

Foreign Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Global Britain, HC 780

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Members present: Tom Tugendhat (Chair); Mike Gapes; Ian Murray; Priti Patel; Mr Bob Seely; Royston Smith.

Questions 182-213

Witnesses

I: Professor Walter Russell Mead, Distinguished Fellow in American Strategy and Statesmanship, Hudson Institute and Dr Kori Schake, Deputy Director-General, International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Professor Mead and Dr Schake.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed for joining us in this afternoon session of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Unusually, this will be a more discursive topic, where I hope we can explore some of the themes of the US-UK relationship. There is an awful lot to talk about. I will apologise immediately and say that the bell is going to go for us to vote in about half an hour, at which point we will have to run out. I hope we will continue shortly afterwards. Mike, you wanted to kick off.

Q183 **Mike Gapes:** Welcome. Can I begin by asking you how the Trump Administration differs in its approach to the established American foreign policy? Is that a challenge that is unique to the rules-based international order? Does it actually mean that the US is now engaging more in bilateral relationships or withdrawing its influence in the world in different ways?

Dr Schake: Fire away, Walter.

Professor Mead: All right. Thank you for the question. In my view, the Trump Administration, like all Administrations, is not just of one mind—there are a lot of people. There are many parts of the State Department that are set up under Congressional mandates with specific Congressional instructions, and they continue to do their work no matter who is in the White House. To think that all of American foreign policy is going to shift because of a change in the White House is just not how the system works. A lot of Presidents wish it did work that way, but it doesn't.

The Trump Administration clearly came to power on a wave of dissatisfaction with the status quo. I think for people in this country that is not a completely unfamiliar phenomenon. There are many parallels between the Brexit vote and the Trump victory in November.

Specifically, I think President Trump is speaking to one tradition in American foreign policy: the Jacksonian school. He has a portrait of Andrew Jackson hanging in the Oval Office. It was put there at Steve Bannon's suggestion, apparently. The idea is that Andrew Jackson was an America-first populist. He fired virtually every employee of the federal Government when he got into office. He didn't believe that there was a class of experts who could do these jobs; the common sense of the average American was good enough to carry out complex government policies. I think on one occasion virtually his entire Cabinet resigned in disgust. Before he could get his central bank policy imposed, he had to fire three Secretaries of the Treasury. It was a chaotic Administration and it was populist and unilateralist, which is not the same as isolationist.

The Jacksonian school does not believe that we are going to build a new world order. It does not believe that the world is moving towards an international community based on the rule of law. It is much more realist



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in its assumptions, more pessimistic about human nature, and generally takes the view that it is not our business if other countries are democratic or not democratic or if they worship one god, 50 gods or no gods—that is really not a problem for us as long as they don't attack the United States or its allies. If they do that, the Jacksonians believe in a kind of overwhelming response.

That sentiment sits uncomfortably with members of the foreign policy establishment, who tend to belong to more sedate schools of thought. Probably about 40% of the population, more or less, are consistently Jacksonian in their views. You can see it in statistics on the percentage of Americans who will tell pollsters that they favour torture, which is consistently a quite high percentage—and they use the word "torture", not "enhanced interrogation". You can see a lot of what the Trump Administration is doing is to play to that base.

Every President, whatever their school of thought, has to know that you cannot make foreign policy simply by mechanistically applying the tenets of a particular school to the international situation. Even the Trump Administration finds itself hymning the praises of human rights, particularly when Ambassador Haley is speaking at the United Nations, or when talking about the advantages of a rule-based trading order in certain circumstances. It will be a work in progress, and political reality will shape that. We are definitely hearing a voice in American foreign policy that has been subdued for some time, but now has really come to the fore.

Dr Schake: The best book ever written on American foreign policy was written by Walter, and it is called "Special Providence". It talks about the four different traditional strands in American foreign policy, such as Jacksonian and Hamiltonian. I agree with Walter that the Trump Administration falls squarely in a long-standing American tradition, but it is a tradition that has not been ascendant in the last 70 years.

The Trump Administration is a departure from American governance since the end of world war two, where the hard men who won that war wanted a wider margin of error than just letting the world take care of itself and thinking, "We don't care until we get attacked". Thus, institutions were constructed. Fundamentally, President Trump and the people whose advice he is most likely to take really do not believe in the elements of a rules-based international order. He does not believe that trade lifts all boats; he does not believe multilateralism is worth the time and effort it takes.

To answer your question, I think the approach is different; it tends towards more bilateral and transactional relationships. I can talk about four basic approaches that different leaders have been taking to harness the erratic nature of the Trump Administration. The first is Chancellor Merkel trying to play the long game and emphasising values, so she is keeping her distance from the Trump Administration and not provoking him, but also clearly defining the differences. That has been unsuccessful.



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The second approach was taken by Prime Minister May, Prime Minister Abe and President Macron: to hold hands with the President and hope that good personal relationships would translate into policy action. That, too, has not worked. An approach that looks to me to have worked is that of Prime Minister Netanyahu, which is to indulge and harness the President's most reckless and destructive impulses to Israel's advantage. That is a short-term game that has very high associated costs.

