



**Transcript of Panel 2: Geopolitics: Old and New Challenges Across Europe
Margaret Thatcher Conference on Security
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The video recording of this panel is available on the [CPS YouTube channel](#).

Gisela Stuart: I'm Gisela Stuart, I'm chairing the session on old and new challenges across Europe. We have two people on the panel who have seen first-hand some of the changes, both on the political and military level. General Lord Richards who will have seen the benefits of intervention and the follies of intervention. The rise of hope and the fall of hope on the military side. George Roberts who; ...

Lord Robertson: Robertson.

Gisela Stuart: Robertson, George Robertson who if you ever want to find out why Wikipedia is not the place to start any research it is George Robertson's entry, which tells you more about boycotting, invading a football pitch. Rather than the fact that he oversaw probably the most successful strategic defence review in the last 20 years and the Secretary General of NATO invoked Article Five. Finally, Boris Titov, who I think is very much the future in a sense because he is a Russian, he is the youngest on this panel. He is, so just to make sure I get this right, the Presidential Commissioner of Entrepreneurs Rights, but also the leader of the Party of Growth.

What I'm asking our panellists to do is actually address this old and new challenges across Europe, and would like to kick this off by a quote by Michelangelo who said, "I saw the angel in the marble and carved to set him free." That is my invitation to you to not to just see that piece of marble in front of you, or the terrible confusion but actually give us some sense of what it is we want to set free. Because there some things, which are old, which are not changing and that's geography and our history. There are some things, which are changing, and the new challenges some of it demography. I thought in the last panel it was interesting that it may just be that we don't understand the songs our children are singing. They have their common songs, their just different songs from the ones we had. To what extent cyber security is so different it's just delivered in a different way.

But enough from me, and I thought it'd be best if George Robertson kicks us off with the political perspective and then we go to Lord Richards and the Boris Titov. George ...

Lord Robertson: Thank you Gisela, it's interesting sitting here in the shadow of the name of Margaret Thatcher since I come from a very different political background but, I sat beside her one night after 9/11 and after we'd invoked Article Five of the NATO founding charter in defence of America after the attacks on New



York and Washington. At this dinner, which had been raised by JP Morgan for money for those who had been affected in the Twin Towers, there was of course at the dinner table a toast to Her Majesty the Queen. Then there was a toast to the President of the United States of America and as we sat down I leaned across and said to Mrs Thatcher, I said, "The next one will be a toast to the President of the European Commission." She looked at me, and she said, "The words will never cross my lips."

So the question that you pose Gisela about the chaos that has been created and we're all pretty good now at sort of thinking about that chaos, worrying about that chaos. Yet sitting here in these surroundings, profoundly historic as they are, sort of wonderfully ornate and representing a huge section of British history, and we are by any stretch of the imagination the elite, even in the metropolitan sort of areas. We may well be part of the problem and not part of the solution to the chaos that is around us at the present time. We're a million miles away from the people who cheered Jeremy Corbyn at Glastonbury. From the people who voted for Donald Trump in America. The people who voted for Marine Le Pen, in France. Yet they represent one of the problems that we as democratic politicians have got to face.

As somebody who led the North Atlantic Alliance for four pretty turbulent years because they included not just 9/11 and the incursions into Macedonia but also Afghanistan, and the beginnings of Iraq. NATO is an organisation of profound value, as Henry Kissinger said this morning, "With the capability of evolving over time to the different circumstances." It is one of the institutions that will need to evolve yet again to deal with the kind of challenges and problems that we'll face in the future. But Bernard Jenkin who was sitting beside me at the earlier session this morning said to me, "You know the amount of will power that was involved in creating an organisation like NATO was huge." It was huge, if you read the history about how NATO was formed it was not automatic. It was not easy, it was not simple, it was not indeed self-evident. The battles that took place in the negotiations are almost like the ones that will be taking place over our release from the European Union.

The debates in the United States Senate who had to ratify the treaty were very profound indeed. One Senator said, "We know what this is about, these Europeans are going to get into another war and expect us to fight it again for them." But it involved therefore willpower, it involved leadership, it involved a comprehensive strategy about the future as well as of the present.

My view today as somebody, as a retired politician, is that we need to have some of that willpower and that energy now. Both to enthuse a younger generation who have no memory of that at all, who can scarcely remember Russia, the Cold War, the Proxy Wars that were involved in the Cold War, the carnage of the 20th century and who are looking for something different. But unless we have that willpower and that leadership to enthuse them, and to give them a sense of optimism for the future then they may well turn to the populist leaders that it looks like at the moment with easy slogans, easy



answers, which is course simply come away in your hands. So it's finding that sense of destiny, of the future, and enthusing people that's important.

If I could answer just briefly the question of the last session, what should the West stand for? I think it's actually pretty self-evident. We stand for the rule of law, we stand for free societies, we stand for a free press, for free speech, for a mixed economy. These are the values the differentiate the West from the rest. The ordered world from the disordered world. I think if we can give a sense of what that means to people in their daily lives then we might be able to get to the point where somebody saying that kind of message might get cheered at Glastonbury as well.

Gisela Stuart: Thank you very much for that. General Lord David Richards, now can you also sort of wear your hat as the former Chief of Defence staff, because there's political aspirations but you have a clearer insight as to what Europe, actually what capabilities we have, if we wanted to bring about change.

