Members present:

Lord Howell of Guildford (The Chairman)
Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top
Lord Foulkes of Cumnock
Baroness Goudie
Baroness Hussein-Ece
Lord Janvrin
Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne
Lord Ramsbotham

Examination of Witnesses

Sir Antony Acland, former head of the UK Diplomatic Service and Ambassador to Washington, Lord Hannay of Chiswick, former UK Permanent Representative to the EEC and the UN, and Lord Jay of Ewelme, former head of the UK Diplomatic Service and Ambassador to Paris

Q292 The Chairman: Gentlemen, first of all thank you very much for agreeing to come before us and share some of your thoughts with us. The remit of the Committee is soft power and British overseas influence, which of course covers a multitude of thoughts. I should formally say that, in front you, you should have a list of the interests that have been declared by the Committee, which is I hope of help to you. I am afraid that if there is a Division, we have to break for five minutes. We cannot avoid that. Again, thank you for coming.

Let me begin by saying that you have all been at the centre—the very heart—of British diplomacy over a considerable number of years. We have had witness after witness and paper after paper asserting that in some way there has been a step change in the nature of diplomacy. It has spread out, and the interface is not just between traditional diplomats, heads of government, and high officials. If we are to secure our interests and persuade people of the line we are taking nationally, it now involves a much wider degree of public diplomacy.

I suppose, in the language of the BBC, I ought to start by asking, “True or False?”. Have things changed or not? Sir Antony, I am going to start with you, because I think you stretched ceterah over a longer period than anyone else in this room. You have been at the very head of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office over the years and have watched things change. Do you think this has happened, or is it really just the old story rewritten?

Sir Antony Acland: I am sure it has happened. If one thinks of the past a little, in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, diplomacy was really conducted entirely on an intergovernmental level. It was conducted by diplomats. The interest was the balance of power in Europe, or the balance of power with the Ottoman Empire. I am sure that all that has completely changed. The business of diplomacy and the business of embassies have broadened enormously. This is partly the result of various reports into the Foreign Office, such as the Duncan report, which quite rightly said that we had to pay much more attention to trade.
However, it is not only trade. When I was in Washington, there were representatives of every single activity coming through. Obviously, Ministers and civil servants, but also doctors and scientists and religious leaders and journalists, and anaesthetists—anaesthesiologists, as the Americans call them. All these groups came to the embassy, partly to make contact, partly to be briefed, and partly to be put in touch with their opposite numbers. Then they went off into the States of the Union to pursue their particular interests. As I described it, if you twisted all these different strands of activity into one large cable, it was a very significant cable across the Atlantic joining Britain and the United States of America. Through that cable was presented every form of activity that Britain was involved in, thereby giving the Americans a feeling of what we stood for and an image of Britain. I think that is very important, and that is what diplomacy is much more about nowadays.

**The Chairman:** Do you think the information revolution has thickened the cable even more? Schools are talking to schools, universities to universities, doctors to doctors, and professions to professions electronically and not necessarily through embassies. Do you think that has changed things?

**Sir Antony Acland:** Yes, I think it has to a certain amount. It has certainly speeded up communications tremendously. I suppose you can put things through the cable more quickly electronically. Yes, I think that is a big change in the way the Foreign Office operates. When I was there, we still had incoming and outgoing ciphered telegrams. It is now electronic messages. It means that diplomacy has to act more quickly. There are always journalists who are ahead of the news, who sometimes complicate things. However, yes, I think that is another very big change that has happened.

**The Chairman:** Lord Jay, you have more recently been at the head of the Foreign Office. How do you react to those questions?

**Lord Jay of Ewelme:** I agree with what Antony has said. There has been a step change. One thing I would like to emphasis is, as Antony has spoken about, the range of people and interests that visit embassies. Embassies themselves are far more aware than the Foreign Office ever is of exactly what that range of activities can be. In some ways it is the embassy that can draw together all the various actors in public diplomacy in a way the Foreign Office never can, because it inevitably only sees a part of it in London.

It is one of the things that certainly struck me when I was in Paris. You had every government department represented there, as well as getting everybody coming in. You were a sort of mini-Whitehall; many embassies are mini-Whitehalls. The amount of pure Foreign Office work that an ambassador does these days can be 10% or 20% sometimes in some parts of the world. That is a real change. From time to time, I have seen that in evidence given to your Committee, people have talked about the FCO. There does need to be a real distinction between the FCO in London and what its relations are with other government departments in London, and the role of embassies and high commissions abroad. These embassies see the totality of British interests in a particular country in the way that the Foreign Office itself probably never can.

**Q293 The Chairman:** That is a very interesting distinction and certainly accords with what we have heard from other witnesses. Lord Hannay, you have been particularly involved during your long career with the international institutions, along with other things. How does it strike you, this claim that there is a new scene—a new characteristic in diplomacy?
Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Well, I think it is true, as my two predecessors speaking have said, that things have changed a huge amount. There has been an enormous widening of the subject matter that you deal with. A huge range of issues such as climate change or nuclear non-proliferation, which probably were not much dealt with by embassies prior to 40 or 50 years ago, have increasingly to be dealt with. They have to be dealt with within an international framework that is much more rules-based than it has ever been before in the history of the world. Therefore, the interface between bilateral and multilateral diplomacy—how to get the country in which you are an ambassador to take a helpful line at an international organisation where Britain has an interest in pushing something forward—has grown very greatly.

However, I would say a word of caution about this business of a communications revolution, internet, et cetera. The fact is there is not a single pattern in every country in the world. Every ambassador still has to work out how the foreign policy of the country he is in is formulated, who influences it, and how he can influence them. That will be completely different from country to country. In autocracies it may be a tight-knit, narrow little body. In other countries, particularly democracies, it may have widened out hugely and involve a lot of the electronic media and so on. However, the idea that there is somehow one single approach to this is wrong.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock: Lord Hannay, you just said “he” when you referred to ambassadors. With no disrespect, you are all Oxford graduates. Two of you are Wykehamists and one is an old Etonian. You are white and you are male. Robin Cook, when he was Foreign Secretary, made a big effort to try to broaden the scope of our ambassadors abroad: more women, more people from comprehensive schools, multiracial, and maybe even a few from redbrick universities. How has that succeeded? What are the changes? Has that happened, and do we have a different kind of ambassador than just a male Oxford graduate?

