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Foreign Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Work of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, HC 518

Tuesday 6 July 2021

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 6 July 2021.

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Members present: Tom Tugendhat (Chair); Neil Coyle; Alicia Kearns; Stewart Malcolm McDonald; Andrew Rosindell; Bob Seely; Henry Smith; Royston Smith; Graham Stringer; Claudia Webbe.

Questions 488-594

Witnesses

I: Rt Hon. Dominic Raab MP, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs.



Examination of witness

Witnesses: Dominic Raab.

Q488 **Chair:** Welcome to this afternoon's session of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Thank you very much for joining us, Foreign Secretary, and thank you in particular for coming in person. I am very glad that we are getting back to in-person hearings.

We are going to start off, if we may, with some of the changes that have happened in what is now your expanded Department over the last year. You have had responsibility for development policy for, I believe, nine months. What have you done differently since the merger? What has changed in how you approached it?

Dominic Raab: First, I would view the merger as one element, one limb or pillar, of the wider changes to our international foreign policy. The merger is important because we can now bring our aid and our development approach much more hand in glove with diplomatic leverage. At the same time, we have the integrated review, which gives us a vision and a sharpness of focus that perhaps we did not have before.

Off the back of that—and I think the pandemic taught us a good deal about this—we have an approach cross-Whitehall, which integrates much more tightly, through Committees, other small ministerial groups and the National Security Council, the international approach we take, whether it is in relation to what we are doing in east Africa, the link with security co-operation, the deal with al-Shabab, and right the way through to the girls' education piece. I think we are knitted much more closely together. That is partly about the merger, but it is a broader issue as well.

Q489 **Chair:** Some of this work has brought a lot of different foreign aspects together, as you rightly say. One of the things that slightly surprised some of us is that it appears, certainly after our session with Lord David Frost last week, that the Europe Minister position is now in the Cabinet Office. Could you explain how that works?

Dominic Raab: I do not think that is quite right, but David is an excellent colleague and he, the Prime Minister and I look very carefully at the arrangements. We have Wendy Morton, who covers the European neighbourhood as well as the Americas, so it is not as if the FCDO has lost that scope.

Fundamentally, what David is looking at is the implementation of the various deals that we have with the EU. More generally, he and I then work together about what that means for our Europe strategy. I still deal with the EU on foreign policy issues; Josep Borrell is my lead interlocutor. I still have the overarching view of the relationship that we may have with capitals, but the truth is we integrated very carefully together. I would say it is an excellent partnership, but I think there is more than enough work there because of the follow-up, if you like, from the withdrawal agreement—the Northern Ireland protocol that was created by the Joint



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Committee, and now the TCA—so all I can tell you is that it works very effectively in practice.

Q490 **Chair:** I understand how you can say that. I am just wondering why it is in the Cabinet Office and not the Foreign Office. The Foreign Secretary has the strategic oversight of Britain's role abroad, including treaties, including trade, as so much of this is foreign policy. Would it not make more sense to have that European negotiation, which is, after all, about 40% of our trade, and certainly one of our most important strategic relationships?

Dominic Raab: You could argue that. I suppose some of the residual infrastructure from the Brexit negotiations was in the Cabinet Office. You can look at the way Michael Gove had been dealing with his opposite number in the Joint Committee, and he obviously operates out of the Cabinet Office.

To be honest with you, I do not feel desperately territorial about it, not least because the Prime Minister has been very personally committed to making sure that the FCDO, if you like, has that perch across the whole piece. There is more than enough intensive work with our European friends to be going on with, and David and I have very good, not just division of labour, but collegiality, in the way we go about it.

Q491 **Chair:** You will be aware, of course, that various different aspects that Lord Frost has been working on, including, for example, the Northern Ireland protocol, have major ramifications for foreign policy in other ways. How have your conversations been going with people like Secretary of State Blinken and others about the different ways in which our decisions in Europe are having implications with the US and other allies?

Dominic Raab: Very straightforward, I have to say. We explain our position. It is understood that the Americans, of whichever political hue, feel that they have a vested interest at stake in the Good Friday agreement. We all want to see the Good Friday agreement safeguarded and promoted, and we have an excellent understanding with our American friends in order to set out the British perspective about how that needs to be managed effectively.

The Northern Ireland protocol represents a commitment to the Good Friday agreement, a commitment to the single market, and a commitment to the internal market of the UK. What is very important is that our friends abroad, not just the Americans, although they have a keen interest, understand the range of those three fundamental stakes and are not just hearing one side of the story. I have always found them very judicious and fair-minded, including Secretary of State Blinken.

Q492 **Chair:** You have just come back from what was a premier foreign policy event so far this year. I say "so far" because there is a second, very important one coming up, but in Cornwall at Carbis Bay with the G7, a lot of the talk there was about foreign aid. A lot of it was about Northern Ireland and a lot of it was about China. On the foreign aid point, the UK was the only one of the seven to cut aid. What did you think about that?



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Dominic Raab: First of all, you say a lot of the talk there was about these issues. China certainly was front and centre, but the media talk was about ODA and Brexit. We had a whole range of issues: the ability to secure 1 billion doses for COVAX; the ability to secure close to \$3 billion in funding for girls' education, which has been under the personal leadership of the Prime Minister; and on climate change, the ability not just to secure 2050 commitments but 2030 ones as well, and a range of other issues on coal. Don't get me wrong—I am happy to take any questions, but my experience of the room and then the chatter outside of the room is that it was not entirely the same.

On ODA, I do not remember any interlocutor raising that with me or in my presence with the Prime Minister for the simple reason that we are the third largest ODA donor in the G7 as a percentage of GNI and the third highest bilateral humanitarian donor this year based on OECD data. We have demonstrated by what we have done on COVAX and vaccines our global leadership. We gave the biggest-ever commitment to the global partnership for education—£430 million—which was a significant increase and the biggest donation we have ever given. I think the leadership is there for all to see. I do not remember once being asked about it.

Q493 **Chair:** Okay. It was raised with me by other Foreign Affairs Committee Chairs shortly beforehand, so I will leave that there.

Dominic Raab: That is fair enough. You just asked me a question and I have given you a very straight answer.

Q494 **Chair:** Absolutely, and I am delighted to have your answers, as you know, Foreign Secretary. This leads to a story that we read in *The Sunday Times* on Sunday about the attempt that you and the Chancellor were working on. I am sure you have many negotiations with the Chancellor over budgets and how to square the foreign aid question. Was this the right way to square it?

Dominic Raab: Sorry, was what the right way to square it?

Chair: The 0.2% cut.

Dominic Raab: You mean the shift from 0.7% to 0.5%.

Chair: Yes.

Dominic Raab: First, I wouldn't comment on private discussions that I have had, but I have been clear all along. The decision that was originally made, a very difficult one financially, reflected the fact that we had been in the biggest economic contraction for 300 years. The budget deficit peaked at double what we saw after the 2008-09 crash. I talked it through with the Prime Minister and the Chancellor and, as painful as that decision has been, we are clear that it will be temporary and will reflect the financial emergency and the impact that it has had on the public finances. Also, I think our constituents would be asking us some pretty serious questions if we were looking for savings across the piece, but had



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somehow exempted one aspect of international policy. It was a difficult decision—a temporary one, but a necessary one.

Q495 **Chair:** But there are savings already on the overseas aid budget, as you know, because 0.7% is a tight number. As GNI goes down, the budget goes down.

Dominic Raab: I have answered this question before at the other Select Committee and my approach is obviously the same. I do not think you can compare the buffer that the GNI index gives you with the financial and economic crisis that followed the public health crisis of this pandemic. I think it is once in a generation, and arguably the biggest challenge that we have had at a global level since the second world war. I do not think that that alone could have provided a buffer.

Q496 **Chair:** I can understand that as a financial point. There is also the reverse argument. As we know through the fact that we are going through the delta variant which, thank God, the vaccines seem to be resisting, we are fundamentally connected to an international health environment that has a very direct implication, not just for our current economy, but for our future economy, our children's schooling and many other things. A lambda variant is now being spoken about and other variants are likely in coming years. There is a strong argument that could go along the COVAX line: "There's a lot of money you could spend on keeping us safe by keeping the different variants at bay."

Dominic Raab: I think it is a powerful one, although I am not sure whether it leads to the conclusion you say—it could do, it depends. Ultimately, it is a matter of judgment, as I described, but we safeguarded. When we looked at this first in the 2020 GNI review and when we had to make the difficult decision to shift from 0.7% to 0.5%, we took a strategic view. One of the things that we did was to set out the priorities, including public health and dealing with the pandemic. I think our record, as we showed at the G7, is a very powerful one. With your forbearance, Chair, I would like to set it out briefly.

First of all, we committed £90 million to the R&D and then to the scaling up of production at Halix, which has given the world through AstraZeneca a safe and reliable vaccine at cost price. As a result of that, at the point of Carbis Bay, 95% of all COVAX-distributed vaccines were AZ. The first thing is that that investment was a massive contribution, and it was personally steered by the Prime Minister. The second thing we have done is to be one of the largest donors to COVAX. We have secured 1 billion doses that way. The third thing that we have done is make sure that, out of our excess supply—because we have had a good domestic roll-out—we have scope to commit to 100 million doses that we can donate by the middle of next year.

As a result of our approach, which involved the ODA commitments, but also the R&D, the science and the expertise, we have secured the extra 1 billion doses. I would say that, notwithstanding the shift to 0.5%, that is a very strong example of British leadership during this crisis.



Q497 **Chair:** I am not going to argue with you. The achievement of the AstraZeneca team and its various different manifestations, whether at Oxford, at Halix or in the COVAX programme, has been fantastically impressive. I would certainly not want you to have the impression that I or I suspect anyone on the Committee is in any way critical of that. There is, however, a strong aspect to this that connects to other diseases. For example, the budget for tropical diseases has gone from £150 million to £17 million. That is a really big cut, at a time not only when covid has demonstrated our interconnected nature, but Ebola reminds us that, actually, a lot of these diseases may emerge in areas where there is even less health security than in, for example, China.

Dominic Raab: You are absolutely right. There is always a challenge. Of course, it has been one aspect of the decision making that, as we have focused our fire on this pandemic, we have not had as much resource to go into the other areas. However, I would say that, although we have had some difficult funding decisions, we will maintain a broad range of programmes, funding and investment in things like sexual and reproductive health and rights, HIV/AIDS, malaria, TB, polio and neglected tropical diseases. You are probably right to say that we may not be at the level we were before but, on the other hand—you mentioned tropical diseases—we have been the second largest country funder of programmes. We will not always be, as circumstances change, at the very top of the donors in every area. I do not think that that is realistic. Of course, we have to refocus our efforts and of course the foremost public health challenge that we face—I know you are not disputing this—has been covid, and that is where we have focused our fire. We look forward to getting out of that, because we will then rebalance our approach.

Q498 **Chair:** Foreign Secretary, again I say, of course you are right: the UK should not be the sole and unique donor, nor should it always be the largest donor on every occasion and in every field—but we are the only ones cutting at the moment. As you have just said yourself, that will have implications on the ground. We do know, for example, that we have, through a legacy of history and through the living bridge that we have between our migrant communities and many countries around the world, extremely close connections—rich, vibrant and important connections—to many parts of the world that have significantly worse public health systems than we do and have very large metropolises that can incubate disease; and that can therefore see us, effectively, much more connected to the flow of health risk, pandemic risk, than many other countries. So I will just ask again: what do you think are the implications for those countries and therefore for our protection, the protection of the British people, from the spending cuts that you had to bring through?

