

Foreign Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [Finding a diplomatic route: European responses to irregular migration, HC 1903](#)

Wednesday 24 April 2019

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Members present: Tom Tugendhat (Chair); Chris Bryant; Ann Clwyd; Stephen Gethins; Conor McGinn; Ian Murray; Priti Patel; Andrew Rosindell; Mr Bob Seely; Royston Smith; Catherine West.

Questions 1-40

Witnesses

[I](#): Sarah Elliott, Legal Officer, UN Refugee Agency UK (UNHCR UK) and Charlotte McDonald-Gibson, journalist and author.

[II](#): Professor Sir Paul Collier, Professor of Economics and Public Policy, University of Oxford, and Dr Roderick Parkes, Senior Analyst, EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS).

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Sarah Elliott and Charlotte McDonald-Gibson.

Q1 Chair: Welcome to this afternoon's session of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Thank you both very much indeed for joining us. We will go straight in, if we may. What are the main causes of the increase in irregular migration to Europe since 2014? Many of us are going to ask relatively open questions like that. If you feel the other person has already answered, please do not feel the need to repeat what they have said in a different way, and try to keep your answers close.

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: I tend to date the refugee crisis earlier, to 2011 and the start of the Arab Spring, because that was when we saw the first large increase in numbers coming across the central Mediterranean route and arriving in Lampedusa in Italy. That was when we first started to see a lot of the characteristics of what we now call the refugee crisis, including bickering among EU member states about who needed to be responsible for the refugees, and talk about who should fund it and whether there should be any relocations. We first saw those debates in 2011.

What happened then was that, in 2012, the numbers started dropping a bit, so people tended to take their eye off the ball and think, "Well, okay, the crisis is over." But it wasn't really, and there were a lot of indications that the numbers would increase again. Those included, first and foremost, the crisis in Syria. We saw a lot of Syrians leaving their country. There were something like 9,000 Syrian refugees at the start of 2012, but by the end of 2012 there were half a million Syrian refugees in the world. We saw this huge increase in 2012, and by 2013 we started seeing Syrian refugees moving towards Europe.

I went on reporting trips to Bulgaria and to the Moroccan-Spanish border and interviewed refugees there, and you could see that this was happening, but because there was a distraction, people were not really paying attention. There was the financial crisis, and there were a lot of other concerns in Europe, so this was somewhat overlooked and nothing really happened. We just saw this increasing in 2013 and 2014. The refugees in places such as Lebanon and Turkey were not getting the funding they needed. In 2014, for example, the World Food Programme announced that it had been forced to suspend food vouchers to 1.7 million Syrians in neighbouring countries.

Come 2015, which is what we talk about when we talk about the refugee crisis, when more than 1 million people arrived, we saw a conflux, with all these factors coming together. The situation in Syria deteriorated—ISIS was there and there were the chemical weapons attacks. The quality of life of Syrians in neighbouring countries was abysmal; they were running out of food. There was upheaval in other countries as well, such as Libya and sub-Saharan African countries. That all added to the mix. Although the

flow of Syrian refugees was the driving factor, once those routes are opened, more people are going to start using them, and more smugglers are going to start exploiting that human suffering, so the numbers will increase even more.

When we talk about the refugee crisis of 2015, that is the context. If we are talking about the crisis in terms of what we saw happen within Europe—the altercations at the borders, with lines of people—that was to do with European disunity, and we can talk about that later if you would like.

Sarah Elliott: I would only add that, as my colleague has said, half of the 1 million persons who arrived irregularly in 2015 were from Syria, which was in the fourth year of the crisis. For the reasons just explained, there was increased vulnerability year on year in the immediate region of Syria—in Turkey, Jordan and Iraq. Several reports were coming out that there was lack of access to work, that savings were depleted and that negative coping mechanisms were being adopted—there was an excellent report by the ICMPD called “Targeting Vulnerabilities” that reflected on that.

There were also tighter border controls. Turkey and Lebanon, which had previously opened their borders to Syrians, were closing them, and it was becoming harder to renew residence permits. The general need to move onwards was really quite critical at that time. Then, of course, there were states in Europe, such as Germany, that enacted the sovereignty clause in the Dublin regulation and opened their borders to those Syrians who were moving through the western Balkans. Libya, we know, was deteriorating rapidly and was an environment for smugglers to flourish.

For those Syrians who came to north Africa, which was visa free in 2011, 2012 and 2013, when I was living there, a change of Government in Egypt meant that the environment became more hostile. They also moved to Libya and capitalised on those networks to come to Europe.

Q2 **Chair:** That is fantastic. Thank you. How have the UK’s policy decisions helped or hindered?

Sarah Elliott: Do you mean in direct response to the number of movements at the time?

Chair: Well, over the 10-year period that you have spoken about, the UK has been involved in various elements, whether through engaging with different Governments and regimes around the region, through not responding to the red lines and the vote in 2013, as you will remember, or through various forms of support, either in the Mediterranean or to places like Lampedusa and the Greek camps.

Sarah Elliott: Looking at the UK’s individual response, while it did not opt into the EU relocation mechanism, for example, it did drastically expand its resettlement programme from 500 to 20,000. It agreed to take that number between then and 2020, and it has maintained its promise of doing so. Indeed, while that was directly from Syrian populations in April



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2016, the UK then announced that it would take 3,000 at-risk children and their families from the Middle East and north Africa directly. It also formally launched a community sponsorship scheme two years ago.

In addition, the UK deployed naval assets to the Mediterranean in support of Operation Sophia. It has become a member of a core resettlement group that is supporting enhanced resettlement from the central Mediterranean, taking leadership in that respect. I understand that it has also resettled 100 vulnerable persons from our evacuation transit mechanism, which is operating in Niger. That mechanism is evacuating vulnerable persons from Libyan detention centres to Niger, where they can be processed for asylum and then resettled to third countries.

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: I would like to add a point about the tone of the political debate around migration and refugee issues in 2015. The UK was not particularly affected by the refugee crisis: if you look at the numbers, there were 500,000 arriving in Germany, compared with something like 36,000 in the UK, so it was pretty small, particularly as a proportion of the population. However, from the tone of the debate, there was this impression that the UK was really being affected. There was quite a hostile tone towards what was essentially a humanitarian crisis in 2015.

Of the people arriving in Europe, 85% were from the top refugee-producing nations, yet, again and again, we heard quotes from the Government and from other political parties referring to economic migration. They were making it a debate about economic migration, when, at that point in time, it clearly was not. At the time when the rest of the European Union was trying to forge some sort of consensus on a way forward, I don't think that the British Government were necessarily playing a constructive part in addressing the moral aspect of that humanitarian emergency. In terms of supporting search and rescue, Mare Nostrum—the Italian search and rescue operation that started in 2013—saved hundreds of thousands of lives. It did not get any support, and it was not supported here. I cannot remember who said it, but somebody spoke about it being a pull factor. Mare Nostrum was not a pull factor. In the first four months after Mare Nostrum ended, 1,866 people died trying to reach Europe. In the year before, when Mare Nostrum was running, that figure was 108, so there was a huge increase in deaths in the four months after Mare Nostrum had stopped running. That was partly because the rest of the EU, Britain included, refused to help Italy to fund the operation. That is my take on it.

Q3 **Priti Patel:** To go back to the period of 2014 and 2015, and the UK's reaction and response, is it not the case that it was not really until we started to see migrants coming over, trying to scale the channel tunnel or coming through the crossing, that the British Government chose to take some form of action? At that time in particular, the whole concept of refugees and migration—certainly from my perspective, and I would like your view on this—seemed to be about a short-term, reactive, defensive measure, rather than about addressing some of the long-term causes. We will come on to that when we question you further, for example on



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IDPs and long-term displacement, and look at some of the political upheavals in these regions—the Middle East, in particular—and some of the wider issues across the Sahel and the horn of Africa.

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: Yes, absolutely, I think so. As I said, I see it starting in 2011. If you look at what happened, you had the Arab Spring and the operations in Libya, of course, which the British Government were part of. There was essentially a sense afterwards of, “Job done. Fantastic. The Arab Spring is finished and has been a success. We can take our eye off the ball.” That was a mistake, because there was an opportunity for the kind of engagement that you were speaking about; for more engagement that looked ahead politically and asked, “What else could happen, and how can we support the communities in Lebanon? How can we support the communities in Jordan and in Turkey?”; and for seeing what would come politically and how steps could be taken to prevent what we saw in 2014 and 2015, which was utter disunity.

European Union countries as a whole did not use that opportunity. In 2011, Italy, for example, made very similar calls for solidarity. They were ignored. If there had been some debate then about what could be done, perhaps some policies could have been put in place—the safe return of failed asylum seekers, for example. There were lots of missed opportunities to look in the long term and not to look at this as a short-term emergency.

Q4 Priti Patel: Where do you see the sort of piece where things started to come together? You had the Arab Spring in 2011 and various flashpoints and intensive periods of crossings, migration, conflict and instability. Let us not forget that it was former Prime Minister David Cameron who held his conference on Syria, which basically acted as a catalyst to raise a lot of money and then look at the long-term issue of Lebanon and Jordan and giving people more hope in terms of resettlement and economic opportunities. From this piece here, where everything was quite defensive and reactive, to that position around Syria and the wider Middle East, what was the change that you sense in terms of action and activity from a policy perspective from the UK Government and other players in the international field?