Lord Jay of Ewelme: Perhaps I can have a go at that, as I was Permanent Under-Secretary at the time. You put your finger on something that is hugely important, because the Foreign Office’s, or the country’s, public diplomacy is only going to be successful if what it is trying to say is what it does. If what it does is just us, it is not going to succeed. Now, I think the Foreign Office has made huge efforts over the last 10 years or so and is continuing to do so. If you now want to get a work placement in the Foreign Office, there are, quite rightly in my view, special schemes for women and ethnic minorities. If you were like David or Antony or me, you would not have much of a chance. This is a real conscious effort to try to widen the intake into the Foreign Office. I think it is happening more than it did in the past. There are conscious efforts to try to ensure that it does happen. It has not yet gone far enough.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: However, this can be exaggerated. I would refer to the period from 1990 to 1995 when I was at the UN. Even then, half my councilors—that was one step down from me—were women. The Foreign Office had been recruiting a lot of women for many years and many of them have risen very high. In Brussels, where only half my staff came from the Foreign Office, and the other half, or slightly more than half, came from other government departments, there was a wide spread of women. That was the case even in 1985 to 1990. It has of course moved further, and ought to. However, it started from a higher base than some people give credit for.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock: We have had a female Permanent Secretary in other departments. Have we had one in the Foreign Office yet?
Sir Antony Acland: No, not yet. However, as Lord Janvrin will remember, if you look in the Daily Telegraph or the Times nowadays, the majority of those who go to the Palace on appointment as ambassadors to kiss hands, which you do not actually do, are women. Very rightly, it is women with their partners. When I first joined the Foreign Office, if you got divorced, you had to offer your resignation. In all these respects, socially and as regards the sex of the ambassador, there has quite rightly been a very big change. I would think now a third of ambassadors abroad are women. Do you think so Michael?

Lord Jay of Ewelme: I do not know the figure.

Sir Antony Acland: It is getting up to that amount, I would have thought.

Q294 Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne: I return to Lord Jay’s point about the necessity, as he perceives it, of a decision being made maybe by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as to the lines of command. This is given that the British embassies on the ground now have such a multifaceted bunch of ministries under them in situ. Could I ask how he sees that such a decision could be made, and is this different in actuality from 30, 40 or 50 years ago? If it is different, is that because of differing budgetary allocations to ministries here, or shifts of power and size of ministries? What is it that has made the change, if there has been a change? If there has not been a change, how did ambassadors manage previously?

Lord Jay of Ewelme: There has been a change. The nature of foreign policy has changed a lot. Issues such as immigration, for example, are of major importance in much of the world. Education is a matter of foreign policy in much of the world. Probably 50, even 20 years ago, if you were an ambassador, you were dealing mainly through the Foreign Office, and it was the Foreign Office’s job to pass things to other government departments. Your staff and you yourself as an ambassador are now in touch regularly with the senior officials and with Ministers of pretty well every government department. That is what an ambassador does. I was in touch with Ministers from other government departments than the Foreign Office far more often than I was with Ministers from the Foreign Office. I was in touch a lot with Number 10. That has changed.

The role of embassies has changed a lot. The interesting question is the role of the Foreign Office in London, given the way in which foreign policies and embassies have changed. There it is a question, to an extent, of just making other government departments realise that there is something that they need to be conscious of. Maybe they could try some sort of—I do not want to put too strong a word on it—co-ordination or something, so that the things different government departments do in London are brought together in some way and form part of a slightly more coherent whole than can be the case.

The Chairman: That is fascinating. We have noticed from witnesses that almost every department of state, including some quite surprising ones, feel they are now at the spearhead of foreign policy in a way they were not before. Nevertheless, the embassies, as you have described them, are often the key, the hubs, in each country.

Lord Jay of Ewelme: Yes.

The Chairman: Is the implication that contrary to the futurologists’ comments that ambassadors and embassies will be bypassed by Skype and instant communication, the opposite has happened and in fact the embassies are becoming more important?

Lord Jay of Ewelme: In a funny way, they have become more important in some ways, because they have a much wider range of interests and understanding. I will not say they will be bypassed by Skype, but there will be direct communications between actors in Britain and
actors abroad who will not go anywhere near an embassy. Part of the job of the embassy is to try to keep in touch with that and see what is happening. I would argue that, in a way, embassies have become more relevant over the last 10 or 15 years, because they are dealing with such a wider range of British policy, not just foreign policy, than was the case in the past.

Q295 The Chairman: The next question from that—and I know our colleagues want to come in—is: are our embassies adequately staffed and resourced? Do they have the polymaths in place who can deal with this vast new range of issues that are part of the international interface?

Sir Antony Acland: Perhaps I can answer that. When I was in Washington as an Ambassador, we had a representative of every main department from Whitehall there. The embassy had the professional advice from each and every department. We hoped when I was there that we were going to get a royal flush of Cabinet Ministers. We totted them up. There were one or two rare birds like the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster or the Lord Privy Seal, who did not have a particular reason for coming to Washington. However, all the others did, and all of them had one of their own people there in the embassy to brief them, in addition to whatever briefing I could give them as regards the political situation in Washington at the time. There was a very wide field of activity. Every department came, every department was represented, and every department had its contacts with their opposite numbers in Washington.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: I was the number two in Washington well before Antony was ambassador. There was always a stovepipe problem in Washington. The departments in London had their stovepipe with the relevant department in the US Government in Washington and they had their representative in the embassy. Co-ordinating that, and ensuring that what you were doing on trade policy bore some sort of resemblance to what you were doing on climate change, or what you were doing on straightforward foreign policy, was quite demanding. The people who operated in the stovepipes were rather resistant to it, and they liked a situation in which they dealt with their home department in London and their opposite number in the United States. The United States is also well known for not operating very effective interdepartmental co-ordination.

There was always a stress to co-ordinate effectively in the United Nations when I was there. I used to have a morning meeting every morning to make sure that everyone in the mission knew what everyone else was doing that day. Therefore, the consistency of what we were doing in the Economic and Social Committee, what we were doing in the Security Council and what we were doing in the Decolonisation Committee, and so on, was kept under some sort of review.