Dominic Raab: Let's not pretend for a second that they have not been challenged—they have. My approach is to take a strategic lens to it, to set out the key areas that we must focus on, that matter to us most, in terms of, if you like, the moral sense of responsibility we have in the world but also the UK's strategic lens that we apply, and to make sure, as we go through the GNI review, the previous SR and then the future SR, that we are really marshalling the £10 billion, for example, that we have got this



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year, that we are putting in, to those strategic areas of focus. I cannot pretend to you we are going to fund everything to the same level as before. That is why you have to have a strategic lens.

I will just raise one issue. You are absolutely right to say that if we are reducing our ODA spend, others may be increasing it, but from what baseline? Very few of the other countries that people cite have been at 0.7% as consistently as we have. I get—I understand entirely and accept—

Q499 **Chair:** Sorry, but Japan does not have the same migrant connections as we do; Germany does not have the same migrant connections as we do. France does—I'll grant you that—but there are many countries that are not quite as intimately linked to the global south or to populations around the world as we are, and therefore this is, for us, an act not simply of global generosity but of global self-interest, is it not?

Dominic Raab: I think the moral and the self-interest absolutely collide in the way you describe. All I am saying is that we should not get into the business of giving credit to a Government that increases its ODA by a fraction from a low base when we are still giving significantly more from a very high baseline. But yes, we have had to take this difficult decision; I am just trying to make that point.

Q500 **Chair:** Okay. I am very grateful for those comments. Can I ask about the ways in which these cuts have gone through? It appears that you have honoured the financial commitments to the multilateral institutions that you were bound to take—is that correct?

Dominic Raab: We have not broken any legal obligations. Of course, the issue with the multilateral—it is an interesting question, and I would be interested in your view as to the balance between multilateral and bilateral spend, because we have had endless debates—the short answer is: we have not broken any of our legal commitments. That does not mean that we will not look to reprofile, in some instances, where the strategic case is made out.

Q501 **Chair:** Forgive me, but I think this is an interesting diversion that is worth having. The Government, over the last four or five years, has focused very much more on bilateral relationships than multilateral. Part of that is the Brexit process; part of that is so-called global Britain; part of that is the tilt to Asia. You have been front and centre of that. It is slightly odd, from my perspective, that we have defended the multilateral more than we have defended the bilateral, given that the entire strategy of the Government has been much more on the bilateral end. Would you care to comment on that?

Dominic Raab: I think it is a fair challenge; I'm not sure I quite accept the assumptions there. The multilateral has economies of scale and good governance in its favour; the bilateral has the ability to focus strategically and the control that we get. I am interested more in the bilateral area. You can see, at the time of financial challenge, why there are typically



financial, fiscal, arguments in favour of the multilateral, but I think that over the medium term that will be recalibrated.

One of the things that we did and I agreed with the Chancellor was to lift the TOC limits to allow us to bring in more in-house capability to run programmes, rather than relying on either multilaterals or consultants. I think that will enhance our capacity very effectively, and to the Treasury's satisfaction, to deal and focus more in bilateral areas where the case, either morally or in terms of national self-interest, is made out.

Q502 Chair: This is a personal statement, not one on behalf of the Committee: I am very supportive of your bringing a lot of capabilities in-house. I think we have seen that the consultancy model has challenges—politely put—so I am very glad you are doing that. May I, however, just go back to your balance of bilateral and multilateral? We have, for example, three new missions that I believe you have recently opened: Chad, Niger and Mali, I think. None of them have a particular budget line connected to them on bilateral aid. Presumably, therefore, they will be delivering whatever they deliver through a multilateral system. Is that correct?

Dominic Raab: No, I would not make that assumption. I will look at it very carefully. We want to see where we add value. The overriding goal for me is: where do we add value; where do we maximise impact; and, frankly, where is the British national interest? We have opened those missions because—and it is a difficult balance—we want to have coverage, even, as the IR sets out, we have got— You will have seen the strategic focus, particularly in East Africa, and none the less we have opened those missions, so there is some ballast to that East Africa, Horn of Africa, Indo-Pacific focus. We are not going out of business in these other areas—we are not reducing our bandwidth. I don't think there is a magic formula or, God forbid, an algorithm that we would apply. You have to exercise judgment.

Q503 Chair: Okay, I would accept that. There is, however, a strange element going on. Some people have commented that it looks like we are going back to different legacies—to different pasts, as it were—because it seems that we have pulled out our bilateral aid from places like Lebanon and Syria, former French areas of influence, and reinvested as much as we have in places like Kenya and Nigeria, British areas of influence. Is there a return to a pre-1960 mindset in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office?

Dominic Raab: I don't think I have ever viewed it through that lens. I do think that, when you are coming up with a strategy, if you don't have downticks, you don't have a strategy, so you have to look at the areas where you are going to shift resource around. Fundamentally, I look at the positives and—I think you put it very well—where our moral and self-interests collide. I think that, overwhelmingly, you can make that argument in East Africa in a way that is different from anywhere else. Overwhelmingly, on the Indo-Pacific, I would point to the road map we have just agreed with India, through to our application for ASEAN dialogue partner status, through to the launching of negotiations for CPTTP, as



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illustrations of why and how we are focusing in that area. I would love to debate with anyone who does not think we should be spending more time, energy, ambition and effort, in terms of our international strategy, in the Indo-Pacific.

Q504 Chair: Sure, but in Lebanon, for example, anywhere between a quarter and a third of the country's population is made up mostly of migrants from the Syrian war. Frankly, it is not a million miles away from complete state failure. For the best part of 10 years, the UK has invested heavily and, as you know, our support for the Lebanese armed forces, enabling it to deter terrorist acts and other forms of aggression, has been a very important contribution from the UK military and, indeed, the UK Foreign Office. Yet we are withdrawing that funding at a time when in Belarus, for example, the Lukashenko regime is using people trafficking as a means of putting political pressure on his neighbours, and Lebanon is particularly vulnerable to those kinds of migrant moves being instrumentalised by states that might wish us ill. Is this not an opportunity to look at Lebanon in a different way, as a country that is very much in our national interest?

Dominic Raab: I don't disagree with the analysis that you have set forward. I think we are providing a meaningful contribution to the Lebanon, and I can set out the details and write to you. I think you could make, country by country, a very compelling argument in lots of different places. Strategically speaking, though, I have just back from Vietnam, Cambodia and Singapore—key ASEAN states. I might be corrected, but I think I am the first Foreign Secretary to have ever gone to Cambodia—I am told that and the Cambodians certainly think that is the case. If you look at Vietnam, you will see that we have had serious issues with people trafficking there. You can compile moral and self-interest arguments in all these different areas, but overwhelmingly, from India through to the Republic of Korea and Japan—the range of our strategic interests, the opportunities of the future and the challenges that will need to be dealt with in the future are going to be there. That does not mean there is not a place for these other areas; it does not mean that there isn't an appetite for these other areas. But I want a strategy, and it is not a strategy to say: "We'll be everywhere." It just isn't.

Chair: Neil Coyle, you wanted to come in and follow up on some of these aid aspects.

Q505 Neil Coyle: Thanks, Chair. I just want to go back slightly. Foreign Secretary, it is great that you are here with us. I am really pleased that you said you are here to give straight answers, because it would be great if you could set the record straight. When you last appeared here, you suggested that the aid sector and Bond had been consulted on the abolition of DfID. They disagreed and contacted us to let us know. Can you set the record straight? Was there consultation with the aid sector before the abolition or not?

Dominic Raab: You asked this question before, and I know you tried to raise a point of order in the House. We announced the proposition, we consulted and then we delivered it. I can write to you—I thought I already



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had, but I am very happy to write again to set it out. I have answered this question so many times, Neil, but I am happy to do so again. We absolutely did consult widely before the implementation of it, but I think what you are saying is from the point of announcement.

Q506 Neil Coyle: You did write and you suggested that before the announcement there had been consultation. Your permanent secretary also wrote and said that that meeting did not discuss the abolition. Who is giving a straight answer here—you or your permanent secretary?

Dominic Raab: I didn't quite catch the question. You were a bit quiet there.

Neil Coyle: Apologies. Let me run it by you more slowly. You wrote and suggested that the sector was consulted before the announcement. Your permanent secretary wrote and said that that was not the case, and that the meeting that you referred to did not have that item on the agenda. Who is giving the straight answer?

Dominic Raab: We have been very clear. We consulted the sector. I think it is fair to say that it took place between announcement and whatever the date was when we formally, legally did it.

Q507 Neil Coyle: Still not quite the straight answer that you suggested we might get.

Dominic Raab: It is absolutely crystal clear, Neil: the point of announcement, delivery and, in between, consultation. Couldn't be clearer.

Neil Coyle: Slightly different from what you said last time. Thanks, Chair.

Q508 Chair: Thank you. Can I just follow up on that very quickly? You are publishing a development strategy, I believe. When are you going to publish that?

Dominic Raab: As soon as possible, but I want to get it right. I want it to reflect the IR and the SR, so I can't give you a precise date, but I think it will be a further building block of the IR. Having got the merger in place, I think we are now exceptionally well placed, so I am already looking at the content of it. We are actively working on that.

Q509 Chair: So you are hoping to bring it out in the next few months, not in the next few years.

Dominic Raab: It will not be in the next few years. I am not going to give you a specific time, but it will be months, not years, for sure.

Q510 Chair: And who are you consulting on that?

Dominic Raab: We will be tapping the expertise and experience of all of our stakeholders. We get a huge amount of input in the ordinary course of things from all the NGO groups and from our international partners, the key partners that we work very closely with, and the UN. All of those will be able to feed into that process.



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Q511 **Chair:** Are you actively calling people in? I am seeking to avoid a repetition in a few months' time of the question you were just asked by Mr Coyle.

Dominic Raab: In order to avoid Neil hitting the roof again, why don't I write to you and set out all of the detail of the consultation that we are going to provide?

Q512 **Chair:** That would be fantastic. Thank you very much for doing that.

It has just been brought to my attention that Vietnam is not receiving any ODA money. Is that deliberate?

Dominic Raab: Vietnam, because of its economic development, I would have to check, but of course the country announcements have not been made yet. I would have to look and write to you as to whether it is true to say that they get zero bilateral or multilateral.

Chair: Okay. I await that letter with great interest. Henry, over to you.

Q513 **Henry Smith:** Thank you, Chair. It is good to see you, Foreign Secretary. Thank you for being with us today. You mentioned the G7 a few moments ago and the communiqué announced by the group of the launch of the B3W—the Build Back Better World initiative—to counter China's belt and road initiative. What role will the UK play in planning for this initiative, and how will it take a lead moving forward? For example, what details can you provide on the initiative? Can you give us further information on what the UK's specific involvement will be?

Dominic Raab: Thanks, Henry. Good to see you. I think it is a really important initiative. I think I talked about it when I was last here, but in any event certainly in the House. One of my experiences of going to talk to African and Asian Governments, both Foreign Ministers and leaders, is that when we ask the question about belt and road and the debt that accompanies it, we get the chorus, "Well, make us a better offer!"

