



HOUSE OF LORDS

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Witnesses: Edward Burke, Professor Richard G Whitman

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Members present:

Lord Teverson (The Chairman)
Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury
Lord Boswell of Aynho
Baroness Eccles of Moulton
Lord Foulkes of Cumnock
Lord Inge
Lord Jay of Ewelme
Lord Lamont of Lerwick
Lord Radice
Lord Williams of Elvel
Baroness Young of Hornsey

Examination of Witnesses

Edward Burke, University of St Andrews and Associate Researcher, FRIDE, and **Professor Richard G Whitman**, Professor of Politics and International Relations and Chair, University Association for Contemporary European Studies, Rutherford College, University of Kent, gave evidence.

The Chairman: Professor Whitman and Mr Burke, may I welcome you to the Committee, along with anyone who is listening in on the webcast. This is our second evidence session on the European External Action Service. It is a public session and is being webcast. A transcript will also be taken; you will see copies of that and if there is anything that we have recorded incorrectly, you will have an opportunity to change it. Although we both look forward very much to both your contributions, if on any of these subjects only one of you wants to answer that is fine by us, but it would be good if at least one of you answered the questions. Perhaps it would be useful if you could just introduce yourselves, not just for our benefit but for those who might be listening in, and then we will move straight on to the questions. Professor Whitman, perhaps you would like to start.

Professor Richard G Whitman: Thank you very much. My name is Richard Whitman. I am professor of politics and international relations at the University of Kent. I am also an associate fellow at Chatham House. In that capacity, I wrote a report with a couple of colleagues that was published earlier this year that focused on the service and suggested directions in which it might go. I have been an observer of European Union foreign policy for almost 20 years and it has got more interesting recently.

The Chairman: That makes for a good meeting.

Edward Burke: My name is Edward Burke. I am an associate researcher with FRIDE, which is an EU foreign policy think tank based in Madrid and Brussels. Until recently, I was also a foreign policy fellow at the Centre for European Reform here in London. Until late 2011, I worked with the EU police mission in Afghanistan as a strategy policy analyst and reporting officer, and later as deputy head of the International Police Coordination Board based in Kabul working in the Ministry of Interior. As for my interest in the EEAS, I have worked in the Centre for European Reform. Obviously, I worked as part of the EEAS in terms of its CSDP mission in 2011, and I wrote a report at the Centre for European Reform looking at some of the progress and challenges that were inherent to the EEAS after its first year and a half of existence. Now I continue to work on that in my new capacity at FRIDE.

Q27 The Chairman: Perhaps I could start with a rather broad introductory question which may give us a good basis for the rest of the session. How well do you feel that the External Action Service was set up? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the institutions and structures of the External Action Service as you see them at the moment?

Professor Richard G Whitman: If I could kick off, obviously a lot of energy and effort have gone into establishing the service. Some would say that a disproportionate amount of energy has gone into the structure of the service and its staffing, but that was inevitable because it was created without a clear blueprint. It still faces a challenge that will not easily be solved,

which is its position within the EU institutional architecture, because it is not of the Commission, is obviously detached from the Council structures and in some way free-floats within the EU institutional architecture. That could be a positive thing in terms of it having a distinctive voice on foreign policy issues, but it is also a challenge, because the creation of the service has reopened some dividing lines between areas of foreign policy, with some competences remaining with the Commission, most notably in neighbourhood enlargement policy, development policy, foreign policy aspects of environment policy and so on. Creating the service was in my view a good thing in terms of a structure through which to coordinate and direct European foreign policy, but the act of creation also established some new challenges for the service to overcome. I could talk a little more about the structures and so on, but perhaps Edward would like to tackle the general if that is okay.

Edward Burke: In terms of the set-up, there are clear opportunities. For example, having one person, Baroness Ashton, not only as high representative with responsibility for leading the EEAS but as vice-president of the Commission and chair of the new Foreign Affairs Council creates a lot of opportunity there for integration, but it is also a huge challenge for one person to do that job. There has been some reluctance or fear within the Commission that this potentially very powerful role of Baroness Ashton could lead to an erosion of the community method. Basically, there is a fear that member states, through the HR and the EEAS, may try to diminish the community method in terms of the Commission's past competence over external relations. You see that in terms of the EEAS. Baroness Ashton has fewer people working on areas such as climate change in the EEAS than did the former Commissioner for External Relations. It is hard to integrate all these things if you do not have a particular expertise and have fewer people working on these areas. Similarly, there has been some resistance to the idea of a more integrated and politically informed trade policy. Essentially, parts of the Commission do not see a role for a politically informed trade

policy. There is still some way to go. Even on development, there is some way to go in terms of the EEAS playing a role, from looking out perhaps for possibilities of abuse of aid to simply providing more political information to DG DEVCO, for example. All these opportunities are there, but they have not been realised simply because, first, the institutions perhaps have not changed their mindsets—I am talking about the Commission specifically—and, secondly, there seems to be a lack of trust that the EEAS has a lot of unique added value. For example, if you look at the staffing of the EEAS, a lot of it is Commission personnel who are simply re-hatted overnight as EEAS. That is kind of saying, “Well, you don’t need to be a professional diplomat to be an External Action Service diplomat. Some people at the Commission look at their former colleagues and say, “Well, what have they learnt overnight? Why should they suddenly second-guess me on political affairs? I am not sure”. Then the EEAS lacks a training budget, so it finds it hard to address these problems. With its minuscule training budget and lack of languages such as Arabic—in terms of response to the Arab spring—some people do not see the added value of the EEAS either. So it is a combination of all these factors—the enormity of the job for Baroness Ashton, the lack of resources with which to do that job and people looking in and saying, “Is there really an added value to this new diplomatic service? Is it really that good and can it get better?”. Without a training budget, it is questionable.

Q28 The Chairman: We will come back to the added-value issues a little later. That is very useful. Professor Whitman, did you want to add a bit more?

Professor Richard G Whitman: To delve into the machinery, I think that one can also draw a distinction, as has already been alluded to, between the Brussels institution—the hub—and the delegations. There are different orders of challenge in each, I suggest. If you just focus on Brussels as an example, it has a very curious organisational structure. I am sure that

Members of this Sub-Committee have looked at the organisational diagram. It makes you feel rather queasy, looking at the different colours.

The Chairman: I can tell you that we have just started this week, but with a glossary to try to upskill ourselves.

Professor Richard G Whitman: That is in itself reflective of the fact that there is an uncertainty within the organisation as to what the best lines of reporting are and what the overall purpose of the structure is. Some aspects of the structure are clear in terms of having geographic divisions, which is a classic model for foreign ministries, and how you balance that with sectoral issues. That is a challenge for all foreign ministries. But when you look at the External Action Service, because it has these other things going on and this need to relate to other institutions, the structure is formidably complicated.

You also have, in effect, two people sitting under Ashton—a chief executive officer and a lead political figure in Pierre Vimont. So you have two people sitting underneath, which is perhaps not the ideal way to organise the structure for clarity. I do not think that there is a working relationship problem between those individuals; I think they have worked out for themselves who does what, how and for what purpose. But it does not look like an efficient use of very talented people at the top of the organisation itself. That is explicable because of the interest that some parties—member states but also the Parliament—have in getting some things reflected in the structure of the service. I would not go so far as to suggest that it is not fit for purpose but it makes life extremely difficult for itself in the way that it is structured and organised to do the job that it is intended to do.