In Brussels with the European Union, it was not such a problem, because the structure in London was much stronger. I did not get my instructions from the Foreign Office when I was the ambassador to the European Union. I got them, effectively, from the Friday meetings, in which I participated, at the Cabinet Office. These were chaired by the Deputy Secretary of the Cabinet, who was also the Prime Minister’s adviser on European matters. That meeting virtually agreed the lines that were going to be pursued in the Committee of Permanent Representatives and in the various meetings of the Council the following week. This was subject, of course, to meetings of ministerial committees when something important had to be thrashed out. However, the EU was very much a separate case in which the British bureaucracy had taken quite a few leaps forward from where it was in dealing with other posts abroad.
The Chairman: Lord Ramsbotham, I think you have a question on that very point.

Q296 Lord Ramsbotham: One of the things that I must say surprised me, and I have been reflecting on it ever since we heard it, was that the responsibility for the co-ordination of soft power—if there is a responsibility in this country at the moment—rests with the NSC. This seems to me slightly alarming in view of what you have told us about what you see as the movement to embassies as it were, with the FCO having a slightly different role in this, and bearing in mind that the NSC is involved in soft power. Thinking about the conduit between the NSC and individual embassies and back again, I wonder whether you could comment on whether you think that is appropriate and sensible or whether there is something missing.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: The establishment of the NSC is a major step in the right direction. There was something really missing. There was the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee of the Cabinet, but it did not play quite as sophisticated a role as it is now trying to develop for the NSC. I cannot tell you, because I have no experience, of how the NSC is interfacing with ambassadors in Washington, NATO in Brussels, the UN or what have you. However, I do think it has within it the capacity to produce a bit more of what we have always had on the European Union side since we joined the European Union: a very strong secretariat in the Cabinet Office, staffed by people from different departments, including from the FCO. This secretariat advised the Prime Minister, pulled together a whole network of Cabinet Committees, and met once a week for three hours every Friday morning with the Permanent Representative to work out what we were going to do the following week. Michael Jay was one of the officials of that secretariat, in fact, when I was the Permanent Representative.

Lord Janvrin: The growing role of the embassy is a really interesting thought.

The Chairman: Yes, we are getting a picture here of the embassies and the Cabinet Office being more important. I am beginning to see the poor old FCO stretched a little thin and diluted over this. However, perhaps I am wrong.

Q297 Lord Janvrin: My question is whether the power of the overseas mission to influence opinion in a country is actually waning because of rolling news, social media from diasporas in this country, and the much more pervasive influence of sport, music and everything else on the cultural side? Do you think the ability of the Government to project their own public diplomacy agenda is quite tricky in a much wider field of modern communication?

Lord Jay of Ewelme: I rather agree with that. If I were high commissioner in Canberra just now, I would not be doing much with public diplomacy. However, it does vary hugely from country to country, as was said earlier on. If, for example, you are the new British chargé in Tehran, I think you are going to have a really important task. This will involve working out what, over the next five years, Britain can do through its embassy and other means to promote Britain’s influence in Tehran and the knowledge in Iran of Britain. Nobody else can do that other than an embassy, it seems to me, and I think that will be an important job for an ambassador.

However, that is not going to be everything. There are going to be channels of communication that cut across what an ambassador or an embassy can do, and one has to respect that. When I was Permanent Under-Secretary, I was in Dhaka in Bangladesh and gave an interview to a Bengali language newspaper. I flew back to London overnight and my e-mail inbox in London was full of comments from the Bangladeshi community in the north of Britain. They had seen the interview and were commenting to me on it. There are links
here that are now part of everyday life, which no government machine can attempt to control. It can attempt to influence—it can get British views across—but it has to be quite careful in not trying to do more than it can do.

Sir Antony Acland: It depends to a large extent on the subject. If there is a major issue like the Falkland Islands, one thinks of the role played by Sir Nicholas Henderson, who was ambassador in Washington. He had an enormous impact, going on television day after day, explaining what we were doing, why we were doing it, and why it was right to do it. I think that in the big issues, when the ambassador can have access to the media, he can play a great role.

Lord Ramsbotham: I was hugely impressed two weeks ago in Kenya to see the way that the very able high commissioner, Christian Turner, was functioning in a rather egg-shell like environment there with extreme skill. He was contacting many Kenyans who in the longer term could be very useful to us. I thought it was excellent.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Again, you have to be very careful to distinguish different cases. I served in two places, the European Union and the UN, where the public diplomacy angle was completely and totally different. While I was in Brussels in the EU, I would have been taken out and shot if I had allowed myself to stand in front of a television camera and talk about Britain’s European policy. That was a matter for Ministers and Ministers alone. It was too sensitive. It is even more sensitive now than it was then, but it was very sensitive then. Although I did a lot of background briefing of the press and I knew all the Brussels-based journalists pretty well, I never did public diplomacy there or indeed much back at home. I was not encouraged to.

The minute I went to the United Nations in New York, where there was a five-hour time difference, a different tone, and where the Gulf War was brewing up and happening, I was urged by Ministers to be on television as often as possible. I was also urged as often as possible to the journalists outside the Security Council. You have these contrasts, which it is absolutely crucial for any ambassador to understand and respond to. However, public diplomacy has become much more important, and certainly ambassadors to the United Nations are now expected to do a great deal of television work. This probably would not have occurred fifty or sixty years ago.

Q298 Baroness Hussein-Ece: Just following on, do you think our embassies are sufficiently proactive in promoting British foreign policy in terms of the soft power that we are interested in, or do you think they can get rather tied up in responding to the wide range of demands? I think it was Sir Antony who mentioned a mini-Whitehall. The demands are getting wider and wider ranging, and perhaps the soft-power element can get rather lost in all these demands. In the Bangladeshi example that Lord Jay gave earlier, you have a very large diaspora here in the UK with different demands and different ideas. This community certainly responds very vociferously to a lot of things they think the British Government should be doing and perhaps things they think they have not done. Where does the soft power lie in all those different demands?

Lord Jay of Ewelme: The answer to your question of whether embassies are good at this is that some embassies are very good at it and some embassies are probably not as good as they should be. However, if you are a young, or even not so young, and bright ambassador or high commissioner and you speak the language, you want to be out there. You want to be travelling the country, getting on the airwaves, getting on the television, and promoting the British Council, the universities, or those aspects of Britain other than those coming from the government departments. That is what makes the job interesting. At least, that
was my experience. I think you will find more and more that is what people do, because their motivation is to do that. Do they all do it? Not all of them.

