

Friday
26 September 2014

Volume 585
No. 39



**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Friday 26 September 2014

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Ten o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That this House, at its rising this day, do adjourn until Monday 13 October 2014.—(*Harriett Baldwin.*)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister relating to Iraq: Coalition against ISIL not later than 5.00pm; such Questions shall include the Questions on any Amendments selected by the Speaker which may then be moved; proceedings may continue, though opposed, after the moment of interruption; and Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) shall not apply.—(*Harriett Baldwin.*)

Iraq: Coalition Against ISIL

10.35 am

The Prime Minister (Mr David Cameron): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the barbaric acts of ISIL against the peoples of Iraq including the Sunni, Shia, Kurds, Christians and Yazidi and the humanitarian crisis this is causing; recognises the clear threat ISIL poses to the territorial integrity of Iraq and the request from the Government of Iraq for military support from the international community and the specific request to the UK Government for such support; further recognises the threat ISIL poses to wider international security and the UK directly through its sponsorship of terrorist attacks and its murder of a British hostage; acknowledges the broad coalition contributing to military support of the Government of Iraq including countries throughout the Middle East; further acknowledges the request of the Government of Iraq for international support to defend itself against the threat ISIL poses to Iraq and its citizens and the clear legal basis that this provides for action in Iraq; notes that this motion does not endorse UK air strikes in Syria as part of this campaign and any proposal to do so would be subject to a separate vote in Parliament; accordingly supports Her Majesty's Government, working with allies, in supporting the Government of Iraq in protecting civilians and restoring its territorial integrity, including the use of UK air strikes to support Iraqi, including Kurdish, security forces' efforts against ISIL in Iraq; notes that Her Majesty's Government will not deploy UK troops in ground combat operations; and offers its wholehearted support to the men and women of Her Majesty's armed forces.

The question before the House today is how we keep the British people safe from the threat posed by ISIL and, in particular, what role our armed forces should play in the international coalition to dismantle and ultimately destroy what President Obama has rightly called "this network of death".

There is no more serious an issue than asking our armed forces to put themselves in harm's way to protect our country, and I want to set out today why I believe that is necessary. If we are to do this, a series of questions must be answered. Is this in our national interest? In particular, is there a direct threat to the British people? Is there a comprehensive plan for dealing with this threat? Is the military element necessary? Is it necessary for us to take part in military action? Is it legal for us to take part? Will we be doing so with the support of local partners, and will doing this add up to a moral justification for putting the lives of British servicemen and women on the line? And above all, do we have a clear idea of what a successful outcome will look like, and are we convinced that our strategy can take us there?

I want to address each of those questions head on—first, our national interest. Is there a threat to the British people? The answer is yes. ISIL has already murdered one British hostage and is threatening the lives of two more. The first ISIL-inspired terrorist acts in Europe have already taken place, with, for instance, the attack on the Jewish museum in Brussels. Security services have disrupted six other known plots in Europe, as well as foiling a terrorist attack in Australia aimed at civilians, including British and American tourists.

ISIL is a terrorist organisation unlike those we have dealt with before. The brutality is staggering: beheadings, crucifixions, the gouging out of eyes, the use of rape as a weapon and the slaughter of children. All these things belong to the dark ages, but it is not just the brutality; it is backed by billions of dollars and has captured an arsenal of the most modern weapons.

In the space of a few months, ISIL has taken control of territory that is greater than the size of Britain and is making millions selling oil to the Assad regime. It has already attacked Lebanon and boasts of its designs right up to the Turkish border. This is not a threat on the far side of the world; left unchecked, we will face a terrorist caliphate on the shores of the Mediterranean and bordering a NATO member, with a declared and proven determination to attack our country and our people. This is not the stuff of fantasy; it is happening in front of us; and we need to face up to it.

Next, is there a clear, comprehensive plan? Yes. It starts at home with tough, uncompromising action to prevent attacks and hunt down those who are planning them. As the House knows, we are introducing new powers. These include strengthening our ability to seize passports and to stop suspects travelling, stripping British nationality from dual nationals and ensuring that airlines comply with our no-fly lists. And in all this, we are being clear about the cause of the terrorist threat we face. As I have said before, that means defeating the poisonous ideology of Islamist extremism, by tackling all forms of extremism, not just the violent extremists. So we are banning preachers of hate, proscribing organisations that incite terrorism and stopping people inciting hatred in our schools, universities and prisons.

Of course, some will say that any action we take will further radicalise young people. I have to say that that is a counsel of despair. The threat of radicalisation is already here. Young people have left our country to go and fight with these extremists. We must take action at home, but we must also have a comprehensive strategy to defeat these extremists abroad.

Mr Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) (Lab): On a comprehensive strategy, there are two questions the Prime Minister has not put to himself: how long will this war last and when will mission creep start?

The Prime Minister: Let me answer that very directly: this mission will take not just months, but years, and I believe we have to be prepared for that commitment. The reason for that is that America, Britain and others are not—I think quite rightly—contemplating putting combat troops on the ground. There will be troops on the ground, but they will be Iraqi and Kurdish troops, and we should be supporting them in all the ways that I will describe.

In terms of mission creep, I will address very directly, later in my speech, why we are discussing what is happening in Iraq today and only that. That is the motion on the Order Paper.

Hazel Blears (Salford and Eccles) (Lab): The Prime Minister has said on a number of occasions in this House that we face a long-term generational struggle and the priority is to fight this poisonous ideology. Will he commit now to working with the mainstream, moderate Muslim community in this country—who see these atrocities carried out in the name of their religion and utterly reject them—and to having a practical programme to make that happen?

The Prime Minister: I absolutely commit to doing that and we have to do it not just in Britain, but right around the world. We should be very clear that the cause of this problem is the poisonous narrative of Islamic extremism. Wherever there are broken states, conflict and civil wars, we see this problem arise, whether it is Boko Haram in Nigeria, al-Qaeda in Yemen or ISIL in Iraq and Syria. We need Muslims to reclaim their religion from these extremists. That is happening in our country and around the world. It was notable that President Obama, in his speech to the United Nations, singled out Muslims in Britain who are saying, “This is not being done in my name,” and we should praise those people.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): The Prime Minister places his trust in the Iraqi army. The problem is that, having caused this mess in Iraq, we armed the Iraqi army, they ran away and ISIL now has their arms. Is he seriously contending that by air strikes alone we can actually roll back ISIL, or is this gesture politics?

The Prime Minister: To be absolutely direct, I am not claiming that by air strikes alone we can roll back this problem. What this problem requires is a comprehensive strategy, including a well formed Iraqi Government and well formed Iraqi armed forces, because they in the end will be the ones who have to defeat this on the ground.

Where I disagree with my hon. Friend is on the cause of how this came about. As I have said, there is the background of Islamic extremism, but I would say that the two principal causes of this problem are the fact that in Syria Assad has been butchering his own people and acting as a recruiting sergeant for the extremists, and that in Iraq the Maliki Government did not represent all the people of Iraq. I thought that Ban Ki-moon, in one of the most powerful interventions I have heard him make, got it spot on when he said that missiles can

kill terrorists but it is good governance that will kill terrorism. We should have that thought front and back of mind as we debate this afternoon.

Mr John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): Does the Prime Minister agree that the Iraqi Government need a political strategy to win over Sunnis and Kurds in their own country, and is he satisfied that they now know how to do it and will get full diplomatic support?

The Prime Minister: In answer to the first part of my right hon. Friend’s question, that is absolutely essential. A lot more needs to be done. I met Prime Minister al-Abadi in New York and discussed this very directly with him. We need to make sure that the Government in Iraq are not just supporting the Shi’a community, but bringing together Shi’a, Sunni and Kurd in a united country, with armed forces that are respected by every part of the community. That has not happened yet, but it is happening and I think that President Obama was absolutely right to delay this action until we had an Iraqi Government with whom we can work as a good partner.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I am going to make a little progress with my speech and then I will take several more interventions.

As I have said, we have to take action at home and abroad. As we take action abroad, it must involve using all the resources at our disposal. That means humanitarian efforts, which Britain is already leading, to help those displaced by ISIL’s onslaught. It means diplomatic efforts to engage the widest possible coalition of countries in the region as part of this international effort. At the United Nations, we are leading the process of condemning ISIL, disrupting the flows of finance to ISIL and forging a global consensus about preventing the movement of foreign fighters. Vitality, and as I have just been saying, this strategy also involves political efforts to support the creation of a new and genuinely inclusive Government in Iraq and to bring about a transition of power in Syria that can lead to a new representative and accountable Government in Damascus so that it, too, can take the fight to ISIL. As one part of that comprehensive strategy, I believe that our military have an indispensable role to play. In a moment or two, I will say why, but first I will take an intervention from the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (John Woodcock).

John Woodcock (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Prime Minister say more about the vital subject of trying to change the nature of government in Syria, and about Iran’s potential role in that?

The Prime Minister: To be frank, what Syria needs is what Iraq needs: an inclusive, democratic Government that represents all of its people. We have had our strategy in that regard—backing the moderate Syrian opposition, the Syrian National Council, and working with others—but I do think that Iran has a role to play. I met President Rouhani in New York to discuss that and other issues, and Iran can play a role in helping to bring about better government in both Syria and Iraq. The jury is still out as to whether Iran will play that role, but we should certainly be encouraging it to do so.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I will give way to my right hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt) and to my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron), and then I will make some progress.

Alistair Burt (North East Bedfordshire) (Con): I am sure that we are all grateful for the recall of Parliament and the opportunity to debate this matter. My right hon. Friend has mentioned Syria, and he has mentioned that the Kurdish peshmerga and the Iraqi army are on the ground fighting ISIL. Also fighting ISIL on the ground is the Free Syrian Army. Given that last week the United States Congress voted to support the Free Syrian Army overtly with weapons, and given that the Free Syrian Army is conducting a ground war, which we are not prepared to do, will my right hon. Friend say whether we are looking again at the possibility of giving military hardware to the Free Syrian Army? It has the people, but it does not have the weaponry to take on Assad or ISIL. It has been attempting to do so for the past year, and it needs our help.

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. Friend knows, we have supported the Syrian National Coalition and the Free Syrian Army with advice, training, mentoring and non-lethal equipment, and I am not proposing a change to that today.

Let me address directly the issue of ISIL in Syria. I am very clear that ISIL needs to be destroyed in Syria as well as in Iraq. We support the action that the United States and five Arab states have taken in Syria, and I believe that there is a strong case for us to do more in Syria, but I did not want to bring a motion to the House today on which there was not consensus. I think it is better if our country can proceed on the basis of consensus. In this House, as I am sure we will hear in the debate today, there are many concerns about doing more in Syria, and I understand that. I do not believe that there is a legal barrier, because I think that the legal advice is clear that were we or others to act, there is a legal basis, but it is true to say that the Syrian situation is more complicated than the Iraqi situation. It is more complicated because of the presence of the brutal dictator Assad. It is more complicated because of the state of the civil war. We should be clear that we have a clear strategy for dealing with Syria, backing the official opposition, building it up as a counterpoint to Assad and working for a transition. As I have said, in the end, what Syria needs is what Iraq needs: a Government that can represent all of its people.

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): Does the Prime Minister accept that without the Iraqi army being able to take and hold ground, there is a real risk that air strikes alone will not only prove ineffective but could become counter-productive, especially if civilian casualties mount and ISIL spins the story that it has withstood the might of the west and held its ground, which it has so far managed to do?

The Prime Minister: I would disagree with my hon. Friend on the basis that the air action that has already been taken by the Americans and, to a degree, by the French has already made a difference. Lives have been

saved. Christians, Yazidis and other minorities, who otherwise would be butchered, have been saved by that action. If my hon. Friend is asking me, “Do we need a better Iraqi army that is more capable on the ground?” Yes, of course we do, but the truth is that, because we, rightly, are not prepared to put our own combat troops on the ground, we should be working with the Iraqis and the Kurds so that they become more effective. However, we cannot wait for that and allow minorities and others to be butchered and the risk to our own country to increase, without taking action.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: Let me make some progress on why I believe military action is necessary before taking more interventions. Frankly, without it, I do not believe there is a realistic prospect of degrading and defeating ISIL. We should be frank: a military conflict is already taking place. ISIL has taken territory. It is butchering people in Iraq. Iraqi, including Kurdish, security forces are already fighting ISIL. We have to decide if we are going to support them and I believe that we should. If we are to beat these terrorists, it is vital that the international community does more to build the capability of the legitimate authorities fighting extremism.

Along with our European partners, as has been discussed in the House, we are playing our role, supplying equipment directly to the Kurdish forces. We are strengthening the resilience of military forces in Lebanon and Jordan and our Tornado and surveillance aircraft have already been helping with intelligence gathering and logistics to support American attacks on ISIL in Iraq. To be frank, and it is vital for the House to understand this, the Iraqi Government want more direct assistance. Earlier this week, the Iraqi Foreign Minister wrote to the UN Security Council requesting military assistance to support its actions. When I met Prime Minister Abadi in New York on Wednesday, he reiterated that request to me. In Iraq, the real work of destroying ISIL will be for the Iraqi security forces, but they need our military help and it is in our interest, and theirs, to give it.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I give way to the former Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr Bob Ainsworth (Coventry North East) (Lab): There is a problem in Iraq, though, that we need to recognise. It is not just political and it is not just about capability. There needs to be a will from the Iraqi army to defend the Sunni areas of the country. In the Prime Minister’s talks with the new Government, has he seen that change, which actually means that our air strikes will support a country that has the will to defend all its own people?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. That is the conversation we are having with the Iraqi Government. There is no doubt in my mind that this Iraqi Prime Minister is a change from the previous regime. They understand this point but frankly we should be tough in our interactions with them. They want our help. They want more training and more expertise. They want our counter-terrorism expertise to help them to defend against these appalling car bombs

[The Prime Minister]

in Baghdad. We should give them that help, but we should say as we give it to them, “This is conditional on you defending and protecting all your people, and that must include the Sunnis in Iraq as well.”

Nadhim Zahawi (Stratford-on-Avon) (Con): The Kurdish President is on record as saying that the Kurds do not want British servicemen and women on the ground fighting the fight for them. What they need is better equipment, training and the air support. Did Prime Minister Abadi deliver a similar message to our Prime Minister? What is the situation vis-à-vis the Sunni tribes, because they need to play a role and to take the fight to ISIL, too?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is spot on. The Iraqi Prime Minister was very frank in his requests to me. He said clearly in New York, “We need your help to drive these people out of our country and indeed out of the world.” He was very frank about that. We are supplying equipment to the Kurds. We can do more to help the Iraqi security forces. As for the Sunni tribes, of course, we need them to help but they need to see that they can be part of a successful Iraq. That is why the involvement of other Arab countries is so important. There are particular countries that may be able to encourage the Sunni tribes to take this step.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: Let me give way to my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis) and then I will make some progress.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): I am glad that the Prime Minister seems to accept that air strikes alone cannot hope to be successful unless they are in close co-ordination with credible ground forces. The only ground forces he has mentioned so far are those of the Kurds and the Iraqis. What are the other Arab states proposing to do, because surely those ground forces have to be Sunni-Muslim ground forces and we need other Arab countries to supply them?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an important point but we should tread carefully here. We are proposing to act at the request of the legitimate Iraqi Government. That Government are supposed to represent all their country—Shi’a, Sunni and Kurd. That country should be doing that, rather than relying on other countries to provide Sunni forces in order to deliver that effect.

It is important that we keep up the pressure, because it is the Iraqi Government who should be representing all their people, rather than getting proxies to do it for them.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I will take more interventions, I promise, but I want to answer this question, which is whether it is necessary specifically for Britain to take part in this international action. Should we just leave it to others? I do not believe that is the right answer. The coalition needs our help, in particular with the vital work being done in terms of air strikes. Britain has unique assets that no other coalition ally can contribute:

the Brimstone precision missile, which minimises the risk of civilian casualties and which even the United States does not have; we have our unique surveillance and intelligence capabilities; and we have our highly professional forces, which are well used to working with their US counterparts. These are some of the reasons why President Obama made it clear to me that America wants Britain to join the air action in Iraq, which has now been under way for several weeks.

I believe it is also our duty to take part. This international operation is about protecting our people too, and protecting the streets of Britain should not be a task that we are prepared to entirely subcontract to other air forces of other countries, so it is right for us to act.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): Will the Prime Minister recognise that killing extremists does not kill their ideas? On the contrary—it can often feed their ideas, and for that reason the former MI6 head of counter-terrorism has said that getting Saudi Arabia and Iran around a negotiating table would be far more effective than bombing. Why are we not hearing far more from this Prime Minister about the political and diplomatic solutions to this situation, rather than reaching for the military solution, which could undermine them?

The Prime Minister: With respect to the hon. Lady, we are taking those diplomatic initiatives. My right hon. Friend the Defence Secretary has recently returned from Saudi Arabia; I am the first British Prime Minister in 35 years to meet an Iranian President. We need all those political and diplomatic moves to take place—they are absolutely vital—but in the end there is a part of this that requires a military solution. ISIL has to be defeated on the ground. That is principally the work of the Iraqi security forces, but we can play a role as well.

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con): Many of those who we have heard speak against the action, and some of those who have contacted me, give voice to the fear of the consequences of action, but is it not the point, and the reason that we have been recalled today, that the consequences of non-action—as I believe this House proved last summer—are far, far worse?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right. What we have to weigh up are, of course, the consequences of action. That is why I set up a National Security Council, at which the heads of MI5, MI6 and GCHQ, and regularly the head of the Metropolitan police, attend and advise. But we have also got to think of the consequences of inaction. If we allow ISIL to grow and thrive, there is no doubt in my mind that the level of threat to this country would increase. We have already seen ISIL murderers butcher innocent people in a museum in Brussels; we have already had plots here in Britain by ISIL. How much stronger will ISIL be before we decide that we need to take action as well?

Mr David Winnick (Walsall North) (Lab): ISIS, indeed, is made up of murderous psychopaths; that is not the issue. We know that. The question is: will what the Prime Minister and the Government are proposing be effective in destroying ISIS? Look at what the House of Commons agreed to: Iraq; Afghanistan; and, under this Government, Libya. None are success stories. Are we going to embark on action that could last for years?

The Prime Minister: I will come on to why this is different to the decision the House made in 2003 about Iraq, but the fact is that this is about psychopathic terrorists who are trying to kill us and we have to realise that, whether we like it or not, they have already declared war on us. There is not a “walk on by” option; there is not an option of just hoping this will go away. As I have just said, the plots are not in doubt.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I promise the House that I will give way more. I want to leave plenty of time for other contributions, but I want to turn directly to the question of legality. The Attorney-General has given his advice on the action we propose to take. There is a clear legal base for UK military action to help Iraq defend itself from ISIL. A summary of this legal position is being placed in the House of Commons Library. The Iraqi Government have requested our help and given their clear consent for UK military action, so there can be no question about this. We have the letter from the Iraqi Government to the UN Security Council, we have the public statements from Prime Minister Abadi and President Masum, and we have the personal requests made to me and to the full UN Security Council by Prime Minister Abadi in New York on Wednesday. So there is no question but that we have the legal basis for action, founded on the request of the Iraqi Government.

Let me briefly address the fact that we will be acting in support of local partners, which has been a major concern of Members across the House. We have a substantial international coalition in place, including Arab nations committed to confronting and defeating ISIL. Sixty countries are acting in some way to help to tackle ISIL. Of these 10 are Arab states, five have already taken part in air strikes with the Americans in Syria, and even regional powers, such as Iran, are publicly condemning the extremists.

As I have said, our differences with Iran remain. Iran's support for terrorist organisations, its nuclear programme, the treatment of its people, all have to change, and we will not back down on these things. But if Iran's political leaders are prepared to help a more secure, more stable, more inclusive Iraq and Syria, we should welcome their engagement.

Mr David Burrowes (Enfield, Southgate) (Con): On the question of the legal principle, clearly there is one given the consent from the Iraqi Government, but will the Prime Minister confirm that there is also the important principle of responsibility to protect from genocide, which is on the table, and capable of wider application?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There are a variety of legal arguments that can be deployed. In this case it could not be clearer that we are acting at the request of a sovereign state, and if we were to act in Syria, I believe that would be the legal basis too: collective self-defence against ISIL which threatens Iraq. But my hon. Friend is absolutely right to say, and I have said this in the House before, that if one is averting a humanitarian catastrophe, that is a legal basis on which to act. Let me be clear again that although it is right that we are having this debate and this vote, if there was a moment when it looked as though there

could be an urgent humanitarian need for intervention, I would be prepared to order that intervention and then come to the House and explain why.

We have a comprehensive strategy for action. As I have said, we have a clear request from the Iraqi Government. We have a clear basis in international law. We have a substantial international coalition, including many Arab partners, and we need to act in our own national interest. So I believe that it is morally right that we now move to a new phase of action by asking our armed forces to take part in international air strikes against ISIL in Iraq, and I believe we should do so now.

Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): Muslims around the world have made it clear that ISIL has nothing to do with Islam; it is an evil organisation. Linked to that very point, have there been discussions with the 57 members of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, which represents Muslim states, to see whether many more of those Islamic countries will be joining this international coalition, along with the five Arab states, to ensure that it is a wider, broader coalition and has the most effective outcome?

The Prime Minister: All these conversations were taking place this week at the UN General Assembly, and one of the most important things that can happen is Muslim Governments, Islamic countries across the world, coming out and condemning ISIL, and explaining that this is not a bunch of people acting on behalf of a religion, but a bunch of psychopaths who have perverted a religion, and that it is not being done in their name.

Let me address briefly what I believe a successful outcome would look like, and then I will take some more interventions. We would want to see a stable Iraq and over time a stable Syria too. We want to see ISIL degraded and then destroyed as a serious terrorist force. But let me be frank: we should not expect this to happen quickly. The hallmarks of this campaign will be patience and persistence, not shock and awe. We are not deploying British combat troops, but we are providing air power in support of local forces on the ground. No British or western troops will occupy Iraq. Many other elements will be needed for a long-term success, many of which I have set out clearly at the Dispatch Box today.

Mr Mike Weir (Angus) (SNP): I am listening closely to what the Prime Minister is saying. He has talked about the international coalition, but the Peshmerga fighters from the Kurds have taken a lot of the brunt of fighting ISIL in the first instance. Can he assure us that all the parties within Iraq also support this intervention, in particular the Kurdish political leadership?

The Prime Minister: What I can be clear about, having spoken to them, is that both the Kurdish leaders in Iraq and the Iraqi Prime Minister have been frank that they want our help. They have both said very clearly, “We do not want British combat troops on the ground, but we do need the arms and the ability to defeat this murderous, terrorist organisation.” We are helping in exactly the way they would like us to help.

Mr Peter Hain (Neath) (Lab): I support the Prime Minister's motion. I also think that, in the end, we will have to deal with ISIL in Syria as well. Did I hear him correctly a moment or two ago? Did he say that if there

[Mr Peter Hain]

was an urgent humanitarian need, he would take the action and then get subsequent support from the House? Surely it should be the other way round.

The Prime Minister: No, no. To be absolutely clear, the right hon. Gentleman heard me right the first time round. If there was the need to take urgent action to prevent, for instance, the massacre of a minority community or a Christian community, and Britain could act to prevent that humanitarian catastrophe—if I believed we could effectively act and do that—I am saying I would order that and come straight to the House and explain afterwards.

Let me be clear: I think the convention that has grown up in recent years that the House of Commons is properly consulted and there is a proper vote is a good convention. It is particularly apt when there is—as there is today—a proposal for, as it were, premeditated military action. I think it is important to reserve the right that if there were a critical British national interest at stake or there were the need to act to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe, you could act immediately and explain to the House of Commons afterwards. I am being very frank about this because I do not want to mislead anybody.

Dr Julian Huppert (Cambridge) (LD): It is very good that this House debates and votes before action happens. May I press the Prime Minister, however, because he has often said that there would be no boots on the ground? The motion is very carefully worded—slightly differently. Will he confirm whether he is asking the House to allow any presence of UK military personnel in Iraq, and if so, in what roles?

The Prime Minister: No. The reason for choosing the words “combat troops” is very important. Of course, when we, for instance, contemplated putting in Chinook helicopters to evacuate the Yazidi people from Mount Sinjar, that would have involved British forces being in an area of Iraq. The servicing, efforts and helping of those helicopters would have involved British personnel. That is why we talk about British combat troops. Again, we should be very clear about that.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I give way to the hon. Gentleman from Birmingham.

Jack Dromey (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab) *rose*—

Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab) I am grateful—[*Laughter.*] We are both from Birmingham; we get everywhere.

I am grateful to the Prime Minister for giving way. Whether or not we are militarily involved in Syria, there is no doubt that the fighting in Syria has been and is intensifying, which means that the humanitarian crisis that has already been unfolding in Syria will also intensify. For example, there have been more than 650 major impact strikes on Aleppo since February. This will require new ways of getting humanitarian aid in. What preparations are being made for that, because the current

arrangements need to be stepped up, and who are the Prime Minister and the international community co-operating with to ensure that that aid gets in?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman raises an important point. We have a very advanced aid programme. Britain is the second biggest bilateral donor. We have been providing more aid across the border, and we are working with all the international partners, as you would expect. That includes, this week, increasing our aid contribution to make sure that that happens.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I want to make some progress with my speech, and I will then take some more interventions.

As I have said, what is required is an inclusive Iraqi Government. We need a Syrian Government who represent all their people. But I want to be frank with the House. Even after ISIL has been dealt with, we should be in no doubt that future British Prime Ministers and future British Governments will, I suspect, be standing at the Dispatch Box dealing with the issue of Islamist extremism in different forms and in different parts of the world for many years to come. ISIL has sprung up quickly, but around the world we see the mayhem caused by other groups, whether Boko Haram in Nigeria, al-Shabaab in Somalia or al-Qaeda in Yemen. We are dealing with a generational struggle caused by the perversion of one of the world's great religions, Islam, but I have no doubt that this struggle is one that this House and this country are more than equal to.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): General Dannatt hinted today on television that we may well need to use ground forces at the end of the day, and it does take time to train the Iraqi army. If that were the case, will the Prime Minister come back to the House?

The Prime Minister: I have said that we will come back to the House if, for instance, we make the decision that we should take air action with others in Syria, but I am not contemplating the use of British combat forces because I think it would be the wrong thing to do. The lesson to learn from previous conflicts is that we should play the most appropriate role for us. It is for the Iraqi Government and for the Iraqi army to defeat ISIL in Iraq. Indeed, in time I hope, it is for a proper, legitimate Syrian Government to defeat ISIL in Syria. Where we should be helping is with aid, diplomacy and political pressure and, yes, with our unique military assets where they can help, but it should be part of a comprehensive strategy and should not go over the heads of local people and should not ignore the regional powers, learning the lessons of the past. That is what this debate is about, that is what this motion is about, and that is why I believe that we are taking the right steps.

Mr James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con): Does the Prime Minister agree that the wording of the motion before the House today was carefully chosen to ensure that we get support for it? Would he accept that it to some degree hamstring the Government? Is there not a place here for leadership and statesmanship, rather the popular support of the House? He needs the support of the country, but do we really need a vote on the matter?

The Prime Minister: I say to my hon. Friend that we live in a robust democracy where this House of Commons frequently demands and wants, quite rightly, to see Ministers at the Dispatch Box defending their actions and setting out, as I have just done in this now accepted convention, that if there is to be premeditated military action, the House of Commons should be consulted in advance. I have set out where I think there are gaps in that convention, about which I could not have been clearer, and I think that that probably has all-party support.

I will take two more interventions and will then complete my speech.

Liz Kendall (Leicester West) (Lab): I thank the Prime Minister. He has rightly talked about defeating ISIL militarily and politically, including with help in the region. Will he say something about how we need also to defeat ISIL financially? Which countries are supporting ISIL, including by purchasing oil, and what are the British Government and others going to do about that?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady is absolutely spot on with that point. There are a number of things that we need to do. First of all is action at the UN, which has now been taken, to cut off the financial flows to ISIL. We need to take action to tell the world that ISIL, supposedly the enemy of Assad, is actually selling oil to Assad and making millions of pounds from it. American air strikes have already dealt with some of the so-called mobile oil refineries that ISIL has been using to raise funds, but clearly more needs to be done to persuade those who may have backed organisations such as ISIL in the past, because they were seen as Sunni Arab organisations, that they made a terrible mistake and should not do it again. That was very much what was being discussed around the table at the UN Security Council and is an issue that I would support.

Alok Sharma (Reading West) (Con): I thank the Prime Minister for giving way. I was going to make a point about ensuring that we can cut off funding to ISIL, but will he expand a little more on that in terms of what is going on with international pressure to ensure that ISIL's funding is squeezed? At the end of the day, it is currently a well-funded organisation and squeezing its funding will ensure that it cannot operate in the way that it has been up until now.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right. Part of the reason why ISIL has got hold of so much funding is because it has the oil and also simply took money out of banks in some of the towns it took in northern Iraq. A long-term squeeze must be applied in this case.

Zac Goldsmith (Richmond Park) (Con): I thank the Prime Minister for giving way. Does he agree that if we are serious about tackling jihadi terrorism in the middle east, we must take a much tougher line with some key allies, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait, which have been fuelling and funding terrorism for decades and, if reports are accurate, continue to do so?

The Prime Minister: What I would say to my hon. Friend is that we need to have this very direct conversation with everyone in the middle east about the dangers of sectarianism and of supporting groups because they are

Sunni or Shi'a. That is part of the background that has led us to this problem. We need everyone to recognise that, whatever branch of Islam they are from, terrorism breeds further extremism and terrorism and, in the end, comes back and damages their own countries and societies.

It is inevitable that the shadow of the United Kingdom's last military involvement in Iraq hangs heavy over this Chamber today, but the situation that we face today is very different. We are acting in response to a direct appeal from the sovereign Government of Iraq to help them deal with a mortal terrorist threat. It is a threat to Iraq and a threat to Britain. We are not acting alone, but as part of an international coalition of 60 countries, many of them from the region and all of them committed to rolling back ISIL, however long and difficult the task may be. This is not 2003, but we must not use past mistakes as an excuse for indifference or inaction. We will play our part in destroying these evil extremists. We will support our Muslim friends around the world as they reclaim their religion, and once again our inspirational armed forces will put themselves in harm's way to keep our people and our country safe. I pay tribute to them for their extraordinary bravery and service, and I commend this motion to the House.

11.15 am

Edward Miliband (Doncaster North) (Lab): I rise to support the Government motion concerning military action against ISIL in Iraq. It is right that the Prime Minister has brought this issue to the House and committed to bringing future decisions to the House too. Let me start by saying that all of us, whatever side of the debate we are on, will be conducting it with huge admiration for the bravery, spirit and duty displayed by our armed forces, who act on the decisions that this House makes.

Let us be clear at the outset what the proposition is today. It is about air strikes against ISIL in Iraq. It is not about ground troops from the United Kingdom, or about UK military action elsewhere. It is a mission specifically aimed at ISIL. As we debate this issue today, I understand the qualms and, for some, deep unease that there will be about that undertaking, both in the House and in the country. Those who advocate military action today have to persuade Members of the House not just that ISIL is an evil organisation but that it is we, Britain, who should take military action in Iraq. I want to do so by first setting out the particular nature of the ISIL threat, by secondly talking about the criteria that we should apply to judging the case for military action, and by thirdly saying something about the role of our country in the world, which for me is directly relevant to this decision.

Mr Baron: Will the right hon. Gentleman also clarify Labour's position with regard to the politics? Many of us are concerned that there is no clear exit strategy militarily, but what about the politics? There is no point in military intervention if the politics are not right—and they are not. Many of those who served under al-Maliki are still in place, and many Sunnis still feel alienated. Without the hearts and minds policy being right, military intervention will not be enduring.

Edward Miliband: I understand the hon. Gentleman's long-held caution on these issues, but the point I will make is that there needs to be a comprehensive strategy.

[*Edward Miliband*]

We are not talking about a military-only solution. It is about political action, humanitarian action and wider strategic action, and I will come to that later in my remarks.

First I want to say something about the nature of ISIL. As the Prime Minister said, ISIL is not simply another terrorist organisation. We have seen, of course, its hostage-taking of innocent British citizens, and it is not just British citizens whom ISIL is threatening but Christians, Yazidis and fellow Muslims, Sunni and Shi'a, from many different countries and backgrounds—anyone who does not subscribe to its deeply perverted ideology.

If the House will allow me, I want to give one hideous example recently gathered by Amnesty International, because it is directly relevant to the decisions that we make today. On the morning of Friday 15 August, ISIL fighters assembled the residents of Kocho village in northern Iraq at the secondary school, where they separated men and boys from women and younger children. The men were then driven away to different nearby locations, where they were shot and killed. The women and children of the village were abducted and continue to be held by ISIL.

Let us be clear about what this is: ISIL is murdering Muslims. So to those who say that military action against ISIL is somehow an attack on Islam, let me just say this: I understand the anxiety, including in communities in Britain, but the truth is entirely different. It is Muslims themselves who are saying it—leading British Muslim scholars and imams recently wrote of ISIL:

“They are perpetrating the worst crimes against humanity...it is a war against all humanity.”

