



Select Committee on the European Union

External Affairs Sub-Committee

Corrected oral evidence: Common Foreign and Security Policy

Thursday 6 April 2017

10 am

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Lord Horam (Chairman); Lord Balfe; Lord Dubs; Earl of Oxford and Asquith; Lord Risby; Lord Stirrup; Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean.

Evidence Session No. 1

Heard in Public

Questions 1 - 9

Witnesses

I: Professor Richard Whitman, Head of School, Professor of Politics and International Relations and Director of the Global Europe Centre, University of Kent; Professor Karen Smith, Professor of International Relations and Director of the European Foreign Policy Unit, London School of Economics and Political Science.

USE OF THE TRANSCRIPT

1. This is an uncorrected transcript of evidence taken in public and webcast on www.parliamentlive.tv.
2. Any public use of, or reference to, the contents should make clear that neither Members nor witnesses have had the opportunity to correct the record. If in doubt as to the propriety of using the transcript, please contact the Clerk of the Committee.
3. Members and witnesses are asked to send corrections to the Clerk of the Committee within 7 days of receipt.

Examination of witnesses

Professor Richard Whitman and Professor Karen Smith.

Q1 The Chairman: Professor Whitman and Professor Smith, thank you for being on time. I noticed you were waiting very professionally outside as we assembled. I remind you that the session is in public, is being broadcast and will be transcribed. I hope that does not prevent you being brutally frank; we like a bit of brutal frankness. Of course, we will send the transcript to you after the session for any errors you may find.

This is a serious and very interesting subject. Could you begin by giving us an overview of the importance of the European Union's common foreign and security policy to the ability of the UK to achieve its foreign policy goals? What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages to the UK of being part of the CFSP?

Professor Karen Smith: Thank you for inviting me to give evidence. The common foreign and security policy is of clear advantage to the UK. The disadvantages are very minor. The EU is a power multiplier for its Member States. It has considerable collective resources, the promise of enlargement, a large aid budget, and it is the largest trading block in the world. That sheer size enables Member States to have an impact greater than they could have independently.

That is particularly the case in the European neighbourhood with the promise of enlargement, which gives the EU a lot of leverage. It does not mean that the EU is without weaknesses. The fact that Member States have the power to veto anything or to block policies can mean that policy-making is slow and laborious, and can result in lowest common denominator outcomes. However, the EU is unique in grouping together states with common interests and common values, and arguably the UK is closer to its EU partners in a range of interests and values than to any other partner worldwide.

There are few costs to participating in the Common Foreign and Security Policy, which is part of the problem; states do not have to go along with everyone, so collective decision-making can be difficult. There are countless examples of how the EU framework has helped the UK—policy on Syria, sanctions on Syria, sanctions on Russia over its policies in Ukraine, the neighbourhood policy in general, the prospect of enlargement to the western Balkans, the Iran agreement and so on. There are considerable examples in which UK foreign policy interests have been fostered and furthered by the common foreign and security policy.

The Chairman: Is not your second point that getting agreement slows things down a rather serious disadvantage?

Professor Karen Smith: Yes, but what is the alternative? Perhaps it is to run ahead of everyone, look behind and see that no one is following. At least with collective decision-making you are 28—soon to be 27—

states with a potentially much more powerful influence in international relations than one state acting on its own.

Professor Richard Whitman: I will add a couple of points, if I may. For all its faults, the system offers efficiencies for the UK in the sense that it is able to do business with a significant number of states at the same time. It also provides the capacity to have an intuitive sense of where other European countries are on key issues at any moment in time.

On the disadvantages, there is the potential for path dependency—in other words, the UK thinks that, when there is a foreign policy issue, the EU is the place where one goes to do it and does not necessarily think critically about whether it is the best venue for doing so. Allied to that is the question of whether the EU's ordering of interests is also the best ordering of interests for the UK as regards where resources are allocated, particularly spending on neighbourhood policy or development policy and so on.

The Chairman: What is your point there? I am not quite sure.

Professor Richard Whitman: It is that, as we exit the European Union, we have to ask ourselves whether our order of priorities would be the same as they are within the European Union, approaching the European Union in its foreign policy area in a different way or—

The Chairman: Are you saying that inside the European Union our interests have not necessarily been the same as the other countries or the European Union view?

Professor Richard Whitman: It is more that other Member States do not necessarily share the same ordering of interests as the UK. There are different reasons why states would have a different order of interests. There are historical reasons, as in interest in other states; for example, the EU has put a lot of effort into central Africa, which is not an area where the UK historically has had significant interests. The European Union has focused quite a lot recently on the Sahel, which the UK has not thought about as a primary area of interest historically. You could argue that perhaps the EU has neglected some areas, such as the Gulf—relations with the GCC states, for example—which the UK would probably rate somewhat higher than the relative ordering of importance that the EU has had.

