

THURSDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2015

Members present

Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top
Lord Balfe
Baroness Billingham
Baroness Coussins
Lord Dubs
Lord Triesman
Lord Tugendhat (Chairman)

Examination of Witnesses

Professor Karen Smith, Professor of International Relations, London School of Economics and Political Science, and **Mr Henry Wilkinson**, Head of Intelligence and Analysis, The Risk Advisory Group

Q1 The Chairman: First, thank you very much, Professor Smith and Mr Wilkinson, for being here so much ahead of time. As we are short of our first witness, it is possible to hear evidence from you now, which is a very great convenience. As I think you are aware, this is the first meeting of the sub-committee in its new inquiry. It is a public meeting, it is recorded, and what you say is on the record. We will ask you the questions that you have been warned about, but I am sure there will be others as well. Please try to keep your answers quite brief so that we can get through a lot. On the other hand, I do not want you to go away feeling that you wish you had said something that you did not say. If there should be, you can submit it in written evidence later. If you both happen to totally agree, there is no need for both to speak. On the other hand, please do both speak if you wish to. Let me ask the first question, and then my colleagues will come in on the others.

It has been suggested that the Union does not have a very good record of drawing up EU foreign policy strategies, that the documents can be too lofty, unrealistic and

not sufficiently strategic. How would you assess the EU's record in this field, and what lessons do you feel can be learnt?

Professor Karen Smith: Thank you for giving me the opportunity to give evidence to this Committee. A critical requirement of a strategy in general is that you know what you are trying to achieve and you know what resources you need to achieve it. There is some prioritisation of objectives: we know what it is most important that we achieve. The problem for the European Union is that an intergovernmental union—and in the field of foreign policy it is an intergovernmental framework; it is essentially all 28 member states deciding—that prioritisation of objectives is extremely difficult. You can have a long list of ideas and broad aims, but reaching detailed understanding of what is most important has been extraordinarily difficult. Strategies tend to end up being kind of motherhood and apple pie-type things: everybody could agree with them, everybody has agreed with them, but no hard choices have been made. That is where they become relatively unimportant and “un-useful” in policy-making. The lesson that the EU will have to learn, and hopefully will learn, is that it needs to focus and establish clear priorities. Hard choices have to be made. Whether 28 member states are capable of doing that is another matter, but the EU needs to subtract from lists of objectives rather than adding to them. The EU does not have to do everything; it cannot do everything, it does not have the resources to do everything, so choices have to be made. That is the number one lesson that I hope the EU would learn going into this process.

Mr Henry Wilkinson: Thank you very much for having me. It is a privilege and a pleasure to be here. I agree completely with what Karen has just said. Looking at the record of EU strategy documents, they seem to get a bit less lofty as they go on—you see the success of the 2003 strategy document, the 2009 and so forth—but they also become a lot more complicated. Frankly, when you read some of the more recent iterations of EU strategy documents they become bewilderingly complex, with a multitude of threats and risks that are being confronted. I think what Professor Smith has been saying is that what is absolutely important is that for a strategy to work it cannot be a list of aspirations, which is how I see a lot of these documents; they are very aspirational. They need to be very clear about what exactly they are trying to achieve. Goals and strategy are not the same thing. Strategy is a plan of action that takes capabilities and limitations into account, but it also takes risks into account, such as: what are the adverse consequences of our actions? There are certain cases in point with, for example, EU enlargement and how Russia has been responding to the perceived encroachment upon its sphere of influence. These sorts of factors need to be taken into account, into a strategy, so that whatever is delivered is attainable and doable and does not create more problems than it solves. That is a very important consideration with some of these plans.

Some of the strategy is also a bit vague in terms of what it wants to achieve. A lot of the threats and risks that the progressive documents discuss are quite abstract, I would say. Terrorism is a threat, but you have to get much more into the weeds and

understand where it is actually coming from and what kind of problems need to be confronted. If I was contributing to some of the thinking about what kind of strategy there should be, I would say that it would need to start prioritising much more specifically what needs to be done to realise the outcomes that it wants, such as what to do about Russian foreign policy and the situation in Syria, in much more concrete terms.