ISIL's ideology has nothing to do with the peaceful religion practised by billions of people across the world and by millions of our fellow citizens, who are appalled by their actions.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): The Leader of the Opposition mentioned hostages. David Haines was brought up and educated in Perth, and some of his family are constituents of mine. To the people of Perth, David Haines was simply a hero, and the more we find out about his remarkable life, the more appalled we are by his brutal and barbaric murder. The people of Perth are planning a commemoration of his life, and I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister will want to join them and congratulate them on their efforts to ensure that this man is properly remembered.

Edward Miliband: The hon. Gentleman spoke with great eloquence on this issue. In a way, it tells us all we need to know about this organisation that it would take hostage people who exist simply to try to help the innocent victims of conflict all around the world.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way and for his support—this time—for the Government motion for intervention. Given what he has said about the horrors of ISIL, if it is necessary for us to come back to the House and debate a motion to intervene against ISIL in Syria, will he support it?

Edward Miliband: I do want to deal with this very directly, if the House will give me permission. I want to be very clear about this. We will obviously consider any further proposition if the Prime Minister chooses to come back with one. Let me mention three issues that concern me about the difference between Iraq and Syria.

First of all, there is the question of legitimacy. There is a strong argument about the legal base for action in Syria under article 51. The point that I have been making in the last few days is that, in my view, when we are not talking about being invited in by a democratic state, it would be better—I put it no higher than that—to seek a UN Security Council resolution. Why? Because that is the highest multilateral institution of the world and therefore it would be better to seek authorisation on the basis of that.

There are two other issues in play in relation to Syria. One, there is the question of ground forces. The point that a number of hon. Members have made is that we cannot defeat ISIL by air power alone. In the case of Iraq, the Iraqi army and the Kurds can conduct those operations; there is—I put it no higher than this—an outstanding question about who will perform that function in Syria. Secondly, as the Prime Minister himself made reference to, there is a big outstanding question about the overall outcome that we are seeking in Syria. The Prime Minister said that there is a clear strategy and plan in relation to that; personally, I think that a lot more work needs to be done on what exactly the route map is in Syria. Those are the particular issues that I raise in relation to Syria.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Edward Miliband: I want to make some progress with my argument, if the House will allow me.

ISIL is not simply a murderous organisation. As the Prime Minister said, it has ambitions for a state of its own—a caliphate across the middle east, run according to its horrific norms and values. That is why I believe, and established in the first part of my remarks, that we cannot simply stand by against the threat of ISIL. But as I said in response to the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron), in acting against it we need to learn the lessons from the past. We should be clear about this with the British people. That means a comprehensive strategy—humanitarian and political, as well as military, and, crucially, rooted in the region. Some of that work is under way, but I believe that much more needs to be done.

There is a reality that the House must face up to: to make this alliance work, there is the need for military action as well to contain and help counter the threat of ISIL in Iraq. That is why we are meeting today.

In the second part of my remarks, to make the case for military action by the UK, I want to return to the criteria that I have previously set out—criteria that learn from the past and judge whether military action can be justified. First, in any action that we take there must be just cause. I believe that ISIL does establish just cause: on humanitarian grounds, which I have set out, and on grounds of national interest. On this point, the international instability created by the undermining and potential overthrow of the democratic Iraqi state would clearly have implications for the stability of the

region and therefore for us and our national interest. It would make it more likely that Iraq would become a haven and training ground for terrorism directed against the UK.

Secondly, military action must always be a last resort; again, I believe that this criterion is met. ISIL has shown that it is not an organisation that could or should be negotiated with. Thirdly, there must be a clear legal base, to provide legitimacy and legal force for our actions. I support the motion today because we are responding to the request from the democratic Iraqi state, and that is recognised in the UN charter.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): As one who voted on 18 March 2003 against the war in Iraq, may I ask whether my right hon. Friend agrees that we bear a particular responsibility for subsequent events, and, therefore, a particular responsibility towards the Government and people of Iraq?

Edward Miliband: That is an important point. I shall come to it later, but let me say now that, while some people would say that our intervention in Iraq means that we should not intervene in this case, I think that there is a heightened responsibility for us precisely because we did intervene in Iraq, and—with all kinds of implications—the Iraqi state that has emerged is partly our responsibility.

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the Government have a moral obligation to help the Iraqi people in their hour of need—an obligation which, like the deficit, this Government did not create, but has to deal with? *[Interruption.]*

Edward Miliband: If I may say so, I think the hon. Gentleman did himself no credit with that intervention.

Let me turn to the fourth test. This is important, because it is the hardest test of all, and we need to level with the House about it. We must believe that there is a reasonable prospect of success before we take the grave step of committing our forces. The aim is clear: it is to reinforce the democratic Government of Iraq and prevent the advance of ISIL, at the invitation of that Government, and it is to do so by using international military air power while the Iraqi army and Kurdish peshmerga conduct a ground campaign.

No one should be in any doubt that this is a difficult mission and that it will take time, but there is already evidence that the US action is having the effect of holding back ISIL. Prior to that action, ISIL was advancing, with catastrophic consequences for the Iraqi people. This is where there is a choice: to act or not to act. Both have implications, and both have consequences. In June, ISIL took Mosul. Failure to act would mean more Mosuls, and more killing of the sort that I described earlier.

Ms Gisela Stuart (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if the outcome is to be greater stability, and if it requires the intervention and the support of neighbouring countries, it would have been quite good to hear more about Turkey's attitude and, in particular, its attitude to arming the Kurds?

Edward Miliband: My hon. Friend has made a really important point. It is incredibly important that we mobilise all countries in the region, and Turkey is primary among them. We need to learn the whole lesson—namely that there can be no solution without our engaging not just the people of Iraq and an inclusive Government in Iraq, but the wider neighbourhood.

Let me now turn to my fifth criterion. There must be broad support in the region for reasons of legitimacy—because this action must not be seen as some new form of imperialism—and of effectiveness, because regional support is essential to the long-term success of the mission. At the end of August, the Arab League made a statement calling for comprehensive measures to combat ISIL, and we now see a regional coalition consisting of Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia and Qatar, as well as other countries.

Sixthly and finally, the proposed action must be proportionate. We must make sure that innocent civilians are protected. I know that strict conditions are in place to ensure that there is proper targeting, and that everything possible is done to avoid civilian casualties.

Having scrutinised those six conditions—just cause, last resort, legal base, reasonable prospects, regional support and proportionality—I believe that they are met.

Rehman Chishti: The right hon. Gentleman has referred to a broader coalition. Does he, like me, welcome the fact that 120 clerics and imams from around the world are setting out sections of the Koran, making it quite clear that ISIL has nothing to do with Islam and is an evil organisation which everyone around the world, including the Muslim world, has a duty to tackle?

Edward Miliband: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. This is not a clash of civilisations. The vast, vast majority of Muslims all around the world abhor ISIL and its activities.

Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab): I congratulate my right hon. Friend and the Prime Minister on what has been said so far today. It is vital for the sense to be felt that the entire House is behind our troops when they are out performing in this way.

My right hon. Friend has spoken powerfully about the fact that this is not a war on Islam, and we are all very conscious of the scars that remain from the past. Will he say a little more about what he, as Leader of the Opposition, will do to ensure that our Muslim communities here recognise that this is not a war on them, and that it is absolutely about protecting Muslims as well as people back here in the United Kingdom?

Edward Miliband: My hon. Friend makes an incredibly important point. I will play my part—as I am sure will he and other Members across the House—in setting out the case and explaining the basis of action, which is to protect innocent Muslims in Iraq who are under terrible threat from ISIL day after day. That is why there is such urgency in this case.

Mr Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): The Prime Minister argued that this was a generational struggle, but only last year in this House, he passionately argued for action in Syria. Had he got

[Mr Angus Brendan MacNeil]

his way then, what would the position of ISIL be today? Would ISIL not be stronger? If the consequences were unforeseen over the space of a year, does that not show that our commitment should not be open-ended, but should be back to be scrutinised by this House?

Edward Miliband: As we are, on this occasion, seeking the unity of the House, it is incredibly important that we do everything we can to make that happen. The proposition last year was about chemical weapons in relation to President Assad. That matter was dealt with by others. Of course, the situation in Syria remains very dire. I believe that we made the right decision last summer, but today is about trying to get the whole House supporting the motion before it.

Mr Tom Clarke (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (Lab): Does my right hon. Friend recall that, fairly recently, this House and the international community were condemned for tolerating genocide in Rwanda and then for tolerating genocide in Sudan? Given the evidence today of genocide, particularly against the Kurds in Iraq, it is no wonder that the British people are in support not just of him but of the motion before the House.

Edward Miliband: My right hon. Friend speaks incredibly powerfully. In the examples he cited, many of us may feel that there was a case for intervention that was not taken up. These decisions are always incredibly difficult, but if we can help innocent people who are under threat of persecution, it is right to do so.

Jim Sheridan (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (Lab): My right hon. Friend is absolutely right in supporting this motion, but may I press him on our role in the world and how it is perceived by people outside? This hokey-cokey approach to international conflicts concerns many people who have just seen thousands of innocent Palestinians murdered while we stood on the sidelines. Will he confirm to the House that he will show the same commitment, and push for resources, to get a satisfactory conclusion in Palestine?

Edward Miliband: I agree that it is right to speak out on these issues—and to speak out without fear or favour—and to pursue the two-state solution that we need.

Mr James Arbuthnot (North East Hampshire) (Con)
rose—

Edward Miliband: I want to move on if I may to the third part of my remarks.

Some people might accept the criteria that I have set out, but say that it is not our job to intervene because western intervention always makes things worse—we must confront this issue, because it will concern not just Members in this House but people in the country. I understand that argument, but I do not agree with it. Intervention always has risks, but a dismembered Iraq would be more dangerous for Britain. ISIL unchecked means more persecution of the innocent. If we say to people that we will pass by on this one, it makes it far harder to persuade other Arab countries to play their

part. Members across the House have been saying that this must be resolved in the neighbourhood and that we must engage the region. We would have less moral authority to say that we want the Arab states to play their part, if we say, “I’m sorry, but this has nothing to do with us. We won’t intervene.” Finally, we should pride ourselves on our traditions of internationalism. Being internationalist and not withdrawing from the concerns of the world is when Britain is at its best.

I want to speak now about the underlying reasons for wariness over action. I am talking here about the 2003 war in Iraq. I understand why some who were in the House at the time will wonder whether this is a repeat of that experience. In my view, it is not, and it is worth setting out why.

First, as the Prime Minister said, this case is about supporting a democratic state. It is not about overturning an existing regime and seeking to build a new one from the rubble, which is a much harder undertaking. Secondly, there is no debate about the legal base for action in Iraq, as there was in 2003. Thirdly, there is no argument over whether military action is a last resort. Whatever side of the debate we are on, no one is saying, “Let’s negotiate with ISIL.” They are not people with whom we can negotiate. Fourthly, there is broad international support, not a divided world, with all 28 EU member states and the Arab League providing support, and five Arab states taking part in action. Fifthly, there is no question of British ground troops being deployed. I understand the wariness there will be in the House and in the country about whether this is a repeat of 2003, but on those five grounds it is not, and it is demonstrably not.

John Woodcock: Does my right hon. Friend agree that our failure to reconstruct Iraq properly after the war actually increases our responsibility to act responsibly and engage other partners in the region to create a more stable country for the future than we have seen over the past 10 years?

Edward Miliband: I completely agree with my hon. Friend about our responsibilities, and indeed our responsibilities to the people of Iraq.

Mr Arbuthnot *rose—*

Caroline Lucas *rose—*

Mr Ian Davidson (Glasgow South West) (Lab/Co-op)
rose—

Edward Miliband: I will not give way again.

The late Robin Cook said this in his resignation speech on the eve of the Iraq war:

“Our interests are best protected not by unilateral action but by multilateral agreement and a world order governed by rules.”—
[*Official Report*, 17 March 2003; Vol. 401, c. 726.]

This is multilateral action, prompted by a legitimate democratic state; and a world order governed by rules, if it is about anything, must be about protecting a democratic state, which is what the motion before us is about. I believe that, although this is difficult, it is the right thing to do. There is no graver decision for our Parliament and our country, but protecting our national interest, security and the values for which we stand is why I will be supporting the motion this afternoon.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Bill Wiggins (North Herefordshire) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. You will have noticed that the House is very full. My constituents expect me to be able to get into the Chamber and hear my Prime Minister. No such obligation rests on this poor man behind me. Will you find a safe place for this camera crew, so that he can film without getting in our way?

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. As far as I can see, the camera crew is certainly not interfering with the business of the House, and everybody is safe. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his point of order, to which I have responded.

May I point out to the House that no fewer than 77 hon. and right hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye, in consequence of which colleagues will understand my decision to impose, with immediate effect, a five-minute limit on Back-Bench speeches.

11.37 am

Sir Richard Ottaway (Croydon South) (Con): I congratulate the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition on the constructive and measured way in which they introduced today's debate.

This intervention is different in two respects. For the first time, war is fought using social media as a tool. The power of the internet is becoming increasingly apparent. We have all been shocked by the slick propaganda. For most of us, the first we heard of ISIL was through YouTube. This is the world that we live in today. The second is the young age and radicalism of our opponents. Albert Einstein once said that old men start wars but younger men fight them. Well, not any longer. The ISIL and al-Qaeda commanders are in their 30s and the old men are the refugees.

Alok Sharma (Reading West) (Con): My right hon. Friend makes an important point. One of the most powerful weapons that IS has been using is social media. What should Governments around the world, like ours and like that of the US, be doing to ensure that social media are not used, that sites are blocked and that IS is stopped from getting its publicity out into the public domain?

Sir Richard Ottaway: I agree with my hon. Friend. I think he has answered his own intervention. I think the Government should be addressing that and recognising that soft power is now a tool of war, and should be addressed very seriously indeed.

I was saying that our opponents are young and radical. Up against them are the slow, clunking democracies of the west and the civilised world. But these democracies are our strength. This building and our electoral mandate—they give us a legitimacy that ISIL and similar rebel groups will never have, and that is what will ultimately undermine them.

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): The right hon. Gentleman makes a very important point. An important part of all this, alongside the military action that I hope we will endorse today, is the soft approach—the diplomatic record of the United Kingdom in relation to many of the Sunni tribes in the area over

which ISIL has control. Is it not important to recognise that ISIL, with its use of social media and its very strong media operation, is effectively an opportunist front for what has been a civil war? We cannot negotiate with ISIL, but we must make sure that we negotiate with and talk to the people in the Sunni community within the tribes in that area.

Sir Richard Ottaway: I agree with the hon. Gentleman; indeed, he anticipates what I am coming to in my speech.

The western world agonises about how to respond intelligently and responsibly to these violent threats. I congratulate the Prime Minister on the rational and measured way in which he has assessed the situation and on the leadership that he has shown. A coalition of the willing has been assembled. The response has been prepared. Our thoughts are now with the men and women of the armed forces. This is not going to be an easy campaign. It is going to be messy, it is going to be untidy, and there will, I fear, be fatalities. But this intervention is the very least that a country such as Britain and the United Kingdom should be doing. We are a world leader in the EU, in NATO, and in the G8. We hold down a permanent seat in the Security Council in the United Nations. We derive benefit from all these positions, but they also give us responsibilities, and we have a duty to act.

I have to say, however, that it is of some regret to me that, while I recognise the politics, we are not authorising action in Syria today. The border between Syria and Iraq has virtually disappeared. It is a sea of human misery. There is open, cross-border movement of people both legal and illegal, military organisations, innocent citizens, and homeless, terrified refugees. It is a seamless conflict over two countries covering thousands of miles and presenting a vulnerability in ISIL's stretched resources that we are not capitalising on.

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Richard Ottaway: I will not, if my hon. Friend does not mind.

We have long encouraged the Arab states to get involved. Now they are, and the irony is that we are pulling our punches as they do. This is the first time that there has been an international coalition in Syria, and we should be a part of it. The Leader of the Opposition said that it would be better if a resolution was tabled at the United Nations before intervening. Given that Russia has already said it will veto such a resolution, it is incumbent on him to say what his position would then be. Why the hesitation over Syria? We will never end this conflict by turning back at the border. Perhaps when the Deputy Prime Minister winds up the debate, he could say what is the role for the Free Syrian Army, which has just been given half a billion dollars by the US Congress to equip its fight. It has been fighting ISIS for months, and, like the Peshmerga in northern Iraq, it is fighting for its homeland.

We are all agreed that air attacks alone are not going to bring this war to an end. ISIS will clearly go underground, and we will need forces on the ground to ram home the advantage that air cover provides. We all accept that there are not going to be British or American boots on

[*Sir Richard Ottaway*]

the ground, but the Peshmerga and the Free Syrian Army are willing. They have strong contacts with each other and stand shoulder to shoulder in their exchanges.

Mr Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry Barr) (Lab): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Richard Ottaway: I will not, if the hon. Gentleman does not mind.

Strategically, it makes sense to bolster moderate forces to take the fight to ISIL. This means supplying funds and equipment to the Free Syrian Army, which has shown itself to be a reliable partner over a sustained period. In the longer term, this will strengthen its anti-Assad capability and bring him to the negotiating table—something that we have been talking about for over three years. No one should be under any illusion that the attacks on innocent citizens in Syria remain 99% the work of the Syrian regime, which has now killed an estimated 170,000 of its own people, as against just a few hundred killed by ISIL.

Mr. Speaker, war is a terrifying business, particularly for those who have experienced it. On occasions it is a necessary evil, but no matter how necessary, it is always ghastly and horrendous. It is with a feeling of depression and trepidation that I will be supporting the Government tonight.

11.45 am

Mr Peter Hain (Neath) (Lab): Although I support the motion authorising military strikes on ISIL in Iraq, and although I fully support my party leader's caution over extending it to Syria without UN backing, the blunt truth is that simply allowing ISIL to retreat across an invisible border, to them, that they control into Syria to regroup is no answer.

First, why British military action against ISIL's barbarity but not Assad's butchery? Should not the haunting and ill-fated legacy of invading Iraq instruct us to stay well clear? In the Cabinet in 2003, I backed Tony Blair over Iraq because I honestly believed that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction. I was wrong. He did not. We went to a war on a lie, and the aftermath was disastrous. That has made me deeply allergic to anything similar in the region and certainly anything remotely hinting at cowboy western intervention.

Meg Munn (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab/Co-op): Does my right hon. Friend also accept that the intervention in 2003 was welcomed by a lot of the people of Iraq, particularly by the Kurds?

Mr Hain: I agree absolutely.

Even Libya, supposedly a surgical operation consented to by this House in 2011, is hardly a good advertisement for us, with chaos now in the country.

Mr Stephen O'Brien (Eddisbury) (Con): In supporting the motion, as I think broadly we are across the House, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that one of the lessons from the 2003 intervention in Iraq is that we should have designed in the reconstruction of Iraq as a democratic state from the outset, rather than leaving it till after we had achieved some military effect?

Mr Hain: Indeed. We tried to, but the Americans took no notice, frankly.

In the Syrian horror from which ISIL has sprung, of course Assad's forces have unleashed waves of terror, but his jihadist opponents too have committed terrible atrocities. That is the context that has given birth to ISIL; not because the House prevented the Prime Minister from armouring moderate rebels in the Free Syrian Army. Had the Prime Minister got his way last August, where might those British arms have ended up? Probably with ISIL. Instead of trying to bounce Parliament into backing military strikes in Syria last August, we should have been promoting a negotiated solution right from the beginning. That was always going to be the only way to get Assad and, more importantly, his backers to shift towards compromise.

Syria never was some simplistic battle between evil and good; between a barbaric dictator and his repressed people. It is a civil war; a quagmire into which Britain should tread at dire peril. At its heart are the incendiary internal Islamic conflicts—Sunni versus Shia, and their chief protagonists and sponsors Saudi Arabia versus Iran. There is also a cold war hangover, of the US—with all its considerable military and intelligence assets in the region—versus Russia, with its only Mediterranean port and intelligence capability in Syria.

Even more crucially, Assad is backed by 40% of his population. His ruling Shia-aligned Alawites, fearful of being oppressed by the Sunni majority, along with the Kurds, Christians and other minorities do not like his repressive Ba'athist rule very much. They fear the alternative even more; becoming victims of genocide, jihadism or sharia extremism. Assad was never going to be defeated militarily and he is not now. That is the truth. If western military intervention had somehow toppled him without a settlement in place, violent chaos on the Syrian quicksand would still have ensued. The Arab League envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, along with the UN, set out a political solution, which should always have been the imperative. That means negotiating with Assad's regime, along with the Russians and Iranians standing behind him.

Our failure to undertake that is a major reason why the civil war, in my view, has been so prolonged and why ISIL has been allowed to flourish. Medieval in its barbarism and its fanatical religious zeal, which views its own narrow Wahhabi sect, dating from the 18th century, as possessing the sole truth, it uses that as the justification for exterminating both all its opponents and any other religious group blocking its way to establishing a caliphate. It has to be stopped and Britain has the military surveillance and intelligence capabilities that those on the front line fighting ISIL do not. In northern Iraq, only US air power—at the request of the Iraqi Government, the Kurds and the minorities facing genocide by ISIL's remorseless advance, and very significantly, with the military participation of half a dozen nearby Arab countries—has knocked back ISIL's well-equipped army. It would not have happened otherwise. That Iran gave its *de facto* if covert blessing is of significance, opening an opportunity for future engagement and collaboration which could be transformative for the whole region, Israel-Palestine included. Britain should also help local Iraqi and Kurdish forces fighting ISIL with air strikes, drones, military equipment and other support. But not with troops on the ground. Countries in the region have to take ownership of this battle because ISIL threatens them all.

But the elephant in the room, for me, remains Syria. ISIL will never be defeated if it is constantly allowed to regroup from its Syrian bases. Without either UN or Syrian Government authorisation, air strikes in Syria may be illegal, although there could well be justification under international law for such strikes, even without UN agreement. And UN authority for air strikes in Syria will not be granted without Assad's and Putin's agreement—maybe President Rouhani's too. That is very difficult—to many, very distasteful—but very necessary. What is the alternative? Although Syria's Russian-supplied air defences have been hit by the fighting, they are quite sophisticated. Even the US had to pre-inform Damascus about the timing and location of its air strikes this past week or so.

Yet engaging does not mean befriending. Rather, it is akin to what Churchill said in 1941: "If Hitler invaded hell", he told his private secretary as Germany readied to invade Stalin's Russia,

"I would at least make a favourable reference to the devil in the House of Commons."

Handled sensitively this could be an opportunity—and I urge the Prime Minister to take it—to kick-start a proper Syrian peace process and to defuse the long-standing, deep and inflammatory divisions among Muslims in the middle east: Iranians as Shi'ites sponsoring Hezbollah and other militias; Saudis and Qataris as Sunnis sponsoring al-Qaeda and other jihadists—including ISIL, where they have helped to unleash a monster that threatens to devour them all.

By acting carefully, not bombastically, and by making common cause with both Saudi Arabia and Iran to confront a common ISIL enemy, Britain could even help realign middle east politics to overcome the bitter and violently corrosive Sunni-Shi'a fault line in the region. It is a big ask, and an even bigger task, but an immensely valuable one.

11.52 am

Mr Kenneth Clarke (Rushcliffe) (Con): I do not think there is any significant controversy about the moral and legal case for what is proposed, and in five minutes I will not set it out. The world would be a better place if ISIS was destroyed, and Britain would be a safer country without doubt. The legal case for intervention in Iraq is clear with its Government's inviting us, and I think it is pretty clear in Syria because of the genocide and the humanitarian disasters being inflicted on that country. I do agree that it is artificial to divide the two problems: the Sykes-Picot line is a theoretical line on the map now, and there is absolutely no doubt that ISIS has to be defeated in both countries.

Mr Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): Given that one of the principles of counter-insurgency is to deny the enemy a home base, is it not absolutely essential that we back the American efforts in Syria? Otherwise, we will never defeat ISIS in Iraq. For people to suggest that we cannot go to Syria is actually tying our hands behind our backs.

Mr Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. President Obama has been quite open that the alliance we are joining is going to launch attacks on ISIS in both Syria and Iraq, and it is unrealistic to proceed on any other basis.

The real debate, to which I would like to contribute briefly, and which is the only issue for the vast majority of people in this House and for the vast majority of our constituents, is: where are we going; what is the long-term purpose; what is the strategy; and how are our foreign policy, our politics and our diplomacy going to be better on this occasion that they have been for the last 15 years?

The disaster of past occasions is not that we attacked pleasant regimes; we attacked evil men when we attacked Hussein, when we got rid of Gaddafi, when we attacked al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, and we would have been doing so if we had attacked Assad's chemical installations last year. It is no good going back; I supported two of those: Libya and Syria last year; I was dubious about one of the others; and I opposed Iraq. That is not the point. What happened in all those cases was that the military deployment produced a situation at least as bad as it had been before and actually largely worse.

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab) *rose*—

Andrew Bridgen: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr Clarke: No. I have no time; I am sorry.

We did not create extremist jihadism; we did not create these fanatical, fundamentalist pressures, but we made things worse and made it easier for them to spread by some of our interventions. So we all agree that we must not repeat that. We need to be reassured, and I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on his speech, where he spent a very great deal of his time trying to reassure. I am left with the feeling that certainly I shall support the motion, because some of our best allies are taking part in this intervention, but I still think that we are at the early stages of working out exactly where we are going.

Our participation in these military attacks is almost symbolic. Six aircraft and our intelligence are no doubt valuable to our allies, but we are symbolically joining them. My main hope is that it gives us a positive influence on the diplomacy and the unfolding politics that have to take place to try to get together—again, all sides seem to agree that this is necessary—the widest possible participation and settlement between the great powers of the region, to get what we all want: lasting stability and security in what at the moment is a very dangerous region of the world.

I congratulate those who are responsible—Americans, no doubt—for getting the Sunni allies and the Arab states into what is taking place. That makes a big difference from previous occasions, but all these things have problems. Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Arab states actually support other extremist Islamist, Sunni organisations, and they have to be persuaded not to. ISIS is the worst of the Sunni threats to the region, but it is not the only one, and its enemies include al-Qaeda and other groups as well.

The participation of the Shi'a is even more problematical, because there is no real Shi'a engagement, and that takes us on to the crucial matter of Iran. A lot of what is taking place in the region is a proxy struggle for power between Iran and the Shi'ites and the Saudis and

[Mr Kenneth Clarke]

the Sunni, and we revived ancient sectarian warfare that most sensible Muslims—the vast majority—hoped was long since dead.

Iran is a key influence because it is a close patron of Assad in Syria, of Hezbollah and of the Shi'ites in Iraq, including the Shi'ite militia, which is the only effective armed force at the moment for the so-called Iraqi Government. Somebody has got to get the Iranians and the Saudis closer together to support moderation and to decide what stability replaces things.

I am delighted that we have aligned ourselves with the Kurds, but their aim of Kurdistan makes problems for Turkey, and Turkey is a key ally as well if we are to make any progress.

I congratulate the Prime Minister on addressing all these things and on meeting Rouhani for the first time, and I wish him well over the coming several years, because no genius will solve this problem in a very short time.

11.59 am

Hazel Blears (Salford and Eccles) (Lab): Before I make my contribution today, I want us all to take a moment to think about and to pray for the hostages who are being held by IS and the hostages who have been murdered in the most horrific circumstances, and I want us particularly to think today about Alan Henning. Alan is a taxi driver from Eccles in Salford. He is not a constituent of mine, but he lives very close to my home. Alan and his wife and family are in the thoughts and prayers of everybody in my city, everybody across the country and, I hope, everybody in this House. Alan went out to Syria on a humanitarian mission to give aid to the men, women, children and babies who were being slaughtered. He was there as an ambassador from our country and today I make a personal plea to the people of IS—whether it falls on stony ground or not—to release him. He should come home to be with his wife and family and the people who love him.

Robert Ffello (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Lab): I associate myself entirely, as I am sure the House does, with my right hon. Friend's remarks about hostages, but we need to be very careful about language. When we talk about humanitarian intervention but mean military intervention, that puts at risk those people who are doing purely humanitarian work.

Hazel Blears: My hon. Friend, as ever, makes a good point. There can be absolutely no doubt that Alan was there on a mission of mercy and support.

A lot will be said today about military power, air strikes and troops on the ground, and I make it clear from the outset that I support the terms of the motion. Personally, I think it is minimalist motion and have no doubt that we will have to return to the issue and debate it again in the future. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr Hain) that if we take action only in Iraq, IS will, no doubt, go back into Syria and we will face very serious problems.

Steve McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): Like lots of other people, I think we may well end up having to go into Syria as well, but if that happens how will we ensure that bombing in Syria will not have the perverse

effect of strengthening Assad, who the Prime Minister has said is one of the begetters of ISIL in the first place? Are we going to have a much more sophisticated strategy than just bombing in Syria?

Hazel Blears: My hon. Friend makes an absolutely relevant point. I think that most of us who have been involved in these issues for some years have sometimes seen the unintended consequences of action we have taken. That is why a far-sighted strategy about what we do, what the impact will be and how we build resilience and coalitions will be essential.

I thank the Prime Minister for the work he has done in building the alliances and the coalition, because it means we are in a significantly different place today than we have been in years past. I think that the idea of the west on its own—America and Britain—taking a war to the middle east is completely wrong, and that the idea that the states on the ground, which have a personal responsibility for the safety of their own region, should take this action, with our support and backing, is absolutely right. I know how difficult it is to build those alliances, so I am thankful for that.

I want to talk not about the military action, but the causes of terrorism, which I have mentioned many times in this House. Unless we deal with the root cause and the poisonous ideology being promulgated by the extremists who seek to groom vulnerable young people into extremism, we will find ourselves back here time and time again. Now is the moment at which we need to be really serious about this agenda. The latest estimate is that 3,000 people from the European Union alone have gone out to fight in Iraq and Syria. They are young, vulnerable men and women.

People can be radicalised in all kinds of environments, including at home by their family, in a youth centre, increasingly on the internet and social media and, indeed, sometimes in religious institutions. It is very interesting that the Home Office's current estimate is that less than 2% of radicalisation is being carried out in religious institutions; actually it is happening in ungoverned spaces in parts of every single community.

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): Will my right hon. Friend put on record her interest in the work of the Active Change Foundation in Walthamstow? It not only set up the "Not in My Name" campaign, which both the Prime Minister and the President of the United States have talked about, but is doing exactly the kind of work my right hon. Friend is talking about and which we should be doing more of.

Hazel Blears: I am delighted to place on record my appreciation for that organisation and my hon. Friend's commitment.

We have debated the Prevent strategy many times in this Chamber. In his statement on 1 September, I was delighted that the Prime Minister said:

"We should be clear about the root cause of this threat: a poisonous ideology of Islamist extremism...a warped world view...And we should be clear that this has nothing to do with Islam".—[*Official Report*, 1 September 2014; Vol. 585, c. 24.]

I am grateful for that and for the many statements that religious people in this country, including imams, have made in response to atrocities. We are now beginning to move from condemnation to a proper narrative about

the fact that such atrocities are not justified by the religion, but we have a long way to go. I urge the Prime Minister to be more courageous and to say that we need to support credible scholars to develop a view of Islam in a modern day, 21st-century democracy, where Muslims are in a minority, that is more relevant to everyday life and that will protect and build the resilience of young people. That is difficult work and we will be accused of trying to tell people what to believe in their religion, which is not the place of a Government in a democracy, but the work is urgent and needs to be done.

I ask the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary to come back to this House with a proper plan for how we are going to conduct the counter-narrative to the ideology. The Home Office has the research, information and communications unit, but it is small and is not doing the kind of effective work it could do. It needs to be bolstered and to take in the best ideas from all of our partners around the world in order to build a narrative, and that must be done in a practical way so that we can show people that this is not the future for our country.

Rehman Chishti *rose*—

Mr Khalid Mahmood *rose*—

Hazel Blears: I usually give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr Mahmood), but I am afraid I do not have time now.

I want to give two examples of why this work is so important. Members will probably have seen in today's newspapers the case of Samira Salih al-Nuaimi, who was a human rights lawyer in Mosul. She was taken and brought before a sharia law court and tortured for five days. She was sentenced to public execution and murdered on Monday. She was a brave human rights lawyer. That is what a caliphate does and that is what this ideology is: it is mediaeval and it is about human trafficking and exploitation.

Secondly, there are people in this country like the young man from Brighton whose mum said he was brainwashed. She had no idea and does not want other people to follow him. Those are the reasons I want to see the Prime Minister back here with a proper counter-narrative ideology plan, and I will support him in that.

12.6 pm

Sir Menzies Campbell (North East Fife) (LD): I, too, remember the speech made by Robin Cook in 2003. I remember it with great admiration and perhaps a little emotion, not least, of course, because he resigned from the Government as a result of his views and joined the rest of us who voted against them in the Lobby that evening.

This is not, however, 2003. It is an entirely different set of circumstances, an important feature of which is the fact that we would be responding to a request made by the lawful Government of Syria. [HON. MEMBERS: "Iraq."] I meant Iraq; I have Syria on the brain and will come back to it in a moment. The very existence of the Government of Iraq and, indeed, the country for which they are responsible is undoubtedly at stake. In my view, there is a legal basis—it has been referred to by many of those who have already spoken—for what we are being asked to endorse today.

Mr Andrew Turner (Isle of Wight) (Con): Given that air strikes alone will not achieve victory over ISIS, who has the plans and the determination to win on the ground now?

Sir Menzies Campbell: That, I hope, is the product of the alliance that the United States, through President Obama and the efforts of Secretary of State John Kerry, have been putting together. An illustration of that commitment is the fact that five countries in the region have joined in to support the air strikes carried out so far,

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Sir Menzies Campbell: No, I am afraid that I must move on.