Sarah Elliott: I can make one key point. I think one of those critical turning points was the death of Alan Kurdi, the Syrian young boy who washed up on the shores of Turkey. That garnered a huge amount of international attention and scrutiny of the lack of regional responses to the situation. I understand that it garnered a lot of public support in the public eye in the UK. I was not here at the time, but I understand there were protests, and people took to the streets. For UNHCR to see a move on resettlement places from as low as 500 to as high as 20,000 relatively quickly meant that that must have had a huge impact on the UK Government; certainly, we were there at the time, and we pressed them to do that. We would welcome a continuation of a long-term resettlement programme at the same numbers that we have seen now to address this.



Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: Yes, absolutely. Another galvanising event was in October 2013: there was a large shipwreck off the coast of Lampedusa, and you actually had bodies washing up on European beaches. That was a really striking moment. Here, you saw José Barroso, the President of the European Commission at the time, go to those beaches, and we had a lot of promises. For example, the Home Affairs Commissioner at the time promised a search and rescue operation stretching from Portugal to Cyprus—I mean, these are the words we heard in October 2013. Nothing really happened.

We see this again and again: we get a peak of public sympathy, of statements of action, which lead to nothing really happening after that, and then the political climate in various countries changes and the policy just reverses. If we look, for example, at the global compact on migration—which is something you might be asking about later—that is a prime example. A lot of the Governments who themselves had negotiated and written this compact then decided that they were not going to sign it, because the political situation in their countries had changed at that time. You see the attention change over time.

Sarah Elliott: Just to caution that we are not quite there yet with solutions, but there will be more to say on that.

Q5 **Chair:** Do you think the numbers have peaked, though—from Syria, for example?

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: I think it is impossible to say. There is only a certain amount of people who could ever have left Syria, and the number of people leaving Syria has certainly gone down, because there is only a certain amount of people who could have afforded that journey or been able to make that journey.

However, there is a danger in saying, “The refugee crisis is over.” That is the most dangerous thing we can do, because that is what people did in 2012. That is when the WFP stopped getting funding, and Frontex, the European Union border agency, saw its funding drop. If we sit there and say, “Look, the numbers are down to pre-2013 levels. Phew, we’re all okay—the refugee crisis is over,” that would be a big mistake, because there are so many factors that could cause those numbers to go up again.

If we look at the crisis we have in Libya right now, we have a conflict in Libya. The Libyan Prime Minister has warned that 800,000 migrants could take to the seas again—of course, he has political reasons for making those warnings, but there is always that possibility. You have climate change refugees; one study says there could be 200 million climate change refugees in the world. While the numbers are certainly down, to say the crisis is over could be a mistake, because it could prevent us putting measures in place that will help in the future.

Q6 **Ann Clwyd:** I heard Dr David Nott, who is in the middle of the crisis in Syria, talking last night. He was complaining about the fact that it has gone off people’s agenda, because of all the other things that have



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crowded in on the agenda, and he said there is still a crisis in Syria and still fighting going on in Idlib—I have heard nothing about the recent fighting in Idlib. He was saying that the needs of the people are still as great as ever and that there is a continuing humanitarian crisis in that country. Given that we gave so much attention to it to begin with, how can it drop off the radar?

Sarah Elliott: Certainly, Syria should not be the only place we look at. In west Africa, there has been a deterioration of security in Mali and Burkina Faso, where there has been an extremist insurgency for many years, and where attacks are increasing. There is a significant Malian IDP population at risk of becoming a refugee population in that region. There continue to be ethnic conflicts in general. There is violence in east Africa—in Darfur, in Somalia—and while a potential shift or transition in Government in Sudan is on the cards, we do not know how that will pan out. There are a lot of pressure points. We need not to rest on our laurels now that Syrians are not coming in waves, but to think about how we would manage those numbers again in the future with the mechanisms we have in place now and about what needs to change.

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: I would say as well that, in terms of support for the Syrian refugees in Turkey and Lebanon in particular, the situation there is not great. Half of the refugee children in Lebanon still are not in school. The World Food Programme warned last year that the fund was only 20% funded because, as you said, people are not really paying attention anymore. That could create a problem.

One of the key things when I was writing my book about the refugee crisis was that most people did not want to go far from home. There was a Syrian family, and the mother wanted to stay in Lebanon with her four children. She said, “I can almost see my house. It gives me hope that I will return.” She did not want to come to Europe, but because she did not have opportunities in Lebanon, she had to. She felt like she had no choice. Her children could not go to school. What do we want as parents? We want our children to go to school, we want to be able to provide for them and we want to be able to provide them with a future.

Lebanon and Turkey are doing the best they can, but there is increasing animosity towards the refugee communities there, and there is declining interest among the international community. That is another flash point that could provoke people to leave again and try to find a life somewhere else.

Q7 **Priti Patel:** Can I just ask you about that? Obviously, we are speaking about Syrian refugees and about Lebanon and Jordan. Of course, the international community has put a lot of its equities in one place by building camps and fundraising for those countries on an annual basis. I have been involved in that, whether it is at the UN or other international platforms, or in Brussels through the European Union. The economic health and wellbeing of those countries is somewhat precarious and finely balanced; they are on IMF programmes and things of that nature.



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What is your sense of the response from the West? Was the sense at the time, “Let’s go for the camps and keep people close to home, on the basis that we can invest in education and employment”—that is still a grey area in terms of things such as work permits—“and park people there without talking about reconstruction, rebuilding and the peacemaking process”? Obviously, that still has to be part of the long-term discussion within the international community, and we have to look at the money that comes for that, too.

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: Most refugees do not want to live in a camp. This is not from my personal reporting experience, but I read an article by another reporter about some British-funded camps in the middle of the desert in Jordan that nobody wanted to stay in, because a camp is not a life. There is not that sense of being able to build a life and provide for your family in these sorts of camps in the desert.

A much more accepted way of trying to help refugees into the community is to try to integrate them in the communities they are in—helping them get into the workforce and access education. We do have these programmes in place now in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon. It is very difficult. You have the same politics. They have the same hostility towards migrant communities there as we have here. It is a very complicated situation, but that is the most important thing if you want to make life better for the refugees and to prevent the flows coming to Europe. That really is crucial.

In terms of rebuilding, yes, absolutely. So many of the refugees—Syrians and other nationalities—want to go home. They really want to go home. Looking at how to put the conditions in place to enable their return in the future is incredibly important. Funds and attention definitely need to be directed towards that now.

Q8 **Priti Patel:** I have a couple more questions. First, how does the UN refugee convention sit with regard to tackling the crisis with inflows into Europe from these particular countries? I know we have touched on Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, but will you say something about how suitable you think the convention is in the light of the challenge internationally of the number of IDPs and so on?

Sarah Elliott: Thank you for that question. It is one that has come up a few times in the light of the response by Europe to the numbers. The refugee convention is adequate for its purpose, which is to provide a broad legal framework for refugee protection: it defines who a refugee is, it protects against refoulement and it provides a set of minimum political, social and cultural rights. Of course, it is not supposed to be comprehensive in telling us exactly how we go about building our asylum systems or exactly how we protect refugees in countries where they are recognised.

One of the perennial gaps that has come to the fore, which has informed more recent political consensus documents such as the New York declaration, is the fact that there has not been global responsibility-



sharing for refugees. It is a collective action problem that only a few countries in the world are really making concerted efforts to deal with. We must also recognise that 85% of the world's refugees are living in developing countries, so while 1 million came to the European continent in 2015, there are 1 million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, 1 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and 3.5 million Syrians in Turkey.

As a result both of what has happened in Europe, and of pressure from those developing countries, we saw the New York declaration for refugees and migrants adopted, and the compact on refugees. That takes us forward in terms of building on those norms and principles, but how do we implement them in a way that draws on all countries to do so?

Q9 Priti Patel: My next question was going to be about the global compact on migration, which seems to provide well-to-do countries and the western world with a bit of a comfort blanket, as a new framework for some kind of international co-operation, although some countries have not signed up to it and others have put their signature to it and left it as is right now. Do you think this will be an effective international tool for co-operation on achieving well-managed migration? Do you think the compact can go as far as even addressing some of the phenomenal challenges around IDPs?

Sarah Elliott: It is quite early to determine that, given that the document was only adopted in December last year, but it received broad political consensus. It was negotiated over two years under UNHCR's leadership, and it does a number of things that, if they were true to what they say, would go quite far toward addressing some of the problems we are seeing. For example, it sets out what practical responsibility-sharing mechanisms could look like.

Some of those draw on historical best-practice examples, such as the concept of a support platform, where like-minded states come together to set up an action plan to respond to a complex situation, which was drawn up from the comprehensive plan of action to respond to the Indo-Chinese refugee situation in the 1970s. I realise that that was off the back of a load of political interests and responses to the Cold War, but there are certainly similar joint interests in responding to, for example, what is happening in the central Mediterranean for Europe, North America or other states.

Another mechanism it proposes is the making of pledges to a global forum on refugees, which will happen at ministerial level every four years, where there will be direct oversight on how states are implementing the objectives of the compact on refugees. I realise it is not necessarily as hard-line as an international convention, but we hope and we know it is already having some impact. Several north African countries have made pledges to institute refugee legislation, including Tunisia and Morocco, and Egypt, after 60 years, has agreed to start to take responsibility for asylum processing, which is an incredible step forward for north Africa.



