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Foreign Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: The implications of Covid-19 for the Integrated Review, HC 380

Tuesday 19 May 2020

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

Questions 1-32

Witnesses

[I](#): Samantha Power, former US Ambassador to the United Nations (2013-2017).

[II](#): Rt Hon Lord Hague of Richmond, former UK Foreign Secretary (2010-14).



Examination of witness

Witness: Samantha Power.

Q1 **Chair:** Welcome to this afternoon's session of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Welcome in particular to our two witnesses. Ambassador Power, thank you very much for joining us from the United States, and Lord Hague, thank you very much for joining us from Wales. I am going to start with our first question. Ambassador Power, the UK is currently reviewing its foreign policy and how it interacts with the world. How is covid going to change the world with which the UK interacts?

Ambassador Power: Thank you so much, Mr Chairman, and thank you for having me. It is a great honour to appear before you. I really appreciate from afar the rigour with which you appear to be tackling this review. Let me offer just five quick points, some of which I think will be familiar, but I will try to offer enough detail to make this a little bit fresh compared with what you are reading and hearing about every day.

The first point is on the question of China's rise and the extent to which covid, in some ways paradoxically, will accelerate trends that were already under way. You see plans around the world, including in countries like my own, to decouple in profound ways from China, as it relates to supply chain resilience, in terms of medical supplies—pharmaceuticals and so forth.

However, you are going to see, especially as this strikes in even more devastating ways in the developing world, closer coupling also. You already see so many countries that do not have the infrastructure in place—whether vulnerable communities within countries or vulnerable countries—feeling as if they have no place else to turn to get access to medical supplies, or even to get public health professionals on the ground in rapid fire.

You are seeing China on the global stage asserting itself, like President Xi did yesterday at the World Health Organisation, announcing a contribution of \$2 billion to efforts towards a vaccine, and calling a vaccine a public good. Again, in some ways this is just a continuation of what we had seen from China, particularly concentrated in the last three or four years, but to some degree, especially given America's retreat from international institutions, there is a void there. There is a vacuum that China is using this epidemic to try to fill. That is point one.

At the heart of that also, I should note, especially as it relates to the UK-US alliance, there really does seem to be in President Xi's grand vision a desire to supplant the alliance system that the United States and the United Kingdom have so valued, and really helped to build over the course of the last seven-plus decades, with a China-centred network. That is a medium to long game, but none the less it is one that the pandemic is having a concentrated impact on.



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The second point that I wanted to stress is related to international institutions and the effect of covid on them. It is very related to the first point. Needless to say, the pandemic has deepened acrimony between the United States and China. When relations between the US and China deteriorate precipitously—or, for that matter, in my time, relations between the US and Russia, as they did after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2014—it really slows the workings of the UN Security Council. The deterioration of great power ties neutralises much of the impact that an institution such as that can have, because what seems to be a bilateral problem infects the workings particularly of the UN Security Council, because Russia, China, the United States, the United Kingdom and France of course all have a veto.

You see it already: the UN Secretary-General issued a call for a global ceasefire, which was not going to change the world overnight but was an important call that we should all unite our efforts against the virus rather than against one another, and owing to the bilateral deterioration of ties between the US and China, that effort has been stymied in the Security Council after weeks of negotiation. The US is refusing even mild reference to supporting international health efforts or agencies. That is very much about, again, a desire to pin the pandemic on China and, by association, the World Health Organisation.

Watch that space, because in the wake of the pandemic, the US-China relationship is of course not going to heal overnight. It is immensely complex, with the need for confrontation and accountability in so many domains, and of course competition, but at the same time on so many global threats the need for co-operation. Getting that right, even within an Administration that is very serious about getting it right, will be immensely challenging, but there will be knock-on effects on international institutions.

The other way that the co-operation of international institutions will be undermined by the pandemic is just the shortage of resources. As the effects of this on the global economy take their toll even more dramatically than they have up to this point, and probably over a much longer period of time than the global financial crisis, it will affect how many resources there are in the global kitty to tend to conflicts, humanitarian disasters, the effects of climate change and so forth. It is hard to see international institutions in the near to medium term coming out of this with more effectiveness, even though the global pandemic has underscored for so many of us how important it is to strengthen those institutions.

Third—I will not labour this point, but just to tick it off—we are seeing this now in the pandemic, but in the foreseeable future you can expect a continuation in the spike of misinformation and disinformation, what the UN Secretary-General has called the “infodemic” related to the pandemic itself, cures and non-cures. Imagine a world in which there is a vaccine, but the misinformation on under-regulated social media is so extensive that half our respective populations refuse to take it because they become convinced that it is a plot from someone. Again, this is a pre-existing trend



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and it has been getting worse and worse, but in some ways in our country, and there may be a Brexit parallel in yours, the bright shiny object was Russia's interference in the US election in 2016.

To some degree, our public policy officials have not focused sufficiently on the extent to which that interference occurs whether you have an election or not. It occurs on the part of state actors such as Russia and China, to widen divisions within democracies; for example, you see Russia in our Supreme Court nomination process flooding the zone with tweets in support of now-Justice Kavanaugh and against, for Black Lives Matter and against. Name any significant domestic public policy debate that we have in this country and Russia, with the trolls, bots and others that they have in their network, is intervening on both sides of the debate to widen divisions. What is new with the pandemic is the extent to which China has now increased its activity in this domain. It was always very active, as you know, in the UK and elsewhere on Hong Kong and Taiwan, but the pandemic has now caused it to increase exponentially its involvement within democracies in terms of the flood of information it is putting in.

Just two last points, briefly: it would be the acceleration of another pre-existing trend in the near term at least, which is the decline of freedom around the world. We have seen 14 straight years of freedom in decline. That does not mean that it is in decline everywhere, it is just net declines. There have, of course, been significant gains in particular places that we could talk about. But you see governments now centralising authority, for sometimes good reasons in themselves, in the light of what is needed to deal with the pandemic: 84 countries have passed some version of an emergency decree. Again, many of them are for sound public health and public policy reasons. The issue is when those decrees are lifted. It is an issue in a country like Hungary where the Prime Minister has effectively put in place no statute of limitations on the concentration of powers. The same is true in The Philippines. More than 52 countries have cancelled or postponed elections. Again, some are for good reasons, as you want to avoid people gathering in public spaces. But there is a question over when those elections will occur. With the rest of us distracted by the tragedies unfolding in our communities, there is not a tonne of pushback in the international system against opportunistic and illiberal leaders using this crisis to concentrate powers.

My next point is a more positive one, perhaps: it is in the light of the US pulling back from a leadership role in international institutions by cutting funding to the World Health Organisation amid a pandemic for example, and in general not viewing international institutions and international cooperation as central to US security and US interests. That core premise or absence thereof really explains a lot of the current Administration's actions. Amid that, there was some shell shock in the international system over much of the last few years, particularly with close allies. You do now start to see middle powers stepping up and asserting a leadership role. For example, yesterday's vote in the World Health Organisation to investigate the origins of the covid pandemic was Australia-led. Indeed, a price has already been exacted by China in response to what Australia has done. But



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Australia brought 110 countries along—yes, with US and British help I am sure behind the scenes. But that is an example of what you will see more and more for as long as the US continues to remain in a much more recessive posture than it used to. That is not just true for this issue. You see the so-called first-movers group you may be familiar with—Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Taiwan, New Zealand, Israel and Australia, the countries that got a handle on the pandemic early—gathering and meeting to share best practice on school re-openings and on how to fight misinformation.

On that last point, as one thinks about international cooperation in the future we really have to think in terms of communities of democracies, networks of democracies caucusing together, sharing best practice, and organising in a way that has not been happening with the US pullback and with the United Kingdom dealing with the complexity of Brexit. You have not seen democracies stepping into the void except on selected issues here and there, which I am happy to elaborate on. I am thinking about international cooperation and how international systems and institutions can be made to work to deal with global threats, to withstand the onslaught on international democratic norms that international institutions have come to embody because of leadership by western democracies. The onslaught is now from China, chipping away at those norms. We will succeed in harnessing those institutions and in building new networks by teaming up, working together and caucusing together.

Last point: I mentioned earlier that the global ceasefire call issued by the Secretary-General was not embraced by the Security Council. I do still think it noteworthy that President Macron really hustled and tried in that context to bring the major powers together to try to secure Security Council backing, P5 backing. It did not work. But again, it is an example of what we are going to need to see for as long as the US especially is on the side-line, but even well beyond that, because that would be part of the new burden-sharing we need in the 21st century. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you very much, Ambassador. There are several points we can explore there, and I am sure they will be picked up.

Q2 **Chris Bryant:** Thank you very much, Ambassador, for an interesting exposé. I wonder whether you think it is intrinsic to modern authoritarian states, especially those that seek to harness populism to their cause, that they should engage in—I don't want to call it fake news, because that is somebody else's phrase, but engage in deliberate misinformation and a form of hybrid warfare that democracies are perhaps ill equipped to cope with.