Q29 The Chairman: Perhaps we could come back later to how you think it could be better. One of the early criticisms of the institution was that it spent so much effort in setting itself up that it missed the main opportunity of its job in terms of its world role—its eye got taken off the ball of its main task. Is that true in retrospect and has it now caught up?

Professor Richard G Whitman: I think it is true and the organisation itself acknowledges that it is true. There was a preoccupation with the structure but that is not entirely the fault of the service. The job that was given to Baroness Ashton was akin to constructing a piece of furniture from Ikea without knowing what she was constructing and without any instructions. She was told, “We want a diplomatic service but we’re not really telling you what it’s for or how you should organise it”. She really had a formidable task ahead of her. It was also bad luck for the service that the Arab spring came along so early in its creation. It was doubly unlucky, if you like.

The Chairman: Has it caught up?

Professor Richard G Whitman: I think it has caught up because there are now more people in post at the senior levels. It has caught up because people had to catch up in terms of doing the job once they were within the new organisation, but whether it operates as efficiently as it could or should, with the staff and for the purpose that it is intended to serve, is another matter.

The Chairman: Are there any further comments on that? Baroness Eccles?

Baroness Eccles of Moulton: Did Lord Inge want to say something first?

Lord Inge: As a military man, the chain of command means clear orders, a clear understanding of what people have to do, their responsibilities, who did what and everything else. But you can delegate a lot of responsibility. What I cannot work out is how the External Action Service ties in with the national foreign policy chains of command.

The Chairman: I think we will come on to that.

Lord Inge: We will? All right.

The Chairman: Perhaps, Lord Inge, you could make sure that we do. I think we will cover it in one of the future questions. We will make sure that you come in on that.

Q30 Baroness Eccles of Moulton: Quite a bit of this question has been answered already but I will focus on two thoughts. The first is that the creation of the EEAS was meant to be cash-neutral, as it were. However, we have heard a lot about how the service, particularly the triple-hatted job of the high representative, which has already been referred to, needs more resources to be able to carry out the key role of the EEAS, which is to support the high representative. As we are particularly budget-conscious, it would be interesting to know whether you believe it can remain resource-neutral, drawing out of the Commission's existing resources the necessary extra resource that is needed to fulfil these apparent gaps. That is first question. The second is really based on my ignorance. I do not fully understand what a politically informed trade policy is. I do not quite understand the politically informed bit. Excuse my ignorance but could you just unpack that for me, maybe dealing with the first question first?

Edward Burke: If I could deal with the last point first, what I mean by “politically informed” is that, for example, in the World Trade Organisation round in Doha in 2008, there was a real backlash against the EU position from the Brazilian Parliament. The EU did not seem to be aware of this domestic problem—that is, understanding a trade partner's domestic politics and why it might take a position in a trade negotiation in the Gulf. Essentially—this is a problem with the EEAS—it has to reach out to more parliamentarians in key strategic partner countries. Also, the trade unions in Brazil had a certain position that they wanted to take. So you see a poor commissioner arrive in Doha, totally unaware that the Brazilian trade unions have taken a very strong position on this and informed the Government that they will not tolerate that political position if the Government wish to take it. Then, when we seem surprised in Doha that this happens, the Brazilians think, “Well, you don't know our country. You don't have a political idea of our country”. That, therefore, makes the EU look diplomatically weak, which is what we have been in my view. In another example from

the WTO, we do not see things coming in the same way. I just point out that one example but there are others that I can go into if you wish.

In terms of being cash-neutral, I find it a bit difficult when I hear statements such as, “Things are ludicrous”, about, for example, a small increase in the EU’s budget. It may be but you have to say specifically why. If we are talking about a large part of an increase—not all but some—being for delegation security, for example, you think that perhaps we did not foresee the Arab spring in 2011. We also did not foresee events such as Benghazi quite recently. We did not foresee that there would be more EU diplomats based in a very dangerous part of the world. Therefore, we need to reconsider how we organise sending EU delegations around the world. Before we describe things as ludicrous, let us get down to the detail and work out exactly what we mean when we say “ludicrous”.

Similarly, the EEAS does not have a budget; frankly, it does not control the EU’s development budgets, the ENPI, the European neighbourhood policy instrument, or even the instrument for stability, which is the one instrument that the high representative can apply readily without having to go into long negotiations with the Commission. Even that has a Commission secretariat to manage it and it is quite a long process even to get through that.

The EEAS budget is 0.33% of the overall EU budget. Its budget is the same size as the defence budget of Slovenia. It has the same number of diplomats as Denmark but it is obviously being asked to do far more than Denmark in the world. So before we condemn the EEAS, first for not doing very well and secondly for its budget, we should say that maybe the fact that its training budget is minuscule is why it is not doing very well. We need to get into specifics about what we want the EEAS to do. If it is to remain budget-neutral, let us reduce its tasks. Maybe it cannot do things in the Arab world because it does not have Arabic speakers; it does not have people who know the political situations. You cannot have more for more if you do not understand who is corrupt and who is doing what in a country.

We need to stop the broad statements and get down to the specifics of what we need for the EEAS and what we want it to do. I will stop there because I have gone on too long.

Q31 Baroness Eccles of Moulton: Could I just pick you up on the Arab speaker bit? Surely one of the reasons for drawing diplomats from the member states was that EEAS would not be expected to cover every possible eventuality. One of the things they could ask for is Arab speakers.

Edward Burke: Absolutely, they could. Whether member states wish to give them is another question. For example, how many Arabic speakers have the Foreign Office given to the EEAS? I do not know the answer to that; I think that 19 Foreign Office diplomats have been seconded.

Q32 Baroness Eccles of Moulton: If that is always the reason used by the EEAS for not drawing on the member states, there is a sort of creep attached to that, because it means that it will have the view that it must be 100% self-supporting not to have to rely on member states for producing help.

Edward Burke: Here is where we might disagree. I think that the long-term secondments are probably something that member states need to look at. They certainly need to look at them for CSDP missions, because as a former head of EUPOL Afghanistan, Kai Vittrup, said publicly, a lot of member states do not send their A-team on CSDP missions. We need to look at secondments. One country sent a secondment to EUPOL Afghanistan for three or four months, which is not very long to understand the country or to get the job done. EEAS diplomats stay for much longer periods and I know that many of them are very capable, but, at the same time, many member states do not feel that they can spare resources with regard to languages, Mandarin and Arabic being two—never mind Pashto or Dari. The EEAS has a limited ability to contract externals. We need to think about long-term development of the EEAS diplomatic capability on its own as opposed to having to rely on stop-start

secondments from foreign ministries such as the Foreign Office, which is already having its budget severely cut and may be even more unwilling to give up resources to the EEAS. I am not saying that in terms of language skills et cetera.

