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The UK and the World: Rethinking the UK's International Ambitions and Choices

Session 6

A Changing Britain

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Matthew d'Ancona

Well, good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, and welcome back after your brief coffee break. My name is Matthew d'Ancona; I'll be moderating this session, the sixth, which is tantalisingly entitled, A Changing Britain, but as I think you probably can gather from the programme, the idea is to explore the connections between the continuing and very dramatic changes in what it is to be British, and the nature of Britain, and indeed, the political leadership of Britain for foreign policy, our role in international discourse, and our position in the world. And we have an absolutely terrific panel here who will be helping us to look at that issue and others related to it. On my left, Danny Sriskandarajah, the Director of the Royal Commonwealth Society; Polly Toynbee, a hugely respected Columnist at The Guardian and frequent broadcaster; Lord Hastings of Scarisbrick, Global Head of Citizenship and Diversity at KPMG; Anthony Wells, who is Associate Director of YouGov; and Professor Christopher Hill, who is the Sir Patrick Sheehy Professor of International Relations at the University of Cambridge. So, a terrific range of people to look at the issues we're going to try and tease out this afternoon. Now, we need to be finished by 1.25 on the dot I'm told, otherwise I shall spontaneously combust; it'll be an undesirable outcome – or perhaps not; so we will keep the initial contributions by the panel to five to seven minutes, then I shall kick off with a few initial questions and then throw it open to the floor for questions from you. So, can I invite Danny to offer his initial thoughts?

Danny Sriskandarajah

Thank you Matthew; good afternoon; I thought I'd kick off with two observations, I suppose; one, about the domestic aspects of what's happening in Britain, so inward-looking about the nature of British society and what that might mean for Britain's role in the world; and the second is to do with my day job, and to look outwards towards the commonwealth and to see if there really is something more that Britain can do with the commonwealth to further its foreign policy objectives.

So, the first is about Britain itself; I spent the last five years researching international migration, and it was a peculiar, unique and important time in this country's history, because at the time that we all were reading about hoards of migrants and the country being swamped by international migrants, actually,

something far more interesting, and with far more important implications on British foreign policy was happening. Yes, the last ten years saw the largest wave of immigrants into this country, but at the same time we saw unprecedented levels of emigration. About four years ago I quantified for the first time the number of British people who live abroad. We estimated it then to be five and a half million people; almost as many British passport holders live abroad as foreigners living in this country; so 10%, let's say. We've had a population swap fuelled and rising in the last ten years, of about five to 10% of the population. We've exchanged some of our own for lots of people from all around the world, and it's phenomenal when you think about it; there are something like 40 communities of foreign born people that have populations in the UK of more than 10,000; i.e., there are more than 40 foreign-born communities that are in excess of 10,000 people, living in the UK. But at the same time, there are about 40 countries in the world where there are more than 10,000 British nationals resident at any one time.

So, if you're thinking about Britain's role in the world and its interconnectedness, then here is a physical, tangible way in which this country is, I think, peculiar by international standards. The comparable figure for Americans who live all or most of the year abroad is probably one to two million. So, a tiny fraction of Americans live in other bits of the world, compared to, say, Britons; there's a British propensity, it seems, to migrate and explore the world that even the French don't share. There are probably half as many French nationals living abroad at any one time, as there are British nationals, and I think whenever there's a crisis in the Lebanon and people need to be evacuated, then it's the British government that may need to be called upon; or, if there is a terrorist threat in any parts of the world, or if there is an attack here or there, then of course there are some obvious foreign policy implications to that. But also, if we look domestically, that there is no such thing, we found out, I think, in very difficult ways in the last few years, as truly foreign policy issues; because if there are so many people who are living in this country who are from the countries of origin that we're concerned with, then the distinction between what is foreign policy and domestic policy gets blurred.

And I think there are some particular challenges that Britain has to face as a result of having so many people from around the world who are here, and so many people from Britain all around the world; but I don't think it's just a challenge; I think there are some important opportunities that I think we've only

started to explore. How can Britain take advantage of the trade links, of the development impact, of the soft power networks that arise out of these population exchanges and these links that Britain, I think, uniquely has at this scale. You might argue that the British [sic, Indian?] and Chinese diaspora are obviously much larger than the British diaspora, but on the other hand, India and China don't have five or six million foreign-born people living in those countries – well, they probably do, but not in relative terms. So, I think Britain, for all sorts of historical and contemporary reasons, has a unique set of challenges, but also opportunities. The second aspect I want to draw out is the role of the commonwealth. As the head of the oldest and largest commonwealth NGO, I'm delighted with the newfound affection that we have towards the commonwealth from the current government. I think longstanding observers of the commonwealth have noted that for many decades Britain has underinvested in this particularly important, and again, unique institution.

However, I don't sleep all that easily at night because I do worry that when Mr Hague starts to look more closely at what the commonwealth is in 2010, that he may be disappointed; that this is an institution that was very important in its day, that was unique and relatively important on the world stage in the 70s and 80s; it was the vanguard of international issues, like the fight against apartheid, or fighting the cause of small island states, but that the profile of the commonwealth has slipped, the resources of the commonwealth institutions have fallen away, there are about 300 metres away in the Secretariat, all of something like 250 people in total who are supposed to administer the intergovernmental commonwealth. The resources that they have to manage the commonwealth, if you will, are tiny by international standards, less than 1% of DFID's development bilateral budget, and those resources have fallen by about a quarter in real terms over the last 20 years. And also, there are some challenges, because no matter what Mr Haig may want to do with the commonwealth, there is a fundamental contradiction that Britain can't be seen to be driving a commonwealth renewal, because it will be accused of neo-imperialism.

So there is some intellectual conundrum that I think faces every British Foreign Secretary; you can't own the commonwealth, nor should you disown the commonwealth, and striking that balance is a difficult one. But I do think, again, there are some really important opportunities here. This is a voluntary association of 54 countries now, that do share something in common, whether

it's the language, the history, similar institutions; and I think this is exactly the moment where Britain might want to exploit the advantages that arise from being a founding and important member of this unrivalled network. I just think the challenge though, is to come up with something that's very new; that to reinvent the commonwealth as a 21st century network, a soft power network, a values based organisation or association that's about a different set of objectives than what Britain might want out of NATO or the UN, indeed. And there are some challenges there, I think, but again, the opportunity to do foreign policy in a slightly different way through this unique vehicle of the commonwealth.

Matthew d'Ancona

Thank you very much Danny. Christopher Hill.