The other approach that looks to me to be working is that of Prime Minister Trudeau, which is to be pleasant and non-provocative to Washington, and to go around it—to rely on federalism, civil society and American businesses. The first country that will meet its Paris climate accord targets is the United States, despite the opposition of the federal Government, because the great golden state of California, the city of Chicago and Apple will all draw the country into compliance. Trudeau is the only one so far who has been smart enough to pool all the different strands of American society that the federal Government are not that important to.

Q184 Mike Gapes: Is the Administration yet able to point to any achievements because of this change of approach? Or is it purely destructive?

Dr Schake: The normative undercurrent in your question is that there are things the President would claim as achievements: pulling out of the Trans-Pacific Trade Partnership, forcing NATO allies into a bare-knuckled accountancy on defence spending and moving the embassy to Jerusalem. I suspect from the nature of your question that you would not count them as achievements. The challenge for the President's approach is that the approach he has taken to negotiating with our friends works well if you only have to play one round, but it does not work particularly well over time. I think that is the challenge. Walter, perhaps you have a different view.

Q185 Priti Patel: In the light of the four examples Dr Schake has just given, I am interested in what Britain should do. We have held hands, and we have the President coming here on 13 July. Obviously, he will be well hosted and well received, but it is not just about holding hands; it is about outcomes and, as we famously hear, the special relationship—the transatlantic partnership. What is the view right now in the White House on the UK? Do you have insights into what President Trump might be expecting, not so much out of the visit, but out of the relationship? Secondly, what do you think we should be doing, as a country and a Government, on that engagement?

Dr Schake: I feel like there is no country that understands the United States better than Britain, or that is smarter as a Government in finding the people who know how to make the American system work. I was struck, when I was in government, by how good the British diplomats were at finding people who did not have an important job title, but who had either the credibility or the lever in their hand that they could hit. I think you guys are quite well positioned to pull off the Trudeau strategy.



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Moreover, there is such broad cultural consonance between our two countries that I would play an outside-in strategy. I would not bank on delivering the President; I would try to encircle him with Americans who share Britain's interests. Walter, what would you do, as your strategy?

Professor Mead: I spent some time reading some of the materials you have been working on, on the future of British foreign policy and questions about what is meant by global Britain, and it strikes me that the biggest question in British foreign policy is not, "What is President Trump up to?", but, "What does Britain want?" My advice to you would be to try to figure that out, and your strategy toward Trump will obviously depend on that. If Britain has a short-term to-do list with the United States on trade, that can be negotiated. I imagine the Trump Administration thinks that Brexit will make Britain more of a demandeur in trade negotiations, and so they will want to get a good bargain.

On issues such as Iran, setting aside the merits of the Trump policy in the middle east, it is probably a mistake for Europe, or any European country, to think that it can change Trump's mind on something that is this fundamental not only to his worldview, but to his emerging international strategy. When the Trump people hear the Europeans say, "Oh, you're breaking with all your allies on the middle east," the Trump people would say back, "No, actually, our allies in the middle east love our new strategy—the Israelis, the Gulf Arabs and so on." What the Europeans want is for America to impose Europe's preferences on America's regional allies in the middle east, and that is just a no go. The question of how to approach Trump has to be framed by what you want from Trump and what you are prepared to give Trump.

Dr Schake: I also think several allies have banked too heavily on being able to have the support of the establishment parts of the Trump Administration—the Secretary of Defence, the former Secretary of State and the former National Security Advisor. What it looks to me that the President is doing is rightly believing that he got elected on things he campaigned on, and he wants people to stop telling him he can't do it. So he's clearing the decks and putting in place a team that most Europeans would find less congenial. The best way to understand what the President's going to do is through what he campaigned on doing.

Q186 **Priti Patel:** Obviously, we do have a close relationship with the United States and there is a range of reasons as to why we get on famously well, with all the links and ties that we have. Do you sense from the White House and those around the President that when Britain phones up and says, "On Iran, we don't really agree with you, we don't like it much. Iran is one thing, and then Paris", they care? Does our voice matter?

Dr Schake: I don't think any foreign voice matters particularly to the President. I think he's quite mercurial. One day the Chinese are our adversary; the next day we've got to find a way to help them keep jobs in China. I don't think you can get a consistent take.



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Professor Mead: It is worth thinking about how the President of the United States divides his time during the day. Forget the golf course moments. Even the hardest-working person has only—what, about 12 hours of potential high-quality attention and engagement on a consistent basis. What percentage of that is going to be domestic versus what percentage is going to be foreign? For President Trump, as for most American presidents, it is going to be at least a 70:30 division and maybe 90:10, and that's just the normal range of the job. That fraction of time and attention that is going towards international questions—how much of that is reserved for listening to the doubts of allies about things we have already decided? Again, I think that by the time one is trying to lobby an Administration to not do something that it clearly has either decided to do or very much wants to do, the train has already left the station. It would be better to be working on something—it would be a little more proactive.