There are some countries in the world where security and other considerations make it very difficult to get out in the way people would like to. You are rather forced into almost a laager and tend to be dealing more with what comes from London because that is the most important thing for that country. However, anybody in that position would be longing to get out of it and to be getting around the country and promoting soft power.

Sir Antony Acland: If you define soft power as I have tried to, all these contacts with people from different walks of life presenting their image of Britain is soft power that happens. As I said, all these people made contact with the embassy and got some guidance and so on. Certainly, when I was in America, I did not aim to go to every State of the Union but I went to most of them to talk about what Britain stood for. I tried to represent Britain in a wider sense, on issues such as the rule of law or human rights—all the important things we stood for—and present the image of Britain that could be absorbed by people. In America, of course, in the Mid West they had very little idea of what Britain was like, and I think you could use a certain amount of soft power with them.

Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne: The United Kingdom is one of the rare net contributors to the European Union, and is a founder member of the Council of Europe. Yet we have at this moment a somewhat diminishing number—almost invisible in one case—of senior staff there. Have we decided that it is really not worth the game, not really worth bothering, and that we are better putting our limited energies in a different position? Or is that merely something that the Foreign Office should address but maybe does not have the capacity or the budget at the moment to deal with?

The Chairman: That is a question that is going to hang in the air for five minutes, because I am afraid we all have to go and vote. I do apologise, but that is the way things are. In five minutes we will resume.

Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.

Q299 The Chairman: The rest of our members seem to have got lost in their work, so we will start again. Baroness Nicholson’s question is hanging in the air, which is about the quality and input of our staff to the EU. However, there is a broader question behind it, which is about the degree of diplomatic penetration into all the new international organisations that have sprung up in the last 20 years—or, indeed, in the last 10 years. How do the panel feel about the quality of our current representation in all the new organisations, not just the EU?

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: The situation in the EU is very bad indeed. In 1973, we started with roughly our population share of staff at every level, because they were recruited from outside without the need for competitive exams and such like. It is quite clear that this was sustained for many years by rather good programmes to encourage people, i.e. the Fast Track programme to go to the European institutions and so on. That seems to have all withered on the bough in recent years. Now we are in a situation where the number of people of British nationality in the institutions is far below the population share.

That is a really serious problem, not just now but far more in the future. Like all bureaucracies, at the EU you go in at the bottom and you hopefully end up at the top. The
number of people who get in at the bottom determines the number of people who end up
at the top some 30 years later. Not only are we losing influence now, we are storing up
decades of loss of influence in the future if we do not do something about it.

I believe the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is trying to do something about it now. It is
not entirely their fault. It is partly, of course, due to the appalling language skills in British
schools and universities. To get into the European institutions you are required to speak at
least one language very well and a second or third language reasonably well. There are not
many British people who do that. That is part of the problem. The institutions themselves
are very reluctant to accept that there is a problem in this imbalance. During this uncertain
period, when the issue of a referendum in 2017 is hanging over everyone—of course, that
cannot possibly help recruitment, because who, starting their career, would set off to
Brussels now, knowing that their career might come to a sudden end in 2017? I have
suggested and will continue to suggest that at the very least they should provide what
existed when we first joined, which was a return ticket for any civil servant who went and
worked in the European institutions. That is to say that you would be guaranteed to get a
place in the British Civil Service if your place in the EU Civil Service was terminated for
reasons totally beyond your control. That would help a little.

However, it is a serious problem. For the other organisations, it is a bit less easy to
generalise. There tend to be, in the UN system, a lot of British people who have been there
for many, many years and have often risen to quite high positions. We are reasonably well
represented, but we do not have proper overall sight of these things in Whitehall. There
needs to be some better planning and strategising about how we ensure that people of
British nationality are getting a reasonable proportion of the jobs in these very important
organisations, which often apply rules-based systems from which we benefit but also to
which we are subject.

Q300 The Chairman: I am going to stick with the staffing issue for a moment. We have
just heard from Lord Jay that embassies are the thing of the future. There has to be
tremendous busyne ss and contacts through embassies. Do we have enough staff to do that?
Are we not scattering our embassy firepower through rather small micro-embassies all over
the place? It may be a good thing—it probably is a good thing—that everyone is in the
network, but that means one-man and two-man embassies have to undertake the kind of
increasingly onerous jobs Lord Jay was describing. There is a shortage there. Now we hear
that we are short of people across the new international institutions, which are springing up
around where the power and wealth is, which is increasingly Asia and Africa, where we want
to be involved. Now we are hearing that we are short of people in the EU. Are we
beginning to look at a need for a whole step change upwards in the recruiting and
mobilisation of our diplomatic resource?

Lord Jay of Ewelme: There is a risk of our being so short staffed that we cannot properly
serve all the places we believe we should have our embassies in. I worry slightly about what
I understand the policy is at the moment of cutting back on people going out from London
and depending more on local staff in a lot of our embassies. You need to have people from
London there, and they are not going to be good diplomats if they have not had the training
earlier on in their career in lower positions in embassies. I worry about that. There is a
genuine question as to whether we have enough staff now involved in the Diplomatic Service
to carry out the policies the Government would like us to. That is a very important point to
focus on.

If I could follow up on what David was saying, I very much agree with him. If you take as a
premise that our interest lies in shaping the international institutions to which we belong to
further our interest, which I do, we need to have our people in them, helping shape them in that way. There does need to be a more coherent look at this, not just in the EU but across the board. Perhaps that is something which the NSC, which is looking at all this, can do, but somewhere in London there needs to be somebody thinking, “Do we have the right people, and do we have enough people in the institutions to which we belong so we can shape them to our interest?”.

The Chairman: Lord Janvrin, I know we have rather gone into your question.

Lord Janvrin: I apologise for the delay. Did you get on to the Commonwealth?

The Chairman: No, we have not mentioned the Commonwealth, which I am always happy to mention. There is one more institution that has a very light interface with our own personnel. We have had one or two personnel from Britain in it. There are those who say the Commonwealth network is at least a gateway to all the great, important markets of the future. Is this some other area where we should be encouraging higher quality staff to get involved? Is that something any of you have feelings on?