Q2 **Lord Risby:** Professor Whitman, thank you very much for that observation, which reminds us of interlocking relationships and how they can be very efficacious.

Turning to your very comprehensive paper, we are in what we could describe as known unknown territory at the moment. In your paper on the co-ordination of foreign policy, you talk about the possibility of integrated, associated and detached. First, how do you feel that the integrated option might work in practice, given the architecture at the moment, and what would such an arrangement mean for the impact of the UK within the EU post Brexit?

Professor Richard Whitman: One of the advantages of being an academic is that we can speculate more than policymakers can.

Lord Risby: That is exactly why you are here.

Professor Richard Whitman: The starting point for the thinking, which leads in very nicely after your previous question, is what the advantages are that the UK currently gets from a foreign policy-making system and whether it is possible to preserve those advantages in the future. All the options are essentially a trade-off between the degree of involvement in EU policy formation and the degree of autonomy that the UK wants in the future in its foreign, security and defence policy.

Essentially, the integrated option is one that does not currently exist with any other non-Member State. The EU has different kinds of relationships, and that is what the other two models are intended to convey. Does the European Union, and indeed the UK, want to look for a different kind of relationship in the foreign, security and defence policy area because of the UK's past association with EU foreign policy and because the UK will arguably be the most significant European state outside the European Union that has significant diplomatic, security and defence capabilities? It would be fair to say that it would require considerable imagination on both parts, because the European Union has not geared up its foreign and security policy system to have outsiders involved as insiders, in effect, in policy formation.

The problem that we face is akin to what I would call the travel adapter problem: whenever we move to and from the continent, we need some kind of adapter to connect to the electricity network. We need some creativity as to what the adapter might be to allow the UK to plug in. There are ghosts of that in the system—for example, the Foreign Affairs Council. People such as the UN Secretary-General, the NATO Secretary-General and the US Secretary of State have been invited to Foreign Affairs Council meetings, but once you get below that level—the Political and Security Committee, for example—the plug-ins for non-Member States are more problematic to imagine. I was suggesting that if there is a will there is a way, but I guess we are at a point in time at which it is quite difficult to calibrate the degree of will on the EU side.

Lord Risby: If we were to move down the track to what you described as associated or detached, could you give an assessment of what you think the impact on the United Kingdom would be in the first instance? Is there any kind of financial contribution aspect that springs to mind in that regard?

Professor Richard Whitman: It depends on where the EU goes in its foreign, security and defence policy. Since June, with the global strategy and the things the Commission has done in its involvement in the defence area and so on, there is a programme of work that may see a deepening of defence integration, in particular on the part of EU Member States. It is not just the situation that we have now; it is the situation that the UK is likely to face in two years' time.

On the costs, there are two areas worth thinking about. One is the cost that might be involved in associating ourselves with the operational side of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, whether we want to be associated with the CSDP operations, civilian or military, which we could be as a non-member, and as other non-members are—some of those costs would fall on the UK in the contributions that it makes—or whether we want to strike up a relationship with the European Defence Agency, where if we were a non-member we would not be paying the membership fee. If we take Norway as an example, it is a heavy contributor to programmes of the European Defence Agency. With things such as battle groups, if the UK commits its forces as battle groups, there are costs for the UK, not least opportunity costs from having those forces available to the EU.

More broadly in the foreign and security policy area, there are questions for the UK as to how our diplomacy development policy spend, for example, is spent alongside or through the European Union, because some of that will be coming back, and how far we want to pursue some of that spend in the future within and through the EU.

Professor Karen Smith: Right now, thinking not about CSDP, because there are several questions on CSDP arrangements later, but about Common Foreign and Security Policy, the variety of models of co-operation that the EU has with third countries is quite extreme. Most third countries—non-EU European countries—are asked to align with CFSP statements and sanctions. That is about the extent of it. There may be intensive political dialogue that might allow a decision-shaping mechanism for those third countries, but essentially they are very much on the outside.

In thinking about an associate membership of the UK with the CFSP, there are quite a few difficulties. There have been various attempts to come up with methods of co-operation with wider countries—for example, Turkey in the late 1990s—and they foundered on several issues. First, the EU will want to maintain its autonomy in decision-making, so it will not allow a third country to have sway over its decisions. That is the first obstacle as I see it, and how one can get over it I am not quite sure.

Secondly, the process of internal co-ordination in the EU on foreign policy issues takes a considerable amount of time and energy; so the outreach capacity of the EU to deal with third countries is limited. I have studied the EU co-ordination process within the UN and this is a classic issue. The EU spends a lot of time talking to itself and not necessarily with third countries because it does not have the time to do so. The UK would be a third country.