Ambassador Power: I think it is in the nature of authoritarian Governments to want to preserve their power, maximise their influence and advance their interests as they understand them. In the wild, wild west of these new—not even new any more—wide-open, free-space technological platforms with no umpire and no referee, they see mechanisms for weakening democracies and exacerbating pre-existing social and political divides, and cultural divides for that matter. You can imagine authoritarian Governments that do not have the resources, that



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are barely hanging on internally and concentrating their efforts on preserving power by repressing and seeking to control their own population, and do not go further afield. You can imagine that scenario, so in terms of “is it intrinsic?”, I suppose it depends on the level of ambition and the aspirations to greater influence that a country has.

Russia, China and other countries see some of the tenets of the international order as dangerous. I think one has to be quite specific, but with the tenets in the UN-based system, you have seen the development over time of a set of human rights instruments that at their core are premised on the idea that individuals have rights apart from those which the state deigns to grant them. That is dangerous to the Chinese Government’s model, where the state tells you what you deserve and what you get from the state, and individuals have no rights above that which the Government is telling them they have.

Even starting with the UN charter, which stresses fundamental rights and freedoms, the idea that sovereignty has to give way in certain circumstances to these other ambitions and aspirations is antithetical to the very democratic model. If you can weaken those Governments that have put those norms in place and chip away at them over time, you are going to get less hassle from international organisations, and the international norms over time—again, from the standpoint of one’s vision—would come to accommodate your way of thinking, where state consent and order are primary and first order, and individual welfare is something that is decided on by the state.

- Q3 **Chris Bryant:** But a century ago, Russia managed to be big and important by having a big and important army, lots of frontiers, and engagements with other historic countries. Prussia boasted that Britain had such a small army that the police in Prussia could arrest every single member of it on a Friday afternoon. The resources today for Russia are not military ones, and China does not particularly want to resort to military strength when it can extend its influence very cheaply by hybrid warfare. Is that what we are talking about?

Ambassador Power: If what you are saying is, “Is there an inexpensive, home-based method to carry out aggression and interference in democracies?” I agree wholeheartedly. What I would caution against is the idea that the military tool in the toolbox is somehow obsolete. Tell that to the Ukrainians, the Syrians in Aleppo or the people in the South China Sea, or think about space and submarine warfare, and other dimensions of where the more traditional, hard power-based contests are likely to take form. I would amplify what you say: absolutely, this is cheap, this is easy and, right now, it is largely uncontested. It has proven—in the 2016 election and to this point—effective from the standpoint of weakening those who stand in the way of you getting to govern your way in your quarters and also of you getting to reshape the international system.

- Q4 **Alicia Kearns:** Ambassador Power, I would like to start by thanking you for everything you have done to give a voice to those who would otherwise have been silenced. Your work has not gone unnoticed around



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the world.

My question is on the point you started making. The UN, and specifically the Security Council, is potentially incredibly powerful, but what pragmatic, feasible reform is needed to uphold the norms you were talking about? What role can the UK and its allies play in any reform? Many people think there should be reform, and many of us who have worked in foreign services are very frustrated with elements of it, but meaningful, pragmatic steps that can be taken seems to be where the discussion often ends.

Ambassador Power: The challenge with any discussion of reform—this is deeply unsatisfying, and especially so to those of us who have sat on the UN Security Council—is that it comes back to the question of Governments and what they are willing to accept, to acquiesce in, to push. There is a reason why there has been only one UN Security Council reform in its entire history, which I think it was in 1965, broadening the non-permanent membership from six to 10—wow, that was a game-changer!

As you know, in order to secure Security Council reform, you have to get two thirds of the UN member states to support it, and all five permanent members, and it must be ratified in the Parliaments of those permanent members and the two thirds. I say that as somebody who tried to push the UN disabilities treaty and has pushed the UN convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, and we cannot even get a UN disabilities treaty through our Senate, where we need 67 votes, so the idea of UN reform of the traditional, statutory kind for now at least feels a little bit remote.

The premise of your question—the untapped power of this body—is key. This gets to how there is no workaround for the need for the major powers to see their interests as advanced by a Security Council that functions on core issues. There was the French initiative around the veto, getting a gentlemen's agreement, for lack of a better term, among the P5 not to use the veto in cases of mass atrocities, which I believe the UK supported while my Government did not come round to it—a mistake, in my view.

Looking at what the Security Council is managing to continue to do, right now it is still sending peacekeepers abroad. There are more than 100,000 peacekeepers in the world in some of the most dangerous areas but, as we all know, they are not properly resourced. In the Obama Administration, partnering with Prime Minister Cameron, we made a real effort to strengthen peacekeeping, get more developed countries to contribute, get more intelligence, reconnaissance and logistics support for those people who put themselves in not only South Sudan and Democratic Republic of the Congo but Mali, Lebanon and places where terrorism is active. So, when the Security Council is still working as it is, there are reforms that can be secured, but you really want to see some kind of modus operandi between the US, China and Russia, because the major Security Council reform you need is arguably within those powers that are preventing the Security Council from reaching its promise. Then you can



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start to look at issues like membership and making sure that the council is more representative.

I think the Zoomification of diplomacy is going to be a benefit. These are small things, but there are just way too many meetings; there is no prioritisation within the Security Council. And that is well within the control of the member states and does not require any kind of statutory amendment.

With the US-China stand-off, lest we end up in the kind of paralysis we saw during the cold war between the US and the Soviet Union, we will have to look at peace and security initiatives that occur outside the Security Council as well. It is no secret that the US and the UK worked together very, very closely to combat ISIS. That was hybrid. That was a military coalition that existed outside the UN Security Council—78 countries, with the US and UK key partners on that. But we also built international law related to ISIS—this was when I was on the Security Council—within the Security Council, because the Security Council, as you rightly say, is the only body with that global reach that can build new international laws and require states to turn over information, on foreign terrorist fighters for example, or to prevent ISIS from trafficking in cultural artefacts, and so forth.

However, we did not want to create a military partnership through the UN Security Council, because the Russian Government were calling every democratic protester a terrorist, and the idea of partnering closely with Russia and China, which is locking up Uighurs and calling all of them terrorists, did not make sense from the standpoint of how to fight terrorism effectively. So looking at hybrid models but also recognising that some coalitions will be built outside the UN for as long as China and Russia's model of governance, and particularly their model of maintaining stability, departs so dramatically from that which democracies believe in.

Q5 Chair: Ambassador Power, can I just come back on some of your UN points there, because you have made some really interesting comments about UN reform? Is there not an element of realpolitik in this, in that if you do not have some countries having a veto—the US, Russia, China—and therefore being able to prevent what you have quite rightly highlighted, the international organisation simply will not work and states will walk away? For example, you could look at some of the incidents that we have seen in recent weeks as perhaps an example of where the absence of a veto has seen one state walk away from one UN body. And is there not a danger, perhaps, in over-ambition in internationalism, in that what it actually does is to break down internationalism into regionalism or indeed simply cliental relationships between a major power and states?

Ambassador Power: The price of entry for the United States back in 1945 was the veto. After the experience of Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations, there was no scenario in which FDR was just going to leave it to chance with Congress, and it was very clear that retaining that level of control was necessary. That said, it was not then envisaged that



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the veto would extend into so many domains, so it was not as if that was well-thought through. There was also discussion in the early days about convening again in 10 years to review, and that was a way of getting people who did not like the veto on board: "You'll have your chance. We'll come back together. We'll discuss it again."

That is a long way of saying that I basically agree with you. I think there is no domestic political scenario conceivable—I mean, never is a long time—where the United States and the United Kingdom, although I should not speak for the United Kingdom, would give up its veto. In light of the polarisation that we experience in this country related to the United Nations, and the way that is getting fuelled lately by certain political actors, any kind of tinkering to the system that seems to be deluding US sovereignty or US agency would be wildly controversial, even among Democrats.

On one level, I think it is a little moot, because we are not close to that. It is not like that conversation is really happening, and it is not like too much energy is getting expended in that direction such that we have to shut it down to focus on more urgent priorities, but there is a kind of slow-moving discussion that happens.

Many countries that do not have the veto would like to see the veto go away, and they have a point in so far as you have Syria, Yemen, the Israeli-Palestinian issue, Ukraine, the covid crisis and a long list of issues where permanent members of the Security Council use the veto—I should add Myanmar and the Rohingya genocide, and anything related to North Korea, which of course would have to go through China. As that list gets longer, the disillusionment with a Security Council that cannot meet the most significant threats of our time, or conflicts that cause so much human harm, has an impact on credibility.

That is why, as this paralysis sets in on a growing list of contemporary conflicts and crises, we need to look to hustle outside UN bodies. There is nothing to prevent contact groups from coming into existence but, because of China's clout in the international system, absent China's backing at the very least, it is very easy for the parties to conflict to play big powers off against one another. Nothing is more auspicious for a negotiation than when the Security Council is united behind a mediator, but you just don't see that as often as you used to. Each year, the number of conflicts of which that is true grows smaller and smaller, unfortunately.