Christopher Hill

Thanks very much. My take on this, in the short time available, is to try and provide an analytical framework of the relationship between domestic change and foreign policy, which I take to be one of the critical factors in determining international outcomes. Inevitably in this conference, we focus mostly on the international environment; security and defence and so on; but the domestic factor, given that we're looking at a single nation State – our nation State, is critical in determining what kind of country we want doing what we be. Now, if we look in macro historical terms, you can see that the processes of domestic change make a huge difference over a long period of time. Just think about the franchise, the acquisition of the franchise, the coming of the age of the masses, made a big difference over the long term to British foreign policy. Equally, in the future, if Scotland were to get its independence, it would rather have some significance for the foreign policy of what's left, indeed, the foreign policy of Scotland.

More recently, and probably more apropos for this session, the arrival of what some theorists call ethno-cultural diversity, and the links to protests over the Iraq war and of course, the seven-seven event, have brought the question very much to the fore, of the relationship between the nature of modern British society and its particularity, and our foreign policy choices. And we have to ask

the question; does UK foreign policy now operate under new terms of domestic reference, as well as the new terms of international reference we've been talking about. Now, how can we look at this problem? There are four obvious perspectives to start with. First of all, there's the perspective which says, don't worry, governments can ride roughshod over domestic change, broadly speaking. In that camp you could find realists, you could find elitists, your neo-Marxist structuralists of various kinds. We can see this through. Stuff happens, but it doesn't make a difference in the long run.

Secondly, we have the liberals, a pretty broad church, inevitably, who would say, immigration is a constant historical factor in any country, particularly in Britain, as we heard from Danny; and we've always absorbed new immigrant communities without much foreign policy disruption; look at the arrival of the Huguenots, exiles after 1848, Nazi Germany, indeed, in my own part of London, Turkish and Greek Cypriots live perfectly happily together, and although it's slightly complicated our foreign policy at various times at the edges, it hasn't made a huge difference; we've managed to balance that out all right. So, by and large, immigrants want to keep their heads down on foreign policy issues anyway, and not draw the notice to themselves, so we can manage it.

The third is a more modern perspective, if you like; it's global civil society, globalisation; we're in big trouble because the State is essentially broken open by trans-national developments. Governments can't control what's going on; public opinion, which we tend to unify and reify, is actually a conjury of different diasporas and groups and so on, and it operates, not through the funnel model of, our government's representing us to other governments in the world, but directly, in a kind of kaleidoscopic trans-national coalition, in which the State is simply one piece of political apparatus among many.

The fourth model, which I tend to favour myself, is that States are still critical sites for political action in foreign policy; in international relations foreign policy matters a great deal; but as we heard yesterday, governments can't take anything for granted; they have to earn the support of their citizens, indeed, their very basic loyalty, as we saw on seven-seven. They certainly can't take for granted what they might done in previous generations; consensus, bi-partisanship, the operating assumptions of national interest view of foreign policy. So, this is particularly true in multicultural societies, of which Britain is a leading example. So, under this view, opinion is much more fragmented, it's

much more internationalised, it's much more aware of what's going on in the world, it's much more active – it's partly, it takes something from the model three of global civil society. And this leads governments to be rather desperate to try and recruit groups, or representatives of groups, into their operating framework. I would call it foreign policy corporatism of a kind that DFID has quite successfully engaged in, but it doesn't necessarily work, as we saw, say, with the Muslim Council of Britain. You get divisions between the leadership of groups who are representing the different forms of multicultural society and the foot soldiers, or the people out there in the cities who don't necessarily feel they're being represented by group leadership.

Now, given all that, obviously 2005 was the nadir for the British government, for British society. Members of our own society attacked their fellow citizens for a mix of reasons, but I think it's clear now that foreign policy was a crucial catalyst in all this. It is possible that this crisis will prove exceptional, that it will prove a passing moment, and that the forces of socialisation, simulation, national unity as it were, will reassert themselves over time. But even if we don't fall into the abyss of home-grown terrorism again, and we still might, and I doubt that our security services are taking anything for granted, we still find ourselves with a new and complex situation to handle, for four reasons. Very briefly, I won't go on too long, Chairman. First of all, elites in general are not so dominant as they were in the Cold War or [unclear] before that, although we hear it still; this is a terrific conference, a wide range of people represented here; but I would still say that, in a sense, it's a rather London centred conference; we represent the London chattering classes. And actually, even London has its diversity. I live quite close to the Finsbury Park mosque, and there were quite many years when the Finsbury Park mosque did not impinge on the consciousness of Chatham House, even on the security services, as we now know. And we've got to try and recognise that there is a lot more going on in any society, but particularly the diversity of Britain, than sometimes appears through reading even Polly's columns in the newspapers. The second reason why things are changeable complex is that the immigrant community is now immigrant communities and are now far more visible, and far larger. Danny's point is an extremely good one about the swap that's taken place, but there's no getting away from the fact that British Society has changed. You can argue about whether it's for the good, for the bad, or whatever, but it's changed. The cities are very different; these 40 communities he talked about, 100 different languages taught or spoken in London schools, and this inevitably leads to

some problems of torn identities. I think particularly; and I'm not an expert on the sociology of all of this; but clearly, there have been problems for some second generation immigrants that have not felt themselves either to be fully British or part of their own traditional community, and that has not been completely irrelevant for the emergence of home-grown radicalism.

So, this leads to, thirdly, to changed notions of Britishness, which we're to some extent, talking about now, and in past session here we've talked about the national interest. Now, anybody that's studied international relations knows that this is an essentially contested notion. It's a very difficult notion in operation [unclear], even more now in this domestic context, I would say; effectively there is not a self evident national interest. There are various competing group interests, which is rather difficult to aggregate in a straightforward way, not one nation, not one interest – although one could do an analytical job about saying there are certain minimum things to do with security and prosperity.

And lastly, we of course have the internet, the information world society which has led to a global information anarchy, where people have access to things very quickly; they can inform themselves, or think they're informing themselves. Their own international relations become more direct, as I indicated earlier; there's been a kind of democratisation of the process at a very superficial level at least. And, members of different ethnic or cultural communities don't feel any longer they have to keep their heads down, in the way that they would have done, say, with the arrival of the Caribbean generation in the 1950s. They're directly in touch with their friends in Peshawar, or Bali or Lebanon or wherever it might be. And I would say this, one shouldn't just actually focus, if one is talking about this, on immigrant communities, ethnic cultural communities; there is the issue of the underclass as well.