The third issue that is somewhat problematic is that CFSP interlinks with all sorts of other policies—development, military, CSDP, trade, aid and climate change policies. You cannot separate CFSP and consider it to be an isolated policy from those other areas. If there was to be some sort of associate membership, the EU would ask how much influence the UK would have over those linked policies.

The fourth issue is whether the EU would want to tolerate a bespoke arrangement for yet another third country or whether it would seek a more harmonised arrangement in which a variety of third countries, including the UK, would share the same access—Norway, for example, or Turkey. Would there be a model for all third countries in which the UK would be grouped?

The fifth issue is how to involve the UK. It could go to Foreign Affairs Council meetings occasionally, but what about the Political and Security Committee? How often would it go to these meetings? Would it be every other meeting or only informal meetings? It is not quite clear.

The sixth issue is what the UK would give in return. What will it promise in return for the privilege of being able to be included in some way, shape or form in the decision-shaping mechanisms of the EU? Is it going to promise alignment on all issues? Is it going to contribute financially? Is it going to contribute more than it has so far in CSDP missions? It does not contribute a lot right now to CSDP issues—a very low contribution—so is it going to do more? Those are the kinds of questions that would be asked on the EU side if the UK requested some kind of special relationship with the EU. It would be nice to think that we could have an associate membership and that somehow it would all be very smooth, but there are some difficult questions and issues that would be raised by the EU.

Lord Balfe: Professor Smith has outlined far more eloquently the very points of reservation that I have. The word I latched on to in Professor Whitman's introduction was "invited". Surely the reality of what is happening is that the foreign policy centre is going to shift to Berlin and Britain will be invited when it can contribute money, manpower or something else that fits into the broad thrust of a policy decided elsewhere.

Professor Karen Smith: If I may, I will refer, broadly speaking, to the policy that Norway has had with the CSDP. It was extremely concerned when the WEU was replaced by the CSDP, because it had an associate membership in the WEU and was more included in decision-making. It has traded—it has bought—influence by contributions. That is how it has played it. It pledged troops for the Helsinki Headline Goal, for example, way back at the beginning of the 2000s. It contributes to battle groups and to CSDP missions. In other words, it tries to be a player and hopes that will give it more influence.

Lord Balfe: Within policy objectives set elsewhere.

Professor Karen Smith: Yes, absolutely.

Lord Balfe: That is the key.

Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean: I absolutely see the reservations that you have, and there is a clear issue of the practicalities of dealing with these three models, but, having been a Foreign Office Minister for

eight years, I do not think it bears a lot of resemblance to my experience. It is not just about when you get round the table trying to get a common security policy; it happens on the telephone between key movers before they get round the table.

Let us take Iran as an example. There were three key movers on Iran: Germany, France and us. The policy was decided pretty well before the formal meetings between those three countries. You may say that we are writing ourselves out of that. I find that very hard to believe, because we are still Europeans and we still have all the same instincts. We probably mostly agree with a great deal of what is happening. I do not agree with Lord Balfe about Berlin—I think Berlin is different again. French foreign policy may well be more influential than it is at the moment because we are at quite a balance over it, but we are still going to be on the UN Security Council; Germany is not.

The position over Norway, although you are right in an academic sense—forgive me—does not seem to me to be how the practicalities will work in the future. You are putting forward these three models, but I wonder whether what is going to happen will be enormously different from what happens at the moment. We still spend more on our military budget than any other country in Europe and we can still project more, and that means something in foreign policy terms—what you are able to do militarily when you run out of all the other options.

I find what you are saying not realistic in practical terms. There will still be a Foreign Secretary picking up a phone. There will still be discussions going on. We may be invited, as you say, and I agree that it is not the same as having the right to be there, but we do not write ourselves out of all those foreign policy objectives simply by moving out. Personally, I wish we were not moving out; I am not a Brexiteer in that sense—I am very much a pro-European person—but on those issues I found the paper, if I may say so, too academic; it did not deal with the practicalities of what has been happening and what is likely to happen. I am sorry to be so challenging, but I will only say it when you have gone, so I might as well say it when you are here.

Professor Richard Whitman: We probably agree that there are models in existence for third countries, but they are countries that are not the same as the UK. As you quite rightly say, the UK role in foreign, security and defence policy is somewhat different perhaps from other Member States, and the UK has all sorts of other instruments and ways to engage. From the EU side, it has tended to think about non-Member States in a particular kind of way and to be more of a demander—

Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean: But nobody has ever left the EU before. Nobody has had that big role within the EU. We all know each other. We are not going to stop ringing each other up to talk about things simply because we have left. When push comes to shove over a big foreign policy issue, we are still going to be part of the discussion that is going on even if it is not formally round a table. It may be that we get invited—you are quite right to use the word—but it is absolutely not the

same as Norway. I think you are leaving that aside.