- Q6 **Chair:** You also highlighted the success of Australia at the World Health Assembly. Many of us not only would support the Australian Government's move but are extremely pleased that so many others are backing Australia. However, is there not an element of danger to the multilateral organisations in that multi-polar world in which nations set up their own coalitions like this, outside the UN bodies? The World Health Assembly example is a slightly tortuous one, because it is within a UN body, but isn't there a danger that other regional coalitions undermine the multi-polarity of things like the UN?



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Ambassador Power: My own view, which is hard-earned, is that international institutions and international co-operation are means to a set of functional ends. In whatever role we are in, we each look out to advance our national interests. I, certainly, conceive America's interests as inextricably linked to the fates of people living elsewhere, as the pandemic underscores—also terrorists who move across borders, refugees and migrant flows that grow out of conflicts, or coal emissions that come from somewhere else matter, ultimately, to the fate of the planet that my kids and grandkids will inherit.

That is my premise, but we have an Administration now that has a different premise, which is much more transactional, and it believes that walls metaphorical and physical can insulate American citizens, and that they should be tried. But in thinking functionally about international co-operation and international institutions, we have a responsibility to work, as you say, and to do everything in our power to work through those institutions that exist and that we have all invested so much in.

They are the only global institutions that exist—there is nothing like the UN, I used to say when I was in my job. I was one of the only people in the US Government who every day had the chance to meet with every single country of the world. If we are pushing something, that is an incredible opportunity. So for pragmatic reasons, for those institutions to be one of the early ports of call, if not the first port of call, is essential.

When those institutions aren't delivering for our people, however, we are of course going to have to be nimble. I would note again that when China, for example, goes into the International Telecommunication Union and tries to create rules that do not look anything like the rules and standards we would wish to see related to the internet in our own countries, that is going to create a heightened set of challenges. As they use their economic clout and their bilateral investments in lots of developing countries to get lots and lots of countries to back them in various votes within the UN, that too is going to create many challenges for the things that we have used international institutions to promote over the years.

As we head into this new dawn, whether it is post-covid or we are in it already, as I noted at the beginning, that is going to underscore the importance of us teaming up and co-ordinating. Right now, we are not doing that within the UN in the way we did just a few years ago: the US, the EU and the UK, but also Japan and Korea and Latin American democracies and so forth. We have a ton we can be doing together and that we can be learning from one another, but also as a blocking coalition as there are these efforts to chip away at the norms.

Again, the importance is: where does the co-operation occur? If it requires supporting the African Union to combat mass atrocities in parts of sub-Saharan Africa because that is a quicker and more nimble choice, provided those forces have the support they need, that is a choice one could respectably make. Yes, on one level, the Ebola coalition occurred within the UN and is a great example—probably the best in recent years—of the UN as the ideal stage to mobilise global coalitions and global co-operation.



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There, the Security Council did perform its function, declaring Ebola a threat to peace and security. Let's remember, however, that even within the UN, when it works it works because the powerful countries within the UN step up: because the US sent 3,000 troops and health workers to Liberia; because the UK took the lead in Sierra Leone; because France was willing to do something it hadn't done before in public health in Guinea, just running points and trying to co-ordinate what a variety of international stakeholders were doing. There is a kind of statism. In some ways even within the rubric of the UN, when you are working in those traditional organisations, it is often a mini coalition of the willing that makes those international institutions work. That is what happened with Ebola. I am suggesting that if the Security Council is not allowing that to happen and if we have tried everything—. Let's say a follow-on Administration to President Trump really sits down with China and figures out what the contours of this relationship are going to look like, involving, again, accountability and competition on the one hand but also some sectors for co-ordination. However, if we are still blocked, simply saying that these are the premier international bodies is not going to make the problems go away. We are going to have to find venues in which to act on behalf of our respective interests.

Andrew Rosindell: Good afternoon, Ambassador. I think we are entering a new era. Post-covid, things are going to change, and they are going to change rapidly. One of the things that does need to change is the UN: whether it is fit for purpose in the way it was post war or maybe western democracies such as Britain and America need to still work within the UN but be more robust in some of our approaches.

I will give an example. China has been appeased in so many ways for so long. You mentioned Taiwan earlier. You described it as a country, and I was interested to hear you refer to it as that. Should we not be more robust? Should we not come together and yes, work within the UN, but be much stronger in how we approach foreign policy towards China and other countries that, frankly, are in the UN but do not play by the same rules as we do? Many of those countries are bought off, particularly by China. Isn't it time we had a completely fresh approach, but one based on a more robust approach to foreign policy in general?

Ambassador Power: Part of that at least is consistent with the recommendation that I have been making, which is that we need a coalition of countries that believe in good governance and human rights and that are democratic to be co-ordinating. For the time being, because the US does not show a lot of interest in showing much initiative within international organisations in such a coalition, my argument is that countries like the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, Germany, France—many countries would be interested and have an interest in seeing the World Health Organisation work more effectively, but also seeing LGBT rights promoted, seeing counter-terrorism strategies promoted by the UN that do not embrace Russia's conception of dissidents as terrorists, for example; that is a big fight that is going on in the UN.



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Yes, I think more activism, more assertiveness absolutely is important. The idea, though, that the UN is appeasing China or this or that, it is a building to which 193 countries come. When the US steps back, as it has, not paying its dues to a bunch of agencies, pulling out of certain bodies, cutting funding to WHO in a pandemic, but not even filling its board seat at the WHO before the pandemic. That creates an opening for another powerful country to throw its weight around.

My own view is that the WHO earlier should have been more forceful and more public about the extent to which China was stonewalling its experts behind the scenes as it related to getting visiting privileges and the like. I think there is accountability there in terms of WHO officialdom. They did declare an emergency far earlier than the United Kingdom and the US were embracing that message. When they were saying nice things about China—when the head of WHO and the China specialist was saying nice things about China and its handling of the epidemic—when it was covering up the epidemic, so too was the American President who has a lot more juice, clout and money and intelligence about what is actually happening inside China than the WHO does. My point is that it is a scrum. I agree with an element of what you are saying which is that if we are going to make these organisations work, we have to be much more active in that scrum.

Q7 Andrew Rosindell: To give an example, we are appeasing China. We are not allowing Taiwan to join the WHO. Clearly, they would have a very important role to play in that. They have done very well during this pandemic—they are one of the countries you gave as an example of how they have handled it. To exclude them from the WHO—

Ambassador Power: The problem in all this is not the point, but the “we”. Who is the “we”? Who is the “we” appeasing China? The vote on observer status for Taiwan was to happen yesterday. Because of China’s use of its economic leverage, its bullying, its intimidation and its incentivising at a time when countries are very vulnerable, it is clear that Taiwan, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia could not mobilise the votes on behalf of its obtaining an observer status that, by the way, it had from 2009 to 2016. Only with President Xi’s coming out on the international stage and with the change in leadership in Taiwan did China seek to revoke that status. This would have been a vote yesterday. It should have happened, but we—the United States, the United Kingdom and others—did not have the votes, we were not able to mobilise the votes.

The question is, what are we going to do to offset the economic leverage that China is exerting in order not to create other bad outcomes. This is a bad outcome; I could not agree more. Taiwan has so much to offer at the WHO. Contrast Taiwan’s response to the pandemic and China’s. Who has more to offer in terms of instructing developing countries about what they can do with their means to respond? All I am taking issue with is where the agency exists. We just have to be much more strategic and much more co-ordinated to get better outcomes than we secured yesterday.



Q8 Royston Smith: Thank you, Ambassador Power, for joining us today. Can I ask about the UK-US relationship? How strong is that, and is there a risk that if the UK charts its own course on things like Iran, JCPOA, or 5G with Huawei, that will be at risk? And if that is the case, that it would risk our special relationship, would that undermine still further some of these international organisations?

Ambassador Power: I think the UK-US partnership—and here I speak from experience—is the core of the kind of coalition that we need to see within international institutions, or within informal networks that exist in parallel to international institutions, to solve global problems. So the more daylight there is between us the worse the outcomes, I think, that either of our respective nations will secure, again, on behalf of our respective interests, or shared interests.

In terms of where the relationship is going, it is very hard to speak definitively given that we have a presidential election approaching, here, in just a matter of months. Certainly I think there are powerful, powerful forces within the United States who see the indispensability of this relationship, for whom the phrase “special relationship” is not a sort of hackneyed phrase, but it’s, again, the essence of understanding what two countries of shared values and shared commitments and a willingness to be active, also, beyond their borders and in international institutions—just how much we have to offer one another.