Lord Richards: Well I will, but actually I was about to say to look at Europe without looking globally is a slightly arid experiment in wishful thinking. So I will touch on it, but like all good soldiers I understand a couple of things, one is that military strategy must be part of a grand strategy, and I'll come back to that. That we can only be part of the solution, or often part of the problem. My thesis, because I'm a practitioner, I have no pretensions to academic excellence, I've just been there and done it a bit and I've got rather frustrated with those that talk a lot and don't do very much, and certainly don't give us the tools often to succeed in delivering on political ambitions.

So my thesis is that the world is a potentially far more inner thought, far more precarious and unstable situation than even Dr Kissinger so brilliantly outlined. To all the geo-political risks that he talked about we must add, and I know they've been touched on different, in different ways, cyber, the anarchic risk of social media, which as one or two people said we don't even begin to understand and states can't combat. Extremism and terrorism, global warming, transnational crime, mass migration, and so on and so on, there's many more. All now partly because of the internet on a global scale. This requires states to rediscover what some of us would know, but many of the younger people here will not really recognise as grand strategy, state craft, and a process to deliver that.

The problem is as I see it in the West there's no real appetite for that, and George you were alluding to that. I'll come back to that. I'm not suggesting by the way that this is easy, but it was Sun Tzu in 500 BC that famously said, "Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to success. But tactics without strategy is merely the noise before defeat." I see a lot of tactics and very, very little strategy, and again I'll come back to it.

But it's not easy, I'm indebted to Sam Nunn for this, but he told me a joke a little while ago about a comedian called Will Rogers who was a famous, apart



from anything else, cowboy, who during the First World War, and he had a view on most things apparently, Will Rogers, he was asked what he'd do about the U-boat threat and he said, "Well I've been thinking hard and long about this, it's quite simple and I'm something of a strategist, you drain the Atlantic." The person he was talking to said, "Well how do you do that?" He said, "I'm a strategist, don't worry me about tactics." There is a lot of this, I'm not suggesting it's easy, but as you said George, it requires willpower and leadership, and I think we must do it.

So in 2009 I was a General, I'd just taken over command of the British Army and I attended a conference with one, General Jim Mathis, so I'm giving you here I hope by quoting something he said at the conference some cause for optimism in a man who I promise you thinks strategically. He said, and this is back in 2009, "We have real need for grand strategy, any analysis shows the need, our predicaments are complex but not more so than in the past and from history we can learn lessons for how other civilizations dealt with complexities they faced. We must have a grand strategy for we cannot subordinate our military strategy to a non-existent political strategy. Our security and military strategy properly nested inside a grand strategy is essential to forming our forces. Yet the situation confronting us and our allies today does not permit us to do this sequentially."

I saw Secretary of Defence Mathis the other day in Singapore at the Sangri-La dialogue and I asked him about this and he's of exactly the same view today. I said, "Well thank you very much." He did say, "That like Will Rogers it's quite hard delivering it."

So just elucidate on some of the things that I've talked about, and we talk here about old and new challenges. We heard Dr Kissinger talk about the Treaty of Westphalia, my thesis is that we are to some degree in that period before the 30 Years war. That what was a frightful war for those nations, not many, mainly in central Europe that were involved in it. It led to the Treaty of Westphalia, and led to quite a stable era thereafter. That broke down, we had the Napoleonic War, we had the Congress of Vienna, led to a very stable hundred years or so before the First World War.

The first half of the 20th century was chaotic, rise of Fascism, Nazism, extremism generally, two World Wars. After that we had an essentially bi-polar system that then ended up for as Anne Applebaum said for about 15 years in a uni-polar world. That now is, and we're right on the front edge of this, we're now at the front edge of a multi-polar world. In which China, India, and a number of other nations, Russia reasserting itself, is challenging the American led uni-polar world that we sort of began to get used to.

There are 17th century analogies there but as I said a minute ago, it's far worse than just the 17th century because we've got globalisation, in all its forms including the internet. Extremism, thousands of educated but marginalised people out there that we need to deal with. Populism, global



warming, cyber, social media, trans-national crime and so on. Then the inevitable dominance over the next 10 to 30 years of China. Hardly mentioned here, Dr Kissinger did, but I can tell you having just come back from South-East Asia, and a conference focused on it, that whole part of the world including America is increasingly focused on China. How will America decline, will it be a graceful decline, relatively, or will it be chaotic and confrontational. I think that's a huge geo-strategic issue for America as well as for all of us on their coattails.

Then not far behind that there's India, and then don't forget little Indonesia, a very, very populace nation whose economy is growing very fast. You've got what's going on in the Gulf and the Middle East, what is Iran up to? The dangerously unpredictable environment out there at the moment, which our Gulf allies are struggling manfully to deal with. North Korea, Indo-Pakistan and so it goes it. So I think you'll agree why I'm saying that while it is self-evidently a dangerous world, it's probably a lot more dangerous than we really imagined. The absence of any real strategic thinking of statecraft and of statesmanship is very worrying to a lot, I would think probably all of you.

Where is our generations Ataturk? Where is our generations Churchill, Roosevelt, Marshall? By the way Marshall was a soldier, never forget, which I'm never slow to remind my political friends. I saw it in Lee Kuan Yew, I see those qualities perversely in President Xi, and also and some of you will be discomforted by this whether you like it or not, in President Putin. I do not see much of it in Western leaders and I'm drawing to a close now. Here in Europe, the European leadership almost to a person is obsessed now by proving the European experiment is going to be a success. I hardly hear them talking about what is going on in the rest of the world. Here in Britain, perhaps understandably, our political leadership is obsessed by Brexit, but is very narrow at the very moment we should be thinking globally. So to conclude, my thesis is we need statesmanship, state craft, we don't seem to have any and we're at a very dangerous point in the world's history as a result.