We have been a friend to the Commonwealth round the table at foreign and security policy discussions, and you rightly say that we are the closest to the Gulf states. I have just come off a plane from Saudi Arabia. Everybody is very interested in what is going to happen post Brexit. As to the idea that we will no longer have the influence that we have had, at least for a period we will go on having that sort of influence because of our closeness to a lot of the countries that are of serious interest over foreign policy at the moment within the EU.

Professor Karen Smith: As regards the phone calls, the out-of-the room networking and so on, that is undoubtedly so. The problem that the UK will face is that the phone calls could often be about what we should do as the EU, and if that turns to be how we should arrange our diplomacy within the EU on any particular topic, the UK could be cut out of it. On large foreign policy issues—an invasion of X, or something like that—I have no doubt that people would also be on the phone to the UK. The possible risk for the UK is that the day-to-day stuff and setting out of the broad context of the neighbourhood, north Africa and so on, would be set in terms of the conversations about what the EU should be doing, and there might be—I fear there will be—a bit of a knock.

The Chairman: If Baroness Symons is right that on the big stuff we will be called in, or invited in, to give a view, maybe we are fundamentally achieving what we want.

Professor Karen Smith: Maybe. In other words, I guess it would depend on what had already happened in the meantime. Politics is not just the huge, epic-making decisions; it is also a lot of the stuff that happens day to day within those epic-making decisions.

The Chairman: True, but if you are in the big stuff you are in the game, are you not?

Professor Karen Smith: Yes, but the game could have been shifted.

Lord Stirrup: I was going to say this later in my question anyway, so I am not taking more of the Committee's time. I understand exactly what Baroness Symons is saying and I would not comment on the Common Foreign and Security Policy side. When it comes to common security and defence, one can be invited into the room for the discussion or the big debate, as it were, but my experience is that a great deal is done at the apparatchik level, if I can put it that way—at the sherpa level, perhaps one might say—in foreign policy. It is done in the Justus Lipsius building in a great deal of detail among the staff, where we will not be represented once we are outside the EU.

In big foreign policy decisions, one can see how nevertheless the UK would retain a great deal of influence. Professor Whitman, you asked what the UK is going to give in return. The UK is giving its alignment with the EU, which presumably, given the EU's status in the world and, as

Baroness Symons said, given our membership of the Security Council and so on, is worth quite a lot. When it comes to common security and defence policy, when people are going out on the ground in danger, it is rather a different matter. The detailed things—the detailed strategic thinking and the planning behind it—matter, and it is very hard for me to see how we are going to be involved in all of that outwith the EU. Yes, we can connect at several points in time, but we will not be part of the process. That matters, it seems to me, and it matters particularly when people's lives are at stake. I do not know if you want to comment on that.

Professor Richard Whitman: Maybe I could connect the two points. It is important that we draw a distinction between the EU foreign policy-making system and the bilateral foreign policy-making systems, because we are obviously not leaving the bilateral and other multilateral forums. We have spent a bit of time looking at European Union foreign policy-making across time, and one of the things we are acutely aware of is that the system itself has been constructed in a particular kind of way to lead to particular kinds of outcomes. Therefore, what is in the treaties and what the institutional arrangements are do not tell us the whole story of the way that foreign policy co-ordination works within and between individual countries.

Critics would argue that that sometimes gets in the way in the rapidity of decision-making, but there will obviously be a different configuration of relationships as a consequence of the UK not being in the room or the working groups or, potentially, not on the PSC when it comes to decision-taking in the future. It is worth thinking now about those kinds of issues, and about whether there are alternatives to the current arrangements that still allow the UK to have an input. The alternatives that exist at the moment involving other countries are not ones that would be a good alternative for the UK, particularly, as I would see it, if there is a lack of imagination on the EU side in thinking about the UK in a particular way as a non-Member State. The models that we have with, for example, countries associated with CSDP operations are not good in the phase of taking decisions about operations, where the UK would most certainly want to be involved before it committed itself.

I do not think we are necessarily talking at cross-purposes, but I would probably come at it from the perspective that what we know about the way that third countries were plugged into the EU in the past is that it was definitely a second-best arrangement. Will the UK, because it is a choice, have to work much harder on the bilateral and diplomacy with other Member State Governments, and/or will it work much harder in other forums, such as NATO? There is now a deepening of the relationship between the EU and NATO, so will the UK work the NATO end much harder in order to see the relationship work better to the UK's advantage once it is outside the EU?

