

EU Washington Forum Conference Report 2008

European Union Institute for Security Studies

**A new departure:
global challenges and
EU-US policies after the
American elections**

**A conference
organised by the
EU Institute
for Security Studies**

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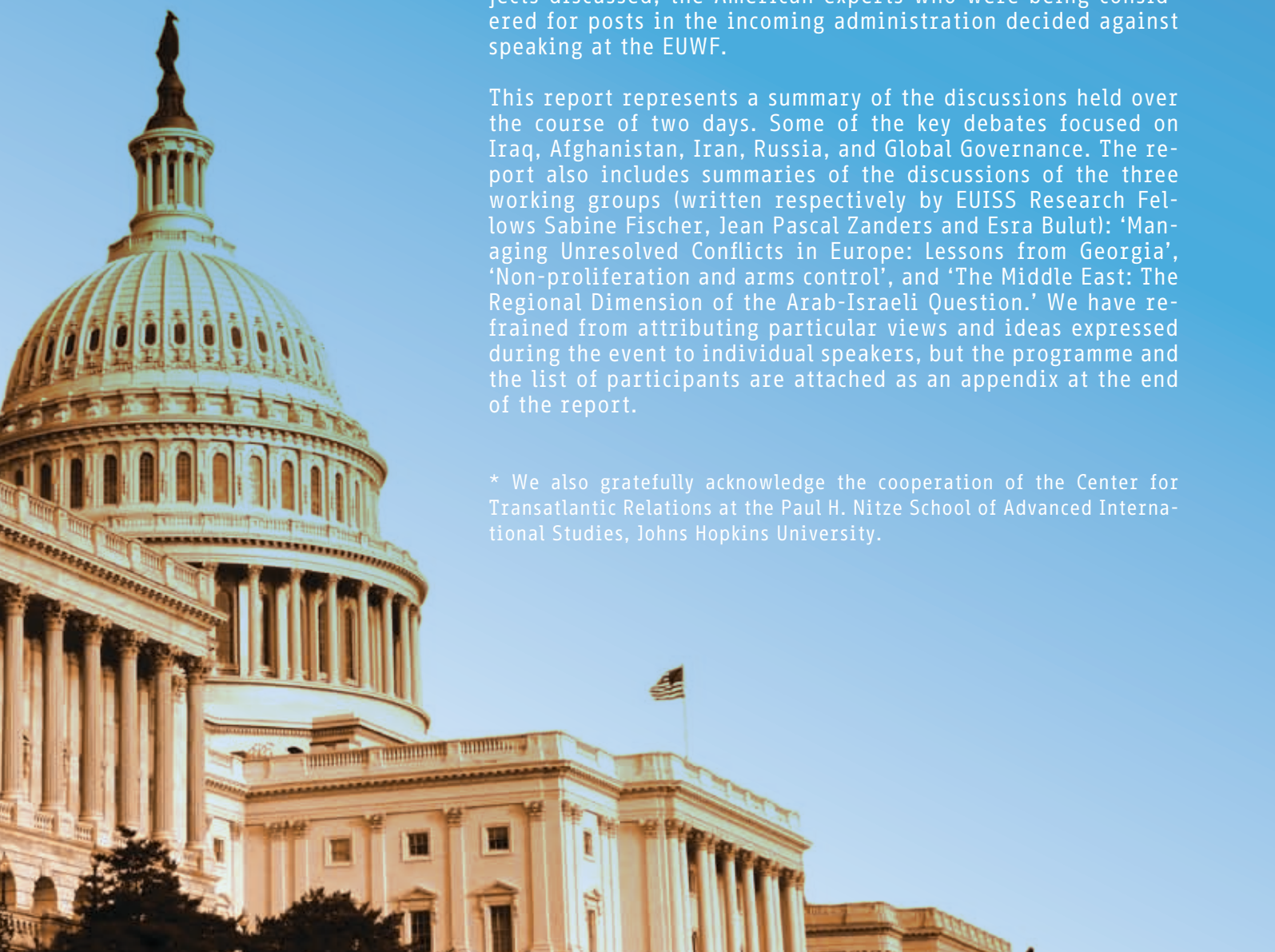
CONTEXT

The EU Washington Forum (EUWF) is an annual event of the EUISS organised with the support of the European Commission.* This year's event, held in Washington on 21-22 November, was the official launch of the EUWF and it featured interventions from numerous high-level figures including the European Union High Representative for CFSP, Javier Solana, the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Radoslaw Sikorski, the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Miguel Angel Moratinos, Senator for Nebraska Chuck Hagel, and the Head of the EU Commission Delegation in Washington, John Bruton.

The event's timing, two weeks after the election of Barack Obama, meant that the debates focused primarily on the implications of the change for US foreign policy, global governance and transatlantic relations. Due to the sensitivity of the subjects discussed, the American experts who were being considered for posts in the incoming administration decided against speaking at the EUWF.