I was struck yesterday, browsing in the Italian newspaper as I have a habit in doing, because I'm interested in Italy, to see the story on Raoul Moat in Britain, and how shocked they were that 18,000 people had already signed up to the Facebook site for Raoul Moat – not all of them in favour of him, of course, but there were huge arguments going on. I looked at it myself and it's a pretty disturbing business. So, this is the underclass, which probably doesn't have much of a view on foreign policy; certainly doesn't have a very sophisticated view; that nonetheless might get involved in various kinds of anti-social activities which could rebound politically in the long run. So, to sum up: This

means, I think, contrary to a throwaway remark of Robin Niblett's yesterday, that public opinion is not indifferent to foreign policy; the huge demonstration of February 2003, the demonstration of the Tamils in Parliament Square, the strong movement of Euro scepticism in this country – which I don't think is just manipulated by the Daily Mail or the Daily Express; the fact that on the other side of it, many, many hundreds of thousands of people in this country have direct debits to give money to Oxfam or whatever it might be – all this shows that there is a large constituency of this country, highly divided, different opinions, but integrated with international relations in some form or another.

This means, secondly, that the UK government needs to accept that we already have, to some extent, because of this new diverse and interested society, a multi-level, multi-actor foreign policy, a set of foreign policies rather than one foreign policy. Some are official; even the government's divided, it seems, between Fox and Hague on defence review and all the rest of it. Some, what I would call para-official; you've got the foreign policies of Oxfam or of Sandline that gets involved with the government sometime; and some purely private – the boys that travel to Afghan training camps, or Pakistani training camps. Actually, they're just like the people who went off to fight in the Spanish Civil War, in some ways, in the 1930s; people have always acted directly, but it's now much more possible and many more people are doing it.

And I don't think, with all due justice to YouGov, which I think the poll is extremely interesting and I'm very, myself, reliant on opinion polls for lots of things, but I think when we use opinion polls, we're reifying public opinion; we're saying, this percentage thinks that, and it automatically assumes that it's a kind of, homogeneity across the ball park, but it's much more complex than that, and good, good polls, of course, try to bring out the diversity.

So lastly, of course, the State and foreign policy, far from being on the way out; indeed, to some extent, 9-11 has strengthened the position of governments and the importance of foreign policy in this country; but they are certainly now facing a much more complex and differentiated domestic environment, and therefore a much more unpredictable one, which is just as important as the complex international environment.

Matthew d'Ancona

Thank you. Michael Hastings, please.

Michael Hastings

Well, now that Robin has stepped out of the room I can say one or two things about the document. I've been part of the overview group that's been responsible for the document, but it only just occurred to me when I was thinking about this this morning, that one word is only mentioned in one place in the document, and it's a footnote; and if you turn to the second page, and I'm sure you've all read it if you were here yesterday, you'll see the only reference to Great Britain is the footnote at the bottom of page two, which is a reference to an article in Newsweek, which basically is titled, Forget the Great in Britain; and then goes on to talk about a further article of Will Hutton's and saying, Britain is no longer a world power, so let's be a better, fairer nation. And, as I was thinking about this, the thing that was bugging me was that I think the loss of the greatness dimension is something in a lot of common conversations amongst the elite southern glitterati, people feel a bit embarrassed about. As in, not the loss of it, but we don't want to assert it. We refer to ourselves as the UK pretty consistently, or, Britain.

But Great Britain has disappeared altogether. What was Great Britain associated with? Well, there's lots of dimensions to the history I don't want to necessarily explore, we haven't got the time to go into it; but one dimension I would say, as a semi-commonwealth individual myself, of Indian Caribbean parentage; Indian on my father's side, Caribbean on my mother's side, and having lived in the Caribbean, is growing up for many, many years with the music in my ears of my parents constantly talking about the greatness of the mother country. And what was it they liked about Great Britain? And the things they liked about Great Britain were, of course, the institutions left behind that worked well – parliament, the law, religion and the church, culture and sport, things that have been taken up by countries around the world, and very often, particularly in the case of sport, done far better. But, other things that Britain very much left behind; freedom, inclusion, integrity, justice, fairness, tolerance; these virtues and values; things that are actually very uncomfortable to discuss in common society, but interestingly, and I say this wearing my business hat with KPMG, you have a conversation in business now around themes that are values or virtues, they are the common parlance of the everyday conversation of leading CEOs. And I can say that; one of my colleagues with my BT hat is sitting here; I sit on one of the BT boards; I sit on the Vodafone Group Foundation – I'm a senior person in the KPMG global world; business talks

about virtue, values, ethics, all the time. But that's not a conversation to be had easily in the elite corners of intelligent discussion. We've not heard it mentioned realistically in the course of the last day and a half so far, and it's certainly not intrinsic to our document, and I wish it would, in future iterations, get us there.

I think it's very important to put the great back into Britain. Great UK, whatever – but it's really about putting the spine back into what I think has become a sparkleless nation. Now, I can genuinely say that because travelling two thirds of the year as I do, and there isn't a corner of the world that I haven't been to on behalf of our business, I don't get any longer, the poll impression that Britain really matters, that our voice it to be heard, other than my many 12 years when I was with the BBC, going to a little part of Northern Nigeria, and listening as I did, with thousands of people, to the Hausa Service in a Nigerian small city on the border of Niger. And when it came on in the evening, and everybody gathered, [sound breaks] phenomenal [sound breaks] and the British Council.

And frankly, as you've mentioned, Christopher, many of our global NGOs, like Oxfam and like Save the Children, who have huge resonance on the world stage, and actually, many of our businesses, ignoring the one that's also in the square at the moment which is sorting our problems of a different nature; but I would still say, of highly significant respect and regard; putting the virtue and value of the things that are our strength, back into the conversation about the role of Britain in the future. I'm conscious of my friend here from YouGov, but I went along to a MORI event in December, just before Christmas, where Terry Leahy was the main speaker alongside Richard Lambert, and it was a review of what's happened in the last two years of the global financial crisis; both of whom gave a moderately optimistic, but quite business orientated realistic view of what's happening in Britain's place in global economy. And it was then followed by Ben Page from MORI doing a presentation of a survey conducted in 2009, about how the British people feel about their country. And the one statistic that I have not been able to forget was the survey page which asked the question, what has been the biggest conversation amongst the ordinary people of Britain, during the course of 2009. And we think it might have been unemployment, we think it might have been debt, we think it might have been recession, we think it might have been Iraq; no, it was celebrities. It was all about who is in the magazines; who is up and who is down, in all sorts of ways that you could describe; but the celebrity lifestyles have become the dominant

ones. Have we as a society become known better around the world for Big Brother and Shameless, than we have become known for the characteristics of our great writing, or, not just relying on history, the characteristics of our contemporary generosity.