Q2 Baroness Coussins: Given what you have just said about the weaknesses in EU strategy and all the loftiness and motherhood and apple pie-ness, what can you tell us about what actually happens to the strategies once they have been published? Are they ever translated into action either in the member-state capitals or in EU institutions? Is there any evidence that they have ever actually been used as guidance for action?

Professor Karen Smith: No—

Baroness Coussins: I thought that might be the short answer.

Professor Karen Smith: —because they are so vague. Many years ago I was involved in a large EU-funded research network on foreign policy across the member states. One of the questions that we repeatedly asked in yearly surveys was, “To what extent has your Government been using the European security strategy to guide foreign policy?”. Many of the responses that we got back were, “The Government agree with the strategy”, full stop, although I must say that the language of some of the goals in the strategy is repeatedly used. For example, one of the three strategic objectives of the 2003 strategy was to pursue effective multilateralism. That fed through into policy documents, but what it actually meant and whether it actually meant a change in action is questionable. That was at the EU level. At the member-state level I have seen no evidence that it has guided policy choices.

Mr Henry Wilkinson: I concur.

The Chairman: That is straightforward enough.

Q3 Baroness Billingham: Should the new foreign policy strategy not just consider the strategic goals that you have already spoken about but set out how we get there? Should the strategy address questions of resources? Those resources are possibly human resources. Have we got the right people in place who are setting out these strategies? Following the answer you gave to my colleague, it seems that they are not.

Professor Karen Smith: Absolutely. This is where resources have to be included in future strategies, because that is going to force discussion of hard choices. Resources are aid, trade, diplomatic, military, CSDP and so on. In other words, we need to take an holistic view of all the resources available to the EU and how they could be used. Looking at how the EU as a whole uses its resources, there is considerable room for refocusing if flexibility can be brought into the process of

refocusing our resources. For example, the development aid budget is spread very widely as 148 countries received development aid in 2013. There is a process that is trying to graduate middle-income countries away from it, but 148 countries is a huge spread in the disbursement of resources. The 2015-19 EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy lists lots of objectives with no indication of where those objectives are going to be pursued. Again, resources could be refocused. The EU has dialogues with practically every country on earth. Does it need to have so many structured dialogues every year or every six months? There are statements on everything. With regard to the External Action Service, almost nothing that happens in the world on which there is not a statement. Is that necessary? Human resources have to be devoted to drawing up the statements, and frequently co-ordination meetings have to be held in which all 28 member states have to cross the "t"s and dot the "i"s. Is that necessary? There needs to be a tough discussion about priorities and where resources should and should not be devoted.

Mr Henry Wilkinson: Resources is a horse and cart issue, because without a strategy you do not know what resources you are going to have to ask for. Part of this in some ways is whether sufficient resources have been dedicated to the strategy and to formulating it. In the field that I look at, if the EU is really going to engage in a more robust external affairs approach, does it have adequate assessment capability to understand what is going on around it and to configure and adjust the strategy as it goes along? As it stands, we seem to get periodic downloads of thinking around the various issues, and every time they change they get more complex. A more sustainable path might be that if the EU is really committed to that, it should dedicate resources to understanding better the world in which it is operating. I sense that that is a very disjointed issue.

The other question about resources involves wealth. If the European Union is going to become more of a singular actor on the international stage, bearing in mind that it is not a nation state, what sort of resources is it going to dedicate to taking much more singular actions around things? That is a very difficult question, because the nation states that are its members will retain sovereign defence and security as primary tenets of their own legitimacy as Governments, and where does the European Union belong in that equation? Is it worth putting resources into that if it is never going to shape defence policies in a meaningful way?