Q3 **Lord Dubs:** Some of my question has gone or has been overtaken by earlier ones. The EU has outlined plans to increase security and defence

co-operation between the EU 27 after Brexit. We are not dealing with a static situation, are we? Is it not likely that they will take that much further and that the process—the approach to us—will be on an à la carte basis? Sometimes they will ask the Brits to get involved and at other times they will not. Is that not what you have been saying up to now?

Professor Karen Smith: The process of security and defence co-operation in the EU will continue and will get deeper. We are not talking about an EU army. That is never going to happen. It is not on the cards; the security cultures of the Member States are far too different, and always will be, for the foreseeable future. There will be tighter co-operation, and building more collective capability certainly is on the cards.

It seems to me that on the CSDP issue there is more opportunity for the UK to be more closely involved. First, there are already arrangements with third countries to participate in CSDP missions, so it could just deepen a path that they have already gone on. The UK might be asked, but it could also volunteer à la Norway, to participate in CSDP missions, and the EU in turn, because of the UK's capabilities, might be more willing to be flexible, perhaps in allowing it more of a decision-shaping role-plus, which might get away from some of the issues about not being in at the decision-making stage in CSDP. Certainly, the EU has already made a fair amount of progress on security and defence, including the developing co-operation with NATO in the last year.

Q4 **Lord Stirrup:** I am rather worried about the seeming approach that you can treat foreign and security policy as separate from security and defence policy. If you are a Clausewitzian, you believe that war is just a continuation of policy by other means; in other words, it is a spectrum. Although of course one can contemplate scenarios where one might join with the EU, once we have left it, in applying sanctions somewhere, clearly there are areas where you could ring-fence an activity, but particularly when it comes to defence policy and defence activity that must be in pursuit of a political foreign policy aim. The two cannot be separated. Although one might do a little on the foreign policy side without going into security and defence, I find it hard to know—I wonder if you could explain how it might happen—how you could do the reverse, and co-operate in security and defence without having that rooting in foreign policy in the first place. Could you respond to that?

Professor Richard Whitman: The two things are more and more conjoined as far as the EU is concerned. In the past, for political reasons, there was an attempt to keep the two separate, partly because some Member States had difficulties in the development of the defence dimension, and obviously the Danes are still outside the CSDP. What is clear with the EU global strategy, and in the implementation plan that goes with it, is the fact that the European Commission will have a much greater role in the defence area because of the defence action plan and the implementation plan for the EU and NATO. There is a lot going on over the next two years, and a lot going on in ways that make it quite difficult for the EU to separate the CFSP and the CSDP, even if it wanted

to do so. It makes it very difficult to think about connectedness for the UK in the future, if it is easier in some senses for the UK to do some of the defence things, when the UK has not been as enthusiastic as other Member States for those in the past.

Lord Stirrup: Can I probe on that point, because the UK being a poor participant has been mentioned several times? It is true that the UK in percentage volume contribution has been at the low end of the spectrum, but some of the capabilities that the UK has provided to CSDP missions or CSDP-related missions are not available elsewhere, except perhaps in the United States. That is almost certainly going to remain the case. Qualitatively, the UK makes, from time to time, extremely important contributions—important to the EU and to the EU CSDP. If that remains the case, will it not also be important for the EU to find some way of bringing the UK into the foreign and security policy decision-making process so that the entire spectrum can be covered—otherwise, as we are exploring here, it is rather difficult for the UK just to leap in at the military end without having been involved in everything that goes before it?

Professor Richard Whitman: I certainly would not use the word 'poor' in describing the UK's contributions in the past. If you could separate the question of the UK contributions to CSDP missions from the question of what is perceived to be a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the UK for the development of the CSDP, that is where I would draw a distinction. Other Member States would probably draw a distinction as well.

A real issue for the other Member States in the future, having given themselves the objective to have more strategic autonomy over the EU, is how to realise that with the UK not being involved; many of the things that the UK contributes, or can contribute, to EU defence capability are capabilities that the UK has or has committed to procure in the future. That is where the EU has to think quite hard about the way it wants to relate to and use the UK. That is probably where the trade-offs are in UK involvement in decision-making, or decision-shaping, in return for access to the capabilities the UK has that other Member States are very unlikely to have in the foreseeable future. The kind of money, for example, that the European Commission is talking about under its defence action plan, and the timescales it is talking about, mean there will be a very long period of time between where we are now and where other Member States collectively or individually would have anything like the capabilities the UK has, and certainly nothing like the capabilities to match the level of ambition that the EU has set for itself in the global strategy.