Professor Richard G Whitman: There are two sets of issues. One is how we get the most out of our total spend on diplomacy across the EU—EEAS plus member states. It is a very good question to ask of the member states as much as of the External Action Service. There is also an issue of the capacity of the EEAS to do the things that might be asked of it within the budget that it is being given. Budgets for diplomacy across the EU are being cut, so the EEAS does not face an unusual situation in terms of operating in a more constrained budget environment. It is also difficult for the service because it has inherited a lot of commitments that it probably would not choose. For example, it would not have chosen to have its network of delegations in the places that it has, but it is very difficult to close a delegation and to open one somewhere else. I do not see the service as a wasteful organisation, but we have created a system in which we have duplication of our diplomatic infrastructure in member states and EU. We have overlap between the Commission and the EEAS, and we have not provided the EEAS with all that it might need. Equally, we do not provide national diplomatic services with all that they need. The core question that remains, and it underpins your question, is what exactly the service is for. The answer to that would allow us to judge whether we need to put in X or Y to deliver on that ambition. That is still indeterminate, particularly because the member states have not decided yet what the service is for.

Q33 Lord Inge: The muddle that I have just heard confirms what I thought; that is, you have got single nations doing their own thing and an EEAS which is trying to match that, but the different nations—take in the Gulf, for example—play it differently.

Edward Burke: I absolutely agree. The UK, for example, could do a better job in clarifying that when it says that it absolutely wants the EEAS to do better with EU strategic partners,

such as China and India. What exactly does the Foreign Secretary want to step aside on to allow the high representative to do instead? If it is just on trade, that is fine, but let us be really clear on that. The high representative is quite proud of talking about defence issues; for example, EU NAVFOR Somalia and Gulf of Aden problems. She talks to the Indian defence ministry and others about these problems because of the EU's naval mission there. We need to be extremely clear. Strategic partnerships on trade are often very specific; politically, they are often a bit fuzzier. If the UK is saying, "We want you to do strategic partnerships", it has to be absolutely specific on the politics that it wants the EEAS to do, otherwise you will have a muddled situation in New Delhi, with a British ambassador who is perhaps unhappy with the EEAS going beyond its remit. If the EEAS does not know where the parameters are, I have some sympathy if it starts talking about EU-India defence ties and the UK maybe does not want that. Should the EEAS talk only about that specific CSDP mission, or should it talk about broader issues to do with the European Defence Agency, for example? I think that the Foreign Secretary is trying to do this and that the Foreign Office is thinking very seriously about it, but it is important that the EEAS is not tasked by a group of member states with having a very advanced foreign policy that the UK believes is completely beyond its competence. The EEAS review next year will give us a big opportunity to clarify exactly what it should focus on in terms of its near and medium-term goals, given its limited resources. Some of the Benelux countries still want the EEAS to do consular work, but it is just not feasible. Even if we had the political will, which we do not, we do not have the budget in the EU. There are simply not the resources to do this. We need to narrow it down to the short and medium term, looking also at the institutional growth of the EEAS so that it can get some early wins, as opposed to having some fuzzy objectives to which member state ambassadors in partner countries might object.

Q34 Lord Radice: We are skirting around the main issue. They are asking us questions, but we really should be asking them a question, which is: what should the EEAS do? You have said that it has been given all sorts of tasks and it is very difficult for it, but, in a sense, you did not answer the Chairman's question. What should it do? You are the two experts; therefore we ought to have a clear answer to it, rather than you asking us. That is not a comment, but it would be helpful to the Committee in the long term if you could just give us a few answers.

The Chairman: Yes, gentlemen, lay out your manifestos.

Professor Richard G Whitman: Lord Chair, thank you. I guess that I am an etymologist, so I enjoy studying the fine detail rather than the big questions. I think that the question for me is whether the long-term objective of the service is to replace diplomatic services of the member states in whole or in part, to which the answer is no, for political reasons. The next question, then, is whether the role and function of the service is to make European Union foreign policy more effective in terms of its generation and implementation. That is the core function, but European Union foreign policy is devised and developed by the member states in association with the high representative. The service is called a service for a good reason. It is at the service of the member states at one remove through the high representative, but then what services can the EU External Action Service perform? Consular work is a big part of the work that most diplomatic services do, and there is a debate to be had about that. Political reporting is a big part of the work that is conducted by delegations in third countries and the service is not yet a Rolls-Royce service for that. The representations on EU positions on issues such as energy, climate, environment and trade policy remain a core function of what should be done in third countries. But not all that expertise sits within the service. We have created an organisation, which for good reason is called an External Action Service, to serve the EU foreign and security policy. I tend to think of it, at best, as a kind of

corporation in which we have a collection of stakeholders, or shareholders if you prefer, some of whom are more vocal in their articulation of what they think the strategy should be for the organisation, the company, the External Action Service. Others are much more passive investors in the service, but the service works effectively only if you have a strong chair and board with a clear vision.

Q35 The Chairman: Just give us the tasks that you feel it should concentrate on. As Mr Burke said, there is a limited budget and a huge number of tasks. What are the key things that it should get on with over the next three years?

Professor Richard G Whitman: The things that it should do are not things under its purview. One is the policy for the neighbourhood, which should be the first-order priority for the External Action Service because the neighbourhood matters more than anything else. The second priority should be the wider neighbourhood, meaning sub-Saharan Africa, the Caucasus and so on. We have the near neighbourhood, which is the Balkans, eastern Europe and further beyond. The third priority should be the so-called strategic partnerships with the big players within international relations, but sectorally on issues such as energy, environment and trade. I do not think that this can be on the big political issues.

The Chairman: Okay, good, thank you, that is very clear.

Edward Burke: I have a controversial view on this because, rather than seeing us as “tired old Europe”, I think Europe should behave like an emerging power. What an emerging power does, as you said, is consolidate its influence in the neighbourhood. That is where the EU’s political leverage and competence are strongest. Clearly it means unblocking problems in accessing countries. The EEAS has already done that in the case of Serbia. Robert Cooper and others recently played extremely positive roles in unblocking Serbia’s political issues with Kosovo to get Serbia towards accession. I think that was a very good role played by the EEAS. Similarly, Baroness Ashton also recently unblocked problems to do with the Serb

republic and Bosnia, and got them back to the table in Sarajevo. These are all unheralded successes of the EEAS in future accession countries. In the neighbourhood is where the EU has political competence. It has economic leverage unrivalled by anyone else, challenged to some extent by the Gulf and others these days, but still unrivalled.

As I said about the political component of trade negotiations, what if you have a department of trade that does not listen to its diplomats and does not understand its interlocutors? You need to understand personal motives, wider political motives and cultural issues; that is how you get deals done. If you look at the EU-GCC trade agreement negotiations and what happened in Muscat in 2008, for example, there were was a pretty ugly misunderstanding of some regional issues there—not only trade but political and cultural issues. I think the French presidency regrets some of those.

Similarly, the EEAS can play a very important role in development. We have seen some waste in EU development spending that I think is due to a lack of political understanding of who the real players are. I will give you an Afghan example. If you always give contracts to the same company—everyone in the construction industry in Afghanistan is connected to major political players and even to the insurgency occasionally—you cannot function. If you do not understand these things, you are having political effects of which you have no comprehension. Therefore, you need to understand how you spend your development money in terms of the wider political effect that it has, and to sound alarm bells. The EU has often been caught out by member states, or even NGOs, pointing out that their development assistance is having an adverse political effect in a country. The EEAS can play a role if it gets better and builds up its skills in doing this. It already has some very good diplomats who are coming in to do this.