That is including, again, powerful forces within both parties; but I think right now the relationship—and this isn’t just true of the UK—but the President of the United States has very transactional relationships, yes, but it’s very personality-driven. It often, again, is rooted in personal affections, personal chemistry. Those are relationships, I think, that President Trump values, that he celebrates. My sense is that with Prime Minister Johnson he has that kind of chemistry; but from the standpoint, again, of us teaming up and working together it would be ideal if our conceptions of collective security mapped on to one another in the way that they did so recently, and the way that they did for so many decades. I think that’s a sturdier foundation.

So when you mention the JCPOA, the UK, from my standpoint rightly, made the judgment that it was in our interest to deny Iran a pathway to a nuclear weapon and that the agreement was working, and the UK embraced the findings of the IAEA appropriately—the only independent body that was looking at the question of whether Iran was in compliance. I think there are going to be moments like that, if the United States continues to pull away from collective security agreements, where the United Kingdom is going to go its own way. Is that going to create tension? Naturally it is going to create tension, but I think, again, there are many—there are a vast number of—Americans who themselves believe that US interests are enhanced by participation in collective security frameworks like that one, and are very disappointed in seeing the extent to which tensions have only escalated, the region has become less secure because of the crumbling of the JCPOA. So that’s one example.



I think on the Huawei issue, that's an example of something where I think many of us feel as though the pandemic has only underscored—the pandemic and all the misinformation that has flooded the zone in the United States, I think also to some extent in the United Kingdom, from China—underscores a concern that many people in both parties in this country have about vulnerability to Chinese interference. And so I think that's the kind of issue, again in a sturdy relationship—we will vocalise our disagreements but also continue to recognise our shared interests across the board. As it relates Five Eyes and intelligence sharing arrangements, that will be a genuine challenge if the Huawei 5G arrangement goes forward. That has been vocalised by intelligence professionals both formerly in the Obama Administration and in the current Administration.

Q9 Royston Smith: I have one follow-up question. What does the UK offer the US? What is it that we do or that we should offer the US as part of our special relationship? Park the issues about Iran and 5G.

Ambassador Power: Many people could testify before you and answer that question differently, but let me speak on the basis of my single comparative advantage, which is having been UN ambassador and having spent more time in Obama's second term—the three and a half years that I was in that job—with my British counterpart than I did with my family.

This is now dated, because I have not been in my job since 20 January 2017, but an enduring feature of British leadership and diplomatic institutions is the UK's willingness to stand up to aggression and, when there is a crisis, to immediately ask, "What can we do?" As basic as that sounds, you would be amazed at how few countries have that kind of muscle memory to say, "What can we do about it? How can we chip in and contribute?"

In a world where burden-sharing is indispensable, where the United States will not be the world's policeman, it is important that there is a powerful, values-driven democracy that is willing to pull its weight—really to punch above its weight—in the international system. In the area of global health—the most pressing area in our time—the United Kingdom was often a trailblazer. DfID's contribution, not only in international development as such—helping developing countries to grow more stable over time—but as a tool in our respective foreign policy arsenals, enhances British leverage. At a time when China, again, is flooding the zone with investment through the Belt and Road initiative and this and that, this level of international activism on behalf of elective security, regional and international stability, and human rights and democracy is critical. You would be amazed at how few fingers I need to count the countries that I could describe in those terms, with that willingness to step up and that core recognition—not withstanding Brexit—that the fate of the people of the United Kingdom is linked to the fate of people outside.

Your development commitment speaks for itself really. The way in which that has been sustained over successive Administrations speaks to a desire to change the world for the better, and to that recognition of the



link between British security, stability and prosperity, and events beyond your borders.

- Q10 Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** Thank you for your time with us today, Ambassador Power. The subject of this session is the Integrated Review the UK Government will carry out on foreign policy, defence policy and international development policy. Some of us on this Committee and elsewhere in Parliament are concerned that this was always about trying to cut those budgets. That concern is more pronounced given the pandemic and its economic consequences. If we do begin to see serious cuts to those three Departments, affecting their ability and willingness to engage in some of the issues you have discussed this afternoon, who will be the most vulnerable? I am thinking of what happened when you were ambassador, in the east of Ukraine and Crimea in 2014. Who benefits if, as a result of this, we chip away at our own capability and willingness, and who will become most vulnerable?

Ambassador Power: That is a great follow-on question from the question just posed about what the UK's contribution is. I think I used the phrase "punching above its weight". The diplomatic power of British public servants—foreign service—out in the field working alongside and in partnership with their development counterparts is a striking feature of the UK's comparative advantage of its value add globally. I remember when Boris Johnson was Foreign Minister. He came to New York in the wake of the Brexit vote and talked very specifically, in the light of Brexit, about the need to really deepen British investments in diplomacy at the UN, having the permanent seat and its critical role on the UN Security Council and within NATO. It did not mean less Britain abroad; it would mean more Britain, but deepening its commitment in different venues. So that commitment to international engagement was a breath of fresh air at the time.

I cannot speak to the gravity of the financial situation that any of us will find ourselves in in the coming months and years in light of this crisis, but we know it will be extreme. It would be a colossal blow to the enterprise of international peace and security. There is a recognition that international development is at the heart of promoting stability in the world and that over time, again, it defuses threats, enhances trade partnerships and brings about outcomes for women and girls that we know make other countries more prosperous and stable. British diplomats and development professionals are involved in promoting all of those things in really singular ways, and it would be a colossal blow if that were scaled back in significant ways.

I see Lord Hague has joined us. At one point—this is now a decade old, Lord Hague—I believe you once took note of the fact that in the British Foreign Ministry the budget for the British diplomatic corps was smaller than or comparable to that for the Kent County Council. I will offer my equivalent. Here in the US we have so underfunded our diplomatic corps that, as you may know, we have almost more Americans serving in Pentagon military marching bands than we do serving in our diplomatic corps around the world.



We in the Democratic party are very eager to rectify that because not only is China out there using its financial heft, but it now has more diplomatic posts around the world than any country—it has passed the United States in terms of the number of outposts. What we have seen in this pandemic with its Wolf Warrior diplomacy is just how much more aggressive its diplomats have been. I do not recognise these Chinese diplomats. I don't know if Lord Hague recognises them. It is a wholly different kind of aggressiveness and confidence. It is a kind of strutting diplomacy, but also a very intimidating form of diplomacy. If at just that time the United States continued to shrivel its diplomatic corps or the United Kingdom were to scale back substantially, it would be very damaging to the values and interests we have been talking about here today.

- Q11 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** So where China has not been a catalyst for chaos in the past, that is perhaps changing. Maybe Russia was traditionally the catalyst for chaos and China tried to benefit from that rather than being the catalyst, but you have seen that change. Do you think that will keep changing in the wrong direction?

Ambassador Power: There is nothing to suggest it is about to go in the right direction. There are positive dimensions, as we saw yesterday with the \$2-billion announcement related to vaccine research. We saw positive dimensions in terms of China's willingness to create a rapid reaction force for UN peacekeeping, for example. There are global goods and collective goods in the clean energy space that we will welcome from China. But when it comes to what China is seeking to do to international norms, what it is using its leverage to do, as in the Taiwan vote around observer status yesterday—what it is also using its clout to do is to really try to weaken the human rights standards that exist, because it is not in China's interest, as it sees it, to have a set of standards that are higher than the state.

China is now the No. 2 donor within the UN system, as you know. That gives it a lot of leverage, but nothing gives it more leverage than its ability to use its bilateral assistance and its diplomacy to get developing countries to back it within the United Nations when it comes to, for example, internet resolutions, counter-terrorism resolutions, resolutions around freedom of speech and freedom of assembly or resolutions on what peacekeepers are allowed to do to protect women and girls in harm's way. China embraces a much more static concept of what peacekeepers should do, a much more recessive posture. So if we are taking our diplomats and our development professionals off the field at the time when China, again, is deepening those investments, I think the damage will be significant.

- Q12 **Claudia Webbe:** I want to come back on a point you made earlier in relation to a global ceasefire. It is clear that there is unimaginable suffering caused by present-day conflicts across the world. A global ceasefire amid the coronavirus pandemic, as called for by the UN Secretary-General, is critical. He has said: "The fury of the virus illustrates the folly of war." The conflict in Yemen is one of the worst humanitarian crises of the modern era. What role do you think the UK can play to build international co-operation and break the barriers to action? What more can we do?



Ambassador Power: What strikes me as you pose that important question is this. I mentioned earlier the personal chemistry between Prime Minister Johnson and President Trump. It is President Trump, or Mike Pompeo, the Secretary of State, who has blocked passage of the Security Council resolution to embrace the Secretary-General's ceasefire call, so this might be a good time—I know we are both busy with our respective pandemic responses, given the enormous loss of life in both our countries, but this would be a good time to call on that relationship, to make it clear to President Trump that it is an important call, that it is one that the United Kingdom stands behind, as the United Kingdom has done from just as soon as it was presented to Prime Minister Johnson, from what we understand over here. I think that is an example of using the bilateral partnership in a productive way.