One of the things that we want to do is Build Back Better World, which is the US approach, or the clean green initiative, which is how we have tagged it—it has various different labels, but it is the same thing. How do we provide a better investment financing mechanism that takes advantage of, frankly, the integrity of the offer that countries such as the US, the UK, European countries, some of our Five Eyes partners or Japan would make? How do we make sure that it locks in some of the green agenda? How do we avoid some of the debt repercussions that this Committee and others have taken an interest in?

That will be a group endeavour. We talked about it at the G7—you have seen what the communiqué says—and we will continue to talk about it. We have a second G7 Foreign and Development Ministers meeting in the second half of this year, which will be an opportunity to build on it. I am leading on this for the UK and, of course, as you have gleaned, it will bring in DIT, BEIS on climate change, and various other aspects of Government. It will be a cross-Whitehall approach. I think it is another good example of



how, not just post-merger but more generally, we are integrating our approach to these things.

That is not anti-China. It is actor-agnostic—it is not just about Africa, but could apply to the whole developing world—and we need to come up with a more compelling offer, given some of the short-termism in the marketplace for countries that are crying out for investment in roads, bridges and other key infrastructure.

Q514 Graham Stringer: COP26 is taking place later this year. There have obviously been 25 previous COPs. They have not led to a microgram less carbon dioxide going into the atmosphere. In fact, there has been an absolutely steady increase in carbon dioxide. The only thing that has changed has been covid, which reduced the amount of carbon dioxide. Why will this COP be different?

Dominic Raab: Graham, first of all, I am not sure that I agree that there has been no effect from international summits. That does not mean we do not see that the trajectory is going in the wrong direction—we know we need to limit the increase in temperatures by 1.5° against 1990 levels.

What will make a difference? Two ingredients are essential for this COP to be effective. The first is the ambition on NDCs. That is why what we achieved at the G7 is so important. For any members of the public who are listening, NDCs are nationally determined contributions—our emission targets. That is why what we have done getting the G7 into the right place on not just the 2050 targets but the 2030 targets was important. We have also done a lot of work on coal, and the clean green initiative will help in developing countries.

The crucial bit that is missing—on the other side, rather than just encouraging this virtuous cycle of increased emissions targets—is the international climate finance. There are various other bits of it that are important, such as article 6 negotiations and various other things dealing with deforestation, which follow. The critical ask from the so-called global south, however, is the international climate finance piece. If we get that right, we have a good chance of the ambition and the package being in the right place, which is why, again notwithstanding the challenges of covid financially, we have doubled ICF funding. We are encouraging and trying to lead by example to coax and cajole others to get in the right place.

As well as NDCs, that is probably the thing that I am spending most of my time pushing on, backing Alok Sharma, the COP President-designate. We had a good discussion about it at the G7 Foreign Ministers meeting in May.

Q515 Graham Stringer: I will come back to climate finance, if I may. I would like you to commit to looking at how carbon dioxide has increased, because I think we have got something wrong about the impact of COP26. One of the perceived failures of the G7 was that there was no commitment to when coal-fired power stations would be phased out. At the same time, India has switched off its nuclear power plants and is investing in coal. You can take whichever figures you like, but China is



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investing massively in coal in its own country and purchasing coal-fired power stations elsewhere in the world. When is that going to change?

This is a long question, but we are putting up the cost of energy here, which is making our economy less competitive because energy is going up in price. In China, the price of energy is dropping because it is using more coal. At a time when China is a threat, we are putting ourselves at a disadvantage. Why is that a good idea?

Dominic Raab: There is quite a lot in that, Graham.

Graham Stringer: There is. I apologise.

Dominic Raab: No, that's fine. Let me try to unpack it as best I can. First of all, the commitment at the G7 was to end new direct Government support for coal power generation by the end of 2021. Of course, there are various other things that we want to see ended—support for coal finance. The Powering Past Coal Alliance is something that, again, in my conversations I am spending a lot of time trying to get countries to sign up to. You are right: there is a long way to go. There are plenty of friendly, democratic allies who we are pushing very hard, as well as countries like China, which we know are investing heavily in renewables but still have a coal issue.

The ultimate question is that we are not going to encourage them, particularly developing countries and poorer countries—for whom the narrative holds very hard that, “You in the west got wealthy and rich off the back of carbon emissions that you now want us to curtail”—and we are not going to turn the dial on climate change unless we lead by example. We have to try to get the NDC commitments there, get the ICF commitments there, and create a virtuous cycle—in a sense, a win-win.

There is a big thing that I think has changed. I have talked about this with my Chinese opposite numbers. I spoke to State Councillor Wang Yi quite recently. I talked to Foreign Minister Jaishankar about this recently. The big change is that the dividends—the yield—in investing in renewables, particularly solar but also wind, have improved pretty dramatically over the last 10 years, so you are seeing more and more investment going into those areas, which I do not think five years ago we would have seen at the same scale. We would not have expected that. That is the direction of travel, but I am not pretending for a second that it isn't a challenge. We would not be putting so much effort into it if it was not important.

Q516 **Graham Stringer:** I understand what you are saying about leadership and countries following. John Gummer, when he was in the House of Commons, made that point 15 years ago, I think. China, which is still treated as a developing country, and India following are investing in coal heavily. It does not matter that they are also investing in renewables if the amount of carbon dioxide coming from coal is increasing. As I asked you last time, shouldn't we be changing the status of China from a developing country in the COP26 negotiations and more generally?

Dominic Raab: There is quite an intense international debate about that. We need to have some objective criteria for what counts as a developing and a developed country and try to depoliticise this as much as possible and be actor-agnostic about it. Otherwise, of course, Chinese defensiveness will only rise, but for all developing countries that are traversing from low income to middle income, then beyond, that is a perfectly legitimate challenge.

Q517 **Graham Stringer:** You mentioned climate finance. The commitments that were originally given to £100 billion per annum have not been hit. When do you think those targets will be achieved?

Dominic Raab: As soon as possible, but we are leading. As I said, we have doubled our ICF commitments precisely because we know that we need to hit that target and it will be a team effort. The best that you can do is demonstrate national leadership, which I believe this Prime Minister and this Government have done, commit to it, and make the case for the other countries around the world that this is win-win, that there are partnerships and that there are jobs in the renewable technologies of the future, but you only get there if we can finance them, particularly in the poorest countries. It is absolutely crucial for the buy-in of the poorest countries. You are right that we are not there yet, but that is why we have made the commitment and why you see us pushing for it in every forum and bilaterally.

Q518 **Chair:** Can I quickly add to the question about China and coal? We are seeing a lot of Chinese diplomacy in the Pacific at the moment, where countries that are particularly vulnerable to climate change are increasingly aware of the threats they face. Are we helping them to be aware of the danger that the Chinese coal production and use is putting them under?

Dominic Raab: The danger in what sense? The environmental sense?

Chair: Yes.

Dominic Raab: Of course. With every ASEAN member that I have talked to—and I have been pretty assiduous and not just visited them all bilaterally; I think I have been out to the Indo-Pacific five times and also engaged twice in ASEAN—

Q519 **Chair:** I don't just mean ASEAN. I am thinking of Nauru and Vanuatu.

Dominic Raab: Of course, we make the argument to them and many other countries will do as well. We make the argument. We make the case that it is not in their interest or in the collective interest. That is absolutely right.

Chair: Thank you very much. Royston, did you want to come in?

Q520 **Royston Smith:** Thank you for coming today, Foreign Secretary. I am going to change the subject, if I may, to the meeting we had with Lord Hague some months ago. He was talking about the initiative for preventing sexual violence in conflict. He said that the FCDO had



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deprioritised that initiative and that energy at senior level had dissipated, funding had decreased, and the subject was no longer raised at diplomatic meetings. How would you respond to that accusation?

Dominic Raab: I don't think that's right. What we do have and what I am looking to set up in the FCDO is a conflict centre that looks at where we can add value, either to resolving a conflict or, in a nascent post-conflict situation, allowing peace and development to bed in. We look very carefully at where we can add value. We don't want to reinvent the wheel. We are looking to supplement with the expertise, talent and experience that we have got. All the initiatives on PSVI are being deployed in that context.

The reason I want to do that is that I wanted to focus on where we add value most, because I think that makes sense. For example, two of the areas where we will be looking more intensively will be in Cyprus. I attended 5+1 talks in Geneva with the Secretary General and the other partners. That's not directly relevant to PSVI, but it is a good example of something where we have a historical role but also some value added that we can demonstrate.

Another area that I think is going to be increasingly important and we should look at is Somalia and what is going on there. That is very good example where the expertise that we have got in PSVI can be brought to bear. Rather than looking at this as a generic flag-waving exercise—I am not suggesting that Lord Hague was doing that—I want to see where the UK adds the most value and where we can do the most good. That is inevitably looking at a conflict or a post-conflict situation as a whole.

The PSVI has a really important role to play there. It is not the only thing that we will do; we have expertise in mediation, development and reintegration of child soldiers, and various other capacities. Rather than regarding it as a niche bit of the armoury, it needs to be integrated and put in an approach to conflict and post-conflict situations.

Q521 **Royston Smith:** I am interested in that, but shouldn't it be niched somewhere? Lord Hague said that we were leading on this and that now we are not. From his point of view, he didn't see legacy or who fronted this up to start with as being anything important, but that it carried on. If some other country were to lead on it in the future, he would be perfectly happy with that. He just felt that someone should. Do you not think that perhaps someone should?

Dominic Raab: I think lots of countries take a very close interest in it and support it. The question is whether it is a team effort and how any country maximises the impact they bring to bear, not setting it up as an issue that is dislocated from all the other issues that are relevant to dealing with sexual violence in war or, indeed, the wider ravages of war, or indeed, how you bed down peace in a post-conflict society.

If we look at Tigray, for example, we are pushing on the humanitarian access. We want to see those elections produce results that are free and fair. We want to have accountability for the human rights abuses—both



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the body set up by Ethiopia, but also the UN body. There is clearly an issue on PSVI in the Tigray conflict, but taking that out of the broader context that I have just described does not seem to me to make much sense. It is part of that conflict and we ought to look at it in the round. Why? Because we want to have the best impact we can have in terms of turning things around. You can't look at one area dislocated from the political channel, the wider accountability for human rights abuses, getting the Eritrean troops out there, trying to make that ceasefire bed down.

I have worked in war crimes for a long part of my life, when I worked on international tribunals in The Hague. There was a lot of NGO and international support for dealing with this, but you couldn't go into Yugoslavia, Rwanda or indeed Sudan and Darfur, and look at that in isolation from the broader question about how to bring peace and how to bring accountability.

I think it is a very important aspect, where we will have more value if we integrate it more, not just in terms of the conflict as a whole, but in the area that you passionately care about—a view I share. It comes back to the point the Chair made at the beginning. Are we integrated or are we not? I believe this is a very good example of where we have more impact if the PSVI element is one of the tools in the toolbox, frequently deployed, but part of our broader approach to conflict.

Q522 Chair: I have a very quick follow-up. You raised Somalia there. Many of us have seen the challenge that Somalilanders have had with the Government of Somalia. Will the Foreign Office be looking at changing its position on recognising the state of Somaliland, which is capitalised in Hargeisa?