It worried me intensely, going through the survey the YouGov has given us, that we have this mismatch between the opinions of the elite and the opinions of the mass, when it comes to, for example, looking at DFID and international development assistance. We have 29% of people in the great mass of the population essentially saying that our role in international development should be about Britain's self interest; 54% saying, money is wasted. In other words, a real view that actually we're spending on things that is not producing anything useful and it's not actually helping us. Whereas, I may naively say that I think that our view, our role in intervention, development intervention in the world, should not be about how it helps us, but how it ensures that the things that we once gave to the world, tolerance, fairness, freedom, integrity, values; that those things become part of the civil society reality of other countries. That those freedoms become as equally embedded, so we are known for our altruism and our generosity.

Fascinating too, from the YouGov survey, that looking at the pages which asked the questions about which countries do people in Britain really rate; and when you look at the rated countries at the top, they are New Zealand, Australia, Canada – very high levels; and then you get into Switzerland, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Denmark etc. Now, none of those countries have got armies trampling the world, nor have they got phenomenal foreign affairs apparatus. They're not having to have deeply uncomfortable defence reviews, nor are they all worrying absolutely about their place in the world – but they are noted for their character. They are very often noted – particularly the Scandinavian countries, for their exceptional generosity; for their commitments on diversity and inclusion, for their pursuit of peace, for their prominence with ideas, which are about enabling other countries to have strong civil society.

And I hope, and we can come on to this in the conversation later, that as we think about reshaping Britain for the future, we'll be happy to put the great back into the spine – not because of its imperialism and all of that, but because of its character and the wonder of seeing a country transformed from being a power into a partner.

Matthew d'Ancona

Thank you. Anthony Wells.

Anthony Wells

Thank you Matthew. Not surprisingly, I wanted to start by talking about our polling and the British public opinion. The overview of that, I'm sure you've all seen, is that the British public have a quite traditionalist, more conservative view of foreign policy; what I'd probably call unsophisticated. They look to British foreign policy to be defending our role as a great power that's [unclear] into purely acting in Britain's national interests rather than ethically; looking towards hard power of armies and the threat from international terrorism; and they consistently lowly rate soft power and things like international development. Particularly in other polling we do, when we ask about the economic situation and what should be cut to save, to reduce the deficit; international development always comes up at the top there, so it's just seen as giving money to foreign people that doesn't benefit Britain.

And in terms of countries, as Lord Hastings said, they're very positive towards the old commonwealth countries and towards the commonwealth, probably primarily because it's made up of people like Canada and Australia and New Zealand. And there's a very anti-EU gut feeling; asked what they think of the EU, it's intrinsically negative, but where we asked what they think about working with the European Union, then they become far more positive. So it is that very driven of, I don't mind working together with the EU on immigration or climate change; but just ask about, mention EU, and they think, bent bananas and straight cucumbers and so on; so there you get that gut anti-EU reaction. In terms of how much that actually constrains and influences the government's foreign policy, and so it's a different question, because while people share all these views in the poll, it's because we've gone out and prodded them and asked them, and said, what do you think about foreign policy. In practice, people don't think about that; they think about celebrity and who was on Big Brother, and so on. International relations and foreign policy are very low salient issues.

Even Europe, which can be fired up by the tabloid media and so on to be very important, it was cited as a very important issue by the public in polls in the

early 90s; now, it tends to be about two or three percent of people who say that Europe is an important issue for the country. Unless they're fired up, it's not important; it's not salient. People care about the economy and health and schools and hospitals. The exceptions to those rules are obviously big ticket wars; if there's British troops out there, or if British troops are coming back in body bags, that matters, that's a care, and that matters a great deal. Also, as Christopher Hill mentioned, very small groups of fragmented opinion do matter when it gets to the point where British citizens actually start killing and attacking other British citizens; then, even though it's a very small amount of people, and the vast majority of people are uninterested or don't mind so much, if you suddenly have violence on the streets, that matters; that's a big constraint.

The third big exception would be immigration. As Danny said right at the start, there's an increasingly blurred line between what's a domestic issue and what's a foreign policy issue. Immigration is clearly a hugely salient issue; it's one of the ones that people most commonly cited as a reason for how they voted at the general election, and so clearly that's a constraint upon the government's foreign policy actions. More important influential is the opinions of the elite, the commentariats [?], the journalists and the professors and so on, and as you've seen from the polling, there are widely contrasting views between the general public and the elite. In terms of, yes, the elites tend to be more pro EU; they tend to have a much greater appreciation of the value of soft power. In one of the questions the general public were asked, which was the most effective tool of Britain's foreign policy influence, and they saw traditional troops and tanks and aeroplanes; the influentials we asked far and away saw the BBC as the greatest projector of our power and influence across the globe. In some other areas though, such as Afghanistan and Trident, the views of the massed ranks of the public aren't much different from the views of the elites, so shouldn't look at it as automatically some great disconnect.

Christopher Hill mentioned Robin Niblett's comment that public opinion isn't different to foreign affairs; I'd say for most of the people, most of the time, that's true; narrowly different to it, but that shouldn't blind us to the important exceptions when public opinion is a constraint, particularly in terms of anti-war feeling, in terms of immigration, and in terms of minority groups who can suddenly have a big impact if their disconnect gets extreme enough. And equally, the impact of the elite carries great weight on the government,

because they move in those circles and are constantly exposed to those influences.

Matthew d'Ancona

Thank you very much. And Polly.

Polly Toynbee

I'm not sure where I think I fall...about halfway between the elite and the common folks when it comes to my views on this. I'm very much hoping that we are about to enter a new and more thoughtful era, with a measure of humility. When we look at the hubris of the recent era, if you start with the extraordinary hubris of Robin Cook's pronouncements about ethical foreign policy and spreading all those virtues which you believe are so British, and I'm rather more dubious about as being somehow exclusively ours.

I think they're a list of values that almost every country would say that they owned and possessed themselves; justice, fairness, tolerance, integrity, virtues and values. I think every country in the world probably presumes that it stands for those things. I think if you ask other people in the world whether they think Britain does, you'd get a fairly dusty answer. I think that we began the Labour era with that great Robin Cook grandstanding, and then of course it moved on to a very different kind of grandstanding of Tony Blair arm in arm with George W Bush, leading us into two wars, both of which now, alas, look very catastrophic. I was a strong supporter of the Afghan war, and I think it might just perhaps, though I'm beginning to wonder if I was wrong, [unclear] if we hadn't gone to Iraq.