There are also things such as an asylum support group, where a state can come forward and say, "We need help to strengthen our asylum procedures," and other states can offer twinning and state-to-state partnerships. Some of those are already taking place in different forms, but this is putting them together in one document as a reference tool. Of course, with the political consensus that it had, and its reaffirmation through the New York declaration, we are hopeful that it will go, to some degree at least, toward assisting with these complex crises.

Let us not forget the compact on migration, which is an enormous achievement in that space. It is the first intergovernmentally negotiated agreement on what international co-operation on migration can look like. It is a 360° view, it has 23 objectives, with goals and best practice, it was entirely state negotiated, and it is an excellent reference tool if you are thinking, "How do I better support remittances? How do I address structural causes of migration? How do I harness migrant potential?" Of course, it is not going to give you a quick fix, but it is an excellent resource that we have not yet seen to date in the international sphere.

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: My feeling with a lot of the conventions and these compacts on refugees is that there is no mechanism for enforcing any of them. We have the 1951 convention, which states the rights of refugees, but they are not enforced. That is what we saw over and over again from 2011 to today: we have seen EU countries repeatedly violate their own convention on human rights. We have seen pushbacks of people trying to seek asylum, and they are returned before any application has been registered. We have seen illegal detention.

We have seen some appalling stories. One of the cases in my book is that, in Hungary, they were forcing detained migrants to take tranquilisers so that they remained in a sort of sedate condition in detention. These are awful human rights abuses on EU soil, and no action was taken. As the years went past, countries became more and more emboldened to deploy these rights abuses, and then we got to the point in 2015 when we had pictures of children begin tear-gassed on EU soil—it got to that point.

So that is a big problem, as there is no mechanism for enforcement. When there is, and there is at the European Union level—the European Commission can take infringement proceedings against a country—it didn't up until 2015. So that sent a very strong signal that countries could do whatever they liked, with no punitive action.

- Q10 **Priti Patel:** This is my final question, so others can come in. It is on the whole issue of global compacts, because this is a new model or framework, and it is obviously well documented structurally—"good practice" might be a fair term to use. This will be subject to politics—the politics of the countries and heads of state—domestic pressures and other things of that nature. Do you see within the compacts any sort of key anchor themes, such as, to give one example, investing in migrants through economic development, skills and education, where outcomes can be measured to show the success of these compacts? Otherwise, enforcement is clearly going to be for the birds. How will these compacts



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be judged as a success in terms of outcomes for migrants and refugees?

Sarah Elliott: I can't speak to the global compact on migration per se, although there will be a UN network on migration, which is a UN co-ordinated body that will have oversight. That is a space to watch, in terms of how they do that. On the refugee side, however, we are looking at indicators to measure impact through that document, which are in the process of being looked into. We do see the process of making pledges and having a ministerial level meeting through the Global Refugee Forum as being at least a good step in the right direction for putting in the relative oversight that we want on states, to measure their commitments.

The difference with the compact on refugees is that, as Charlotte has mentioned, we know what the principles are; we know what refugee protection should mean. It is about how we actually achieve that. It is fair to say that there have certainly been examples, and we can speak more about where the gaps were in the EU response in that regard.

However, the compact on refugees is putting forward practical arrangements, whereby things could change or come together that have not been put forward before. The convention talks to international co-operation; it does not tell us how we should do it. Actually, back when the travaux préparatoire were being negotiated, France said that we need some direction on that. Here is an opportunity to give that direction. We will do our best to do that well.

Chair: Chris, I thought you wanted to come in about environmental issues.

Q11 **Chris Bryant:** Can I just ask some basic questions first? They are really, really basic. For example, much of the debate in the UK tends to be about the pull factors—the supposed pull factors—for migration into the UK, but from what you are saying, the push factors are far more significant. Is that right? If so, would you like just to delineate what those push factors are?

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: Absolutely. I think it is a really common misconception, especially here in the UK, that people are coming here for jobs, for the great TV or something else—I don't know. But it is not the case at all, especially at the height of the crisis in 2015. As I said, 85% of people were coming from refugee-producing nations. They are fleeing chemical weapons attacks in Syria; they are fleeing ISIS in Syria; they are fleeing a military dictatorship in Eritrea. There are obviously all sorts of conflicts around the globe that they are fleeing.

Over and over again, when you speak to refugees, they do not want to leave their homes. It is their very last option. When they have considered everything else, then they take that step to leave their homes, but they try to stay as close to their homes as they can. It is really because they have no other options left that they decide to take that journey to Europe.

Obviously, you talk about economic migrants and refugees, and there is a different debate there. There are economic migrants who make the



journeys to come to try to find work and improve the lives of their families back home. However, in 2015, with 85% coming from refugee-producing nations, it is a more clear-cut push factor versus pull factor. It is definitely a push factor. I think Sarah can probably say more about that.

Sarah Elliott: I fully agree with Charlotte. To add to that, there is also a perspective that safety can be found where the refugees are, or in certain countries of transit, or even sometimes in other EU countries. However, there is certainly a lack of effective protection in many countries where persons seek asylum. You may be able to get refugee status, but you would not necessarily get access to healthcare or basic services, or even education or livelihoods.

We have to understand that these are motivating factors for people to then move on and seek the same elsewhere. If we take Sudan—where I was working several years ago—at the moment, it is a very generous refugee-hosting country; it currently has a population of 1 million refugees. However, it has an encampment policy, with refugees expected to live out their lives in a place with no access to work or services. At the moment, the economic crisis is so bad, and the fuel shortage so critical, that we cannot actually maintain water stations, so refugees are drinking out of unsafe river beds. That is not life. That is how it is in many other countries in the region.

Q12 **Chris Bryant:** If you look at some countries in Latin America, lots of people have moved from the countryside to the main cities. They have sort of set up encampments of their own outside cities, whether they be called favelas, villas miserias or whatever, and over time those have ended up having tarmac roads and concrete walls and so on, and they have become part of the city. Is that not a process that happens for other displaced people that we are talking about today?

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: It very much depends on where the camp is. There is such huge variety. I have been to a refugee camp on the Thailand-Burma border that has been there for decades and, yes, they have created their own community there, but they do not see it as a life. It is like a little town. It has shops and schools—it is a community—but they cannot leave; they are essentially imprisoned there. It very much depends on the location.

In the settlements that you are speaking about, people have freedom to come and go. It is the same in Syria, where you had large settlements of Palestinian refugees on the outskirts of Damascus. They would refer to those places as camps, but they were not really camps. They were simply neighbourhoods of Damascus that had really become part of the city. There is so much variation in these camps in the world, but certainly the camps in the deserts that Sarah talks about, like the one in Kenya—what is that called again?

Sarah Elliott: Dadaab.



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Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: Dadaab. They are like miniature towns with no hope. There are education programmes for the kids, but what do the kids do when they get their secondary school certificate? They can't leave and get a job. They are still in the camps. There is a cycle of hopelessness in those sorts of settlements that people want to escape.

Q13 Chris Bryant: Do you think that the UK's overseas budgets of various kinds are correctly targeted at trying to diminish those push factors?

Sarah Elliott: I am not well placed in terms of what the UK Government are funding through mechanisms such as the EU trust fund. My word of advice would be that you have to make sure that your development funding is evidence-based. Where are people moving from and why? Are local alternatives available? Sometimes it is not about the poorest of communities. It could be about communities where there is a level of subsistence. It costs a lot to move—thousands of dollars. What is wrong? Is it corruption stopping the flourishing of new industries? Or are people actually using smuggling as a livelihood mechanism? Sometimes entire communities are supported that way.

As long as these things are not tied only to political imperatives or short budget cycles, and you really think smart about where you need to invest that money, you will succeed. Information campaigns will not do much without real alternatives. That needs scrutiny, and it needs to be sustainable.

Aside from development, as Priti Patel mentioned, you also need to look at how to resolve these conflicts. How do we support peace processes at the same time? Are we doing enough to implement IHL in conflicts and to tackle what is driving those, and to attack impunity?

Q14 Chris Bryant: The big numbers at the moment are still in relation to Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, the Congo and so on. Those are all countries where there is conflict but, looking forward, you mentioned environmental refugees. You mentioned a figure of 200 million, I think, as possible environmental refugees in future.

As I understand it, that is in part because some of the lowest lying lands in the world are obviously those susceptible to flooding. If the water rises round the world, some of the poorest people in the world will be affected. Potable water is lost, and we might have conflict over drinking water. Is that the kind of pattern, and how do you see that developing? Where are the countries that are most susceptible?

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: That is certainly the pattern. A key one you mentioned is climate change creating further conflict. Conflict really is the driving factor for pushing people out of their homes. That is a crucial one to watch. I will say that I am not an expert in climate change and migration, so perhaps Sarah has some other thoughts on that.

Sarah Elliott: I need to reiterate that it is often multiple causes that interact that can lead people to be displaced. I understand, for example, that in South Sudan at the moment generalised violence and famine are



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all coalescing together. That is not new; there is even famine or drought in parts of Syria, which was partly spurring some of the unrest there at the time.

There is a need for the international community to respond to persons displaced as a result of climate-induced movement. There are mechanisms out there to do that. But it is an additional driver, absolutely, that is present in many of the other regions that you are talking about.