Gisela Stuart:

Thank you very much for that, and I'm just reminded by something Henry Kissinger said, "Mere proclamation does not make something happen." I think there's been lots of proclamation but very little action. But of course we're talking about the geographic Europe, which if my geography lessons teach me right goes up to Urals, so significant part of Russia is part of Europe. Of course talking about leaders you've got a situation now where Angela Merkel and Putin can choose whether they speak to each other in German or in Russian. So it might be quite useful to have the Russian perspective.

Boris Titov:

Thank you, first of all I have to thank Lord Saatchi for the invitation, rather unexpected invitation, and his belief in my English. Because I'll try to be, to make my speech understandable. But anyway, I hope you will understand it.

First of all I'm honoured to be on such a panel, on such a conference, with such distinguished panellists and very professional audience but the thing is



that I'm not a professional. I'm not a political professional, I'm a businessman. I'm a businessman myself, but also I represent the interests of businessmen, and not only Russian investors into Russian economy but also foreign investors. I have to protect their rights. We had like a joint venture with President of Russia because we have a problem, mutual problem, which we all face, the problem of administrative pressure, bureaucratic corruption pressure on business. We decided to, he gave us power, state power, and we gave him skills of management.

So we decided to do this institution, which is called Presidential Commissioner for Entrepreneurs Rights in Russia. I'm running the office for five years, since that time I don't think that we had a breakthrough but maybe little bit the situation changes. At least we had a big problem with Ikea in Moscow, Ikea the big Swedish company, and we finally settled it. So some wins we have already.

From my point of view, and I will express the point of view of first world businessmen, the challenges that confront the world now, we haven't heard yet in today's conference. The main challenge, which we see and it's opportunity but big risk as well, it's the new technological revolution, which we all face, will face very fast. First of all, and it's not just change of technologies, some technologies, I think it's a main change of even economical, social society of the world. Because for example, big data analysis gives a way to so called prognostic economy, which is somewhere in between. It's not free market anymore, it's more a planning market. So competition will give way for at least some way, for planning instead of producing a lot of goods for the market and see who's the best, and the rest should go.

Also, block chain, completely change in governance, the governments have to be changed that. They should be smaller and more efficient, block chain is a huge change in the whole world I can say. Currencies, of course they will definitely and drastically change the financial systems. Because you can't, now confront them anymore, they're already in our life and they're spreading, and nobody can put an end to that.

Also, cubit based processor, the internet of machines, Dr Kissinger touched this but in a very small scale. Bio technology they will put before mankind global problems. Employment, governance and wealth. So for example, block chain society already puts on the table the question of new international government. World government, already they talk about that.

For Russia, it is of course a special challenges, the most important, one of the most important is again revolution, technological energy revolution. In that sense we all understand what the new technologies like, we all know shale oil, but we don't really understand that's there much more alternatives, like MESA-hydrates on the shelf. We also even now going for a new technology like atmospheric electricity, which is on the way and should be very soon



here. Of course this gives a trend that the oil prices, energy prices will go down and Russia faces this challenge.

Now we have big debate in Russia, like could call it a strategy battle, we have two main expert centres, think tanks working on the strategy. The President asked us both to do that, the first one is Mr Kudrin, I think well known ex Minister of Finance and the Deputy Prime Minister for Growth in Russia. The other one is called Stolypin Club, which I'm the chairman. The difference is mostly, Kudrin lets continue with the previous politics, economical politics. Which makes, most of all it's the financial consolidation. We bring the inflation down and then everything will be growing. You have to have macro-economical stability and then everything will come.

Our politics is, yes you're right this worked when the prices for oil were high, when the incomes were guaranteed, but now it doesn't. Now we have to find the way how to get more money from other fields, from other sectors. We have to diversify. For that we need new politics, and first of all financial politics, like we call it, we see it in the West, QE, quantitative easing. The West changed so we have to change as well. We have to stimulate investment, Russian investment in industrial sectors, IT sectors, agriculture, and Western and Chinese, foreign investment in those sectors. Because every company coming and investing in Russia is a Russian company.

So the debate is there, we debate on conference and public, SME's, I mean in the press. We debate at the table, at the desk of Mr Putin, we have two big meetings when we expressed our opinions. I can say that we are coming to, we are finding the way, but one thing we are, we have in common, I mean the main thing, we have many things in common but we have the main thing in common with Kudrin. We all think that the future of Russia is democracy, market economy, the competition and rule of law. In that sense, there's no discussion in Russia. No discussion. We, I strongly oppose the previous panellists, by saying Russia's a threat, which is a new ideology, which is threatening attacking the Western world. I can say complete, sorry to say that, nonsense.

Russia is a democratic way of thinking, which was not attacking, it's in defence. It's choosing the way but it's in defence. You look how many times their interests were neglected, starting from Chechnya, from the NATO expansion then Serbia. I can say Russia is a partner if even, I don't say interests are respected, Russian interests are respected. The Russian opinion is respected. You have to hear Russia, to make Russia talk together with the West.

So in that sense I can say that we face, now we have to, I agree fully with Lord Richardson that we have to define, divide the strategies and the tactics. All our rows, rows it's called, scandals or fights, little fights, even with the question of Syria, Iraq, even the ISIS in general. Of course our small rows ...



Gisela Stuart:

Rows.