I would note that a lot of momentum of course has been lost in these weeks, so the power of this resolution now, compared with when it should have been passed, will be blunted. You had a number of stakeholders to conflicts or parties to conflicts—in Colombia and in the Philippines, for example—that stepped up right after the Secretary-General issued the call. Even in Yemen, actually, the Saudi Government said that it was willing to cease fire for a time, but unfortunately—not only because the Security Council did not rally behind it, although that probably didn't help—many of those parties have gone back to fighting. To give a second wind to that call, Security Council passage would be very helpful.

Beyond that, on any specific conflict, at a time when the Security Council is not working, there is nothing that stops the United Kingdom, the United States or other stakeholders from pulling contact groups together, using Zoom diplomacy, and identifying incentives and disincentives. The pandemic changes the landscape and may give diplomacy more inherent leverage than it has had in some time, but that requires not waiting for the US to take a leadership role. There are more conflicts now happening around the world than at any point in 30 years, so there are plenty of opportunities to exercise diplomatic muscle and to try to bring key stakeholders to the same page. It does not require a Security Council resolution to throw one's weight behind trying to resolve any particular conflict, or at least trying to pause any particular conflict.

Claudia Webbe: Thank you for that.

Q13 **Henry Smith:** Ambassador Power, thank you very much for joining us today. In your view, how has the response to covid-19 affected the reputations of the west and China respectively, in terms of credibility and influence?

Ambassador Power: Well, life is long and sadly we are only in the early phases of the pandemic, so we will see how the history gets written. There is no question that inherent features of authoritarian leadership, namely a lack of transparency, a lack of accountability and a culture of fear, were major impediments to a robust and prompt response in China.



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For all who were tempted by the authoritarian capitalist model, this was an appropriate wake-up call about systems that operate by a principle of fear, rather than society-wide or majoritarian consent, and their dangers. This was always going to show, and will continue to show in other crisis settings. When you are afraid of delivering bad news to your leader, that will stymie debate and dissent and impede the flow of critical—in this case, life-saving—health information or other information. These are not adaptive features of those systems, and that is more evident than it was before the pandemic struck.

China has scrambled to rehabilitate its reputation. It was riding high before the pandemic, particularly in light of the US retreat from a leadership role in so many areas. It has scrambled. China's dispatch of medical supplies was clearly both an important practical and humanitarian gesture, and part of the effort to show a different face of China than the one that emerged during the cover-up of what was happening behind Chinese lines. Some of those supplies were defective, so that did not help out the gate, but there appears to have been a recovery and now the supplies are arriving, particularly in developing countries where, while the WHO is pooling its resources and has sent out millions of items of protective gear, that will never compare to what China is capable of doing if it puts its resources behind it.

Until yesterday, China has been doing a lot of that bilaterally, so some of it is not all that visible to us and is not reported by mainstream media in either of our countries. It is a soft power push. When the gloves, masks and ventilators arrive in your hour of need, you don't forget that, as we know from what each of us are going through in our own countries. It is a mixed picture, at this point. Yesterday may mark a watershed, because it is the first time since the pandemic broke that China, instead of branding its assistance by doing it all bilaterally, showed up in Geneva and said, "We are doing it at the UN. We want to show that we are leading the world." Again, if that continues, that will be significant in this debit/credit assessment of China's reputation at the end of the pandemic.

I do not think that the Wolf Warrior diplomacy is winning too many friends. I do not know what Lord Hague will say about this based on his time as Foreign Secretary, but there is a night and day dimension to China's aggressiveness—its tweeting, its hostility, its rage, its stirring of nationalism—which has also had an effect on the treatment of foreigners inside China. You had, for the first time, African countries *démarche*-ing China because of the treatment of African workers inside China. Again, it is a complex picture, and these trends will play out in different ways.

There is no question of the damage to the US' reputation; I will let you speak to the UK's handling of the crisis. In our case, Fintan O'Toole had a piece in the *The Irish Times* saying that the world has raged at America and admired America but has never before pitied America. We have seen misinformation propagated at the highest levels. The Republic of Korea and the United States had our first cases on the same day. For America, the home of so many Nobel prize winners and Silicon Valley's vast



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resources and scientific expertise, not being able to catch up with the virus for so long in terms of testing, with so many goals set and missed, is not the best face of the most powerful democracy in the world.

It is a shame, because there really was a way to do this differently—the playbook was there, although there has been controversy over it. Again, having an Administration that is not keen on science, technical expertise, international co-operation or international institutions is not an auspicious set of predispositions for dealing with the worst pandemic in a century. In that debate of authoritarian versus democratic systems, the United States is not exactly helping the team, in terms of our handling.

If you look at New Zealand, Australia, Taiwan, which has been mentioned, Germany, Denmark, Iceland and Norway, you see the power of accountable governance, scientific rigour, dissent and a changing of pathways because of the acceptance and internalisation of new information and new expertise. When a whole society throws its weight behind a response, and where public institutions have earned that trust and legitimacy, you see just how impactful democracies can be.

There is a lot of talk along the lines of, “Asian democracies can do it—look at Korea and Taiwan—but what about the rest of us? Do you have to be draconian or Confucian?” Absolutely not. There are wonderful democratic models for how citizens have been made part of the solution, but it is absolutely clear that polarisation, where it exists in its most virulent forms, has impeded various democracies’ responses. It is just another reminder of how damaging virulent polarisation and party-ism is in steady state and in dealing with crises.

Chair: Ambassador Power, thank you enormously for your time. You have been hugely generous, and you have very kindly stayed about 10 minutes over. I very gratefully—thankfully for you, perhaps—release you. Thank you very much indeed.

Ambassador Power: Thank you. It was good to see you all, and thank you for the wonderful exchange.

Examination of witness

Witness: Lord Hague of Richmond.

Q14 **Chair:** Lord Hague, we will go straight on and start on you now. You can see the themes of the conversation that we have just been having with Ambassador Power. Do you have any initial thoughts on, or reactions to, what the ambassador raised? I am thinking particularly of the Anglo-US relationship and the UK’s role in international organisations.

Lord Hague: I was fascinated listening to Ambassador Power and strongly agreed with just about everything that she said. Many of the things that I discern changing in the world are very similar to the things that she remarked on, particularly the increased tension between the United States and China, and the change in Chinese diplomacy. You can see the effects of that every day, and it does impair international institutions.



There are other things that Ambassador Power did not get on to. There is the effect of this crisis on the European Union, which has become an existential crisis in the view of many European leaders. There is the acceleration of the Pacific century: 2020 is the first year when half of global GDP was going to be Asia-Pacific anyway, and they will be more resilient in the face of this crisis, so instead of 90% of the new global middle class being in Asia-Pacific, it might be 100%. That makes a big difference to where we look for our alliances and friendships in the future. Then, there is the big impact on the oil-producing countries—that is a whole extra subject—and the striking absence of global co-operation, which is really to your point, Mr Chairman, about UK-US relations and our role in international institutions.

The most amazing thing of all about this crisis, to anyone who has served in foreign policy, is the lack of global co-operation in dealing with this pandemic. I am told that, at the beginning of the global financial crisis, when Lehman Brothers went under in 2008, the first foreign phone call of President George W Bush was to Hu Jintao to start to co-ordinate the international response. It is a totally different atmosphere today. The United Kingdom has to work closely with the United States in all international forums and institutions—they are very often our closest ally in those institutions—but we are allowed to be a voice for global co-operation at a time when, as Ambassador Power just remarked, the White House is not always interested in the international institutions, in the science or in extending global co-operation. There is an important role for the UK in doing that, and you can see for instance how a logical response to this pandemic is to seek a new global agreement on how we deal zoonotic diseases—those that jump from wildlife to humans—and we could advocate a new and powerful agency to act on that internationally. Advocating that sort of thing is a role for the UK because it is not clear at the moment who else is going to take up such causes in such a wide range of international forums in which we could pursue such a thing.

- Q15 **Chair:** All those issues address various elements. I wonder if, before we move on to specifically to the UK element, you could just touch on one thing that we have noticed in the last few weeks. I realise that this is a slight diversion but I think it an important one. As the UK is seeking to find its place in the world, various elements of the EU are also changing, with the €500 billion bail-out and, at the same time, the German supreme court's judgment about the ECB bail-out in Karlsruhe only a few weeks ago. Could you talk just for a moment about the changing dynamic within the European Union and how you see that?

Lord Hague: These are very serious developments in the eurozone. I think that it is easy to underestimate from the outside the importance, particularly of the judgment of the German constitutional court. This is of momentous importance because the EU is a legal construct and this is a dispute about the legal rights of courts and nations within the European Union. The euro is the most critical institution of the European Union and the dispute is about the euro. Italy is a vulnerable member and it is really



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about the ability of other countries to come to the aid of Italy; it really is a crack in the foundation of the European Union.

You can see now in the urgent efforts of European leaders such as President Macron and Chancellor Merkel to launch their €500 billion initiative—which would still have to be agreed by some other, rather reluctant countries, like Austria, Finland and the Netherlands—the urgent effort to try to repair this damage. To those of us who have always believed that there was a fundamental flaw in the construction of the euro, this is of course considerable supporting evidence.