Q187 **Chair:** Can I ask, if one is seeking to influence using multinationalism, using the UN, not to respond but to shape the debate before the decision is made, do people like Nikki Haley carry weight? Do they make a difference in the debate—does noise made in the UN and other international bodies, NATO or whatever, shape that debate or does that not work?

Professor Mead: Not too much, I think. The Washington world is pretty insular. You've been in government, you can say more; but everyone I know who has been in government talks about how you are just consumed by the fire hose of stuff coming to the inbox. So the idea that a resolution or debate in the General Assembly or even in the Security Council is going to have some tremendous weight is just not realistic. But I would say the same thing is true of other countries—countries' political decision makers are generally speaking acting within a fairly narrow range of alternatives and their perceptions and reactions are much more shaped by their domestic situation than by anything else.

Dr Schake: I think it is also true that there are lots of ways to affect America's debates without affecting the President. For example, there was a really terrific speech given at a school in Washington a couple of months ago on principled conservatism that had a big impact on how people think about playing a hand as conservatives at a time when the President is himself not principled. It shapes scholars' attitudes; it shapes congressional staffers' attitudes; it shapes congressmen's attitudes. I had Senator Sasse shake it at me, and articles in the newspaper—the American Government is so porous; it is so easy to hit bank shots. So, you can't necessarily shape the President but you can shape the debate in all sorts of ways that hem the President in.

Q188 **Mr Seely:** Can I come back to something you were saying earlier, which was absolutely fascinating? I particularly want to talk about the first answer, from both of you, which I thought set the scene well. You are dealing with sporadic engagement with overwhelming force as one option in the Jacksonian tradition, and continual engagement with consistent force, which is the argument that certainly the foreign policy establishment would say is better for this day and age. In a



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couple of sentences each, can you sum up the four traditions of American foreign policy, just so that we have them as a context through which to look at the Trump Administration?

Professor Mead: Let me do that one. The primary school—in some ways it is the easiest one, particularly for the Brits to understand—is what we call the Hamiltonian school. Alexander Hamilton, now famous in a Broadway musical but once famous as an architect of the American political system, looked around the world and said, “What’s the most successful state in the world? Why, it’s Great Britain. How do they run things? They seem to have a pretty close alliance between Government and large enterprises. They have a central bank, and so on. We should have these things.”

Hamiltonians tend to believe in the potential of a commercial world order to bring some kind of international stability based on free trade now; historically they were more protectionist because of concerns about the UK. They are realists in the sense that they tend not to be naive about human motivations, but they do think that greed can check pride and arrogance.

Wilsonians—in a British tradition one might say Gladstonians—believe in that same global order but want to see it erected on the foundation of human rights, law and democratic rule; that sort of thing. So Hamiltonians and Wilsonians often differ on specific policy questions, but both of them look to the construction of a rules-based international order as the natural endpoint of American foreign policy. Those are what we might call our globalist schools, and they have been more or less in the ascendance since the 1940s.

For the two rival alternative schools: one would be the Jeffersonian school, which said to Alexander Hamilton, “What? We’ve just fought a revolution against creeping British tyranny and you want to do the same thing here—are you mad? You say Britain is a very successful state, but 100 years of wars against France have created a huge national debt, which the aristocracy basically uses to ride herd on the common people. The King buys majorities in the House of Commons. The Walpole system, so on and so forth—we are not going to have that. To avoid that, keeping the Government small and limited, we have to do as much as possible to avoid foreign entanglements and especially wars.” So out of a concern for the purity of liberty, Jeffersonians would be more isolationist. Rand Paul is maybe a leading exponent of this school today.

The Jacksonian school again shares the Jeffersonian aversion to international world order. It is not a simple neutrality or conditional attitude to it; it is an active sense of threat: that an international order is an elite conspiracy. All the globalist elites from every country will get together to oppress the peasants of every country—

Q189 **Chair:** A Corbynista world view?

Professor Mead: The thing is, arguably in Anglo-American culture it really comes out of the reformation: “You say you are this international



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institution doing good things, but we know what kind of a pope Borgia was," and so on and so forth. And there is a conspiratorial sense of that, too—this elite is restlessly, secretly probing. You find it on the right and on the left.

Q190 **Mr Seely:** That is a fascinating answer. I presume—I am not trying to be flippant—that Donald Trump has not necessary intellectualised any of that, and he does things by gut feeling. But there are people around him, like John Bolton—whether you agree or disagree with him—who have a significant intellectual hinterland and see themselves in that tradition.

Professor Mead: First, it is important to understand that these things are not simply intellectual schools of thought; they are cultural currents. One can predict where Donald Trump's gut instincts are likely to lead him. Whether there is ratiocination or not is less relevant. Yes, Steve Bannon and some of the people in his trade world are clearly Jacksonian in many respects. I would argue that there is a little bit of a Hamiltonian in John Bolton, but he is very unilateralist. He leans towards American state power; he is more like Nelson at Copenhagen than Robert Peel.

Dr Schake: That is a very grand description for John Bolton.

Q191 **Ian Murray:** I like all the theoretical discussion, and wonder whether or not you'll write a book in 10 years' time on Trumponianism because you will create something different. Given what you have just said, I wonder how the Trump White House acts in an event of crisis such as Syria. We know what he is doing in Iran, but how does the White House react when another unspecified international crisis comes in, given that it is essentially non-interventionist along the Jacksonian model?

