



My Lords, I rise to move Amendment 168A, tabled in my name. I shall also speak to Amendment 168C, which is consequential to it. I am very grateful to the noble Lords, Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth and Lord Blunkett, and the noble Baroness, Lady Kennedy of The Shaws, for co-signing it.

This amendment is a combination of the two amendments that I put forward in Committee. It requires the Secretary of State to produce a 10-year strategy for tackling the global refugee crisis and human trafficking in collaboration with international partners. As I explained the rationale behind this amendment in detail in Committee stage, I will be very brief.

I particularly want to quote in aid of this amendment the Foreign Secretary, in his speech a couple of days back in Italy. He said that “there needs to be an international response to this because it is an inherently an international issue”.

We also need a long-term vision and strategy that reaches beyond short-term electoral cycles and allows this issue to be taken out of an entirely political agenda. The 1951 refugee convention is a fundamental basis for the care and protection of refugees. The convention should be built upon and added to, in collaboration with other signatories and international partners, for the particular context that we face today, to ensure that we share responsibility fairly and work together effectively across borders.

At Committee stage, the Minister questioned the suitability of a 10-year strategy and suggested it would risk tying the hands of future Governments, but we have long-term strategies in other areas of policy, and quite rightly too: defence and security, climate change and many others.

No strategy is set in stone; this amendment neither binds future Governments, which we cannot do, nor even specifies what exactly should go into a strategy for refugees and human trafficking. It simply requires that the Government, and future Governments, have one—a strategy—to consider actions in these areas right across the piece, joining up government in every area. The fact that we are here debating a second Migration Bill in as many years suggests that this might well be useful.

There is much wisdom in this House which will be more usefully applied to a strategy than it is often given the chance to speak to. For example, the noble Lord, Lord Green of Deddington, is one of the great experts on migration, whether one always agrees with him or not. We need a calmer and properly structured look at the whole areas of migration.

The UK has led in the past, historically, and it does so now. I want to stress that this amendment does not wreck or damage the Bill, or indeed set intentions for the Government to follow.

I remind the Minister of the speech made by the noble Lord, Lord Deben, in Committee stage, where he said he thought I was helping the Government by proposing such an amendment. It is indeed intended to be helpful, to improve the Bill by mitigating some of the concerns about a lack of a global and long-term perspective on the issues, and to offer something around which this House and the other place could debate carefully and thoughtfully, whatever our differing views about the rest of the Bill.

The noble Lord Swire in the last debate of amendments, talked about the need to be able to debate in an open and honest way; that is the

intention of this amendment.

Therefore, I hope that the Government and all noble Lords can see that this amendment is a positive and constructive suggestion, whatever I or others may feel about the Bill in general. I urge the Government to develop a strategy that is ambitious, collaborative, and worthy of our history and up to the scale of the enormous challenges that we face.

3 min read

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