- Q15 Catherine West:** Let's go back to the essay question, which is on the EU and the key points of the EU's response to irregular migration. What would constitute an effective response? So far, we have talked a lot about what hasn't gone well. What is best practice? What does best practice look like?

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: The big problem was that there was a lack of burden-sharing. Burden-sharing is incredibly controversial. Should refugees be relocated to other countries? That is what Europe is still completely split over right now. But you do need to have some of these systems in place; that is very helpful.

Look at what has happened in Italy since 2011. In September 2011, they asked for burden-sharing, and nothing happened. A few years passed and they asked again, but nothing happened really—well, a little bit happened but not a huge amount. What have we seen happen in Italy? We now have a populist-nationalist, reasonably Eurosceptic Government in Italy. So this does have a political impact. That is crucial.

There are also reception conditions. Reception conditions on the Greek islands in 2015 were absolutely abysmal. You had EU officials going and saying, "We can't believe this is the EU." We had people giving birth in tents, with no running water. The conditions in Greece were and still are abysmal. More work needs to be done on having acceptable reception conditions.

This is also about processing asylum claims. It takes a very long time at the moment for somebody to get their claim processed. If that takes a long time, the return system is going to get backlogged as well. All these processes need to be put in place for the reform of the Dublin agreement. That is something that should have been discussed. It was on the table at meeting after meeting in 2012 and 2013; it just kept getting kicked further down the road because there were other things going on.

All those mechanisms would certainly help with the humanitarian perspective, and also with efficiency and meeting some of the goals that everyone in Europe wants, which includes a fast and efficient returns policy as well.

- Q16 Ann Clwyd:** Could you give us an idea of how European countries' responses to irregular migration affected the humanitarian situation for migrants in the central Mediterranean?

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: In the central Mediterranean specifically, as I mentioned previously, the EU's policy sways between being humanitarian and being restrictive, and back again—humanitarian, restrictive. We saw search and rescue operations launched and then withdrawn. Then they would be launched again, there would be a political debate and they would be withdrawn. Then there would be a tragedy, and they would be reinstated again. That is what we have seen happen over and over again.

Looking at the central Mediterranean specifically, the effect that we have seen of the EU policies is that more people are dying at sea. It is quite simple. If you take boats out of the water, more people are going to die, and I have some figures from the last few years about the percentages of people dying on the route.

In the Mediterranean recently, the European Union has been funding the Libyan coastguard to return people to Libya. The Libyan coastguard is returning people to a country that is essentially descending into civil war right now. The conditions in detention centres in Libya are pretty awful. People are being sent back to detention, torture, rape, extortion and forced labour. These have all been reported repeatedly in Libya. That is one situation.

The boats have been taken out of the Mediterranean, aid agency search and rescue boats have been denied access to certain areas, and Italy has been denying access to its ports. This has caused the numbers arriving on that central Mediterranean route to drop quite significantly since last year, and caused the death toll to rise. For example, in 2017 on the Libya-Italy route, 2.4% of people who made the crossing died. In 2018—last year—that figure doubled, and 5.6% of people attempting that route died. I have just looked at the latest IOM figures, and so far this year the figure is 10%. One in 10 people trying to get from Libya to Europe dies—one in 10 people. That is a really high figure, and that is because we have removed the capacity to save people at sea.

Sarah Elliott: I can add that we know that fortifying borders, in and of itself, will only exacerbate vulnerability. The demand to cross them remains. As we have seen in Europe, it meant that, as fences went up, the situation for certain individuals in Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia and other places became a humanitarian situation in Europe itself. We can see there is more to be done to work with movement, when it is a critical need and when it can benefit countries in Europe through resettlement places and what we call complementary pathways to resettlement.

For example, at the moment, family unity is a critical need for refugees on the continent who would like to be re-joined with family members. Due to practical issues, such as costs and lawyers—and practical issues in the central Mediterranean in terms of accessing embassies—that can be inhibited, and yet it is a critical factor in improving integration prospects. Certainly, where there have been challenges to that, families have remained separated. We would encourage more efforts to look into



scholarship programmes for refugees, labour mobility schemes and the like.

- Q17 **Ann Clwyd:** Can I ask you what the implications of ending search and rescue missions to the Mediterranean have been? Isn't this in breach of EU member states' legal obligations? If that is the case, is there any legal recourse to pursue this?

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: On the EU policies in the central Mediterranean, you could argue that they constitute pushbacks, because people are being sent back to a country where they might have a valid claim of asylum. I imagine, because this is EU policy that has been agreed by all member states and thoroughly scrutinised by all the lawyers in Brussels, that they would make sure that this policy would stand up if challenged on human rights. Personally, I would think that it should be in violation of some of the treaties, because, as I said, you are returning people back to torture and death. Essentially what Europe is doing is letting people die as a deterrent. You have to question the morality of that.

Sarah Elliott: Undeniably, there will be three main effects of a reduction in search and rescue capacity in the Mediterranean. There will be more deaths at sea—there still are, and in higher ratios. That will not deter smugglers, who were already moving people across that sea body prior to 2013 and Mare Nostrum. We also know that it could put pressure on private vessels, with serious contractual or financial implications, to pick up the slack. We have seen that already with calls by the Chamber of Shipping to look into this more concertedly. Additionally, it would not stop the routine detention and exploitation of third-country nationals in Libya, which is providing an excellent business model for smugglers and traffickers there. Certainly, while I cannot specify exactly what legal recourse of action there is, these are untenable situations that are being perpetuated by actions such as that.

- Q18 **Ann Clwyd:** Are you surprised that none of the outside agencies has mounted a challenge of this kind?

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: I have looked into these cases, not the ones in the central Mediterranean, but the returns from Greece to Turkey. That is another EU deal with Turkey where Turkey was given a large amount of money to essentially stop refugees leaving the coast. I know there have been a number of legal cases that organisations have started. As I understand it, they are working their way through the European Court of Human Rights. I think there are legal challenges under way.

- Q19 **Mr Seely:** Sorry for being late. Thank you so much for being here. I have a quick question. People talk a lot about future wars being driven by migration issues, in the same way that we talk about future wars being driven by a lack of water or the fact that most of the population of the world lives in a littoral location—as in on the coast. The reality has not yet worked out like that. While agreeing that it is a horrible problem, and the result includes many horrible tragedies and amounts of people dying,



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are there any examples that we have of wars, or instability even, that are being started or significantly fuelled by damaging, irregular migration flows?

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: Caused by irregular migration flows?

Mr Seely: Either caused by migration flows or made significantly worse.

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: One of the big concerns in Lebanon was that the large influx of Syrian refugees could affect sectarian tensions in Lebanon. I think one in five people living in Lebanon now is a Syrian refugee. That certainly is a concern. I am not an expert on Lebanon—I have not been—but I do not think it has turned out to be as explosive as people were worried about. But that is still a concern, and I know it is still a concern of the Lebanese Government. They are still looking to find ways to make that community more cohesive and make it better.

Another concern is the recruitment of refugees by groups such as Islamic State. You have these large refugee camps in sub-Saharan Africa where you have a population that, as I have spoken about before, has no hope. There is this hopelessness there, because there is nowhere their life can go. It becomes quite a fertile breeding ground for Islamic State recruiters. That is another example I can think of. Nothing else springs to mind at the moment, but I will have a think.

Sarah Elliott: I would warn against correlating migration movements with conflicts. Most of the 19 active conflicts in Africa are long-standing and relate to ethnic and Islamic insurgents, or other reasons. It can certainly contribute to tensions, but that would then be something to look at in terms of what the existing structural issues are that are fuelling that and why there have not been efforts to promote social cohesion. Otherwise I am not sure of a specific conflict where it would be a clear causative factor.

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: I think the idea that refugees become disruptive to the societies they are in has become quite prevalent in Europe, and it really is not the case. In Germany and other countries, you see the media and politicians taking an increasingly hostile view towards the refugee communities, and that is a very dangerous approach, because the crime statistics are not changing. There is no evidence of any refugees causing an increase in crime anywhere, but you do not necessarily get that impression when you read the newspapers sometimes. I certainly think there is no real evidence of refugees bringing violence to a country.

Q20 **Royston Smith:** Charlotte, you said earlier that the UK had not particularly been affected. I know you will probably talk about numbers, with Germany taking six or seven times as many as the UK, but there have been effects on the UK from irregular migration. I would argue that perhaps the Brexit result had something to do with that. Even if that is not the obvious effect of migration, it is an obvious causal effect. So what effects do you think the UK has seen since probably 2011, as you said, rather than 2014, which we were looking at? What have the effects been



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on the UK?

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: That is an interesting point. I agree with your point that migration did affect the Brexit referendum, but it was not migration and the refugee crisis per se that affected it; it was the reaction to it. It was politicians, political parties and the media portraying it as being a threat to the UK, when it really was not a threat to the UK at the time. It was perception rather than reality that had an effect.

This is where Europe as a whole could have dealt with it a lot better. In most countries there was a trend of taking a small, hard-line, securitised view and saying, "If we don't do this, the nationalists and the populists will start winning. We have to change our policies to be a bit more hard line." But what have we seen now? We have got the European Parliament elections coming up, and we are expecting to see record numbers of nationalists and populists, and far-right and hard-right parties in the European Parliament. So this has all happened.