The circumstances faced by Iraq are such that its very survival is at stake. It is important that we exercise a degree of responsibility in the matter. Although it is not the sole cause of the current circumstances in Iraq, there is no doubt that the military action in which we joined with the United States against Saddam Hussein has been a major contributor to the circumstances in which we find ourselves.

Let me deal with the question of Syria. I am content that were there to be a motion to the effect that we should take similar action in Syria, there exists a proper and sound legal basis for such action. Indeed, the very factors that justify intervention in Iraq would be of equal weight in relation to Syria. Those are, to put it briefly, the barbarism that is being displayed, and the fact that regional stability is being heavily undermined. Let us remind ourselves that such undermining of stability has an impact on countries such as Jordan, a close ally that would be a necessary component were there ever to be a global settlement for peace in the middle east.

We must also recognise that the Arab countries that have joined in have exercised a degree of responsibility in doing so. In many cases, they are taking on elements in their own countries that are opposed. How would any other country, faced with that decision, feel in the event that the motion that we are debating were not passed? It has been suggested that we need a United Nations resolution before we can embark on any action of the kind that is proposed, or indeed on similar action in relation to Syria. We must accept the reality that the prospect of a United Nations Security Council resolution is totally remote. Indeed, even to put such a resolution on the table would be a wholly pointless exercise because of the attitude that would undoubtedly be taken by Russia and possibly also by China.

The language that has been used so far has been about destruction, but I am not sure that it is possible to destroy an ideology. I am not sure that it is possible to destroy a cult of the kind that now exercises such malign influence. One thing that we most certainly can do is to adopt a policy of containment and deterrence. To do that, we have to degrade its military capability and create circumstances in which any return to barbarism will be met by swift and effective action. I think we would do best to agree that we are not likely to embark on a successful process of destruction, but that we can have an effective doctrine of deterrence and containment.

[*Sir Menzies Campbell*]

There is no parallel between today's debate and the debate on Iraq in 2003, but there is a parallel with Kosovo. When Kosovo was an issue, with considerations similar to those that we are discussing—not least ethnic cleansing—the international community was able to deal with the situation without a resolution. A lot has been said about the long term, but we do not have that luxury.

Mr Speaker: Order.

12.13 pm

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab): It is so easy to despair. In politics, especially, how often do we obsess about small differences rather than about the biggest challenges? Too often, we are interested by the internal workings of Westminster power, and we stop looking outwards. We turn away from the world and in on ourselves, but that is a mistake. Our country is internationalist in outlook and, to us, all people matter, just as our neighbours and our families matter. People in Iraq matter. The conflict has innocent victims who have been scared out of their homes: women, men and children who take no part in violence but who will lose the most.

ISIL has executed a murderous and disastrously effective campaign of violence. This summer, it has taken control of Iraqi cities and exploited the fragile political situation to cause terror and devastate morale. ISIL has demonstrated that it has a serious stock of military equipment that it is prepared to use to attack indiscriminately. It must be stopped.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): During the past 20 years, the position of the United Nations has shifted, and it now places a responsibility on its member states to deal with genocide when it occurs in the world. That does not, in my view, require a Security Council resolution. We need to do something when people are threatened in this world.

Alison McGovern: I will say more about internationalism shortly. Some people will say that the conflict is not our fight, and we should leave it to those who are closer by. For those who feel strongly, it is tempting to offer a counsel of despair and walk away. It is much harder to set about dealing with violent threats in a complicated context where the risks are high. In response, I say that we all want peace, and the only question is how to achieve it. The UK should not dictate the answer to the violence or carelessly interfere, but that does not mean that we should turn our back while the violence persists. In answering the question of whether we should do anything or nothing, we have to ask ourselves what good we can do.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): Does not my hon. Friend accept that no one is talking about walking away? The only argument is over whether bombing is the way to resolve the long-standing political problems in Iraq and the surrounding region.

Alison McGovern: As I have said, in answering the question of whether we should do anything or nothing, we have to ask ourselves what good we can do. Conflict in the middle east seems to invite comparisons, but

although we should learn from history, the search for patterns and repetition can be misleading. There is no reason why the future should necessarily be like the past. In fact, our job is to make sure that it is not.

ISIL is a serious and growing force that is wreaking havoc on the Iraqi Government and on innocent people. The Iraqi Government have asked us to help, and we have the capacity to do so. Our Government have made their aims clear, and the Leader of the Opposition has set the right tests. We in this House must offer scrutiny as best we are able and make the success of the operation more likely. A vital factor in that success will be to cut off the financial supply to ISIL, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester West (Liz Kendall) has said. A United Nations Security Council resolution on that point was adopted on 14 August, and it would be helpful to know what progress has been made.

There are other facts that matter. We are talking not simply about security, vital though that is, but about politics and development. We need more than a military response. Peace requires not only the absence of violence but the meeting of other needs. Basic needs must be met to keep the vulnerable alive, and all who are affected must be shown a way out of the conflict. In the past, the UK, via the Department for International Development, has put reasonably substantial sums into development-focused assistance for Iraq. That ended in 2012 when the bilateral programme ended. This year, DFID's budget for Iraq has been more than £25 million, but only £4.3 million has been spent so far. Do we need to increase efforts to ensure that money that has been committed can be spent effectively and soon? In addition, we must question whether that is enough support. By way of comparison, we will spend some £75 million this year in Syria, and a similar sum in Yemen.

I want to make two further points about development, the first of which concerns long-term needs. The budget that I have mentioned is for a single 12-month Iraq emergency humanitarian assistance programme to help 65,000 ordinary Iraqis who are in serious need. It will be used to provide emergency medicines, food and basic shelter, and to reunite families. At what point will Iraq receive longer-term development assistance, rather than simply humanitarian assistance? Instead of emergency aid, such longer-term assistance would support the wider development needs of victims of the conflict. Have the Government discussed that possibility internationally?

Do Ministers know how many children are losing out on their education as a result of the conflict? Schools in the Kurdish region are being used for shelter, which is the right thing to do, but it means that many children are losing out on their chances and hope for the future. In addition, what is the risk to wider health care needs? The Iraqi Government must be supported to maintain not simply the hard infrastructure that the country will need—power, transport and water—but the vital infrastructure of public services. Development assistance must work alongside military answers to ISIL. Is DFID working alongside the military in planning? [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. There is quite a persistent chatter in the House, which is, frankly, discourteous. All colleagues should be heard with courtesy. Please let us do so.

Alison McGovern: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

We were able to help a handful of the most vulnerable people from Syria to take refuge in our country. I would like to ask whether we can do more. The refugee crisis now is colossal. This country must live up to its obligations and our moral duty to help those who have done nothing to cause the conflict and are innocent victims of it.

Victims of violence in Iraq need our help, and our military assistance, but our job is far bigger than that. We must also try, limited though our power is, to win the peace.

12.20 pm

Dr Liam Fox (North Somerset) (Con): The threats that ISIL poses are very clear. The humanitarian outrages that it has already perpetrated have been on our television screens and in our newspapers. ISIL threatens the destabilisation of the region and an all-out religious war. It will be a global exporter of jihad if we allow it to be. Therefore, the question of whether to act or not is a relatively simple one. However, in choosing to act, we must do so politically, economically and militarily, all in concert. Politically, we need greater regional support even than we have had until now. That includes Turkey, which is a key player in the region and a strong NATO ally. We also need a clear view from the regional powers on exactly what political shape they want to achieve in the region. If anything, the lesson we learned from Iraq is that military victory, where it is possible, is only the beginning of a much more difficult process.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that countries, including Turkey, Cyprus and others, in the region need to do much more to disrupt the flow of fighters from Europe and elsewhere to Iraq and Syria and indeed back here, if possible?

Dr Fox: It is the duty of all those who wish to see international order maintained to do everything in their power to disrupt the flow of such people.

All conflicts are ideological and this conflict is no different. We require political and religious leaders in the region to be much more vocal about the fact that this has nothing to do with Islam, that it is a cruel, barbaric, mediaeval and misogynistic creed, and that it is not religion but a political perversion. We also need to make those messages clear to those young, impressionable individuals in Britain who may be considering becoming involved in such an enterprise. Those who are already there need to understand that they are not welcome back in this country and that the full force of the law will be applied should they come back. They cannot take a jihad gap year and come back to the UK with impunity.

The question of oil has been mentioned but, through the international financial system, we also need to stop financial flows to ISIS. It is very well funded and we must stop groups in the region playing a double-game, publicly decrying ISIS but providing it with the funding it requires.

Mr Stephen O'Brien (Eddisbury) (Con): My right hon. Friend is making an important point about the economic levers that need to be deployed. Does he agree that there is a serious dichotomy? Some of the middle

east coalition allies in the current arrangement also fund the export of undesirable aspects of Islamic fundamentalism, particularly to north and west Africa.

Dr Fox: I agree. Not only are those countries funders, but ideologically they give succour and support to groups, such as ISIL, that have been causing trouble in the region. Those countries cannot have it both ways.

On military action, I absolutely welcome the decision to use British air power. It has been obvious for some time that the forces on the ground were not able to achieve a military solution because they did not have sufficient air power. However, in applying British air power, we must understand that this is not just about dealing with the command and control, or even supply lines, of ISIL. Close air support will be required if there is to be a successful counter-offensive by any ground forces in the conflict. We need to understand the risks that that will pose to our forces. However, it is a mistake not to include Syria in today's motion. ISIL operates from Syria. It attacks individuals, communities and the Iraqi state itself from Syria. There is a clear legal case for attacking ISIL bases in Syria. I am afraid that sooner or later we are going to have to do it. It would be far better if we said so explicitly today.

Rehman Chishti: Does my right hon. Friend agree that when ISIS, or ISIL, is defeated in Syria, it is important to fill the vacuum with the opposition Free Syrian Army, rather than allowing the murderous Assad regime to take over as that would be counter-productive?

Dr Fox: There is no doubt that the situation in Syria is complex and difficult. My point was simply that, if we want to defeat ISIL, we cannot do it without defeating it in Syria, where it has bases from which it operates. Otherwise, we are giving ourselves an impossible task, which will get us into the mire later.

Mr Andrew Robathan (South Leicestershire) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend give way on that point?

Dr Fox: No.

We need to be clear in this country that we cannot disengage from the global threats that we face. It is clear to us that there are those out there who hate us ideologically for who we are, not what we do. When the US was bombing ISIL and we were delivering humanitarian aid, it did not differentiate between an American hostage and a British hostage who were beheaded. Terrorism and terrorist ideology respect no borders. Acting will undoubtedly have a cost on this occasion, but the cost of not acting would be infinitely greater.

12.26 pm

Mr Dai Havard (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab): There is little time, so I will try to deal with just some of the issues. Clearly, we have needs, opportunities and tasks to complete. As I understand it, the plan, which has not been explained terribly well, is that we should just be part of a process to try to find, fix and then, as the Americans would describe it, finish the opposition. Our contribution to the process at the moment is, at best, to help to fix the enemy in the position it is in—and not allow it to advance and do any more harm—and perhaps to do more than that if we can.

[Mr Dai Havard]

That is part of a campaign. In many respects, the language is over-ambitious; it always is. It is about wars on terror and eliminating and destroying. That needs to be better calibrated but, as I understand it, our part is in what possibly is not yet a fully formed strategy; it is a developing campaign. We need to make whatever contribution we can to a long-term process. As a number of hon. Members have said, that involves diplomatic activity as much as military activity. We need to do a lot more on that. We also need to do a lot more on the financial activity and the ideology that is peddled. My right hon. Friend the Member for Salford and Eccles (Hazel Blears) made an important point, to which I will return. We need to invest in those processes; we have been disinvesting in them. Therefore, we have opportunities.

We need to understand that others have made progress. It is interesting to see a woman jet pilot from the UAE flying an F-16 in combat. Other nations are making progress. One should not deny the success that is being achieved. That does not solve everything but it shows that a different discussion is going on in the region.

Three years ago, in conjunction with the Royal United Services Institute, I set up a defence and diplomacy group in Parliament because it was clear that the strategic focus had moved and we were behind the game. Therefore, we must not make that mistake. There is an opportunity, no more than that, that we must develop and work on.

Some rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia may be possible. Diplomacy is a dirty business; it always is. Sometimes one has to speak to people one does not want to speak to in order to make progress. I did that for 25 years as a trade union official—get over it and get on with it is the answer. One must make progress and recognise success when one sees it.

There are those tasks but we must invest in the ability to do them. We must not only create space by fixing the enemy but enable the countries in the region to be helped to do things for themselves; we must do things for ourselves, too. We have dramatically disinvested. We do not have Jones the spy where we need to have Jones the spy because we have not been paying the money to have intelligence on the ground to understand the position. We have disinvested in our intelligence, at home and internationally. We need to understand that this is a long-term process, and that in doing all these things we need to make a long-term investment.

Mr MacNeil: Is the hon. Gentleman in any way perturbed by the open-ended nature of this motion?

Mr Havard: It is a reality; I am perturbed by it, but I also recognise the fact that it is the realpolitik. There is no way that we will make this change in the short term, and neither will we make it in a Twitter debate of 140 characters. As I have said to you, Mr Speaker, on a number of occasions, we used to have defence debates in this Parliament on a regular basis—a full day of discussion—and we need to reinstate them. This will be a long-term process, and this debate will not be the only discussion about it; we will be discussing this matter for the next 15 years and we need the structure to do that.

Mr Graham Allen (Nottingham North) (Lab): My hon. Friend knows about these things. Is it not a fact that this whole debate, and all the build-up to it, is in

reality about the deployment of about six Tornado aircraft in north Iraq? If we are genuine about being humanitarian, would it not be better to deploy about 60 fully laden cargo aircraft to deliver medical supplies, food and water to the affected areas?

Mr Havard: The truth is that to put six jets in the air takes a lot more than six people—I tell the House that for nothing—and we are already contributing with intelligence, humanitarian support and all the rest of it. However, my hon. Friend makes the point that, yes, this will involve long-term investment and a long-term commitment in terms of expenditure on a whole range of places, including perhaps on scrubbing up our bases in Cyprus and other places; we have to invest to do that stuff.

I will just talk about the law for a moment. I led a report for the Defence Committee earlier—in fact, I surprised myself when I discovered that it was 2013 when we produced it—about the legal framework for military personnel in future operations. We have domestic difficulties with all that; the debate about combat immunity has not gone away. The reason I want to raise this issue now is that there seems to be a settled view in some places that there is a legality to going into Syria. That is our next debate; it is not a debate for today, because today we are only talking about operating in Iran—sorry, Iraq; Freudian slip.

If an aeroplane were to go down in Iraq, the search and rescue mission would not be a problem; should an aeroplane go down in Syria, there could well be a problem. There is this “hot pursuit” argument being made, that if Iraq is now defending itself, it is therefore legitimate for it to go over the border into Syria to do so, and to be supported by the Americans and others. However, do we all of a sudden vicariously gain legal legitimacy because we are part of the support activity for that process? Where would that situation leave individual members of the military in terms of their legal certainty? That is a discussion that we will need to have if we get to that point. I understand the arguments that this situation is like Kosovo, that this is collective defence and that it is all these different things, but we need to have a serious discussion about this issue.

The only thing I would say to those who say, “Well, we can make all these decisions today, it is already done and it is all very certain”, is that I do not think it is very certain, including in our own Supreme Court; I think we would find that out if we were to go and ask it. So we should just be careful about what we do. The issue of protection is equally as important for the individual as it is for the collective approach that we are taking.

I will vote for the motion today, despite the fact I think it is being badly sold. I tell Government Members, “You need to get your act together”, because I do not think the general public understand that this motion is a component part of what is a broader developing campaign that will develop into something we might call a strategy. Government Members need to sell their goods a bit better; I think that I understand the motion, but what I also understand is that we have a series of tasks ahead. It is easy to talk to others about what they should do, but I say to Government Members, “You need to address what you need to do.”

12.33 pm

Sir Nicholas Soames (Mid Sussex) (Con): I shall be very brief.

First, I applaud the tone and measure of the Prime Minister's speech to the House today. Secondly, I concur with almost everything that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) said; he has successfully shot all my foxes. Therefore, I only want to say that in my time in this House the failures in our policy in the middle east, under all Governments, have been really serious. The lesson that we and this Government have learned needs to be highlighted today; it is that the diplomacy that has gone on ahead of the formation of this coalition has been magnificent. It is a new effort in bringing in our coalition partners in this effort—Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, Bahrain, the UAE and others—to take part in their fight. It is not the west's fight; it is their fight, and we are in support of their efforts. It should be marked, and marked well, by the country that we are in support of an Arab coalition.

I endorse the point that the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr Havard) made in his excellent speech about the need for further and greater intelligence capability on the ground. I am not party to decisions about that capability. I do not know—of course, correctly—what we have there already, but whatever we have, it is not enough. In all these operations, we need to know much more than we do about the immense intricacy and complication of the tribal structure, and the way that it works. In his admirable speech some time ago, the Chairman of the Defence Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Rory Stewart), made these points very clearly indeed. Intelligence is the key to all future operations of this type.

I conclude by saying only that I, together with every other person in this House and in the wider country, wish good luck and safe return to our Tornado pilots, who I can assure the House will make a magnificent effort on our behalf.

12.35 pm

Mr Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): The threat posed by the barbarism, brutality and savagery of ISIL is not merely a threat to the Sunnis, Shi'as, Kurds, Christians and Yazidis of Iraq itself. ISIL poses a clear and present threat to the people of the United Kingdom; it is a clear and present threat to the territorial integrity of Iraq, the Government of which has asked us to intervene by way of air strikes; and it is a clear and present threat to regional stability, international security and civilisation in general. For those reasons, we are in a different place from where we were a year ago when this House was last asked to consider military action—that time, in Syria—and for those reasons we in the Democratic Unionist party will support military action, unlike last time.

A plea has gone out to the country. The sovereign nation of Iraq faces a perilous time and it has submitted a request for assistance at this crucial juncture, to assist it in protecting its national security, and the security and safety of its people. With our history of fighting for freedom, democracy, justice and human rights, how can we as a nation turn our backs and reject such a plea?

This time, there is no question mark about the legality and validity of intervention in these circumstances, and there is certainly no question mark about the need for

immediate intervention. The savagery, sheer brutality and scale of the genocidal wave of terror sweeping the region are truly terrifying; it is a savagery and obscenity that continues to shock even the most hardened commentators and those with great experience of previous conflicts.

In Northern Ireland, we are well used to the impact of terrorism on families and communities; we have seen it first hand and directly. However, this terrorism is on a different scale. It is a mediaeval-type barbarism, which people in the country want a response to.

Dr William McCrea (South Antrim) (DUP): Does my right hon. Friend agree that any decision to take military action is not one that will be taken lightly by any right hon. or hon. Member of this House, bearing in mind the sacrifice or the dangers facing our servicemen and women, but that we cannot sit idly by and allow a group of Islamic fanatics to terrorise and butcher innocent people in Iraq?

Mr Dodds: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. Clearly, the dangers are great for our servicemen and women. I pay tribute to them and salute them for their efforts in many conflicts, and again they are being asked to do a job on behalf of the people of this country; the House is coming together to ask them do that job. We wish them well, and we know that they will display the courage, gallantry and effectiveness that they always display in these situations.

Mr Allen: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that if the House had voted last year to go into Syria, or to bomb Syria, in effect we would have been on the same side as ISIS and fighting the same battle as ISIL, and does that not lead us all to show a great degree of caution about the fact that within one year circumstances can change rapidly in an incredibly volatile civil war going on in that region?

Mr Dodds: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the situation then may have led to the consequences that he outlines, which is why we in the DUP voted against intervention in Syria at that time. In any future situation that arises where a motion comes before the House, whether on Syria or the intervention of combat troops, we will take our decisions at the time on the merits of the circumstances. We are taking this decision today on the merits of the circumstances that are before us in the House, and we believe that it is right and imperative that we give the assistance for which the Iraqi Government have asked. It is on a sound legal basis and it will be according to a well-thought-out plan and will make an effective difference. That is the difference between now and last time.

Mr Andrew Turner: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Dodds: No, I cannot give way because I have used up all the interventions.

Despite what we have said about the barbarism and savagery of ISIL, which is well documented and people can see it for themselves on their TV screens and read about it, there are people who will ask why the UK should get involved and directly intervene in such a

[Mr Dodds]

situation, for the reasons that have been outlined by many already. ISIL's brutality and savagery are aimed not just at the peoples of Iraq, but present a clear threat to this country, the west and the region in general. Unless that threat is confronted now, we will be storing up much greater trouble for this country and our citizens in the future. We have seen the brutal murder of David Haines, the kidnapping of and the threat against Alan Henning, and others who have been brutally terrorised and murdered. It is not just that ISIL presents a threat to the UK; this organisation has already taken direct action against the citizens of the United Kingdom, and that demands a response on the part of this country. We simply cannot allow the creation and consolidation of a state covering large swathes of territory that would be the base for the planning and direction of terrorism against this country and on a worldwide scale.

As we know, hundreds of people have already gone to the region from this country and have engaged in terrorist activity and in war. We need to be clear that as we embark on this action in this House today we also say to the people of the United Kingdom that we will take the decisive and clear action that is needed to prevent people from this country who have gone to the middle east, to Iraq and Syria, from returning and becoming a major direct threat to the citizens of this United Kingdom. It would be simply wrong to take this action today and then to say that we will not be able, for whatever reason, to take action to prevent these people from coming back to the United Kingdom. The two have to go hand in hand.

If Parliament were to reject this request today, it would send the disastrous signal that the United Kingdom does not stand by its friends and allies in times of trouble and that it is prepared to ignore the barbarism of ISIL and our international responsibilities and obligations. Intervention is justified because it is on a sound legal basis. It is at the request of the Iraqi Government and there is already a clear and direct threat to the United Kingdom through the murders of British citizens. We will be part of a coalition that includes Sunni Muslim states. There is a clear plan and we can make an effective difference for the better. The barbarism of ISIL has already targeted UK citizens and we must respond to that, otherwise we will be failing our people. We wish our airmen and women well, and we wish them Godspeed.

12.43 pm

Margot James (Stourbridge) (Con): I support the motion, but I am not under any illusions about the risks and difficulties involved. We have heard already many references to those risks, and from those who are more cautious about any action at all, we have a sense that what is covered by the motion will not be enough to eliminate the threat to the region and the wider world posed by the ISIL barbarians. When the people of a peace-loving nation come with heavy hearts to the conclusion that there is no alternative to the waging of a just war, the situation will always be fraught with doubt and uncertainty—a lack of trustworthy intelligence about what is happening on the ground; concerns about those close to the conflict with whom it will be necessary to form alliances; a desire to ensure a more promising

political landscape than currently exists, or, frankly, is likely to exist this side of 50 years. Those against any form of action will always pose questions that are impossible to answer at the outset of any conflict. They will draw on historical examples of when things go wrong, of which there have been several in recent years, but they will ignore the examples of more successful interventions, such as in Bosnia and Sierra Leone.

The fact that the answers to those questions are imperfect does not provide sufficient justification for turning our backs on the Iraqi Government's plea for help. Yes, we must proceed with caution; there must be an absolute commitment to minimise casualties among innocent people who have suffered so much.

Andy Sawford (Corby) (Lab/Co-op): I have been listening carefully to what the hon. Lady has said and to the rest of the debate, and I will support the motion. She is absolutely right to make the point about minimising casualties. Incurring casualties is one of those arguments that are put against action, which we must hear but should not prevent us from making the right decision today. However, as we go forward with air strikes, we must take very seriously the concern that ISIS is embedded among civilians.

Margot James: The hon. Gentleman is right that the threat to civilian life is so much greater from inaction than from action.

Duncan Hames (Chippenham) (LD): I agree with the remark that the hon. Lady has just made in what has been a thoughtful speech, but I hope that, like me, she will be hoping to hear from the Government during the course of this debate how they intend to work closely with the Iraqi Government as a partner to ensure that humanitarian assistance is available to the civilians who are caught up in the conflict.

Margot James: I agree with my hon. Friend. That is absolutely a priority, and it should not be instead of but as well as what this country provides through humanitarian aid.

Of course, military action is not the only matter with which the House must concern itself. I strongly agree with many of the points made by the right hon. Member for Salford and Eccles (Hazel Blears). We really must get behind the moderate and universal force of those of Muslim faith, both here and abroad, in seeking to educate the younger, more hot-headed members of that faith, who are such a minority, that this is not the path of true Islam and it is not the path that they should follow.

But proceed to these air strikes we must. Of that I am in no doubt, and for many reasons. First, there is the unique nature of the threat. We are dealing with a growing army of mediaeval barbarians who have the most modern 21st-century military equipment at their disposal. The methods of ISIS are so barbaric, its manpower, military and financial resources so substantial, that the other regional powers are not a match for it without western support. Initially, its focus has been on securing territorial gains and then expanding within the middle east. Unchecked, the history of fundamentalism shows us that there is no doubt whatsoever that ISIS will then turn its sights on western targets. The Prime

Minister is quite right when he says that ISIS is a direct threat to us in the UK, and that is clear from the number of young men who have already been recruited by it to join its fight, some of whom will find ways of getting back into this country, no matter what measures we put in place to deter them, to try to mount terrorist attacks.

That is not the only justification. It is only 11 years since we invaded Iraq, an invasion to which we were not invited, for which there was no post-invasion plan, and which presided over the disastrous de-Ba'athification of the Iraqi army. There then followed Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay and other gross abuses and insults to the Islamic world. It was Lord Salisbury who said:

“Our first duty is towards the people of this country...to maintain their interests and their rights; our second is to all humanity.”

Rehman Chishti: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Margot James: I fear I cannot, because of the time. I am sorry.

Nowhere is Lord Salisbury's second point more true than in the middle east, a part of the world that this country and France actually governed until just 70 years ago.

In supporting the motion, we should fulfil our moral responsibility to the region by confronting ISIS and supporting the forces of moderation in that part of the world; we should increase our aid to the region, and take in our fair share of refugees—Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon cannot continue to absorb them all, on top of the hundreds of thousands of people, if not approaching 1 million people, whom those countries have already absorbed or are having to absorb; and we should prevent the further spread of militant ideology, especially among young Muslims in Britain.

ISIS is a grave threat to world peace and, in its barbarism, it is a truly satanic force that must be confronted by the rest of humanity. We have the measure of fundamentalist Islam, even if we are still working out exactly and in fine detail how to respond. Austen Chamberlain said of Hitler's Germany:

“For a people who believe in nothing but force, force is the only answer.”

I am afraid that that will turn out to be true of the war declared by ISIS on all those who do not share its narrow and warped interpretation of Islam, and on all women and girls of whatever faith or of none. Although military solutions are far from enough, it is very unlikely that we will be able to maintain our freedoms without utilising our military strength as part of a much broader strategy.

12.51 pm

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): The immediate decision before us in this debate is about military action, but behind that, this is about values. This is not a war against Islam. Islam is one of the great world religions, which is practised freely, without any harm to anyone, by millions of people in this country and around the world. This is not about Islam, but about co-existence.

Co-existence is absolutely fundamental to our society—the ability to elect Governments who are freely chosen by the people, equality of rights between men and

women, freedom of speech and freedom of religion are fundamental—but ISIS rejects every tenet of it. That is why ISIS kills, with impunity, fellow Muslims, Christians and Yazidis; engages in sexual exploitation of, and the trade in, women; and cares nothing for anyone who does not sign up to its single truth. This is not about Islam, but about co-existence.

The shadow of past decisions—particularly the 2003 decision to invade Iraq—is a long one in debates such as this one. That is because there is a live debate about the degree to which we are responsible for creating or fomenting violent jihadism. It is important to be clear about that. I accept that past decisions have angered jihadists and perhaps encouraged some people to join them, but it is a fundamental mistake to think that we are responsible for violent jihadism. Let us not forget that the bombing of the World Trade Centre on 11 September took place two years before the invasion of Iraq. Syria, until recent days, has been a byword for non-intervention by the west; yet it is now the headquarters of the global jihad.

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): Is it not also the case that there was a plot against the World Trade Centre in the 1990s, that the bombing of USS Cole was in 1998 and that al-Qaeda carried out plots and activities of a similar kind well before the intervention in Iraq?

Mr McFadden: My hon. Friend makes a good point. It is worth stressing that the United States Administration's policy for the past five or six years has been absolutely to resist intervention, but we still have violent Islamic jihadism and ISIS.

Mr MacNeil: I just want to query the hon. Gentleman's history. What is the connection between the twin towers attack and Iraq?

Mr McFadden: The point I am making is that violent Islamic jihadism was around long before the decision in 2003.

Beneath the argument that this is really our fault lies a new imperialism—an imperialist conceit that, in foreign policy terms, seeks to divide the world into adults and children. The United States, the United Kingdom and other countries are defined as adults, and movements elsewhere, including the jihadists, are defined almost as children who react only in response to what we do or do not do. That is not the case: they are responsible for their own actions and their own ideology.

No one has forced anyone to behead innocent journalists and aid workers on the internet. No one has forced anyone to go from this country to join a group that carries out such acts. No one has forced anyone to carry out the terrorist acts that we have seen on our own streets. We cannot say this loudly and clearly enough: those who carry out these actions and foment this ideology are adults who are responsible for their own actions.

That brings me to the motion, which sets out a plan for military action in Iraq. I will vote for it, but I have to ask, as other hon. Members have asked, why it is right to carry out such actions against ISIS in Iraq, but not in Syria. The Government have welcomed the action carried out by the United States and Arab countries in Syria in recent days. If it is welcome and right for others to do

[Mr McFadden]

so, why is it not welcome and right for us? If the Government's position is that it would be illegal or wrong to act in that way in Syria, why is it not illegal or wrong for the United States and the countries taking part in the action? Militarily, we must ask what the point is of chasing ISIS from Iraq through a barely existing border to Syria. Morally, we must ask why it is right to come to the aid of the victims of ISIS who live under a democracy in Iraq, but not those who live under a dictatorship in Syria.

Is not the motion a reflection of where the country stands right now—somewhat limited in its confidence, overburdened by past events, and looking too much in the rear-view mirror? I would say that “Out, damn'd spot” is no basis for taking crucial foreign policy decisions. Instead, we should learn from the past, ally our soft power with hard power, follow through on our decisions to intervene so that we achieve our objectives, and not just define the struggle as a generational one and begin military action, but actually will the means to complete the job.

12.57 pm

Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): I support the motion today, ever conscious, as we all should be, of the young men and women who will be placed in harm's way on our account.

I support the motion, but for me it does not go as far as it should. It is a snapshot of what will be required. The permission that it gives for the deployment of Tornados from RAF Akrotiri, and the fact that we are telegraphing safe havens over the Syrian border to ISIL are matters of concern. The motion is a snapshot of the issues that we need to address, but for me it does not go anything like far enough. I am quite certain that the House will have to return to some of the issues we have discussed today, particularly the point—made more firmly by Opposition than by Government Members—about the need for us to engage on Syria.

Many other things are required, but in the brief time allowed I want to make four points in support of, but in addition to, the motion we are supporting today. First, there is no doubt that this matter requires a multilateral effort. We need to ensure that the United Nations is engaged in every possible way. Of course, as other hon. Members have said, it will not agree at this point to the motion we want on Syria. Nevertheless, we must engage with the United Nations, not least its humanitarian agencies. The vast power, legitimacy and authority that UN support conveys and gives us cannot be understated.

We need to ensure that there is massive regional support, and the Prime Minister deserves credit for having tried to secure the widest possible coalition. It has been a good start and I was pleased to see the successful meeting with Iran in New York, for which the Government deserve credit. Along with many others in this House, I have concluded that the relationship with Iran needs to be rebased and that much more work needs to be done to try to bring Iran into the comity of nations. Let us not be too pious in this House about British policy towards Iran. It was a British coup d'état in 1953 that removed Mosaddegh, the democratically elected Prime Minister of Iran, so we should bear that in mind as we consider the policy.

Dr Julian Lewis: Just to illustrate some of the complications of the situation, if indeed we do bring Iran back in, is it not the case that Iran will make it absolutely certain that our other professed wish to bring down President Assad never happens? The relationships are very complex.

Mr Andrew Mitchell: My hon. Friend is right that the relationships are very complex, but that argument must not be an argument against trying. We are not trying to do this on any terms, but we must do everything that we can to achieve it.

Mr Allen: The right hon. Gentleman was a distinguished International Development Secretary in a previous incarnation. What is his view on winning the peace as well as winning the war, which clearly was not done with Mr Paul Bremer being put in to run the Iraq regime after the previous Iraq conflict? From the right hon. Gentleman's previous experience, what are the lessons of that and how will we engage people so that they can have a settled political settlement once all the fighting and death is over?

Mr Andrew Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman pre-empts a point that I will come on to later.

My second point that Britain's involvement must be in training, arming and giving strategic support and planning. Many have already suggested that links with the Free Syrian Army, the Kurds and the Iraqi army need to be enhanced, but this is an area in which the British military excel. We need to ensure that we do everything that we can to help train, arm and provide strategic support and planning. Those are issues at which Britain is undoubtedly one of the best in the world.