Dr Schake: I think the Jacksonian model is an extraordinarily good guide to the Trump Administration.

Chair: Order. Forgive me, I must suspend the sitting so that we can vote.

Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.

On resuming—

Chair: Thank you very much for waiting. I apologise to both of you. Given that you were mid-way through, Bob, do you want to continue?

Q192 **Mr Seely:** Yes. I am not trying to recontextualise the context. We were talking about the difference between Hamiltonian, which is effectively trade first; Wilsonian, which is values first; Jeffersonian, no foreign entanglement; and Jacksonian, which is averse to the international order, but when you act, you act with everyone in mind. These are the four traditions in US foreign policy and we were talking about where the Trump Administration engages with those cultural and philosophical trends.



Professor Mead: Could I give an example of the Jacksonian? One of the most interesting and for foreigners often most difficult to understand elements of American foreign policy politics is the link that we see between Jacksonians and Israel. Jacksonians tend to be rather nativist and introspective. If they have a religion it is generally going to be evangelical Christianity; it might be conservative Catholicism.

They see Israel through a number of lenses, but one of the things is that Israeli security policy looks to Jacksonians like what everyone should do. So if a couple of rockets come spinning over from Gaza and the Israelis then send the entire air force in to bomb in retaliation, many people around the world and many in the US would say, "Well wait a minute, it was wrong of Hamas to send the rockets over, but a disproportionate response is as bad". For Jacksonians, that is just not true. They think that if somebody starts something, then all the death that follows is on their shoulders. You see that when the Trump Administration said, "We blame Hamas for all the deaths in Gaza".

Q193 **Mr Seely:** Although it is a wonderful and fascinating philosophical debate, I am trying to steer it back to the Committee and US-UK relationships. The key element of that, if I understand it correctly, is that, for the first time in a very long time, we do not have an internationalist agenda, we have a twist on a very traditional American isolationist agenda, and foreign policy engagement may therefore be more sporadic. There is a philosophical desire to engage less in a consistent way, and to focus in a short-term way, maybe using considerable force, on specific items. That is what we who come from the tradition of continuing engagement now have to deal with. Is that correct?

Professor Mead: Yes, although, again, if you think about the Marshall plan, it would have been impossible without Jacksonian support. The Jacksonians bought into the institution building after world war two, not through a love of international order but a fear of communism.

Q194 **Mr Seely:** And to be honest, you could say that the 1930s was the last era in American politics of a Jacksonian foreign policy, because you had an isolationist agenda. That was then ruptured due to Pearl Harbour, but also lend-lease and that sort of thing as well.

Dr Schake: In answering that question about Trump in a crisis, I am not sure that he is strictly a Jacksonian. What I believe that I notice about the President, in his decisions on Syria and on several other things, is that he likes Jacksonian posturing but doesn't choose Jacksonian military responses.

Q195 **Mr Seely:** What do you mean by that?

Dr Schake: When given a choice of options on how to respond to the first—no, the 17th—instance of the Syrian Government's chemical weapons use, the first one that his Administration chose to respond to last year, he didn't choose an overwhelming response. He chose a response carefully designed to distinguish between Russian involvement, Iranian



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involvement and Syrian involvement. He chose the least possible military response, and likewise for the second retaliation.

I don't think his reflexes are strictly Jacksonian. In fact, I think a challenge for America's allies is that the President talks an awful lot tougher than he is willing to militarily deliver in a crisis. That gap could be really problematic.

Chair: This conversation can go on—I hope that it will ramble on, in many ways. Can I perhaps quickly come back to Ian, who was finishing off his question, or does yours follow straight on from this, Mike?

Q196 **Mike Gapes:** Mine follows on. I am interested in the comment that was made earlier when you referred to John Bolton. Would it be fair to say that John Bolton is a neo-con? How does that neo-con tradition—the Wolfowitz neo-con approach—fit into this model, given that Trump is appointing John Bolton? Why has he appointed someone like John Bolton? Is it because he can't find enough people who have experience, given the churn and all the sackings that there have been, of Tillerson and all the rest? Is it because he has not yet settled on his final position?

Dr Schake: I don't think of John Bolton as a neo-con. The neo-cons are a group of people who, as much as they believe that the United States should use its military and economic power to change the world, are also profoundly idealistic. They believe that our values are universal and they believe in spreading them. They believe that democracy is possible everywhere, and that our power should be used to unleash it. That is actually not John Bolton's set of views. He is much closer to the Jacksonian reflexes than to the neo-con.

Q197 **Mike Gapes:** Where would that position lead the people—Wolfowitz is the obvious example—who came ideologically out of somewhere near Chicago about 30 or 40 years ago? Where do they fit in?

Dr Schake: Outside the Trump Administration.