Dominic Raab: That is not on the horizon, currently, but we are looking to do what we can to try and bring some stability and peace and, of course, to deal with the al-Shabaab threat that we see emanating not just in and around Somalia, but in that region as a whole. I think it is a good example.

You can always find one or other area—you mentioned Lebanon; there will be others that members of the Committee will be very eloquent in pressing. I think Somalia is absolutely in the crosshairs of a humanitarian and moral challenge, which also has very clear, strategic interests for the UK, not least because of the threat of al-Shabaab to the region.

Chair: As you know, we have a rather large Somaliland and Somali community in the UK, which brings us very close to it indeed. There was a fantastic Conservative candidate in Cardiff North only at the last election—there we go.

Alicia Kearns, over to you.

Q523 Alicia Kearns: Foreign Secretary, thank you very much for joining us. You touched on the conflict centre. Since my election, I have been calling for an atrocity and conflict prevention unit, so this is very welcome. Can you confirm the conflict centre will also look at tackling mass atrocities



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committed outside of conflict and official conflict zones, such as those taking place in Xinjiang currently against the Uyghur? Who is the specific Minister who will be overseeing the conflict centre?

Dominic Raab: I certainly would not be dogmatic about the categorisation—if we see suffering and it is a conflict or close to it, I don't think we would stick to a dogmatic categorisation or lens.

I will personally be overseeing it. It, of course, cuts across geographies and the thematic division of labour among my brilliant junior Ministers. I will be personally overseeing it, and that is partly because it is a new thing and I want to give it the attention that it should have and it deserves.

Q524 **Alicia Kearns:** It is phenomenal to see that you will be taking such a strong interest in it. It is so important as we go forward. That distinction between conflict and non-conflict has been a real concern for the sector, so that is fantastic to hear.

While we are talking about conflict, I would like to raise with you the recent verdicts for the Serbian security service commanders, who were found guilty last week of mass atrocities in Bosnia. This was a landmark case. It took years to put together and a huge amount of resources, but they still weren't convicted for some of the atrocities that they had committed, because of the difficulties in gathering evidence when state authorities want to hide it. I think the judgment shows how difficult it is to establish chains of command between states that deny their roles in atrocities and the paramilitaries or cut-outs that they employ to commit them.

I would be really grateful to understand what you are doing to invest in our capabilities to map out in real time the atrocities being committed, as well as the relationship between states and paramilitaries. What assessment you have made personally, with your background, of what this case means for atrocity crimes jurisprudence?

Dominic Raab: Alicia, thank you very much. Which case and tribunal were you referring to?

Alicia Kearns: It wasn't a tribunal. Last week, there was the case against two of the most senior security service commanders in Bosnia, who had committed atrocities, but they were not found guilty of some things, because they were able to deny them because of the lack of a chain of command. How do you think that impacts on atrocity crime jurisprudence, and what are we going to do to make links between state actors and cut-outs, or those who deny that they are responsible because they are not in more senior roles?

Dominic Raab: There are two bits. One is that the fundamental challenge in any war crimes investigation is evidence. It is, almost by definition, a challenge if you cannot get access to the area. We have had lots of reports in relation to Tigray, but whether we have trial-ready evidence yet is a more difficult question. It is not that it may not exist; it is just difficult because the humanitarian access is so limited. That is inherent in every international criminal trial since Nuremberg. If you read things like Telford

Taylor's "The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials", it was true. If you look at the challenge in Rwanda and Yugoslavia, it was true.

You make a good point about mapping. I think we do very well at that. It is not just a mapping exercise. Can you get the forensic evidence? Of course, we believe in having a burden of proof that needs to be hit in order to secure a conviction, and that is very important. It is very important that we do not take shortcuts, because of the impact that that has on the communities who need to see what happened, and sometimes need to face the reality of what their leaders did.

On the positive side, forgive me if I also talk up the fact that we have seen the conviction of Ratko Mladić, including for genocide, upheld on 8 June by the residual mechanism for the Yugoslavia tribunal. That is massive in terms of command responsibility. It is massive in terms of a conviction for genocide. Radovan Karadžić, of course, the Bosnian Serb leader, has been transferred, or will be transferred, to the UK to serve his sentence. I hope you will forgive my amour propre, Chair, by pointing out that I negotiated in 2004 the UK-UN sentence enforcement agreement.

There were loads of critics of the Yugoslavia tribunal right the way through my time working there: "It cost too much. It never delivered any convictions. The investment was not worth the candle." If you look at the number of senior figures now who have been extracted from the Balkan barrel—bad apples extracted from the Balkan barrel—and what that has done for accountability, for reconciliation, and for the reform effort, because so many of them were involved in organised crime, I think it was good value for money for UK taxpayers, and I think that we should be very proud of the role that we took not just in trying to stabilise the terrible conflict there but then bringing accountability.

We were involved in tracking the fugitives. We were involved in many of the cases. We were involved in things like witness relocation. Karadžić will end his days in a British cell. I would consider myself still a reasonably young Foreign Secretary, but I am looking back to 2004 and I remember then that people said that we would never get any of the really big fish. What that shows is that you sow the seeds and the investment takes a huge amount of time to come to fruition, but it can happen.

I agree with your premise, but the reason that Mladić and Karadžić matter is not just for some solace for the victims. I do not know the extent to which it provides solace—if I were a grieving victim so many years on, I don't know—but I think it must provide at least some. Even more importantly, however, for those who are contemplating such crimes in the future, there must now be an element of doubt in their minds about whether they can just get away with it. Puncturing the impunity for those like Karadžić and Mladić sends a clear message for the future. Forgive me, Chair, for getting on my soapbox.

Chair: I think you are entitled to crow about that achievement. It was a huge achievement for the UK and for the international community.



Q525 **Alicia Kearns:** Foreign Secretary, I think the whole Committee would share the importance that you place on that conviction, in particular given your point about accountability and reconciliation. Therefore, if I may, I will apply that to another setting, which is Myanmar. Given that the military is responsible for some of the worst mass atrocities we have seen in recent history, will the UK Government intervene in the genocide case at the ICJ, which has been brought by The Gambia against Myanmar, to ensure that the same accountability and reconciliation are possible there?

Dominic Raab: We certainly support accountability in any forum. Whether we intervene in the case is a slightly different issue. We have been very clear on Myanmar: we have sanctioned 24 individuals and six entities. Some of that was in relation to what we have seen recently in the context of the coup, some on the treatment of the Rohingya. However, I do not think that the International Court of Justice will deliver— It is the principal judicial institution of the UN and is very important, but it is for state-to-state cases. It will not deal with the impunity and the deterrence that I have argued for in relation to Myanmar, because it is not an international criminal tribunal. So, while I support the impetus behind the case, it is not quite the same thing.

Q526 **Alicia Kearns:** Is there more we could be doing on accountability or for some sort of court proceedings for Myanmar?

Dominic Raab: I think we need to be clear that there will have to be accountability for the worst crimes. Equally, look at the situation on the ground. The Tatmadaw is bedding in, although the dialogue between ASEAN and the regime is interesting. It is a classic example of what we have argued for in the Indo-Pacific tilt—the old paradigm of the West dislocated from the G77 or the non-aligned does not work for us anymore. If we are to influence the Tatmadaw, or indeed China or India, who are watching and have different interests and stakes—I don't think China is particularly satisfied with what it sees there—we need to broaden the caucus of like-minded countries.

When the G7 held its Foreign Ministers' meeting, I invited the chair of ASEAN, from Brunei, to join us. I am considering—again, I will gauge the appetite of the ASEAN members—inviting ASEAN to the second Foreign Ministers' meeting. However, I think it is probably too early, just given the reality of the facts on the ground, to talk about setting up a tribunal in Myanmar—I do not see how. It would not pass the UN Security Council—you can imagine who would veto it—and it would not have host state consent, by definition. But what we need to do is to have a marker in the ground, that there must be accountability down the track for some of the appalling human rights abuses we have seen. Of course, with our Magnitsky sanctions, we can provide at least a measure of accountability through asset freezes and visa bans now.

Q527 **Alicia Kearns:** My final question. You brought up ASEAN. We now have ASEAN dialogue partner status. What are your priority areas for that new status? Have there been any successes as a result of it? Also, what do



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you think ASEAN performance on Myanmar has been?

Dominic Raab: First of all, we have not got it yet. The leaders have signalled that they plan to do it. I think it will happen formally later this summer, but let us not count our chickens before they hatch. I think it matters, though, and I think it is an important area of dialogue.

What is fascinating about the ASEAN countries, which cover quite a wide range, is how much they have welcomed the UK role on everything from dealing with the pandemic and the support we provide on climate change to talking with them about how we uphold the UN convention on the law of the sea, given some of the disputes in the region and China's role in the South China sea. Those are all areas of capacity building.

You asked how ASEAN is doing with Myanmar and the Tatmadaw in particular. The answer is: much better than it is given credit for. The G7 will do its thing—we will make very powerful statements, and we will impose sanctions. The non-aligned, of which ASEAN has traditionally been part—the non-aligned or the G77 group—has historically felt uncomfortable with that kind of western-style robustness. That does not mean they are not doing anything—look particularly at the role of the current chair, Brunei, but also the role that Indonesia and Singapore have played in trying to exert leverage and in engaging in dialogue. They have got their ASEAN five-point consensus on Myanmar. They are looking to appoint a special envoy.

What I find most interesting is the scope for a team effort between what the G7 and Five Eyes and the so-called west does, and what ASEAN is doing. They have got a different style—they talk about ASEAN centrality—but they are very amenable to talking to us about the team effort and the synchronised way we go about things. We should definitely take advantage of that.

Q528 **Chair:** Can I quickly follow up on a couple of points? You mentioned the difficulty of prosecutions. Clearly, this is an ongoing problem. It is something that traditionally the UK has been quite good about—collecting data and storing it in such a way that a possible future trial could take place. Are you doing that in Myanmar?

Dominic Raab: Well, if you have got access—

Chair: Is our embassy doing that in Myanmar?

Dominic Raab: Again, you are talking about a process of accumulating evidence, which would be a very specialist skill. We will look at what we can do. I think it is more likely to take place with NGOs and international partners than, say, the traditional role of the embassy.

Q529 **Chair:** Sure, but it is supporting those NGOs.

Dominic Raab: If there are any that are able to do that, we will support them. We have already been very careful not to choke off the ODA funding. We have been doing all sorts of stuff for two things: first, to stop the Tatmadaw getting any economic advantage from the trade between



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the UK and Myanmar, and, secondly, to ensure, even as we apply the pressure, we are not choking off any of the vital support that we can provide for NGOs in Myanmar.

Getting access to it, whether it is for the embassy or the NGOs—we have just got to be honest about what these situations are like. The Tatmadaw is in control, although there are all sorts of other centrifugal forces around the country. Getting that kind of legally proved evidence is quite difficult—quite a challenge, and that has consistently been the case with war crimes in conflict situations.

Q530 Chair: Sure, but there is an awful lot. The difference between your era on the Bosnian crimes and today in Myanmar is the amount of citizen journalism, if you like—home-shot footage on telephones and all the rest of it—that is now being uploaded on to Facebook and websites and shared pretty widely. It puts this into a somewhat different position. I am not saying it is quite the same as fingerprints on a knife, but it is not nothing.