But anyway, in a sense they've both blurred into one mistake as where we are now, and it's one of those great ifs about how Afghanistan might have looked. But Labour was tremendously good at stamping around talking about us being world class everything, and leading the world in just about anything you care to mention, including climate change, in which we happen to be miles behind everybody else – but never mind, we led the world in the rhetoric, anyway. I hope that we now start to aim rather low, as perhaps the people do too, and that we do a lot less strutting; and we worry a good deal less about punching

above our weight. I never quite could understand why punching above your weight was such a very good thing. Afghanistan drags on, longer than the Vietnam war, which seems astonishing, and I do think that it is, I hope, a profound lesson about asymmetric wars and the impossibility of winning them when the people who will live there forever can bide their time and look very hard in who to put their trust for security. Is it those who are going home as soon as they possibly can, or those warlords who are going to be there forever; and I think an inordinate amount of extraordinary optimism and delusion was put into the descriptions of how Afghanistan and Iraq would be due to our interventions.

I think we are very good at soft power, and perhaps that's what punching above our weight means, though I think it's often meant some other things as well that I'm less in favour of. You're quite right when you talk about the brilliance of the world service in the British Council; we are very good at foreign relations in terms of we are good at the G20; we were, insofar as anybody was good, we were the ones who pulled something out of Copenhagen. We're very good technocratically at those things, but sometimes we delude ourselves that those skills somehow suggest some much greater power that we still have. I think we delude ourselves about how Britishness is seen in most of the world, and we could learn a good few lessons by all the Hollywood movies that we see, in which we are always the villains.

And I think there is quite a lot of dissonance between your view about how we think we are in the world, and the world's view of what they actually think of us, and we should listen a little bit more, and with a little bit more humility. And I think after Iraq and Iran, not only the old baggage of the colonial past and all of that, and all of this bragging that we go in for, but also bungling and ineptitude, and perhaps now with having to withdraw from Sangin and hand over to the Americans, should be a moment for reflection too about the extraordinary bragging of the brilliance of our armed forces being so superior to those Americans who really weren't much good, but we were a damn sight better. And it starts the time to think about that again. I think that most important of all though, about our standing in the world, is that we are about to be taken over economically by the BRICs and up and coming economies, and I don't think it's begun to sink in with us quite what that means to fall rather rapidly down the world ranking, which is just about to happen.

I don't think that the economic cataclysm of what's happened at home has begun to sink in in terms of our view of ourselves, our capability, and our position in the world. To talk about 25% cuts in public spending for just about everything is unheard of, unthinkable. The IFS said it's never been done, and they don't think it can be done; and now the government is moving on to talk about 40% cuts, which is really undoable, and it changes the nature of society hugely and very fast, in terms of what people can expect from the State. And, a State withdrawing, a great tide pulling back in that way, hasn't happened quite in that way in a western country. If that's what's really going to happen, the culture shock in this country is going to be profound. People are very happy now saying, oh, we'll just get the deficit down, most important thing; but they've not absorbed what these cuts are going to mean by, say, 18 months time from now, and that has a huge impact on how we see ourselves and what we think we should be doing in the world. If we have a tidal wave of youth unemployment, many of them unlikely ever to find jobs; if things do pick up a bit over many years; they're expecting unemployment to be a long term problem; it'll be those ones will be the ones who are beached.

So, conversations about whether we can afford Trident and whether Trident is a price worth buying for buying our UN seat; this just is going to seem utterly arcane, and of course, our UN seat, we should be using it as our way back in, in a way, to Europe. We should offer it and say this should be a European seat; we now do have a European foreign minister of sorts. I didn't mean that personally about her, I meant about the role; I definitely didn't; I'm not being rude about her, I think she's as good as you can be with a very difficult job. We have an economy in which nobody knows how we're going to live. We've been living on thin air; we've been living on repeated property bubbles. Well, we may be able to get through one more before we finally, utterly crash; everyone is longing for that to start up again; the city – well, that's maybe a bubble we can get going again; but people have seen through it, and they know that we're not living on anything very much. Can we find some other way of earning our living; well, perhaps, but it's going to be very difficult. I think the best thing we can do with some humility is to work our way back to being good, for the first time, back to being good Europeans, working with our trading partners as closely as we can, and again, not assuming that we should be strutting about and telling everybody else what to do; Germans and French seem to be doing rather better than us. And I'll leave it on that depressing note.

Matthew d'Ancona

Thank you; thank you all very much indeed; in fact, fascinating, each and every one. I just want to ask a few very brief questions, and then I'm very keen to get our delegates involved. But Danny, I just wanted to start with you; you presented this very interesting idea of a new 21st century idea of the commonwealth, but as Polly's been saying, in a sense we're about to embark upon what could be a total reinvention, a recasting of the British State, what the British State is, involving potentially 33 to 40% cuts in some departments. Now, some people will think that's a necessary part of deficit reduction, some people think it's terrible, but what is certainly true is that what will emerge at the end will be dramatically different. At the same time, we have retreated from Iraq and we are clearly going to be retreating from Afghanistan ere long; how realistic, in that context, is it to expect the public to expect politicians to focus on and devote time and resources to the commonwealth?

Danny Sriskandarajah

Well, I think we have a commitment from the government which is that they will focus on the commonwealth, and I think that there is an opportunity here because the commonwealth, for wrong and right reasons, isn't a heavily resourced organisation. It's not where Ockham's Razor is going to fall particularly and it's a few tens of millions here and there in terms of the fiscal commitment. However, I do think there's an opportunity to devise a new way of administering a multilateral network.

Matthew d'Ancona

My question is psychological, really, as much as fiscal. If Britain is becoming, in a sense, in terms of its state craft smaller, if it is tending to withdraw, not just from the world, but from other; literally from the doorstep; how do you then sell a vision of the world, whatever that might be, whether it's a European vision, a commonwealth vision?

Danny Sriskandarajah

I think on the commonwealth, the intellectual challenge is how do we convince a British Foreign Secretary to come up with what might be called a post-post-colonial vision. The commonwealth made sense for the last 61 years as a relatively neat post-colonial trick. It was the anaesthetic given to Britain to ease the pain of the de-colonisation. It was a way of retaining those links between countries that were part of the empire, and it had some huge achievements in its time in the last 60 years. I think the intellectual challenge, in the 21st century, is how do you build on those networks. The question is not whose values are these. The ambition is, these are values that we share; there is a commitment, at least in the commonwealth, to go beyond the commitments made in other international forums on good governance, on democracy; if these are values that we believe and if this is a narrative that we're committed to, then the commonwealth is the perfect vehicle to do that. But I think we'll need to probably move the focus of the commonwealth away from Marlborough House, the international secretariat of the commonwealth, and make the commonwealth a network of networks, then Britain becomes a hub of campaigns that bring together civil society, government, of course, but other actors. Or maybe it's a philosophy of the commonwealth is the big society writ large; maybe there's...