To extend that into why this is relevant to foreign policy—people may say, “Well, this is nothing to do with us anymore!”—it must be a prime goal of British foreign and defence policy to ensure stability in our neighbourhood. One of the things we can see in this crisis, and in recent years, is a declining ability of the European Union to take new agreed initiatives together, on the challenges of the 21st century—on migration, for instance, in the last few years, or on policy towards China, which is very relevant to what Ambassador Power was saying. The EU finds it difficult to be united.

After Brexit, the UK is going to have to find ways of co-operating with EU states and the EU collectively on stability in our neighbourhood—in the western Balkans and against terrorist threats that might emerge across north Africa. The need to do that is not receiving enough attention at the moment.

Q16 Chair: One would be hard-pressed after 2,000 years of UK history in its various different forms to say that Europe was particularly foreign. We have been drawn in so often to moments of failure—indeed, participated in some of them—that we cannot really opt out. Understanding what is happening in the European Union would seem to be, from your suggestion, a fundamental part of the Integrated Review. If we do not have an understanding of our own region, we are going to find it very difficult to do foreign policy.

Lord Hague: Yes, absolutely. We have left the EU, but we are not going anywhere. We are sitting on the edge of Europe—a coastal state. As you say, what has happened through centuries is that the bloodiest and most terrible instances in our history have been through things going wrong on the continent of Europe or nearby, so we must not neglect that in an Integrated Review, even though it is also true that the Asia-Pacific must be more important to our foreign policy than it has ever been in our history.

Q17 Chair: Could you talk for a moment about the different balance that we are seeing? Ambassador Power highlighted things like the Wolf Warrior and embassy tactics, which are really only a reflection of China’s growing power in the region and around the world. What does that mean for the UK? We have alliances in terms of the five party defence alliance, the Commonwealth and any number of different bilateral agreements and responsibilities around the world. What does this new China mean for us?



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Lord Hague: We always have to remember that we cannot solve global problems and challenges without China. I mentioned the case a moment ago for better global action against this kind of virus—to prevent it arising in the first place. Well, it would be utterly futile to attempt that without China.

As the Committee knows very well, Britain has the presidency of COP26 coming up, although postponed, and we will not be able to make anything like the necessary progress without the full participation and wholehearted contribution to combating climate change from China that is needed. We have to try to maintain and even to strengthen frameworks of global co-operation that can include China, and not close off communication and understanding with China.

At the same time, we cannot ignore that China does not play by our rules in the economic field. The Wolf Warrior behaviour that Ambassador Power has just been describing is not really playing by our rules in the diplomatic field either. There is a decoupling taking place between our closest ally, the United States, and China, certainly in the technological field, and even beginning now in the financial field, with President Trump's statements last week about how Government pension funds should not be investing in Chinese equities in the future.

This will present choices to the United Kingdom. It means that we have to make sure that we are not strategically dependent on China. However much we encourage diplomatic co-operation, economic links and personal links, such as in our universities, with the people of China, we cannot allow ourselves, amidst that decoupling, to become strategically dependent on China. I think that means that we have to evaluate how we join up our environmental goals, our economic policy and our security policy, because they might be at variance with each other. We are aiming to have millions and millions of batteries powering our cars and buses in the future, but the country leading in that is China, and the country controlling most of the rare earth elements that will go into them is China. We have to ask questions about that strategy.

Q18 **Chair:** The question I had picks up on a point that Ambassador Power made about partnerships with democracies. She, quite understandably, did not go into great detail on it, but the idea of having democratic states working together to reduce dependency on states that do not share our values would seem like a reinvention of the WTO, or rather GATT, which started off, in many ways, as that sort of a partnership but has now effectively been dissolved to such a degree that its common denominator is so low as to make it very difficult to see the strength of any partnership based simply on it. Is there an argument to say that the UK, perhaps building on the CPTPP, or perhaps building on other partnerships, could seek to enable a partnership of the indies, as it were—the independent trading nations—into a new alliance? Is there room for that?

Lord Hague: I think Ambassador Power was talking more about different coalitions of the willing, but I do not want to interpret incorrectly what she was saying. That is certainly more how I would—



Chair: I may have extrapolated further.

Lord Hague: I think you have, Chair, and you are allowed to do that. I am trying not to do that. It would be great to think that the United Kingdom can pull such things together, but we have to walk before we can run, really. It is important to build co-operation with like-minded countries on the sorts of issues that we have been talking about. For instance, if we are going to ensure that we are working globally with China but we are not strategically dependent on China in industries that are critical to our security, it is much more effective to do that in partnership with France, Germany, Australia, Canada and the United States than it is to try to do it on our own.

Some of you debated in the House of Commons in recent months the role of Huawei in our 5G network. If we are trying to make sure that in 10 years' time we are not in that difficult situation because western companies are able to provide all the necessary technology, there is no way of doing that without the United Kingdom—British companies and the British Government—working with other countries. Such an effort—I agree in principle with Ambassador Power about it—begins with the creation of informal coalitions trying to adapt together to this changed world and the accelerated changes of this world. Whether it ever turns into a new bloc in the world I do not know; I am a bit more sceptical about that. I think we are more into an age of overlapping networks of co-operation than an age of constructing new power blocs in the world.

Q19 **Graham Stringer:** Thank you, Lord Hague. It is interesting, and you make a strong case for another international organisation or using international organisations that are there; it is difficult to disagree with that. You have also said that covid-19 is likely to accelerate or exacerbate the trends in the world. One of those trends is that China is increasing its influence, becoming more hostile and taking more pernicious actions in parts of the world. What do you think concretely we should do to respond to that in what will be a changed world?

Lord Hague: Well, a number of things, one of which I have already been talking about. We cannot afford, in that changed world, to be dependent on China in key industries. We need a great diversity of supply. Of course, there are 10 key industries where China has set out the goal of not being dependent on us or on the west—the “Made in China” initiative. It can be the effect of China’s becoming so pre-eminent in those industries that we are then dependent on China. There must be a reciprocal policy in the west that in those fundamentally important areas to the technologies of the future, we are able to safeguard our own interest.

That is No. 1. No. 2 is that we should participate in the defence structures of our allies and their activities. We do that with the United States and, to a smaller extent, with Australia. Those countries uphold rights of navigation, for instance, in the South China Sea, and we should always be party to that. Defence arrangements should be clearly aligned with the other leading democracies of the world.



But the other part of it is to keep working on the first point I made about China. There has to be a global solution to common problems. Having the Wolf Warrior approach will not pay off for China. Ambassador Power said it was not winning many friends around the world, and it really is not. China has gone in the past couple of years, it seems, from emphasising the creation of soft power—although the paradox is that you cannot really create soft power; as we know in the UK, a traditional soft power country, it is something that you have because of your history or culture, and you have to be an open society for people to regard you as having that soft power—to this very hard power approach. That is not going to be very effective, and we must keep every diplomatic effort going with them to say, “We need you to work with us on climate change, and you need us as well, because otherwise you are going to be suffering the consequences.”

There are all those different prongs to it, and that last point includes still trying to work with China in international institutions. It is not in the UK’s interests for the steady decline in the effectiveness of international institutions that Ambassador Power described to take place. We have a strong interest in a world based on law, justice and a common global approach to global problems. We must maintain that element in our approach to China as well.

Q20 Graham Stringer: That was a comprehensive answer, but may I finish up on more or less the last point you made, climate change? Within the discussions on climate change, China is treated as a developing economy. It clearly is not any more. At the same time, it is building a huge number of coal power stations and sponsoring them around the world. In the context of discussions about climate change, can we continue to treat China so gently?

Lord Hague: No. I share your feelings—your criticism—about that. In fact, if there one thing we have to do to have any hope of meeting global targets on reducing emissions, we have to stop all burning of coal in the next few years. It is a problem ending any western financing of coal projects in the world when China can step in and continue them if we stop doing them.

You are raising a very important issue, and I agree that China is not a developing country any more. However, here you are in the House of Commons in the United Kingdom, and we all, across all parties, want COP26 to be a great success. This will be the most important global conference of the coming few years, and the UK is responsible for it, and it will only succeed if China is a willing and generous participant in it. So while we may be critical of many things, we also have to create the framework for the necessary understanding with China, to try to bring the United States, the European Union and China together in agreements in that conference. So we have to be diplomatic as well as forceful. You are stressing the forcefulness; I am just slightly correcting it with the diplomatic bit.

Q21 Stewart Malcolm McDonald: Thank you for your comments, Lord Hague. Can I put to you essentially the question I asked Ambassador



Power earlier? As we start to think about how we come out of the pandemic and what the economic consequences of that will mean for our own capability, in terms of the three areas that the Integrated Review will look at—Defence, the FCO and DfID—if there is any shrinking of our capability as a result of the review, who benefits? Who internationally would be nervous if that pattern was replicated in other NATO countries, for example? Which state or non-state actors could take advantage? Could we see another Georgia, or Ukraine, or something in Taiwan, for example?