Q4 Lord Balfe: The High Representative notes that the security context is radically different from 2003 and describes an arc of instability around the European Union and a world that is more complex and connected. Do you think this is a useful framework for understanding the security context facing the EU, and what in your view are the key external and internal trends that a new foreign policy should take into account? On my extensive travels within the EU, I have been struck by the way in which small states, which of course are not well represented around the globe, see CSDP as an adjunct to their own security concerns, for instance as in the Baltic states, and in another context for making other people aware of their security concerns, for

instance as in Portugal. In other words, they see it as much as an adjunct to their own foreign policy as they do forming a common foreign policy.

Professor Karen Smith: It is a useful starting point in the current context. In some ways it could be even bleaker in that we are surrounded by an arc of crisis, and as I will indicate later the neighbourhood is extremely challenging right now.

On the key external trend, the diffusion of power internationally means that we are not in a world of two superpowers or one superpower but in a much more multipolar world, which completely changes the context for how an actor such as the EU or its member states can think about interacting in international affairs. Essentially, third countries are no longer going to be as dependent on the EU as they have been, because they have other options and alternatives, which means that the EU has to think carefully about how it can persuade or encourage them to join its policy objectives. It also means that EU member states need to wake up to the fact that unity will become ever more important, given a more multipolar world. The key external trend is the diffusion of power, which is in the document.

The internal trend, which is perhaps also as worrying, is the increase in contestation of the European Union from within. That makes it more difficult for EU member states to achieve unity to deal with the diffusion of international power. Decreased internal support, both public and governmental, for the EU also deprives it of legitimacy and ultimately decreases its soft power, which I can say something about later. Small member states have traditionally seen the EU as a good power multiplier. It is extremely useful to them. There are trade-offs. In other words, they have to accept a certain understanding that they are not always going to get their way, but they are not going to in international relations in general. That is the plight of small states. In a way, all member states are small states with this diffusion of power internationally. Some small states have been the most supportive of a strong CSFP; others have been much less so. The key external trend is the increasing diffusion of power internationally.

Mr Henry Wilkinson: I find the document published in June a very thorough exposition of the trends and threats that the European Union is definitely facing. It covers most of the issues that I can think of. The question in the study is: what areas require the most weighting in prioritisation? On that point, it is a little less clear, because there is a cacophony of risks out there and there are so many complexities that you almost get to the point where, as there is so much complexity, you have to ask where one starts. When things are so interconnected, what is the knock-on effect of doing one thing? Can you tackle things piece by piece, or do you have to take a much more complete approach to deal with them? These are very challenging questions that I do not think this document has really shed light on yet, although it may be a bit premature to criticise it on that point.

In terms of the threats as I see them, I think they are broadly right, but the document has to be a lot more explicit about certain points.

Externally, a couple of issues are very important. It is very clear looking at, for example, the current refugee crisis, that domestic civil conflicts are a real issue in the international order. They are by far and away the most prevalent form of conflict. EU strategic policy needs to recognise that, to look at what it can do to stop conflicts breaking out, to develop a list of countries that are most at risk and to take much more robust action to help them. As we know, it takes an awful lot longer to end a war than to prevent one. That kind of strategy would be very important.

Corruption is another major source of insecurity and risk which I do not think is given enough priority. Corruption has undermined democratic revolutionary movements and various other movements that we should be looking favourably upon if we believe in the spread of democracy, because corruption erodes civil liberties and does all kinds of other things when you look at how states are trying to develop and pull themselves out of conflict cycles and various other things. Corruption is prolific. What can the EU do about it? Its greatest power is its economic clout, its access to markets and to various other things. Taking a much more robust approach to dealing with high-level corruption and poor governance is a top priority and where the EU can really make a difference.