On CSDP missions, these should probably not be military ones, but on civilian missions I certainly think that in future the EEAS can also help to address problems. For example, the

EU in Kosovo has recently been criticised, again for a lack of political awareness and understanding of how to move things on. We need more informed diplomats to help with this. Someone in Afghanistan has already outlined a CSDP mission. If you are going to reform the Ministry of the Interior strategically, if you are going to deal with corruption—to have anti-corruption as a major strategic role—you need to know what corruption is in the first place. The question is: do we know this? Do we have enough good diplomats who speak Farsi, Pashto et cetera to deal with the situation. So that is what I think the EEAS should do. On strategic partnerships, if we are doing only trade with India—let us say that 95% of our relations are trade—let us get on with that instead of confusing the EEAS as to what it is supposed to be doing in India.

Q36 Lord Boswell of Aynho: From the point of view of the EU Select Committee overall, we are currently conducting an inquiry into enlargement. Obviously, from your account of neighbourhoods and your specific reference to some of the western Balkans situation, that is not irrelevant to EEAS. It sits alongside a commissioner who is charged with the enlargement brief and is communicating with Council members and us on their perspective on that. Are you satisfied that those two operations are tuned, and is there an External Action Service contribution that will add value to this process?

Professor Richard G Whitman: There is, I think, for the reason that we touched on in the previous exchange. The neighbourhood matters first and foremost for the success of the EU and the success of the External Action Service. However, our approach to enlargement is a technical one in terms of opening and closing the different parts of the negotiations with the third party. One of the things that we are struggling with is the political aspect of enlargement—the sequencing and prioritisation of enlargement. If you take the ordering of enlargement that emerges, it does so because certain countries appear to have moved faster in terms of technical compliance, rather than our political signalling being as clear and

unambiguous as it should be. If you look at the statements of the high representative, she has been very careful not to talk about enlargement as a foreign policy tool in terms of what the objectives of the Union should be in seeing country X or Y as a priority for enlargement because she also has this inter-institutional problem that she has to address. That is one of the dysfunctional aspects of the service as it has been established. Many commentators would agree that the neighbourhood has to be the first priority and that enlargement is the strongest foreign policy tool that the Union has to get a third part to comply with managing itself and its democracy in ways that we find palatable. Yet we have taken the politics out of the enlargement process by dividing it up in terms of who holds that particular portfolio,

Edward Burke: Just to add to that, I think the high representative is generally quite pleased with her relationship with Commissioner Füle. You may have seen the document that 11 Foreign Ministers published on the future of Europe recently. It was released by the German Foreign Ministry on 17 September. Eleven Foreign Ministers said that they would like to see the EMPI eventually come under the jurisdiction of the high representative, so that she would have full authority. It is about strengthening the position of vice-president of the Commission; that is quite important here. There was even a suggestion in the papers that we need senior commissioners—that is, Baroness Ashton—and junior commissioners. The idea would be that instead of very long, difficult and tedious debates with DG DEVCO, or even in thinking about the EMPI, you would give very straight authority to the high representative and say, “You are in charge of foreign policy. You are the vice-president for external relations. You will therefore have the say over what you think our priority areas should be”. There are now general arrangements whereby the EEAS can input into Commission development policy but by no means is that authority. The Commission is by its very nature collegial but in foreign policy that can create delays and interminable headaches for the EEAS. There is a suspicion about the EEAS undermining the community method. I

would recommend that the Committee look at this proposal from 11 Foreign Ministers of the EU because it is quite serious but also streamlines to a large degree the foreign policy of the EU in a way that the Lisbon treaty envisaged. It envisaged a much more powerful vice-president of the Commission than the position that Baroness Ashton currently occupies. I think there has been a fightback against the Lisbon treaty by the Commission that may be undermining foreign policy currents in the EU. So I think that this document by the 11 Foreign Ministers was interesting and useful.

Lord Radice: Sorry—

Q37 The Chairman: You had an excellent question there, Lord Radice, but I just wanted to go back to what you might have asked as well just to check. On staff training and calibre, particularly language issues and the wrong people, would either of you give just a sentence on anything else that you feel about adequacy and capability? We will then move on because I am aware of the time.

Professor Richard G Whitman: I think it is worth thinking about the composition of the staffing for the service, because a third of them are locally employed agents. There are different training needs. We tend to focus on the so-called AD staff, the administrative and diplomatic staff—the higher-end staff, but I think that, across the board, there is an absence of a staffing strategy and, therefore, appropriate targeting for the different groups within the service, top to bottom, in Brussels and third countries. We can obviously elaborate on that, but languages and regional competencies are crucial issues.

Edward Burke: When we look at staffing for the EEAS, leaving aside CSDP missions, we think of approximately 3,500 EEAS personnel. Break that down to people who work in policy and you have less than 1,000 people to come up with new research in global Europe. It is not an easy task. When we insist that the EEAS will have only 900 diplomats, that is fine, but then you need to tailor your cloth and to do much more. That is why I say that the

service should focus on the neighbourhood. We should not say, “Go off and do everything everywhere”. In delegations, we often have one diplomat or no diplomats. If an EEAS head of delegation goes on leave, there is no one even to sign documents on budgets and resources. So the budget problem needs to be looked at as well.

Q38 Lord Jay of Ewelme: I thought that what you said about the 11 Foreign Ministers’ report was really interesting. Perhaps you could get that, Chairman. The answer to some of the questions, I suppose, is very different according to whether you are looking at them in London or looking at them in Slovenia, Malta or indeed Scotland later on, perhaps.

I wanted to come on to the question of the UK in the EEAS. I think that Lord Lamont has some questions on this later on, so it is a sort of “soft cop, hard cop” approach to this. How do you think the UK has so far engaged with the EEAS? In your judgment, has the instinct been, “How are we going to take advantage of this now to further our own objectives?”, or has it been rather damage limitation: “How are we going to stop it interfering with the sorts of things that we want to do on our own”? What do you think the service should be doing to take advantage of what is there and is going to continue to be there?

Professor Richard G Whitman: To handle the big question first, I think that the perspective of people outside the UK is that the UK is not a lover of the External Action Service. Rather, it started with a position of active dislike verging on seeking to undermine the service, but its view appears to have shifted. On occasion, it will try to trip up the service and is by inclination unfriendly to the idea. The recent initiative to reach an understanding with the Canadian Government on dealing with consular issues of one another’s nationals in third countries does not really help. The UK has a sort of public diplomacy problem in that we send out very mixed messages on the service. It would be sensible to send a more positive message wishing the service well. We are also not making the most of the opportunities when it comes to getting our people into the External Action Service. There is

a smaller percentage of UK nationals at the AD level than there is of French and Germans, for example,

Lord Jay of Ewelme: Sorry, the AD level?

Professor Richard G Whitman: That is, the administrative and diplomatic staff—the higher end, if you like—but also those who do high-end diplomatic functions. So we are not getting as many people in there as we could and as we should. That does then rely on folk in London persuading, encouraging and mentoring staff here to seek secondment to the External Action Service.

Q39 Lord Jay of Ewelme: Do you have the impression that in the Foreign Office people are saying, “Look, this country really matters to us. Let’s make certain we’ve got a really good candidate who speaks the language to go into this particular job”? Is that rather targeted approach being followed?

Professor Richard G Whitman: I do not think that we are approaching the External Action Service in that sort of targeted way. It is much more of a piecemeal approach towards the service and much more connected to individuals’ own ambition as to whether they look for a career. We also have a wider problem with getting people into EU institutions in general; I do not think that it is a specific EEAS problem. We have to think more broadly and I know that the Foreign Secretary already has and is keen to bring younger people into the service.