Q5 Lord Balfe: I want to turn to the matter of sanctions and the advantages and disadvantages of the UK co-operating with EU policy, and ask you for examples. I also want to draw attention to the way they develop. Later on this morning's agenda, which we will not discuss but for information, we have a paper about the continuation and development of sanctions to Council Regulations on Iran, a Council Decision amending a decision on Libya and a Council Decision amending a decision concerning restrictive

measures against Myanmar. I can understand how the big things are developed, but those have all come from a relatively low level of the Council. How are we, when we are not there, going to have any effective say on the way in which sanctions policy is developed?

For instance, to take Iran—I do not want to discuss it—the measure runs out on 13 April; it is being renewed. Surely, if we are not in the building and in the room, the development of it will pass us by completely. Do you have any comments on the advantages and disadvantages in co-operation, and whether we will be able to co-operate effectively, once they are in force, on the development, because I do not see how?

Professor Karen Smith: Sanctions policy is a particularly difficult issue, because we know, and the academic literature shows, that collective multilateral sanctions are considerably more effective than individual unilateral sanctions by a state. You need to work collectively. To have a situation in which the UK and the EU diverged on sanctions policy would open up the possibility for the country that is the target of the sanctions to do a divide and rule thing, which could lead to a considerable amount of tension between the UK and the EU.

The EU currently asks non-EU European countries to align themselves with sanctions policy and it duly notes when they have not; for example, Switzerland on Russia has been somewhat problematic. In other words, it knows; there is a notebook somewhere with little black marks against countries that are not completely aligning. Again, the decision-shaping role for third countries in EU sanctions policy is minimal. The consequences of not aligning the sanctions policy among the wider group of European countries are fairly dire as regards the effectiveness in general of the sanctions policy. That could be an area the UK follows.

Q6 The Chairman: How would that affect other CSDP missions such as Operation Sophia, civilian missions in the Ukraine and policing missions in Afghanistan and so forth? How do you think they will come out in the wash?

Professor Karen Smith: Those are missions where the UK has contributed, and presumably there could be continuity. In other words, because the CSDP has EU third-country agreements, in those particular examples it would be a case of simply having an agreement on continuity. It is the new ones where there might be more problems. There have been very few military missions under the CSDP framework; most of them are civilian or quite low key. The military missions are the headline or major kinds of decisions. If it was a case of a major decision, something for which you needed a large peacekeeping force or whatever, there might be the flexibility to involve the UK in decision-making. It is the lower-level stuff, the training of border guards in Libya or Sahel anti-terrorist missions, where the UK might be cut out entirely.

Professor Richard Whitman: Perhaps the mission that falls into a different category is the Atalanta mission, because the UK is providing its headquarters at the moment. We do not have a precedent for a non-Member State providing the headquarters for an EU operation, so

there is at least a question mark, assuming that operation is still ongoing in two years' time, as to whether there would, on the part of the EU, be a desire to move the operation's headquarters to another Member State. Two years is quite a way down the road and certainly the mission is currently due to expire before the UK leaves the EU, although it has been extended in the past.

Q7 Lord Stirrup: Could I turn to the European Defence Agency? Could you set out the benefits that the UK sees at the moment from the EDA and whether they ought to be a priority for us in the future when we are outside the EU? If so, how might we pursue them through some sort of associate membership? How do you see the whole picture of the EDA evolving over Brexit?

Professor Richard Whitman: The UK, I think it is fair to say, is ahead of the EU on the costs of running the EDA, and has obviously tried to keep a lid on them, but it has been generally more enthusiastic about the benefits that it can offer other Member States through greater potential efficiencies in defence expenditure. The EDA has also set up a model where there are administrative arrangements with third countries, to try to draw in countries to make sure that it gets efficiencies there. In a way, it is the sort of institution that the UK should have maximum comfort with, because countries participate on projects on the basis of national needs, and that generally fits with the UK approach towards defence of increasing both capabilities and efficiencies.

The concern would be if the UK leaves the EDA as a consequence of leaving the EU, because the EDA is composed of 'full members' of the EU, if we can call them that; they are EU members. The UK would leave the steering board, and therefore the role that the steering board plays on the work plan for the EDA and so on would be lost to the UK, particularly where we are likely to go now on the consequence of the global strategy—the EDA capability development plan—which is allied to the objectives the EU has set for its security and defence policy and is something that will unfold over the next few years. If the UK is moving outside, there is a question about how far it would be able to have an influence on that body. Certainly both the European Commission and the high representative who sits on top of the organisation think about it as the key vehicle to deliver increased defence capabilities for the EU.

Lord Stirrup: Do you think the EDA will have any impact on EU Member States' defence spending?