My third point is that the humanitarian protection of civilians is absolutely essential. I remember during the Libyan campaign, when I had the honour of sitting on the National Security Council, the personal attention that the then Defence Secretary took to ensure that targeting was of such quality and standard that civilian casualties were absolutely minimised. There would be nothing worse than the damage that will be caused by an air campaign if huge numbers of innocent civilians are attacked, as they have been in other campaigns but as they were not in Libya. Libya was successful in that respect at least. We must ensure precise targeting and the protection of civilians. We must give absolute priority to that and must ensure that protecting those who are at grave risk in this conflict is right at the top of the list.

My fourth point, which brings me directly to the point of the hon. Member for Nottingham North (Mr Allen), is that anyone who thinks that this crisis will be solved by smart weapons from 12,000 feet is completely and totally wrong, which is pretty widely accepted, at least in the House. It is absolutely critical that there is a plan for when the crisis is over and that the plan is enunciated now, because we need to ensure that we split off the hardliners, those who are intent on military action and advancing their cause through weaponry and ordnance, from those who are biddable and who may be brought back into more sensible dialogue and international comity.

Alok Sharma: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr Andrew Mitchell: I am afraid that I cannot.

We must ensure that people know that there is a plan that will provide a better life for their children and grandchildren when the crisis is all over. That means focusing on governance. As has already been said, the brilliant quote from Ban Ki-moon absolutely sums it up. We must focus on local governance and accountability, on providing some sort of basic services, on tackling the extremes of destitution and poverty that fuel such conflicts and on bad governance and unfairness. We must show people that life will be better once the conflict is over and that we are part of the grouping that is insistent on ensuring that they have that better life.

This is not just something that we see in Iraq and, indeed, in Syria. All across this part of the world, including north Nigeria, Mali, Somalia and Libya, the effects of bad governance and alienation from those who govern—the deep, systemic poverty with no hope or opportunity, no economic activity, and conflict being endemic in the lives of everyone everyday, especially women and children, who are the most vulnerable in such circumstances—are the things that we, the international community, need to make clear will be addressed when the conflict is over. It is not just about smart weaponry; it is about smart policies—soft power as well as hard power—which are absolutely essential to the solution.

1.5 pm

George Galloway (Bradford West) (Respect): Mr Speaker, time does not permit me to tell you how many millions of times “I told you so” is currently being said in the country—or will be once people read of this debate. Millions of ordinary people knew what the expensive talent governing our country did not know, namely that there was no al-Qaeda in Iraq and that there was no Islamist fundamentalism in Iraq before Mr Blair—and his mouthpieces who are still here—and Mr Bush invaded and occupied the country. What a tangled web we have woven is abundantly clear to everyone watching this debate. The mission creep has not even waited for the end of the debate. The words on the motion are about bombing Iraq, but there is a consensus in here that we will soon be bombing Syria. The words do not mention boots on the ground, but there is a consensus here that there will be boots on the ground, the only question being whose boots they will be.

The debate has been characterised by Members of Parliament moving around imaginary armies. The Free Syrian Army is a fiction that has been in the receipt of hundreds of millions of dollars and hundreds of tonnes of weapons, virtually all of which were taken from them by al-Qaeda, which has now mutated into ISIL. The Iraqi army is the most expensively trained and most modernly equipped army in history. Hundreds of billions of dollars have been spent on the Iraqi army, which ran away leaving its equipment behind. ISIL itself is an imaginary army. A former Defence Secretary no less said that we must bomb its bases. It does not have any bases. The territory that its personnel control is the size of Britain and yet there are only between 10,000 and 20,000 of them. Do the maths. They do not concentrate as an army. They do not live in bases. The only way that a force of that size could successfully hold the territory that it holds is if the population acts as the water in which it swims. The population is quiescent because of western policies and western invasion and occupation.

That is the truth of the matter. ISIL could not survive for five minutes if the tribes in the west of Iraq rose up against it.

Ian Austin (Dudley North) (Lab): Does the hon. Gentleman understand how appalled people will be to hear him say that women who have been buried alive or enslaved have been quiescent in their persecution by these people? What a total disgrace.

George Galloway: They don't like it up them, Mr Speaker. They would rather have an imaginary debate, moving around imaginary armies. ISIL is a death cult. It is a gang of terrorist murderers. It is not an army and is certainly not an army that will be destroyed by aerial bombardment. ISIL is able to rule the parts of Iraq that it does because nobody in those parts has any confidence in the Government in Baghdad, a sectarian Government helped into power by Bremer and the deliberate sectarianisation of Iraqi politics by the occupation authorities. The Government know that. That was why they pushed al-Maliki out—even though he won the election, by the way, if we are talking about democracy. They pushed him out because they knew that far too many people in ISIL-occupied Iraq had no confidence in the Baghdad Government. Nobody has any confidence in the army emanating out of Baghdad.

This will not be solved by bombing. We have been bombing Iraqis for 100 years. We dropped the world's first chemical bombs on them in the 1920s. We attacked them and helped to kill their King in the 1930s. We helped in the murder of their President in 1963, helping the Ba'ath party into power. We bombed them again through the 1990s.

Emma Reynolds (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab): I am sure we are all ever so grateful for the lecture, but what is the hon. Gentleman's solution to this problem?

George Galloway: Now that I have an extra minute, thanks to the hon. Lady, I will be able to tell her.

This will not be solved by bombing; every matter will be made worse. Extremism will spread further and deeper around the world, just as happened as a result of the last Iraq war. The people outside can see it, but the fools in here, who draw a big salary and big expenses, cannot or will not see it, like the hon. Lady with her asinine intervention.

Rory Stewart (Penrith and The Border) (Con): I thank the hon. Gentleman very much for giving way, but will he please bring us towards his solution to this problem?

George Galloway: In five minutes it is difficult, but we have to strengthen those who are already fighting ISIL. We have to give them all the weapons they need—the Baghdad Government have paid for weapons that have still not been delivered. We have to strengthen the Kurdish fighters, who are doing a good job of fighting ISIL.

The Saudi, Emirati and Qatari armies are all imaginary armies. They have not even told their own people that they are on the masthead. Has anyone here seen a picture of them fighting in Syria? Anyone seen a picture of a Saudi jet bombing in Syria? Saudi Arabia is the

[George Galloway]

nest from which ISIL and these other vipers have come, and by the way, it does a fine line in head chopping itself. Saudi Arabia has 700 warplanes—get them to bomb. Turkey is a NATO member—get Turkey to bomb. The last people who should be returning to the scene of their former crimes are Britain, France and the United States of America.

1.12 pm

Mr Adam Holloway (Gravesham) (Con): I believe that when Members think of ISIS, they think of a foreign fighter, dressed in black, holding before him a terrified offering dressed in orange—a kind of spectre or ghost, screaming at us out of cyberspace. Last week I was in Iraq with my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Kwasi Kwarteng), and an Iraqi said to me, “You’ve got to see ISIS in Iraq like this: it’s the good, the bad and the ugly.” The good are the Sunni tribesman, rising up against the sectarian Government in Baghdad, the bad are the foreign jihadists, and the ugly are the former Ba’athist regime people whom my regiment fought in the first gulf war. Who will kick out the bad, the jihadists? The only people on the ground who will be able to do that are the good and the ugly—the tribes and the Ba’athists.

Time and time again, we see that the only way to remove people like ISIS is without the consent of the local people. It is overwhelmingly a political problem, even if it is a security headache. It is not a first-order clash between the west and the Muslim world but one between neighbours. In Iraq, it is a sectarian conflict. ISIS did not take over Iraq’s second biggest city by magic or by force of arms, they took it over because the local people allowed them to. One of my friends from the war in 2003 said that for people in Mosul, there is very little difference between living under a sectarian Shi’a Government and living under ISIS. He said, “The only difference, actually, is that ISIS won’t let you smoke.” That might be overdoing it somewhat, but we have had only the most limited reports of Sunni resistance from inside the great swathe of territory that ISIS controls.

None of that excuses the extraordinary cruelty of ISIS, but before we even think about anything beyond emergency air strikes in Iraq and escalation into Syria, ought we not to stop and work out what needs to be done politically and how we might take the political ground back from ISIS? At Sandhurst, they taught us that military force is exercised to support political ends, and that politics should dictate the terms of military engagement. As we have heard, John Kerry, the US Secretary of State, has worked hard to put together a coalition, but if we tried to make up the worst way to start the campaign, it would be with headlines around the world, including the Muslim world, referring to “US-led air strikes”.

Mr David Ward (Bradford East) (LD): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Holloway: I would love to.

Mr Ward: What the hon. Gentleman seems to be forgetting is that we have been invited and requested by a democratically elected Government to help to deal

with a mess that many people, including me, believe we created. What should we do when they ask for that help—should we say, “We created that mess, but we are having nothing else to do with it. It is none of our business”?

Mr Holloway: A first step for the hon. Gentleman might be to join the Territorial Army and, in a year’s time, volunteer to serve in the region. Arab countries should be at the forefront of the fight, and we should think about how to help Iraqi and Syrian Sunnis gain security and a fairer deal, so that they eject ISIS themselves.

By not yet diving in completely, the western capitals have shown that they have learned something from the absolute disasters of Iraq and the NATO deployment to Afghanistan, and from our chaotic and inconsistent response to the Arab spring. However, we must ask ourselves what we are doing when the US Secretary of State seems to be chairing the effort.

Fiona Mactaggart (Slough) (Lab): I share the hon. Gentleman’s feeling that bombing can work only if there is a plan for what comes next, but I am not hearing from him what that should be. I am probably not the only Member in the Chamber who is not certain about how they will vote because they are not hearing enough about what happens next. I would like him to tell us what he thinks should happen.

Mr Holloway: That is a fair observation. There is no simple solution to any of this, but the answer will not come from something military that is led by the west. It will come from something political that is led by people within the region.

There is a huge amount that we can do, but it should mostly involve encouraging and enabling other people. It should not be a rerun of Iraq in 1991, when, although there was a grand coalition of Arab states, it was still led by the United States, or of 2003. If we are to win, the lead should come from within the region and should include a long-term political vision. Otherwise, step by small step, we will enter a much darker age of war and radicalisation.

Mr Graham Stuart (Beverley and Holderness) (Con): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr Holloway: No.

If the west fails to morph into the background, away from the military lead, I am afraid our vote today will drive our nation towards disaster.

1.19 pm

Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley) (Lab): This is not the first time that I have disagreed with the hon. Member for Bradford West (George Galloway). In fact, I can remember the last Speaker, before the hon. Gentleman was the Member for Bradford West, asking him to leave the Chamber because he had misbehaved. The microphones here are quite good, and Members do not need to shout to make themselves heard if others are listening. I say to the hon. Gentleman that he is wrong now as he was then. Al-Qaeda was in Iraq before 2003; it operated under the name Ansar al-Islam. It was the Kurds who told me about Ansar al-Islam at that time. They showed

me the heads of those who had been beheaded by that very same group. It is not true that al-Qaeda was not in Iraq before 2003.

I remind the House that the hon. Member for Bradford West was the man who greeted Saddam Hussein as a great friend and leader of his people and shook his hand in Iraq. I do not think the Kurds or the Shi'a would have been very pleased with that, given that Saddam Hussein exterminated hundreds of thousands of Kurds and Shi'a. If anyone doubts that, I suggest that they go to the mass graves in al-Hillah and all over Iraq.

I fully support the resolution, but I do not think it goes far enough. I have listened with interest to what the Americans have been saying in the past few days. General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the US joint chiefs of staff, and other senior US military figures have said that air power alone cannot defeat ISIS.

Mosul, the second largest city in Iraq, is a case in point. Yes, the Iraqi military fled, but I believe that there is an alternative story to that—they fled only because they were ordered to by those who were then in control of the military in Iraq.

Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): Last week, I met 120 representatives of the Mancunian Iraqi diaspora from Mosul, whose families live in tents in exile in foreign lands. They just want their families to be able to go back, build civil society and live in peace. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is in our self-interest to help them do that?

Ann Clwyd: Absolutely. Air strikes have obviously not been able to recapture Mosul. Four months on, Mosul is still in the hands of ISIS. Some 2 million people live in Mosul, although many, as my hon. Friend said, have fled. Another problem, of course, is the number of refugees who have gone across borders—into Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkey.

Mr Stuart: The question that sits in the air following the contributions of the two speakers before the right hon. Lady is about who is going to defeat ISIS. My hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr Holloway) was suggesting that it had to be done internally, by the Sunnis in Iraq and Syria, or there would be the question of the regional ownership of the military force driving ISIS out. Who is going to provide that effective force? We could be bombing for 10 years with little to show for it.

Ann Clwyd: Of course there is a problem; nobody would dispute that. The Iraqi army, apparently, are not ready or properly trained for such action. We cannot depend on the Peshmerga—a small group of soldiers who have been defending their own homeland and cannot possibly be responsible for defending the whole of Iraq. That is just pie in the sky. The question of what we will do if the air strikes are not successful will continue to challenge us.

The issue of refugees has also been raised. Some countries have been much more ready to take refugees than this one. More than 3 million people who have fled Syria over the past three years have been sheltered by a small number of neighbouring countries. In the past week, more than 100,000 additional such refugees are

said to have crossed Turkey's border, fearing the advance of ISIS. Although we have made some kind of offer, I understand that only 75 Syrian individuals have arrived in the UK since January this year. In comparison, Germany has pledged to resettle 20,000 Syrians. Resettling several hundred over three years does not respond adequately to the clear need. We also have to see what we are going to do in Syria; I am sure that there will be another debate in the House of Commons on that issue.

It is not true that nobody asked us to go into Iraq. In 2003, the Kurds invited us to help them; I remember saying so in this Chamber just a few weeks after I came back from Kurdistan. That is another myth that I want to dispel. The new Iraqi Government deserve our full support. Al-Maliki, of course, alienated so many of the very Sunnis who we hope will fight to defend Iraq. They have to be won back. We can depend on the Kurds, although there are disputes between them and the Iraqi central Government that will have to be resolved in some way. I fully support the resolution, which is a good step in the right direction.

1.26 pm

Alistair Burt (North East Bedfordshire) (Con): As we get through the debate, we start to say a number of similar things. Before I say the three things that I wanted to say, two things are pertinent. First, most of us approach this debate with a sense of humility bearing in mind the history of Iraq and what has happened there. Secondly, as recent speeches have shown, there are layers of complexity; we should approach simplistic answers with even greater trepidation.

I want to make three brief points. First, in support of the motion I should say that the particular nature of so-called ISIL has become clear in recent months. We have to be careful about the names we use. The Islamic world is deeply upset at the identification of this terrorist, criminal group with the words "Islamic State"—they are neither Islamic nor a state. In some parts of the region, they have started to be called "Daesh", a derogatory term. We must be sensitive to the issue—the group are not Islamic and not a state.

The particular nature of the group has become clear. Their wickedness is demonstrated in the fact that they want to occupy not just territory, but minds, and they want to seize not just land, but people. The barbarity of the executions is matched by the barbarity of how they seduce and corrupt the people they bring from different parts of the world to follow their lies. We now know the nature of the group, and that is why the motion is set as it is.

In support of the Government's motion, I should say that had we been discussing something different today, the tone would have been rather different. Although I absolutely agree with others that we are going to revisit the issue, having the motion as it is, allowing us to proceed step by step, might be wise.

This is a long struggle. To an extent, I am reassured by the fact that a coalition of 60 is now dealing with the issue, but I remind the House that for the past three years there has been a coalition of more than 100 states and different entities called the Friends of Syria. That has achieved none of its objectives; Syria has rather dropped off the map recently, until now.

Neil Parish (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend personally for all the work he did in the region while he was Minister. The situation is very difficult, but we have to target ISIL, who are bringing the middle east back to the dark ages. There are no two ways about it. Their brutality, as my right hon. Friend has been saying, is second to none. The idea that we should do nothing would be absolutely wrong. I entirely support the motion.

Alistair Burt: I entirely agree. ISIL's barbarity is what has brought us here today, as well as the recognition that something longer-term is needed beyond force.

That brings me to my second point. In the past few weeks, I have travelled to both Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates. None of us should underestimate the importance of those Islamic states' having joined against this terrorist criminal group. That is a big thing. As the hon. Member for Bradford West (George Galloway) observed, none of it is simple. The fact that some, in the past, supported what became this terrorist group because they felt that they were standing up against Sunni oppression was a very big thing, and the fact that states and theological leaders are now denouncing it marks a profound shift in opinion. It is a big thing to be able to attack those who are attacking one's enemies. That shift has been profoundly important, and none of us here should minimise it.

Relationships in the area are complex. Not all Islamist groups are enemy groups. Some leaders in some states go easy on some groups, but are now beginning to make a clear distinction, recognising that groups which label themselves in a particular way, professing to stand up for Sunnis who are being oppressed, are not always what they seem. That is a profound change, which—as my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr Holloway) said earlier—enables this alliance to be led not by the west, but by the thought leaders of the middle east. It marks a turning point in the way in which this matter should be handled in the future.

Jack Dromey: The right hon. Gentleman is making a typically thoughtful speech. It would be unthinkable to stand back and repeat the mistakes of history—the slaughters of Srebrenica and Rwanda, for instance, through barbarism—but the right hon. Gentleman is right to point out that it would also be unthinkable to fail to learn the lessons of history. Evil thrives on a sense of grievance.

Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, on the one hand, it is of the highest importance for us to work with and support progressive elements in the Muslim community nationally and internationally and resist the demonisation of the Muslim community, and that, on the other hand, a regional political settlement must include a two-state solution?

Alistair Burt: I shall not respond to the hon. Gentleman's second point. There is an issue relating to the settling of wider grievances, and that is one of the layers of the complexity to which I referred earlier. However, his first point was absolutely right. The unequivocal response of the Islamic community in the United Kingdom to what we have seen in recent months has also been one of the most profound developments. As the hon. Gentleman said, there should be no demonisation of the Muslim

community in the United Kingdom, because its response has been very dramatic and very strong, and must be used to bring to the young people who have been corrupted by this false ideology a sense that their Muslim faith should take them in a different direction.

The last point that I want to make concerns Syria. I entirely agree with colleagues who have raised it as the issue that might have been discussed today. We know that it is there, because there are no borders between Iraq and Syria, and indeed there are no borders when it comes to dealing with the issue, which will be dealt with in Syria sooner or later. However, there are some misunderstandings about how the situation in Syria has arisen, and about the relationship between President Assad and the extremists.

President Assad's fight is with his people who rose up against him, who are represented by those who supported the protesters, and who have been recognised by more than 100 states, the Syrian National Coalition and the Free Syrian Army. The enemies of those people are not just Assad, but the terrorist criminal forces that have come in. Assad has been in league with those forces, because his greatest fear is his people, not the extremists. Had we taken action against Assad last year, that action would have demonstrated that the rest of the world was prepared to stand up against him, and—as he realised—would have provided an opportunity to bring him to negotiations.

Assad will not negotiate for the peace of Syria until he is forced to do so, which is why we should seek to support those who have been fighting the terrorists and criminals on the ground. That means the peshmerga and the Iraqi army—although the vulnerabilities of the Iraqi army are well known, and they cannot be relied on for some time to come—but it also means the Free Syrian army, which exists and is not a fiction. It has fought both Assad and the terrorists for the past year in Aleppo, and it should be supported. We now know that we cannot do the ground work, which must be taken on by people in the region, so we should support those who are doing it. The United States has moved from covert to overt support, and we should be trying to do the same

If there is to be an overall settlement, underlying grievances will need to be tackled, but the key to such a settlement is an end to intolerance in the region, notably religious intolerance between sects and against the Christian community. Intolerance runs through the region as though it were a stick of rock, and the damage that it does is now being seen in the intolerance of the terrorist and the criminal.

1.34 pm

Ms Gisela Stuart (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab): It is a great pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt). His speech reminded me that, in my view, the Foreign Office is a worse place for his not being there.

I want to pick up a few strands that have been developing in the debate. The hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr Holloway) described the way in which the bad and the good were trying to get rid of the ugly, but left unanswered the question of what we should do if they asked for outside help to get rid of the ugly. Whether or not we like the fact that this action is seen as being

United States-led, a democratically elected state is asking for our help, and I think that we are duty bound to give that help.

Mr Sheerman: I always listen with rapt attention to my hon. Friend's views on international affairs. As one who has sat here listening to all her speeches, may I ask for her guidance on how we are to get out of this once we are in? What is the long-term gain?

Ms Stuart: That is a fair point, which I shall try to address. It brings me back to what was said by both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in their opening speeches.

First, I am very glad that on this occasion we have the clearly outlined strategy that we did not have a year ago, and that is why I feel comfortable about voting for the motion. Secondly, I am reminded of Ban Ki-moon's observation that, while missiles kill terrorists, it is good governance that kills terrorism. The long-term answer will be the good governance of functioning nation states, and we must therefore ensure that the nation states that are currently functioning in the region—Jordan, Turkey, and Iran—do not fall apart or become compromised. We must also ensure that the fragmentation that is a risk for states such as Iraq—and, to some extent, Jordan, if we are not careful—is not allowed to happen, because it would not be in our interests. Frederick the Great said that one cannot ride on horseback against ideas. It is not a newly discovered wisdom that ideas cannot be fought with arms, but we seem to forget it at regular intervals, and every generation seems to need to be reminded of it.

Why is military action required now? I think that it is required as a starting point. A myth is developing that ISIS is undefeatable, that it will spread, and that it cannot be contained. The first step must be to show that it can be contained, and that those who want to fight it will be given support.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): The point that the hon. Lady is making is very valid at the present time. The air attacks by the United States Government and other forces have already produced some dividends, in that ISIS has slowed its advance. Surely, if we join that campaign now, we will help the process to continue, and, with the armies on the ground, will be able to return Christians and ethnic groups to the areas where they want to live.

Ms Stuart: Yes, indeed; and the armies on the ground will not be our armies. That is also very important. We must enable those nation states to function properly, and those armies to function properly. The solution—which, essentially, is a fall-out from the post-Ottoman settlement—will only be found within the region, but we have a responsibility within that region. Whether we like it or not, we are no longer the great power that can underwrite any of the settlements or bring about any of the changes; we shall have to do that with others. I have just seen on the news that Denmark is to send in seven F-16s, so the coalition of support is widening.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden) asked why we were not talking about Syria. I think that the fact that the debate is framed so narrowly is due to lessons that I hope we

have learnt from last year. Those who come to the House and cannot explain themselves in a way that will take the House with them must be far more cautious in future. We will return to this subject. It is not a given, but I think that we can bring the parties together at this stage, and can be part of an international coalition.

It is incredibly foolish to think that just because we are not going into Syria, nothing will happen in Syria—to think that we are the only actor that will bring about change. The fundamental lesson for the House today must be that the functioning nation states in that region will have to deal with the terrorists, and that we shall have to assist and take a lead from them. That means that Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and Iran must take a responsible position as well. I hope that we shall hear a little more about Turkey, and the effects in Kurdistan, during the winding-up speeches.

Mr Andrew Turner: There is a real problem here. Who will have the strength and determination today, tomorrow, next year and the year after to be on the ground in Iraq? So far, no one has said who it will be. Whose boots will be on the ground in Iraq?

Ms Stuart: In fairness to the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, they did say that there would have to be the establishment of a functioning Iraqi army. We know that air strikes on their own are not sufficient; we learned that in Libya. Just going in and getting rid of a head of state is not the answer; it is simply the beginning of an answer. That is why it is important for this House not to lose the determination and the will to pursue and enable.

As I was saying, I hope that Front-Bench Members will come back and say a bit more about Turkey, what it means to arm the Kurds, and what effect that may have on the Turkish Government. Furthermore, perhaps they can set out their thoughts on a UN resolution. Those who think it unlikely that we will get another UN resolution should be reminded that we should try out damndest to get one, because it is only then that we will have the moral authority to consider different options.

1.41 pm

Sir Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton) (Con): I support the Prime Minister and this motion today and welcome the support of the official Opposition. As someone who has focused on the middle east for more than 30 years, I was intending to urge the House to be particularly cautious and sober in approaching this decision today, but it is quite clear that that is exactly the mood of the House and this debate. That caution is necessary, because we are about to embark on something that is unlike anything we have seen before. In my mind, it shows every sign of being neither easy nor conclusive.

When the Falklands were invaded, force was obviously justified. When Kuwait was invaded, we were right to work with others to repel the aggressor. In each case, we knew instinctively what the objective was, and we absolutely knew when we had attained it. But this is different. We are justified in deploying our armed forces both to fight vicious extremists and to support Iraq's request for help, but the clear strategic objective in doing so and the manner in which we will use our weapons are much more difficult to shape than in the past.

Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): I want to take up my right hon. Friend's exact point. Does the lack of strategic objective not manifest itself in one particular way? We have heard that this could go on for some time, but we have not heard a criterion for stopping, let alone a criterion for what we are going to achieve.

Sir Alan Duncan: My whole point is that we have to live with that uncertainty, because we are living in an age that lacks the clarity of the past, but that does not mean that we do nothing. We will be acting in a region the turmoil and disruption of which are more difficult to comprehend than anything we have ever seen, and that means—and this is exactly my answer to my right hon. Friend—that the path ahead is far from obvious. Personally, I have been in favour of the UK taking action only if it is part of a co-ordinated international effort. We now have that, and it is reassuring to be alongside Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, and of course the United States and France. Again I say that none of this will be straightforward. Wisdom is not weakness, particularly in the middle east. In the complicated melee of today's middle east, we would be wise to appreciate that we are confronting a new threat in a new way, and therefore we should calibrate our expectations accordingly.

In passing, I must say that I am a little uncomfortable with the language of some people—essentially outside this House—who seem to see this decision as a test of the United Kingdom's virility. That is no way to look at this issue, and it harks back to an age and a mentality that simply do not suit the world of today. The country needs to know why we are doing this. The justification for our involvement is best expressed in terms of what it will do to improve Iraq, its people and the region itself and less well expressed by saying that it is mainly because terrorists directly threaten us here in the UK. That threat exists anyway, and it will not be eliminated even if ISIL is forced into submission.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid Sussex (Sir Nicholas Soames) said, we must also be realistic about how little we really know. The rise of ISIL has taken us all by surprise, and knowing in detail and with confidence who they are and what exactly is happening on the ground will not be easy. Our well of understanding about the region has run rather dry. If I might say so, this House would do better not to be so quick to mock the hon. Member for Bradford West (George Galloway).

Mr MacNeil: The right hon. Gentleman is making a good speech. Is he uneasy about the way in which the gates are being opened in this motion? The motion could open up the possibility of the UK bombing in Iraq for up to the next 10 years, because it is open-ended.

Sir Alan Duncan: Let me answer the hon. Gentleman this way, because it really is my main point. We are looking at not one country invading another or a national army marching across the border, but a conflict without borders and the advance of non-state actors who have no national identity, no seat in the UN and no coherent political structure. The threat is not from a rogue state or a vicious dictator, but from a poisonous, viral movement that is cutting a swathe of grisly barbarity across the region from Syria to Iraq. That enemy can morph into

al-Qaeda one day, disappear into the crowd and come back again the next. We can resolve to beat it, but it is not the same as fighting a country.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) sensibly asked, what can we target? What can we hit? How can we be sure that we are bombing in the right way? Can we perhaps disable infrastructure rather than destroy it, and how will we continue to be effective from the air should ISIL forces move into a dense urban settlement? For all those reasons, we must expect to give our Prime Minister flexibility and discretion, without us descending into political recriminations. He must be allowed to adapt and amend our actions to suit the unfolding acts on the ground and in my opinion—this is a view that has been expressed by my right hon. Friends the Members for Croydon South (Sir Richard Ottaway), for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke), and for North Somerset (Dr Fox)—that should not exclude spreading air attacks into the deserts of Syria.

In conclusion, taking on ISIL is not just about bombs. It requires comprehensive confrontation—diplomatic, social, religious, cultural, educational and financial and through the media and the use of intelligence—and ISIL must be beaten on all fronts. This may go on for years; it might not. Today, we should be prepared to start our action, but, equally, should it ever become too impractical or inappropriate to fight from the air, then we should also, without shame, stain or blame, be prepared to stop it.

1.49 pm

Frank Dobson (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): The one thing that is certain is that no one in this House or anywhere else can be certain that the policies we are being asked to endorse will succeed. If we look at the track record of the interventions of the French, British and Americans in the middle east since the collapse of the Ottoman empire, we see that the odds look as though we will not succeed, because everything else has gone wrong. And yet I find that I am probably going to vote for the motion tonight. This is my argument for doing so.

The situation that we face is different from previous ones. Clearly, what has happened is a threat to international peace and security, and therefore entitles the world powers and the Government of Iraq to invite support to try to protect them against their invaders. It may not be an invading army, but it is certainly an invasion that Iraq has suffered, and Iraq is entitled to call upon the rest of us. And it is faced with a genocidal outfit. Genocide consists of killing people because of who they are, and that is exactly what ISIS is doing.

In any war, some prisoners will be murdered; in many wars, some women will be raped. It is usually the product of indiscipline. In the case of ISIS, it is part of its military strategy to terrorise people, and it is organised: organised murder, organised abduction of women and organised rape of Muslim women. That is not western propaganda, which is its usual excuse; it is parading proudly what it is doing. It is showing on social media the murder of prisoners, the carting off and abduction of women.

Mr Sheerman: I agree with everything that my right hon. Friend has said, but does he agree that when we use drone missiles and attack from the air, that is

not—it cannot be—precision, and when we get into this, if we start killing children, and schools and hospitals are drawn in, public support will go away very quickly?

Frank Dobson: That may be true, but it must be said that without the American intervention from the air, the chances are that ISIS would now be in control of Baghdad. They had to be stopped militarily and one function of the air attacks is to deprive them of their use of heavy weaponry, to give those who are opposed to them a better chance of defeating them. It is necessary, therefore, it seems to me, to provide an opportunity for the ground forces to get their act together and take them on, and if what we are doing can weaken their opponents during that time, that is all the better.

The effort that everyone agrees is necessary—to encourage political activity, to effect political reconciliation, to bring people together, to unite the people of Iraq against their common enemy—can be successful only if we help the Iraqis to keep the common enemy at bay until they have got themselves sorted out. That is why, on balance, I shall support the motion.

Mr Robin Walker (Worcester) (Con): The point that the right hon. Gentleman rightly made about the brutality of ISIS, especially towards women, could apply equally to other organisations, such as Boko Haram in northern Nigeria. Does he agree that that determination to support the moderates against the extremists and to use all our soft power needs to be looked at far more widely than the middle east alone?

Frank Dobson: It is certainly true that part of our tradition—which we sometimes fall short of, and have done in the past—is to promote decency and democracy worldwide. We have an obligation to help all those countries who are trying to maintain democracy or to establish it in the face of extremism. But in this case there was not just the possibility but the likelihood that Iraq as a sovereign state would disappear, and unless we keep up the pressure, there is still a possibility of its disappearing.

However, I am concerned about the ease with which, when some people talk, they slip seamlessly from Iraq to Syria. In Iraq, there are two existing groups fighting on the same side against ISIS. They hope to get further military support on the ground to help them. That is fairly straightforward. But when people talk about getting involved in Syria, they are talking about sending young people from our country to a place where they will not have the faintest idea who they are supposed to be fighting, and people who they might have been allied with this week become enemies next week, or this week's enemies become allies next week. We owe it to our people, if we are going to send them abroad on our behalf and risk their lives, to try to ensure that they are faced with a fairly straightforward function in war. War is nasty and complex enough as it is without pushing them into somewhere like Syria.

When I first entered the House, they used to talk about senior figures. People talk about senior figures now, but when I first entered the House “senior figures” included Denis Healey and one or two others. They had a bit of a down on sending young people to war, and that was because they had been sent. We should always remember to be very, very careful about sending anybody

else's children to fight for us, particularly if we try to send them in a cause that is not clear, and against an enemy that cannot be easily identified.

1.56 pm

Sir Nick Harvey (North Devon) (LD): Having opposed the invasion of Iraq in 2003, with my party colleagues, I have deliberated uncomfortably and cautiously for the past few weeks on the issues about which we must decide today, but I have been persuaded of both the justification and the need for action of the sort that we are asked to approve today. Many Members have spoken about the humanitarian atrocities that are being perpetrated by ISIS. Surely to goodness we must learn from the mistakes of Srebrenica and Rwanda and not make the mistake of simply allowing them to happen.

Heather Wheeler (South Derbyshire) (Con): There is a gentleman living in my constituency who is part of the Yazidi group. I was appalled by the paperwork and photographs he showed me of the atrocities that are going on. We must all support the motion; it is absolutely a just motion.

Sir Nick Harvey: I very much hope that all Members across the House would agree with that, whatever their take on the military issues to be discussed.

However, beyond the humanitarian catastrophe there is the strategic threat, which will grow given that, as we have heard, ISIS already controls an area bigger than Britain and has the stated objective and ambition to make that bigger and bigger. We have seen from al-Qaeda in Afghanistan what will happen if terrorist organisations with international ambitions are allowed such freedom of manoeuvre. ISIS has manpower; it has got hold of some very sophisticated equipment; it has a flow of money. It is quite a formidable enemy for the Iraqi army and the Kurdish forces. That is why Iraq is looking outside its borders for external help.

Yes, it would be better, as the hon. Member for Bradford West (George Galloway) said, if the clear lead were given by some of the regional neighbours and by Muslim states. We are very grateful, I hope, for the efforts that are being made by some of the neighbours, but the moral responsibility falls on countries such as the United Kingdom, because we are one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, and as we have a substantial Muslim population ourselves, we have more than most to fear from the growth of ISIS if it were allowed to go unchecked. So there is a just cause; there is a clear legal case; there is a plausible objective to degrade ISIS and enable the Iraqi and Kurdish fighters to recover the terrain that they have lost; and there is a strategy that we shall use our air power to soften up the enemy and allow the ground forces to recover that terrain—we are not going to deploy our own forces, but we will help them to do that.