Lord Radice: Into the service?

Professor Richard G Whitman: Sorry, into work within the EU institutions. I think that we have not yet worked out exactly what we want the relationship to be between the UK Foreign Office and the External Action Service. One of the things that we could do on our own initiative is to invite External Action Service staff for secondment to London, so that they get a better sense of us, what we want and the way that we operate. That is something

that we have done with other national diplomatic services in the past and should do with the External Action Service.

Lord Jay of Ewelme: That in a way would be only an extension of what we have always over the years done with presidencies. We have had people from the next presidency come and sit beside us.

Professor Richard G Whitman: Indeed, that is a very good point. There are some practices that we have lost with the elimination of presidency that we cultivated in the past. It would be sensible to pick up some of those threads.

Edward Burke: Just to follow up on that, the argument over competence in 2011 overshadowed and in some ways painted a negative picture of the UK as being highly reactive to the EEAS. A lot of diplomats in other member states and foreign ministries felt that this could have been avoided by the UK and should have been seen earlier. The view of other member states is essentially that we had working arrangements at the WTO and UN committees for a long time—20 years in the case of the FAO and slightly less in the case of the WTO—as regards rotating presidency. “If you have a problem with an EEAS diplomat doing that, let us know quite early if you don’t mind”. The fact that that statement from EU representatives and new EEAS diplomats suddenly stopped in mid-2011 painted a negative picture of the EEAS globally. Other countries around the world saw this and thought, “Well, we can’t take these guys seriously. The UK doesn’t believe in them”. This had a really negative, damaging effect, first, on how the UK was perceived in Europe on the EEAS and, secondly, on how the EEAS was perceived in the world. It really damaged attitudes to European diplomacy. We have got over that. The general arrangements were signed, I think, on 22 September 2011. Things are getting better and there is greater understanding now. It is just a pity that we could not have avoided it. The UK is struggling to present itself as a constructive actor because of that. There are still consequences of that. The Foreign Office

is thinking seriously about what it wants the EEAS to do, which is excellent. It wants clarity; it has been helpful in the neighbourhood; it wants the EEAS to be focused and deliver on the neighbourhood. It wants clarity on things like the more-for-more concept, with regard to engaging post-Arab spring countries. This is all good stuff from the UK. The Foreign Office is trying very hard to get candidates into positions in the EEAS. It has some very good diplomats there and the Foreign Secretary is not unengaged in this at all—quite the contrary, he wants to see Britain have influence within the EEAS. That is good. Just on the budget, on very general statements that say that something is “mad” or “ludicrous”—that may be so, but tell us where and what line and what comma.

Q40 The Chairman: Lord Boswell’s committee has been looking regularly at the multi-annual financial framework. In fact, as I remember it, the UK is saying that, if it should be moved around, external action is an area that the EU should concentrate on. Perhaps I could bring in Lord Lamont.

Q41 Lord Lamont of Lerwick: I will be very careful not to use the words “mad” or “ludicrous”. It seems to me that it is all very well to criticise the UK Government in their approach, but you have spent 45 minutes trying to answer the question, “What is this for?”. Frankly, there has not been a very clear or satisfactory answer to that question. You seem to be taking the attitude that the UK Government should have been more constructive, simply because it was going to happen. That is exactly what was said at the time of the euro—“Why don’t you be more constructive, because it’s going to happen?”. These are very real questions that need to be asked. I find it difficult to resist the conclusion that the EEAS is simply a piece of self-aggrandisement; it is a self-promoting bureaucracy whose position is not entirely clear. There has been no clear answer to Lord Inge’s question about how it relates to national diplomatic cores, embassies or foreign policy. What is the specific remit of representation at a European level? I have to say that I have been asked this question by

more than one ambassador when I have been in embassies abroad. They have said, “What are these people for? What are they doing?”. The reality is that there is no EU foreign policy, as such, in many areas, and there are many areas where individual countries disagree—on the recognition of Kosovo, on the treatment of Cuba, on Libya and Iraq. Because there are these differences in foreign policy, we do not call it foreign policy but external action, which of course includes development policy. Mr Burke makes the point that the EEAS is not responsible for development policy, but when we have had representatives of the EEAS here they have tended to say that they are here to promote trade and look at the co-ordination of trade—just the sort of point that Mr Burke has made today. To say that the EEAS would promote a politically informed trade policy is not a good justification for the creation of this service. Trade negotiators should be able to talk to the existing diplomats and find out why the Brazilians object to a particular trade deal. It is just a question of picking up the phone and talking to the person. We do need to create that. I find the ideas that have been put forward completely unpersuasive.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock: Say what you really think.

Edward Burke: I am very grateful that Lord Lamont did not call me mad or ludicrous. It is very kind of him. I have just a few responses to what he said. First of all, this is the High Representative for Foreign Affairs, or foreign policy. We may call it the External Action Service, but there is no doubt that the high representative is supposed to create foreign policy. That is very much within her job description. Just to pick up a few points in terms of UK national influence and what is good for the UK about working on foreign policy issues in the EU context. Look at Tunisia, which is not a country where the UK has a lot of political influence, but where the high representative, bringing together the World Bank, the EBRG, expanding its mandate, the EIB, the IMF, and so on, managed to get a €4 billion package over two years for Tunisia in 2011. That is pretty impressive. She did that by bringing together a

small committee of key actors. The EU is clearly seen as having the major economic role in Tunisia in terms of its trade and neighbourhood policy, and the UK could have done nothing similar to what Baroness Ashton did. I think that the Foreign Secretary was right to give her due praise for it. There are situations in which there is a European foreign policy, especially in its neighbourhood. Look at Bosnia, which quite recently seemed to be lurching back into a situation of absolute political chaos and perhaps violence. That was unlocked by the EU. Similarly, to say that Serbia has not behaved differently because of EU diplomacy is not credible. The Serbians clearly see that they need to make political reforms on the basis of what the EU diplomacy tells them.

Lord Lamont of Lerwick: We are aware that if a country is planning to accede to the EU, the EU obviously has a role. Everybody can accept that, but it is not the same as external action.

Edward Burke: With respect, it is a question of whether you think that there is value added by having professional diplomats to do these political negotiations as opposed to technocrats. I see a role for diplomacy in the world, whereby people who are good at political negotiations, as opposed to trade negotiations or technical details to do with enlargement, have a role to play, politically and diplomatically. The Foreign Office would, I think, probably agree with that. Even though diplomacy can be regarded as a less than technocratic career, it is a skill set that we try to have good professionals to do for us. I think that the UK recognises this, which is a good thing. In situations such as that in Yemen, you can talk to UK diplomats and look at what the EU head of the delegation did. Michele Cervone did an amazing job in bringing together Europeans so that there was a common European position as regards Yemen's transition. That gave the Gulf Cooperation Council one European interlocutor to deal with in a highly complex political process. They did not really need 10—because in Yemen there are enough interlocutors to go around, never mind

the Europeans. So again, that was an example of a good diplomat doing a good job. It is just a question of getting more of these. It is not that he took a unilateral political approach; he was very careful to respect the views of the British ambassador and others. But then he presented a collective opinion to the GCC and Yemeni Government, which is very important. So I think there is a role. Member states look after member states' interests, and sometimes you need somebody to focus on what the EU is doing. If the EU is doing intensive trade negotiations, as we have seen with the Foreign Office, it has been cut down to the bone in terms of its own budget and diplomacy and may not have time to constantly pick up the phone and talk to trade technocrats—as opposed to what is going on in the head of some parliamentary committee chairman. This is full-time diplomacy; it is not part time. For the very limited resources that the EU budget gives to the EEAS, it is something worthwhile. It is quite a small cohort of diplomats doing this work. We do not need to ask too much of them, but there is a limited role that they can play. As I say, I am glad that the UK is saying that right now and is looking for a narrowing down of priorities, seeing that professional diplomats are still needed in this world, including for the EU.