Matthew d'Ancona

It doesn't take long, does it?

Polly Toynbee

A wonderful thing about the big society, it can be anything you want it to be.

Danny Sriskandarajah

Well, a bigger commonwealth, like Shakespeare and the Bible.

Matthew d'Ancona

Christopher, can I ask you a question, which was, you said something very pointed about seven-seven, which was that it was undoubtedly, in your view, linked to foreign policy. Now, without going into the rights and wrongs of that statement, do you more generally feel that foreign policy makers have now a responsibility, given the complexion and complexity of British society, to think about social cohesion here domestically when they are casting foreign policy?

Christopher Hill

Yes, broadly; but I think that an intelligent foreign policy maker has always been aware that they need not to go too far beyond what their domestic base will support; that was why Neville Chamberlain went to Munich and did what he did; he didn't want to create that [overtalking].

Matthew d'Ancona

He didn't do it because someone would get on a bus and blow themselves up, did he?

Christopher Hill

No, absolutely not, and the corollary of your implication, in my view, is that we certainly can't conduct our foreign policy in a way which would give an effective veto to some group which would threaten to blow us up if we didn't, if we pursued a particular foreign policy. But more intelligently, I think we have to make sure that we have engaged as many of the different diverse currents of thinking about international relations in our society as possible, as we can, when we are making foreign policy.

Now, clearly, when a crisis comes up, and 9-11 was a classic example, we went into Afghanistan; I supported intervention in Afghanistan; I didn't necessarily, when I was doing that, think that I was buying into a nine year war and an occupation and nation building and the whole business, and probably decision makers didn't either. Now, there will be some people who will never be satisfied whatever you do, and will unfortunately occasionally take things into

their own hands in the modern world, given access to information and to bomb making materials and so on. We've seen this with the IRA; it's not just a modern phenomenon; it goes back to the 19th century, of course, and beyond. So, those people simply have to be dealt with firmly by the law; also fairly, by the way. I don't think Guantanamo, rendition, and emergency powers for ever and a day is the way actually, to drain the swamp. I think it actually increases the problems in the swamp.

But there will be large numbers of people who would not automatically think of taking up arms against their own citizens; the vast majority; 99.9%; but they may still be highly troubled by their foreign policy, and if you don't have their support, even if they're not going to take up arms, then you have a problem in the long run, and I think the reason, one of the reasons why Labour got itself into such difficulties was because it did ignore the vast groundswell of opposition to the Iraq war. It rode roughshod over an extraordinary, the largest political demonstration in British political history. Now, even a big demonstration like that can't be a veto on a properly thought through foreign policy, but by heaven, it should be taken very seriously.

Matthew d'Ancona

Thank you. Lord Hastings, I just wanted to, you made a fascinating point about the greatness and the extent to which that had been lost; but where can one locate that greatness in a way that people understand; of course, particularly when Gordon was Prime Minister, there was a lot of work done on values; but I think as Polly said, you cannot simply claim values for one country – that will get you nowhere. Where do you think people see that greatness as lying now; if we were having this conversation 150 years ago, they would have said, the empire, the monarchy, perhaps the church – I don't know; all sorts of institutions probably. But now, the list might well be different; it might be the NHS, the BBC, who knows; how do you persuade people that that greatness is still there, but that it is evolving?

Michael Hastings

Well, I think there's a need to combine the things that we're clearly very good at – and the NHS is a good example of things that we can teach and support

the rest of the world in their active development of; and it was interesting to be in the US a lot of times during the Obama health crisis of various kinds; and when you have serious conversations with serious people in business and journalism and in the opinion former classes, you can talk properly about the NHS, they change their minds. But a lot of the rhetoric was it was just socialism, which America didn't want. And it was a misunderstanding of what the NHS represented as a coherent identity point for a nation, about how to support its people, how to ensure common provision that was fair and it was open and it was dignified.

I think if you build on that principle, and of course, you take the BBC, and I'm not just the BBC as the world service, and the world service trust and the BBC online, and BBC domestic and everything else, and then you add in a whole series of other organisations, you do genuinely get to a place where there are things you can start to feel very proud of, and you can have good conversation internationally where there is a learning point. This is what I mean by partnership; this growing up away from the power mentality, which clearly is what so drastically went wrong with the Iraq and Afghanistan mentality, into the partner mentality.

Now, just sticking on the Iraq point, if anybody is still interested in the Iraq Inquiry, which by the way is still going on; most people have forgotten about it; but this Friday morning, to our credit as KPMG International, our chief executive is doing a two hour evidence session to the Iraq Inquiry. Why is KPMG doing it; well, not about KPMG, but because for the last 18 months of his tenureship as Global Chief Executive, he was Chairman of the Basra Development Commission, in a voluntary capacity as a business leader, giving himself time after time, month after month, to leverage enormous investment, \$14 billion of investment, to get Basra back on its feet, to recreate jobs, to get GE reinvested in its factories, to restore a sense of economic opportunity for the multitude of thousands of young disaffected Basran Iraqis, in order that Basra should be a healthy place for the future. That is about using partnership, leverage, leadership, engagement, sacrifice, volunteerism; these are distinctive things that have been part of the British character, and no, they're no longer unique to the UK, and I was never claiming that; what I am saying is, when Britain had the place of setting the tone of how the world was, these were the things that we often set in the forefront of our definition, alongside other aspects of institutions.

And I think it is about grabbing hold then, of things that we can be very proud of, making our story and our song about those things; not being cynical about the big society; I spent an hour with Mr Big Society, Nat Wei, yesterday afternoon, getting definition out of him as to what this thing is going to look like, and I damn well hope we all grab it; not because it's a piece of conservative lib-demery [?], but because we need it; we actually need an effective future society that doesn't have the unpleasant Raoul Moat stories littered across our newspapers for the rest of the world to scoff at us. We want a society where we feel we all work together, and not just us with Europe, which of course we need to do, but us as a partner organisation. Just to conclude, you're talking about with the commonwealth, what countries can exert influence; well, in terms of the list of countries listed here, just to pick two of them, Norway and Switzerland managed to do it brilliantly well without armies. And how do they do that? Because they lead with ideas, they lead with values, they lead with engagement and they lead with partnership; and that's what I hope we will choose to do, which is actually a humble position, as Polly pointed out, because it's not about power and control; it is about conversation and openness.