Sir Antony Acland: The Commonwealth is important for a whole variety of reasons. As you say, it is some of the largest countries, with huge power for trade and all that. It is also a way in which Britain can influence more countries in a favourable way, which is what the Prime Minister has been trying to do at the present Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, talking about human rights and the rule of law. If we trade in countries, it is really important that traders know there is a legal set-up where, if they get into difficulties, they can have recourse to it. Through something like the Commonwealth, that word can be effectively spread.

Certainly, when I was head of the Diplomatic Service, on the whole the Foreign Office paid proper attention to the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth Secretariat. We were all involved in their activities. Of course, there was a very senior Deputy Secretary-General in the shape of Humphrey Maud, who died the other day, who was extremely effective. One should not lose sight of this large grouping of countries where we can use our soft power to spread human rights, the rule of law and proper principles around effectively.

The Chairman: I am going to slightly switch and ask Baroness Armstrong to move from machinery to substance, because we have had witnesses telling us the marvellous things we are doing in the field of Sport and culture, and we have had witnesses telling us we have not been so marvellous when it comes to earning our bread and butter or even looking after our security. Particularly on the trade side, other countries seem to have got there first when it comes to the new markets. Are we using our soft and smart-power weapons as we should? Baroness Armstrong, do take over.

Q301 Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top: We were really interested in what you think the most important current threats to UK influence abroad are. Where do you see those coming from?

Sir Antony Acland: I will have a go, but I am sure the others will do it better. The threat comes from our major competitors, particularly in the trading field: Germany, France and now, very much, China. If you think of China operating around the world, particularly in Africa, there they are doing a lot in the way of infrastructure, building roads and so on, and gaining enormously as a result—getting their hands on raw materials and oil and so on. That is where our competition is.

We have to be good enough to compete to earn our bread and butter, as the Lord Chairman said, in these countries, particularly the developing countries of Asia. We
must pay great attention to India, China and more to Latin America, to Brazil, Argentina and
to the developing countries, which are developing quite quickly in parts of Africa. That is
what I would see as competition.

There are particular awful threats like terrorism, which could upset a lot of our activities if
there were a terrible terrorist threat somewhere, but in the broad sense I see it as
competing with these other large countries, which are trying to do exactly the same as we
are trying to do: to use their influence, their soft power, to gain rewards for themselves.

**Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** Answering your question directly, the greatest threat I would
see is the threat we might withdraw from the European Union. You lose two forms of soft
power that way: the first form of soft power is the soft power we have within the
European Union: that is to say, shaping the laws and the decisions that are taken in Brussels,
whether that is for the single market or anything else you might like to think of in the wide
range of issues that are covered in Brussels. We would lose that. We might keep our access
to the single market from outside, but we will have no say in the policy decisions that are
taken about how that single market is run. At the moment, we have a big say. We do not
have a determining say in all cases, because the decisions are taken by qualified majority. If
you look at the statistics, last year Britain was in the majority in 55 decisions and voted
against five. On the whole, that is a lot of soft power.

The other part of soft power we would lose if we withdrew from the European Union is the
soft power the European Union has in international negotiations. That could be in trade
policy, where negotiations with Japan, the United States or Canada are conducted on behalf
of the European Union, greatly to our benefit. As you have seen, the Government have
enormously welcomed the moves in that direction. However, we would be outside that.
We would not be involved in that any more. We would have to look after ourselves and we
would be lower in importance to the United States, Japan or Canada than the rest of the EU,
with which they would still be negotiating.

This also includes other things. Look at the Ukraine now. Would we be exercising any
influence over the rule of law, human rights and democracy in the Ukraine as Britain? The
answer is no, not much. As the European Union, you can see the influence. Switch on the
television set and you can see a large number of people in the Ukraine are saying that their
Government’s policy of looking more towards Russia and less towards the European Union
is the wrong policy. Look at the Iranian deal that was done at the weekend. It was really
managed by the EU three, supported by the rest of the EU, because it was neither an
American policy nor a Russian and Chinese policy. The policy of sanctions plus diplomacy
was the European policy. A lot of that would be at risk, frankly, which is why I say that is the
biggest risk.

I agree entirely with what Antony has said about how, in the bilateral and commercial field, it
is our competitors, and of course that includes other members of the European Union.

**Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top:** Lord Jay will have a different perspective, I suspect.

**Lord Jay of Ewelme:** I agree entirely with what David and Antony said about the clear
threats that come from terrorism or from war breaking out somewhere. Clearly, part of
our soft power is working to ensure that does not happen.

**Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top:** I was going to say it is to stop that, yes.

**Lord Jay of Ewelme:** That is hugely important, although it is something we have not been
talking about. The other point is that what you have characterised as threats I would regard
as opportunities. We can talk about the threat to our trading position from China, Brazil or
India, but that actually ought to be a huge opportunity for us. I sometimes worry that the focus on the concept of threat shows a lack of confidence about our ability to pursue our interests and realise the opportunities that are there. We need to start looking at it in that sense: what do we need to do here or through our embassies to ensure that we can fulfil the opportunities there are before us? That leads us back into some of the things we have been talking about: having a strong UKTI and having the right people in international institutions in order to pursue our interests. I tend to look at it as opportunity rather than threat.

**The Chairman:** That puts it in a very good way and it is not far from our minds either, because obviously the EU is our neighbourhood; the bulk of our exports go there and so on. The EU has had some problems, as everyone has to concede, but what we keep being told by witnesses is that the big growth—the fast generation of wealth and investment funds and the big new markets—is shaping up elsewhere. That has been the language of the American rather crude commentary: the rest is catching up with and, indeed, overtaking the West. Are we geared into that scene?

**Lord Jay of Ewelme:** There is no reason that we should not be. It is a real mistake to think of these as alternatives or options. We ought to be realising our economic potential within the European Union and using our influence within the European Union to ensure that markets are opened elsewhere in the world, because that suits our exporters as well, and we should be developing links with the big growing economies so that we are exporting to them.

I have never been able to understand the argument one sometimes hears that these are somehow in opposition to each other. There is no reason why we should not fulfil them both, it seems to me.