Boris Titov:

Row yeah, between Russia and the West, we call it like a little scandal inside the communal kitchen. You know what in Russia during the Soviet times there were big apartments, many people, families living in one, having all the bedrooms, but they had only one communal kitchen for everybody. So they, from time to time they have scandals. But so we call them tactile scandals, tactile rows.

We have to think strategically and strategic now in that sense, to my opinion, I think business opinion is, the problem is that we are divided with the Third world. It's not only mentality, religion, ideology, it's the standard of living first of all. We have to, from giving gifts to them, we have to go for a very strategic, systematic policies towards the Third world. We have to, and two main ways is infrastructure, and working places. Not working places here, working places there.

Look what China does now, with the silk wear, the economical zone of silk wear. They are investing, and not government money, not the state money, they stimulate private companies to invest in projects. Not only in Asia or Far East, in Africa, silk wear is everywhere, it's not only on the way between China and Europe. It's everywhere. They want to promote infrastructure, they are doing infrastructure there, and they are create working places. That's the way we all have to go. We have to, yeah sorry to be so long, but anyway finalising my long speech. Lord Saatchi was right, I'm doing well with English here.

Gisela Stuart:

No, it's okay.

Boris Titov:

So I can say that we have to go and take the practise of Churchill and Roosevelt, even we have discrepancies, we have problems between each other, they found the way to make alliances, even Soviet Union, it can't compare Soviet Union and Russia today. Completely different countries. It was much difficult, more difficult for them than for the today's governments to find a way to make alliances, allies. What, there's a special word in Russian, which is called, [Russian 00:30:27], alignment against the global threat. So I think that we should have to not show ego now today of every country, but to show wisdom. Thank you.

Gisela Stuart:

Thank you very much and I failed to remind you to submit questions if you have any. But I want to pursue the subject of Russia because I think probably most people here would regard Syria not just the little argument in the kitchen, just something slightly more significant. I wonder both you, George Robertson and David Richards in a sense, you were there in the late 90's, when you know you had the Russian-NATO partnership, there was the period when we all thought, yes we were completely on the same page. But that has changed. What has changed? George would you like to start off.



Lord Robertson:

Well I became Secretary General of NATO in 1999, after the Kosovo conflict. So I wasn't exactly popular in Moscow, and regarded as a bit of a hawk. But I'd a long, long relationship with Russia before that. So shortly after I went there, President Putin was elected, well he took over from Boris Yeltsin who resigned spectacularly on Hogmanay 1999. So I was among the first foreign visitors to meet the then President-Elect Putin. It was quite a remarkable meeting because I took the view that Boris has said, of putting myself in the Russian chair. What did they expect of me? What did they expect of NATO? What about the bruised feelings after what happened in Kosovo, which had been fairly traumatic for the Russians.

I tried to build a relationship, at that first meeting President Putin said, you know and these are the words, "I want Russia to be part of Western Europe. That is our destiny in my view. Others disagree, that is my view about it." We then went on to build a relationship. Famously at the second meeting he said to me, his opening gambit was, "When are you going to invite Russia to join NATO?" I said, "We don't invite countries to join NATO, they apply for NATO membership and they have to satisfy the criteria laid down." To which he said, "Well we're not going to stand in line with a bunch of countries that don't matter." I said, "Well we should stop the diplomatic sword dance and just get down to building a relationship together." Over the next three years we did, and we built relationships, the Ambassador to NATO at that time was Ambassador Sergei Kislyak who's now become an internationally known phenomenon.

Lord Richards:

Well known.

Lord Robertson:

We built a good relationship, which led in 2002 to the creation of the NATO-Russia Council, which I chaired with 20 Presidents and Prime Ministers round the one table, including the Russian President as well. We had work streams working on a whole series of issues like non-proliferation, chemical weapons, on submarine search and rescue, whole things. The kind of cooperation that joins us together. Now things eventually went wrong, I think the West, the Americans dropped the ball.

The Bucharest Summit and a declaration that Ukraine and Georgia were going to become members of NATO was not something that was either practical and it rang alarm bells. The crisis in Georgia and the rest of it, but we can still move back to that area of cooperation. After all most of the challenges that we're talking, the new challenges that we face, that David Richards outlined, of cyber, of organised crime, of terrorism, of refugees, of corruption, of health pandemics, all of these are common problems for the Russians, as they are for us. Indeed for the Chinese and for the rest of us. So it should be possible despite our differences, and they will remain, to build areas of cooperation that will be involved.

Now President Putin has been in power for 17 years, far too long. Maybe the lesson of some of the great Western leaders that David Richards bemoaned



lack of today, after Roosevelt they brought in term limits for American Presidents so they couldn't stay too long. Mrs Thatcher, was not replaced by the British people but by the Parliamentary Conservative Party. Churchill was defeated in 1945 after successfully leading the country in the Second World War. So we give people a finite amount of time, and I think 17 years by any stretch of the imagination is far, far to long. For anybody to keep their finger on the pulse of the nation, or even on the global....

Boris Titov: Lee Kuan Yew?

Lord Robertson: Yeah but there are some exceptions to that, but he, Lee Kuan Yew operated in a way in Singapore that would be unacceptable in most Western countries. However successful economically that has to be. But democratic politicians today, and it's easy sometimes at our age to sort of look and say, "Where are the great people?" Well they suddenly come to the fore when they are required, but we live in a world where the volatility of opinion means that we live in permanent state of uncertainty. There's a permanent surge of views going on that I difficult for any politicians to pin down. Then we've got the velocity of change, technological change, the world of social media, the rest of it, which is changing the whole environment in which we do our politics. Where the kind of leaders of the past may well be completely irrelevant to the kind of leadership that will be required for a strategy in the future. But the problem with the two V's of volatility and velocity is that we are left vulnerable.