If the British Government and other European countries had made a stronger point and really made a positive argument and said, "This is a humanitarian emergency—a moral emergency—and we need to stand up and do the right thing," it would have created a different debate. The debate would not have even been the debate that we saw, which was people trying to outsmart each other about who was going to be toughest about a crisis that was not really affecting the UK. That negativity just built up. There was an opportunity to step back and really make the moral argument.

Q21 **Royston Smith:** Sarah, did you want to add anything?

Sarah Elliott: No, I certainly hark what Charlotte said. The perception of a crisis in the UK itself was entirely misplaced in terms of numbers, including of asylum applications, comparative to even France or Germany. We have even seen that rhetoric used in response to the Iranian crossings over the channel at Christmas time. It is not helpful. If you look at who crossed then, it was 600 compared to 30,000 crossing in the Mediterranean. We really need to put this in perspective. The UNHCR would never call what happened in Europe a crisis. It was entirely manageable for a wealthy continent. We think the number was something that could be dealt with, with mechanisms in place to do it. So we need to be careful how we conceptualise what is happening and how we communicate it to the public, in exactly the way Charlotte has mentioned.

Q22 **Royston Smith:** Was the UK, then, right to opt out of the EU refugee relocation schemes? Was that a mistake on the UK's part?

Charlotte McDonald-Gibson: The UK did not opt out. It was never going to be part of it. Again, this was another slight misrepresentation of what was going on, which made it seem like a crisis. We had a Government at the time really strongly arguing that it was not the right thing to do, but these things would never have affected the UK because it had these opt-outs from years back, so it would never have had to take refugees and migrants. What that rhetoric did was just allow other people, for example,



in Hungary, to be like, "Yes, absolutely, this is wrong." The UK did not need to make those arguments, because it was never part of it in the first place. I would argue that there would have been a strong case for voluntarily opting in and saying, "Yes, we are part of Europe. Let's be part of the solution. Let's be part of the European Union and take them in." I think that if the UK had done that, other countries might have followed. It might not have descended into the race to the bottom that we saw instead.

- Q23 **Chair:** Right. I think we have covered all the questions that we wanted to bring up in this session. I am incredibly grateful. We will pause for a moment as we get the next witnesses in.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Professor Sir Paul Collier and Dr Roderick Parkes.

- Q24 **Chair:** Welcome to the second half of this afternoon's session on migration in the Foreign Affairs Committee. Welcome, both of you. May I start off and just ask very briefly: is the refugee crisis over?

Professor Sir Paul Collier: Refugee crises arise when fragile situations go into meltdown. For the foreseeable future there will be fragile situations going into meltdown. We can't predict which ones, and we can't say where they will be, but when fragile situations go into meltdown what they produce is a lot of displacement.

With Syria, half the population of 20 million—10 million people—got displaced from their homes, because their homes just became too dangerous to live in. As the discussion earlier implied, refugees are not migrants. They are the people who chose to stay at home and so half of these displaced people moved within Syria—which is pretty normal. Usually about 60% of displaced people move within their own country. The other half stumbled across the border into Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon. So the refugee crisis was a crisis of those three local haven countries—and that is always the case. The European bit was sort of peripheral. We will doubtless come to that.

Is the Syria crisis over? There will be one last round, which is the Irbid area, and goodness knows what that will produce—clearly, a flight into Turkey, if people can get to Turkey, or Lebanon, if people can get to Lebanon. There will be many others.

We need a system that is robust to recognising that these meltdowns will happen periodically, despite our best efforts to stop them. We should obviously have much better efforts to stop them than we have had, but they are happening, so we need a strategy that is ethical and sustainable for meeting the legitimate needs of refugees and displaced people.

- Q25 **Chair:** Is the UN convention fit to address recent inflows?

Professor Sir Paul Collier: No. It is very old-fashioned. It was designed many years ago to deal with an internal movement within Europe from the



newly communist countries to the democratic countries. It was a sort of legal device to prevent the Russians from insisting on return. That was what it was about. It has then morphed, through a load of court cases, into different animals in different countries. It is not even consistently applied across countries—nothing like. It is just not fit for purpose. It is not that we should tear it up; it is just not designed for today's problem.

- Q26 **Priti Patel:** Sir Paul, you have just spoken about systems and strategies to address conflicts and migration—mainly migration and the flows that we see. We spoke in the last session about the UN global compacts on migration and refugees. I would like to hear both your perspectives: is that a suitable system or potentially a suitable strategy that can look to address the new waves of migration from conflict that we are seeing of late?

Professor Sir Paul Collier: If you are asking me whether that is the solution to the problem, the answer is, "Obviously not." Is there a solution to the problem? Yes; this is not complicated, I think. The refugees naturally invite and induce compassion, a recognition that we all have responsibility toward them. That is the response of the heart: "We are responsible for doing something. We are all responsible." Then we need our heads to say, "Who is best at doing what? What do refugees really need?"

To my mind, first and foremost they need to have the dignity that comes with a degree of autonomy restored. In other words, they need a job. The UNHCR, in all its great huffings and puffings, has never got around to thinking, "Refugees need a job." Its business model was, "Put them in a camp and infantilise them with free food and a free tent forever." That is an insult to the problem. Most refugees ignore the whole UN system, because that is not what they want. They would rather take their chances in a town, trying to work illegally. The key battle should be to make it possible legally for people to work as refugees.

Dr Parkes: May I start with the first question of whether the crisis is over, and then come to the compact? I speak a little bit from an EU perspective, because that is who I work for at the moment, and even from that perspective the answer is no. During the crisis, we have focused on the foreign policy dimension, on Frontex and borders, but the internal proviso was always, "We need to get our own house in order. We can buy ourselves time with the EU and Turkey deal, by strengthening the external border," but only so that we could start fixing the things that Sir Paul talked about, and we have not done that.

We have internally played for time, so now we hit the European elections. The outgoing European Parliament has put its name to a more ambitious internal migration and asylum approach, but it counts for nothing because they are outgoing, and you will now see a new Commission coming in and a new Parliament of very different make-up. So we have a foreign policy dimension, and we have border controls, but the capacity to absorb asylum seekers, refugees and irregular migrants is not there.



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The first panel talked a little bit about the situation in Greece. It is incredibly fragile. The EU has pushed the solution to Greece, and Greece has pushed it to the islands. The mayors of the local towns who built the camps are refusing to expand their capacity because they do not want them to become a permanent solution. So you have 4,000 or 5,000 people sitting in Lesbos in a camp with capacity for 2,000, and every time the Government moves people out of the camp and on to the mainland, which they do not like doing because that takes them out of the EU-Turkey deal, the same number will come out of Turkey, almost as a message: "We are capable of listening to your plans and we will send the same numbers in just to keep the pressure up."

That is by way of an answer to the first question. We are in an incredibly precarious situation. We have pushed the solution to borderlands and fragile neighbours without getting our own house in order. I think my colleagues in Brussels would agree with that.

On the compact, we are facing the same problem that we have historically faced—at least since the end of the cold war: that poor developing economies host most refugees and wealthy northern countries fund UNHCR and spend most money on the few people who do actually come here. So you have got that incredible imbalance, and we have been trying to solve this since at least 2003, with UNHCR's three-prong approach. Reading the refugee compact is like reading that, only precisely with the element you talk about—getting refugees into work.

I would look, though, a little bit at the experience of the migration compact, which was the parallel track. UNHCR took the refugee compact and said, "We don't really want to have a full discussion on this. We will take this and run with it." I think the north-south split remained, perhaps because they did not have a broader discussion where all chips were on the table.

If you look at the global migration compact, the EU has historically blocked any global migration deal precisely because we were scared of African states effectively making us sign up to an open cheque on taking people in. Actually, what we found from the discussion was that African Governments are facing the same problems as we are. They were keen on border control returns and immigrant integration. There was not such a big north-south split as we thought, precisely because essentially we took it out of UN hands and had a proper discussion. So maybe there was a missed chance there when doing the compact—it was too controlled a process.

- Q27 **Priti Patel:** With regard to the compact and the important point that poor and developing countries are the hosts to many internally-displaced persons and refugees, do you have a view in terms of the policy levers that could be applied to provide the economic security or employment anchor and use more market-based strategies to give refugees economic security so that they can go on to thrive and prosper, rather than having this really regressive and false narrative that refugees are a burden to their host countries?



Professor Sir Paul Collier: Yes. As Dr Parkes said, at the moment we spend £135 for each refugee in Europe for every £1 we spend on a refugee in the poor regional havens, and yet most refugees are in those poor regional havens. The few who come to Europe are actually a highly selected bunch of refugees. The displaced out of Syria were a complete random cross-section of the Syrian population. Fear strikes randomly anywhere, so the displaced perfectly replicate the overall Syrian population. But the ones who came to Europe are overwhelmingly young, male and well educated. Fewer than 5% of Syrian refugees are in Germany, but they have around half of all university-educated Syrians there, so they have gutted Syria of the university-educated: the very people that it will need to rebuild the place. It is very select. The entire focus needs to be on what we can do in the regional havens.

Alex Betts was the director of the Refugee Studies Centre at Oxford, which is the main research centre on refugees in the world. We were brought into Jordan by the Government of Jordan in 2015 to say, "Help—what can we do?" We never meant to do other than be helpful to Jordan, but it turned into this bulk refuge when we realised that what could be done was blindingly obvious.