**Q302 The Chairman:** I am sure that is the right approach. We have to get to grips with some of the evidence. We can operate through the great power of Europe—it is a huge and powerful bloc—but when we arrive in certain markets we find others have got there first and the others are the people who are supposed to be our partners in the European Union. How do we catch up with German, Italian, French, Dutch and Belgian competition in these new markets?

**Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** We have to become more competitive. In the end, embassies and ambassadors do not win contracts, businessmen win contracts. British business has to be competitive to win contracts. As we know, at various stages in the past 70 or 80 years, we have been very uncompetitive and there have often been moments when the Government have said, “Why is it that the Diplomatic Service cannot redress this balance?” It cannot redress the imbalance of basic uncompetitiveness. Getting the economy right and getting the investment going in at home is absolutely essential. We will not be able to redress the balance otherwise. We will not be able to win a bigger share of the Chinese market. The Germans did not win their share by cheating; they won their share by being competitive.

**Q303 Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne:** Going back to the European Union’s influence and particularly the EEAS, there is a window of opportunity, as I perceive it now, for Britain to be well further than primus inter pares in respect of Tehran. Certainly, this could be the case with regard to the EU and the wider Europe, most of the world and perhaps even, or with the exception of, the USA as well. We are much closer to the Iranians both historically and actually. Therefore, we have an opportunity. How do you see
the Foreign Office gearing up to use that opportunity, so that we can get ahead of everybody else before they start to try to catch up?

**Lord Jay of Ewelme:** I agree with your premise. When I was in Tehran, I was very struck about how, in a curious kind of way, people seem to be looking at the Americans as British stooges. It is a very odd feeling. There are huge potential links and potential assets there. It comes back partly to what I was saying earlier on: we need to have an embassy there as soon as we feel it is secure to have one, and I hope that will be very soon. We need to have really good staff there, and through soft power, which is what we are talking about, we need to be working really hard to exert our influence and build on what we have had in the past.

Also, something we have not talked about yet, but I hope we can, that I should mention is the role of universities and education. This is hugely important in getting the young leaders of tomorrow into British universities now and getting British universities setting up in countries abroad where we have a terrific amount to export. This seems to me to be a market in which we ought to do that.

**Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne:** Narrowing the question a fraction more, as a supplementary, how should the Foreign Office do that, given that we are all meant to be part of the EU, the G8 and all sorts of different blocs? How do you see the Foreign Office as being able to push Britain first?

**Lord Jay of Ewelme:** I do not see any conflict of interest in being a member of the EU and putting Britain first, to be honest. I would have thought we should have an embassy in Tehran, it should be properly staffed, and we should be acting on the influence we have exerted through the Foreign Secretary, and—through Cathy Ashton, as a Briton, playing her role.

**Q304 Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne:** You are suggesting that the FCO is not as fully and completely well staffed as you would like to see. What is the next step?

**Lord Jay of Ewelme:** I am not saying it is not sufficiently well staffed to be able to staff a really good embassy in Tehran. That seems to be such a high priority now that it would do that. My concern is the peripheries. You have embassies that are really not achieving a huge amount. You have one or two people and a very high cost for protecting them. The question I ask myself is this: might it not be better not to have those and to have the people in the places that really do matter to us, like Tehran?

**Sir Antony Acland:** There is a question of priority there, is there not? Obviously, funds are short. Every government department is being cut down and it is very difficult to make ends meet. However, the priority must now be—I think of when Michael and I were there—seeing the possibilities and openings in the situation in Tehran. We would have said, “Let us get together experts, people who speak Farsi, to go out there and form an embassy, even if we have to take them away from somewhere else”. I think that would happen. I am terribly out of date, but I imagine that it would be happening now.

**Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne:** This is the exact example: is the Foreign Office in a position to be able to galvanise and co-ordinate, with strength and authority, UKTI, say, DfID and the British Council for Iran? That is perhaps the key point.

**Lord Jay of Ewelme:** There is no reason at all why it should not. I went to 50 or 60 embassies around the world when I was Permanent Secretary and I saw some that were incredibly effective. You had someone like Ann Grant, who was our high commissioner in South Africa, who was extraordinarily good in getting together the entire British effort there in pursuit of British interests. She was highly effective. You went to some places where it
was not as effective. I would think, however, that Iran is going to be such an important embassy for us over the next few years that the Foreign Office should be putting real pressure and emphasis on getting the right people there, and there is no reason why it should not be able to do that.

The Chairman: I certainly do not want to get into an in or out argument about the European Union, but we need some guidance on how we ride two horses, as it were. You have just said that if things go right, as we hope, Iran is a vast and highly sophisticated country with huge resources and we want to be in there. However, the EEAS will have an embassy there as well. This is quite a tricky business, is it not, to try to make best use both of our own interdependent relations and our existence as a member of the EU? How do we do it?

Lord Jay of Ewelme: It should not be difficult. Perhaps I have been influenced by spending nine years in France and going to Paris quite a lot at the moment, but the French do not have any hang-ups about being a member of the European Union and promoting their own interest, and I honestly do not see why we should either.

The Chairman: Can we learn from them?

Lord Jay of Ewelme: We may be able to.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: We may be able to learn from them by not making things into either/or choices. The French do not.

Lord Jay of Ewelme: Exactly, we can do both.

Q305 Lord Foulkes of Cumnock: I want to try something different, a long shot, because our witnesses have concentrated on their professional experience, but you have a lot of experience in a whole range of other things. We are looking for something new to suggest, some new way of approaching things. Michael mentioned universities and education. I wondered whether each of you had some idea that has not been tried before, which in our report we might suggest could be looked at for improving the United Kingdom’s influence abroad. This might not be in your professional capacity but in sport, music, art and the whole range of other things you are involved in.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Surely, you do not want to lose sight of the tried and trusted instruments we already have: the British Council, the BBC World Service, British universities. These are what you might say are the great export industries of soft power, and we are good at them. In the past, we have proved we are good at them.

In business terms, surely you would invest in things that you are good at and ensure that they have all the resources to make you even better in the future. I gave the Committee some written evidence on this point: I would argue that we need to be looking very carefully at the switch of the BBC World Service to not being financed from the Foreign Office vote, which in a way is a plus, because you can no longer say it is the tool of the British Government. It never was, of course, but that is what people thought, because it was financed on the Foreign Office’s budget.