Professor Richard Whitman: Possibly for some smaller Member States, but not for the larger ones, no.

Lord Stirrup: Is that not a much more important factor in delivering the defence aspirations?

Professor Richard Whitman: Absolutely. There are of course other places where Member States seek to have a more efficient defence

spend, such as the OCA, so it is not just about the EDA for other Member States' bilateral and other multilateral programmes.

Q8 Earl of Oxford and Asquith: It is clear that we have developed a very good working relationship with the French on our defence issues over the last few years. It is even surprising sometimes to our own Governments how well we all work together.

My question is in two parts. First, do you think that the defence relationship with the French is a bit of an illusion as a kind of model to take forward with other EU members? After all, we have a very strong nuclear joint interest, and our history of contiguous coasts is unique in a way.

Do you think there is a way of developing that defence relationship with other members of the EU, or is it a bit of a blind alley and there might be more fruitfulness in developing the purely foreign policy aspects? For example, one must probably have lost count of the number of times over the last three or four years that members of the EU, us especially included, have congratulated themselves on our common foreign policy to Russia about Ukraine, as if having the foreign policy in itself was the goal rather than any results developed from it. Is there therefore a way of developing closer bilateral foreign policy relationships with individual EU Member States or groups of EU Member States following Brexit?

Professor Karen Smith: It might not be bilateral, but what have been called the Quint—the US, the UK, Germany, France and Italy—consultations might be the UK's way into some sort of decision-shaping role. Working on it with the "big" powers in Europe together might be a way. The problem will be that if the EU global strategy really comes to fruition and there is much more co-operation within the EU, the capacity of other Member States to engage deeply in bilateral relations with the UK could be limited simply because attention and energy are focused elsewhere. Certainly, a stronger British-German relationship will be crucial in maintaining influence on European affairs. Co-operation with smaller countries—the Nordic countries, the Baltic countries, the Netherlands and so on—could simply continue as is, but again there is the issue of the capacity of any particular state's diplomatic service and so on to engage deeply in European Union mechanisms and outside. There, the UK might come up against limits, particularly with smaller states.

Professor Richard Whitman: A colleague of ours—and of yours, Baroness Smith—who is an academic, suggested that one of the approaches that the UK had taken in the past to other European countries was what she called "promiscuous bilateralism", the suggestion being that from time to time the UK cultivated bilateral relationships where it thought they were to its advantage, very often in the short term rather than thinking what the advantages might be in the medium and long term. In the medium and long term, it is crucial for the UK to look long and hard at the relationship with Germany, which is about to be upgraded

in the defence area with the Anglo-German defence agreement that is coming.

Looking particularly at the Baltics and the areas where there is already military co-operation with other Member States, where we are engaged in other force structures, I agree that those are the countries where the UK will probably have to think about how it might broaden its diplomatic relationship. There is also a question about areas where EU policy is relatively thin and other Member States may have a more vested interest. The Gulf is one example, especially as the UK is investing more diplomatically and basing in the Gulf. Further afield, in Asia, it is probably fair to say that in east Asia the EU has had a rather underdeveloped policy in the past, but the UK has important allies in that region as well and might think about how those relationships might unfold, and then in turn how they might unfold in bilateral and trilateral initiatives with other European states.

Q9 Lord Dubs: Can you say a little more about NATO? Given that our Government have said that NATO "will remain the cornerstone of European defence", how do you think that will play out in the future? Will it affect the relationship between NATO and the EU?

Professor Karen Smith: It is useful to remind ourselves that the EU-NATO relationship has been problematic ever since Cyprus joined the EU in 2004. In other words, getting over the Cyprus problem has been an issue. Now the highest administrative elements of the EU and NATO are quite keen on developing co-operation, but it remains to be seen whether the Cyprus block will continue to be an issue. It is important to remember that NATO is about defence. It is not about foreign and security policy. It is in fact about a particular kind of military action at one end of a spectrum, which is only part of a spectrum. I do not want to dismiss NATO's importance completely, but we need to remind ourselves that NATO is one possible tool among many possible tools and it does not have all the right answers; it does not have civilian crisis management and so on.

The other thing we need to remember is that the future of NATO has not always been clearly rosy. We have had US issues with burden sharing under all Administrations, but some of the capability issues and the lack of political will issues that have been apparent from Afghanistan to Libya and so on have called already called NATO's effectiveness into question. With the current doubts that have been raised about US policy on NATO, the solidity of NATO as that other tool is perhaps not as solid as one might want. The danger is that EU-NATO co-operation is pushed forward at the highest level—the Secretary-General and the High Representative level wanting to push it forward—but the political blocks to EU-NATO co-operation thus far remain. They are not removed and we do not get a lot of co-operation. Again, there would be no way in for the UK to be able to influence that via a strong EU-NATO relationship. There is a definite risk of that.