Professor Richard G Whitman: One of the reasons why we have the service that we have and the arrangement that we have is that the things that we tried previously did not seem to work as effectively as the member states had hoped. So the rotating presidency was a problem in terms of collective representation on the part of member states. It caused uncertainty on the part of countries as to who was representing the EU this week or this month. The functions of collective representation were determined on the capacity of the national diplomatic service that happened to be holding the presidency office at that time. So the member states took the collective view that it was better to have something to put in place instead in that foreign policy area. Whether they should have been much clearer in terms of their intent for the service is something that we could debate. But having a service

in existence now, the key issue, as this sub-committee is doing, is to focus on precisely what it would be sensible for the service to do. One problem for the service itself is that it really lacks clear instruction on the part of the member states as to what they want it to do. It does not have a document akin to the kind of document that the US Government provide for setting out exactly what the collective security strategy is and, from there, what the intention is in terms of diplomatic and development policy to fit with those objectives. The service itself continues to struggle, because there is not a clear, unambiguous understanding as to what its task should be. It is for the member states to undertake that or to ask the high representative to do that on their behalf. The other thing that all member states have to think about in terms of their spend on diplomacy is the best way to manage the reduced spend that we have on that activity, both in the national capital and in third countries. Are there areas in which we can make savings with collocation or sharing facilities? Are there places where some member states might want to subcontract work to the EEAS delegations? Not all member states would want to do that, but it is not so far removed from the discussions that we have about defence and defence spending in the EU. We really do not have a clear framework within which we take national decisions in terms of spending and allocation of resources, energy and effort. That is something for member states to think about as much as the high representative. If they want to give the External Action Service a very narrow brief, that is fine, but not giving the service a brief is a problem.

Q42 Lord Williams of Elvel: We had a very clear steer from the Foreign Office in the previous evidence session that, in regard to the review coming up in 2013, its job was to make sure in the review that the EAS reflected UK government policy. There was no question of enlarging the competence or changing competencies from the Commission to the EAS. There was no question of reopening the debate about the consular service. Do you think that that is a sensible way of approaching the review?

Edward Burke: No, I think that we should be bolder. The UK has had this discussion for a long time with regard to Afghanistan, for example, after the Robin Cook/Clare Short/Iraq problem. What happened in Basra? Why did DfID not think more about UK national interests? The Conservative Party, the Labour Party and many others had concerns as to why DfID did not seem able to fulfil the national security role that perhaps it should have, balancing its poverty reduction role. There are situations where we need to quickly unblock EU development funds for EU strategic interests. The EAS needs more authority to be able to say, “This is a priority set by the member states and we need to move quickly to get aid to a certain part of the world”. That could be Tunisia, Somalia or Afghanistan et cetera. Obviously, we need to be careful how we spend it. I am not saying that we should try to cut corners unnecessarily in terms of waste. Sometimes, if it takes 250 days to go through the bureaucracy of setting up an aid project, that limits your ability to have influence in rapidly changing situations. The Foreign Office should be bolder in saying that we have a diplomatic service that we ask to do certain tasks.

For example, the EU is currently playing a leading role in Somalia—the key role in trying to expand the remit of the Government to go with the African Union. On the other hand, there have been some problems with, first, the length of time it takes to get an aid project moving, and secondly, being politically aware of what is going on and being very careful not to misspend aid. For example, there are some concerns over the CSDP mission—are some members of the Somali security forces turning and fighting for al-Shabaab as opposed to the Government? These are major political questions that we need to sort out. We need a stronger Diplomatic Service to do it. That is its role. The UK should be bolder in looking at the Commission and Baroness Ashton’s role as vice-president of the Commission. Does she have the external relations authority that, for example, the Commissioner for External

Relations had, before that position was done away with in the Lisbon treaty? Does she have the powers?

For example, there used to be this meeting of External Relations Commissioners in Brussels, where they would come together under the Commission President and try to problem-solve issues. Those meetings declined quite considerably. Some people say that they worry about Commission coherence in EU foreign policy, and the UK needs to help and look at that problem in its EAS review. It needs to be bolder. If the EAS needs more authority to make for effective EU diplomacy, then good: give it that authority and make Ashton a stronger vice-president. They should look at that. However, I would like to come back to the chain-of-command issue at some stage.

Q43 The Chairman: Can we do that briefly now? Then we will need to move on because of time.

Edward Burke: I was just going to say that I agree with what you say about the chain of command in terms of the internal structure of EAS. There are a number of issues that the UK needs to look at as well. One is to do with the role of EUSRs. As you know, member states like to keep the EUSR budget separate, and sometimes there is a sense that EUSRs go on manoeuvres—they will commit to something that is not really within the EAS's remit.

Lord Radice: Can you explain those initials?

Edward Burke: Sorry, the EU special representatives. They are often national diplomats brought in for special roles, such as Bernardino Leon in the southern Mediterranean. Sometimes, between the managing director and the head of delegation, it is a fuzzy area as to who is really in charge of what. The EUSR is obviously funded by a separate budget provided by member states. It is not in the integrated EAS budget. Institutionally, there is some confusion, sometimes. With CSDP missions, if NATO says, "We want you to expand your mission in Afghanistan", for example, does the NATO commander go to the head of the

CSDP mission or to the EU special representative/head of delegation? That is a big political question: who is in charge of deciding on reporting upwards on major issues. Is the EUSR in country more important than the CSDP head of delegation? I think so, and that the EAS would usually say yes. Sometimes in CSDP missions you have parallel lines of reporting that do not cross over as much as perhaps they should, since CSDP missions go through CPCC or EU military staff and then go to the high representative, as opposed to going through the managing director EAS structure. So we need to look at these parallel management structures. It would be good if the UK did that.

Lord Inge: Command structures, if they are to work, have to be simple. As far as I can see, they are getting more complicated.

Q44 Lord Williams of Elvel: How do other EU member states regard the EEAS? Presumably there is a difference between the larger states and the smaller ones, and presumably also a difference within the larger states. How far do they regard the EEAS as being a vehicle for their own national policy and how far do the smaller states regard it as being a substitute for their own diplomatic service?

The Chairman: We need to keep the responses fairly snappy as we go on now, as we need to finish before midday.

Professor Richard G Whitman: Perhaps I could take that question. As you implied, very different views exist across the 27, and it does not easily cut in a small state/large state way. That is partly because of the political ambition of the service. If you take the German Government, for example, it continues to be of the view that it wants the service to thrive and would even consider giving more responsibility to it. The British and French Governments are probably more closely aligned in terms of seeing the External Action Service as a means by which they can boost national foreign policy. These are perhaps outrageous simplifications

of the broader view, but it is interesting when you start to look at the detail, particularly on the part of the smaller member states.