Dominic Raab: It's not nothing, but the question will be: is the accumulated total of that enough to secure a conviction? It is important stuff—I don't want to minimise it. My experience is that normally in a case, particularly a criminal trial, you come down to a couple of key bits of evidence, and it is quite difficult in the absence of either personal testimony or forensic evidence to clinch the conviction. Look, if it is caught on camera and it is bang to rights, then of course we want to try and use as much of that as possible.

Q531 Chair: Okay. So you will support any NGO that looks to do that.

Dominic Raab: I would look at the case of any NGO that was in that space.

Q532 Chair: Okay. When was the last time you met the Foreign Minister of Myanmar—the Tatmadaw Foreign Minister?

Dominic Raab: I am not sure I have. It may have been when I was first in Bangkok when I became Foreign Minister, for the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' meeting—not recently. The only way I would have come into any contact with the Foreign Minister would have been through the UK-ASEAN Foreign Ministers' dialogue, and most of that was remotely.

Q533 Chair: You wouldn't feel that that in any way legitimised the Tatmadaw.

Dominic Raab: Well, I could then boycott ASEAN meetings—I think that would be a mistake. By the way, my general approach would be to engage with them. I would be happy to talk to the commander-in-chief. I don't think anyone would confuse my conversation with any member of the regime with legitimising it, given the content of what I would be saying.

Q534 Bob Seely: Foreign Secretary, thank you for being here. Can you talk to us a little bit about how the UK and the western alliance are dealing with China's wolf warrior diplomacy?



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Dominic Raab: In general—you have seen this borne out by the US approach—it follows very neatly what the Prime Minister has said. We recognise the reality of China. We also see that with the rise of the east, not just China but many of those countries—India as well—millions have been taken out of poverty. That is a good thing. We recognise that there is no country, or no significant economy, that is not doing trade with China. That is only going to increase as its economic relevance increases.

At the same time, on issues of global concern, whether it is the challenges of covid or climate change, we are not going to be able to deal with them unless you can have a sensible conversation. At the same time, we need to be absolutely robust in defending our core interests. You talk about the wolf warrior diplomatic initiative, but let's look at it and break it down. We are going to defend our intellectual property, we are going to defend our telecoms infrastructure and we are going to stand up on the issues that matter to us on human rights from Hong Kong to Xinjiang, as I think we have demonstrated a global leadership role. We will look at other things such as the impact that Chinese investment and approach will have in our universities, whether it is on freedom of expression, academic freedoms or, indeed, the integrity of the research that we do there.

Q535 **Bob Seely:** That is a very full answer, thank you. You say that we will look at that. Are we looking at it now, do you think?

Dominic Raab: We are looking at every aspect of this. I have been chairing a small ministerial group that will dovetail into the National Security Council to make sure that there are no strands of that that are not looked at. Since my time and under the Prime Minister's leadership, we have looked at this in a cross-Government way—everything from local authorities to universities to the trade piece—and in a much more integrated way.

Q536 **Bob Seely:** That is exciting to hear, and thank you for that very full answer. You talked about defending our core interests. Do you think we are there yet? We know about an aggressive, mercantilist strategy that the Chinese have. We know about IP theft and we know that they are buying companies in order to gain IP, and yet the Government are not going to be moving on Newport Wafer Fab. I know it sounds like a fusion restaurant on the Isle of Wight, but it is a very important chip manufacturer in the UK. Are we defending our core interest by not taking action, considering that the National Security and Investment Bill arguably had weaker potential protections than Australia and the United States have for their relevant laws? I know that we discussed that as a Committee when we spoke of it in Parliament.

You mentioned looking at UK universities, and I am very glad that you did. Cambridge has, frankly, embarrassed itself with some of the things it has been doing with the Chinese state. We know that China spies on students abroad, but we are still allowing Confucius Institutes. You are looking at these things, and you are saying that we are trying to get coherence across the board. When are we likely to see that coherence happen, or do you think it is happening at the moment?



Dominic Raab: I think it is an iterative process as the issues and the risks that we have to deal with change. Let me take one tangible example. You mentioned vetting foreign investment. Let us start from the premise that global Britain should be an open and outward-looking country to the world. We want to attract people and be the best place for people to come and set up a business. We want to be a buccaneering, pioneering, free-trading country, good for jobs, livelihoods and exports. At the same time, we have to protect the interests that you rightly identify, Bob. If you look at the current Government powers to intervene in mergers, they are set out in the Enterprise Act 2002, so that initial legislation is now close to 20 years old. It is currently subject to minor exceptions. Target businesses must have a turnover of, I think, £70 million before the Government intervenes on national security grounds. Businesses below that threshold, including those at the forefront of one or other tech dimensions, find themselves beyond the scope—particularly start-ups or scale-ups.

If you look at the National Security and Investment Act 2021, we have legislated to try and respond to that, and we are doing that not just domestically but in tune with our Five Eyes partners. I talk a lot with my Five Eyes partners about this. You will know that the new Act requires notification and clearance on investments in businesses in 17 areas of the economy that we have identified and that the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is tracking, which are regarded as acutely sensitive. On top of that, those powers are not limited by turnover or share of supply thresholds. You asked me what has changed. I think that piece of legislation is a very solid step in improving our sensitivity to defending inappropriate investments in sensitive sectors.

Q537 **Bob Seely:** You are right about that. Coming back to that issue, because we are talking about it, the Newport Wafer Fab directors have written to the Government asking them to intervene, so I am curious as to why you think they may not have done.

At the time, the criticism of the National Security and Investment Bill—although it was a significant improvement and much needed—was that the BEIS Secretary of State is making that decision on national security him or herself and not as part of a wider security debate with input from the Foreign Office and Defence, as happens in the United States and Australia. Members of this Committee and others criticised that at the time.

We also said there should have been a definition of national security. Even now, despite the undoubted improvement, we are still not tough enough on these things and we still lack the coherence across protecting industry, protecting our IP and defending ourselves against over-reliance and dependence on China.

Dominic Raab: You will have to make your judgment on the balance between being open to investment and being tight enough on these things. Inevitably, it is a balance and we do not want to go too far in either direction; it is a balanced call. In terms of it being a cross-Government approach, it is absolutely the intended procedure that there is



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a cross-Whitehall process to vet and take the opinion on investments that create a particular international risk or security risk, and the relevant Ministers in the Departments will be consulted on that.

Q538 Bob Seely: On this point, you are saying that there is a process for looking at China collectively across Government. Can the Foreign Affairs Committee submit something to that process? How would we do so?

Dominic Raab: The way a small ministerial group or NSC works, it does not tend to be the case that Select Committees submit to it. If you write to me in the usual way and the Committee wants to look at the process for cross-Whitehall consideration of these issues, I think that would be the prerogative of your Chair and your Committee. I would not dream of impinging on that terrain.

Q539 Bob Seely: Just before I come to the next question, the reason I ask that is because we have, rather slowly and almost, at times, reluctantly, learned about Russia. We now have a cross-Government Russia unit which tries to look at Russian issues as a whole. Arguably, we have not done enough with tax havens and with the presence of some oligarchs in this country, but it is an improvement on what was there. I am just wondering to what extent one is comparing the China cross-Government work with the stuff that has been done on Russia in the past?

Dominic Raab: They are different challenges. Let me give you an example. We look at the tragedy that is befalling Hong Kong. We prepared eight or nine months for that, working closely with the Home Secretary, precisely so we could take the measures we did on things such as extradition, the arms embargo and BNOs. The preparation for the BNOs announcement was a long time in the making. That is a good example of something where, when our worst fears were realised, we were ahead of the curve in what we could do.

Q540 Bob Seely: On the BNOs, I feel that the Government have absolutely done the right thing and I think many of us would say that, so thank you.

For my next question, I would like to talk about the WHO and its dealing with China over the pandemic. Do you believe the WHO has fallen short of its neutral role in dealing with China, but also in investigating the causes of the coronavirus outbreak?

Dominic Raab: If the WHO did not exist, we would need to invent it. Dr Tedros has provided leadership at an incredibly difficult time, but let us also be clear that it is an imperfect institution. All international bureaucracies have their faults, as do domestic bureaucracies. The case for strengthening it has been borne out by the stresses and strains that the pandemic has placed on it.

There are always lessons in a global health crisis. The findings and recommendations of the independent panel for pandemic preparedness and response, and other reviews, will give us the ammunition to look at the reforms. We talked a bit about that at the G7, and the communiqué talks to that.



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In terms of the origins, which you also asked about, I think we need a transparent, independent science-led approach to this. We have had phase 1 of the WHO-convened covid origins study. That was always going to be the first step.

Q541 **Bob Seely:** Do you mind if I ask about that? I find it breathtaking. This is the single most important scientific investigation of our era, possibly since world war two. This is the most important scientific inquiry for decades. The unwillingness of the world scientific community and nations to try to understand where this virus came from—if it was zoonotic, or whatever the expression is, or if it came out of a gain-of-function experiment—has been extraordinary. Why haven't we been much more vocal about finding out where this came from? If it had been any other country, we would have been crawling all over this science with a fine-toothed comb in a way that simply has not happened.

Dominic Raab: I just do not agree with that characterisation. The reality is that we have pushed very hard for the WHO-convened study. You need to do two things. One is to get access. We have been very clear that China needs to cooperate more consistently, on access to both data and people, and that there needs to be a phase 2 that is not accompanied by the same delays.

It doesn't matter what you are dealing with, whether it is what is going on in Xinjiang, where we are trying to push for Michelle Bachelet to get access, or this. Ultimately, we are going to have to engage with China on the negotiation to get access. That is the reality of dealing with a country the size of China. The most effective way is to build the widest coalition to put pressure. Not everyone will look at it the way you or I may look at it, Bob, which is why we have the WHO-convened investigation under way.

We have to try to use that mechanism to elicit all the answers and leave no stone unturned. That is what we are trying to do. This issue will be viewed in different ways and through different prisms around the world, particularly given how much China is doing to support many countries, whether we like it or not, in different ways. We may not agree with them, and that is the challenge, but that is what international diplomacy in 2021 is all about.

Q542 **Bob Seely:** Are we helping the Americans with their review of the origins of covid?

Dominic Raab: I cannot think of any request that we have had that we haven't been willing to support. As I said, we have got to try to avoid this being so politicised against the Chinese that we don't get any of the co-operation that we need for it to be credible and meaningful. Let's be honest; that scares off those countries, particularly in the region, who want the same answer as you and I want but who are a bit nervous about the very politicised way it was handled previously. That is the balance—to make it as credible as possible and to get the results that you want.

Q543 **Bob Seely:** Just a final point: you talked about having as wide a coalition as possible. That is partly to defend ourselves, because of the power and



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might of modern China and the fact that it is a one-party communist, or one-party something, state—it is not quite communist—so you are right to talk about this wider coalition. The Australians have been getting a lot of stick from the Chinese state diplomatically, and a lot of very aggressive language from the Chinese leadership. Are we standing by allies in the Pacific area who stand up to China and then find themselves at the sharp end of Chinese aggression over trade sanctions, wine sanctions, diplomacy, verbal threats and that sort of thing?

