

[My intervention to the Minister in the Lords Amendments debate for the Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Bill](#)

Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP (Wokingham) (Con): Will the Minister confirm that, if we dismiss Lords amendment 1 today, the courts will not have a role in fixing the dates for elections, because, surely, that is matter for us, answerable to the electors?

Michael Ellis, Paymaster General, Minister of State, Cabinet Office: My right hon. Friend is quite right that it is not productive, and, in fact, it would not be in the interests of the judiciary themselves, for the courts to have such a role.

We committed to repealing the Fixed-term Parliaments Act, as it had led to paralysis at a time when the country needed decisive action. In a similar vein, the Labour manifesto said that the 2011 Act

“stifled democracy and propped up weak governments.”

A vote in the Commons could create paralysis in a number of contexts, including minority Governments, coalition Governments, or where our parties, Parliament or even the nation, at some point in the future, were divided.

As a majority on the Joint Committee on the Fixed-term Parliaments Act noted, a Commons vote would have a practical effect only where Parliament were gridlocked. The problem is that if the Government of the day had a comfortable majority, a vote would be unlikely to make any difference; it would have no meaningful effect, beyond causing unnecessary delay and expense. However, when Parliament is gridlocked, a vote could mean denying an election to a Government who were unable to function effectively. We witnessed the consequences of such a vote painfully in 2019, so let us not repeat that mistake by devising a system where those events could happen again. Lords amendment 1 is, therefore, with the greatest possible respect, without merit.

[My intervention regarding the Government's newly launched 'Homes for](#)

Ukraine' scheme

Rt Hon Sir John Redwood MP (Wokingham) (Con): With a three-year visa but only six months of guaranteed accommodation, will people have any tenant rights? What is the back-up provision if the sponsor wants to terminate well before the end of the visa?

Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Minister for Intergovernmental Relations: It is our expectation that those who commit to have someone in their home for six months are undertaking quite a significant commitment, but it is already the case that the expressions of interest suggest that there are many people who want to do exactly that. The experience of previous sponsorship schemes has been that those who have undertaken such a commitment have found it a wonderful thing to have done, and the number of those who have dropped out or opted out has been small. However, it is the case—my right hon. Friend is absolutely right—that there may be occasions where relationships break down, and in those circumstances we will be mobilising the support of not only of central Government and local government, but of civil society, to ensure that individuals who are here can move on. The final thing I would want to say is that many of those on the frontline coming here will of course be women and children, but many of those coming here will want to work, to contribute and to be fully part of society. It is the case already that we have had offers from those in the private sector willing to provide training and jobs to people so that they can fully integrate into society for as long as they are here.

Discussing my latest book, Build Back Green: The Electrifying Shock of the Green Revolution

I recently had a discussion with Mark Littlewood from the Institute of Economic Affairs about my latest book, Build Back Green: The Electrifying Shock of the Green Revolution. You can watch it here:

What does national resilience look

Like?

The government now says it does wish the UK to be more self reliant. One obvious area to start with is energy, the centre of the current cost of living and international crisis.

The government wishes to move to a net zero future. They need to understand that for the next few years most people will need gas for their home heating boilers, most energy using industry will still need gas for ceramics and steel, bricks and cement. Most cars, trucks and vans will still need petrol or diesel. The electric revolution will be more widespread next decade, not this.

That is why the UK government now needs to call in the oil and gas industry in the UK and encourage it to fill the gap of the next few years with more UK produced gas and oil. The Business Secretary implied he would do so. So when will he make the announcements that policy needs? We do not need more studies or White Papers. The need is urgent. He and his officials need to give licences to explore and to produce more from all the known deposits and fields. The Treasury needs to consider if the tax regime is sending the right signals, as it will be a big winner from more domestic production. Producing UK oil and gas already incurs Corporation tax at double the standard rate.

For its wider goal of decarbonising the government needs to make more rapid progress with small nuclear reactors, to conclude if this is feasible and economic and if so pump prime a development and production programme to make them a next decade reality. It needs to see which combination of technologies could back its extension of windfarms so that they can keep the lights on when the wind does not blow or blows too much. They need to decide on the balance of green hydrogen production, battery storage and pump storage as the main means of storing wind energy when it is available and using it when the wind is on strike. Affordability matters when they make their choices. You cannot rely on more wind farms alone as there are too many hours when there is no wind or when you have to switch off the turbines because the wind is too strong. All the energy they produce on windy nights needs to be stored for use on calm days.

How can the Ukraine war end?

Let me make clear I strongly oppose the brutal Russian invasion and their resort to medieval sieges with modern bombs and artillery raining down on civilians and defenders. I do not post here the few submissions I get which slavishly follow Russian propaganda denying atrocities or blaming others for the deaths and destruction we can see from reputable media sources.

I also strongly support NATO policy to take every precaution to avoid this becoming a NATO/Russian war. Whilst NATO would overwhelm Russia there could be much larger loss of life and destruction in Ukraine and the conflict would be widened by Russia into NATO countries before they lost. NATO's aim should be to encourage settlement between the parties whilst helping Ukraine resist Russia's unprovoked aggression.

The U.K. as a leading member of NATO needs to stick with NATO policy. In the end like all wars there has to be a truce and preferably a peace settlement which can only come from talking. The U.K. will not play an important role in that as it falls to Russia and Ukraine as the combatants to decide what compromises they will make to end the fighting. It may take a neutral intermediary like Israel to help them.

Russia seems to want to gain legal title to Crimea and the bits of Donbas it already influenced. It wants to add a land corridor from Russia to Crimea. It wants Ukraine to pledge it will not join either the EU or NATO. Maybe it still wants a change of Ukrainian government. It does not look as if Russia can either easily conquer the whole country or govern significant parts of it by military occupation now it has united most Ukrainians outside Crimea and Donbas against it. Maybe Russia still thinks it can get unconditional surrender by starving and bombing people out of cities, but it still leaves it with too few troops there to keep down a population of more than 40 million.

Ukraine wants the Russian army to exit and wants to restore democratic government to the whole country. These positions are so far apart because Russia still looks as if she thinks she can at greater cost in lives and destruction claim more territory and the Ukrainians have growing confidence they can make further conquest difficult for the Russians.

There will only be a truce or peace if Russia gives up many of her imperial ambitions and if Ukraine offers Russia some way of climbing down that Putin can accept. Unpleasant though that is to the Ukraine side a lot of lives rest on it. It looks to an outside observer who does not have to do any fighting as if Ukraine will not be able to join the EU or NATO any time soon. It looks as if Crimea would in a free vote vote to be Russian. Maybe these are building blocks for a ceasefire. The EU and US involvement in removing an elected President of Ukraine in 2014 for being anti closer links with the EU triggered military responses from Russia which have just got a lot worse. Whilst President Macron seeks a ceasefire the EU issues a Council statement about Ukraine's European EU future.