Professor Mead: That is where a lot of the Republican never-Trumpers are right now. They are a form of Wilsonian—they see a universal order. There is a problem in American politics, and perhaps conceptually, with the Wilsonian position. On the one hand it is about order and law, and on the other hand it is about rights and values. Then you get the problem of the UN Security Council, which is the supreme international institution, but where non-democratic and even anti-democratic states have the ability to cast blocking vetoes. When you want to defend democracy, as a Wilsonian do you say, "We must sacrifice democracy on the altar of institutions", or do you say, "We must sacrifice institutional order to save democracy"? Neo-cons are Wilsonians who sacrifice institutions. Liberal internationalists tend to be more in favour of upholding institutions, even at some cost to a democracy agenda. It is a problem within Wilsonianism, since it is a problem of world history.

Q198 **Ian Murray:** You have partially answered my question, but how does



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all that fit into North Korea, for example? We had all the powerful rhetoric about “I have the red button on my desk” and so on. Has Trump just been lucky in this case, in that things have moved on, or did he deliberately have that hard posture to try to extract what, on the face of it, looks like some kind of result?

Dr Schake: I think the President believes the latter, and that a policy of maximum pressure brought North Korea to the negotiating table in a way that it had never come to it before. Other interpretations of what is happening, inconsistent with that—such as that the President of the United States gave a no-preconditions summit that gives North Korea the status as a nuclear weapons state that it has been seeking—cause enormous concern among America’s allies in Asia and beyond. The President clearly thinks that all the pressure caused what happened in North Korea, but it seems to me more likely that the risk of war associated with President Trump’s policy made the South Koreans so desperate and fearful that war was going to be the result that they made a series of compromises, and persuaded the President to make a series of compromises, to get them out of that box, which I hope works.

Professor Mead: I think Kori is right about some of this. I also think that the Trump presidency—the Trump Administration—looks and sees three anti-America powers out there: China, Russia and Iran, each of which, in different ways, is looking to change or revise the geopolitical order. The Trump Administration sees that in geopolitical terms more than ideological terms, as a more Wilsonian Administration might do. You have seen him trying to court Russia, as many American Presidents have done. Russia seems like the country that would be easiest to win over because the clash of interests looks less—in the long run Russia has to worry about China and Islamic extremism, and so we should be able to work something out somehow. Bush, Obama and Trump all did that. It doesn’t work; it is more complicated than that.

Then you see Trump looking at China, North Korea and Iran. He is not crazy enough as a political operator who is sensitive to public opinion. Trump may not have read a lot of books, but he has a nose for public opinion. He knows that the American people are not excited about crises all over. I think what he may have done is, without asking too many questions, to come to the conclusion that Iran is the one to focus on. North Korea is the harder case, so put that one on the shelf in some way in order to focus on Iran. It looks to me as if a number of foreign policy decisions are being made around that idea.

Dr Schake: I feel like Walter is giving a much better rendering of the President’s sorting criteria than the President is giving himself. I think it’s a lot more random and a lot more subject to reversal.

Professor Mead: I would not disagree that some are subject to reversal, but I would also say that I think there are some very smart people around the President, who would accept the analysis that I have given as their read of what they are hoping they are selling him. It is not simply a random walk.



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Q199 Priti Patel: I think this is a really interesting discussion. You both just highlighted a range of points that are of great interest to us. Professor Mead, you have already said that the President has a great nose for public opinion and is very sensitive to public opinion. He is clearly focused on his domestic agenda. How much do you think the domestic side influences, dare I say it, how tough he wants to look with some regimes in the world? Secondly, how do his foreign policy choices and decisions play domestically?

Professor Mead: Israel is a great example of a foreign policy question that unites the Republican party and Trump's constituency, which are not entirely the same thing. From Trump's perspective, a strong pro-Israel stand checks every box. He is more of a theatrical producer than a world conqueror. If you think about the theatre of American policy, when Reagan sent marines into Lebanon and a bomb went off in the barracks, killing several hundred marines, Reagan did not respond by sending an expeditionary force into Lebanon, but neither did he just sit there. He invaded Grenada. He asserted American power in a way that was low-risk, but high visibility.

Mike Gapes: Against the British monarchy.

Professor Mead: I am not saying that we have learned nothing as your pupils and students. The Greeks did teach the Romans a thing or two.

Dr Schake: My sense is that both President Trump and President Obama before him were rightly tapping in to a sense of weariness on the part of the American public, which had expected the end of the cold war to be easier, less complicated, less difficult and less costly. They expected a lot more help from a lot more quarters than we got. They are retrenching presidencies in both ways. President Obama did it by leading from behind. President Trump is doing it by loudly clashing cymbals together, while he walks back from where we were. If you look at the reaction to the recent elections in Iraq, first of all, we were not diplomatically engaged to prevent a boycott of the elections by the most progressive and democratic forces in Iraq, but we are also doing nothing now that the Sadrists will hold the balance and Iran's influence is growing. So there is a lot of noise as they walk back away from the kinds of engagement that had characterised American foreign policy before the Obama administration.

Q200 Priti Patel: Israel aside—the Israel issue is big, particularly this week—do issues about Syria and Russia cut through at all domestically? Is there any sense of what the American public think about the President's handling of the expulsions and sanctions? Those are big steps, particularly with Russia. The rest of us are still trying to catch air and move forward ourselves.