Dominic Raab: Absolutely. Of course, you will know that at the G7, Australia was invited as one of the Indo-Pacific partners, as a UK guest. I have had several conversations about this with my opposite number, Marise Payne, who is an excellent colleague and friend.

Some of the countries that are at risk of getting, if you like, roughed up in the way you describe want to be very careful about the way they handle it. You have to engage with them and work out what they want us to do. We cannot support them more than they want to be supported themselves.

What we need to do is to steel all our friends and partners in that region for what is going to be a long-term issue, and one for which there is a lot of moral hazard. We saw it with the way Canada has been treated in the detention of the two Michaels. What did we do on that? We worked with the Canadians to set up this arbitrary detention mechanism. It is not quite one in, all in, but it is basically an international alliance. When someone finds that we have this hostage diplomacy, we are all galvanised into action. That is quite an important innovation. You will hear more about what we will do with our Australian friends, but rest assured that we are standing by them, and on everything from the arbitrary detention mechanism to the fact that we have just concluded a free trade agreement negotiation with them. I think you will see much more of that to come.

Chair: Just before we come to Graham, Neil wanted to come in briefly.

Q544 **Neil Coyle:** Foreign Secretary, that was not quite a straight answer there. When Bob Seely asked if the UK was co-operating with the US review, you said you weren't aware of any request that had been denied. Has a request from the US been made? If not, are you offering support for the US review?

Dominic Raab: We are working very closely with the US, we support the WHO-convened study and the truth is that I just don't know off the top of my head whether they have asked us to do something that we have been unable or unwilling to do. I can check and get back to you.

The truth is that we have an excellent relationship with the US and I would be very surprised if there was something they wanted us to do that we had not worked through with them yet, because I speak to Tony Blinken very regularly. Indeed, he came over for the G7 summit and I had dinner with him, so we talked through all those issues.

I can tell you that there has not been in any of my recent discussions with Tony Blinken, or indeed with Jake Sullivan, the National Security



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Adviser, any request on this at all.

Q545 **Neil Coyle:** I am glad you had a lovely Blinken dinner. Can I also commend the Government's work on the Hong Kong BNOs, and can you perhaps given the Committee in writing an update on the numbers of people supported? That would be really useful. Finally, are the UK Government comfortable that the People's Republic of China—the Chinese Communist party—controls four of the 15 UN specialised agencies?

Dominic Raab: I am not sure that I quite heard the last question. On the BNOs, you will need to go to the Home Secretary for the precise numbers; I see her updates regularly, but for the precise numbers you would need to go to her. What was that about China?

Q546 **Chair:** It was about four of the 15 specialist UN agencies—is the Foreign Office comfortable with the fact that China controls four of them?

Dominic Raab: When you say "control" of them, what is your definition of "control"?

Neil Coyle: Chairs.

Dominic Raab: First of all, we want to engage, as I said, with China where we can multilaterally, but I do think that there is a real battle for the hearts and minds of the multilateral system. We saw that with the race for director general of the World Intellectual Property Organisation, where the Chinese put up a candidate. We supported and worked very hard with our partners to secure the Singaporean candidate. Another area that I can think of is the UN Open-Ended Working Group on cyber, and what are the rules of the road on cyber? That is a very sensitive issue right now.

I think that in those areas you will see a very concerted effort. We discussed at the G7, both at the Foreign Ministers' meeting and at the leaders' meeting, how important it is not to allow a vacuum to appear in those multilateral organisations and why it is so important that the US is much more engaged now, whether it is with WHO or the Paris agreement.

I do not fully accept the premise of your question, but I do think you are right, Neil, to raise that risk, and we have a renewed emphasis on working with our partners to mitigate it.

Q547 **Bob Seely:** To follow up on Neil's point—to be fair to Neil, I think it is a valid point—it is critical to take people with us, Foreign Secretary, as you say, so we can't alienate people, especially in the area. At the same time, we have to realise that there is a problem with this diplomacy or war over institutions, or the battle for hearts and minds over who controls these institutions, because they are potentially very important if their public role is almost at zero public consciousness. Are we now taking this battle seriously, because one could say that we have been a bit complacent about this over the previous decade?

Dominic Raab: Absolutely. I think it is much easier with a US Administration that wants to engage so proactively multilaterally.



Q548 Graham Stringer: Isn't the real difference in how the World Health Organisation has responded to covid, compared with how it responded to SARS 20 years ago, China's dominant position in that organisation? Twenty years ago, SARS came along and the ex-Norwegian Prime Minister basically was running the World Health Organisation. She intervened, went round the world and said, "This is a problem," and SARS was dealt with with very few deaths on a worldwide scale. This time Dr Tedros basically delayed things, denied there was human-to-human transmission, and took the Chinese line. Isn't that the problem? When you say that it is not going to be business as usual, what do you mean? Shouldn't it change dramatically after the really malign involvement of China via Dr Tedros in the World Health Organisation?

Dominic Raab: Your basic premise that, compared with 20 years ago, China has got more clout and exerts it in an international organisation must be true.

Graham Stringer: To the detriment of those organisations, in this particular case.

Dominic Raab: Certainly, we should be seized of the risk. I think this is true. I think you can make this as an actor-agnostic point. With any big country or group of countries that seeks to dominate an international organisation that promotes or safeguards the global good, we would want to be very mindful that that doesn't skew what it is there to deliver, which is the mandate that it has got to reflect all countries independently and objectively. I think it is a fair point.

Q549 Graham Stringer: I was really asking for your response—at least you think it is a fair point. The fact is that the World Health Organisation dealt with covid in a less effective way than it dealt with SARS, even though science had improved 20 years later. What I am trying to find out is how you as Foreign Secretary and the Government are going to respond to that change. How is business as usual changed?

Dominic Raab: I think it is reasonable to say that covid has been a far more damaging and global pandemic than SARS. It is reasonable to say that China is more influential than it was, but you have got everything from the pandemic preparedness treaty that we are working up through to the reform of the WHO, which I think is evidence of our gripping this in a way that we haven't done previously. Then again, you would expect us to come through a global pandemic of this nature with some lessons learned, and energised to prevent its happening again.

Q550 Graham Stringer: Can I ask the question one last time in a different way? You said in your answer to Bob that it is always a difficult balancing up of openness against protection. That is one of the balances you have to do. Do you think you are getting that balance right? My feeling is that China and Russia, by not playing to the rules and undermining many of these international organisations, are damaging us, and we are not protecting ourselves as much as we could, whether it is through the World Health Organisation or the World Trade Organisation—one can go



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through all those different international bodies. I am interested in whether we can up our game.

Dominic Raab: First of all, domestically, I have explained how, through the recent foreign investment legislation, we are improving our ability to vet investments in sensitive sectors. In cyber, we have come a long way in terms of knowledge, resilience and attribution. I won't talk about some of the operational capabilities, but we also now have the National Cyber Force, which is joint between GCHQ and the MoD.

In terms of the multilateral space, we have learned a lot from the pandemic. Clearly, on this issue of multilateral values and upholding the rules-based international system—from intellectual property, where we have a good story to tell on what we have done with WIPO in the way that I described earlier, through to safeguarding the UN convention on the law of the sea and the work that we do with ASEAN—I think we have got a strong base, but we want to do even more.

Of course, what you need is to galvanise clusters of like-minded countries that believe in that. The US coming back into the Paris agreement and reversing its decision to leave the WHO really matters, but we cannot just rely on the same old usual suspects, which is why the ASEAN dialogue partner status bid, which might seem a bit niche for many members of the public if they are watching this, matters. That is a very influential group of important countries, and they identify with a lot of the force for good that we bring to that region and, indeed, the world. They are not going to do things the same way we do—if we look at it with that mindset, I think we will always set ourselves up to lose—but if they do collaborate with us and recognise the scope for a team effort, I think that is important.

I mentioned India at the start. The relationship with India is critically important, and it has not had the proportionate coverage that it should have done. That is partly because the PM could not visit in person, but we have signed the 2030 road map setting out the ambition for an FTA—a serious, credible road map to an FTA. Lots of Governments have talked about it in the past, but it is a credible, milestone-linked process for an FTA. We now have a migration and mobility partnership with India, so young professionals from both sides can go and spend some time in each other's countries, but it also deals with returns. We are working together on climate change, and there has been a significant increase in our security co-operation, from maritime through to cyber. As a result of this, India has ranked the UK as a comprehensive strategic partner: we are only the fourth country in the world, and the first European country, to do that. These are the foundations for what you are describing, but it does not happen overnight. I cannot tell you that it will.

The CPTPP is important. Why? Because at the moment, that is a high-standard, high-quality free trade deal in that region. China is looking at it; the US has gone cold on it, but we would like to stir a bit more interest in that. A country like Japan, which chairs the CPTPP, is very interested in the UK negotiating to accede to it, but the strategic significance beyond the commercial is very powerful.



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In all of those areas, we are laying the foundations, but I cannot tell you that it happens overnight. We keep talking about this: this is why the Indo-Pacific tilt is not about being anti-China. It is about where the opportunities are and where some of the challenges will be in the future, and where we need to spend more time and energy building up coalitions of the like-minded.

Q551 Stewart Malcolm McDonald: Foreign Secretary, I wonder if we could talk about the recent incident with HMS Defender. Would I be right in characterising that as making a point, rather than picking a fight?

Dominic Raab: On behalf of the Russians, or the UK?

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: The UK.

Dominic Raab: I am not sure that would be quite right. Look, HMS Defender was taking the shortest and most direct route. It is an internationally recognised traffic route. We have every right to conduct innocent passage through Ukrainian territorial waters—it is in accordance with international law—and that is what we will continue to do.

Q552 Stewart Malcolm McDonald: So it was to make a point, then. By the way, I agree with making that point, just to be clear.

Dominic Raab: We were making the point that we like taking the shortest and most direct route. That was the point.

Q553 Stewart Malcolm McDonald: And was either yourself or the Foreign Office involved in the route planning at all?

Dominic Raab: I am not going to talk about sensitive issues, but I fully support the action we took, and was consulted in advance.

Q554 Stewart Malcolm McDonald: Would it be normal for the Foreign Office to be involved in that discussion beforehand?

Dominic Raab: With a colleague as collegiate and as brilliant as the current Defence Secretary, yes.

Q555 Stewart Malcolm McDonald: That is because he is a Scotsman, of course. Can we move on to what happened very quickly after the events there? It very rapidly became a—quite a successful overall, being honest—Russian Government disinformation event. What do you think of that?

Dominic Raab: I don't think it was successful at all. What they said was nonsense, and widely viewed as typical—

Q556 Stewart Malcolm McDonald: And printed almost everywhere without question, and repeated by, indeed, members of this Committee before we knew what the truth actually was.

Dominic Raab: I am not going to advise the Committee on whether they should wait and assess the evidence more carefully. All I can tell you is that it was nonsense, and we were pretty robust in rebutting it. I am not quite sure of the point you want to make, but I think it is absolutely right



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that we exercise and defend the rights under UNCLOS, and we do so from the Ukrainian territorial sea to the South China sea.

Q557 Stewart Malcolm McDonald: Did the Government at all—either your Department or the Ministry of Defence—expect it to be weaponised in the way that it was to spread disinformation, which I think was quite successful? I mean, it was repeated on our national broadcaster, for example, for about four hours before the truth had come out from the Ministry of Defence.