External affairs is another. There are a couple of questions. We need to think very carefully about what is happening in the eastern neighbourhood, as we call it. Calling it a neighbourhood might be oversimplifying the issues. The EU needs to think very carefully about how it views Russia. It needs to think much more carefully about great power conflicts. With a lot of these issues there are the transnational risks that we have been talking about, and in the multipolar—if that is the right term; I do not know if it is any more—world order that we are now facing, where you have a lot of rising powers and some falling powers, we need to start thinking about the possibility of the return of great power conflicts and various other risks around that. I do not think that is given enough weight. Perhaps that is because that sort of conflict is becoming unthinkable, I do not know, but to my mind that is exactly the point that you need to start thinking about. It is a risk.

Internally, again I agree with Professor Smith and broadly with the document. One additional factor that might be worth thinking about is whether the EU is in a position right now politically to take on some of these challenges, which frankly require unity, or whether it is better to preserve the Union and to defer some of these issues if it is not quite ready for them yet. We are talking about how the smaller states see the European Union as a force multiplier, but we need to be worrying about what the larger powers' role will be. If Britain decides to withdraw, how will that affect strategy, given that Britain is one of the most active and capable military actors in the Union. There are questions about the appropriateness of policy and whether certain things should be taken on or whether they should be phased depending on how the political situation, the economic situation and so forth progress.

Q5 Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top: This might seem a strange question after all you have been saying, but the High Representative has been mandated by the European Council to draft a global foreign policy strategy. I would be grateful if you could give us your views on this and your assessment of such an approach. Given what you have said already, can you say a little more about whether you see the EU as having a global rather than a mainly regional role? Does it have the political will and the capacity so to do? If not, where is it overextended, and where should it focus its foreign policy?

Professor Karen Smith: I am going to be very academic in my terminology here, but I think it could be useful to distinguish between a global actor and having a global foreign policy. The EU is a global actor—that is, its resources are huge and it is a major trading power—particularly where there are strong supranational internal decision-making procedures such as trade policy or even to a certain extent environmental policy. In other words, it deserves a seat at the table. It might not always be influential at the table but it deserves a seat at it; it could not be absent. So in that sense it is a global actor, but that does not necessarily mean, particularly given the challenges around us, that it should have a global foreign policy. I would argue that it is now time to say that we must focus on the neighbourhood, which I would define much more widely than is indicated in a lot of policy documents coming out of the EU right now. The neighbourhood includes: the accession countries of the western Balkans, which have been ignored for far too long; countries that are in the European Neighbourhood Policy; Russia, which is not in the Neighbourhood Policy; and neighbours of the neighbours—the Sahel region, Iran and Iraq. In other words, it is this extremely unsettled neighbourhood that we currently live in. So I would argue very much that we need to sort out the multifaceted, multiple conflicts and crises in the region. If the EU does not attempt to sort out its neighbourhood, it will not have the credibility to have a more global foreign policy. In other words, thinking about how we might contribute to security in the East Asian theatre is not particularly relevant, given the security threats and the security situation in the neighbourhood. It is time to focus much more clearly on this. That is the priority.

One way of dealing with this is to work much more closely with other international actors—the UN, NATO, EU member states, other states, NGOs and so on—to build those networks, so that the EU itself does not have to do everything. It can do some things with other actors, but the priority for the next five to 10 years simply has to be the neighbourhood. It cannot be global.

Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top: I forgot to declare my interests. I am a trustee of Voluntary Services Overseas, which may bid for European funds. I should have said that at the beginning, sorry.

Mr Henry Wilkinson: I agree. The point about being a global actor and having a global foreign policy is a particularly astute point. We have talked about resources and various other things. If the European Union is really going to advance a strategy,

the question really is about what it can do. There is a whole raft of threats, and when we talk about security what we are really talking about in an interdependent world is risk management. The principles of risk management are essentially that you try to lower the risks by mitigating them. You lower the probability of them occurring where you can, and if you cannot you do as much as you can to reduce the impact. That is the basic principle. If one were to draw up a risk matrix of what the EU is facing, it is very clear that its immediate neighbourhoods are the most pressing problem. Therefore it seems logical that, with limited resources, that should be the area of priority. I fully understand the logic of why the European Union should aspire to be a global bloc, but again there is the question of whether this is premature. If the European Union is going to start acting like that and becoming a much more significant geopolitical actor in its own right, it also has to recognise that other rising powers are going to start seeing it as such. There is also the potential there of taking on more than it can chew with competitors and even adversaries. So my personal view, which I think I share with Professor Smith, is that focusing on what is immediately pressing is the most important issue, and that is the immediate periphery and the things that are spilling over, and dealing with them.