Now it is going to be financed on the BBC’s own single budget. Are they going to provide it with enough resources? I do not know. I have looked at the arrangements that have been suggested and they seem remarkably flimsy to me. I would have thought it is absolutely essential that we have a BBC World Service that is not only good now but is capable of reacting rapidly when something like the Arab spring comes along and there is a need to double the amount of broadcasting you do to Arab countries.
The same is true for the British Council and universities. As you know, there is a tension now between the Government’s policy of limiting immigration and making it more and more difficult for people to get visas, and the pent-up demand of students from emerging countries, which, I entirely agree with Michael, are the seed corn of our future soft power. These are people who come here, spend their university time here, go back and never forget it. That is with them for the rest of their lives, and that is very important.

**Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** Some British universities and some of the independent schools are establishing campuses overseas. Is that a positive way of enhancing British soft power?

**Lord Jay of Ewelme:** It can be, very much so. Last year, I was in a city called Ningbo, which is about four hours’ drive south of Shanghai. It is a city of about 6 million people. In the middle of it, there is a replica of Nottingham University campus—the building. There are very large numbers of Chinese there, many of them affluent, and there are quite a large number of people from Nottingham University as well. If well managed, this seems to me to be an extraordinarily powerful model, and there is a similar one I went to subsequently just outside Kuala Lumpur. Other universities are doing the same.

I do not know whether this would be for the Foreign Office or the Department for Education. If one is looking to the future and saying, “Where do we want to be in five, 10 or 15 years’ time?”, we need to ask what our universities are doing in which countries of the world. Where should we be hoping they are going to set up? How can we in some way get them to think about this, not always in competition with each other? How that could be a way of promotion British influence? Answering your question, Lord Foulkes, that is one area where I would put my finger.

**Q306 Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** That is very helpful. We are getting some evidence that one of the problems about students coming over here is the difficulty of getting a visa.

**Lord Jay of Ewelme:** Yes.

**Lord Foulkes of Cumnock:** They have to go to other countries to get visas and they are finding it very expensive and very difficult. In your experience, is that creating problems?

**Sir Antony Acland:** It has recently been made easier for Chinese people to come here, has it not? That is a very good thing.

**Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top:** It is in train.

**Sir Antony Acland:** It is not for us to say what you should put in your report, but I would hope that you would say that the mechanisms already exist in the British Council. When I was in Spain, for example, the British Council played an enormous part in teaching Spaniards English. They had a huge English-teaching programme, which was enormously appreciated and very effective. Again, because the Spanish learnt English, they adopted British culture and a friendship with Britain. It is there: the BBC World Service and the universities and the schools. That should be emphasised. It is not for us to say, but I hope it would be.

**Lord Hannay of Chiswick:** Students, researchers and academics coming over here are of course where we get the biggest economic benefit. We get less economic benefit from putting campuses abroad than we do from that. On the first aspect there are plenty of reports, including one from my own Committee, the EU Sub-Committee on Home Affairs, Health and Education, which you could easily drawn upon. Four Committees in the House of Commons and the House of Lords all recommended that the Government should stop treating students as economic migrants for public policy purposes. They arrive here with large amounts of ready cash in their hands and they provide employment in this country,
often in cities where British universities are the biggest employer. In places like Birmingham or Canterbury, they are the biggest employer. There is something to be said there. I hope it will be said.

**Lord Jay of Ewelme**: To answer the question about what other things could be done, it would certainly be very helpful if our larger embassies could all be asked, “What do you think are the real levers of influence on policy in this country over the next five years? How would you like to see the various levers that you have available to you brought together in order to maximise the influence that we can exert?” How are those levers going to change? How is technology going to change? There is no reason to suppose that technology over the next five years will be any less dramatic in its change than over the last five years. How is this likely to change? How do we use this to our advantage and, with any luck, get ahead of our competitors?

**The Chairman**: Your answers really are very useful, because you really have opened up the original question that I asked in a most helpful way. I am going to ask Baroness Goudie to ask one question and then Baroness Hussein-Ece. I am then going to try to bring things to a halt. We would like to go on a long way, but we have other things on our schedules.

**Q307 Baroness Goudie**: My question really comes from where you see our influence in other regions. We have talked about the big countries and we have talked about the EU, both of which, I agree with members of the Committee, are vital. Where else, however, do you see we should be looking to influence for trade? Could we perhaps look at where we should be taking DfID down this road? I know you are entirely separate, but I also feel the Foreign Office’s influence on DfID is quite important. There is also culture, but I would like to see where else you feel we should also be trying to have influence, because they will be the further emerging markets. As we know, there are many more countries that people do not even know exist. We should also be looking at those.

**The Chairman**: It is a very good question, because obviously in the general political discussion there is a feeling of slight imbalance between the enormous resources of DfID and the somewhat limited resources of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and other internationally involved departments. Do we have that balance right? That is the question behind that.

**Lord Hannay of Chiswick**: As you know, I have spoken in the House many times in support of the commitment to 0.7% of GNI and the size of the DfID budget. That is a major development of Britain’s soft power in terms of actual economic development, if the money is properly spent and does not go into the wrong pockets. That is going to have a long-term benefit. It also has benefit, however, in the sense of Britain’s positioning amongst the aid donors. This is reflected in the Prime Minister having been asked to chair the commission that was set up to prepare the next Millennium Development Goals, the post-2015 Millennium Development Goals.

That is good, but I do worry a bit about the way in which over the years the separation between DfID and the Foreign Office has become too stark. There has not been enough recognition that they are actually working for the same organisation, called UK Inc. They are not working for two different organisations. I wonder whether enough is done to co-ordinate. I know they have done some good things with the Ministry of Defence in building up the pool for conflict prevention. There they have learnt a lot of the lessons of Bosnia, Kosovo and so on. We were not properly co-ordinated and were unable to move quickly enough when a situation began to get out of control in a country that mattered. The balance clearly cannot be putting DfID under the Foreign Office. That is not sensible either.
DFID has very substantial sums of money at its disposal and will continue to have those at its disposal as long as the 0.7% target is retained. We should be thinking a bit more strategically about how this is deployed, and I wonder whether that is being done properly.