“Can it work?” Members are asking. There are no guarantees, but it could. If there is a detailed plan, then, bluntly, I do not know what it is, but on a need-to-know basis I do not need to know. We do not know how long it will take, what it will cost, or what, short of outright triumph, is our exit strategy. I was impressed by the fact that the Prime Minister was very realistic about the limitations of what air power can do and what military power can do. The military effort has to be accompanied

[Sir Nick Harvey]

by a humanitarian aid effort, by diplomatic efforts, and by efforts to find a political solution. As many have rightly said, we do not find a political solution to a complex situation on the ground from 20,000 feet above it.

I also welcome the fact that the Prime Minister was appropriately modest about the contribution that the UK is proposing to make. Of course, we will be supplying forces who are highly skilled and very courageous, who will go with the good will of all of us, and who will be using very sophisticated equipment. However, there is absolutely no place for hubris on the part of the United Kingdom about the scale of the overall effort that we are going to make.

Sir Gerald Howarth (Aldershot) (Con): Is the United Kingdom not already making a very substantial military contribution in the form of our intelligence-gathering assets, and through Rivet Joint and the Tornado and its Litening missile?

Sir Nick Harvey: My hon. Friend makes an important point. The value that we can add to the international effort through our aerial reconnaissance and our intelligence-gathering is probably of more significance than what we are to contribute in outright firepower. The hon. Member for Bradford West made a point worth reflecting on: although ISIS is controlling an area as large as Britain, it will not marshal itself neatly into conventional military bases that render themselves obvious targets. The quality of the intelligence and surveillance will therefore be absolutely crucial to the outcome of this effort.

Broadly speaking, there is a just cause, and there is a plausible strategy and a need for us to contribute to it. In listening to how this debate has unfolded, my greatest misgiving relates to Syria. Many Members have observed that harrying and hassling ISIS in Iraq is pointless if it can simply flee over the border into Syria, and in purely military terms, I see what they mean. However, the strategy that has been laid before us of our air support working in tandem with a credible organised ground force would not apply in Syria, where the situation on the ground is chaos and carnage. There is no credible ground force at this stage with whom we can ally. Although we may have common cause, to some extent, with Russia, with Assad and with Iran over the desirability of degrading ISIS, they have very different views from us as to what they want to emerge on the ground as the lasting solution in Syria, and we would need to be aware of the dangers that that would pose.

Apart from anything else, there is no appetite in the United Kingdom for our getting involved in an ongoing operation, lasting very many years on the ground and trying to instil a new order, and that is the likely outcome if we get involved in Syria. General Dannatt once said, "If you go around kicking down the door, you create a moral imperative to stay around and help clear up afterwards." We are rightly fed up with the amount of work we have had to do on that in Iraq and Afghanistan. Syria is a very different situation from Iraq, and we would end up doing the same there if we did not watch it.

2.4 pm

Ian Austin (Dudley North) (Lab): My right hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Frank Dobson) is completely right to warn us about the gravity of this decision. The question of sending British troops to take military action is the most serious we will ever be asked to answer. However, we are faced with a brutal and murderous organisation that has kidnapped and beheaded victims, including a British aid worker; that has carried out genocide, enslaved women, buried others alive and crucified, executed and butchered Christians, Yazidis and Muslims—in fact, anybody who does not share its warped and perverted view of Islam; and that presents a huge threat to the rest of the region. Given that, and with an international coalition having been built in the region, it is right to confront ISIL.

I would like to ask, as did my right hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden), why we are being asked to approve air strikes in Iraq but not in Syria; why we welcomed and supported the American bombardment of ISIL targets in Syria this week but said that British action should be limited to Iraq; and why, if we think that the American action was legal, action by Britain would not be. What is the difference between taking action against ISIL on one side of the border and taking it on the other—even though, as we have heard, the border does not actually exist? Are we saying that we would take action against terrorists responsible for beheading a British citizen on one side of the border but would not target them if they scuttled a few yards across into Syria?

As I understand it, we are prepared to take action in Iraq because the Government there have asked us to do so. Does that mean that we would be prepared to take action against ISIL terrorists in Syria if the murderous dictator Assad asked us to do it there? We must avoid giving anybody the impression that he has a veto over any action that we might take. It is also important that we avoid giving any impression that Putin, who has annexed Crimea and invaded Ukraine, and who incarcerates his critics at home and murders them abroad, has a veto over any sort of western action.

I believe that we should have acted sooner to support those among the rebels who want democracy and human rights—that is, when the revolution against Assad started. The tragedy is that the democrats who looked to us for support have been slaughtered. They were starved of the resources, weapons and support they needed. They were killed on one side by Assad, supported by Russia, Iran and Hezbollah, and by extremists on the other, supported by Qatar and Saudi Arabia. As a result, the only people not involved in Syria have been those of the western democracies.

Of course, as we have heard, there are consequences to taking action, but there are also grave consequences to not taking action. In Syria, the west's failure has created the vacuum in which the ISIL terrorists have been allowed to become so strong. Both Assad and ISIS are stronger now than they were a year ago. The west should not just support and arm the Iraqi army and the Kurdish forces—we should be doing much more to help the pro-western, pluralist democrats among the Syrian opposition and support them in their efforts.

2.7 pm

Sir Gerald Howarth (Aldershot) (Con): I am delighted to take part in this debate. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Sir Alan Duncan) said, there are no simple solutions to this complex issue. Today's debate illustrates the complexity that we face as legislators in having to take decisions on behalf of the British people. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made a very compelling case. It was an absolutely excellent speech and I agree with every word of it. I have tried to press on him my view that we should have taken this action sooner, but I understand why he could not do so: it is because he was not prepared to bring before the House a motion on which he was not certain of securing a result. I do not blame him for that caution.

The Prime Minister posed the question, "Where is the British national interest?" We need to be satisfied that the British national interest is met by the strategy that he set out. I believe that the answer is crystal clear and that it is in the British national interest that we should support this motion. All the leaders around the world have declared that these IS, ISIL, ISIS people are beyond the pale and are a major threat not just to the middle east but to us here at home. As my hon. Friend the Member for North Devon (Sir Nick Harvey) said, they have already overrun a large part of Iraq. They have threatened to overrun the whole of that country, resorting to their barbaric methods in so doing—methods that we have ruled out and most countries abandoned centuries ago. We have seen, and our constituents have seen, the slaughter of innocent people and the way in which these barbaric people have been behaving. They have seen our own nationals and US nationals murdered as well.

It seems to me therefore that if this threat is so great, we have to address it. There are two clear issues. There is a blurred line between them, it is true, but the imperative today is that we should prevent IS from overrunning the whole of Iraq. Indeed, the objective must be to drive them out of Iraq as far as we possibly can. As the right hon. Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Frank Dobson) so eloquently said, it is not a question of making an act of faith; we have seen it work. The troops on the ground have said that without the intervention of the United States' air strikes, they would not have been able to blunt the attack of IS in northern Iraq. We know it works. It is not as though we are trying to suggest something for which we have no intimation as to what might happen.

Mr Jamie Reed (Copeland) (Lab): The right hon. Gentleman is right; this motion is squarely within the national interest. He talks about being honest with the British people and we must do that. I support this action, but does he agree that we do not know for how long we will be involved or how long it will take? We do not know in any finite term where this will end and we ought to be honest with the British people about that.

Sir Gerald Howarth: The hon. Gentleman makes a perfectly fair point, but I am afraid to say that that is the case with all military action. We cannot start any military operation and say at the outset that it will take six months. At the outbreak of the first world war, which we commemorated this year, the expectation was that everyone would be home by Christmas. That turned out to be a rather false hope—tragically false. Such things go with the territory of military operations.

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): It has been said throughout the debate how important it is that there is the coalition of Arab states that we are supporting. I am less clear about who will be directing operations. Could the right hon. Gentleman shed some light on that?

Sir Gerald Howarth: The hon. Lady makes a very good point and if she will be patient, I intend to come on to it, as the involvement of the Arab states is one of the most significant points about this whole business.

The imperative—ridding Iraq of IS—leads to the possibility of dealing with the problem at the political level. It is imperative that we provide Haider al-Abadi, the new Prime Minister of Iraq, with the space in which to deliver the resolution of the differences between the competing communities in Iraq. He cannot do that if his whole country is threatened by these barbarous people intent upon overrunning it. However, the onus is on him to deliver that political settlement.

The hon. Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth (Debbie Abrahams) has rightly mentioned the involvement of other countries. It is very important that we should be standing alongside our friends in the United States; they are our closest ally. We have the same concept of freedom. It is important to do that, but it is also important to be seen to be standing alongside our allies in the Arab world. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a close ally. I was reminded by Mohammed bin Zayed in the UAE that we had no excuse for not understanding the region; we have been there for 200 years. It is a fact that we have experience of the region that other countries do not have. They look to us for support. The fact that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is there, as is the UAE, Qatar and Jordan, is the most significant development in this whole business. As my right hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt) said, we should not underestimate the importance of that. To an extent, our credibility is at stake.

The Leader of the Opposition said that we needed to define our role in the world. He is absolutely right. In opposition in 2009, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague)—the former Foreign Secretary—said that the UK should help to shape the world in which we find ourselves and not simply be shaped by it. This is a moment where we should assist in that process.

In assisting our friends in the Arab world, we should be encouraging them to take responsibility for what is essentially a regional problem of theirs. One of the exciting things has been to see a female UAE pilot involved. That is the ultimate insult to the IS people, I am sure. Let us salute her and her role. My hon. Friend the Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis) said that perhaps the Arabs should help by putting more boots on the ground, and I think that is true.

My final point is that we will not resolve the IS problem simply by military means. I agreed with everything the right hon. Member for Neath (Mr Hain) said; he will be horrified by that, but there we go. He said that the case for striking in Syria was quite strong, but we cannot defeat an ideology by military means alone, let alone by air strikes. That is a challenge for the Muslim world more generally. I hope that this exercise will feed into our strategic defence review, which is coming. We need a proper strategy and we need to feed the experience of this recent political development into that strategy.

2.15 pm

Mr Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry Barr) (Lab): We are here again to discuss the issue of stability and conflict in the middle east. It appears that we have not learned the lessons of a decade ago. I made one of my first speeches in this House, soon after my maiden speech, after 9/11. It is clear that we have not taken forward those lessons to provide stability for the region over the last 14 years or so.

Instead, what we and the US—using its influence in the Gulf countries—have done is to start to pump more money and weapons into Syria, which has further destabilised that region. Money has been given to people whom we may think would be our supporters and to those whom we thought were on our side. They were, we were told, moderate. We speak about the moderate Syrian people and about the freedom fighters, but the vast majority of them are affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood, an organisation that the Prime Minister banned in this country. Yet we think that they will be our ally in resolving the issue in Syria.

A number of hon. Members today have said that the issue can be resolved only if we put more money and resources into the freedom fighters. Which of those freedom fighters will we support? The Muslim Brotherhood? Al Nusra? Will we support other extremist organisations that already exist? Will we support the unIslamic state in the region? I deliberately call it not ISIL, not ISIS nor IS; I call it, and Brummies predominantly tend to call it, the unIslamic state. That is what it is. It has no place in the religion of Islam of which I am a part. It has no place in any teachings of Islam. Those people who rape, murder and torture are carrying out things that are banned in Islam. They kill people because they might be Sunni; they kill people who are Shi'a, Christian, Yazidi and Kurds. They kill anybody who does not submit to their warped ideology. We have to be aware of what we are trying to do.

The previous Foreign Secretary went to Europe and said that we needed to lift the arms embargo against the Assad Government so we could supply those so-called moderate fighters. When he came back having made the great achievement of lifting the arms embargo, he sat down with the security people and they said, "Secretary of State, who are you going to supply these weapons to?" Very soon he decided that there was no option of supplying weapons and decided that we would provide communication aid to those people. We create these types of vacuum. Senator McCain has been an advocate of a neo-Con policy in Syria, which is to make sure that we put in as much money and arms as we can. What we have not realised is that, as part of that effort over the past three years or so, we have created the vacuum that has allowed the un-Islamic state to be formed in those regions, taking people from all the various extremist organisations there and making them even more extreme, more grotesque and more violent than any other organisation—

Dr Julian Lewis: I am anxious to give the hon. Gentleman an extra minute, because I want to hear what he thinks we should and should not do in the situation we face today. He is in danger of getting to the end of his speech without telling us.

Mr Mahmood: I thank the hon. Gentleman for doing that. I am very keen to get on to the question of the situation today. I will vote later today in favour of providing support to the Iraqi Government, because they have rightly asked us to do so. I will go further: there will be a need for us to provide support on the ground in order to finish the job. The job needs to be finished off properly; if it is not—if we allow significant groupings to remain in Iraq—there will be greater problems for us to go back to resolve. In order to do that, we need not only air strikes but the surrounding Arab countries to put their money where their mouth is, by and large, and to get people on the ground to deal with the situation. The support of our people will be needed, so it is important that we do that and get the issue sorted out. To do that, we need to move on.

A huge number of Muslim academics and scholars have condemned what is happening, as have organisations such as Inspire, led by Sara Khan, which works for women—

Steve McCabe: Will it be possible to defeat these evil terrorists while simultaneously turning a blind eye to the evils that exist among some of our allies? Surely Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and some of our other allies have to sort their act out, as well.

Mr Mahmood: My hon. Friend is right. Unless we play with a straight bat across the piece and condemn such actions, we will not be able to deal with the situation. It is very important that we do that.

2.22 pm

Mr Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield) (Con): It is my intention when the House divides this afternoon—if it does divide—to support the Government's motion, but in doing so I am very mindful, having listened to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr Mahmood), my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr Holloway)—indeed, even the hon. Member for Bradford West (George Galloway), had he not treated the House as the recipient of a human foghorn—that they had some important points to make. A note of caution needs to be sounded about what we are trying to do.

The Prime Minister made a powerful case. First, he said that ISIL is a threat to this country directly. I have no doubt that he is right about that. Having spent the first six months of this year signing off consents for the prosecution of young people returning from Syria, where they had served and trained with ISIL—and, in some circumstances with clear evidence, it seemed to me, that they had participated in atrocities—I am perfectly alive to the fact that that threat is real. However, I sound this note of caution. Simply bombing ISIL—whether in Syria, or Iraq, as we are planning to do—is not going to make that threat go away. Even if we ultimately get rid of the ungoverned space, the threat will remain unless or until civil society exists within the Muslim world of a kind that provides a model of how people can co-exist peacefully. We face a challenge domestically, which we must not shirk, in persuading people that that peaceful co-existence exists here and they should not be inclined to emulate what they see in the middle east.

The second factor, and for me the most persuasive, is the genocide being perpetrated in northern Iraq and Syria. This country has a long history of international

involvement, and although we may be able to make only a small contribution, I find it difficult to see how we should sit on our hands when a barbarous group of individuals perpetrates the kind of crimes we see daily on our screens. If we can make a contribution to dealing with that, the justification for military intervention is there.

Mr David Burrowes (Enfield, Southgate) (Con): My right hon. and learned Friend is making a compelling case. Would he advise the House that the legal principle of the responsibility to protect in relation to genocide has a wider application that goes beyond the Iraqi borders into Syria?

Mr Grieve: I am grateful to my hon. Friend—that is precisely the point to which I was about to come.

I have not the slightest doubt that the legal framework exists to take action in support of the Iraqi Government, at their request, to deal with ISIL. I am clear that the legal base is present for that, and the House should not be concerned on that issue. Equally, so far as action in Syria is concerned, should the Government ever be minded to pursue that option and the House to debate it, the preconditions for action in Syria are also present: first, because of the right to self-defence of the Iraqi Government when some of the attacks are clearly coming across the Syrian border; and secondly, because of the doctrine of humanitarian necessity in terms of intervention to protect the population in northern Syria from ISIL's attacks—something we have seen in recent days in the Kurdish villages by the Turkish border.

In his speech, the Leader of the Opposition rightly raised the question whether, on that latter point, there should be a resolution of the United Nations Security Council. There is no doubt that it has an important role to play in issues concerning humanitarian necessity, but the Government will at least have to consider whether any application, if it were to come, to the UN for such a resolution has any prospect of success. The ability to intervene, I have no doubt, exists, even if no such resolution is present.

However, the Leader of the Opposition's comments and those of other Members do highlight one of the really important challenges we face. The fact that the framework for legal intervention is present will not necessarily mean that the intervention that subsequently takes place meets the criteria of lawfulness. It has to be reasonable, necessary and proportionate to the aim that has to be achieved. In that, I can well understand the Government's making a distinction between the situation in Syria and that in Iraq. Even in the context of Iraq, there are some pretty serious challenges. Some of our partners—including particularly the Iraqi Government—have a rather chequered human rights record. We must avoid being party to the ill treatment of prisoners, to the massacre of prisoners, or indeed to any action on the battlefield that could take place that we might facilitate by our aerial intervention. I trust that the Government have looked carefully at that in finding ways of co-operating.

Mr Andrew Turner: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr Grieve: I will not; I must finish.

The moment one looks at that issue, it becomes immediately apparent why the situation in Syria is likely to be so much more challenging. Having made those comments, I would like to emphasise that the fact that there are challenges—be they legal or ethical—is not a reason for doing nothing. Precisely because we have a tradition in this country of observing the rule of law and of maintaining human rights, even in a battlefield context, and because we have an interest in ensuring that civil society is facilitated in an area that has been so singularly deprived of it, we have a duty to take action. What this motion enables us to do is to give the Government the framework in which that can occur.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. The right hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton (Mr Meacher) will be the last Member to be subject to the five-minute limit. Thereafter, in a bid to maximise the number of contributions, I shall have to reduce the limit to four minutes for Back-Bench speeches. The first Member to be impacted upon by that new limit, I give him notice, will be the hon. Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh). I call Mr Michael Meacher.

2.29 pm

Mr Michael Meacher (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab): It cannot be emphasised too strongly that this is not another invasion of Iraq. It is a response to a desperate plea by the new Iraqi Government for outside help to combat what is seen as an existential threat to the Iraqi state; nor is ISIL just another enemy in the complex and lethal sectarianism of the middle east. It is a monster, with a bloodlust that can only be compared to the Genghis Khan Mongols or the latter-day Nazis—and one that the world simply cannot turn aside from or wash its hands of. But equally, it is foolish not to recognise the risks of military action through air strikes: the inevitable civilian casualties, the death threats to hostages, the very real possibility of terrorist retaliation on British soil and the risk of mission creep, which the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) was talking about in terms of taking action towards Syria with a dubious legality—I gather from what he said—and the uncertain and unpredictable consequences for the civil war against Assad.

Perhaps the biggest problem, as always in war, is the exit strategy. No war can be won from the air—we all agree on that—and this war can be won only on the basis of political and diplomatic action, which, frankly, will be quite difficult to achieve. First, this depends on the regional powers that feed ISIL with money, arms and political support reaching an agreement that they will withdraw that oxygen, which keeps the pyre burning. In particular, the oil-smuggling network that was created to evade UN sanctions on Saddam's Iraq, now in the hands of ISIL and yielding more than \$3 million a day, must be stopped via Turkey and Iraqi Kurdistan.

Secondly, this depends on achieving some reconciliation across the broken Shi'a-Sunni divide. That is incredibly important. Of course things have flared up with lethal intensity because of the highly discriminatory policies of the last Maliki Government. The new Iraqi Government recognise this. Of course they have been in office for

[Mr Michael Meacher]

only three weeks, but they have yet to provide a power-sharing agreement that will bring the Sunni majority on side.

Thirdly, the moderate Sunni element needs to be split from the extremists. Again, that is beginning to happen, but the lessons of al-Sahwa, the awakening, which played such a crucial role in stemming the insurgency in 2007-08, need to be revisited. Fourthly—this is the most difficult one of all, but the most important—the really big, major powers in the middle east, Saudi Arabia and Iran, which until recently were implacably opposed to each other, clearly are needed to use their influence to restrain their proxies and to restore at least some co-existence across inflamed sectarian lines. All that will be extremely difficult to achieve; but ultimately, the war against ISIL will be won only if we can reconstruct and repair the broken Iraqi state.

Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab): My right hon. Friend is making a very good speech. Does he agree that we must do all we can to rebuild trust between the Kurdish Government and the Government in Baghdad, because that will help us to build up civil society in Iraq, which is absolutely key to taking on ISIL?

Mr Meacher: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Of course that is part of the commitment of the new Iraqi Prime Minister, al-Abadi, to produce a governance within Iraq that takes account of all the key parts of the population, not just the Shi'a and Sunnis, but crucially the Kurds, who are a very important part of this equation.

Again, it cannot be emphasised too strongly that the Iraqi Prime Minister, al-Abadi, has made it absolutely clear that he does not want western and US troops on the ground in Iraq because he believes that he has sufficient volunteers to contest ISIL with Iraqi forces, provided that there is collaboration from air cover. But in the last analysis, the only serious long-term answer for these broken states—not just Iraq, but Syria, Libya, Afghanistan and Nigeria—is to restore them again to a real, viable state. It is easy to say that; it is extremely difficult to do. It will take a long time, and it will require enormous, long-term economic and aid commitments, which was patently not apparent after the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. That aid will, no doubt, predominantly come from the US and Europe, but it should come from other places as well.

Katy Clark (North Ayrshire and Arran) (Lab): My right hon. Friend has, of course, mentioned the previous occasion when we debated Iraq, when the UN's position was absolutely central. There has been very little discussion about the UN today. Does he agree that it would have been preferable if we had a clear position from the UN and a motion specifically relating to Iraq before the House made a decision?

Mr Meacher: That is a very important point, because the economic and aid aspect, which is crucial—far more important than bombing, as several hon. Members have said—needs much more attention. I do not think that it is sufficiently taken into account in the motion today, and I take my hon. Friend's point that that needs to be developed. This will go on a long time, and we need to give far more attention to that issue.

I believe that the only justification for military action is not just to halt the ISIL momentum and to protect communities, but to buy the time to put in place the political and diplomatic conditions to enable the reconstruction of a broken Iraqi state, to achieve reconciliation of sectarian-torn communities along power-sharing lines and, above all—again, taking up my hon. Friend's point—to achieve the long-term support to revive the economies and social institutions of those broken countries.

2.36 pm

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): I visited the Christian villages near Mosul that are most affected by Islamic State. I have heard the harrowing tales of women losing husbands, sons and daughters to death and kidnapping. It is appalling to talk to a mother and hear her say that she last saw her son or her husband going to church and has never seen him again. But attacks on Iraqi Christians and other minorities, such as the Yazidis, have been happening for years, ever since our misconceived and misplaced invasion of Iraq. That replaced an admittedly brutal strongman who protected minorities with chaos. For years, I and others have argued that Assyrian Christians in the Mosul plain needed their own province in Iraq to defend themselves. Frankly, we have been met with a complacent response from the Foreign Office. Now, it is almost too late: the Kurds have failed to protect them. Perhaps they have not got the resources.

The truth is that, until now, we have done everything wrong. In our zealous liberalism, we have encouraged revolutions across the middle east and then been profoundly shocked when the forces that we have helped to unleash have turned against us. In that sense, the British Government are indirectly culpable in fostering the conditions for jihadism to thrive in Iraq and Syria. It is not surprising that last year in Maaloula, a Christian village in Syria, one civilian said to the BBC to tell the west

“that we sent you Saint Paul 2,000 years ago to take you from the darkness, and you sent us terrorists to kill us.”

In that sense, brutal as he is, Assad is a natural ally against jihadism.

Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con): Is my hon. Friend saying that we should not support the campaign of the Syrian free forces against the Assad regime, as some Gulf states are urging us to do?

Sir Edward Leigh: We all want Syria to be a democratic, modern country, and we all want the Syrian free forces to win this battle, but a year ago we were asked in this House of Commons to bomb Assad and now we are being asked to stand on our heads. I have heard of being asked to bomb our opponents and support our friends, but what we are doing now in Syria is extraordinary and makes no sense.

Rory Stewart: My hon. Friend is making a very important point. The idea is that somehow we could support the Syrian Government against extremists, but the paradox and the problem is that the only legitimacy the Syrian regime now has is the existence of those terrorists. What possible motive would Bashar al-Assad have to remove them so long as they remain his main reason for international support?

Sir Edward Leigh: I accept that point. The Government tell us that we are not going to follow the Americans down the road of bombing ISIL in Syria, because of the complexities that my hon. Friends the Members for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski) and for Penrith and The Border (Rory Stewart) have outlined.

That border, however, does not exist. Our Government say we are only going to bomb ISIS in Iraq—a solution that makes no military sense whatsoever. What will this achieve? Most Back Benchers have no idea what the intelligence says. I suspect it is scanty. No journalist is embedded in IS, which would be a suicidal thing to do. How long will this operation last? Will bombing in Iraq alone seriously impede IS? We have only a tiny number of planes and they are based a long way away. We were once told that never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few, but now never have so few been asked by so many to achieve so much with no clear aim in sight.

Of course, however, IS is winning against the Iraqi Government, but it is not winning against them because of superior armour or its command and control, which is easily bombed; it is winning because the Iraqi Government are corrupt and their army, which we armed, ran away. Are we going to bomb 4x4s racing across the desert?

Make no mistake: this is about our amour propre as a nation. There is nothing wrong in that: we are a member, as we have been told time and again in this debate, of the Security Council, but if we want to act with a big stick in the world, we must wield the means. Yet what have we been doing with our armed forces over the past four years and how many planes have we got to bomb ISIL? What serious difference will we make?

Those are the realities, which we all know, but we are where we are. We have caused this mess and we should apologise to the people of the region for it. We have no idea where this will end. We have no idea what our bombing campaign will achieve or how long it will take. But there's the rub: we caused this mess.

I want to make a personal point before I sit down. I do not think, for personal reasons, that I can walk away on the other side of the road from those desperate women I talked to in the Mosul province. I have stood beside the wrecked tomb of the prophet Nahum in the Christian village of Alqosh, which is directly threatened. I have talked to the monks nearby who live in fear. How strange that, writing in sublime language 2,500 years ago, the prophet Nahum warned us of the fall of the Assyrians and their civilisation—and their descendants are now meeting the same fate. Therefore, although I have severe doubts about what this will achieve, and with a heavy heart and full of foreboding, I will vote for this motion tonight.

2.43 pm

Meg Munn (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab/Co-op): I refer to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

I support military intervention by the United Kingdom in Iraq and will vote in favour of the motion. The situation is extremely troubling. The refusal of the west to recognise in a meaningful way the moderate elements in the opposition to Assad in Syria, coupled with the organisational ability and fanaticism of IS, gave IS the space to grow. Some outside support, wealth accumulated

by smuggling, oil and kidnapping, and, perhaps, as rumours suggest, handouts from Gulf states, only increased its attractiveness to jihadists around the world.

Given the ideology of IS, it was inevitable that it would spread into the troubled western area of Iraq. The speed of its advance in June may have come as a shock, but we should not be surprised that it has flourished and grown. What may have been surprising was its ability to make common cause with various groups and organisations in Iraq that share little of its ideology, particularly the remnants of the Ba'athists and some tribes. However, it quickly became clear that others would be allowed to operate only as long as they followed IS. There are a number of well-founded stories of tribal groups suffering massacres of their young men after trying to argue or change course.

IS has released many self-glorifying videos that show the treatment of captured Iraqi soldiers, with lines of men being marched into the desert and shot, or knifed on the banks of rivers. Videos have been released of Sunni imams being killed because they would not turn over their mosques to IS. Minority groups such as the Yazidis and Christians have been persecuted, and hundreds of women have been taken away to who knows where. Vian Dakhil, Iraq's only Yazidi MP and someone I know well, pleaded for the Iraqi Parliament to act as the Yazidi people fled the terror. Vian herself was injured in a helicopter crash as she tried to help her people. Although many have been rescued, they have lost their homes and their security. Untold numbers of people have perished and lie on the mountains or in the desert.

I remain deeply troubled by the way in which the international community has stood on the sidelines. The United Nations doctrine of responsibility to protect has counted for little during the past few months in western and northern Iraq. The only people to help were the Kurds from the Kurdistan region of Iraq and from the north-east of Syria. I am the co-chair of the all-party group on the Kurdistan region in Iraq, and I have had the opportunity to visit several times. I have seen the region develop into a thriving open society with a growing economy. That successful, semi-autonomous region is under attack from IS, and it is being defended by the dedicated and brave peshmerga.

Mike Gapes: Does my hon. Friend agree that the British Government should have given support to the Kurdistan Regional Government much earlier than they did? Does she agree that the fact that we provided arms directly only after other countries, such as Germany, had done so showed that we were behind the curve and should have acted much sooner?

Meg Munn: I agree with my hon. Friend on that subject. Kurdistan has opened its heart and arms to the many refugees who have fled to its territory. Many of them have fled from fighting and car bombs in different parts of Iraq and, in the past three years, many have fled from the conflict in Syria. During the past two months, the number of refugees has increased dramatically as Sunni, Shi'a, Yazidis and Christians have fled from IS. The unstinting support and protection given to the refugees is a credit to the Kurdish people.

It makes little sense to consider the serious situation in Iraq without considering Syria. Of course, it is right to respond to the request of the Iraqi Government and

[Meg Munn]

provide them with assistance, but to imagine that IS will recognise a border on a map is simply wrong. When Parliament was recalled on 29 August last year, the estimate of the dead in Syria was approximately 100,000. Of those who were against intervention because it would make things worse, I asked whether there were any signs that things would improve. We know that the stark answer to that question has been no. We failed to intervene, and the number of dead stands at more than 200,000. I support the UK's being part of the military coalition in Iraq. I welcome the Prime Minister's words on Syria, but I urge the Government to keep an open mind on possible further action in Syria. Only by recognising that the situations of the two countries are entangled and finding ways to deal with both will we have a chance of removing IS from the equation altogether.

2.48 pm

Mrs Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Meg Munn), who made an excellent speech based on personal experience. I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr Mahmood) when he said that we had not learned our lessons after 10 years' experience in Iraq. I differ from him; I believe that we have not learned our lessons on Iraq after 100 years of experience. During the British mandate, we struggled to build the institution of a functioning state. It seems to me that 100 years after our troops landed on the Fao peninsula on 6 November 1914, we are still fighting the same battles. The position is very different today, not least because it is not just us here who have first-hand evidence of what is going on in Iraq and Syria; the general public also have evidence of what is going on. Through technology and social media, we are seeing at first-hand the atrocities being carried out by ISIL, which are being brought into living rooms throughout the UK. Personally, I find that very frightening.

In his opening remarks, the Prime Minister has made the justification for bringing this action today. There is no doubt that we have been invited in by a democratic state to help to defend it. We are part of a broad coalition with 10 Arab countries and 60 other nations. There is now firm evidence that ISIL cannot be negotiated with. I am sure that the Deputy Prime Minister will allude to that again in his winding-up speech.

We are being asked to give limited support. I am reassured that, unless the circumstances were dramatic, the Prime Minister would return to the House to reconfirm any actions that the Government may take. However, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Sir Alan Duncan) said, the Prime Minister must have that flexibility to act in certain circumstances. I am pleased to be able to say that I support what he said.

This fight is not just abroad; it is also at home. I need some reassurances from the Government that we are not just going to send bombers from Cyprus to strike targets in Iraq and that we need to use our domestic resources to deter young Muslims from being recruited to this barbaric regime. We also need to be careful not to isolate our Muslim communities in our own country. Up and down this country, in the mosques and in our

constituents' homes, they are as concerned as we are about what is happening in Gaza, Israel, Iraq and Syria. We must not leave them behind.

In voting to support the Government tonight, however, my fear is that I have heard nothing today that makes me certain about the endgame. For us, Iraq is a never-ending story. I caution the Government because I do not want this country to be drawn into a never-ending war. I will support the Government tonight. Our thoughts must be with those people who are held hostage by this terror regime, the people who are victims of it and the people who are going to put their lives on the line fighting it.

2.52 pm

Dan Jarvis (Barnsley Central) (Lab): The decision that we will take today is the most difficult that this House could face: whether to commit our armed forces to conflict. I believe that the use of military force must be a last resort. We must resort to military force only when all political, economic and diplomatic routes have been exhausted. However, the complex nature of the threat that we face and the evil perpetrated by ISIL cannot be confronted by political, economic and diplomatic means alone.

During the debate, it is important that we consider the lessons of history and understand that, whatever we decide, there will be consequences. We know well the possible consequences of military action. We will be entering a situation that we cannot fully control. Nor do we know for certain where our involvement will end. In the short term, we should be prepared for the fact that it might increase the risk against our country. ISIL cannot be defeated overnight and we will need fortitude and resolve over the coming days, weeks, months and potentially years.

However, there are consequences of not acting, too. If left unchallenged, ISIL will continue to sow its seeds of destruction throughout the middle east. Its ambition, though, is not limited to Iraq and Syria. It has already murdered a British citizen and if we do not confront it now, its murderous activities in the region could be exported further afield, including to our shores. Therefore, having very carefully considered the different courses of action, based on the information presented, I believe that the risk of not acting is greater. But if we are to act, we must ensure that our intervention conforms to certain criteria—that it is legal, legitimate and proportionate—and that any use of force brings with it a clear prospect of success in defeating ISIL's capabilities, and comes with a clearly defined mission, end-state and exit strategy.