One of the areas that the External Action Service is not keen on, but smaller states are, is the ways in which you can pool consular activities in third countries. That is also of particular interest to Schengen member states, because of their common arrangements for visa issuing. One can draw a distinction between Schengen and non-Schengen states but also states that favour thinking much more closely about activity in the area of consular work. Smaller member states generally are more favourably disposed to more co-location, perhaps retaining a presence in some kind of shared facility. Where things start to get tricky is the member states' attitudes towards whether they want to open or close representation in third countries. Broadly, states would like to retain a stake where they already have one in third countries; but the costs, particularly on the security side in some places, are such that it is very difficult to sustain that kind of expenditure. Attitudinally, there are a fairly small number of member states that think about the service as a direct challenge to their diplomatic services. The predominant view is that this is something that exists. They are not quite sure about their attitude to it but they would really like to see the service thrive in such a way that they could get some national advantage, particularly in terms of spending less, putting it bluntly.

Edward Burke: With regard to the larger member states, it tends to differ quite a bit. Under the previous French Administration, there was some tension. For example, the Foreign Minister, Juppé, felt that Baroness Ashton's performance was not always what he wished it to be. There was a feeling of general French disappointment with the EEAS that it was not playing the role that they wanted. Whether that was a kind of Gaullist reaction—saying, “If you don't do exactly what we want then we're not very pleased”—and less

collegiate in thinking in terms of the wider member states, there was some frustration that the EEAS was not reaching the ambitions that France had for it early on.

Q45 The Chairman: What were those ambitions, then, of France? What would the Sarkozy regime have wanted? Give us some quick headlines.

Edward Burke: For example, they would have liked to see a very strong political role played, with the EU speaking with one voice in Washington DC, or being bolder with the military staff, trying to establish more EU military operations for overseas missions, taking more responsibilities and so on. It is still quite intergovernmental stuff—still CFSP.

Q46 The Chairman: But with the French having an equivalent global diplomatic reach to the UK, why do they not see the EEAS in the same way as the British Government might in terms of thinking that they do not need it or thinking of it as a challenge to them and that they are already there? Why is there that difference?

Edward Burke: I think the French felt that the EEAS could stretch competence in the British perspective at least, going and talking about defence issues or taking European positions at the UN, for example. They thought that if they could control that, Europe would be stronger because it was in the lead together with the HR and Pierre Vimont, and so on. The fact that that has not transpired irritates them. On the other hand, other member states such as Germany and Sweden are just frustrated with the bloc-building. They feel that the EEAS does not necessarily have the powers that they envisaged under the Lisbon treaty. They feel that some member states, including the UK, have played a blocking influence on the past, that the UK was not being constructive and so on. There was some disappointment that the EEAS had not done better earlier. My opinion is that this is a new institution and I would be much more cautious about how long it will take to build competence. That is why I say that we should start regionally and work our way out in terms of where we concentrate.

The other member states feel that the HR needs much more power in the Commission than perhaps she has had.

Q47 Lord Foulkes of Cumnock: This has been really helpful evidence, I must say. It has certainly set me thinking. I think that you have answered quite a lot of the subsequent questions, including part of mine, about the consular role. Can I deal with the delegations in particular? You dealt with some of the central operational activities, but in the delegations can you give us a couple of examples of where and how the European Union representatives can do things that could not be done by national representatives, individually or collectively?

Edward Burke: Yes, there are a number of situations where that has happened. I mentioned Yemen earlier, where again the EU could do that, because it is a substantial donor—clearly the GCC is the biggest donor, albeit in an imperfect way. If we had Germany, Denmark and everyone else trying to take a position, we would have had a confused message, because at that point the situation in Yemen was confusing enough. With the UN SRSG we had a GCC representative, and the last thing they needed was 10 European ambassadors with different opinions. So the EU head of delegation did a great job in bringing everyone together and getting points agreed on.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock: Can you give a couple of more examples?

Edward Burke: Tunisia is also a good example, whereby the mediation of the HR and the head of delegation brought everybody together and said, “Look, the EU is the main economic actor here and we have a neighbourhood policy towards this country. It is already being advanced, although for political reasons it probably should not have been, and we want you to contribute to X”. So they managed to come up with a comprehensive development package for Tunisia, which was excellent. As regards Serbia, it was a remarkable achievement in itself to keep Serbia on track towards accession. There is a political or diplomatic role in

that, which is away from the technocratic and just ticking boxes for enlargement processes. People like Robert Cooper, a very experienced British diplomat, played a good role in that.

Q48 Lord Foulkes of Cumnock: You are talking about ones in the neighbourhood or relatively close by. What about America, or Asia, because the EEAS has people over there—are they not surplus to requirements? That is your line, Norman.

Lord Inge: And yours by the sound of it.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock: No, I am just asking a question.

Professor Richard G Whitman: The delegations are a bit of a curate's egg, to be honest. That is because of what the delegations were before, moving over from being these Commission delegations to EEAS ones. The quality of the delegation depends very much on the head of the delegation.

Q49 Lord Foulkes of Cumnock: If we were going to visit, where would you suggest that we visited to look at a good one—and where would we go to look at a challenging one?

Professor Richard G Whitman: A “challenging one” would be a better way to put it. One very interesting one to visit is Damascus, because the delegation there functioned as a sort of corral as other member states closed their embassies because of the conflict. It would be fascinating to visit a location in which there is minimal member state representation, and therefore the quality and competence and the third party perception of the role and function of the head of the delegation is relevant. That would be extremely interesting. It would also be very interesting and useful to go to one of the so-called EU strategic partner locations as well to look at a location where there is a heavy investment in partner member states, where there is a high level of diplomatic representation—and to see therefore what the competitive advantage is for the EEAS delegation. On the delegations themselves, there is a question whether the footprint as it exists is appropriate for the EU and whether there needs to be a more structured way of thinking about them. Again in relation to the member

states, should they be hubs—should we have a regional hub with antennae? Should you be looking at locations, for example; if there are strategic partnerships, should they be the larger delegations, and so on? What set of skills do you find within the delegation itself and is it really fit for the tasks in hand? We have obviously touched on the issue of political reporting, which is a challenge. The view in the Foreign Office here is that the quality of political reporting that is coming through the EEAS has improved. So in some capitals, it is clearly thought that there are the right people in the right job. But I am not sure that that is the case uniformly.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock: That is very helpful. Thank you.

Baroness Young of Hornsey: Mr Burke, earlier you talked about lack of understanding of political and cultural context in some areas being to the detriment of the service, especially with regard to development. You have talked a little about the different parts of this issue around development, aid, control and misuse. I am trying to put that picture together now. Have there been any good-quality interventions around development and aid by the EEAS with regard to EU development policy, with concrete examples of something that has not worked as well as it might have done? I am also interested in the quality of expertise and skills within the service. Could you also say something about that, please?

Edward Burke: Cote d'Ivoire was a good example of where we had EU sanctions initially against a recalcitrant president. Then some European nations intervened militarily. Then we had a very quick flip from sanctions to assistance and the EU did quite well in Cote d'Ivoire. There was flexibility and urgency from the member states and the EU to do that. Cote d'Ivoire has been a long-standing partner and country where the EU has been engaged over the years, but in recent years, and since the EEAS as well, there has been a good performance to ensure that aid was spent carefully, because it is such a divided country. The EU, politically perhaps, understands Cote d'Ivoire better than any country. It has received a

lot of diplomats from member states who are quite happy with the role that the EU has played there and the changes that it has brought about. It has applied economic pressure that any single member state could not have done, then it flipped over into a major development role in Cote d'Ivoire very quickly. I thought that that was quite good.