So discovering the ways in which we can keep public opinion on side and at the same time take decisions and keep people on side with the tough decisions that will be required. Because we won't get security on the cheap, we won't build our defence forces or indeed our internal security forces without substantial amounts of public money being expended on it. Unless the public are warned about the dangers, and secondly pre-armed about the cost that will be involved then we'll be in trouble. I can give one example, David Richards commanded all of the NATO troops in Afghanistan, Afghanistan was a war in which NATO countries were involved. A huge number, hundreds of thousands of troops fought in Afghanistan. Hundreds lost their lives, billions, billions of pounds of public money were expended on that. Yet did we properly explain to people why we were there? What was in it? Did we psychologically tell the Taliban that there was no way that they were going to be allowed to win?

Winston Churchill during the Second World War went to Parliament every week of the war, sometimes in secret session, concept that is completely unknown today, in order to tell people the blunt and honest truth about what the dangers were and what was going to be required. During the premiership of Gordon Brown and the premiership of David Cameron, both of them made speeches and debates about Afghanistan once, one speech each in the whole of that time. It's scarcely a wonder that the Taliban thought all they had to do was wait us out. Scarcely difficult to believe that the country didn't know that we were engaged in something of huge value and importance as well. So



grand strategy is right, but unfortunately in electoral systems where you can't stay in power for 17 years, tactics can be pretty fatal as well.

Gisela Stuart: I think 17 years unless you're her Majesty the Queen is too long, okay. But I want to come back to something that Henry Kissinger said in relation to his China policy, the America China policy. Where they said, "We were trying to make sure that we were friends with both more so than they were with each other." Now can you, sticking with the theme of Russia for a moment, can Europe be an independent actor in our grand strategy or are we part of one or the other? David where would you have the big strategic view? Are we sufficiently significant to actually be independent actors?

Lord Richards: Britain?

Gisela Stuart: Yeah, or no, Europe, actually collective now.

Lord Richards: I think Europe collectively will be, but I'm a great believer in the process, I don't the answer yet, all I know is we need to devise a strategy. We can look at sign posts and I mean just picking up what Boris said earlier, I mean I remember when I was in the National Security Council asking for a, I called it a hand rail I think, in relation to Russia. I had been on actually a very good visit to my Russian counterpart, and as military men do we got on rather well beneath the political level, we agreed certain processes. But I came back having realised I didn't know what Britain's strategy or even policy towards Russia was, so I asked for one, and never got one.

I think in relation to Russia, and it would apply to Europe but it would be hard for Europe - 27 nations - in the future to agree such a fundamental thing I suspect., 'cause there's all sorts of differences within the EU on this issue, that we at least need to know what our direction of travel is. Do we want to seek areas of common interest and build on that? I would agree absolutely that Syria is an archetypal example, and I won't but I could talk about how Russia has demonstrated in its decisive action in Syria whether we like it or not by the way, the utility of military force again.

Transforming the situation in that country, and if you go back to when they intervened Assad, again I'm not taking sides on this, Assad was pretty well on the point of defeat. Russia turned that around and by the way he wouldn't have been defeated, the war would have gone on and on. But he was pretty near it, they turned that round, and today again I, you've all heard the news this morning, I don't know if President Assad and his team are really thinking of using chemical weapons again. Personally I doubt it, but there must be some intelligence presumably, but things are much clearer and broadly the focus collectively is on ISIS, which is much healthier.

That's as a result of the Russian intervention, our rather feeble activity which wasn't galvanising the Syrian opposition groups and properly supporting and resourcing them, was actually just leading to more hundreds and thousands



of dead and millions in displaced people. It's much to our shame actually that our inaction in Syria has led to the situation today. I wouldn't blame Russia for most of Syria, actually you can congratulate Russia for resolving much of what we see in Syria today and leading us out of it. We should now work, I know this isn't very fashionable by the way, this is a practitioner's view, we should now work as energetically as the politics allow with Russia to bring an end to Syria and then we can deal with Assad. But it's got to be in that order.

Gisela Stuart: If I come to Boris, I just park this question, why do we think Russia is a threat? It'd be interesting, why does the West perceive Russia as a threat? But just before I do that, David would you say that Russia action in relation to Syria and the closer working with Turkey actually makes it more difficult for NATO to arrive at a particular view?

Lord Richards: I think NATO, notwithstanding George's excellent point about NATO and out of area, I think this would be a good one to keep NATO out of.

Gisela Stuart: Okay.

Lord Richards: Because NATO is a number of nations, it's not just the USA now, or Britain and a few like minded friends. I think that NATO brings all sorts of military advantages and I was very involved in the Libya campaign, and I remember insisting that we had to involve NATO because the idea floating around both Paris and London was that Britain and France would do it by ourselves. I and my French counterpart, Admiral Guillaud, knew that that was just not practical, that we don't have the capacity and technical skills to do that, we needed NATO to do it. But actually America can do it, in the case of Syria, and I think that we should leave this one, leave NATO out of this one.

Gisela Stuart: Well thank you, you answered one of the questions.

Lord Robertson: NATO wasn't involved in Iraq because there was a difference of opinion among the members, so it's not the answer to every conflict.

Gisela Stuart: Okay, we getting question; ...