Matthew d'Ancona

Anthony, your figures were clearly bristling with information on the staff; is there a way of persuading the domestic public – let alone the wider world, that Britain has more to sell to the world than arms and Kylie and Cheryl Cole? It is interesting...

Polly Toynbee

She's not one of ours.

Matthew d'Ancona

Well, we think of her as one of ours, she's kind of indigenous. We laugh at the role of exported celebrity, but actually, it clearly is taken very seriously by the public; so is there a way of taking it beyond that to what you rightly call the realm of ideas?

Anthony Wells

I don't think it's an extreme split [?] that they only recognised the army; they certainly think hard power, they value that more; but they do value the BBC; it's more our international development and things like that, that the public don't value at all. So, culture, fine; we do appreciate that; in terms of international development and that, yes, soft, direct foreign policy, soft power, that people don't really appreciate. In terms of convincing people that hard power isn't so important, I think that will be difficult because it is still tied up with some of the British public probably aren't ready for a post-post-colonialism yet – that is still tied up with our remaining power in the world, it is, we've still got an army and our British soldiers are still the best in the world; and it will be, it is attacking people's self-worth in some way by saying that the British army and this sort of thing isn't so important anymore and there should be a different way forward. So, it would be a difficult fight to do, and whether the hard cutbacks in public spending may be an opportunity to do it; and there's certainly things like Trident, there is public appetite for a cheaper version there, and if that can be tied up with, we need to evaluate our role in the world and wherever you need to have a great [unclear] missiles and submarines, it may be an opportunity for the government to try and persuade people that may be a different way forward.

Matthew d'Ancona

Just one final question before we go to the floor; 99, Blair gives this great, much-quoted speech in Chicago defending the doctrine of liberal interventionism. Was that a great cataclysmic error; was that a moment where the [unclear] still paying, or is there still in that idea, something that can be retrieved to everyone's benefit?

Polly Toynbee

I thought it was wonderful at the time, and I now think I was totally wrong. I thought it was hugely inspiring, but the trouble was, Blair was so good at that, at making you feel that almost anything could be done with the power of words, that things were doable by wishing them, by speaking them; that words were themselves magic that would transform themselves into effective delivery. And

I think what we've learnt about both these wars is some very hard truths about how incredibly difficult interventionism is. It doesn't mean never; but could we have been certain that Sierra Leone would have been short, sharp and effective? Or, might we still find ourselves there nine years later and unable to get out? It's very difficult to know in advance whether something is going to be the smart bomb down the chimney and that's it, fixed – whatever it is. I just think we have to; and you can't say never; but be extraordinarily circumspect, have a huge amount of international support for whatever it is you're going to do; make sure you've got the backup from lots of other countries and you're not stuck out there on your own; hope for the best and play it by ear. I think you can't have very many isms, and what I was saying about humility really, is extreme pragmatism in all foreign policy from now on, for this country anyway.

Matthew d'Ancona

Great; would anyone like to; yes, sir? I'm going to take a couple of questions at a time, so gentleman here, thank you.

Peter Marshall

My name is Peter Marshall. The most succinct observation of what others abroad think about the British, is the proposition that the British always land on their own feet, or somebody else's. But I'll put the matter, perhaps, in a more objective way. I think there's been a fascinating series of presentations, and the questions that you've drawn out of your colleagues, gentlemen, I think also helped us a great deal. The question, surely, is this: If you look at the points on the agenda, how far are they things which are caught rather than taught? If there is something about us which is distinctive, is it really something that's internal and which we express in ourselves and in our lives, rather than being something we should be able to project in a more positive way. The great strength of the BBC and the British Council, for example, is that they are what they are. They came across abroad so effectively as being objective. The commonwealth, and this is where I very much agree with what Danny is saying, is the same sort of thing; it's got a merit of its own, rather than its origin in Great Britain.

Matthew d'Ancona

Okay, thank you very much. I'm going to take two more, if we just give him a microphone.

Ashish Bhatt

Matt, thanks. I just want to come back to this issue that I don't think anyone has tested the assumptions further enough on, that Britain has changed, is changing, and will continue to change; the nature of that change is inherently unpredictable; that unpredictability about that change drives insecurity, and at times of economic prosperity it's all well and good and all too easy to talk about inclusivity and big society and things, but those differences and the difficulties of managing that change and reassuring both domestic audiences and external audiences, become that very much harder as the insecurity bites, and I do think, and Matt and I have discussed this over ten, 12 years now; but the Labour party lost the plot somewhere in there – it did; it retreated into a very narrow shell that abandoned and pandered to the baser instincts. And in that I think Polly is absolutely right; language and tone do matter. I actually take a great deal of exception, as I suspect many people do, as a British citizen, to keep finding myself referred to as an immigrant, and I suspect very many of us second, third generation people do. What happens out in the world has a huge reverberating effect, especially when there are communities in our northeast that are deeply concerned about the impact of [unclear] and Pakistan this, that and the other. Now, we can't have our foreign policy dictated to by what people think of it, but we have to be conscious of the impact of what we're doing; we have to be able to have a slightly more self-confident narrative about expressing what is it [unclear]. To Michael, I won't repeat what Polly said about values, but most of the colonial countries that we're talking about fought against the British to win their freedom, and I think that is where a little bit of the humility comes in, that the anaesthetic effect of the commonwealth about making us feel better about having lost an empire has worn off, and I think Danny's absolutely right; we have to think about that again.

Matthew d'Ancona

And one more; yes, gentleman here at the front; if you can be quite brief?

Keiichi Hayashi

Yes, Keiichi Hayashi from the Japanese Embassy; I just want to make two quick comments. From [unclear] aspect; one is about the commonwealth, where we are now seeking observer status in commonwealth, and we very much welcome that. We are wanting it because we are interested in this networking in Africa and the Caribbean countries, and I think in that sense, the commonwealth is probably changing in a welcome way. And also, to echo what Lord Hastings has said about the greatness, our Prime Minister, [unclear] the current one, was here just before, in the run-up to our general election, to learn about the parliamentary system in the UK, the relationship between the party and the government and the relationship between the government and bureaucracy. And all this happened 120 years after we started this parliamentary system, so we still feel some sort of legitimacy and authority in the British parliamentary system.

Matthew d'Ancona

Thank you. Is that something, just very quickly, because we only have five minutes left, but do you think that's something that we've missed out of our audit, actually, is the impact that the parliamentary system has had around the world and continues to have?

Michael Hastings

Well, very briefly, as a member of the Upper House and as a cross-bencher and to an independent member, not political...

Matthew d'Ancona

It's a bit of a sitter [?] of a question, really.