Dr Schake: Russia is one of the most confusing places. So many conservatives have swung into line with the President's belief: "We can find a way to deal with the Russians. Don't pay any attention to the election." There is a lot movement on that. Walter's framework of thinking about American foreign policy might give a better answer than I could,



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looking at the policies. On Syria, I think there is a general belief that there are no good guys in this equation, and that it is way too complicated for us to have a good answer. Unless you have a policy that leads with caring for the victims, I don't think it's sustainable right now.

Q201 Royston Smith: I couldn't disagree with anything that you have said; in fact, we are sitting in awe of the information you are giving us. But here's a question that perhaps you can't answer. I am going to ask you to predict what the President would do.

From our Government's point of view and our country's point of view, we know that we have a special relationship in defence, and we probably always will. To define what the special relationship is and how that will serve us going forward, from the sound of it, we first need to work out what we want, as you said, Professor Mead. You may not be alone in thinking that perhaps we have not done that very well yet.

If we can predict what the Trump Administration will do or will become—potentially two terms of a Trump Administration, in that he is still populist—what do think you may be able to predict that might be helpful for the Government going forward, if they want to get close to the Trump Administration?

Professor Mead: Try to figure out what Trump wants and what you want, and where those interests lie together. Where does his agenda match a British agenda? When they don't match up, what are things you are willing to swap? Be ready to enter into a more transactional negotiating process on some things.

Think out of the box. It is clear that what Trump is trying to do, say, on North Korea—whether it is wise or not is another matter—is that with China he wants to put trade and North Korea together. He thinks that by lumping security and economic issues, he can attract China with the idea of a grand bargain, and swap concessions back and forth. He likes to bargain.

It is not just a Trump question; it is a world politics question. If you look at people like Modi, Erdogan, Putin and, in his way, Macron—it is not simply a democratic-undemocratic thing—or Xi, there is a tendency towards a much more personalised engagement. So heads of state are less chief bureaucrats of officers but big personalities who have relations with each other, horse trade, try to gain dominance, those sorts of things.

You could, if you wanted to be cynical, think of this as the five families of New York—you are in a "Godfather" movie, where you are saying, "I'm sorry about the mercenaries in Syria, Mr Putin, but it was business, not personal." It is a different way of doing international relations but, again, it is not just with the US and not just with Trump. That is going to be hard because, particularly in Europe but generally after the 1940s, there has been a tendency to bureaucratised politics.

Q202 Chair: It is hard in a parliamentary system as well.



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Dr Schake: I think Prime Minister May starts off in a weak position, because the President has a difficult time dealing with women as peers. I think she and Angela Merkel have a more complicated national policy agenda to advance because of that.

The fact that President Trump does not play team sports does not mean that you can't play team sports against him. I think the shrewdness with which the May Government has suggested that global Britain might join the Trans-Pacific Trade Partnership, or that global Britain might join NAFTA, is a really smart way to play the Trump Administration.

Because of the President's transactional—almost primordial—and reflexive way of dealing with power and weakness, you can play easily to advantage. Delivering commonality with the Canadians, the Australians, the New Zealanders, the Japanese and the Mexicans would make a bilateral trade deal between Britain and America, in which you go in with your hands tied because you are part of TPP. That is actually a terrific way to use team sports to the Trump Administration's disadvantage.

Professor Mead: That logic would have led to a different result in the EU referendum. Britain has taken a decision to approach the rest of the world more on the basis of a single nation state. I think Kori is right that that is not the best position to be in, and one has to think about alternatives. You had a very good one, and 52% of you were not happy with it. It is tough, but I would say it is a question of priorities.

The President of the United States is a combination of Prime Minister and Queen. Bad Presidents think that if they succeed as Prime Minister, it will improve their standing as Queen. Good Presidents understand that, no, you get the Queen thing right and the other stuff will follow. That was Reagan: an excellent Queen, but a terrible Thatcher. That is Trump—Trump is much more Queen than Prime Minister.

One of the things to think about is that he may value things that help him in his role as Queen that a Prime Minister would think were of less importance.

Q203 **Chair:** Are you saying that somebody who made their name as a reality TV star may be more interested in reality TV?

Professor Mead: Precisely so. I think this offers interesting opportunities. The fact that there is a big embassy ceremony in Jerusalem made it easier to sell a line of policy to a President who wants photo moments. One of the things that Britain produces really well is political theatre.

Dr Schake: That's fine—give him the gold carriage.

Q204 **Mr Seely:** Are you saying that one of the ways to influence him is through flattery and symbolism? It seems to me to be a pretty important point. We are dealing with a man who is not bookish.



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Professor Mead: He is a man who sees his political career as tied to theatrical performance. He will feel assistance to the theatre of policy as a more substantial contribution than some might say.

Dr Schake: I would just caution that both Prime Minister Abe and President Macron delivered enormous spectacle and political theatre on behalf of the President, and it had zero policy effect.