Lord Risby: As somebody who goes to Ukraine a bit, it is very obvious to

me that the main preoccupation of Mr Putin in respect of Ukraine is NATO. This is the beginning and the end of the subject, so although you say there may be limitations, it is a core underpinning of the security of Europe, at least in the eyes of many. For a long time there was an accident waiting to happen. Suddenly we were going to have a US Administration who said, "Hang on a minute, we are spending 72% of the overall budget". There has been some improvement recently, but we have the largest and wealthiest of the European countries unwilling, because of public opinion, to spend the sort of money that perhaps the Americans have been willing to spend.

You mentioned that the EDA was perhaps not a force for putting pressure on countries to increase defence spending—I think I understood that—but that we now have an Administration who take it very seriously. The dynamic also seems to be changing, from Washington, and we certainly have a favoured view as to Washington, although others do not. Given all that, what do you think the impact is likely to be on defence policy in Europe as a result of that changed situation?

Professor Karen Smith: On NATO and Ukraine, that is the point—NATO is about defence.

Lord Risby: I understand that, but it is emblematic.

Professor Karen Smith: Yes, but the policy on Ukraine is also going to be affected by the EU. What sparked the Maidan protests originally was the prospect of not signing a deep and comprehensive free trade agreement with the EU. I agree that NATO is fundamental there, which is why it is so problematic if its future is somewhat cast in terms of whether the US would defend particular countries if they came under attack. That has been questioned now. In general, you could say that nuclear deterrence is based on rather dodgy psychological grounds. Would we be prepared to commit nuclear suicide on behalf of X, which is already shaky as a psychological ground? The future of NATO and of US policy on NATO is concerning for European defence architecture in general.

Lord Risby: What I am trying to ask is whether you think, precisely for the reasons you are suggesting, that this will trigger a response within the European Union on defence and the commitment to defence.

Professor Karen Smith: I would argue that in fact a lot of the progress that has been made, or the arguments that Mogherini is using to push for greater EU security and defence co-operation, have acquired much more force because of US policy, but it is EU-centred.

Lord Stirrup: In the Prime Minister's letter triggering Article 50, there seemed to be an unfortunate conjunction between security and defence on the one hand and Brexit negotiations on the other, which is probably unintended. Most people would feel that security and defence are clearly not a bargaining chip in such negotiations, not least because we do what we do in those fields because it is in our national interest to do so, and that will continue.

Looking at the view from the other side, and given everything that has been said this morning about the importance of the UK's contribution in those areas, and its continuing contribution whether inside the EU or not, do you think that that consideration will colour the perspective of the EU 27 as they go through negotiations in considering the UK's future relationship with Europe, or do you think they will just not think about it at all?

Professor Richard Whitman: It is an important and ongoing issue for some Member States, not least because, of course, British forces have been recently deployed in the Baltic in service of NATO, which means in service of European security in general. It is difficult to see how the technical aspects of negotiations for the UK's exit are easily connected to the security questions, not least because if you look at our own national security strategy, at the EU's global strategy and at other countries' national security strategies, we worry about the same things, we continue to worry about the same things and we look for different institutional responses to address the range of security challenges, both traditional and new. It will be an important background factor as the negotiations unfold, not least because the UK, being a member, will be involved in discussions about the implementation of the global strategy—simultaneously involved in the discussions within both the EU and NATO about how the implementation plan for that relationship is going to unfold. I do not think you can separate one from the other in the sense that other Member States will see that the UK's commitment to those areas remains as it was before.

The other Member States will have to ask questions about the way to engage the UK. To give one example, questions have been raised as to whether it would be appropriate for a UK national still to hold the role of Deputy Supreme Allied Commander. You could unnecessarily create difficulties in the relationship with the UK by handling that sort of issue in a different way, seeing it as a totemic or political issue that you want to argue over, whereas the gains that exist from keeping the UK engaged are obvious to all other Member States. In a way, in the policy area that we are looking at, if we are just looking at the EU policies, there is a paradox. It is probably the easiest area for the UK to disengage itself from as regards the institutions, the processes and so on, but it has potentially the greatest cost for both the EU and the UK in that it is fairly light touch institutionally but the benefits are multiple for individual Member States as well as for the UK and the neighbourhood in general. The conjunction of the two does not help anybody, and I am sure the second draft of the letter would have perhaps removed that unfortunate phraseology.

The Chairman: Thank you very much indeed. That was both extremely interesting and extremely helpful. Thank you both for your contributions. We have enjoyed it. Thank you.