Michael Hastings

Yes, absolutely; but I would honestly say that the hunger to understand how to do this well; and part of the doing well are the conflicts that exist in our current

parliamentary system. We don't, in many ways, like the old adversarial back and forth of the Commons, but actually, it helps to serve a very, very useful purpose, which is, it keeps; my American friends say; it keeps the leader on the mettle; it's very important. But when it comes to the House of Lords, having a bizarre set of people, who would never put themselves forward for election which is why probably it would never happen, but that bizarre set of people are prepared to give themselves to fight for things that need to be done right. We've got a debate tomorrow morning, two and a half hours, about interventions to stop the growth of the prison system, the growth of the numbers in prison. Hugely important; you just don't get those kind of debates in the Commons, but it's the ability to explore how to make things better with the ordinary person in mind, I think that's a great strength in our parliamentary system, and countries still want it, desperately. The spread of the commonwealth parliamentary association, endlessly selling, sending members of both the Lords and the Commons abroad, because of this desire to learn from what's been great about our system.

Matthew d'Ancona

Polly, didn't [unclear] no good. A number of good points, but one in particular struck me was that for all the talk of inclusivity and multiculturalism, [unclear] empirical multiculturalism rather than the much maligned ideology; actually, there is still a meretricious distinction between the fully British and the notionally immigrant. And until that is sorted, in a way, all the above is very hard to resolve.

Polly Toynbee

I do think it's becoming much more different, depending who you are and what bit of the country you're in and what ethnic group you come from, how people get treated and regarded and it's not comfortable everywhere by any means. I don't think we're too bad at that compared with other countries; I think in some ways, in quite a lot of the communities have really done well, and in certain aspects some young ethnic minority background people are doing an awful lot better than white working class people are doing, in education and other things. But I think that what I really want to come back to is that when we talk,

[unclear] when you were talking about, and what is it about us that's innately great and good and all the rest of it, to keep remembering that we are almost, apart from America, the most unequal, unjust, socially unjust country in the western world. We have seen an explosion of grotesque wealth at the top, and a government that was very well intentioned and tried hard to pull up the people at the bottom a bit, even then, it widened the gap. Inequality in this country is what created the Raoul Moats and all of that anxiety about difference. We know that countries that are most unequal are most unhappy and most socially dysfunctional at every level – even the rich, in unequal countries, are unhappier than the rich in more equal countries. So, the idea that we have somehow this innate wonderful message of tolerance, justice, goodness, to sell to the world, we have an awful lot more to learn from the rest of the, certainly the western world, than we have to offer, I think, as a lesson.

Michael Hastings

[unclear] that is a fact between pessimism and optimism, I suppose, [overtalking].

Matthew d'Ancona

Always, always [overtalking].

Polly Toynbee

It might be facts as opposed to fantasy.

Michael Hastings

[unclear] one thing, and I had a long conversation with comic relief this morning; comic relief is seen as...

Matthew d'Ancona

What, all of them?

Michael Hastings

No, no, the chairman of comic relief. [unclear] is seen as a jewel in the British crown; it begins its tirade into the United States. Americans are saying, what have you got about Britain, you actually love to take time to think about generosity to the rest of the world. I think that's a characteristic that's very positive.

Polly Toynbee

We give less than most other countries in terms of charitable giving; [overtalking] lower the scale.

Michael Hastings

I don't accept that.

Polly Toynbee

It's true.

Matthew d'Ancona

Just before the [overtalking] afterward; I want to give the three other members of the panel a minute each just to make closing remarks; Danny.

Danny Sriskandarajah

I've taken from this panel that there are three landscapes that have changed radically in the last decade or so. One is the demographic landscape of what Britain is, and there are some important implications that we've drawn out. The second, is the fiscal and economic landscape, that no longer can Britain's foreign policy be investment-led; it can't be about giving billions to DFID, or spending billions on Trident. So, we've got to come to terms with that reality. And the point that I tried to make about the commonwealth in the 21st century,

is the geopolitical landscape has changed. 20, 30 years ago, if you were a lead of Fiji or Zambia or whatever, you looked to Britain and the commonwealth as an important forum to do your foreign policy. That reality has changed. The commonwealth is a relatively under resourced association in an increasingly crowded marketplace of international associations. If we're rethinking Britain's role in the world, I think yes, there are challenges about the demographic landscape, the fiscal landscape and the geopolitical landscape, but I think there are also unique opportunities that this country has, to forge, to innovate, to pioneer doing foreign policy, given those realities.

Matthew d'Ancona

Thank you; Anthony, your minute starts now.

Anthony Wells

I think the most important point anyone's made was Polly's about the economic situation really forcing the hand of the government [unclear], it's like Trident and so on. Now, I said at the start, I don't think foreign policy currently constrains the government that much, except on a few extreme examples. But, in terms of really pushing Britain's relations with the world, transforming it and taking a new approach, it would do, because it's part of the way British people see themselves, and it's really stabbing deep into that, but their hand may be forced, in which point that's where the economic situation is also an opportunity for Britain to recast its role in the world.

Matthew d'Ancona

Christopher?

Christopher Hill

Two points on the domestic/ foreign relationship. If we take a medium historical perspective, I think we can see, or historians will see, that we got into economic difficulties in the 60s and early 70s. We pulled in our horns, we got

rid of the empire, we had to do it with [unclear] of Suez [?]. The economy starts to pick up boom again, followed by another age of optimism in international affairs under Blairism. Now, what's happening, we're in deep trouble again economically. One would predict that we would pull in our horns; if we don't, we might find there's a very serious disjunction between what we're trying to do and what our society can support in a macro sense [?]. Second point, about managing unpredictable change, which the gentleman over there quite rightly pointed to as our central preoccupation; historically in Britain, we prided ourselves, I think rightly, on gradualism, on trying to cope with inevitable change, that if you want things to stay the same, everything has to change; since 1689 we've had little social violence; Peterloo excepted. Now we've had a period of social violence associated with foreign policy. With any luck that might subside as a period of great change, part of which has been a wave of immigration in recent times; I entirely agree that people who have been here from the 50s and 60s are part of this society, and things have worked extremely well. When you think of Enoch Powell's rivers of blood speech, society as a whole has done remarkably well not to live up to his doom-saying, but foreign policy turned out to be a nasty little element in the mix, which has caused us deep problems, and we've got to try and cope with that and restore this sense of gradual change and some kind of harmony between our internal and our external.

Matthew d'Ancona

Thank you very much. Well, I'd like you, if you were to join me in thanking the panel, and thank you all for coming.