Q205 **Mike Gapes:** Can I take you back to some of the policy choices that have to be taken? You have touched on Syria. Given the focus on Iran and the clear decision, regardless of the consequences, to tear up the JCPOA, walk away from it, is that driven by a strategic view that the Sunni Arab states, Saudi Arabia and GCC countries are the US's reliable allies and we need to get them on board and therefore they are unhappy about this deal, and so is Israel? Or, is it driven by, "This was a deal done by Obama and, just as with climate change and health care, I am going to get rid of all the things he did because it is my presidency and I am going to do what I want"?

Professor Mead: Why does it have to be either/or?

Q206 **Mike Gapes:** I am interested to know what is driving it, because clearly, if it is just the Obama legacy, it is probably easier then to get into better positions on some areas in the future, whereas if it is driven by a strategic view of the world, that is going to cause some complications—considerable ones—in getting any solutions to some of complex issues in the Middle East.

Dr Schake: I am with Walter: I don't think there is clarity in the way you are looking for clarity.

Mike Gapes: That is my problem, yes!

Dr Schake: I would add that a lot of people oppose the deal on its merits; a lot of people oppose the deal on the basis that if the President is going to make an international agreement, he needs congressional approval of it. A lot of people worry that he made a deal both substantively and procedurally isolating the countries we ought to be most worried about. There is an avalanche of reasons for why the people in the Administration are where they are on the Iran deal.

Professor Mead: There is more room for workarounds on climate issues than for workarounds on Iran.

Q207 **Mike Gapes:** Because the Californians and the rest of them—

Professor Mead: But also, the President—there are a lot of things that make sense from a climate point of view that don't necessarily look like you are signing up for a whole global treaty and so on. It might be possible to reach out very cleverly and effectively for some things. On Iran, I think that is linked to a strategic vision that rightly or wrongly is going to shape a lot of Administration thinking.

Q208 **Mike Gapes:** How does that impact on NATO, given that within NATO



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there is Turkey? We have President Erdoğan on an official visit here at the moment.

Professor Mead: Lucky you.

Mike Gapes: Turkey-US relations are clearly very difficult at the moment. The Turks are buying the S-400s from the Russians—

Chair: Or may not be.

Mike Gapes: Yes, but clearly that is a major question. Also, there is Fethullah Gülen in Pennsylvania. There is really quite a bad vibe between the United States and Turkey on a lot of issues.

Dr Schake: Let's not leave out their taking American citizens prisoner.

Mike Gapes: Exactly—the pastor. Yes, I understand that. I am not defending the Turkish Government—

Dr Schake: I didn't think you were.

Q209 **Mike Gapes:** I am just trying to explain the problems here. Is the relationship with Turkey seen as an important one, or is this Administration basically not interested in Turkey? Turkey is taking 3.5 million refugees and potentially has a major role, for good or ill, in regard to Syria.

Professor Mead: It is interesting that one of Secretary Pompeo's first trips was to Turkey and that, after his meetings, there was a sense that the crisis in relations was easing. The Trump Administration seems to be willing to give some ground in terms of Kurdish aspirations in Syria.

Q210 **Mike Gapes:** You mean sell out the Kurds.

Dr Schake: We have already done that, so we might as well give up their aspirations.

Professor Mead: There is a long history of this. That seems to be easing it. If you look at the world from a Turkish point of view, this is not a good time. You have Iran running—from a Turkish perspective—rampant in the middle east. Somebody told me—I haven't actually fact-checked this myself, but it sounds really good—that Russia and the Ottomans fought 14 wars; Russia started all 14 and won all 14.

Mike Gapes: All but one, I think.

Professor Mead: Okay. Well, that's—

Dr Schake: Thirteen-one is a pretty good record.

Professor Mead: This has to be haunting Erdoğan. There is a sense of being cut loose and adrift, with the Americans also clearly arming the PKK. That is from a Turkish perspective. I think what it means is that if you take the irritant of the PKK-aligned Kurdish advance beyond the Euphrates out



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of the picture, there is probably more basis for US-Turkish security relations to be reasonably good than one might expect.

Dr Schake: I would add three quick points. First, I think what got Mike Flynn into legal jeopardy was actually consistent with the President's desire to overrule the FBI on the extradition of Fethullah Gülen. The FBI has on several occasions asked the Turkish Government for evidence of his involvement in the coup and it has never been satisfied by what the Turkish Government have offered. I think the Trump Administration are frustrated that they cannot just trade this guy and get it over with, but they can't.

There is a second thing that I think is aggravating in the relationship, and I honestly do not understand this one, given that the American Government do not actually care what the outcome in Syria is as long as ISIS is not part of the solution. I am astonished that in the last seven years we have never found a way to compromise with the Turks over the future of Syria, because that would be a terrific way to patch up the relationship. We obviously do not care enough about Kurdish aspirations to have supported their independence bid in Iraq and elsewhere. So that seems to me trade space. I am surprised they have not taken it up. Maybe that is what Mike Pompeo is headed towards.

The third piece is that the Turkish Government are much more likely to be aligned with the Qataris, the Iranians and the Russians than with us. There is a series of choices about the dispute between the GCC countries and about our unwillingness to give the Turks a pass on a lot of the domestic repression that's going on. You can see an alignment emerging that is Russia, Turkey, Qatar and Iran. Several disparate policy choices are pushing in that direction, so I think you are right to be worried.