The Government of Jordan was very worried, because it did not dare allow these refugees to work. The Syrians were much poorer than the Jordanians, so the Jordanian population would have exploded if they had been given legal permission to work. However, Jordan itself was in an economic trap of not being able to develop, so we came up with this idea: if we brought jobs to Jordan, would they give some of those jobs to refugees?

Once we had put it on the table that their refugees could be an opportunity to get firms to come, it took them only six weeks to switch completely. At that time there were only 4,000 work permits for a million refugees. They said, "We will do up to 200,000 work permits for refugees, if for every 100 jobs you bring in 70 go to the refugees but 30 could be for Jordanians." That was the structure that we took to the World Bank and the British Government, and that became the basis for what is now called the different compact—the Jordan compact.

The Jordan compact has now been imitated in Ethiopia and in east Asia. That is a viable model. The key agencies in doing that were really nothing to do with the UNHCR. The UNHCR's response to what Alex and I said was, "We're not a jobs agency." They were quite indignant. Of course, that is the problem. They are not a jobs agency, when what people need is a process of bringing jobs in.

A key agency was the World Bank—the World Bank aid part changed its rules so that it could provide aid to Jordan and Lebanon. For example, it financed a big expansion of schooling in Lebanon, so Syrian children could go to school. The IFC, which is the arm of the World Bank group that works with firms, was granted money to bring in firms to cover the cost of setting up in the regional havens. We then went to the European Commission, and they agreed to give 10 years of free market access to



Jordan, so that firms could go and produce stuff in Jordan and sell it to Europe.

That is a very simple, viable approach, and is now sort of becoming the new global model. It is orthogonal to what the UN is doing, because the UN is not the right agency to deal with this. There is a straightforward solution that is consistent with ethics and dignity, responding to the needs of refugees. The regional havens should provide open borders and permit jobs. What the rich countries should predominantly do—yes, we should take some refugees; everybody should take some refugees—is the basic thing of providing money and jobs.

Q28 Chair: Is part of that network through opening up those regional havens—those regional camps as you put it; those regional areas—into economic areas of interest, such as trade deals and making them zero-rated on tariffs or whatever it might be, so that you can really develop an economy and therefore have a legal structure and an economic structure that can resettle back in the initial country?

Professor Sir Paul Collier: Yes. Jordan started with industrial zones and just said, "Firms can come into these industrial zones." Now they have broadened it, but that was politically the easiest thing to do. We must imagine that if these practices had been going on for 20 years, global firms like Ikea would now just be doing this as a standard matter. Where there was a crisis—a flood to a regional haven—firms like Ikea would be going there and saying, "Oh, well we can make flat-packs there," and IFC would be saying, "Here's the money to get it all started." Once we have got the system up and running, it is sort of using globalisation for humane purposes, and UNHCR is pre all that.

Dr Parkes: Sir Paul is the expert on this, but perhaps I can add a couple of things—lessons we learned—from an EU perspective. The first is that, initially, with the trust funds and so on, the EU behaved incredibly defensively and shifted all its funding up to Niger to create a buffer. We pulled a lot of funding from spots in Africa that could have provided jobs and opportunities, and we did a lot bilaterally, because we had the most pressure on individual states, instead of acting regionally and having regional circulation of people. That is one lesson.

The second lesson—you hinted at this a bit—is that there is a bit of a camp business among large international organisations. One of the problems we are facing at the moment is that in the Balkans, the flows have dropped off—the numbers are down—and Governments are saying to us, "Do we have to give the money back if we close the camp? Do you have ideas about how to keep this open?" You have a sort of—

Professor Sir Paul Collier: The camps become the objective.

Dr Parkes: Yes, and it becomes permanent. I have visited one or two of those and seen how they are being used, and that is tricky.

The third point is that I think Sir Paul's model works as well if we do not think of it as solely trying to keep people in their home regions. We have



to be aware that, as people become wealthier, are linked into global markets or whatever, they will travel, and they may still come to Europe. That needs to be part of the equation somehow.

- Q29 **Priti Patel:** This is my final question on this. Is it not the case that, frankly, when it comes to migration and displacement, the whole response has been dominated—rightly so—by the humanitarian argument and we are not necessarily joining up all the key policy levers that focus on economic outcomes? I am thinking of economic wellbeing, state building, getting people back home, keeping skills in the region and all the value-added points that would be made by an economist looking at this from a very rational perspective. Should we not have a much more blended approach that combines the points Sir Paul has made with the various respected UN agencies and national Governments at bilateral level? Should not all those levers try to come together in a different way?

Professor Sir Paul Collier: The real criticism is exactly something you raised earlier. It is not humanitarian versus economic; it is that it has been reactive rather than strategic. It has been panicked reactions to yesterday's events. If you just do these reactive things, you get yourself deeper into a mess. There is absolutely no tension here between the humanitarian and the economic. The head and the heart can work together. Why do refugees mostly ignore the whole UNHCR system? Because it does not meet their core needs for autonomy and dignity. They are desperate to try to restore a degree of autonomy and dignity in their lives and they cannot find that in the camps. The economic is part of a humane response, so the so-called humanitarian agencies do not have a monopoly on the humane—far from it.

Dr Parkes: I want very quickly to pick up one or two things. First, it is tempting to fall into the argument that there are flipsides when it comes to migration management. One is that if you start relying on refugees' agency—their taking things into their own hands—it sometimes makes things harder to manage. You had a discussion with the first panel about a European relocation system. We have had long-drawn-out debates that anyway wouldn't have come to anything, because if people want to move country, they will; they will organise themselves. That plays out wherever.

You also have a sort of reverse blending. If you start treating refugees as migrants capable of working, there's a reverse blending, if you like, of migrants being treated equally to refugees, because they are in precarious situations and on transit routes and so on. They probably have a good case, if they have been through the Sahel and Libya, for saying, "We've had our human rights broken" etc. That is part of the problem that we had in the central Mediterranean. Because it became entirely framed as a refugee problem and, through that, the EU's responsibility, it became much harder to put pressure on countries of origin and say, "Build up your consular network in north Africa, so that your citizens can go back." The onus was always on the EU, because even if people were moving for economic reasons, it was framed as a refugee problem. So there is a flipside, I think.



Q30 **Ann Clwyd:** How would you crystallise the biggest obstacles to a collective European response?

Professor Sir Paul Collier: First and foremost is short-termism. Actually, things are getting a lot better. There is a thing called the European Migration Network, which is an agency under the European Commission, and last year they commissioned Alex Betts and me to come up with sustainable migration and refugee strategies, which we presented in Brussels in December. That was very successful and they have just asked us to do more. So Europe is starting now to think more strategically, but for years it didn't.

As we heard in the first session, the whole Syrian so-called crisis—refugee crisis—was because, for four years, Europe just sat on its hands and didn't help. That is why Alex and I were brought into Jordan—because the country, the Government, was desperate. What should it do with this million people? There are only 7 million Jordanians. This was a nightmare. Because the people weren't allowed to work, it was a burden on them, and they weren't getting any help or nothing like enough.

We brought that on ourselves by, basically, a policy of what I call the heartless head. I'm referring to the phase in which we just spent four years ignoring the problem. Then we switched from the heartless head for two months to the headless heart, or Merkel did. Then Merkel panicked and changed her mind and closed the border by paying €3 billion to Erdoğan to close the border for her, and then she started to put pressure on the rest of Europe to try to make them take some of these refugees off Germany's hands. No wonder nobody wanted to do that. This was being bullied because of a unilateral set of decisions by a German Chancellor, and it has taken Europe some years to get out of that. I think, post Merkel, this will be much easier.

I was working with the German Government at the time, believe it or not, because they wanted me to work with them on their Africa G20 strategy, so I worked with them. I had dinner with Chancellor Merkel and all the rest. Really they have blundered into such a short-termist reactionary policy that it has taken years to get out of that and start thinking longer term.

Dr Parkes: Can I disagree with Sir Paul? Is there time for that? I don't think it will change with a change of Government. I think it is structural for two reasons. One is the Schengen area. It is so odd to have a passport-free area as the basis for your migration and asylum policy. It is not a sense of a common European labour market. It is not a sense that here are 28 wealthy states that could club together and absorb asylum seekers or whatever it may be. It's a passport-free travel area, which means that your migration, borders or asylum policy is nothing more than a flanking measure. It does nothing more than safeguard Schengen. It means your borders policy is about migration controls. It is not about customs. It doesn't link into the military. It is a very partial borders model. It was created in, essentially, 1985 in the north-west of the EU, so it really

doesn't fit the geopolitical realities of anybody to the south or the east. Those are the structural problems in borders and immigration policy.

Equally, you have an overlay of the usual arguments about solidarity within the European Union that again plays out in these fields. The north says solidarity is about everybody else taking our rules "and then you'll be fine". For the south it's, "You give us resources without criteria attached." For the east it's, "You're leaving us out. Please include us." So you have got that three-way split, as you had in the eurozone crisis and now that you have in Schengen, I think. So it's structural.

Professor Sir Paul Collier: Actually, I don't disagree with that, but there are ways out of it. The Schengen area is right for EU citizens to move within that Schengen space. That does not have to apply to refugees who can perfectly reasonably be assigned to a country and have their entitlements specific to that country: both their work entitlements and their access to benefits entitlements. That is a perfectly viable area for discussion. Schengen is a constraint, but not a killer to a coherent refugee policy. If you don't do that, all the refugees end up in Denmark or somewhere.