Sir Antony Acland: There used to be a Minister of State in the Foreign Office responsible for aid. I wonder whether it would not be a good thing to go back to that.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: That was when it was completely subordinate.

Sir Antony Acland: It should not be completely subordinate, but to have a ministerial link might be no bad thing.

Lord Jay of Ewelme: I have worked in DFID as a separate organisation and DFID as part of the Foreign Office, and the Foreign Office when separate from DFID. I am clear in my own mind that they should be separate organisations, but they need to work closely together, because they need to be pursuing the same broad overall foreign policy objectives. That is doable.

The answer I would give to the question is Africa. If one is talking about how we can get ahead of the competition in the future, let us start focusing on Africa not as a basket case, as it is sometimes portrayed, but in fact as a continent that is taking a huge amount of British exports. In many countries—in South Africa, Nigeria, Zambia, Tanzania and Malawi—it is showing an ability to grow very remarkably. There is an area of the world on which it would be good for the Government as a whole, and not just DFID, to be putting a lot of emphasis.

The Chairman: Do we have the new diplomatic resources with the new skills and the new wider compass of duties and responsibilities to do that? That is what worries us.

Lord Jay of Ewelme: Quite possibly we do not. I am quite certain that the right priority is to say, “What do we need to do in order to promote British interests around the world in the bits that matter to us over the next five, 10 or 15 years? In order to do that, what are the resources we need?”; rather than saying, “These are the resources, and because the resources have been cut we are going to have to cut back on our objectives”.

Sir Antony Acland: You have to pick the winners, have you not? You have to focus on the countries in Africa that are going to develop. We cannot be everywhere. We do not have the resources for that. We have to focus on the winners.

The Chairman: Yes, the likely winners may be shifting, with the vast revolutions in energy and in consumer power, with the great growth in markets as large as Europe and in Asia now. It is very hard to pick those winners, is it not?

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: It is not all that hard in the one you mention, which is energy. Once a country clearly has large oil and gas resources, first of all it ought to be British companies that are in there operating and selling all sorts of equipment for the development of those; nowadays you are not allowed to own these things. You can also be quite sure that countries like that are going to have more disposable resources to import than countries that are not so blessed. That is quite a long-term prospect. The fact that, for example, vast amounts of gas have been found in Mozambique would seem to point the fact that although Mozambique is currently one of the poorest countries in the world, it may not be that forever.

The Chairman: That is very shrewd and very true.

Q308 Baroness Hussein-Ece: You have already started to answer the question I was going to ask. We have already mentioned Africa and Iran. The question I was going to ask was which countries and regions should be the focus of the United Kingdom’s foreign policy
and whether this focus has changed over the years during your time at the FCO. You have already started to talk about Africa, quite rightly, and Iran. Lord Jay mentioned how Africa has been considered for many years or decades as a basket case. That is shifting, is it not?

Lord Jay of Ewelme: It is shifting, yes. We need to be thinking about it as a continent that has enormous potential in resources and trade in both directions, where we can make a difference. I would put that quite high up our list of priorities.

Baroness Goudie: We see in parts of Africa that China has bought up parts of Nigeria and other countries. This is not meant to be a trick question: how do you see us forming policy about how we could work with China in some of these countries? They have also been buying up food for food security. There are other issues, as well.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: In the area of DfID’s work and development, there is a real potential to work with the new emerging countries that are just beginning to become donors, like India, Brazil or China. They do not have huge financial resources in their aid budgets. They often have a lot of experience of pulling large numbers of people out of poverty, for example Brazil. They could very possibly work with us. I know DfID has done some work in this field, but it could be given greater encouragement to do this. In the future, we should be not thinking of an aid budget in mercantilist terms but of how we can use the fact that we are providing aid to increase our soft power by working with some of the big emerging powers, which may in fact welcome having us work with them.

Baroness Goudie: Do you mean partnerships?

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Yes.

Baroness Goudie: Partnerships are very good. It is about having joint resources, rather than the same people doing the same thing.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick: Yes.

Lord Jay of Ewelme: Sudan is a very good example of that. It was clear to the British Government a couple of years ago that the Chinese had real influence in Khartoum. They also had influence in Juba, and we have been working with them to try to get China not just to see North and South Sudan as places from which to extract resources but that it is in their interest that there should be a peaceful resolution of conflict there.

Q309 Lord Ramsbotham: I am reflecting on what you are saying, particularly going back to Africa. In Kenya, they discovered oil up in Turkana. There have been strikes there. The high commissioner was concerned that DfID was out there and that it was not doing anything in contact with him, but it was proposing some small educational development up there, which was out of tune with Turkana and nothing, really, to do with the development of oil. He talked about how much better it would have been if there had been a general Kenya policy and the power of DfID’s bank balance, as it were, had been applied to that and linked to the development of finding oil in Turkana, which will need help to get it out to a place from which it can be exported.

Lord Jay of Ewelme: That is exactly what should be happening and exactly what a head of mission should be ensuring happens, in my view.

Sir Antony Acland: He must have an aid officer with him in the high commission in Kenya, surely.

Lord Ramsbotham: The director-general of DfID was out there sorting that out.
Lord Hannay of Chiswick: In recent years, there has been a tendency—Michael will probably know this more than I do—for the aid missions to be more and more separate from the embassies. That is probably a tendency that needs to be readjusted back a bit without falling into the trap of simply saying that aid is just a way of doing foreign policy. That would not be wise either. There is some happy medium between the two, however, and I am actually not sure we have quite got to it yet.

The Chairman: We have kept you a long time. I was going to say that it has been hugely enjoyable but it has certainly been hugely illuminating. I am going to end on a slightly more trivial note. There was a mention earlier that the news from Canberra and Brisbane is not frightfully good at the moment, but we have had evidence before this Committee about the news of cricket mania growing in Shanghai, where the fast bowlers from China are going to devastate the world, and in Afghanistan, which is leaping up the cricket league. It does indicate that sport has a soft-power drive behind it, and of course it is a game that we are the experts at and we invented. Maybe we can improve British soft-power influence through that as well.

Thank you very much indeed. We would like to go on, but as usual we are constrained by the time. We are extremely grateful to you for taking time to come and share your experience and wisdom with us. Thank you very much.