Dominic Raab: If you want to ask the MoD questions, feel free to, but I do not really have any more to add to it, other than—

Q558 Stewart Malcolm McDonald: You seem terribly relaxed about all of this.

Dominic Raab: You asked whether it was foreseeable. Of course, I regularly compare notes with the Defence Secretary on potentially sensitive issues. But the reality is that we have rights under international law for a reason and we stick to them. That is part of the USP of global Britain. That is not a confrontational thing, but it is a confidence thing.

Q559 Stewart Malcolm McDonald: To talk about disinformation a bit more broadly, what would be your assessment of foreign disinformation in the UK and the level of activity in the UK at the minute?

Dominic Raab: From any particular country, or overall?

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: I am thinking across, let's say for example, Russia, China, Iran, and across different platforms, whether that is RT, Confucius Institutes or the information ecosystem in the round. What is your assessment of hostile foreign state activity now in the United Kingdom, whether that is on covid, elections, vaccines or whatever it might be?

Dominic Raab: We have seen a series of Governments and conceivably non-state organisations—Russia, Iran, DPRK—willing to use this lever of misinformation, to create confusion and try to influence. We have seen all the areas that you described. If I look at our ability to track it, our ability to counter it and our ability to call it out, that is much stronger—for example, although they were not misinformation, in the case of the cyber-attacks on the R&D trials for vaccines.

We are much more alert to doing it and we do it with our partners. The best example I have of rebutting misinformation is in the case of the Estonian President. I visited Estonia recently, where they really feel on the frontline. Russia was badmouthing the AZ vaccine. The President had it on live TV and then did a half-marathon and a cross-country ski the next day just to show it was safe. That is a really good Estonian rebuttal. We can learn a bit from the Baltics.

Q560 Stewart Malcolm McDonald: I agree. You may or may not know that I published a report about two weeks ago about disinformation activity in Scotland. It talks a lot about what Estonia, Finland and others do to counter that.



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Dominic Raab: On that, one thing might interest you. I went to Estonia, not just to talk to them but to talk to the Baltic 3 and I then went to Oslo to talk to the Nordic 5. One of the things we are doing—and I know your Committee is looking into it—is looking at those clusters of relationships that we have. Of course, my relationship with Josep Borrell and the EU is important, but the clusters of relationships we have with our key EU partners and the Baltic 3, the Nordic 5 and the Visegrád 4 are very important. They are obviously particularly important in relation to Russia and some of these issues.

Q561 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** If we go back to the Russia report, I don't want to rehearse all the lines of it; I want to stick to disinformation and where responsibility for that lies. One of the things it made clear was that responsibility lies across various parts of Government, whether it is yourself, some of the agencies, DCMS, the Ministry of Defence, the Home Office and others.

That is not a good thing; that can be exploited quite easily. Some of the countries you have just mentioned have learned to have a much more streamlined counter-disinformation strategy. Given the disinformation, in particular over the past year in relation to covid, the vaccine and all the rest of it, is there any way to streamline this stuff, so that it isn't as scattered across Government as it is?

Dominic Raab: That is a fair question. There are lots of things like that, but we have a range of Government Departments for obvious reasons. The key thing is to integrate and co-ordinate them. That is why we will see not just what the merger has done, but the cross-Whitehall interdepartmental working. We have many more small ministerial groups. The NSC is functioning in a different way, to bring those things together.

It is true to say that, as we look forward, we need to be far more integrated. You can see it—though you may say belatedly—in the approach to 5G and tech. You can see it in cyber. I chair now, across Whitehall, again another small ministerial group that will report up to the NSC on cyber. You can't look at cyber unless you look at it across Whitehall. You can't look at it just from a resilience point of view, but also attribution and some of the more offensive ways that we deal with the risk.

Q562 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** I do want to come to cyber in particular, if I might interrupt you there.

Dominic Raab: The point I want to land is that the Government is operating in the international space, with a link between the international and the domestic, in a fundamentally different way from the way it has operated before. That is partly about structures. I have a degree of extra latitude as First Secretary, as well as Foreign Secretary, but it is basically about the outlook and the culture that the Prime Minister is imbuing across Whitehall.

Q563 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Sure. Thinking about the threat that disinformation poses, I think it has become something that people



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understand much better. If there is a positive from the pandemic experience, it is that people are more alert to bad information. One of the things that we can do to better educate the public is better explain the threat. If we take the report that I did on Scotland, in particular, 40% of Scottish voters do not think that elections are free or fair. That is a problem. I do not agree with them, clearly, but what an amazing opportunity if you wanted to sow a disinformation campaign. Wouldn't it be good if the Government, a bit like the annual or six-monthly statements on the threat that Daesh poses, gave an annual statement to Parliament on the threat that disinformation is posing to the UK, within all the normal parameters—that certain things will not be shared? Something that helps MPs and the public understand what is going on could really help build the information resilience that you see in Estonia, Finland and elsewhere.

Dominic Raab: I am not sure that the key to it for the average—

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: There is a lot more to do—that is just one suggestion.

Dominic Raab: No, it is a fair point. I am just not sure that, for the average citizen, that is what is going to do it. What we do much more assiduously—you have seen it over the last year—is attribute. We come out and say, "That is wrong." There is some stuff we can talk about and some stuff I cannot talk about, but we now do it much more consistently, and we do it much more concertedly with our partners, for sure.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: Turning to cyber, and I also want to talk about cryptocurrencies—

Q564 **Chair:** May I just interrupt very briefly? There is a counter-disinformation unit in the Cabinet Office. Is that going to be permanent?

Dominic Raab: Erm—

Q565 **Chair:** Could you write to me?

Dominic Raab: That is probably one for the—

Chair: It is one for you. Come on, Foreign Secretary. It is one for you. I would be very grateful. Come on, you can write to me on that one.

Q566 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Does your Department have specific in-house expertise on cryptocurrencies?

Dominic Raab: I would have to write to you on that. I do not know.

Q567 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** You do not know?

Dominic Raab: Cryptocurrencies are more the Treasury's beat, but the problem is that whenever I say something like that, someone pops up and says, "Actually, we've got an in-house expert on this who liaises with the Treasury." If you want me to write to you about where across Whitehall the expertise in cryptocurrency sits, I am happy to do so.

Q568 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Could you speak broadly, then, about



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some of the work? You briefly touched on some of the work that is going on to assess the challenges that cryptocurrencies pose to the UK from a foreign policy perspective.

Dominic Raab: Any fraudulent activity that involves tech, including in the financial sector, is a big risk. I am not the expert in this area, so I would want to write to you. Write to me with what you would particularly like to know, and I will make sure you get a fulsome answer.

Q569 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Sure. Lastly—I hope you are not going to tell me that you will have to write to me on this—

Dominic Raab: It is always a possibility.

Q570 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** It is always a possibility, I am sure. We have seen recently, in the last couple of weeks in particular, a spate of ransomware attacks. There have been some quite brutal ones over the past few days. Again, within the bounds of a public hearing like this, how is the UK assessing and responding to those? More broadly, in terms of the rules surrounding this stuff on attribution and how states and non-states interact with one another on this, in the long term do we need new rules and new treaties on this for like-minded countries to sign up to? Lord Dannatt has said that some work on this has gone on, but I wonder if you can dig into it a bit further.

Dominic Raab: On the first point, we are actively working on that, both across Whitehall and with our partners. I am not saying more than that.

You raise a really good piece about what the international rules are and what the multilateral effort is. What you have effectively seen in the UN General Assembly open working group is that Russia and China dominate this debate. Of course, you can see an authoritarian model that could be applied to cyber, which we would have a real problem with. The challenge will be, and we are actively working on this and I am seized of it, coming up with the compelling alternative that does not just unite typical NATO/Five Eyes countries—the usual suspects—but, to come back to the same point, reaches out to those countries that want the rules-based international system to mean something and do not want to go down that authoritarian track. There is a lot of technical work going on, but we also need to read the hearts and minds of the geopolitical contours. My feeling is that there is an opportunity for the UK, with the science superpower schtick that we have, and our cyber expertise, as well as our economic tech potential and investment, so there I think there is absolutely a space for UK leadership.

Q571 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Everyone wants democratic countries to get it right. The same can be said of cryptocurrencies, where China has launched its own national cryptocurrency, which will not be anonymously used. Do we want those rules or our rules, different rules? I wish you well in that endeavour.

Dominic Raab: But also, Stewart, what is our vision for the internet? If you go for an authoritarian model, what does that mean? We do not want to see international law start to provide succour or a veneer of legitimacy



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to the kinds of efforts that you will then see to clamp down on media freedoms and the emancipating impact that they can have, particularly in all the countries about which we have expressed concern, from Myanmar to Belarus.

Q572 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** How many people are working on that in the FCDO?

Dominic Raab: It will not just be in the FCDO.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: Of course.

Dominic Raab: I talked about the cross-Whitehall cyber ministerial group, which includes the National Cyber Security Centre and a cross-Whitehall initiative.

Q573 **Chair:** May I come back very quickly to a couple of points? We spoke about HMS Defender, and clearly the carrier group is going out to the Pacific. How involved have you been in the routing of that deployment?

Dominic Raab: You ask, "How involved"; I am very familiar with the routing. There is clearly a practical and strategic side to it as well as the obvious military side. It will be an exceptional opportunity for us to showcase our defence capabilities but also the wider aspects of global Britain. Of course we will do that in a confident but not confrontational way, and by the way, we have been very clear with our partners in the region about it. I have raised it with the Chinese Foreign Minister, and said that is what we are doing, it is important and that there is nothing that should create nervousness or anxiety. Again, that mantra of confident but not confrontational is important.

Q574 **Chair:** Which side of Taiwan will the Queen Elizabeth be sailing?

Dominic Raab: I shall allow the Defence Secretary to give you the precise contours of the route.

Q575 **Chair:** There have been arguments made to me by members of our Governments that while they are very welcoming of the Queen Elizabeth and her deployment, they are concerned that it is a temporary adventure, and not an enduring commitment. What would you say?

Dominic Raab: I am slightly reluctant to comment on hypothetical, anonymous conversations that you have had, Tom, but I think you will see—

Q576 **Chair:** Maybe you could comment on whether or not you have a strategic ambition to have Royal Naval capability in the east, in the Pacific, in coming years?

Dominic Raab: What I will say is that the UK maritime presence in the Indo-Pacific is, as well as CPTPP trade, ASEAN diplomacy and cyber, one of the key limbs where I think you will see us more active on the security front.

Q577 **Chair:** So a destroyer or a frigate out there pretty regularly, or



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enduringly?

Dominic Raab: Those are issues for the Defence Secretary.

Q578 **Chair:** Well, they are foreign policy decisions; they are not just defence decisions.

Dominic Raab: Okay, but the precise vessels that might go out at any one particular time—strategically, there will be a more active UK presence, and I think that is good news for the international law equities that we have got. I have mentioned UNCLOS, and there are others.

Q579 **Chair:** You will be aware from the conversations that you have had in south-east Asia that a lot of people will have spoken about either a welcome return, or just simply the return of the UK to the area. They will have different views on it, but at least it will be seen as an enduring commitment. It will at least be based on the idea that it might be an enduring commitment, yet people are now looking at situations such as the withdrawal from Kabul and wondering whether or not our commitment to overseas deployments and to engagements are as enduring as we sometimes make out.