- Q31 **Ann Clwyd:** The impact of irregular migration on countries such as France and Italy has been profound, particularly for France. Would you like to talk about that, and also examine whether politicians could have played a more decisive role in influencing attitudes in those and other countries, instead of turning the whole thing into a very divisive and toxic situation?

Professor Sir Paul Collier: Do you want to take that?

Dr Parkes: I'll be sacked if I do.

Professor Sir Paul Collier: First, the Italian situation is very odd. France and Italy, you will have gathered, are at loggerheads about this. You have President Macron preaching righteousness to Salvini and saying, "You have got to take all the refugees." Then a boat goes to France, and what does Macron do? Sends it to Italy. He is not walking the talk. Italy has got very heavy youth unemployment: something like 30% youth unemployment. You see the half million largely unemployed African immigrants, and in many ways it is tragic. I was talking to an African cardinal based at the Vatican who says a sin of "thou shalt not tempt" has been committed. These kids come to Italy under the delusion that it is the land of milk and honey, but when they get there and find that there are no jobs, and no prospect of a job or training or anything, they cannot go home, because to go home would be to admit failure to their friends. They are sort of trapped.

It is a very grim situation, and it is ripe for this populist, vile response. Until Europe gets a solid grip on both refugees and migration policy, we will not be able to counter the populist narrative. The essence of it is that people turning up on beaches irregularly should not get privileged access to living in Europe. That is a ridiculous way of getting to Europe. We need



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a system whereby, if you have an asylum claim, you can make it from where you are—indeed, you have to make it from where you are—and then we need, as you were saying, a discussion with African Governments.

I deal with African Governments all the time, and they do not want their brightest and best people to flood to Europe, but they do want some rate of migration that is beneficial to them. At the moment, the statistic I keep quoting is that there are more Sudanese doctors working in London than in Sudan. That is an ethical disgrace for Britain, in my view. This year, we poached more than half our doctors from elsewhere. We have the finest universities in the world. We could train all our own doctors, and more. We should be exporting trained doctors, not importing them. We just need to get to an ethical basis. That is true across Europe as well.

- Q32 Catherine West:** I want to ask about the evidence base and the methodology relating to the data. For example, we know that there are some EU-backed deals with Libya, and one element of that was the camps. There are 34 camps in Libya at the moment. As we know from the UNICEF reporting, there is evidence of malnutrition, physical and verbal abuse, children housed in adult cells, unaccompanied minors not provided for and military-run centres described as “living hellholes”.

Is that being funded by the European Union? Where are the mechanisms for checking how that money is being spent? Elements of what was signed off in Malta in 2017 are very good, but clearly this is not very good. I do not think that any European would want to know that their money is being spent in that way. From a methodology and research point of view, because you are an academic, how is that being monitored and fed back to decision makers, so that programmes can be stopped if they are not doing the right thing?

Dr Parkes: Do you want to go, Sir Paul? I will give you time to think. I don't know the answer, but I did know the answer, so I am just trying to remember.

- Q33 Catherine West:** I am happy for you to write. We obviously have a lot of evidence before we do these sittings, and I have only just finished reading the evidence myself. However, I think that we want to work towards what works methodologically, from a science point of view, and know what does not work, and then we want to fund and match the resource to what works and stop funding what doesn't work.

I am just wondering, given the particularly difficult situation that Libya has found itself in during the last month, and the risk that it may become too dangerous for people to go in and monitor those camps, whether that is being funded by EU funds. I just want to know what levers the EU is pulling around the funding.

Dr Parkes: As I recall, it goes through UNHCR and IOM, and one of my colleagues in Brussels will help hold them to account—which is easier said than done, in the sense that if you are dealing with the people running the camps in Libya, they often have two hats on. One is local law enforcement or whatever running the camp, and the other is militia, and they will swap



caps as they go along. Trying to get access to the right bits of the camp is tricky, and so on and so on. That is known.

The trouble, I think, is that the EU funding also goes into training personnel within Libyan authorities, and some of those people perhaps have two caps on as well. We can be holding IOM to account, and they have talked to someone who, through the EU and its training mechanisms, has a perfectly legitimate cap on and can come back to Brussels and say that to us, but essentially, both IOM and the EU are perhaps living a sort of parallel life—you know, they're blanking out the shadow structures that are there.

That is the real difficulty of trying to separate the two, because both IOM and the EU need something to be happening on the ground, so you have to engage with this blurred situation. Trying to put in place proper accountability structures and oversight within that is incredibly difficult. I mean, I am happy to write about the proper mechanisms, but that is the essential problem.

- Q34 **Chris Bryant:** Before you get to the Mediterranean—if you are going from Africa—and once you have already left your original home, you go through various transit areas in Africa. As I understand it, the UK has tried to work with France and Italy on various different programmes in, for instance, the Sahel. Has that been successful? Is it ever likely to be successful?

Professor Sir Paul Collier: The focus on transit countries is, in my view, kind of a mistake. Any system that induces people to go to Libya is a very, very, very mis-designed system. It is about the most dangerous place in the world, so we need a system whereby if you have a claim for asylum, you need to be able to make it somewhere that isn't Libya; you know, that is a safer place. If you want to migrate—you are not making a claim to asylum, but you just want to migrate—you should be able to apply for an opportunity to migrate, given your characteristics, and see whether there is a match; see whether somebody wants to offer you a job and a place.

We have to separate the system of being able to get to Europe, whether for asylum or migration, from going to these terribly dangerous places. Part of that is, if you go to a dangerous place, it must not increase your chance of getting to Europe. As long as it does not increase your chance of getting to Europe, nobody will go to these dangerous places, but at the moment we are just sort of reactive—"That is where they are." Of course, at the moment, people are actually trying to get from Libya back to where they came from. As it were, in the short term, that is something we should be helping.

Dr Parkes: I disagree a little bit. I think transit is incredibly important, because we tend to split countries into countries of origin and countries of destination, and anybody who sits in between can leverage that, essentially. It is not fun to be a transit country: you are sitting between two other countries' problems, so we do need to work out a model for that. I would also flip that round a little bit and say that countries of



transit are also countries of destination. Quite often they will come to us and say, "Help us with these transit problems," when what they actually mean is, "We haven't got the capacity to integrate into our labour market people who perhaps want to stay here, so help us with returns."

Q35 Chris Bryant: When you say, "come to us," who do you mean?

Dr Parkes: In this case, the EU. I'm afraid I do not know the UK system well enough. That is essentially what ECOWAS was doing—the west African economic zone. They have taken money from the European Union on the grounds of, "We want to create a Schengen-like EU labour market-type system, where west Africans can circulate freely." As soon as the migration crisis broke, it was a de facto free movement zone, where people transited without being told, "You have rights to work in the country that you're moving through. You have certain opportunities here." That is perhaps a second thing: deal with transit issues, but do not classify everything as a transit issue. Spot that a lot of people heading north within west Africa wish to stay there but just do not know that the opportunities are there.

On the relationship with France and Italy, and picking out certain zones, we can look at where the funding goes within the trust funds and so on. Spain takes west Africa, because they moved first during the crisis with the Canary Islands 10 or 15 years ago—that is theirs. Italy takes the central zone down through Libya because, again, geographically there is a logic to that. I have a feeling that Germany has taken the horn of Africa and the IGAD zone. France spreads itself, on its own national basis, sideways across that whole zone—there is an arc of instability that it is trying to manage. There are tensions between all four of those countries on that basis. If the UK plugs into Italy and France, it is plugging into the most difficult bilateral relationship, because it is competitive between France and Italy. That is probably an issue in how effective the UK is there—you are managing relations between European Governments as much as you are in a very tricky part of the world, so that is possibly an element as well.

Q36 Chris Bryant: Incidentally, I would say your cardinal had a very odd theodicy and understanding of sin, since I have never been aware of temptation being listed as one of the seven deadly sins, or in the ten commandments.

You were both, I think, listening to the previous witnesses. We were talking about the EU relocation scheme and Britain having not been involved from the very beginning. It would be interesting to hear your take on that as well.

Professor Sir Paul Collier: You probably have a better blow-by-blow account, Dr Parkes. Clearly, there was a rapid and substantial backlash in Germany. There was also a large majority view within the German Government that the Chancellor should not have done this. It was a very isolated policy, which she then reversed. Her priority was really to get the Syrians who had come to Germany to be moved to other European countries. That is why Chancellor Merkel was pretty cross with David



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Cameron when he said, "Oh, we'll take refugees directly from the camps," which was obviously a much more sensible thing to do, because you did not just select the well-off young men; you actually selected people on the basis of need.

But that did not meet the Chancellor's political problem. She then sort of strong-armed, as I understand it. Until then, there had been a national veto right, which was removed on this extremely sensitive issue. That then produced a lot of non-compliance, so the Commission came up with this assignment of who was supposed to take what, but nobody did. This was pushing her own political needs and very much undermining the procedures, and the confidence in those procedures, that had been shared.

Dr Parkes: I will agree with this as far as I can without being sacked. Germany has always blown hot and cold on relocation. If it has had a large influx of people, then it is pro-relocation, and if not, not. It has pushed and then stepped back over the last 20 years.