We should be clear, however, that air strikes in Iraq can be only one strand of a much wider strategy and that on their own they will not be sufficient to defeat ISIL. Achieving decisive success is only likely to come through subsequent action, and from regional forces taking action on the ground in Syria as well as in Iraq. So we should play our part in helping to build and sustain the wider coalition from across the region, and we should provide support to those contributing partner-nations where we are able to do so. However, there needs to be a wider, encompassing political framework, with a clear plan—both for the immediate aftermath and the longer term—to provide humanitarian aid and reconstruction.

Jonathan Ashworth: My hon. Friend speaks with great authority on these matters. Regarding the regional actors, does he agree that, although it is welcome that five Arab nations are involved in this mission, they should do all they can to stem the flow of donations from their own citizens to ISIL that has been going on?

Dan Jarvis: I am grateful for that intervention and I absolutely agree that all those regional partner-nations must do everything they can, as we must.

The point that I was making is that military force on its own will not be enough. There needs to be a wider, encompassing political framework, with a plan for humanitarian aid and reconstruction, which will ultimately lead us to create a stronger and more accountable Iraqi Government as part of a wider settlement in the middle east. We should contribute to that work, but ultimately it will be for the countries of the region to ensure long-term peace and stability.

In the midst of this important debate, we should reflect on the service of our armed forces and on what we will ask them to do. I believe that throughout the country, whether people agree or disagree with the action being proposed today, our armed forces will always be held in the highest regard. They represent the best of our country and we have a lifelong commitment to supporting them in every way we can.

The judgments we are making are difficult, and there are no easy answers to the situation we find ourselves in. I do not relish the action that we are taking. Like Members from across the House, I come to this debate with a heavy heart, and I am mindful of the risks and uncertainties that undoubtedly lie ahead. However, it is in our national interest to act; it is in the interest of the people of Iraq to act; and it is in the interest of peace and stability in the middle east that we act. That is why I will support the Government motion today.

2.57 pm

Rory Stewart (Penrith and The Border) (Con): Members of the House have laid out, with enormous ingenuity, the complexity of this situation; we have heard about everything from Turkey almost to Turkmenistan. In the end, however, this is a relatively simple motion and we should support the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in the decision that they are making, for two reasons: one is that air strikes, in and of themselves, are a sensible response to the problem that we face; and the second is the caution and the focus that they bring to the issue of defining the wider mission.

Air strikes are sensible because, as I discovered with my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi) when we stood on the front line looking at the Islamic State, it is clear that essentially what had happened is that an advance across open desert territory, using Humvees and artillery, had been driven back quite easily with air strikes. Those US air strikes of three or four weeks ago achieved the result of preventing people from taking Irbil, and of ensuring that 450,000 refugees currently located inside Kurdistan were protected from the advance of the Islamic State. If nothing else is achieved, that containment is worth while, and the Royal Air Force's participation in that process would be not only legal but moderate. It would be a reasonable undertaking, not only to defend our troops but to achieve an important humanitarian objective.

Richard Benyon (Newbury) (Con): Does my hon. Friend therefore disagree with the hon. Member for Bradford West (George Galloway) who said that this is a force that cannot be contained by air attack because it has no presence on the ground? My hon. Friend's experience would rather suggest the opposite.

Rory Stewart: That is a very good question. The answer, of course, is that outside the heartland of the Islamic State, which is basically the Sunni areas of eastern Syria and western Iraq, it is very vulnerable. When it moves across open terrain towards Shi'a-controlled areas around Baghdad or into Kurdistan, it is out miles into the desert. It has nobody to move among. This idea that the hon. Member for Bradford West (George Galloway) presented of it swimming among the population makes sense only in the areas around the Sunni triangle—Mosul, Deir ez-Zor, Raqqa—but does not make any sense in the Kurdish and the Shi'a areas. So the notion of containing through air strikes is sensible.

The second issue—because I think almost everybody in the House has agreed to vote for these air strikes—is the much bigger issue of destroying the Islamic State. Here, what has been very impressive in this debate is the caution that has been shown in making promises about our ability to do that. We have been here before. These people whom we are fighting in western Iraq are very, very similar to al-Qaeda in Iraq, whom we fought between 2007 and 2009. We are facing an increased, exaggerated version of the same problem.

Problem No. 1 is that we do not control the borders. That is most obvious in relation to Syria, but we also have a problem with Turkey. Problem No. 2 is that there is no trust currently among the Sunni population in the Government in Baghdad. They will find it very difficult—even more difficult than they did in 2007—to trust us again. The third problem is that there is very limited will among the Iraqi army to get into those areas. The Shi'a elements of the Iraqi army will be reluctant to go into Mosul. Kurds will be reluctant to go into Mosul, and even if they could be convinced to do so, they would find it difficult to hold those areas because they would be perceived as an alien occupying force. That means, therefore, that all the hon. and right hon. Members who have spoken about a political solution and a regional solution must be right, but we cannot underestimate the difficulty of that.

Mr Richard Bacon (South Norfolk) (Con): What does my hon. Friend say to our hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr Holloway) who is quoted in *The Guardian* this morning as saying that if we start bombing we are bombing

“exactly the people you are going to need to get rid of Isis.”?

He was referring to the Iraqi Sunni tribesmen.

Rory Stewart: It is a good challenge. The answer is that air strikes need to be focused primarily on containing the advance of the Islamic State territories, and secondly, attacks need to be targeted against terrorist locations. But they cannot be the platform or the foundation of a counter-insurgency strategy. That needs to come from the region.

Just to move towards an end, the fundamental problem is that the Sunni states in the region believe that the Islamic State is an opponent of Iran. This is, in the end,

[Rory Stewart]

to do with suspicions between the Sunni states and Iran. As we have heard today, it does not matter how many planes we see flying around, the reality remains that Turkey has not yet committed to engaging in this. This is vital. We still see financial flows coming out of the Gulf directly into the Islamic State. Unless we can find a way of beginning to get the structures in place—structures which involve, first, trust between Iran and those other actors; secondly, some trust from the Sunni people on the ground on the future of their states—we have no future there. That is not a military problem but a diplomatic and political problem. Therefore, the challenge for the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister is to put those planks in place. If we are serious about these things—and we have the Arabists—we could get the money. People are worried about the budget for this; the Gulf states would write a £50 million or £100 million cheque to finance the teams to do that. It is slow, patient work. We must get out of the black and white mentality of engagement or isolation, surge and withdrawal, and instead show, through a light, long-term diplomatic and political footprint, the seriousness that should define this nation.

3.4 pm

Shabana Mahmood (Birmingham, Ladywood) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the debate today. I will support the motion before the House, but I do so with deep concern and real worry about the future. That is not because I do not want ISIL to be destroyed—I do—but because I believe that our history in Iraq, with the war of 2003, has eroded trust, created suspicion about our motives for getting involved and perhaps caused some of the factors that has led us to where we are today. Without genuine, prolonged efforts to achieve a political settlement, I have fears about where this may ultimately end. I am deeply concerned about the potential scale of civilian deaths that may occur, bearing in mind the scale of those that have already occurred and that are occurring even as we speak. Such decisions are deeply difficult—I often feel that we have to choose between the lesser of two evils—but a political solution is the only way to ensure that peace can be won and, in the end, that it can be a lasting peace.

The starting point for making my decision is that those in ISIL are fanatics and monsters; they are not Muslims. They have hijacked the name of Islam, the religion that I, as well as tens of thousands of my constituents and hundreds of thousands of British Muslims, follow and practice, and which we all love. They have hijacked and dishonoured the name of our religion. I am a Sunni Muslim, like the majority of British Muslims, and like them I abhor and am repulsed by the fact that those in ISIL describe themselves as true Sunni Muslims: they are not, and we reject them utterly.

Stephen Doughty: My hon. Friend is making a crucial point. Will she join me in welcoming the fact that in Cardiff, as well as in many communities throughout the UK, Muslim leaders from across the Muslim spectrum and leaders from other communities and faiths have come together to condemn ISIL's activities not only in Iraq and Syria, but in recruiting and perverting young people in this country?

Shabana Mahmood: My hon. Friend makes an important point. The coming together of the wider community has been welcome and much needed. He also makes an important point about the radicalisation of young British Muslims. We must be alive to the risk that all this action might also create such radicalisation.

I have to say that the anger and hurt of the wider Muslim community both here and abroad is secondary to the pain, the death and the destruction that ISIL has visited on its victims, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. The rightful place for those in ISIL is behind bars or 6-foot under the earth.

What then should we do? In making my decision, I have taken into account both the nature of ISIL, which I have already set out, and the fact that the action we are being asked to approve is legal. Such action is at the request of a democratically elected Government, so the situation is very different in nature from that in 2003. A sovereign state has asked for help that we can provide, and we should therefore provide it. I do, however, have concerns. The Prime Minister gave assurances on some of the issues when he opened the debate, but we in this House should continue to press the Government on such matters.

My first concern relates to the Iraqi Government. The hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Rory Stewart) raised important and powerfully made points about the difficulty of the task. I am not under any illusions about how difficult it will be, but the Government must be one for all of Iraqi society, and one in which they all feel that they have a stake. Otherwise, there will be no future for Iraq as it currently exists. They will have to consider splitting it up into two or three countries, with each group being given its own homeland. If they do not want to break up, they will have to consider some sort of constitutional settlement involving a form of federation or on the basis of the kind of constitutional debates that we are now having about our future. They will have to come to a resolution, and we must support them in doing so.

The Iraqi army must demonstrate that it is willing and capable of protecting all Iraqis, including the Sunnis in the south of the country who are under attack from Shi'a militias. There must be even-handedness if we are to win the wider and harder battle for hearts and minds that has to be won. ISIL is presenting itself as the true protector of Sunni Muslims in that area, and we should tackle that head on, so the Iraqi army must be able to meet that call. If the Iraqi army and Government can demonstrate that they will protect and include all minorities, we can move a long way towards the stability needed both to win the fight before us today and, in the end, to win the peace.

I must give a note of caution about some of our coalition partners. It is welcome and important that they are all onboard, but we cannot be blind to the regional dynamics that exist between the different groupings, and we must be alive to the risks that such dynamics pose. However, a sovereign state has asked for help, and I think that we must all answer that call.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Order. Before I call the next speaker, I advise Members that we will be dropping to a three-minute limit. If people can try to

shave a little more off their speeches, we will get everybody in. The limit is four minutes now but will drop to three minutes after the next speaker.

3.9 pm

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): Among the many important comments made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Shabana Mahmood) was her statement that ISIL likes to place itself at the head of the Sunni Muslim community. That is why it is so absolutely essential that the Sunni Muslim regional partners of this Government must be at the forefront of any military action against what can be interpreted as the Sunni Muslim states. A great deal of what organisations such as al-Qaeda and ISIL do is deliberately provocative. They wish to provoke actions that will enable them to represent the ensuing conflict as one of infidel crusaders invading Muslim lands, which is a trap that we must at all costs try to avoid.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan) observed in her excellent speech, some of us are now about to vote for the fourth time on intervention in the middle east. The first time that I voted was in favour of war in Iraq, primarily because I believed what I was told about weapons of mass destruction. I must admit, however, that at the back of my mind was the thought that somewhere in Iraq were a great many moderate, democratic forces just waiting to be liberated from the oppressive rule of Saddam Hussein. I am afraid that experience taught me better, because, following the downfall of Saddam Hussein, the age-old enmity between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims came to the fore and we found ourselves in a strange triangular relationship with two forces, which in their most fundamentalist forms are highly unattractive and certainly no friends of democracy.

Indeed, the right hon. Member for Neath (Mr Hain) made the point well when he compared the situation to what happened in 1941, when the choice was made for us that the menace of Soviet communism, which frightened the west during the inter-war years, ended up being our ally because of the Nazis' invasion of Russia. The trouble with a triangular relationship with two types of force, neither of which is friendly to democracy, is that there are no good outcomes. One can only try to arrange for the least worst outcome. We know what happened with the second world war and that it was the least worst outcome, but it still meant that half of Europe was enslaved under communism for decades.

Rory Stewart: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dr Julian Lewis: I am happy to give way.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman took seven minutes in speaking. If he wants to intervene, he should remember that other Members have not yet spoken.

Rory Stewart: I apologise.

Dr Julian Lewis: I shall proceed.

Where are we with the current situation? When I was asked before this debate whether I would support the motion, I said that I would do so provided that the Government came forward with an integrated strategy

in support of credible forces on the ground. I intervened on the Prime Minister earlier and I am glad that he is here to hear me make a point now. I asked him which Sunni forces would be on the ground for us to support. At the moment, he has only been able to come back to us with Iraqi and Kurdish forces. I must say to him that if our strategy is to get anywhere in the long term, the Arab League and the regional powers must step up and make their contribution. We cannot do it, because that would play into the hands of the Islamists.

I will be supporting the motion, with reluctance and a heavy heart, because I know that there are no good outcomes. It is a mistake to think that we can get rid of this organisation from places such as Syria and cosy up to Iran while thinking that we can pull down Assad. Those things are not compatible with each other. It is a bit of a George Orwell situation with three powers constantly shifting. The only answer to dealing with such things is the practical answer of the balance of power. We have to ensure that Sunnis cannot dominate Shi'as and that Shi'as cannot dominate Sunnis to excess.

3.14 pm

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): This is the third time during my lifetime in Parliament that I have been asked to vote to invade or bomb Iraq. I have voted against on previous occasions, and I will not support the motion today. I ask the House to think a little more deeply about what we have done in the past and what the effects have been. We have still not even had the results of the Chilcot inquiry.

The current crisis descends from the war on terror, the ramifications of which have been vast military expenditure by western countries and the growth of jihadist forces in many parts of the world. Many people have lost their lives, and many more have had their lives totally disrupted and are fleeing warzones to try to gain a place of safety. Only two weeks ago, it was reported that 500 migrants had died trying to cross the Mediterranean to get into Malta, and many die every day trying to get to Lampedusa. Many of those people are victims of wars throughout the region for which we in this House have voted, be it the bombing of Iraq, the bombing of Libya, the intervention in Mali or the earlier intervention in Afghanistan.

We need to give a moment's thought to where the problems come from. The growth of the Taliban came from 1979, when the west decided to support the opposition in Afghanistan. The Taliban morphed into al-Qaeda, which then morphed into various other forces in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, and of course into the current group, ISIL. That is an absolutely appalling group of people—there is no question whatever about that. Their behaviour, with the beheading and abuse of people, is quite appalling.

Chris Williamson (Derby North) (Lab): Will my hon. Friend comment on the argument that the air strikes have so far prevented the expansion of ISIL forces? Would more air strikes go further in preventing ISIL from taking more ground?

Jeremy Corbyn: The air strikes have had some effect, but I do not believe that further air strikes and the deepening of our involvement will solve the problem. I will come to that in a moment, if I may.

[Jeremy Corbyn]

We are right to talk about ISIL's appalling human rights record, but we should be careful with whom we walk. The Prime Minister pointed out that there had been a ministerial visit to Saudi Arabia to get it on side in the current conflict. We sell an awful lot of arms to Saudi Arabia, and there is an awful lot of Saudi money in London in property speculation and various other investments. Saudi Arabia routinely beheads people in public every Friday, executing them for sex outside marriage, religious conversion and a whole lot of other things, but we have very little to say about human rights abuses there because of the economic link with Saudi Arabia. If we are to go to war on the basis of abuses of human rights, we should have some degree of consistency in our approach.

One should be cautious of the idea that bombing will be cost-free and effective. There was a military attack in Tikrit on 1 September, as reported by Human Rights Watch. It was an attempt to strike at a supposed ISIL base of some sort in a school. It resulted in 31 people being killed, none of whom was involved in ISIL, which was nowhere near. We will get more of that.

I believe that the motion that we are being asked to support will lead us into one war after another. There has to be a political solution and political development in the region. I have had a lot of e-mails on the subject, including one this morning from a lady aged 91 that said, "War begets violence, which begets the next war." We need to take a different stance.

3.19 pm

Martin Horwood (Cheltenham) (LD): On the subject of Islam, I should say that the Leader of the Opposition was exactly right to emphasise that ISIL kills Muslims and that the Prime Minister was exactly right to emphasise that a Muslim Government have asked us for help. We are confronting ISIL, not Islam. We are not even confronting mediaeval Islam, which some speeches have mentioned. Mediaeval Islam was a pinnacle of civilisation when we were in the dark ages, and we owe it a huge intellectual debt. To compare it to the murderous extremists of ISIL is to do something of an injustice to that heritage.

Four useful tests could be set for British military intervention overseas, only one of which was barely met in the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The first is a parliamentary vote, so I warmly welcome the recall of Parliament today. There has been enough discussion about what would happen under urgent circumstances and where discretionary flexibility might be needed; we now need to make the case for a proper statutory framework for these votes and set out the circumstances in which Parliament votes for military action as well as what I hope would be the rare exceptions when that would not be necessary.

The second test is a clear legal and humanitarian case. Many others, especially the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve), the former Attorney-General, have made that case much more eloquently than I could. I am glad that this year the Government have taken the time and care to make that case clearly to the House.

The third test is broad regional support. I welcome the support of Sunni states in the Gulf, although, like the hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn),

I have misgivings about some of them. I welcome Jordan's participation in the coalition. Turkey's would be even better, and explicit support from the Arab League would be better still, although its secretary-general has made supportive comments about the need to confront ISIL militarily.

I am afraid that I would draw the line at Iran, not because I do not support engagement with it—that is very important—but simply because many Sunnis in the region would feel that Iran has intervened quite enough in their countries for the time being. As the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) and the right hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton (Mr Meacher) said, we have to make strenuous diplomatic efforts to resolve what is in effect a cold war between Saudi Arabia and Iran that has blighted the region for years. We need to make every effort to draw moderate—or relatively moderate—opinion in those two states closer together to reach some kind of accommodation.

The fourth test is a long-term plan. There is not time to explain what that should be, but it should apply to Syria as well as Iraq. It has to apply across the region, where we should seek every opportunity to support moderate, democratic opinion—including in Israel-Palestine, where we should give more support more consistently to Mahmoud Abbas, who is trying to pursue the path of peace, not of bombs, rockets and massacres.

3.22 pm

Angus Robertson (Moray) (SNP): My apologies, Mr Speaker, for having missed the early part of today's proceedings. Both sides of the House have agreed on the brutality, cruelty, inhumanity and misogyny of ISIL. We all want that organisation to disappear. We want people living under its yoke to be freed. No other families, regardless of where they are, should face the situation of loved ones being executed, beheaded or treated in any such way.

A strong case has been made from many corners of the House that something needs to be done. I agree. We need to support the Iraqi Government—hopefully, a Government not pursuing sectarian politics. We need to support the Kurdish government and stop equivocating just because it may pursue self-determination in future. We need to support regional responsibility, stability, economic development and a stand against extremism from the neighbouring countries. Furthermore, it would be far better if there were an express United Nations motion covering all of this.

It goes without saying that in all corners of the House we support our armed forces. The case has been made that we should try to contain and degrade ISIL's capability—its money and where it gets its weapons and matériel from. We need to do everything to counter radicalisation at home and abroad, and to bring people to justice. We need to do all those things.

However, a great many people listening to proceedings today will share all the revulsion at ISIL yet have a deep, deep scepticism about the potential for mission creep and for a green light for a third Iraq war. People out there are right to be sceptical. We have heard strong justifications in recent years for intervention but very little about the longer-term outcomes. Afghanistan—how long were we there for? In Iraq, there was the issue of

WMD. Action in Libya was for humanitarian purposes, but now there is total anarchy. Now there is Iraq again, moving swiftly on to Syria. It is important to bear all such issues in mind. Where is the plan? What next? What happens after the bombing has started?

The motion is very clear, and I urge Members to read it. It supports bombing, but it contains not a single mention of a strategy or plan to win the peace. It asks for a green light for military action that could last for years, and it makes no commitment to post-conflict resolution. For that reason, my party will not be able to support the motion, and we will vote against the Government this evening.

3.25 pm

Sir James Paice (South East Cambridgeshire) (Con): We have heard some erudite and persuasive speeches from Members who have far more knowledge of the region than I do. There seems to be little doubt that the House will support the motion; I strongly welcome that, and I shall do the same. I do not intend to try to persuade the House of the evils of ISIL or of the need to bomb or to do anything, but I want to flag up three aspects that I hope the Government will bear in mind. I particularly welcomed the speeches made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke)—who, as one would have expected, covered the issues extremely well—and my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell), and it is in the same vein that I shall speak briefly about the fact that we may need to do more.

First, although I am sure that we all strongly welcome the tremendous coalition involving so many other Arab states, including Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, I hope that the Deputy Prime Minister, when he winds up the debate, will be able to address some of the stories that are going round. It is being suggested that the support from some of those countries is pretty lukewarm, and that their participation in the air strikes has been pretty small. Indeed, some have accused them of doing little more than flying around. It would be useful to know precisely their role. I also hope that the Deputy Prime Minister will address the financial issue. It is all very well to say “They should stop buying the oil” when financial institutions and mechanisms are turning that oil into the flow of cash that is buying the weapons, and so forth, for ISIL. I hope that pressure can be brought to bear so that the situation can be dealt with through those financial institutions.

My second point relates to the Prime Minister’s wholly understandable commitment that we should not put British troops on the ground. I firmly believe that we should always retain some element of surprise, and that—here I use a phrase that has already been used—if we will the end, we need to will the means. I do not want to see British troops on the ground. I entirely agree that it is up to the Iraqi army and the peshmerga to be the troops on the ground, and to take back the ground that, hopefully, air strikes will liberate. Nevertheless, I am not sure that it is wise to rule out the issue of troops on the ground for ever and a day, which I think is what we are doing.

My final point concerns Syria. I am sure that the Prime Minister will come back to the House to deal with the subject—as, indeed, I believe that he should—but

I think that, before doing so, he needs to address the fundamental question of how we can attack ISIL in Syria without being seen as in some way supporting the Assad regime, when we are supporting the Free Syrian Army at the same time. I am afraid that there is still a small lacuna in policy, as I understand it, on that issue.

3.28 pm

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): Although its origins lie in Islamist jihadist groups in Iraq and elsewhere, ISIL is not an Islamic organisation; nor is it a state. I think that our media should stop referring to it by using its self-description, and I am glad that the motion does not use those words.

I want to make two points in the limited time that is available to me. This criminal caliphate cult—for that is what it is—is a threat to all the communities in the region, and, because of the 15,000 foreign fighters who have been attracted to it, including 3,000 European Union citizens, it is a threat to us. I have a large number of Muslim constituents, and—I cannot go any further than this—there are people in my borough who have been arrested, detained or imprisoned for terrorist offences. It is vital that we do not take action that gives the narrative that we are against Islam; we are not. We are fighting to defend Islam and Muslims in the middle east region and also in this country. The worst crimes of this brutal terrorist organisation are being carried out against Islamic women.

Finally, on the Kurds, I am pleased that the British Government are now giving the support that they should have given earlier to the Kurdistan Regional Government, and that we are seen by the Kurds as a friend.

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): My hon. Friend is right to raise the plight of the Kurds. Does he also agree that they need not just military assistance, but humanitarian assistance? There are hundreds of thousands of them fleeing both Syria and Kurdish-controlled Iraq.

Mike Gapes: I went to the KRG last year. I visited the area of Dohuk and the Domiz refugee camp. At that time, there were about 150,000 Syrian Kurdish refugees, half of whom were living with families in the city of Dohuk, and the other half in a well-organised refugee camp. Now, there are many more. There were 250,000 Syrian Kurds who fled last year. Now it is estimated that the KRG, which has a population of about 4.5 million people, has taken in 1.4 million refugees or displaced people from the rest of Iraq. Similar stories apply in other countries in the region. The Kurds have taken in Christians, Yazidis, Sunnis and Shi’as. They have not discriminated; they care about humanity. This is a functioning democratic society that needs our support, investment and humanitarian assistance. Above all, the brave but lightly armed peshmerga who have put themselves on the line need far more equipment and training.

A few weeks ago, the capital city of the KRG, Irbil, was potentially going to be swept aside. The Americans and others were thinking about evacuating personnel. It was only because of the peshmerga’s bravery that the KRG was kept safe. It is vital that ISIL is driven back, defeated and ultimately eliminated. The ideology it represents has to be challenged not just by us but by those from within the Muslim world—the imams, the various mosques, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and elsewhere.

3.32 pm

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): There can be and is no greater responsibility for Parliament than when committing combat troops—armed forces—to battle. As such, we are absolutely right to scrutinise and examine the evidence and to ask the questions. I am afraid that there are certain questions that remain unanswered, and I hope that the Deputy Prime Minister will address them when he winds up the debate.

A key concern is that there seems to be a lack of a co-ordinated plan, particularly when it comes to the military and political aspects. As a soldier, clarity of mission and a clear exit strategy are absolutely essential, and yet that is not what we seem to have here. We all accept that military intervention—air strikes—alone will not defeat IS, but what is not clear is what plan B is if there are no ground forces to follow through and take and hold ground. I am talking about local and regional ground forces. Because there is a real danger that if the Iraqi army is not fit for purpose and cannot take and hold ground, the air strikes themselves become not only ineffective but actually counter-productive, especially if civilian casualties mount, and especially if IS will be able to spin that they have withstood the might of the west and held ground. There is a real danger here, without a co-ordinated military plan, that we are going to go up a cul-de-sac with no successful exit strategy.

But I also suggest that the politics is not right. It is very clear that one of the major reasons for IS's success in the north of the country is that the Sunni minorities feel alienated. We have had a change in leadership—the sectarian al-Maliki has gone—but the next tier of politicians, who were responsible for implementing that sectarian politics, have largely remained in place. There has been no clear-out, and without a political solution, without the hearts and minds accompanying a military campaign, any military successes on the ground could be very short-lived.

We must learn from the errors in the past with regard to just knocking the door down and in effect walking away, because if we do not, we shall yet again make fundamental errors.

3.36 pm

Mr Jamie Reed (Copeland) (Lab): I shall be brief. I support the motion and I commend both the case made by the Prime Minister and the excellent case for support made by the Leader of the Opposition. There has been a great deal of unanimity in the comments and contributions from across the House, but I have some concerns about the debate so far, like the hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron), and hope that the Deputy Prime Minister will be able to address those.

First, we must be absolutely clear with the British people. Our support for intervention is morally, strategically and politically right, but we have to be clear: we do not fully know how this will end. As is usually the case, this plan will not survive contact with the enemy. We need to be frank about that—frank, too, about the potential consequences. We must never again see soft and hard power as separate strategies. The lesson of the 21st century has been that hard power without soft power is disastrous, and that soft power without the prospect of hard power is too often pointless. Nobody in the House wants to

write a blank cheque, morally, strategically or financially. The motion seeks to avoid that, but the motion will not be on the battlefield.

We will return to these issues before a general election, I am sure, to discuss them again, perhaps with regard to further intervention. That is the truth. When the Deputy Prime Minister concludes, I hope he will be able to tell us what assessment the Government have made regarding the potential domestic consequences of our intervention. The public would expect that, and surely some assessment has been made.

Finally, were I a Muslim Briton, I would feel under siege in my own country—marginalised, treated with suspicion and caution, even contempt, for more years now than I would care to remember. As a Parliament, and as a legislature, we need to do more to reach out to our Muslim countrymen. We have to let them know that we know that the extremism we are fighting against is as alien to them as it is to everyone else in this country. We do not do that enough, and I hope that the Deputy Prime Minister will ensure that he does so when he concludes the debate.

I support the motion, but it deliberately avoids a series of difficult questions that demand some extremely difficult answers. We will, I am certain, return to these issues very soon, but fundamentally, we must deal with the world as it is, not as we would like it to be.

3.38 pm

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): There have been many good speeches today, some at different volumes. I only wish to contribute three main points, first on the justification of military action, secondly on the question of ISIL and Islam, and thirdly on the longer-term plan.

On the first point, I have always believed that there are only two ways to justify military action: the first is self-defence and the second is protecting other states in their self-defence. In the case of the motion, there is both self-defence—citizens have already been captured and executed—and the Iraqi Government's request for our help in protecting their state against a brutal invasion.

On the second point, it is incredibly important for the cohesion of our country that no one confuses the action we are taking against ISIL for an expression of our views on Islam. Today the leaders of the Muslim community in Gloucester, in my constituency, have published a letter in the *Gloucester Citizen* which highlights their views:

“Muslim communities in Gloucester today together speak out over the evils of terrorism and condemn the horrific atrocities falsely committed in the name of Islam in Iraq and Syria.”

This is important because, as President Obama and our own Prime Minister have stressed, we should be working with Muslim communities and not allowing this legal action to become a wedge between them and the rest of us. I hope that the Deputy Prime Minister will agree that there is more to be done on this on both sides.

On the way ahead, the motion is clear that our plan of action is to support

“the Government of Iraq in protecting civilians and restoring its territorial integrity”.

For me, that is enough for now. I strongly believe that the answer to the question, “Should we be sending Tornados everywhere in the world where barbarous terrorists strike?”, is that, as the Leader of the House,

then Foreign Secretary, once said, "Just because we cannot intervene everywhere does not mean we should never intervene anywhere." We do so today in a coalition of regional countries and two other permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, at the specific request of the Government of Iraq. There is no doubt that a significant effort will be required to bring about what Ban Ki-moon said in the great quotation that the Prime Minister repeated regarding the strength of Governments in defeating terrorism. There is a huge amount of work to be done on that.

In his guide to the causes of war, the historian Sir Michael Howard wrote:

"Force, or the threat of it, may not settle arguments, but it does play a considerable part in determining the structure of the world in which we live."

Let us therefore hope that in supporting this motion, the action we take will help to bring about a structure in Iraq in which all peoples can work together peacefully.

3.41 pm

Paul Flynn (Newport West) (Lab): This motion is the thin end of a bloody and ugly wedge that will grow and expand and mission-creep into a prolonged war with unforeseeable consequences. In the middle east, we are falling into a vortex of hatreds that are ancient and deep. Once we start this process, it will be almost impossible to extricate ourselves from it in future.

We speak under various delusions, one of which is a feeling of omnipotence in thinking that our presence is absolutely essential, although we do have a contribution to make. During the 2003 war in the Gulf, we were told that we had to go in because otherwise Saddam Hussein would continue, but that was not the case because the Americans were already there. The Americans, to our great gratitude, are there now. That country has sacrificed more of its sons and daughters in seeking democracy for the people of other countries than any other land in the world. We should look to having our own policies. Why cannot we become independent in our foreign policy? We have not done that since the time of Vietnam, but that means there is a terrible prospect for us, and we are facing it now.

The result of the war in Iraq was to deepen the sense of suspicion and alienation between the western Christian communities and the eastern Muslim communities. When we went in into Iraq in 2003, only a minority were involved in al-Qaeda, and they hardly figured at all. Now we find, to our horror, that young children who were born here, brought up here and absorbed our values through education are suddenly, in their adolescent years, having their idealism twisted and marching off to behave like mediaeval barbarians. How on earth has this happened? It has not happened because of the mosques or the imams, who were not much in touch with them, but because of the internet and the propaganda that comes from it. That is the source of this evil.

Once people become radicalised in this way and lose all their standards of common humanity, as they are doing in ISIL now, there is no question but that they will come back here. We are living in a world of a war in which on one side there are marvellous, sophisticated, clever weapons, but those are not needed to fight terrorist activity. It did not need a nuclear weapon to bring down the twin towers or a smart bomb to murder a soldier on

the streets of Britain. In this asymmetric warfare, there is no military solution. That solution will bring its own consequences in more terror. We must look to having an independent foreign policy free from the United States.

3.45 pm

Nadhim Zahawi (Stratford-on-Avon) (Con): I draw the House's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Interests; I am co-chairman of the all-party group for Kurdistan and vice-chairman of the all-party group for Iraq.

There is no forgetting that, over the past two decades, the UK has spent a total of 16 years at war in Iraq, nor the profound effect that that has had on our national psyche. It is, I am sure, the source of the hesitation that some right hon. and hon. Members will be feeling today.

ISIL is a contagion and we are right to join our coalition partners in air strikes. Effectively targeted air strikes degrade ISIL's war fighting capabilities and dismantle its command and control structures. They will do much, but we must not be lulled into the sense that they alone will provide a clinical clear-cut victory. They can be only one aspect of an overall strategy. Intervention is complicated, its results unpredictable. We only have to look to Libya to see that. But it is impossible to mitigate all of the dangers. Instead, we have to take the long view. Fundamentally this is a conflict management situation. It is not about bringing a decisive end to the endemic disorder the region has faced over the past century.

Mr Bacon: Is not the endemic disorder partly a result of the borders imposed by the west 100 years ago? Is it obvious, as many seem to think, that the current borders of the nation state of Iraq are the right way to go?

Nadhim Zahawi: My hon. Friend raises an important point. The Kurds have given themselves three months to see whether the new unity Government will work. We have to be aware that our strategy relies on the actions of others and we must be prepared actively to contend with both sudden changes in regional dynamics and evolving long-term agendas. Will Turkey come off the fence and offer a definitive contribution? Will Saudi clerics make the ideological and religious arguments necessary to counter this violent extremism? Are Qatar and Kuwait ready to stop the flow of funds to ISIL? To what extent can Iran be relied upon to act pragmatically? By linking nuclear negotiations to actions on ISIL, Iran endangers a backlash from both Riyadh and, of course, Tel Aviv, and potentially compromises any shared gains.