Lord Hague: We could. I have a lot of sympathy with your question and hope this does not lead to an overall reduction in resources. Of course, in government you can never separate such a review from considerations of the resources available; otherwise, you just end up with a wish list that you cannot fulfil. But the world is becoming a more dangerous place—it was already becoming more dangerous, and I think this accelerates it.

There will clearly be something of a struggle within many countries and between countries in the wake of covid-19 about whether we are going in a more globalist direction, to address the sorts of issues we have just been talking about, or a more nationalistic one. We do not know how that will turn out, but we do know that in history generally a crisis that creates mass unemployment in many countries, and immediately exacerbates international differences, such as between the US and China, tends to push it in a more nationalistic direction. So the United Kingdom does have to protect itself as well as recognise that we are one of the few countries that can really push forward these global solutions, because we are in the G7, the G20, the Commonwealth and the United Nations Security Council. We have more convening power than all but a very few other countries in the world, so it would undoubtedly help people who are enemies of democracy, global co-operation and the rule of law applying in the world if the United Kingdom were weaker in the world. I hope we will not shrink our overall resources.

Q22 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** I agree with just about everything you say there. Following on from that, if you were in the Foreign Office now when the work on this review began to start—having understandably been put on ice—where would you be suggesting the FCO’s posture may need to change post-pandemic to take account of everything you have just outlined and the dangers that could present themselves?

Lord Hague: The Foreign Office should further reinforce the ability to strengthen what I call networks of bilateral relationships. Of course, the British Foreign Office is a very good diplomatic service and very good at getting its way in the UN Security Council within all the constraints, and in the European Union when we were there. It has been less trained and equipped over the decades to create the kinds of innovative coalitions that I was discussing with the Chairman 20 minutes or so ago, yet there is going to be a huge need for that in the future. That means building up the bilateral relations with many key partners in the world.

It also means being prepared to do what I used to call at the Foreign Office being prepared to “scratch the Rolls-Royce a bit more often”. We



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always talk about the British diplomatic service as a great Rolls-Royce. It hums along beautifully, keeping out of trouble. Now and again, we have to have the quick manoeuvre where the Rolls-Royce gets a bit scratched but the passengers get to their destination, because if the United States is going to give less leadership in global bodies but the need for that is strong, the UK has to be prepared to launch initiatives and perhaps be a little bit more French in our approach—I never thought I would say that. They do not really hold back on coming up with a new initiative and presenting it to the rest of the world, so I think we should be a little less coy about that.

We are out of the EU and we have some acknowledged differences with America. We are allowed to put forward some more of our own ideas, so I think the diplomatic service needs to be pushed in that way.

Chair: Thank you very much. Can I ask Alicia to come in, driving a Rolls-Royce and scratching it?

Q23 **Alicia Kearns:** That is slightly out of my price bracket at the moment, but I am glad you have aspirations for me, Chair.

Lord Hague, thank you ever so much for taking the time; it is really interesting to hear your views. I would like to discuss with you a matter that I believe is close to your heart, which is atrocity and genocide prevention. Having worked at the Foreign Office, one of my ongoing frustrations was that the moment we saw early indications of human rights atrocities or abuses, we were too often too slow to act. That was not because of a lack of willingness, but because each team was essentially left to act on its own and suddenly become an expert in atrocity prevention, rather than drawing on some international central resource.

I think the average member of the public—even I, as someone who worked in the Foreign Office—feels that as an individual nation and as an international community, we could still do better. My first question is about what you feel the UK could be doing better to prevent these atrocities, including as part of the international community, because that is what we all say we believe in: preventing and engaging at an earlier time.

Lord Hague: Thank you for asking me about this. As you might recall, in 2012 I launched the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict initiative with Angelina Jolie. We had a lot of international support for that, and we created an international protocol about evidence collection where crimes of sexual violence in conflict have been committed to help and guide people around the world, but of course that was only a beginning. What is really needed is a central point in the world to help orchestrate that to bring it together. In a world where international institutions were working very well, we would have the United Nations Security Council empowering a major figure in the United Nations to take action and to investigate wherever such crimes are committed. I cannot see the UN Security Council agreeing on such a thing, but it might be possible to create an international commission. It is another of these instances of bringing willing countries together, rather like the International Commission on



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Missing Persons, which has done outstanding work after the wars in the Balkans to ensure that the evidence for prosecutions of war crimes—the crimes I am particularly focused on of crimes of sexual violence in conflict—can be gathered and preserved and justice ultimately done.

I also think we should devote more of our development efforts in that regard. It would not be unrealistic to say that 1% of a DfID budget should be ringfenced for work on gender-based violence around the world. It is a major development issue and it is important that such a campaign is led from the top. I know senior Ministers have their plates rather full and it is very easy for me, having given up all those responsibilities, to say other people should do things. However, these things work internationally when senior members of the Government are strongly personally committed to them, because it then produces a reaction from other Governments to work with them. There are quite a lot of ideas like that that the UK could pursue to encourage faster international action, focus on it in our own Government, devote more of our development budget resources and create international bodies that gather the necessary evidence at the right time.

Q24 Alicia Kearns: Just a follow-up question, Chair. One of the challenges around any such organisation, even if it had the backing, is the its ability to go into countries and get that evidence. Obviously, in certain countries, it is very unlikely that autocratic regimes would allow them. That leads to my separate point. We are a member of a vast number of multilateral organisations. Are there those that, during your tenure as Foreign Secretary, you particularly felt needed reform and what sort of reforms would you have wanted to see?

Lord Hague: You are right, it is a major problem getting access to the right areas—although not always a problem. In the case of very serious violence against the Rohingya people in recent years, they have been driven into another country where it has been possible to gain access to them, in Bangladesh. Or in the many years of war in Sudan, it was possible to go into Darfur and carry out investigations where the writ of the central Government did not really run. Of course, you are right, it is often a problem, but it does not prevent us doing a lot more work in this regard.

Are there international organisations that need reform? One of them in my mind when I was in office was the World Health Organisation. Ambassador Power gave some examples of the action that had to be taken in the Ebola crisis by individual countries, particularly the United States, the United Kingdom and France, because the World Health Organisation was not mounting a very good response. To be fair, I do think that under Dr Tedros it has improved, although it is still easy to criticise the response of recent months. I think that was one that certainly stood out and has now become much more topical.

Q25 Andrew Rosindell: Good afternoon, Lord Hague. I like some of the things you are saying; they are giving me optimism that, as a nation, we will be a bit more bold in how we approach our international relations



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now that we have left the European Union. But do you agree with me that we need to be much more proactive in a very individual way? You mentioned the French—not a bad analogy, actually. They are not afraid to stand up for their interests and sometimes to be a bit bolshy. Do you not think we should be a bit more sparky in our foreign policy and be more proactive in international organisations—the Commonwealth, for instance? I think it was your plan to put the “C” back into “FCO”, if I recall correctly. Do you think the FCO is really harnessing our international and global connections? How will this play out in terms of global Britain? We have got to be out there in the world again now that we are out of the EU.

There are all these things. How will we, as a nation, going to have the boldness to do this, and to take the FCO with us, because so often it is the FCO officials who try to dampen things down rather than let us get out there and really strike strongly for our national interests? How do you feel about that general feeling?

Lord Hague: I am not part of any Foreign Office trade union, but I would say a word in defence of the officials. They are often blamed for all kinds of things, but in my experience they respond to a clear lead from Ministers, like civil servants in all the Departments of the British state. Blame the Ministers, not the officials, would be my advice. They faithfully carry out what they have been asked to do.

One of the things that they were asked to do when I became Foreign Secretary was to put more life into the relationship with the Commonwealth—absolutely—and we made a lot of efforts to do that. To some extent, we did succeed in doing that, with certain individual countries. For instance, we completely revitalised the ministerial relationship with Australia, which had really fallen into disuse in the previous decade.

It proved much more difficult to mobilise the Commonwealth. And I would stress that with the advice you were giving there to be a bit more bolshy but also to make more use of the Commonwealth, you would find that you are pursuing two opposite purposes there, because that is not the sort of thing that goes down well in the Commonwealth. It is in itself a vast exercise in coalition-building to get the Commonwealth to agree political objectives among more than 50 countries.

The greatest value of the Commonwealth really is being such a remarkable network among the peoples of the Commonwealth: the educational links, the business links, and so on. It is not very cohesive as a political instrument. I would not say that I became disillusioned, but I came into contact with some harsh realities trying to do that.

In general, though, yes, I agree with the thrust of the question, as you can tell from my earlier remarks. There is no point leaving the EU and then failing to be distinctive in foreign policy, but it must be part of that distinctiveness that we are building global coalitions and addressing global problems, and not afraid to challenge other countries to join us in doing



so. So, it should not be an insular nationalist distinctiveness; it should be an internationalist distinctiveness, in my view.