On the other hand, I am still aware that the EU needs to blow the whistle from within if there is a problem in how its aid is spent. Some of the reporting that goes to Brussels is very happy. It is unfortunate when the European Court of Auditors has to flag something that member states did not seem to be aware of. For example, in the case of Kosovo, EULEX had major problems. Member states sitting on the CIVCOM committee or the Political and Security Committee say, "But we have great reports; everything is really good". So the reports are not borne out by others. Sometimes, as a diplomat, you have to say that you cannot do something because it may not be in your power or you may not have the resources or the local political situation is not as you expected or were led to believe in Brussels. Therefore, you have to reassess. Unfortunately, sometimes, because there is multiannual funding, I think that EU diplomats feel that they are forced to spend money. "It has been programmed three years ago, so I have to go ahead and spend it", as opposed to, "Put on the brakes. We have a major problem here; this is not doing what we thought it would do. The political situation has changed in this country and therefore we need to change". This political flexibility, I do not think is inherent within the EU's diplomacy yet. Member states need to encourage. Let us say you have a EUSR in Khartoum, for example, or elsewhere—that is perhaps a poor example—you should say, "We want honest reporting. We want you to tell us problems. We do not want 100% success stories". It is this mix of political reporting that we need.

Q50 Baroness Young of Hornsey: Can I ask both of you a quick question?

It goes back to this issue about skill sets and nous about what is going on on the ground and the cultural context in which people work. Is there something about the kind of people who are taken into the Diplomatic Service that is not necessarily best able to serve the contexts into which we might wish or need to put them? I know that it is not your remit, as it were, but could there be a broader, more imaginative recruitment strategy?

Professor Richard G Whitman: We have a sort of double problem going on. In Kosovo, we have established the External Action Service and at the same time merged the different bits of development together, the former DG Development and EuropeAid, to create DG DEVCO. All of these things have gone in flux and then, in third countries, we have also changed some delegations, which were close to 100% focused on development, by asking them then to take on board political activity. It gets to the point about training. We could talk a lot how we best train the high-end diplomats, but the EEAS has to have a strategy for training people in third country—the locally employed staff as much as those whom we are sending out from Brussels—because their job has changed quite fundamentally. Those other people on the ground who are responsible for the implementation of development perhaps did not have to think about the politics of that in the past. Where we are constrained—this is a broader problem for the service—is in the method of populating the service. The service cannot start to take any new, career-track people for the foreseeable future because it opens up to people within other EU institutions next year. But then, beyond that, it is not that settled how we are going to recruit people into the service and get precisely the kind of people beyond those who are on the shorter-term contracts. That is the essential problem with getting the mix right in a more political development policy that serves the foreign policy aims as well as the development policy aims. It is essentially a human resources problem that I cannot see being solved in the short term.

Baroness Young of Hornsey: I should have declared an interest as I work with a number of NGOs in development, both here and in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Chairman: We have covered most of the rest of the questions. The only one that we have not really done, perhaps, is on the response to crisis, which is another area. Lord Jay, I do not know whether you wanted to pursue that very briefly.

Q51 Lord Jay of Ewelme: It was just a question of whether you thought that crisis management or crisis response was something that the EEAS could or should do. It has always seemed to me quite an important change in the way that the EU works—to be able to respond in the way that national Governments do to crises, which is immediate, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Is that something that the EEAS is equipped to do?

Edward Burke: Yes, this needs looking at for the review as well. The HR has done a good job of recognising that there needs to be better integration of the EU's crisis management tools. So she has set up a crisis management board, she has crisis platforms to deal with specific countries and she brings together key people from the Commission and elsewhere. There is a new MD as well, an Italian diplomat recruited specifically for this role. So she has clearly made a start on it but it probably needs further elaboration. There are both the Crisis Management and Planning Directorate and the CPCC, the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability. CPCC does essentially civilian stuff while CMPD does other crisis management things, basically. There is some discrepancy between these two, the CPCC and the CMPD. I am sure that many of the personnel in the two departments get on very well but—perhaps it is only in my mind—there is sometimes a little obscurity, as opposed to why you need another agency to deal with crisis planning. These two are obviously of equivalent authority. Their heads report to the MD for crisis management. That is better; at least we now have an MD for crisis management. Then it is up to the HR herself. I think this needs to be looked at.

Detaching CPCC and other agencies from the political knowledge base of the EEAS may be problematic in that sometimes you get the feeling that maybe the CPCC is just planning its own missions in terms of objectives, monitoring effects and problems et cetera, on its own, when what you really need is a political expert who can say, “The reason you’re having that problem with that Minister is because that guy is really corrupt and you can’t work with him, therefore your objectives can’t work. You shouldn’t be spending your money on this because he might be stealing it. You need to check very rigorously”. That is what I am saying about having local political knowledge. So having agencies that see themselves as operating in their own area, in which they do not need to consult diplomats daily on political issues, can be problematic. It is not something that we recommend in this country and it is not something that we should recommend for the EU.

Professor Richard G Whitman: This is one of the issues for the review, Lord Chairman. It is one of the issues that the British Government should pull on. Frankly, the system itself is too complicated in terms of the Brussels-based institutions. It is also about in what areas the EU should seek to be a crisis or conflict manager. It cannot do global, so where are its priority areas? Where should it be investing resources, in time, energy and effort and, in the longer term, in terms of conflict mediation and mitigation work? That takes us back to where we started, which is what the service is for. The review is a good opportunity for the British Government to say clearly and unambiguously, “This what we think the tasks of the service should be”, and to trigger a process with the other member states that gets that programmed.

Q52 Lord Radice: It is not that I particularly want to ask this question but I promised Baroness Eccles that I would do so. I am just going to ask Professor Whitman this. On neighbourhood policy, I think you have both said that there is clearly a role there for the service. Why has the service been less successful in, for example, Ukraine and Belarus, than

it perhaps has in those areas where you have given good examples? Why has it been less successful in slightly further-off places, on the edge of the neighbourhood, if you like?

The Chairman: A brief answer, please.

Professor Richard G Whitman: The briefest answer is that the local situations in Belarus and Ukraine make life very difficult, but it comes back to the point that has been made by a number of people. The vice-president of the Commission side of the high representative's job is the bit that is underperforming. That is where there is the connection to the Commission and so on. So, really, neighbourhood policy should be under the purview of the External Action Service because it is a core foreign policy objective for the member states.

Q53 The Chairman: May I ask one more question, which we have not covered at all, to which we can perhaps have a written response? It is on the accountability of the European External Action Service. We have the European Parliament, which is basically able to affect the budget, or has control over the money. National Parliaments seem fairly ineffective, yet it is primarily an intergovernmental area. If you were able to write to us with your views on how we might make the service somehow democratically or otherwise accountable, we would find it very useful.

I thank you very much indeed for the time that you have given us, and for some very provocative answers to some provocative questions. Indeed, that is what we are trying to get to the bottom of in our report. Thank you very much.