The other aspect of global power and working with multilateral institutions is getting people to commit to common interests and pursuing common policy goals. A lot more effort could be made on that. One of the things that is particularly interesting in this context is that it is quite easy to look at the world at the moment and perceive it to be an increasingly dangerous place, which the report makes fairly clear. I am not sure that I entirely agree with that assessment. If you look at where the conflicts are in the world, what we are really seeing is that some parts of the world are getting an awful lot worse, but an awful lot of places are getting better. Actually, there is greater polarity between the stable countries and the unstable ones. As it happens, the countries that are in the worst shape are much closer to us than other regions. That is worth bearing in mind as well.

Q6 Lord Triesman: Good morning. You may feel that you have answered the question that I shall ask in response to the last question, but I would like to check that. If you were given what I suppose would be the opportunity but that might be the curse of writing this foreign policy, what would you prioritise? If you had to limit yourselves to the top two or three things that ought to be prioritised, what would they be? I have one further thought. You both said that attention needs to be given to doing the things that you can do. What triaging system would you have in order to identify the things you cannot and should not do, even if they look sufficiently dramatic on the world stage that there appears to be a demand to do them?

Professor Karen Smith: I repeat that the focus should be on the neighbourhood and the wider periphery. There are two top issues. One is the conflicts that have security implications for the EU with the risk of terrorism and the massive refugee movements that we are seeing. So the first is dealing with conflicts, engaging with peace

processes or whatever—in other words, there are multiple conflicts here—and post-conflict situations, such as in Libya, which deserve attention. Conflicts pose risks to the EU, so there is clear self-interest in dealing with them.

The second issue is a less self-interested goal, and that is dealing with the risks of gross human rights violations and mass atrocities in our neighbourhood. In other words, if you go down the lists of areas where the population is most at risk, an awful lot of them are in the neighbourhood. Some are obvious, such as Syria, while others are not quite as dramatic, for example the Central African Republic, but addressing the presence of ongoing mass atrocities is the number two objective that I would put.

Part of the problem in the EU is that because there is no prioritisation of objectives, the latest crisis can crowd out any preventive action. In other words, everybody focuses on the latest crisis and attention and resources are diverted. Yet the EU's greatest strength and comparative advantage is its longer-term policy. In other words, in the long term its trade, aid and structured relationships with third countries could allow it to have more impact on preventing conflicts, atrocities and gross human rights violations. Again, that requires a steely-eyed focus on the neighbourhood/periphery. A strategy implies that you are making hard choices, so those would be the top two things that, if I were President of the EU or whatever, I would recommend.

Mr Henry Wilkinson: The first priority, to my mind, should be a back-to-basics approach. Looking at everything that is going on, it is quite easy to lose sight of the EU's purpose and why it is a good thing. It may be because I was a student of history, but I see the European Union as something that came about to prevent conflict within Europe, so the first strategic objective of the European Union must surely be to preserve that European order, to preserve the integrity of the Union in so far as it is the best mechanism that we have found in the history of Europe to prevent conflict within Europe. Everything that we do should surely be oriented around making sure that that is happening. That includes making sure that we do not take on policies that could create schisms within the Europe, or invite adversaries to adopt a divide-and-rule approach, or do things that might pick the alliance apart. As part of that, we need to be very cautious about the implications of the rise of extremist parties and movements within Europe. This is potentially the most pressing security threat into the longer term. Whatever strategy we have in place must have first and foremost preserving security within the European Union.