Boris Titov: Chirac, Putin were against going into Iraq.

Gisela Stuart: We're getting questions on Twitter, this perception, are we talking about, why does the West think that Russia is a threat? Is it about strength and weaknesses? I mean from your point of view, do you think we are reacting irrationally? Or do we not understand each other?

Boris Titov: First of all can I comment on Syria, I'm not a politician again but it's the business view. When you have in business management, when you have a lot of tasks, aims, interests, you have to choose, you have to prioritise, give priority to some of them. In Syria, we have so many interests, so many actors,



so many participants, which in one things they work together, and other questions they are confronting each other. So business way is to find the priority, priorities today definitely ISIS, it's the main threat to the world, to the mankind.

So forget, to the second stage, like Roosevelt and Churchill found this priority of fighting fascism as the main priority of that time, we have to find the priority now. Instead of putting down those planes of Assad, and shooting at them, instead of that fight against ISIS, you find them, they tried to do that they didn't manage. I mean the Obama and the Putin talks on Syria, but they didn't find, I don't know why but they didn't find a way. But now we have to do it again, I think we have to prioritise ISIS as the main threat. We have to challenge and to fight this threat and then all other questions, we will be able to settle them in a very, much more easier way. I don't really understand the question about...

Gisela Stuart: Let's turn it on its head. If you think business is the way where we can actually get much closer together? What about the current sanctions by the European Union on Russia? So clearly Europe collectively thinks that not all is well in Russia. Are we right to think so or you think we're getting it wrong?

Boris Titov: I'm just about sanctions, of course, I think that Europe doesn't believe, well the USA, that sanctions are economical pressure on Russia. If they wanted economical pressure, the sanctions would be different. It's only political issue to show Russia that we're confronting your policies. We do feel the same, we don't feel sanctions as economical sanctions. The big companies, I mean oil companies maybe, but they already went around this technological problems they had, these chips, which they didn't have in Russian but now we have, we now have a mining process in Russia, which requires a lot of chips, lot of technology and we do that in Russia. Mining I mean, Bit coin mining, so medium businesses, industrial businesses, small businesses they don't feel at all, at all. Even anti-sanctions gave way for more investment into agricultural sector, which is good. We have five percent growing agricultural sector.

So we don't see them as economical, pressure on Russia, but we see them that the West confronted Russia in a political way and emotional way, human way, as relations between people. That is very bad, and it's very strange to see sometimes the TV when the big government meets between the Presidents meet, or the meetings of Secretary of State coming to Sochi meeting Putin, they're all like friends, they shake hands, they joke and then sanctions. What in between them there are sanctions? It's something like from the other world, it doesn't, in your mind you don't cope with that. We are the same family I can say to you. If Russia is, would be as I said, considered as a partner, considered their opinion not even interest I said that, if the opinion of Russia would be considered I can say there will be no discrepancies. We are the same family again.



Gisela Stuart: Thank you, I just wonder whether I can put the challenge to all three of you of something Henry Kissinger said in his relation to how he viewed Brexit, which was to begin with he would have rather had us remain but now he thinks it could be a very liberated and enabling function for the United Kingdom to take on that role. Now I know what George thinks, he was muttering it next to me, but I won't reveal it, George do you want to kick off 'cause you've clearly given this some thought? Then David and ...

Lord Robertson: Well I'm in two minds, one of my minds says that coming out of the European Union is a disaster for this country and that we will gradually come to understand that, and the price that we will pay will be very considerable both in the part of this capital city but elsewhere in the country as it begins to happen. At the moment there's a degree of complacency because the Brexit decision was taken and not much has happened, unless you go on holiday and you get one euro for every pound, that's the Brexit immediate price. But I think more will happen, my view is that it will have a profound effect on a lot of companies in this country and people will come to realise it. Therefore, you can say that if we're going to be out of the single market and out of the currency union that will have profound economic consequences, which the British people at the end of the negotiation might say, "That is not something acceptable" and might want another choice about it. So that is a possibility.

Gisela Stuart: But what about that in terms of defence and security? Is this an opportunity for the United Kingdom who's been able to fudge decisions for many years, because you were sitting around the table and therefore did not have to take responsibility for developing certain policies. If I understood Henry Kissinger right he thought this was this kind of opportunity to reach up much wider than just the EU. Do you think that's anything that's possible?

Lord Robertson: What he said, and I wrote it down, was that "It could be an opportunity." I think what worries me is that Britain and France together are European defence. They are the back stop if America chooses not to become involved in something in the future. You've got a President in the United States who's already said that NATO is obsolete. That even although he moderated that view a President of the United States who refused to use the words Article Five as he stood outside the new NATO headquarters in Brussels only last month, even although he attempted to clarify it slightly later on. But who deliberately left these words out of that, then the Europeans may well have to look after themselves in the future.

If we are outside of the machinery that will decide on any European mission, the entry points, the modus operandi, the exit strategies, but yet be crucial to the effort itself that puts us in a very difficult position. We'll still be crucial to any neighbourhood problem that confronts the Europeans, Brexit didn't change geography, it changed the politics of European integration and if there is a challenge as there are challenges now with migration and the rest of it, then that challenge is to Europe and we will be expected to play our



part. I worry about the fact that we will not have the role that we have at the present moment as full members of the European Union.

Gisela Stuart: But given that most of the real advances were done on a bilateral level rather than at an EU institutional level, I mean Saint-Malo was a bilateral agreement. David Richards are you as pessimistic?