Fundamentally, can the Iraqi Government introduce the changes in quality and equality of governance required? Are they prepared to introduce a new form of federalism, honesty and equity on revenue sharing and meaningful economic reform and to settle outstanding constitutional questions? Such intertwined forces will require creative thinking by our diplomats. My hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Rory Stewart) pointed out clearly what we needed to do to resource these diplomats. They, of course, need to consider all the options that are open to them. What if the grand coalition that has been put together does not work? What is plan B? In Washington our colleagues are beginning to think about these options and we must do, too.

[*Nadhim Zahawi*]

The choice between boots on the ground and heads in the sand is a false dichotomy. Destroying ISIL is something only the people of the region can accomplish. But if we can buy them some time and space to do that, I think we should.

3.48 pm

John Woodcock (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op): I will be supporting the motion today. We are right to demand a coherent and effective strategy but on the bigger issue of whether to act at all, the question I ask is this: if we are not prepared to take on monsters such as these when they threaten our citizens, our interests and our entire value system, and if we accept that there can be no accommodation with them at all, when exactly would we be prepared to act? I respect the Prime Minister for being clear today that this campaign may last several years. We must authorise action in the knowledge of the lives, military and civilian, that may be lost. But it is right that we strike now, at a time when extremists have made great advances but do not yet have the secure foothold in the region that they need. They control Iraq's second city but not yet the full apparatus of statehood.

We should recognise the legacy of the botched vote on Syria last year. I know that there are different views on this. But for my part, the failure of US and UK resolve did not magically trigger this chemical weapon breakthrough, as some suggest; it emboldened extremists by showing them that the bar for action against their terror was that much higher.

We must dispel confusion about the forces fighting in Syria. It is demeaning and wrong to hear people say that last year, we were being asked to intervene on the side of ISIL. The moderate democratic Syrian opposition coalition were desperate for help in their two-fronted battle against a murderous dictator on one side, and the evil jihadis on the other. They are now beaten back but they are not cowed, and their forces will play an important part in degrading ISIL within Syria—if we can give them support through air strikes.

It is time for all sides in this debate to match laudable rhetoric with commitment. If we believe that the world must pursue ISIL until it is defeated; if we accept the legal case; if we support the action of other nations operating in the country; and if we think it morally wrong, as has been powerfully expressed today, for us to sit on the sidelines while others confront this evil, we must state our ambition now to put forward a strategy for action inside Syria too.

3.51 pm

Mr Richard Bacon (South Norfolk) (Con): For two thirds of my adult lifetime, we have been dropping bombs on Iraq, and as the hon. Member for Bradford West (George Galloway) said, actually, we have been doing it for 100 years. Each time we do it, we think it is going to make things better. The evidence suggests that each time we do it, we make things worse. I voted against the Iraq war in 2003 because I thought it would make things worse. The Deputy Prime Minister was not

a Member of Parliament at the time, but many Liberal Democrats did vote against it and they were right: it did make things worse.

The Leader of the Opposition countered the argument that if we do anything, we will make things worse by saying that if we pass by, we will make it harder to persuade Arab countries to play their part. I find that quite a difficult argument to understand. The House of Commons Library tells me that in the top 18 Muslim countries in the world, of which 13 are Arab—the other five are Muslim countries such as Pakistan and Indonesia—there are 2.8 million men under arms. It seems to me that if fellow Muslims—co-religionists—are being threatened in this part of Iraq and Syria, the first response would be from Muslim countries. Those top 18 Muslim countries—perhaps many others as well—would be the first to put their soldiers' lives on the line, although not necessarily all of them. Of course, not all of them would be available, but out of 2.8 million soldiers enough could probably be found to do the job, especially if other countries, including those in the west and in the Gulf, could be found to pay for them. They would not excite the natural suspicion and antagonism that will be aroused by any involvement by the west. However, that has not happened yet.

Perhaps the single most important contribution I have heard today was from the right hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton (Mr Meacher), who said that there are big questions to ask about the regional powers that have been supporting ISIL. That issue has hardly been touched on in the debate. We have heard that Turkey has yet to make up its mind, and there are big concerns that some of the Gulf states—and Saudi Arabia itself—are partly supporting ISIL.

The truth is that Islam faces its own version of the thirty years war. The idea that we can solve the problem by supporting one side in this war is absolutely delusional. It is only Muslims who can decide locally for themselves whether they wish to live together or to die together. There is a role for the United Nations and the five permanent members—including Russia and China—and we quite possibly could get a resolution through, including all five permanent members, if we but tried.

3.54 pm

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): When it comes to this military intervention in the middle east, we do not have to look in the crystal ball; we can read the book. I am all too familiar with the history of our last military intervention in the region, so I will not support the motion in the Lobby tonight. It is totally disingenuous of colleagues on either side to say that this is a choice between acting and not acting. It is a choice between what sort of action we take—whether we place the emphasis on these military interventions, which are in some ways for show, or on humanitarian and diplomatic work and, above all, on putting pressure on the great powers in the region to step up.

There is something that no one has mentioned: it is quite clear from what ISIL has done in filming the beheadings, putting them on YouTube and ensuring that they have English voice-overs that it is seeking to incite us to bomb. Why does that not give people pause? ISIL wants this to happen because it will make it the heroic Muslim defender against the crusader.

I do not need to repeat that air strikes on their own will not win a war against ISIL. We will need ground forces. We know that the Iraqi army is wholly inadequate. Inevitably, we will get drawn into Syria—the Prime Minister has admitted as much and has even said that he would wrap it up by saying that he was doing it on humanitarian grounds—but I have not heard much about Turkey and the Kurds. I have one of the largest Turkish-Kurdish communities in the country in north-east London, and I know that the Kurdish community has a long-held aspiration for a Kurdish state, which I support, but it would involve dismembering Syria, Turkey and Iraq. That explains some of Turkey's ambivalence about this issue.

Some people have said that this is not 2003. Sadly, this reminds me too much of 2003. Yes, it is legal, but there is the same rhetoric: national interest, surgical strikes and populations begging to be liberated. I think that it was Walpole who said of another war that the population are ringing the bells today, but they will be wringing their hands tomorrow. We know that the public want something to be done, but as this war wears on and as it drains us of millions and billions of pounds, the public will ask, "What are we doing there? How are we going to get out?" I cannot support this military intervention. I do not see the strategy, and I do not see the endgame.

3.57 pm

Mark Reckless (Rochester and Strood) (Con): Surely, humility and modesty should be our watchwords in this debate, if only because the reductions we have made to the size of our armed forces across the Army, Navy and, I am afraid, Air Force are so significant; yet we do not seem to have made the same reduction in our leading politicians' desire to intervene across the world with the relatively modest armed forces that we still have.

I am pleased that there has been quite a strongly pro-American tone in this debate—both from the left and the right—and President Obama has found the words to describe very impressively what the Americans are trying to do. I wish them enormously well in that, but the size of their forces and their ability to intervene is one, if not two orders of magnitude bigger than ours.

We need to think about our record in previous debates. It is only a year ago that we were debating a Government motion to bomb the other side in Syria. It is only three years ago that 557 hon. Members from across the House voted for the intervention in Libya. It is very difficult to say whether anything is better in Libya as a result because it is so dangerous that people cannot tell us what is going there. That suggests the answer may not be the one that we would wish.

A week or two ago, I went to Calais and met a gentleman, Peter, who had come from Ethiopia through Sudan and Libya to Lampedusa and was then moved on by Italians and left at Bologna to get a train to Paris and then Calais. He is one of thousands of such people. One thing at least that Gaddafi did not do was encourage those boats. He had an agreement with Italy and defended their borders. The change that we have had has not helped us.

We talk of the legitimate, democratic Government in Iraq, but we have pretty much a sectarian Shi'a Government. A little less than perhaps half of the people vote for

those parties. About a fifth of the country supports the Kurdish parties, which are happy to support the Shi'a regime, as long as they pretty much run things in Kurdistan. A fifth of the country is made up of the Sunnis who are disengaged, to put it at its mildest, from that process. The reason why we have this problem is that they prefer ISIL—or at least many of them do to one degree or another—to the Shi'a sectarian Government who were either persecuting them or not giving them a share of the spoils in that state.

Some people in the House—the right hon. Member for Neath (Mr Hain) is one; my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis) is another—have said that they regret their votes on the Iraq war in 2003, but I do not understand what the Prime Minister's position is. I would feel perhaps more prepared to support the Government if I knew whether he thinks that he made a mistake in 2003. Does he regret that vote, given what has happened, or is it something from which he does not resile? An answer to that would help, and we need to be modest and humble in our decision today.

4 pm

Mr Jeffrey M. Donaldson (Lagan Valley) (DUP): As my party leader, my right hon. Friend the Member for Belfast North (Mr Dodds), has indicated, we will support the motion. We wish our armed forces well in the actions they will be required to take. Like many right hon. and hon. Members, this is not the first time I have been called on to vote on whether we should go to war. If we look at past experiences, we will see that we would be challenged to fault the actions of our armed forces in carrying out the demands we have made of them. The problem we will see as we look back at some of the conflicts we have been involved in is how we have handled the politics afterwards and how we have gone about preventing further conflict in the future.

Jim Shannon: Theodore Roosevelt said:

"Speak softly and carry a big stick."

The west spoke softly when ISIS crossed into Iraq and when 100,000 Christians were expelled from Mosul with a "convert or die" ultimatum. Does my right hon. Friend feel there is only one option now, and that is to carry the big stick and wield it through military intervention?

Mr Donaldson: On this occasion I think that military intervention in Iraq in support of the Iraqi army and the peshmerga is justified, but how often are we going to be in this situation? I believe that a review of the strategic defence and security review is scheduled for next year, but should we not begin that review now, in the light of all that is happening in the world today, the downsizing of our armed forces and our capacity to respond to the situations we now constantly face? What if another front opens up? What is our capacity to deal with such a situation? As others have said, mission creep is also a concern when entering a conflict without any degree of certainty regarding an end date or a time scale. We need to look at the strategic defence and security review urgently and address whether we are on the right trajectory with regard to the strength and capacity of our armed forces to deal with the situations that confront us.

On the politics, there are clearly huge problems in Iraq and just appointing a new Prime Minister will not fix them in and of themselves. The sectarian issues—which

[Mr Donaldson]

are familiar to us in Northern Ireland—run deep in Iraq and we also need to take account of the Kurdish situation. The Northern Ireland Executive has a relationship with the Kurdish Regional Government through a memorandum of understanding and we have been working closely with them. We could do more to help not only the Kurds improve their governance arrangements in Iraq, but the Iraqi Government themselves. Too often, when our armed forces leave the battlefield we do not do enough to invest in the new politics required to enable the post-conflict transformation. We need to put more emphasis on the politics in the future.

The right hon. Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt) was absolutely right to say that we need to look at how we can counter this violent extremism. That means countering the narrative, and not just here in the United Kingdom. We need to look at strategies such as Prevent. Are we doing enough in the UK to counter radicalism? Arresting those who we believe or suspect to be involved in preparing for acts of terrorism is one thing, but getting to the root cause and source of that radicalism is something else, and we need to consider that. We also need to help the Arab nations to counter extremism. There is an opportunity, given our involvement in this conflict, to get alongside some of our Arab partners and to work with them to counter extremism and to create a more effective narrative than that which exists at present.

4.4 pm

Andrew Rosindell (Romford) (Con): The events taking place in Iraq and Syria are not simply an attack on our society and our way of life; such barbarism is an attack on humanity. The Prime Minister is right to say that Britain must play its part in defeating such evil. Throughout history, we in these islands, and indeed the entire English-speaking world, have stood firm against aggression in defence of freedom, and so we must again. The barbaric and cruel persecution of minority groups—especially Yazidis, Christians and, indeed, Muslims—that we are witnessing has no place in the world in which we live today.

The United Kingdom has unique military capabilities, which should be extended to preserve the lives of innocent civilians and ultimately to protect the lives of British people. Although it is right for the United Kingdom to provide humanitarian aid, such aid must be consolidated with steadfast military support, which must include providing Kurdish ground forces with suitable resources and delivering air strikes against ISIL.

Nadine Dorries (Mid Bedfordshire) (Con): Does my hon. Friend share my alarm at the fact that the territory controlled by ISIS is now larger than the United Kingdom?

Andrew Rosindell: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct, and that is why we must consider taking action in Syria as well as in the area in Iraq that ISIL controls. The Royal Air Force should be there alongside our allies in the United States, Australia and others leading the fight to crush those who seek to inflict such cruelty and wickedness on the people of the middle east. As the Prime Minister has said, the action is also about protecting our people and protecting the streets of Britain. We cannot

win the fight alone, and other nations, particularly Muslim and Arabic countries, must play their part. We have a global duty to stand together, and every nation dedicated to the cause of humanity must play its part. Walking by on the other side of the road is not an option for any nation in such tragic circumstances.

We must be uncompromising in guarding our own country and our own people. Whatever action is necessary to preserve the safety and security of the British people must be taken. It is right that the United Kingdom play an integral role in building a coalition of nations from across the world that are prepared to stand up to extremist Islamism. Although British action has the full support of Iraq's Government, we must also recognise that there is now no border between Iraq and Syria, and if battle must be taken there as well, so be it.

Mrs Caroline Spelman (Meriden) (Con): I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that RAF Akrotiri is only 100 miles from the Syrian border. Will he join me in reinforcing the importance of keeping safe all the dependants of the families who live at RAF Akrotiri and commending them on the role that they play?

Andrew Rosindell: I entirely support what my right hon. Friend has said. RAF Akrotiri is a British sovereign base area and an important overseas territory that we use in such conflicts. The people there must also be protected and looked after.

Many contributions today have played an important part in our debate. To sum up the situation that we face and the decision that we must make, there are no finer words than those spoken by Margaret Thatcher on 22 November 1990, when she told the House:

“To those who have never had to take such decisions, I say that they are taken with a heavy heart and in the knowledge of the manifold dangers, but with tremendous pride in the professionalism and courage of our armed forces.

There is...a sense of this country's destiny: the centuries of history and experience which ensure that, when principles have to be defended, when good has to be upheld and when evil has to be overcome, Britain will take up arms.”—[*Official Report*, 22 November 1990; Vol. 181, c. 453.]

Robert Ffello (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I briefly seek your guidance. A number of hon. Members have been in the Chamber since half-past 10 but are probably not going to be called. A number of hon. Members in the Chamber have not been here all day and are making interventions. Can we have a ruling on that?

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): The ruling is that that is not a point of order.

4.9 pm

Mr David Anderson (Blaydon) (Lab): In the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq, I led a trade union delegation to Kurdistan. I was amazed by the reaction of the people there, who were delighted that our country had invaded that benighted nation. Since then I have learned why that was so. The people in Kurdistan lived through a period where they saw genocide at Halabja, 182,000 people destroyed by Saddam Hussein and 4,500 villages razed to the ground, while the west, including the Government led by Margaret Thatcher, turned its back. While 1 million

Iraqis and Iranians were being killed on the battlefields, the west turned its back because it was a price worth paying, as Saddam was keeping the Ayatollah occupied.

To take a position today, I went back to those people and said, "What do you think we should do in the House?" The advice from a very close comrade of mine on the ground in the trade union movement in Kurdistan was, "ISIS is a fascist organisation. The only language it understands is force. Under ISIS, trade unions have been, as under Saddam, forced to go underground. Despite recent elections, Iraq is still terribly divided, but the immediate threat of ISIS must be halted and to do that we need external military air support." That was the clear advice from people at the sharp end, not the intelligence services. We have learned lessons. Things are different today. However, I want to say clearly to the Prime Minister: under no circumstances should this be escalated without Members coming back together. I do not care what he says about circumstances perhaps meaning that he has to act on his own. He should not do that. That is one of the main reasons that the House is held in such contempt.

I am also wary about who the Prime Minister is being advised by. Yesterday at the UN, the Iranian President said that certain intelligence agencies put blades in the hands of madmen and were behind the build-up of ISIS. Some people claim that those agencies were the CIA and Mossad and that they intended, after last year's failure to take action on Syria, to find another way to make people such as us take and support action. That may not be correct but unless such claims are addressed the people of this country will suspect that this could be the back door to action on Syria.

I believe in supporting the people on the ground in Kurdistan. I have to support this action, even though I do not really want to, but I am clear that the Prime Minister should do nothing without the sanction of this House.

4.12 pm

Richard Benyon (Newbury) (Con): If I understood the hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) correctly, he suggested that many Members were perhaps taking this decision lightly. If that is what he said, may I say how wrong he is? I do not believe that we have had a better debate and more thoughtful interventions from both sides of the House. I for one believe that for my generation of Members of this House the well of military intervention has been well and truly poisoned by previous interventions. Our default position is not blindly to go by what Front Benchers might say on such matters. I am going to support the Government on this, for the very good reasons stated by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, who put forward an eloquent case.

We should be mindful of the people of Kobane. My hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi) has just told me about that town, which is in Syria. It should be in our minds tonight because it is surrounded, genocide is taking place and there is an existential threat to the community there. It is not an exception in that region. We are taking a very important decision tonight.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) put the clearest, most powerful case for a coherent plan. Tonight we are talking about a

short-term plan. This will resolve a short-term issue. The medium-term plan must be to see the Sunni tribes and the Iraqi and Kurdish forces prevail against ISIS and some level of normality return to those communities, but the long-term plan must see an outcome that perhaps we can only dream of: the good governance that Ban Ki-moon has talked about, and the ejection of ISIS to the fringes of our minds and people's lives in the region. To achieve that, however, we have to be absolutely resolute; we have to see the kind of work happening in Whitehall that is currently happening in places such as Washington.

In a previous debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Rory Stewart) raised concerns about the decimation of the thinking in organisations such as the Foreign Office during the past 25 years. We want to see that process reversed.

In the few seconds I have left today, I will just say that I am pleased that the motion refers to the threat to ourselves—to this country. We must not forget that ISIL leaders have exhorted their members to go back and cause terrorism incidents here. I represent a constituency in which many thousands of people travel to London every day, and they get on the tube, as they did on 7 July 2005. We have a duty to them, and to all the British subjects who trade around the world and who are at risk from the kind of kidnapping and extortion that this evil force is carrying out around the world, to support this motion tonight.

4.15 pm

Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): I rise to make a few short remarks, following the learned contributions of other hon. Members.

This is not an easy debate nor an easy decision to make; nobody wants to be part of the process of war. However, ISIL represents little but the tools of ego and hate. There is no love, no compassion and no element of progress or development; there is only destruction and power, the violation of women and the murder of whole communities, whether Christian, Yazidi or Muslim. This battle is not against Islam; it is in defence of Islam.

ISIL needs to be stopped, in Iraq and in Syria, by its own Governments and with international support, as needed. In an ideal world, that would be achieved through negotiations, and if the difference between us was a genuinely political one, negotiation would be possible. The problem is that the behaviour of ISIL is not subject to negotiation. ISIL is a cancer that will spread as far as the world will allow it. Standing back is not an option if we believe that humanity is worth fighting for and protecting. To do nothing is to abdicate responsibility and to let ISIL get away with its barbarism.

I have come to the view that we need to play our part in a coalition to support air strikes, but I see no appetite for our boots to be on the ground. ISIL is a huge threat to the stability of Iraq and the wider region, and so far air strikes have been successful in limiting its advance. The action has the support of other Arab nations and is a product of the assistance that has been directly requested by the Iraqi Government.

My biggest concern, however, is the lack of a coherent strategy to go alongside the international coalition's military action. I hope that in the Deputy Prime Minister's winding-up speech, we will hear more about an active

[Seema Malhotra]

political dialogue, led by Arab nations who put aside their differences to genuinely share responsibility for handling the crisis, providing joined-up humanitarian support and planning for a sustainable peace. The world needs Arab nations to stand up in unity to tackle comprehensively the funding and support that ISIL receives, and to lead this campaign for ISIL's defeat and a long-term peace.

Any action we take must not create a vacuum that sees any new instability emerge. To those who say it is not our battle, I say this: it is a fight for the whole world. However, any action must also be subject to close scrutiny, and I hope that this House will seriously take its part in that process.

4.18 pm

Greg Mulholland (Leeds North West) (LD): It was in February 2003 that I went on the famous march in London, alongside—it is estimated—millions of people around the world. My now wife came on her first ever political protest. I was proud to be part of that movement, and I am proud now that so many in this House have acknowledged that my colleagues on the Liberal Democrat Benches were right to have opposed war then.

However, this situation could not be more different. A democratic sovereign state has asked us for help to deal with one of the most unpleasant terrorist forces that we have ever seen. There is a clear legal case for action, and there is an overwhelming moral case not simply to sit and watch the appalling scenes on television. As a nation—I am pleased that many hon. Members have acknowledged this—we now accept that we have a responsibility precisely because of the mistake of going into Iraq in the first place.

Mr McFadden: The hon. Gentleman says that we have a moral obligation because Iraq is a democratic state. Can he tell the House why it is a democratic state?

Greg Mulholland: This is a very strange time to be seeking to make points about the mistaken invasion of Iraq. The right hon. Gentleman should instead accept some responsibility for his vote, which was so mistaken.

I am also pleased that the House is taking so seriously its most profound responsibility—to vote on whether to send our brave servicemen and women to war. I take that as seriously as anyone, having been up to nearly 20,000 feet with three very brave former and current servicemen who have served and been injured fighting for our country. I have seen at first hand the reality of what that means through the incredible work of the Royal British Legion Battle Back Centre. We are right to take this seriously.

It would be a further tragedy of the disaster of the invasion of Iraq in 2003 if we felt we were unable ever again to intervene as part of an international force, which is what is proposed. This is not simply following America's coat tails; this is part of a genuine international coalition, and we must do this. We simply cannot turn a blind eye to genocide, ethnic cleansing, and the most appalling sorts of religious persecution we have seen since, frankly, the concentration camps. Then it was an attempt to wipe out the Jewish people and the Jewish

faith, as well as Poles, Catholics, socialists and Gypsies. Now, Christians, Muslims, both Sunni and Shi'a, Yazidis and people of all faiths and none are being slaughtered, murdered and tortured. The BBC has reported that 3,000 women and children have been sold into the sex trade by people who claim to be doing so on behalf of religion. I understand that we all have anxieties, and we should have them, but I have heard nothing today from those who are voting no or telling us to vote no about the alternative. We cannot negotiate with an evil, maniacal force such as Islamic State, and we should not do so. We must stop that and then we will be assisting a further opportunity for the middle east to go forward again.

Like everyone else, I will be taking this vote seriously and voting with a heavy heart, but as an internationalist and a Liberal, and as someone who believes that this country should not turn its back on what is happening, I believe that this country must take a part in this international coalition, so I will be voting in support of the motion.

4.22 pm

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): There are things that we agree on: we agree that action is legal; we agree that ISIL is un-Islamic, barbarous and evil, whose violent and horrific behaviour towards captives and opposition forces has horrified the world. We are voting today for six planes to fly missions to weaken ISIL on the ground and to leave it to local forces to undertake ground attacks. It is then that I start to have some major concerns. Who will do that work on the ground? Who will provide the people who will undertake that work? For terrorism to thrive, we need three things—men, money and an ideology that will attract the other two. Sadly, a lot of the money, the men and the ideology have come from those nations that we will now call our allies and on which we will rely to fly missions with us and to take the work on to the ground.

I am concerned that British forces will increasingly be dragged into undertaking that work. I hope that we will hear from the Deputy Prime Minister what guarantees we will have that our Arab allies will take part in this fight, that the NATO forces will not be a smokescreen behind which their inactivity is hidden, and that they will show to their people that they are taking part.

We are told that there is no military solution, only a political solution. For me, a political solution would be a federalist Iraq—a future where there is a Kurdistan, Sunnistan and Shi'astan, working together. Unless we give the Sunni population something to fight for, they will not engage. After all, they have been attacked with barrel bombs and subjected to murder by the regime in Baghdad. They have taken to ISIS because ISIS has been better than the Baghdadi Government.

I want to thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Salford and Eccles (Hazel Blears) for her kind words in relation to the British hostages. We must bear in mind that two people are living in fear of their lives while we are having this debate, and all our thoughts must be with them.

Finally, will we also take on the Khorasan group, an al-Qaeda affiliate that is also a major threat in this country, as well as the Ba'athist Naqshbandi organisation, a particularly nasty organisation?

4.25 pm

Jesse Norman (Hereford and South Herefordshire) (Con): After six hours and many very good contributions on the substance of this debate, I want to consider the wider constitutional position in which we are placed. During the past decade or two, a convention has started to develop that, except in an emergency, major foreign policy interventions must be pre-approved by a vote in Parliament. The idea springs from honourable motives and it is understandable given the present climate of distrust in politics, but in my judgment it is nevertheless a serious mistake.

It is absolutely right for Parliament to insist on proper democratic accountability where military action is at stake through debates, questions and statements, but the requirement for a prior authorising vote of this House is very different. Yes, it is vital for parliamentarians to maintain the most unreserved communication with their constituents on this matter, as indeed it is on any matter of public importance, but the plain fact is that in matters of foreign policy, with a few signal exceptions, Members of the House are inevitably far less well informed than Ministers who follow and reflect on the issues every day. We do not have the same access to officials and advisers; we are not privy to diplomatic traffic or secret intelligence; and we are not briefed by, and may not demand briefings from, our armed forces. As a large corporate body, we lack the capacity to react quickly and without warning to fast-changing events. The result is delay and a loss of agility and surprise, which ill serves our forces in the field.

Mr Allen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Jesse Norman: I will not give way. I am afraid that there is no time.

Moreover, I suggest that as a matter of fundamental constitutional principle, extreme care should be exercised over when or whether the House is asked to vote on such matters in future. It is a basic purpose of Parliament—above all, of this Chamber—to hold the Government to account for their actions. It is for the Government, with all their advantages of preparation, information, advice and timeliness, to act, and it is then for this Chamber to scrutinise that action.

If Parliament itself authorises such action in advance, what then? It gives up part of its power of scrutiny; it binds Members in their own minds, rather than allowing them the opportunity to assess each Government decision on its own merits and circumstances; and instead of being forced to explain and justify their actions, Ministers can always take final refuge in saying, “Well, you authorised it.” Thus, far from strengthening Parliament, it weakens it and the Government: it weakens the dynamic tension between the two sides from which proper accountability and effective policy must derive.

On 3 April 1982, the House was recalled by Mrs Thatcher for the Falklands war debate. It was a Saturday—the first time that the House had been so recalled since Suez. Tempers were high. The atmosphere was one of crisis. The taskforce was about to sail. It was a matter of peace or war. The very sovereignty of this nation was at stake. Yet what was the motion that day? It was:

“That this House do now adjourn.”

When, in calmer days, the Government come to reflect on these proceedings, I hope that they will heed the wisdom in that—

Mr Speaker: Order.

4.28 pm

Hugh Bayley (York Central) (Lab): At this late hour, I will not repeat any of the arguments made earlier in the debate. I will vote for the motion. I just want to make two points that have not been fully covered so far.

My first point is that in his speech the Prime Minister said that it might be necessary to take the fight against ISIL into Syria. I think that that probably will be necessary at some stage. He said that it might not be possible for him to seek authority from the House before doing so. He has undoubtedly taken legal advice about whether such action would be in accord with international law. Will he put a summary of that advice before the House at the earliest possible date, and will he share full copies of the legal advice in relation to action both in Iraq and in Syria, on Privy Council terms, with Opposition Front Benchers?

My second point is that our country’s security depends on a doctrine of collective security provided through NATO. The summit in Wales discussed ISIL and concluded that ISIL

“poses a grave threat to the Iraqi people, to the Syrian people, to the wider region, and to our nations”

and that if

“the security of any Ally is threatened, we will not hesitate to take all necessary steps to ensure our collective defence.”

We cannot opt out of the commitment made in Wales. We must, as a United Kingdom, bear our part of the collective burden. I could not hold up my head in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly if our country were to duck out and to leave it to the United States, France and our Arab partners to deal with this difficult problem. We need to contribute to global security and not be a passive consumer of security provided by others.

The decision whether to go to war, when it comes before the House, is always one of the most difficult and serious decisions that we elected Members of Parliament have to make. There is rarely a right answer as to what to do in such circumstances. We must look for the least worst option. Engaging militarily, though ugly, is necessary and I urge Members to vote for the motion.

4.31 pm

Simon Reeve (Dewsbury) (Con): I will significantly reduce what I was going to say to the content of an e-mail that I was sent by two constituents who live in a small village called Shelley. They had sat up and talked about the situation, because they realised the seriousness of the prospect of war. They had had on their minds the civilian casualties that may follow and the dire consequences for hostages if the country takes part in air strikes. What they said encapsulates why I will support the motion:

“There comes a time when it is paramount for the collective to defend citizens of other nations whose government can’t defend them. There is also a need to show that as a country we are prepared to defend our own citizens.”

4.32 pm

Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab): The motion is the result of our failure to develop a sustained, coherent and strategic policy in the middle east. ISIL has a 10-year track record both in Iraq and in Syria, but the question we should ask is how has it become so strong. Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism assessed that ISIL was funded from the very countries with which we now propose to ally ourselves—Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait—and whose refusal to put in place any serious financial controls has seen hundreds of millions of dollars siphoned off to ISIL and other jihadists. What pressure did the UK Government put on those Governments to tighten the noose around that flow of funds? Did we talk of sanctions or of freezing accounts in London? Of course not. The Government were too busy trying to clinch the £4.4 billion deal for the 72 Eurofighter Typhoon jets to Saudi Arabia. That was our Government's priority. It should have been otherwise.

Now that ISIL are regarded by its former paymasters as too big for its boots, we are joining forces with them to degrade ISIL's capacity and to cut it back down to size, but we are told that there is no intention to have boots on the ground. What an assurance that is. Of course there will be no boots on the ground. The Sunni states in the middle east do not want to destroy ISIL. They want it to remain as a thorn in the flesh of the Iraqi Government. This Government is not America's poodle; it is the poodle of the Sunni states. Britain could have exerted real influence on the Maliki Government, but we turned a blind eye as the Iraqi Government ruled as faction and thug. Where was our Government's attention? It was on Syria, but who did we want to degrade there? It was not ISIL, but Bashar al-Assad. The Government have made foolish alliances and alienated countries such as Russia that could have helped. They have been pathetically weak in bringing our so-called friends to book, and they are deluding themselves—or, worse, the public—with any suggestion that air strikes against ISIL are a sufficient response to the wider hell that is the Sunni-Shi'a conflict.

I have three questions. What demands about inclusive government, and what potential sanctions, has the UK placed upon Prime Minister al-Abadi in Iraq as preconditions of our involvement? What assessment have the Government made of the warning by the Royal United Services Institute that

"limited air strikes could serve to further legitimise ISIS?"

Finally, what demands has the UK placed on Saudi Arabia and other Sunni states about cutting off funding for Wahabist jihadi groups around the globe?

The Prime Minister says that we are fighting for democratic values, but those we are fighting with are not democracies. In joining them, we are not protecting democracy. They are the last absolute theocratic monarchies on the planet, and we join them at our peril.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. A one-minute thesis from Mr Richard Drax.

4.35 pm

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have two small points to make in one minute.

First, I pay tribute to our armed forces. It looks as though, tonight, they will once again be put on the front line and in harm's way. The few, who have become fewer, will once again be flying over enemy skies. Our thoughts will be with them and their families and if, God forbid, they are shot down, with those who have to go and pick them up off the sand—it is not just the pilots who will be involved.

Secondly, there is no doubt that ISIL is a risk to the stability of the middle east. It is therefore certainly a risk to the future of world stability, which affects us and our future security. In my view, there is no doubt that we should get involved. We cannot wash our hands of the situation and walk away on this occasion. I will support the motion, and I am personally grateful to the Prime Minister for calling us back here to debate a subject that is really more important to us than any other—taking our country once more, regrettably, to war.

4.36 pm

Mr Douglas Alexander (Paisley and Renfrewshire South) (Lab): The tone and content of the contributions to the debate have done justice to the seriousness of the motion before the House. We have heard contributions from former Defence Secretaries, former personnel from our armed forces and a range of other distinguished voices. Given the limited time available, I hope the House will forgive me if I do not acknowledge individually the full breadth of important contributions that we have heard over the past six hours.

As the Leader of the Opposition has already made clear, we will support the Government in the Lobby this afternoon. For many of us, the decision about the use of British military force in Iraq is a wrenching one. The Opposition support the motion not because we are eager for conflict, nor because we are unaware of recent history, nor simply because we wish to show support for our armed forces. We do so because we believe the action meets the criteria that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition has set down—that it is a just cause; that the proposed action is a last resort; that it is proportionate; that it has a reasonable prospect of success; that it has a clear legal base; and that it has broad regional support.

I trust that Members in all parts of the House will be united in their wholehearted support for the men and women who will take part in this perilous action with their characteristic skill, courage and devotion to duty. However, this is a Parliament of women and men of free will and independent judgment. There are real worries, anxieties and concerns in all parts of the House, and they must be listened and responded to with respect. The Government's motion accordingly makes it clear that they are seeking authority to act in Iraq, and that a separate parliamentary vote would be required for any proposed military action in Syria. Although the Opposition support the action taken in Syria this week by the Americans and by the air forces of five Arab nations, we believe that holding a separate vote if action in Syria were contemplated would be the right course of action.