Dominic Raab: I not quite sure I would accept that comparison, but I understand your wider point, which is that if we are going to be strategically committed, we need to show that we have stamina. I think we do for this endeavour but, ultimately, we will have to demonstrate it, rather than just providing words.

Q580 **Bob Seely:** Towards the end of the Cold War—we had our own version of this, but it was not really public—the Americans had the Active Measures Working Group. As I am sure you are aware, “active measures” was the old KGB term for the toolkit of subversive war, so, disinformation and smears, blackmail, political front groups and all those sorts of dark arts of political campaigning. The Active Measures Working Group was very good at briefing journalists and getting the message out there, looking at the latter-day tools at the end of the Cold War, many of which the Russians are still using now. I am sorry to come to you cold on this, but do you think that there might be a role for a similar type of organisation or Government collective that regularly briefs people—as Stewart was saying, to follow up on his point—on not only disinformation, but all the other elements that the Russians use when it comes to covert malign influence?

Dominic Raab: One of the things that we talked about in the IR—not just in the IR itself, but in the process of it—that has been valuable and instructive is the need, below the threshold of conventional warfare, to have a more permanent attritional campaign against the threats that hostile states or non-state actors can apply, whether that is cyber, misinformation or various other things. One of the key elements of that will be—we will do it selectively but none the less consistently—the public messaging. Whether that means more briefing in future with the media, I do not know, but we have already started to see it to some degree with an increase in calling out. We have done it with Russia, and we will continue



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to do that with it and other hostile states. Whatever format that will take, there is definitely a case for doing it and seeing the way we inform the public—as you and Stewart have identified—as an important part of the strategy.

Q581 **Bob Seely:** That is great. If anything, it would be useful if that were more structured and perhaps more explanatory, rather than just presenting an opinion. If we can get the hinterland behind the thinking, that would be useful.

I have another question related to that. The German philosopher Clausewitz said that we must understand the wars we fight—so, understand the tools that are being used against us. Clearly, the tools being used in Ukraine are somewhat different from the ones being used here. The tools being used here are Putin oligarchs using upmarket law firms for libel tourism, trying to shut down freedom of speech for people investigating them and the Putin regime, or oligarchs close to Putin using the London financial centre—

Chair: Bob, we have to move on. Will you wrap up?

Bob Seely: Okay, I will ask that question another time.

Chair: Claudia, you wanted to come in.

Q582 **Claudia Webbe:** I hope I will not ask questions that you have already answered, Foreign Secretary. Let me start with a quick-fire one on Belarus, as we have just spoken about it. Why do the Government not consider legal action to be necessary in the case of Belarus?

Dominic Raab: What is the legal action you are proposing?

Claudia Webbe: I am asking you the question.

Dominic Raab: Sorry. To clarify—

Claudia Webbe: Do the Government consider legal action to be necessary at all?

Dominic Raab: Sorry, forgive me. What I was trying to clarify is, who do you want us to sue and where?

Q583 **Claudia Webbe:** Do you agree that the situation in Belarus requires an intervention from the UK?

Dominic Raab: Absolutely—both the rigged election and now the more recent forced landing of flight FR4978 and the arrest of journalist Roman Protasevich. However, we have taken decisive action: we pressed for the ICAO investigation; we announced sanctions on those involved; we have introduced measures to restrict flights operating in Belarusian airspace; and, in relation to the fraudulent elections and the subsequent human rights violations—the clampdown—we have imposed over 100 sanctions designations relating to Belarus. I think we have taken very concerted sanctions action working with our partners, whether the OSCE or ICAO.



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Q584 **Chair:** To follow on from Claudia's question, is there any scope for using the convention on torture for some of the actions that the Lukashenko regime has been using against people like Protasevich and other demonstrators?

Dominic Raab: When you say "using" the convention against torture, what do you mean? There may well be cases of torture or inhumane and degrading treatment, but what is the "use" of the convention against torture that you have in mind? Is it that you want us to bring a petition against them in the UN?

Q585 **Chair:** Raise a complaint at the UN—exactly.

Dominic Raab: The challenge in the UN will be the position of Russia, of course, so I do not know whether that is practical, but I can tell you this: there is no body internationally where we wouldn't be willing to exert our influence and, indeed, to lead on to apply pressure on the Lukashenko regime. That includes ICAO, which is a big deal. We have talked a lot about UNCLOS in the context of China, but ICAO is the equivalent for civil aviation. When we looked at the actions taken against Flight FR4978, I felt that although it was categorised by many as a human rights clampdown on a journalist, actually, in terms of broadening the caucus of countries that were going to weigh in, the fact that they had flouted the rules of international civil aviation was probably likely to be a better ground and basis on which to raise the issue diplomatically. It is likewise in terms of the approach we have taken in the OSCE on the human rights abuses. But if there's an avenue in the UN that we have not explored and that will not just immediately be vetoed, I am up for considering it with our partners.

Chair: Okay. I agree with you on the ICAO point, by the way, and as you know, we pulled together a statement by the Foreign Affairs Committee Chairs of Lithuania, Germany, the United States and many others on that Sunday, calling for exactly what you very quickly put into action, for which I am very grateful. The—*[Interruption.]* Sorry, go on, Claudia.

Claudia Webbe: Sorry, are you still asking about Belarus?

Q586 **Chair:** I was going to ask one last question on Belarus. We now have reports of the Lukashenko regime bringing migrants from different parts of the world in order to push them through into Lithuania. I hasten to emphasise that these are early reports, but this sounds like people trafficking for political leverage. Have you heard similar reports?

Dominic Raab: Yes, and I have talked about it with my Lithuanian opposite number.

Q587 **Chair:** Will we be looking to offer support? I am not quite sure what that support to Lithuania would look like at the moment, but are you looking for options as to how we might be able to support Lithuania?

Dominic Raab: Let us verify the full facts, but as the reports stand, it would be an appalling thing to do. Of course we would want to stand absolutely shoulder to shoulder with Lithuania, in the same way we do with Estonia and Latvia.



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Chair: Thank you very much. Claudia?

Q588 **Claudia Webbe:** I will just come back on a slightly earlier question, if I may, Chair—if you will indulge me. On the figures I have here, the reduced amount of aid pledged to Yemen is about 1.3% of the £6.7 billion-worth of arms to Saudi Arabia. Why?

Dominic Raab: First of all, the country-specific allocations for this year have not been made public, so I don't see on what basis you could assess that. Equally, conflating ODA to any country with commercial activities is obviously not comparing like with like.

Q589 **Claudia Webbe:** The point is that Yemen is obviously facing one of the worst humanitarian crises of the modern era. It would suggest that it needs more aid and more support, not less.

Dominic Raab: We of course have had to make difficult decisions on ODA, but we remain one of the global leaders on Yemen, notwithstanding the shift to 0.5%. Again, it is a good example of where the FCDO is involved with the efforts to find peace. We are doing critical diplomatic work to try to apply pressure on the Houthis to come to the peace table—the negotiating table.

Don't get me wrong: we would always want to be able to spend 0.7%. I have explained in some detail why temporarily that is not possible, but as I said we are still one of the global leaders in providing aid to Yemen. I would have to check the data, but I think we have gone from third to fifth biggest global donor, so we are still very much leading the way. The combination of the aid funding, the support for the mediation efforts and the pressure diplomatically that needs to be applied to the Houthis all comes together and has to be integrated.

Q590 **Claudia Webbe:** So you are indicating there that what your Department is doing on the international stage to bring this horrific war to an end is—what?

Dominic Raab: As you know, there has been the UN-led dialogue process that Martin Griffiths has been working so hard on. We have been supportive of that. We support in ODA in the way that I described. We are also working with our partners, including partners in the region, and looking to see how we can put pressure on the Houthis—another example of an Iranian-sponsored group or proxy that is doing serious harm around the world—and trying to apply pressure to them. Those are three elements where we are one of the leading players, and we will continue to be so. It has got harder because of covid, that's for sure.

Q591 **Claudia Webbe:** Okay—thanks for that. Another quick-fire one. We have just spoken about COP26, which is obviously a crucial opportunity to address the existential threat of climate change, yet the conference risks excluding representatives from the countries that are most at risk from climate breakdown. This is partly, of course, because poor countries in the Global South do not have equitable access to vaccinations, which demonstrates that the coronavirus and the climate crises intersect. In the



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build-up to November, what is your Department doing to ensure that COP26 is accessible for all?

Dominic Raab: We have done a huge amount. No country will have done more, I think. I am not sure whether you were here earlier when I explained the three elements of what we have done on the international side. We put £90 million into getting AZ up and running—that has been provided at cost to the world—and 95% of COVAX-distributed vaccines have been AZ. On top of that, we funded a billion doses of our COVAX to go to the poorest countries around the world. We have also now made the 100 million-dose commitment by the middle of next year from our excess supply. On top of that, we are working to provide vaccines to enable COP26 to take place, so we could not be doing more on this front. I do not think that there will be any country that cannot be represented and that does not want to come because of that.

Q592 **Chair:** Foreign Secretary, you have been very generous with your time. I hope that you will forgive two very brief final questions. The first one is entirely personal. I hope that you will forgive me for asking it. I have had emails from people who were my interpreter at various points when I was working for the Foreign Office in Afghanistan. Can you please assure me that you will be looking personally at those interpreters, who were not only working with the military but with the Foreign Office, our diplomats and our envoys in Afghanistan, to make sure that they are looked after and, if necessary, given the same support and protection that military interpreters will be given?

Dominic Raab: Absolutely, and you should write to me if there is any example of a case where you do not think that we are providing the support that we should be. You should know that we have already provided 1,300 Afghan former staff and their families support through the relocation scheme because they have a threat to life. You are probably aware, but I do not think I have been here since it was introduced—I am not sure whether I was last here in April—that we have the new Afghan relocations and assistance policy, which reflects the fact that the situation has changed in Afghanistan. I think it touches on the point that you made earlier—we want to be absolutely clear that we stand by those who served us so loyally for so many years.

Q593 **Chair:** Thank you very much. I will be in touch in private about that. The last point is that you lead an amazing team of people around the world who have had the most difficult year that we can imagine in various ways. Can you assure me that they are getting the same vaccines as they would get if they were in the United Kingdom, and therefore they are as protected as they would be here?

Dominic Raab: Are they given the same? I don't know, but the programme of vaccinating our staff and, indeed, any critical contractors who are almost the equivalent has been massive. I did an all-staffer yesterday, and one of the positive feedbacks was about that programme. It has not come to me that we have any significant gaps, but of course it depends which country we are talking about and the logistical challenges.



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That has been a major effort, of course, to protect my brilliant team, both in London and abroad, but particularly those in very difficult posts. I have seen some of them in Asia, and recently in Baghdad, for whom the conditions have been quite arduous. They have shown a tremendous amount of character, and of course I have a duty of care to them, which I take very seriously.

Q594 **Chair:** Fantastic. Can you please pass on the enormous thanks of the Committee to every mission that has been working so hard for the country?

Dominic Raab: Bless you. I will.

Chair: Thank you very much, Foreign Secretary.