Lord Richards: No, I'm not, I mean so much one can say. I mean first of all going back to what I said in my opening remarks, we're living in the new world, much bigger world and we've forgotten already I think some of the reasons why many, a majority voted to get out of the EU. I saw on the television some European leaders the other day, sort of crowing over Mrs May's predicament and I reminded myself why I too didn't much like the EU. It was arrogant, and complacent, and they have pulled back from that, and by the way that's a very good thing and I'd like to see it becoming more self-confident and a little bit more, Richard Chartres very important point, a little bit more humility being demonstrated. But they needed to and in a way Brexit has helped that. But actually, there's a whole big wide world out there, that's the first thing.

I see Europe being so insular and introspective at the moment, they're determined to make the European experiment, as I said earlier, work. I wish them well in that but actually now we've decided to come out of it what is really important to answer your question is leadership and grand strategy.

That's what worries me, has the United Kingdom got a clear vision of where it wants to go in the post Brexit era and then this is what, all a strategy is, is a plan to deliver a policy or a vision, and I don't see any sign yet of that strategy being forthcoming. Indeed, I even know, and I'm sure there're one or two people here from the Foreign Office, and I'm not going to quote names 'cause it was a Chatham House thing, that someone very senior in the Foreign Office still confuses policy with strategy. That worried me. So we need to do, sort that out. I think it's doable but we're a bit obsessed by Europe, and Brexit, as opposed to the opportunities in due course.

A very good friend of some of here, Mervyn King, Lord King is of the view that there will be a dip economically and that worries all of us clearly. Because ultimately I as any non-solider or solider knows, our future depends on our economy. So that has got to be sorted out, but I see Japan already talking about some sort of bilateral relationship. Australia's still there, I'm very certain that President Trump will do it, so it's not as bleak I think with time and with a clear plan as people might think. I'd just like though to pick up on one thing George said, which I broadly agree and he was the head of NATO, actually NATO notwithstanding a blip or two from President Trump, and I think he has broadly corrected them. Certainly that's; ...

Lord Robertson: This week.



Lord Richards: This week, and I think he's feeling his way on this issue and he was playing election erring to a degree. But is that NATO will remain the bedrock of British security, and there is no talk of us leaving NATO. Indeed, I think that President Trump was quite right to insist that people spend more on their own defence, it is not acceptable that America pays for about over 50 percent of NATO's defence and it's got to change. So he was right to do that, and I'm a big supporter of it. The Anglo-French Agreement will go on, both nations have said, "This is out with Brexit. It was nothing to do with the EU." So I think France and Britain, where there's a will there's a way. There's got to be a strategy, we'll continue to work quite rightly very closely with each other in the defence sphere, and if we see that faltering then strategists have got to bring them back to what is most important.

Gisela Stuart: Were you worried about the absence in the Conservative Party manifesto of a commitment to keep the army at the minimum numbers of 80,000?

Lord Richards: Oh you're getting me into a deep water here, but yes, the answer is yes. I think the armed forces in this country are being under-resourced and tonight we will have some Michael Fallon here, for some of us anyway, and we need to pin him down on this. There's a lot, I mean a lot of people have talked about the virtues of two percent GDP, and that's a good thing in principle. But it's an input figure, what people like me want to look at is output, and the output is relatively in decline. The army today is at about 78,000 even at 82,000 what it's meant to be at, it's the smallest army since 1790 in this country.

The Royal Navy is vastly under resourced for the task it's been given and can't man all its ships, there's only 19 frigates and destroyers. We've got this massive aircraft carrier we've got to deliver, we've got to make that work. It's probably impossible to do and keep the rest of the fleet going without big injection of resources. The Royal Air Force has never had less combat aircraft in its whole life, which is much shorter obviously than the Army's. But nevertheless, we've got to be sympathetic to them. So yeah the politicians and it wasn't in the manifesto, Labour Party obviously, are you Labour? Yes, anyway Labour Party virtually didn't mention it, and we'll probably get rid of Trident which is another debate all together.

Gisela Stuart: Don't go back in government, we will mention it, don't worry

Lord Richards: But no, I mean, hang on, seriously there is no appetite out there I'm afraid for defence, and some gallant people in the media have tried to stir it up and got nowhere. So unless people like us and you realise that fundamentally defence spending is important to us all in this very uncertain world, and I'm not focusing for one minute by the way personally here on Russia, then we are treading into even more dangerous terrain.

Gisela Stuart: Well thank you very much, we're sort of coming towards the end so if we can sort of have concluding comments from the panel, so we can finish at one



o'clock. I was just wondering, Boris one of the things, which really is troubling us, or is troubling me, is that in 2004 to all the new Accession member states, membership of NATO to them was even more important than the European Union because security. We went through a period where Russia did not appear expansionist, and then you had the Crimea and you had the Ukraine. How would you explain that to us? Why that should not unsettle us.

Boris Titov:

First of all, Brexit of course I can't judge, I mean I'm from my point of view it's especially in political and security side of it, but again business wise, economically wise, of course we see, and the Wall Street reaction was proving that. That Britain faces some challenges in economics, especially again with the new technologies, financial technologies, which will change the financial world. This can be a problem, and it seems that to be alone in such circumstances, it's a challenge for Britain. I don't think that they will be more contacts with the US, I mean difficult to say but there are challenges.

The other feeling I have, my personal feeling about Brexit is we have a big programme with the European Union and we work together against corruption. My institute, Ombudsman Institute in Russia and the European Union, and we have a mutual budget for that. It was for the three years, it was funded by Britain, I hope of course Britain stays in United Europe, I mean in European, not in European Union but in the Council of Europe, it will continue. But I think this programme is under threat, it's my personal opinion, which is against Brexit.