For the second issue, I would look at the most pressing issues. Terrorism, as we currently see it, is a very important issue. There are a lot of reasons why terrorism exists; it is a very complex problem. If we are going to grasp the nettle and deal with the problem, we need to think very carefully about policy towards Syria and about dealing with the group that calls itself Islamic State and its offshoots in places such as Libya, which is essentially a completely anarchic conflict zone right on our borders. These are the clear and present dangers, so if I were doing this I would probably say,

"Let's see if we can deliver some results in these areas first before we start pushing things".

If we are going to talk about dealing with human rights, which are very important in preventing genocide, at what point are we going to declare the things that we see as war crimes as acts of genocide that compel us to act? If you are going to do that, you have to be able to intervene, which is another element. Probably a third element is having a serious conversation between member states about intervention. If we are going to start talking about hard policy and hard power, we need to be talking about making hard decisions and doing things that might hurt but which in the longer term improve our security.

Lord Triesman: I think we have a very strong sense of how you would order priorities and for what reason. Does that imply that Cathy Ashton should not have been sent to spend so much time dealing with the prospect of nuclear armaments developing in Iran? Would that have been inside or outside that set?

Professor Karen Smith: I would classify Iran as part of the periphery. In other words, it is the neighbour of the neighbours. There was a lot of discussion about how wide the European neighbourhood policy should be. For example, lots of the Persian Gulf countries are not included, yet the security context is obviously interlinked. I would have counselled not chasing strategic partners. The EU has a bizarre list of strategic partners. It is almost randomly selected. I would not have gone down that route.

Q7 Lord Dubs: I shall stay with the eastern and southern neighbourhood and press you a little further. It has been suggested that the EU has been quite ineffective, that it is not a strategic player and that its support for democracy is inconsistent and especially ineffective in the southern neighbourhood. What is your assessment of EU action in the neighbourhood? What do you think the weaknesses are? Is there a tendency to say that a lot of these things should go into the "too difficult" box and be left aside while we do the easier things? Is that a fair criticism?

Professor Karen Smith: The key weakness with the southern neighbourhood was to attribute stability to the lack of democracy, and therefore to support authoritarian regimes. I fear that we are going back to that, so I think that is a key weakness. On the eastern neighbourhood, the debates that we have tended to have about whether to offer the prospect of accession to the eastern neighbours are a diversion. First, any such issue is far in the future, given the state of those countries, yet I have been somewhat dismayed to see, for example, lots of the discussion about Ukraine being that if only there had been a promise of enlargement, we would not be in this situation. I do not think that the promise of enlargement is a panacea, a magic wand that you wave and suddenly everybody steps into line. That is a bit of a diversion of diplomatic attention and perhaps public debate. There has not been enough attention because there is a kind of block—if we get too close, maybe they will think they should become EU members—and that is affecting an internal EU debate. I would remove the question and say that we are not going to deal with it.

Having said that, what is not included here is the question of the western Balkans, which have been ignored far too much. It is a mystery to me that we have almost walked away, in a sense, from the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, because it is apparently too difficult for us to manage. We need to refocus on getting all the western Balkans, which means solving certain issues with Macedonia, Bosnia and so on, into the EU. There was a loss of attention; attention drained away from key areas in the neighbourhood there, so those are the weaknesses that remain.