- Q26 **Royston Smith:** Can I take you back, Lord Hague, if I may, to something that you know particularly well, which is the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict initiative, and which of course you launched? Apart from the fact that there was a report recently by the Independent Commission for Aid Impact to say that it fell far short of ambitions—it started off well under you, but it has not done as well subsequently—I am thinking about the bandwidth of the Government, and about co-operation and what you were talking about with China and others, and COP26, and the UN, and the rest.

I am not suggesting for a second that you were looking for a legacy, but in order to have one I suppose that your initiative would have to be successful beyond your introducing it. Are we in danger of seeing such initiatives falling off the radar as we go forward to tackle some of the issues that we will have in the years to come?

Lord Hague: You are quite right. Governments, like any organisation, have restricted bandwidth, particularly when we say, as I have just been saying, it only really works if senior people are heavily engaged. There are only so many things that they can do—this is true.

I would say, wouldn't I, that something that I launched should be carried on and be part of the bandwidth of my successors, but I do think that this is a vital issue to foreign policy. We will not resolve conflict in the world and certainly not address fundamental issues of equality in the world—of gender equality—if we cannot begin to combat sexual violence in conflict. I would argue that that is sufficiently important that it should be carried on through different Governments and different Foreign Secretaries.

Absolutely, however, I agree about the bandwidth. The important thing is not to keep adding lots more initiatives that dilute what we do. It is important for senior Ministers pursuing an integrated defence, security and foreign policy to decide frankly what their priorities are. On something like the PSVI, it would be better to say to another country, "Why don't you become the champion on this?", if we do not have the bandwidth—to suggest to Canada or Germany that they become the champion, and just run it along at a low level. This country can then concentrate on the key issues selected by the Ministers of the day.

- Q27 **Graham Stringer:** One of the biggest changes in international politics over the past few months has been the Saudi Arabians' collapsing of the oil price. I suspect that that would have upset any American Administration, not just the Trump Administration. What are the implications of that for the Integrated Review and, generally, for the prospects of peace in the Middle East?

Lord Hague: You are opening up a vast question, quite legitimately. It is too early to say, of course, what the prospects of this for peace in the middle east are, but we can see that oil producers in the middle east, as elsewhere, are getting an early taste of the next 20 years—it is another of



these accelerated trends in the world. They are getting an early taste of energy transition.

It might be that oil consumption never gets quite back to what it was—we don't know, but it might not. There is tremendous competition to supply the oil from around the world, as the recent price war showed. I suppose what it really underlines is that some of those countries have to adapt fast. Saudi Arabia has a plan to adapt, but some aspects of that plan are now being cut back in the light of the developments. Saudi Arabia is having to cut its Budget and raise sales taxes—it is really feeling the pinch, despite its large foreign currency reserves.

When we think about a security review, that underlines the importance of discussing security in the Gulf. That is one of the fault lines in world diplomacy, along which conflicts could arise. British forces, as you know, are engaged frequently in maintaining peace and stability there, such as with minesweeping operations in the Gulf, and we have close allies like Oman. So a protracted economic crisis that threatened the internal stability of states in the Gulf would, you would have to imagine, increase the risk of conflict there. But it is too early to say that. Looking at the world over the next two years, consider where the big fault lines are between the world's tectonic plates; it is along the fault lines that the volcanoes and earthquakes always take place. They are down the Persian Gulf; in the Asia-Pacific and the South China sea; and in eastern Europe, where you have the boundaries between western democracies and Russia. That is where you have to look out for conflict. What has happened to the oil price increases the attention you have to give to that, just a little bit.

Q28 Alicia Kearns: I wanted to raise the situation in Ukraine. It feels as though Ukraine risks becoming forgotten. We know that authoritarian states will take opportunities such as a worldwide pandemic to progress or further an interest, just as when Russia invaded Syria: after its airstrikes there, it took advantage in Ukraine. Do you feel that there is anything the international community should be doing to support the Ukrainian people, or is there anything we should more broadly be pushing for together?

Lord Hague: You are quite right to raise this. It is important for western policy not to forget Ukraine. That is quite difficult, given the current state of the United States, particularly with all the domestic political issues that have arisen in Washington in connection with Ukraine. It means that America has burned its fingers a little bit in Ukraine, and we do have to look out for it. It would not be surprising if President Putin basically tried to cash in his gains, with, potentially, a settlement of years of conflict strongly on his terms. Ukraine will need support on that. The UK cannot deliver an enormous amount of that on its own; it has to work with Germany, France and the EU. Again, that underlies the importance of so much of what we have been talking about. You have to have willing coalitions of nations working together. It is important for the UK Foreign Office to be doing that in the months ahead.

Q29 Stewart Malcolm McDonald: Lord Hague, you were saying earlier that



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perhaps we could be a bit more French, and a bit more creative about taking on something and making it a specialist crusade. Could disinformation be the kind of thing on which the UK could up its game? It strikes me that disinformation is a major threat. Countries are designing their own domestic laws on it, and France recently had its own fake news law. I was at a conference earlier this year with MPs from a variety of countries from South America and the western world, and the big thing that I took away from that conference was the thought that there is no international co-ordination on this. If we do not have a coalition of the willing, if I can use that horrible phrase, to deal with it, then it will just keep getting exploited. That will be to our detriment. Alicia mentioned Ukraine, which has been a big testing ground for disinformation; it would also be to the detriment of nations such as Ukraine, and regions such as the Balkans. Is that something we could do more on?

Lord Hague: Yes. Again, we have to have regard to the point raised earlier about bandwidth. Ministers will have to decide what they are going to concentrate on. Could this be one of those things? Yes, it could. In fact, if you look back at my time as Foreign Secretary, I launched an international conference in 2011 on what we called “the rules of the road”. It was an early attempt to find international understanding on how we would all behave towards each other in cyber-space. Some countries found that difficult to engage with; the authoritarian states found it very difficult, because my concept of it included civil society and the private sector, as well as Governments, in the conversation.

There were a couple of successor conferences to that, and some countries, like the Netherlands, were extremely keen and supportive. It is yet another of those things that one Foreign Secretary launches, and then it loses momentum with domestic political changes. Of course, with our role in media, the respect for the BBC around the world, the strength of our intelligence agencies, and our networks for international co-operation, the UK is in a very strong position on this. It would be best approached by partnering with an Asia-Pacific nation. Indeed, countries like South Korea and Japan always showed a lot of support for this. A partnership with another nation to push this issue forward together would be the most effective way to do it.

Q30 **Stewart Malcolm McDonald:** So that should probably be in the Committee’s recommendation, as far as the Integrated Review is concerned.

Lord Hague: That is up to you and the Committee. I am just giving my opinions, but I have no doubt that you will have a very exhaustive session on what will be in your recommendations.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: Thank you very much.

Chair: I am sure we will. We will perhaps come to that in private session, rather than doing it here.

Andrew, you wanted to ask about the Overseas Territories.



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Andrew Rosindell: Yes, a very quick question. Lord Hague, the United Kingdom has a particular responsibility to the Overseas Territories. It is very important they do not get forgotten or left behind. It is important that they be included in any new approach or global strategy that we may have. In fact, strategically, they offer us a lot, if we only took advantage of it and worked with them. They want to be part of us, as you well know. How do they fit? As a former Foreign Secretary and someone who did a lot on the Overseas Territories during your time, tell us how you think they will fit as part of that global British network—that family of nations and territories that we need to harness to promote the objectives that we are discussing today.

Lord Hague: They are important British assets around the world, and they should be regarded as assets, not liabilities. They do sometimes give us strategic advantages, and in any case, they are populated by people who want to be closely affiliated with the United Kingdom, and that should be their free right to determine, so we have responsibilities towards them as well.

Of course, what happened in 1982 with the Falklands reminds us for ever after that it is really important never to lose focus on those responsibilities; it just costs you more afterwards. In any Integrated Review, they have to be borne in mind. It would be worth in such a review considering how more can be made of them as assets, as well as just responsibilities. They are primarily assets, in terms of being options for additional military locations, but it would be worth considering that in the round as part of the review. There should be no question of neglecting them in any way.

Q31 **Andrew Rosindell:** Including the one that has the flag that is behind me.

Lord Hague: Including all your flags—well, I can't see all your flags, but yes.

Q32 **Andrew Rosindell:** On that particular one, you mentioned the military. Of course, the military are there, but the people are not anymore. Isn't it a pity that we haven't been able to resolve that one?

Lord Hague: That is a vast, complex issue in itself; I am hoping it is beyond the time limits of the Committee for me to give my half-hour dissertation on it.

Chair: It is slightly beyond the scope of this immediate inquiry. Thank you, Lord Hague. I am extremely grateful for your time, and particularly for your response to Ambassador Power. I thought you were extremely generous to be part of a rather wide-ranging conversation at this important time. Thank you very much to everybody. With that, we will close the session.