Again about the policies it's very difficult for me again to judge, but I already said that the Russian policies were more a reaction to the policies of the West. It was not something that Russia was pushing through or attacking. Russia had, here the previous panel said that Russia has aims to destroy the West, something like that was in the air. It's completely not true. I can explain my feeling is that we reacted because we couldn't let, you have to understand what is Ukraine in Russia, it's like Scotland and England. Of course, we should have maybe done the better political work together, to stay together, but the reaction when something, Europe was not, the interests of Russia were neglected by Europe and that [inaudible 01:03:19] made this feeling work.

With Crimea for us, Crimea speaks Russian, Ukrainians are very small part of it because we have still separate languages with Ukraine. We understand each other but we have separate, different languages. Crimea spoke Russian all the time, Crimea was Russian land for many, many years. The people are there Russians, the investors in Crimea and the tourist infrastructure and other different agriculture were always Russian companies. When they said, "Okay Ukraine goes away" what would happen with us? They started, I know many businessmen, because I run the Union also, Business Russia, in Crimea they were saying, "No, no we can't do that because it's a big threat to us." The people started going out into the streets, and I know personally the man who



was, spent a lot, a fortune for protection against some nationalistic, really we feel them as not very comfortable people to speak with.

I mean from Ukrainian side this, I don't remember the name of this nationalistic movement. So they started protecting themselves, and at that situation I think Putin took an emotional decision. It was not a political decision, we see all the consequences, it was an emotional decision of a Russian man saying, "We can't let them be under pressure, and we can't let them leave them in problems." We understood that.

Gisela Stuart: I think we'd probably find it difficult to agree with you, but there we are. George final comments?

Lord Robertson: One of the worrying aspects of the world today is that we actually live in a much more peaceful world than we have ever done before. Better educated world, where there is less poverty than there has ever been before. We unfortunately take it a bit for granted, there's a degree of complacency and an unwillingness to recognise why it is we have got to where we are. There are dangers and problems ahead, but we need to learn that we came out of the Second World War, a visionary generation set up institutions that were elaborated on by the previous speakers and by Henry Kissinger. NATO and the EU, the IMF, the World Bank, these were institutions along with the United Nations that were created in order to make sure we would never go through that again.

Now we've allowed some of these organisations to wither, some of them not to modernise, and to become unfashionable. We're seeing huge cut backs in diplomacy, the British Foreign Office budget, total budget is now less than the budget for the United States Embassy in Baghdad. Tiny in comparison to the nature of the job that it has to do. President Trump is going to cut the United States, State Department budget by something like 30 percent at a time when diplomacy is actually mattering.

We've weakened the concept of deterrence, we're weakening the idea of alliances all of the time. So the bedrock of what we have created is being weakened at a time when as David Richards rightly said, this range of problems and difficulties and challenges that we have out in front of us have become ever more complex. As somebody recently said we've moved from mutually assured destruction to mutually assured disruption. Where uncertainty and unpredictability is now permanent. If ever there was a time for us to recognise that these institutions of diplomacy and of intervention, and of peaceful cooperation were essential then this is the time of history for that to happen. That will require grand strategy, will require courageous political leadership and courageous political tactics as well.

If we come to agreements on the global scene, like the Budapest Memorandum, if I might say to you Boris, which in 1994 guaranteed the territorial integrity of Ukraine inside it's existing borders. Guarantee given by



Russia, by the UK, but France and America, then we should stick by those guarantees as well. It's the weakening of some of those institutions that would make me worried about the future.

Gisela Stuart: Indeed George, you know we spent more on winter fuel payments than on the budget of the Foreign Office, which puts a perspective. Now David it's up to you to cheer us up so we can walk into lunch without being too miserable about the future.

Lord Robertson: Okay well I'm not certain I can cheer you up because I agree very much with what George said so eloquently. Just if I may focusing on Russia though, which is your original question to Boris, actually I think you summed up perhaps unwittingly but correctly the problem, and that is after the end of the Cold War we rather assumed that they would just join the club, do as the rest of the world, well Western world did, which is basically do as the US wanted. We sort of forgot because of our ignorance of Russian history and culture and collective psyche that actually they're a very proud nation. They weren't going to readily do that, and they were uncertain about that world at the end of the Cold War. They still talked in terms of spheres of influence, things that we had forgotten, that was already history. I think if we had a little bit more humility and given Russia a bit more encouragement and a bit more time, then we would be in a completely different situation today.

I think your point Boris about just allowing your view to be heard and understood wouldn't be a bad start. Actually I may be the only other person here, but I do understand why Crimea was an emotional commitment on the part, I like that description, on the part of President Putin. Because I like all good military men and all of you are military historians to a greater or lesser extent, I remember going to war with Russia over Crimea in the 1850's not with Ukraine. I always saw it as Russian essentially and I thought, I remember, and Ukraine by the way, the rest I can see other solutions but I never saw Crimea as being, given what happened, as staying within this new Ukraine. Now there may be ways that we can over the years resolve that problem, but I think this inability or reluctance on the part of Western nations to empathise just a little bit with Russia has been the cause of many of the problems we now confront.

Gisela Stuart: Well on that positive note, I want to thank the panel for the discussions. I want to thank you. I think we now have lunch, we're back at 2:15, for the next session, which I very much look forward to, and thank you.