Mr Henry Wilkinson: The record on the southern neighbourhood is pretty dismal. The question about the Arab spring is whether it was a fantastic opportunity that was squandered or wasted. In reality, it was a failure not just of the EU but of its member states, the US and pretty much everybody else. There was an opportunity for change, and now there are civil wars across the region and the terrorist threat. Now in Europe and US there is pretty unanimous agreement among officials that the terrorism threat has never been higher. People are tying this very much to the emergence of organisations such as Islamic State, which have energised radicalisation across the region. We are now dealing with a very complex problem. Our record on the Arab spring was not particularly great, so the questions are: what we are going to do about it now, and what can be done about it now? At the core of this debate—I am speaking specifically about north Africa and the Middle East, and particularly the countries that you could call Arab spring countries—is the very challenging issue of the need for security and the need to promote liberal democratic values. It is a very difficult debate, because which comes first, and are they mutually exclusive in certain contexts? In my experience, looking at conflict zones, liberal democratic values very rarely exist in practice, because without security nothing else really functions. We have to think about our record on promoting democracy and liberalism, because what really needs to come first? Can we promote them while there is ongoing conflict, severe terrorism threats and so forth emanating from the region? On the question of the record and how the EU needs to proceed, these sorts of questions need to be asked. How does the European Union deal with issues of this kind? How does it reconcile its liberal democratic, humanitarian mandates with a slightly more realist approach?

The Chairman: Within the context of the questions that you have just been asked on the Middle East, how would you assess the record of the EU in relation to the Israel/Palestine dispute, and what would be your recommendation about what the policy should be going forward?

Mr Henry Wilkinson: I think the record is pretty poor. You can measure that just by the fact that we do not seem to be any further down the line. In fact, if anything, at least when it comes to the Israel/Palestine conflict, we seem to be further back than where we were. More robust action needs to be taken to incentivise both parties to find a resolution. I do not know the answer to that. The record so far has been pretty dismal, and it needs to be rethought.

The Chairman: What do you mean by robust?

Mr Henry Wilkinson: The question is: why does the conflict matter so much? The 2003 document argues that it is one of the most pivotal issues that need to be dealt with, and we have to ask ourselves why it is so important. Central to that is that it is used as a source of grievance. It is exploited by undemocratic Governments and others in the Middle East. Secondly, there is a profound sense of injustice around how the Palestinians are treated that resonates very widely. There are double standards about Israeli actions and other actions when looking at the conflict and various UN Security Council resolutions and their enforcement. There needs to be a more consistent approach in dealing with it. As the saying goes, if you have always done what you have done, you always get what you have. That is the policy that we have with Israel and the Palestinians.

Professor Karen Smith: Effectively, we know that the answer is a two-state solution. We have known that for some time. There are even parties on the ground that have agreed this in separate negotiations in Europe. In other words, there is large-scale agreement on this. We all know where it is. The EU needs to be firmer about that being the future and where we want to go, so action that undermines that should not be tolerated as it currently is.

Mr Henry Wilkinson: It is a matter of mediation. European countries have certainly played a role in that, and that is important and should be kept going. The question is: who is the most credible interlocutor between the Israelis and the Palestinians? To my mind, that is the United States, so the question is: what is the EU doing to ensure that the United States maintains that position and moves things forwards?

Q8 The Chairman: Moving away from that area, the European security strategy 2003 said that in order for the Union to play an active role in international affairs and meet the threats facing it, it should be more active, more coherent and more capable. Do you see any progress towards those desirable attributes during the period since 2003? What in your view are the key structural and operational factors that inhibit an EU foreign policy?

Professor Karen Smith: There has been progress, particularly because of the reforms that were implemented under the Lisbon treaty. There is considerable awareness of the fact that there needs to be more coherence between policy areas, that there should be a comprehensive approach and so on. There has been progress. However, the key factors that inhibit effective EU foreign policy are the ones that have already been mentioned: the lack of priorities and therefore the lack of hard choices by member states, which in turn indicates a lack of unity about what should be done and what the focus should be; attention being easily diverted; the disbursement of resources; and the lack of resources.

If we were talking about corruption, for example, one striking example is that the EU mission to Ukraine, which is supposed to help with the rule of law, has less than 200 people. Given the scale of corruption in Ukraine, that seems like a drop in a bucket. There does not appear to have been much enthusiasm for foreign policy in general in

the past few years. The euro crisis has been incredibly diverting of the attention of key players for the past few years. There appears to have been a lack of appetite for engaging in hard discussions about foreign policy. The euro crisis has been very damaging in that respect.

Mr Henry Wilkinson: I would not add to that.