Under the last Home Affairs Commissioner, when things were rather calmer, some research went on into how we could have a relocation system that would basically be on the German model, where they have, I think it is called, the Königsteiner Schlüssel. They have a key that looks at your GDP or employment rate and so on within Germany, within the federal states, and then allocates people on that basis.

In the heat of the crisis, somebody took this half-baked road map out of the bottom drawer and said, "It's a crisis. This is what we need," and then tried to apply it to the EU. From the German perspective, it was familiar, so they were keen on that, but since the European Union is not a federal state, it makes no sense at a European level, and it was a no-go. Then you hit the situation that you talk about.

Just a last word: if you want a relocation system that works, a lot of it is about decentralising it—getting sponsorship programmes, getting cities involved, taking it out of the summits, where 28 people sit round a table and divvy up populations between them. That is unsustainable, but you are caught in that at the moment, because what is essentially on the agenda is a more centralised system or one-stop shop, where the European Asylum Support Office is turned into a proper European refugee office and does allocate, as they would in Germany. We ought to be going a little bit in the opposite direction of trying to depoliticise and decentralise, I suspect.

Professor Sir Paul Collier: I notice that AKK, who is likely to be Merkel's successor as Chancellor, came out with a speech about a month ago saying that she did not agree with people being assigned; basically, each country should be free to take refugees or not take them—it should not be freed of burden-sharing, but it should have a choice as to whether it shared that burden through money or taking people. AKK was basically distancing herself from the Merkel position.



- Q37 Chris Bryant:** Can I ask you a question that my constituents, in a way, might ask? In relation to the people we are talking about today, in terms of irregular migration, rather than EU migrants or EU citizens exercising their EU right of freedom of movement, what impact has that had on the lives of working-class communities in the UK?

Professor Sir Paul Collier: You will know better than I do, because the numbers are, in a way, too small to be researchable at the level that I research at. It will be much more individual situations that either play out well or play out badly. At the generic level, it is all just too small to be one way or another.

Dr Parkes: I would be able to answer the question better on European free movement. I would not know, I am afraid, about that.

Chris Bryant: This is the interesting thing. I think a lot of my constituents were far more concerned about that set of people, at a particular time when the whole Syria conflict was prominent in the news and so on, than they were about Polish workers.

- Q38 Royston Smith:** Which brings us nicely on to Brexit, doesn't it? We talked earlier about the perceived effect of migration on the UK, and about how the perception was far different from reality. We talked about the relocation model that does or does not work and about how things might be dealt with in future. How will Brexit change the UK's co-operation with Europe on irregular migration?

Professor Sir Paul Collier: I imagine we will stay part of the European Migration Network, which is a European Commission agency but includes Norway, for example. *[Interruption.]* Dr Parkes tells me that he thinks that is likely. We would still be part of that conversation, which is important, because that is where ideas are shaped.

Dr Parkes: In terms of the UK's overall influence on European migration and asylum policy, the UK has had quite a strong impact despite being one step removed. When the UK held the EU presidency for the last time—in 2005, perhaps—it basically set the agenda that people are talking about now, namely that we need to get away from all the European rule-making and legislation and focus on implementation, and the external dimension and foreign policy side of migration. Perhaps the UK is happier with all those things because it does not like the endless regulation. Perhaps, by expedience, they are the things being picked. That agenda may get skewed, which, funnily enough, is an agenda where the UK might feel happy.

In terms of the regulatory dimension inside the EU, Frontex is jumping up and down and saying that it is Brexit-proof. It is positioning itself as the main migration or asylum body, because the UK has never been part of it, as it was never part of Schengen. That has an impact on the rest of the world. The EU's normal security co-operation outside the EU takes place in the common security and defence policy, so the security missions that we send abroad will be affected by Brexit, because the UK has been quite active. You will see Frontex going abroad and doing things you would



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normally expect a crisis management mission to do, which is odd. You will have those sorts of distortions, but that is more from an EU perspective.

From a UK perspective, we have been able to protect certain countries of origin from EU migration diplomacy. The EU likes to exercise its market power in putting pressure on countries of origin, but also countries of transit, to take back irregular migrants or to hold them there. With countries with which the UK has a particular relationship, we have been able to soften that approach and say, "Hold off—we will deal with this bilaterally. There is no need for the heavy-handed approach." I think that will change; certain African and Asian countries are already being singled out by the EU for heavy pressure. Other countries with a colonial past in the EU are looking at those countries and saying, "We can expand our influence there." I am thinking, essentially, of France in Nigeria, Anglophone west Africa and so on. Whereas they might have gone through the UK to deal with those countries, they now see an opportunity to expand there. Equally, Spain says, "Let's lose the focus on Africa; that was just a legacy of the UK, France and Belgium being in the EU, and if the UK is not there anymore, let's expand our influence into Latin America and take advantage of Brexit and Trump." I think those shifts will perhaps come as well, from a UK perspective, in that there will be a different set of European relations in those countries.

Professor Sir Paul Collier: That is certainly right; Macron's first international visit was to Nigeria. I wonder whether the arrangements at Calais will be maintained, because there are British immigration officers based in Paris and in Calais. Presumably that is a matter for President Macron. He only needs to say no, and then—

Q39 **Chris Bryant:** He has said repeatedly that they will remain, hasn't he?

Chair: He has.

Dr Parkes: Funnily enough, on a very personal basis, the current UK ambassador, when he was based in the Balkans, was managing the French police officer who manages that stretch of the border. There is a personal connection there, which I think does count on a very small level. On the personal, diplomatic level, that helps.

Q40 **Royston Smith:** May I ask finally about the UK's foreign policy, and other countries' foreign policy, on intervention and atrocity prevention? Sir Paul, you talked about head and heart, and then heart and head. In some ways, it can come back to where or when the UK or others, or coalitions, intervene in places that look as if they have instabilities. Libya comes to mind straight away, because that is a place where we did not intervene and we said, "We're not going to get involved in it," and off we went. That does not work either. There is also the argument about whether we should have intervened in Syria and whether there would have been so many internally displaced people if we had put some other policy in place to try to prevent that. From your point of view, and from the point of view of migration caused by conflict, what perhaps should we have done in some of those places?



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Professor Sir Paul Collier: I think not just British but international policy has been pretty poor in the past in terms of intervening in fragile situations. First, we have been all over the place: we have over-intervened and we have under-intervened, and it has gone in cycles. When we have intervened, we have sometimes been wildly over-ambitious. I did a commission report called "Escaping the Fragility Trap" this time last year. It was an independent commission under the auspices of the British Academy, which was co-chaired by David Cameron and Donald Kaberuka, who was the president of the African Development Bank for 10 years. The report was co-written by myself and Sir Tim Besley at the London School of Economics. We came up with very precise recommendations on how international policy toward these fragile situations could be improved. We could do a lot better.

We need a more realistic strategy. Take Libya: if you were going to intervene in Libya, you needed more follow-up than we had. We persistently had this naive idea that if you hold an election, what you get is a legitimate Government and then everything is going to be all right. It does not work like that. Part of the problem in Libya now is that one side has international recognition and the other side does not. About 18 months ago the Deputy Prime Minister of Libya came to see me to talk about the fragility work we were doing. He started by saying, "I'm the Deputy Prime Minister from the legitimate Government, except that there isn't one." That was his own admission. There is not a legitimate Government. There is one with international recognition, but in terms of legitimacy with their own citizens, there isn't one. What they clearly needed was power-sharing.

Then we made the same mistake in Zimbabwe. November 2017 was a real pivotal moment, where the opposition—I have worked a lot with the opposition—said, "It's obvious. What we need is a couple of years of power-sharing." Then the international community comes in and says, "Until there's an election, you won't get any money." Then there had to be an election within six months, and that meant that you could not do power-sharing, because each side became the enemy of the other. Then it was inevitable that the ruling party would win by heavy-handed means, and the rest is a tragedy. I was there in January, and it is just awful. The window of opportunity has closed.

Dr Parkes: Could I just add a brief word, linking that to your previous question about Brexit and UK-EU relations? No western Government has tied itself to the international refugee regime without some sort of interventionist corollary that allows them to affect human rights abuses or whatever it might be beyond their borders. They are not signing a blank cheque. There is always a sense of, "We can influence affairs beyond our borders," but there are two quite distinct traditions. One is around the US, and one is around Germany and its neighbours. The US tradition is to intervene—the right to protect or whatever it may be—sporadically in the affairs of other countries when it looks like atrocities will be perpetrated. That is perhaps with a link to geostrategic interests in terms of which countries you intervene in and which you do not. Germany on the other



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hand is saying, "The way we can influence the rest of the world is by tying ourselves to strong norms within Europe and then spreading them abroad to our close neighbours and then further abroad, so that countries of origin cease to be countries of origin and countries of transit become countries of reception and so on."

Both those models are in crisis, I think. The short, sharp interventionist model is in crisis, but, equally, Germany's model of trying to spread norms abroad is in crisis, too. You also have a split in the EU between the UK and Germany over that. One of the diplomatic issues for post Brexit is how you meld those models again. How do you have a model that Germany is happy with if it is not happy with what we did in Libya? How do you put that back together when both those approaches need reinvention? Somehow that is something that needs to be looked at.

Chair: Can I thank you both enormously? In fact, the other witnesses are here, so I thank you all very much. This has been hugely enlightening and very interesting. There are a lot of ideas to take forward. We will follow up in writing if we may on a few of those issues. Thank you very much.