We are all aware that international military intervention in Syria in recent years has been a subject of international controversy, and that legitimacy matters to the effectiveness of such missions. We all know that Syria is experiencing a multi-layered, multifaceted civil war, yet the issue of

who could conduct ground operations in Syria at this time remains wholly unclear as the debate concludes. There also remains no real clarity about the wider political strategy for transition in Syria. Our mind is not closed, and we have not made the agreement of a Security Council resolution a condition for considering future action. However, given the history of recent military interventions, the British people both want and deserve a cautious, considered and calibrated approach when military action is contemplated.

Sir Richard Ottaway: The right hon. Gentleman has just set out the position on a UN Security Council resolution. If such a resolution is tabled and vetoed, what will the Labour party's position be on intervention in Syria?

Mr Alexander: As I have just sought to explain, our moral compass is not set in Moscow or Beijing; we think it would be better to have the world's principal multilateral forum—the United Nations—consider this matter. We have said very clearly that there is a legal basis for action, and that is the basis on which we have provided support to the five Arab nations and to the American action in Syria in recent days. However, as I have sought to reflect in my remarks, there is an issue of legality and legitimacy. Given the controversy that has surrounded international action in Syria in recent years, we think that any actions that can secure broader legitimacy would assist in the completion of that mission.

Let me make a little progress. The motion also makes clear that the Government will not deploy UK troops in ground combat operations in Iraq. Not only is there little or no public or parliamentary support for such action; it would also risk many of the same cruel frustrations of the last difficult and painful mission in Iraq. Just as fundamentally, however, UK combat troops in ground operations would undermine an essential point that needs to be made again and again to the Iraqi Government and the Iraqi people: this has to be their fight. We, the international community, cannot win this battle for them.

Let me turn directly to the adversaries identified by the motion. ISIL's callousness and barbarism, including the taking and murdering of British hostages, has been well rehearsed in this debate; so, too, has their expansionary ambition to establish a caliphate at the heart of the middle east. Let no one here suggest that we are now engaged in a conflict with "Islamic State". As the Secretary-General of the United Nations rightly observed earlier this week, they should more fittingly be called "UnIslamic Non-State" because no faith or God condones or justifies their barbarism.

We are not and never will be in conflict with Islam. Islam teaches peace. Given that millions of our fellow British citizens of Muslim faith are woven into the very fabric of our communities and country, let us resolve, individually and collectively, to extend the hand of solidarity and friendship to our British brothers and sisters who follow the Muslim faith.

It is also vital that the Government should step up their counter-radicalisation work, as my right hon. Friend the shadow Home Secretary has repeatedly urged at this Dispatch Box. Every effort must be made by our brave and dedicated security services to identify, monitor and respond effectively to the threat posed by radicalised British citizens returning to the UK from the region.

As a number of Members have reflected, the fight against ISIL is, at its core, a struggle about the future of Sunni Arabs, so it is crucial that Sunni Governments have not only offered support but are participating in this multilateral mission. Only Sunni participation stands a chance of convincing ordinary Arabs and Sunnis in Iraq that the fight with ISIL is also their fight. Yet as many hon. Members have recognised, such wars are not won through air power alone. ISIL cannot be defeated without someone to replace it on the ground. Notwithstanding the capabilities of the Peshmerga, that will take time, given the current condition of the Iraqi security forces. Nor would it be acceptable or desirable for the Shi'a militia, who have played an important role in halting ISIL's advance on Baghdad, to play a central role in liberating predominantly Sunni cities. Air strikes are essential, however, to stem ISIL's advance and degrade their operations.

However, we should be clear that the objective of disrupting, degrading and weakening ISIL must be in the service of creating the conditions for new forms of governance in Sunni parts of Iraq. Maliki's sectarian rule was disastrous for not only Iraqi armed forces but Iraqi society. Iraq now needs to rebuild its armed forces in ways that reflect the need to restore confidence among its Sunni population. It still has a long way to go on that path. This military action must be underpinned by a clear political strategy and it is vital that the Iraqis themselves drain the sectarian impulses that sustain ISIL in Sunni areas of Iraq today.

The commencement of military action must not be a signal that the time for diplomatic, humanitarian and political action is over. This challenge will test not just our military strength but our diplomatic and political skills and stamina—challenging, yes, traditional allies in the Gulf as well as engaging with other countries in the region such as Iran. The House has the privilege of discussion but also the responsibility of decision. All of us who will support and stand with the Government today must also have the humility to acknowledge that at this moment we cannot say with certainty all that lies ahead. Even limited military intervention brings with it unforeseen and uncertain consequences, but by the decision that we make today we will be supporting action to prevent the foreseeable and certain killing of Sunni, Shi'a, Kurdish, Christian and Yazidi Iraqis by ISIL. We will be supporting action which has broad support in the region, and which follows a direct request from a democratically elected Government of Iraq.

We have a legal, political and moral mandate to act to resist ISIL in Iraq. That is the international community's responsibility, and that should be Britain's choice, so that must be the House's decision. I urge all Members to support the motion.

4.45 pm

The Deputy Prime Minister (Mr Nick Clegg): This six-hour debate has been at all times thoughtful, respectful and sober, on an issue of great significance and also of great complexity. In the time that remains, I want to address myself to those who have spoken out worrying that we are doing too much and possibly repeating the mistakes of the past, and to those who, conversely, feel that we might be doing too little and should be going further, or that we are embarking on a piecemeal strategy. I also want to underline the significance of the voices of

[The Deputy Prime Minister]

Members in all parts of the House who have spoken out so emphatically against those who might interpret this as a conflict of religions—as a “west versus the rest”.

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab) *rose*—

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con) *rose*—

The Deputy Prime Minister: Before I give way, let me join the right hon. Member for Salford and Eccles (Hazel Blears) and others who stood in solidarity and spoke out in support of the families and loved ones of Alan Henning and John Cantlie. It is impossible to imagine the anguish that they must be going through. I also join the hon. Member for South Dorset (Richard Drax), the right hon. Member for Mid Sussex (Sir Nicholas Soames), the right hon. Member for Belfast North (Mr Dodds) and others who said how important it was for us to bear in mind the great courage and professionalism of our servicemen and women who are once again being asked to put themselves in danger’s way for our collective safety.

John McDonnell: Does the Deputy Prime Minister agree with the stance of the Prime Minister, who supports a policy of not coming back to the House to ask for approval of further action, whether it is action against Syria or boots on the ground?

The Deputy Prime Minister: What the Prime Minister said, and what I think every reasonable person would accept, is that if any Government at any point find that they need to act very quickly indeed to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe or to protect British citizens here or abroad, clearly the Government of the day have the right—[*Interruption.*] There may be circumstances in which action needs to be taken in a matter of hours or overnight.

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown *rose*—

The Deputy Prime Minister: I will give way in a minute, but let me first say to those who worry about echoes of the debate about Iraq that took place in 2003—I felt that the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden) spoke very articulately about this—that of course we should avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, but that does not mean that we should be trapped by the past. Of course we should learn from the past, but we should not be paralysed by it. Let me say to all those who, like me, campaigned against an attack on Iraq in 2003 that I do not hesitate, and I think many others do not hesitate, in advocating now that we should act to defend Iraq following a request from the Iraqi Government—the legitimate Iraqi Government.

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: Had I been able to speak in the debate, I would have asked my right hon. Friend if he could reassure the House by telling us exactly what criteria Her Majesty’s Government will use to judge when ISIL has been sufficiently degraded that it no longer poses a military threat.

The Deputy Prime Minister: I think that the point at which ISIL can no longer act with the menace and brutality with which it acts at present will be quite obvious on the ground. However, as many people have pointed out, we are not pretending, and no one should pretend, that air strikes on their own are the solution. That is why I want to address myself to those—including the right hon. Members for Croydon South (Sir Richard Ottaway), for Neath (Mr Hain), the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Meg Munn), the right hon. Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox) and the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell)—who have suggested that we should now take the decision also to embark on air strikes in Syria.

It is important to remember that, as has been pointed out by the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) and others, there are complexities in Syria which are not present in Iraq. There are differences. The fact that we are not embarking on air strikes in Syria does not mean that we are inactive in Syria. We train, equip and advise the forces in Syria whom we wish to support in Syria. In one sense, by choosing to play one part in the wider jigsaw of this coalition effort that now comprises 60 nations undertaking different forms of action—military, diplomatic, political and humanitarian—we are saying quite overtly that we are doing one part of what we judge we can do best right now, but not pretending that we can do everything all at once. Just because we cannot do everything does surely not mean that we do nothing, and that is the sensible stance that we are taking.

Oliver Colville (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for giving way. We have heard a great deal about the role the RAF will play, but what about the Royal Navy—especially our submarine fleet?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Clearly, all our assets are available. As my hon. Friend will know, the Ministry of Defence has Tomahawk-capable submarines, and the Royal Navy has several vessels available in the Persian gulf.

May I compliment the thoughtful interventions of the hon. Members for Penrith and The Border (Rory Stewart) and for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi) who quite rightly highlighted the fact that any military action can only seek to create the conditions in which a diplomatic and political process can take hold. All we can try to do is to work with other countries in an effort led by Arab nations in the region to create the conditions in which good governance can take root in both Iraq and Syria. As Ban Ki-moon said, at the end of day, bombs can kill terrorists but good governance is what kills terrorism.

Michael Ellis (Northampton North) (Con): Does the Deputy Prime Minister agree that there would be concern if we abrogated responsibility in connection with Syria to the United Nations Security Council—I am talking about potential punitive action—because it would be tantamount to leaving it to Vladimir Putin to consent or deny.

The Deputy Prime Minister: That is not the subject of the debate today. Clearly, the United Nations always plays a role in such matters. The UN Security Council has already pronounced against ISIL over the past

several weeks. The conditions were neither available nor legally necessary for a chapter VII resolution to be passed.

There was strong feeling from all parts of the House today. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Shabana Mahmood), who is not in her place, spoke out as someone of the Sunni Muslim faith. Like the right hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire South (Mr Alexander), she said that Islamic State is neither Islamic nor a state. She said that the greatest antidote to its perversion of Islam is moderate, peace-loving Muslim communities elsewhere and in this country. As the hon. Member for Stourbridge (Margot James), the right hon. Members for Salford and Eccles, and for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan) and the hon. Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham) said, that is why it is so important for us to work closely with all those individuals, families, community organisations and religious leaders who have spoken out with great, great courage and strength of feeling at a time of rising Islamophobia and increasing anxiety in many Muslim communities. They say ISIL is as much of a potent threat to their way of life and their religion as it is to anybody else's.

Jason McCartney (Colne Valley) (Con): We have heard a lot about failed military interventions in this part of the world today, but does he agree that the one successful one was the no-fly zone over northern Iraq in the 1990s that allowed the Kurdistan region to flourish as a democratic, prosperous and religious tolerant part of the world. I met Kurdish students at Huddersfield university during the summer. As well as responding to Iraq, let us respond to the Kurds. Does he agree?

The Deputy Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right to say that we as a country played a role in that intervention. That allowed the space for the Kurdish authorities to find their own feet, metaphorically speaking, and to decide their own fate. The assistance we are giving in terms of lethal equipment, advice and training and the longstanding partnership we have with the Kurdish authorities will play an extraordinarily important role in Iraq, combined of course with the work that we must do with the Iraqi army to ensure that as we and other members of the coalition deliver air strikes—Denmark has just announced that it will be taking a similar route—the Kurdish authorities, the peshmerga and the Iraqi army will be able to push hard against ISIL on the ground.

Caroline Lucas: The language around air strikes sounds very clean and precise, but we know that in reality they are anything but. Does the Deputy Prime Minister genuinely believe that all other measures, political and diplomatic, with Saudi Arabia, with Iran, have properly been pursued before we go down the route of yet more bombing? Does he agree with those of us who think that the alternative to bombing is not doing nothing but making the redoubled diplomatic and political efforts that we need, which we have not seen? That should be at the centre of this debate.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Whilst I regret this, and everybody on both sides of the House may regret it, there are times when it is simply impossible to reason with your foe. There is no diplomatic initiative that would be recognised by ISIL. It is a barbaric, murderous outfit, which by its actions and its pronouncements has shown that it cannot be reasoned with.

As for the hon. Lady's suggestion that this action is precipitate, I completely reject that. For week after week after week, great restraint has been shown, most especially by President Obama, who has been under considerable political pressure to act more precipitately. He has said, sensibly, as have we, "No; a coalition"—of what are now 60 nations—"must first be assembled. Countries from the region must play an active role"—as they are. "We need to receive a request from the Government itself—the Iraqi Government, a Muslim Government"—as we have done. "We must discuss this at NATO"—as we have done. "We must discuss this at the United Nations"—as we have done. I do not think that anyone could reasonably accuse this House, this Government or the international coalition of acting precipitately.

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): Does the Deputy Prime Minister agree that it would have been preferable to have a UN resolution?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Of course it would be preferable, but as the former Attorney-General, the right hon. and learned Member for Beaconsfield, pointed out, given the legal clarity which serves as the basis for our actions, namely the request from a sovereign Government, a legitimate Government—the Iraqi Government—that UN resolution is not necessary. It has equally been made clear that there are other members of the Security Council who simply were not prepared to allow for a chapter VII resolution to proceed.

Robert Ffello: Will the Deputy Prime Minister give way?

The Deputy Prime Minister: I will give way, but then I must make progress.

Robert Ffello: Given that there are many in the House who have very strong concerns about this—I will vote for the motion, but with a very heavy heart—will the Deputy Prime Minister and Prime Minister commit to coming back to the House very regularly, particularly early in October when we return, to make statements to the House, to keep us apprised of what is going on and what further measures are needed?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Of course we undertake to provide regular updates to the House. By the way, the feeling with which the hon. Gentleman describes his own sentiments, "with a heavy heart", is one that I think everyone shares. There is nothing other than great seriousness around this issue, and that is the tone in which it has been dealt with during the last six hours of debate.

Finally, I want to echo those who said that at the end of the day, this is also something which speaks to our values. Both sides of the House believe in tolerance; ISIL believes in hate. We believe in co-existence; they believe in division. We believe in freedom of speech; they believe in the tyranny of thought. That is why I urge the House to support the motion today. We must act. We do so mindful of the mistakes and lessons of the past, but we do so with lawful authority, with clear objectives and with the support and active participation of a broad coalition of international opinion which is saying to ISIL, "Enough is enough." That is why I commend the motion to the House.

Question put.

The House divided: Ayes 524, Noes 43.

Division No. 53]**[4.59 pm****AYES**

Abrahams, Debbie
 Adams, Nigel
 Afriyie, Adam
 Ainsworth, rh Mr Bob
 Aldous, Peter
 Alexander, rh Danny
 Alexander, rh Mr Douglas
 Alexander, Heidi
 Ali, Rushanara
 Amess, Mr David
 Anderson, Mr David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Arbuthnot, rh Mr James
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Austin, Ian
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Bain, Mr William
 Baldry, rh Sir Tony
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Balls, rh Ed
 Banks, Gordon
 Barclay, Stephen
 Barker, rh Gregory
 Barron, rh Kevin
 Bayley, Hugh
 Bebb, Guto
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Beith, rh Sir Alan
 Bellingham, Mr Henry
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Benyon, Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berger, Luciana
 Berry, Jake
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Bingham, Andrew
 Binley, Mr Brian
 Blackman, Bob
 Blackman-Woods, Roberta
 Blackwood, Nicola
 Blears, rh Hazel
 Blenkinsop, Tom
 Blomfield, Paul
 Blunkett, rh Mr David
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bradley, Karen
 Brady, Mr Graham
 Brake, rh Tom
 Bray, Angie
 Brazier, Mr Julian
 Brennan, Kevin
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, James
 Brooke, rh Annette
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Brown, Mr Russell
 Browne, Mr Jeremy
 Bruce, Fiona
 Bruce, rh Sir Malcolm
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Buckland, Mr Robert
 Burden, Richard
 Burley, Mr Aidan
 Burnham, rh Andy
 Burns, Conor
 Burrowes, Mr David

Burstow, rh Paul
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Burt, Lorely
 Byles, Dan
 Byrne, rh Mr Liam
 Cable, rh Vince
 Cairns, Alun
 Cameron, rh Mr David
 Campbell, rh Mr Alan
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Campbell, rh Sir Menzies
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Carmichael, Neil
 Cash, Sir William
 Champion, Sarah
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Mr Christopher
 Clappison, Mr James
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Clarke, rh Mr Tom
 Clegg, rh Mr Nick
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coaker, Vernon
 Coffey, Ann
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Colville, Oliver
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Cox, Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crausby, Mr David
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Crockart, Mike
 Crouch, Tracey
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Cunningham, Sir Tony
 Danczuk, Simon
 Darling, rh Mr Alistair
 Davey, rh Mr Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davies, David T. C.
 (*Monmouth*)
 Davies, Geraint
 Davies, Glyn
 de Bois, Nick
 De Piero, Gloria
 Denham, rh Mr John
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Dobson, rh Frank
 Docherty, Thomas
 Dodds, rh Mr Nigel
 Donaldson, rh Mr Jeffrey M.
 Dorries, Nadine
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Jim
 Doyle, Gemma
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Dromey, Jack
 Duddridge, James
 Dugher, Michael
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan

Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, Mr Philip
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellison, Jane
 Ellwood, Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Engel, Natascha
 Esterson, Bill
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Chris
 Evans, Graham
 Evans, Jonathan
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, Mr David
 Fallon, rh Michael
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Featherstone, rh Lynne
 Field, rh Mr Frank
 Field, Mark
 Ffello, Robert
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Foster, rh Mr Don
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francis, Dr Hywel
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fullbrook, Lorraine
 Fuller, Richard
 Gapes, Mike
 Gardiner, Barry
 Garnier, Sir Edward
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, Mr David
 George, Andrew
 Gibb, Mr Nick
 Gilbert, Stephen
 Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
 Glass, Pat
 Glen, John
 Glindon, Mrs Mary
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodman, Helen
 Goodwill, Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, Mr James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Greatrex, Tom
 Green, rh Damian
 Green, Kate
 Greening, rh Justine
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffith, Nia
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Gummer, Ben
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Hague, rh Mr William
 Hain, rh Mr Peter
 Halfon, Robert
 Hames, Duncan
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip

Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matthew
 Hancock, Mr Mike
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harper, Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harris, Mr Tom
 Harvey, Sir Nick
 Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
 Havard, Mr Dai
 Hayes, rh Mr John
 Heald, Sir Oliver
 Healey, rh John
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Hemming, John
 Hendrick, Mark
 Hendry, Charles
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Heyes, David
 Hillier, Meg
 Hilling, Julie
 Hinds, Damian
 Hoban, Mr Mark
 Hodge, rh Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Hood, Mr Jim
 Hopkins, Kris
 Horwood, Martin
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Howarth, Sir Gerald
 Howell, John
 Hughes, rh Simon
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hunt, Tristram
 Hurd, Mr Nick
 Irranca-Davies, Huw
 Jackson, Glenda
 Jackson, Mr Stewart
 James, Margot
 Jamieson, Cathy
 Jarvis, Dan
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jenkin, Mr Bernard
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Graham
 Jones, Mr Kevan
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Jowell, rh Dame Tessa
 Joyce, Eric
 Kane, Mike
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kelly, Chris
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, rh Sadiq
 Kirby, Simon
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lancaster, Mark
 Lansley, rh Mr Andrew
 Latham, Pauline
 Laws, rh Mr David

Leadsom, Andrea
 Lee, Jessica
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Leslie, Charlotte
 Leslie, Chris
 Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Brandon
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Lewis, Dr Julian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Long, Naomi
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Love, Mr Andrew
 Lucas, Ian
 Luff, Sir Peter
 Lumley, Karen
 Macleod, Mary
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Malhotra, Seema
 Mann, John
 Marsden, Mr Gordon
 Maude, rh Mr Francis
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McCabe, Steve
 McCann, Mr Michael
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McCrea, Dr William
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGovern, Alison
 McGovern, Jim
 McIntosh, Miss Anne
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLoughlin, rh Mr Patrick
 McVey, rh Esther
 Meacher, rh Mr Michael
 Meale, Sir Alan
 Mearns, Ian
 Menzies, Mark
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Miller, Andrew
 Miller, rh Maria
 Milton, Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moore, rh Michael
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Mosley, Stephen
 Mowat, David
 Mulholland, Greg
 Mundell, rh David
 Munn, Meg
 Munt, Tessa

Murphy, rh Mr Jim
 Murphy, rh Paul
 Murray, Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Nandy, Lisa
 Nash, Pamela
 Neill, Robert
 Newmark, Mr Brooks
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, Caroline
 Nuttall, Mr David
 O'Brien, rh Mr Stephen
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Ollerenshaw, Eric
 Onwurah, Chi
 Opperman, Guy
 Osborne, rh Mr George
 Osborne, Sandra
 Ottaway, rh Sir Richard
 Owen, Albert
 Paice, rh Sir James
 Paisley, Ian
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perkins, Toby
 Perry, Claire
 Phillips, Stephen
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pickles, rh Mr Eric
 Pincher, Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Daniel
 Pound, Stephen
 Powell, Lucy
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pugh, John
 Raab, Mr Dominic
 Randall, rh Sir John
 Raynsford, rh Mr Nick
 Reed, Mr Jamie
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees-Mogg, Jacob
 Reevell, Simon
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reid, Mr Alan
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Robathan, rh Mr Andrew
 Robertson, rh Sir Hugh
 Robertson, John
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rogerson, Dan
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Roy, Lindsay
 Ruane, Chris
 Rudd, Amber
 Russell, Sir Bob
 Rutley, David
 Sanders, Mr Adrian
 Sarwar, Anas
 Sawford, Andy
 Seabeck, Alison
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Sharma, Mr Virendra

Shepherd, Sir Richard
 Sheridan, Jim
 Shuker, Gavin
 Simmonds, Mark
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Slaughter, Mr Andy
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Julian
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Smith, Sir Robert
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Soubry, Anna
 Spellar, rh Mr John
 Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
 Spencer, Mr Mark
 Stanley, rh Sir John
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Stride, Mel
 Stuart, Ms Gisela
 Stuart, Mr Graham
 Stunell, rh Sir Andrew
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sutcliffe, Mr Gerry
 Swales, Ian
 Swayne, rh Mr Desmond
 Swinson, Jo
 Swire, rh Mr Hugo
 Syms, Mr Robert
 Tami, Mark
 Thomas, Mr Gareth
 Thornberry, Emily
 Thornton, Mike
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Timpson, Mr Edward
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tredinnick, David
 Trickett, Jon
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Turner, Mr Andrew
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Abbott, Ms Diane
 Ali, Rushanara
 Allen, Mr Graham
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Baron, Mr John
 Begg, Dame Anne
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Caton, Martin
 Clark, Katy
 Davidson, Mr Ian
 Durkan, Mark
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Flynn, Paul
 Galloway, George
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Hoey, Kate

Tyrie, Mr Andrew
 Umunna, Mr Chuka
 Uppal, Paul
 Vaizey, Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vaz, Valerie
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Mrs Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, Mr Ben
 Walley, Joan
 Walter, Mr Robert
 Ward, Mr David
 Watkinson, Dame Angela
 Watts, Mr Dave
 Weatherley, Mike
 Webb, rh Steve
 Wharton, James
 Wheeler, Heather
 White, Chris
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Willetts, rh Mr David
 Williams, Mr Mark
 Williams, Roger
 Williams, Stephen
 Williamson, Chris
 Williamson, Gavin
 Willott, Jenny
 Wilson, Phil
 Wilson, Mr Rob
 Wilson, Sammy
 Winterton, rh Ms Rosie
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Woodcock, John
 Woodward, rh Mr Shaun
 Wright, David
 Wright, Mr Iain
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Wright, Simon
 Yeo, Mr Tim
 Young, rh Sir George
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:

**Mark Hunter and
 Gavin Barwell**

NOES

Holloway, Mr Adam
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Hosie, Stewart
 Huppert, Dr Julian
 James, Mrs Siân C.
 Lazarowicz, Mark
 Lucas, Caroline
 MacNeil, Mr Angus Brendan
 McDonnell, Dr Alasdair
 McDonnell, John
 McKenzie, Mr Iain
 Mills, Nigel
 Mitchell, Austin
 Morris, Grahame M.
 (*Easington*)
 Mudie, Mr George
 Reckless, Mark

Riordan, Mrs Linda
 Ritchie, Ms Margaret
 Robertson, Angus
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Stringer, Graham
 Weir, Mr Mike

Whiteford, Dr Eilidh
 Williams, Hywel
 Wood, Mike

Tellers for the Noes:
Jeremy Corbyn and
Pete Wishart

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House condemns the barbaric acts of ISIL against the peoples of Iraq including the Sunni, Shia, Kurds, Christians and Yazidi and the humanitarian crisis this is causing; recognises the clear threat ISIL poses to the territorial integrity of Iraq and the request from the Government of Iraq for military support from the international community and the specific request to the UK Government for such support; further recognises the threat ISIL poses to wider international security and the UK directly through its sponsorship of terrorist attacks and its murder of a British hostage; acknowledges the broad coalition contributing to military support of the Government of Iraq including countries throughout the Middle East; further acknowledges the request of the Government of Iraq for international support to defend itself against the threat ISIL poses to Iraq and its citizens and the clear legal basis that this provides for action in Iraq; notes that this motion does not endorse UK air strikes in Syria as part of this campaign and any proposal to do so would be subject to a separate vote in Parliament; accordingly supports Her Majesty's Government, working with allies, in supporting the Government of Iraq in protecting civilians and restoring its territorial integrity,

including the use of UK air strikes to support Iraqi, including Kurdish, security forces' efforts against ISIL in Iraq; notes that Her Majesty's Government will not deploy UK troops in ground combat operations; and offers its wholehearted support to the men and women of Her Majesty's armed forces.

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. The Prime Minister has informed us that he will take action without parliamentary authority if he feels it necessary. May I place on record an appeal to you, Mr Speaker, that if there is any indication of further action beyond the remit of this motion, that you consider yourself to have the power to convene the House?

Mr Speaker: I am guided by and must operate within the Standing Orders of the House. I am not under the Standing Orders of the House so empowered. However, for the time being—I say this in the best possible spirit—I will simply note that the hon. Gentleman has expressed his view with his customary force. It is on the record.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, That this House do now adjourn.—(Mel Stride.)

5.16 pm

House adjourned.

Petitions

Friday 26 September 2014

OBSERVATIONS

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Development Proposals in Barton (Salford)

The Petition of residents of Irlam, Cardishead and Barton,

Declares that the Petitioners strongly oppose the proposals of Peel Holdings to build up to 1,400 houses as well as warehouses in the green belt area at Barton (Irlam ward), which is bound by the M62 (North), A57 (South), Manchester City Airport (East) and Irlam (West); and further that the Petitioners believe that Boysnope Golf Course (an excellent leisure facility for the local community) should not be shut down.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons does all in its power to prevent this development proposal from taking place.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Barbara Keeley, *Official Report*, 9 July 2014; Vol. 584, c. 403.]

[P001351]

Observations from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, received 15 September 2014:

The Government's objectives for the planning system are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Relevant policies in the framework will be a material consideration whenever a local authority is working on its local plan or determining a planning application.

For instance, the framework maintains strong protections for the green belt. This Government continue to attach great importance to green belt as a way to prevent sprawl and encroachment on open countryside, and as a vital 'green lung' for many communities. The framework makes clear that openness and permanence are essential characteristics of green belt. It also states that inappropriate development should not be permitted there except in very special circumstances.

Green belts are designated by local authorities, not central Government. Alterations to a green belt boundary can be made, but only in exceptional circumstances, using the local plan process. This is for the local authority to propose, as part of the local plan process. By ending regional housing strategies and the 'top-down' pressure they exerted on local authorities to review the extent of their green belts, this Government strengthened green belt protection: local authorities are now fully responsible. If any conflict of policy or planning priorities arises, it is for the local authority to weigh all the material considerations and decide what is right for the land in question.

Because of the quasi-judicial role of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in the planning system, neither he nor any other Minister may intervene in, or even comment upon, any planning application. It is for local authorities to assess and determine planning proposals, and therefore a strict duty of impartiality is in place.

Development proposals on land off Lightwood Road (Stoke on Trent)

The Petition of residents of Lightwood, in Stoke on Trent,

Declares that the Petitioners are deeply concerned by proposals for a residential development on land off Lightwood Road, which the Petitioners believe the infrastructure of the local area cannot support and would destroy a large area of green-belt land, despite more appropriate areas of land being available in the city.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Department for Communities and Local Government to intervene in this matter at an early stage to ensure a more suitable site is found for any development and any application submitted for a development on this particular piece of land is rejected.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Robert Ffello, *Official Report*, 16 July 2014; Vol. 584, c. 975.]

[P001372]

Observations from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, received 15 September 2014:

The Secretary of State has a quasi-judicial role in the planning system, and cannot comment on the merits or otherwise of any planning proposal which might come within his jurisdiction at some future date.

The Government's objectives for the planning system are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Relevant policies in the framework will be a material consideration whenever a local authority is working on its local plan or determining a planning application.

For instance, the framework maintains strong protections for the green belt. This Government continue to attach great importance to green belt as a way to prevent sprawl and encroachment on open countryside, and as a vital 'green lung' for many communities. The framework makes clear that openness and permanence are essential characteristics of green belt. It also states that inappropriate development should not be permitted there except in very special circumstances.

Green belts are designated by local authorities, not central Government. Alterations to a green belt boundary can be made, but only in exceptional circumstances, using the local plan process. This is for the local authority to propose, as part of the local plan process. By ending regional housing strategies and the 'top-down' pressure they exerted on local authorities to review the extent of their green belts, this Government strengthened green belt protection: local authorities are now fully responsible. If any conflict of policy or planning priorities arises, it is for the local authority to weigh all the material considerations and decide what is right for the land in question.

It is understood that while pre-application discussions have taken place with Stoke-on-Trent city council with regard to proposed residential development off Lightwood Road, no planning application has been submitted. It would be for the city council to consider any application that may yet be made in the first instance. However, in the event that the city council is minded to approve green belt development on the scale proposed, it would be required to refer the application to the Secretary of State under the Town and Country Planning (Consultation) Direction 2009. The purpose of the direction is to give

the Secretary of State an opportunity consider whether to exercise his call-in powers under section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 taking into account the written ministerial statement on call in. Views expressed by local residents and other relevant planning matters would be taken into account as part of this process.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Human rights in Sri Lanka

The Petition of residents of Harrow West,

Declares that it has been reported that violent attacks on Muslims in the southern Sri Lanka town of Aluthgama beginning on 15 June resulted in the death of four Muslims, and injured more than 80, with many homes and businesses destroyed; further that the Petitioners believe that it is of particular concern that eyewitnesses have reported that the police stood by and refused to intervene during the violence; and further that international human rights organisations have called on the Sri Lankan authorities to fully investigate the attacks and identify those who incited the violence.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons takes action to raise concerns regarding the violent attacks on Muslims with the Sri Lankan authorities.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr Gareth Thomas, *Official Report*, 22 July 2014; Vol. 584, c. 1357.]

[P001380]

Observations from the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, received 17 September 2014:

I thank the petitioners for raising this important issue in the House of Commons.

The British Government remain concerned at the recent attacks against minority religious groups in Sri Lanka, as my noble Friend, the former senior Minister of State, Baroness Warsi, made clear in Parliament on 2 July. Our high commissioner to Sri Lanka has raised our concerns with the Sri Lankan authorities over sectarian violence and tensions. We have urged the Sri Lankan authorities to take early action to promote peaceful co-existence between all communities, noting the importance of ensuring any acts of violence, intimidation or threats are thoroughly investigated and

those responsible brought to justice. Following the violence, Sri Lankan Justice Minister and leader of the Sri Lankan Muslim Congress told the media that he was “outraged” that the “law and order machinery completely failed”.

The Sri Lankan President committed to bring to justice those responsible for incidents in Aluthgama. However, despite media reports of 124 arrests following the violence, we understand that no convictions have taken place, and that those taken into custody have subsequently been released. There are similar reports of impunity for those responsible for ad hoc crimes against members of religious minorities.

On 7 July, the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire), Minister with responsibility for South Asia, met members of the Sri Lankan Muslim community resident in the UK whose family and friends were directly affected by the violence in order to discuss their concerns. On 18 July, officials met with the Sri Lankan high commissioner to the UK and urged the Sri Lankan Government to take action to address sectarian tensions, including by outlawing hate speech. The EU delegation has also released a statement in agreement with EU Heads of Mission in Sri Lanka condemning the violence and has called on the Sri Lankan Government to uphold law and order.

The UK was a main co-sponsor of a UN Human Rights Council resolution passed on 27 March which establishes an international investigation into allegations of violations of international law on both sides of Sri Lanka’s conflict. The resolution also expresses alarm at the significant surge in attacks against members of religious minorities in Sri Lanka, and calls upon the Sri Lankan Government to end continuing incidents of human rights violations and investigate all alleged attacks on members of religious minority groups and places of worship.

We hope that the Sri Lankan Government will as promised work to ensure that these events are comprehensively investigated and that those responsible are prosecuted. We will continue to urge the Sri Lankan Government to take action to prevent further attacks on minority religious groups, and promote enduring peace and reconciliation between all communities in Sri Lanka. We believe that this would help ensure Sri Lanka reaches its enormous potential as a strong and prosperous nation.

PETITIONS

Friday 26 September 2014

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