Q9 Baroness Coussins: Professor Smith, in one of your earlier answers when you talked about external and internal trends, I think you said that you thought there had been a decline in soft power in the EU. Certainly other people have commented that EU soft power has not been particularly effective or had much value. Could you say a bit more about that? What are, or should be, the EU's strongest soft-power tools, and how should they be more effectively exercised?

Professor Karen Smith: I am afraid I am going to be very academic here and stick to the original concept of soft power as put forward by Joseph Nye over the past decade or so. That is, soft power is the power of attraction. In other words, you cannot manufacture it; it just comes out of a country's or an organisation's culture and values and the extent to which external policies coincide with that culture and those values. Soft power cannot be created, but a closer alignment of external policies with the values which the entity—the EU or a state—claims to follow augments soft power. Likewise, a failure to do that—hypocrisy, double standards and whatnot—force a decline in soft power. Soft power can be squandered.

Soft power is very important for the EU. It has been an incredibly inspiring model. We have already heard about its record of reconciliation and preventing conflict within Europe. It deserved the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize for that. In fact, it should arguably have earned it much earlier for that. It is an inspiring model overall of how states can interact with each other in international affairs. For that, its soft-power resources are very high. The important thing is that for an entity that is highly dependent on voluntary action, firstly the voluntary consent of the member states to engage in this, and secondly because it does not have huge command-power resources—that is, the power to coerce other states to do what it wants—it is going to get other actors to do what it wants largely through persuasion, and what will help there is soft power. Soft power could even obviate the need for command power in certain circumstances. At least, that was Nye's understanding of it: that with enough soft power, people want to follow you; they do not want to go against you. In that respect, the EU needs to be particularly concerned not to deprive itself of its enormous reservoir of soft-power resources.

Mr Henry Wilkinson: Again, I agree. To my mind, soft power is really what the EU has been about. I wonder whether the question of strategy is the EU contemplating moving into a more hard-power—I was going to say neighbourhood, but the word seems to be used for other things in the context of the EU. Soft power is immensely important. It helps to deal with conflicts, it helps to prevent them, it incentivises people. We were talking about whether the EU should play a global role. In many

ways, it can play a very important role. We also need to contemplate the fact that with the emergence of rising powers and the decline of others, they might find that the EU is very valuable in the international system in certain aspects: mediation, representation, setting standards, teaching people how we have done it here.

Q10 The Chairman: Could I ask you one final question? At the moment, the agenda is dominated by the refugee crisis, which is proving extremely divisive between the member states. In your opinion, will it be possible for this exercise even to get off the ground while the member states are at loggerheads on how to deal with the refugees?

Professor Karen Smith: I think it is crucial that the member states talk about longer-term strategy, otherwise we have yet another crisis knocking long-term strategic thinking off the agenda. It is absolutely crucial for them to sit down and have hard discussions about this. Ultimately, lots of very sensible suggestions have been put forward about how Europe could approach the refugee crisis. It would involve a fundamental rethink of European asylum policies, but the direction is fairly clear and events are going to force the rethink. But that does not mean that this should be an opportunity for EU member states to avoid having hard discussions about longer-term strategy.

Mr Henry Wilkinson: I agree. The refugee crisis highlights why this is such an important area of policy. Going back to our initial points about what strategy is, if strategy is a road map and a plan of action, what the refugee crisis highlights is that whatever it is, it needs to include how it will be sold back to the electorates of the European countries. There have always been questions about how representative the European Union really is. We talked about these kinds of policies being too lofty. The European countries really need to start selling these and being very clear so that there is genuine buy-in, and to explain to people how the policy will work, that it will deliver results, and that these sorts of crises can be dealt with better or even pre-empted. It should be an integral part of the plan, whatever form it takes when it is presented.

The Chairman: I said that that would be the final question, but I overlooked Lady Armstrong, who had wanted to come in. I am sorry about that.

Thank you very much indeed.