Chair: Forgive me. Time is running on. Can I ask for two final questions? Ian will have one and then we will come to the last one.

Q211 **Ian Murray:** This feeds into the seriousness of foreign policy and the Trump Administration. How important or otherwise do you think the President's use of Twitter is in terms of his foreign policy? It is easy to dismiss, but 140 or 280 characters—I am not sure how many are allowed—seems to drive a lot of his foreign policy in terms of the public-facing sector.

Professor Mead: I would take the Twitter as direct expressions of the President, but remember that the President is a salesman and a showman, so he will not necessarily be trying to tell you what he really thinks when he tweets. I would take his tweets with a grain of salt, not because they are not important, but because—this is very important about this President—unlike his predecessors, who generally believed that you did not want there to be any confusion over American policy or presidential intentions, this President sees creating uncertainty in the minds of others as an advantage and as a bargaining technique. So the tweets are real, but the intention is not always to reveal the truth.

Dr Schake expressed assent.

Q212 **Chair:** We have a final question. We have spoken about it a lot and I must say I have been hugely grateful for your time this afternoon. I could not have asked for better explanations about the United States at this difficult time.

We speak a lot about the special relationship here, and in Washington we heard a lot about it. What is the special relationship if you exclude defence and intelligence?

Dr Schake: That is a fantastic question. I think it is a set of reflexes that are hardwired into both societies about what the world looks like and what a successful strategy for engaging it is. Walter, your book, "God and Gold", lays this out better than anything else does, so I cede you the rest of my time, other than thanking the Committee for the privilege of being here.

Professor Mead: I would recommend, once you finish "Special Providence", go on and read "God and Gold". The special relationship is very complicated. I think that for many people in this country it is a little frustrating that one cannot always turn it into a specific policy outcome on a specific issue, and then the tendency is to say, "Well, what good is it?"

Chair: We don't get a better trade deal—

Professor Mead: Exactly. Blair goes to war in Iraq and he does not even get a good deal on steel. What the heck? Why are we doing this?

Q213 **Chair:** On the day we went to war in Iraq, the Department of Commerce put extra sanctions on beef—the same day.

Professor Mead: It is never more important than in time of war to have good nutrition.

Dr Schake: You are talking to a soldier—he marches on his stomach.

Professor Mead: The best way I know to talk about this is to say that my first visit to Parliament was in 1964, when I was 12 years old. My father was serving as the rector of Esher at the time, and he somehow managed to wrangle tickets to the Strangers Gallery for the two of us. We went up there and sat, and as a normal 12 year-old would be, I was rather bored by what was going on. But this old man came in, sat down on the Back Bench and went to sleep. People applauded when he came in; it was Winston Churchill. As a 12-year-old American I knew that this was something astounding. Later I went back and looked, and this appears to have been one of the last three times he was in the House. That meant something to me, to my father and to many people who've heard the story. When I tell this story to my students, they are kind of awed—something that doesn't happen often enough to professors, I must say, and they have to be very young students for it to really work. But there is something in this connection that is not quantifiable or reducible to specific policy outcomes.



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The Armenians have a thing that they say: they were the first country to convert to Christianity, and so when two people are praying to God, he listens to the Armenian first. There is something to be said that Britain has a voice in American thinking and American culture that no other place on earth does.

Q214 Chair: Can I ask my supplementary? If the outcome of the election process had been different and Senator Rubio had won, with the changing demographics in the United States, the rise of the Hispanic population—is this relationship going to change?

Dr Schake: I actually love that question, and my answer to it is no. Because one of the things I noticed when I was in government—

Chair: Senator Rubio came here three times, by the way, when he was campaigning.

Dr Schake: The notion that demographics drive the special relationship is not right. I noticed, in my time in government—I was the poor taxpayer who had to manage the politics of the countries that had troops fighting in Iraq or Afghanistan. Of 56 different countries, only one of those countries would ever actually show up to talk to the United States about solutions you were setting in motion that were going to be helpful to us. Everybody else came to the American Government to say, “Here’s what you’re doing wrong, here’s what you need to do for us”.

There is something about the practicality of the British Government and the American Government—about the problem-solving abilities of both societies, the build a better mousetrap approach to how you do things—that is different from our relationship with everybody else. The Canadians can mimic a little of it; the Australians can mimic a little of it. There is a fundamental operating system of Britain and the United States about governance—the sense of accountability to your publics, the belief that government works for the people. The way that gets expressed is—well, the example of Tony Blair on September 11th, “Here are all the things we are setting in motion and why they are going to be helpful to you.” Nobody else had that reflex; lots of other countries had an enormous amount of sympathy for what was happening, and made symbolic gestures, but what Britain did is make international institutions useful to the United States at a time when we were too shaken to do it for ourselves. That’s what the special relationship gives, and I hope we give back a little bit of it to you as well.

Chair: Can I say thank you enormously to both of you? This has been the most fascinating session and an enormous privilege to have you both here. Thank you.