This report represents a summary of the discussions held over the course of two days. Some of the key debates focused on Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Russia, and Global Governance. The report also includes summaries of the discussions of the three working groups (written respectively by EUISS Research Fellows Sabine Fischer, Jean Pascal Zanders and Esra Bulut): 'Managing Unresolved Conflicts in Europe: Lessons from Georgia', 'Non-proliferation and arms control', and 'The Middle East: The Regional Dimension of the Arab-Israeli Question.' We have refrained from attributing particular views and ideas expressed during the event to individual speakers, but the programme and the list of participants are attached as an appendix at the end of the report.

* We also gratefully acknowledge the cooperation of the Center for Transatlantic Relations at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University.



EU-US RELATIONS AFTER THE AMERICAN ELECTIONS

The election on 4 November 2008 of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States was unequivocally welcomed in Europe, a sentiment echoed and expressed by various Europeans throughout the Washington Forum. America's worldwide image was revamped overnight: the US came to be seen once again as 'a place where all things are possible', as Obama said to his audience during his acceptance speech; and for Europeans, the election of Obama is proof of the vitality of American democracy. The change in Washington created a new opportunity for transatlantic relations which, despite an improvement in his second term, remained poisoned throughout the Bush presidency because of the war in Iraq.



Keynote address by Chuck Hagel, United States Senator for Nebraska

The views at the Washington Forum varied as to how this change will alter transatlantic relations. Some felt that the enthusiasm the Europeans have shown for Barack Obama and a boosted moral appeal of the US may translate into a greater support in Europe for the incoming administration's foreign policy. The widespread public support for Obama would make it easier for governments to say yes to the Obama administration on some issues. While it is clear that the problems will not disappear overnight, some felt that whatever the new President does will be looked at differently, because he will have a different approach to the policy issues that were placed on the American agenda by the Bush administration.

However, one panellist argued that since Obama is likely to disappoint some in Europe, the management of expectations is the most important transatlantic challenge for the incoming President. For example, it is unlikely - not least because of the role of the Congress - that the US would revise its climate change policy in time for the Copenhagen summit, due in December 2009. This will clearly disappoint many who have been anxiously awaiting the arrival of a US President whose views on the environment are more in line with their own. Obama will thus need to work hard to manage expectations.

Some participants questioned whether the Europeans are ready for the new relationship: the US needs help in Afghanistan, and some consider the major test for EU-NATO relations (and therefore also EU-US relations) to be Af-

ghanistan, but they doubted whether Europeans would be willing to assume greater responsibilities in that conflict. It is largely expected that once in office, Obama will request increased and caveat-free European support on Afghanistan, and some argued that this request will be the most important point on President Obama's agenda. Europeans will be asked not just to provide more military support but also to provide more trainers and civilian capacity-building support.

Thus, a key question for US foreign policy will be the issue of who will and who will not be in a position to help, and in this respect, some held that the incoming administration will assess its relations with other states by dividing them between those that offer help and support and those who do not. According to this perspective, the European reaction to this initial request from Obama may come to determine the atmosphere in transatlantic relations during his first term. This view was challenged, however, as suggesting that the incoming president would treat the EU instrumentally and not as a partner. One observer highlighted that the EU does not want to be merely the implementing body, but it also wants to take part in the decision-making. In response, panellists argued that the US would be willing to share decision-making, if risk and responsibility are also shared. But one participant highlighted that Obama still has to show that he has a true interest in the EU apart from concentrating on the three biggest member states: Germany, France, and Great Britain.

According to several panellists, though, the pace in Afghanistan will slow down as efforts will have to concentrate on Iran, and thus not Afghanistan but Iran will become the focus of the next administration. George Bush had the luxury of being able to leave Iran as a problem for his successor, but Obama will have to now deal with Iran. Furthermore, a speaker observed that Iran will in any event be a bigger issue for European support, since not much EU support can be expected on Afghanistan.

SPECIFIC ISSUES FOR TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

Iraq

There is a general consensus now that the war in Iraq was a mistake but that the 'surge' is working and turning Iraq into a more stable environment, which has seen improvements in security, and also a rise in micro-economic activity. This consensus was highlighted by Barack Obama's re-appointment of Robert Gates, who executed the 'surge' as the Defence Secretary. This suggests that no major change of strategy will be underway during Obama's presidency, and that Obama will most probably honour his electoral position and withdraw combat troops from Iraq within 16 months or perhaps even faster, but not later than 2011.

A panellist argued though that the belief that Iraq is slowly but surely becoming a normal country is premature. The success of the 'surge' is reversible and the growth of

stability in Iraq still requires a sustained foreign presence. According to this perspective, all major positive developments in Iraq – such as the drop in the sectarian violence, the modest progress in the integration of the Sunnis, the so far non-dictatorial nature of the Maliki government – have been prompted, on occasion forced, by the continuing US presence in Iraq.

Iraq still has many remaining political problems: successfully continuing the integration of Sunnis; the possibility of a military coup; the potentially explosive situation in Kirkuk; and the dictatorial tendencies of the Maliki government and Maliki's Dawa party. With a too-hasty withdrawal of the US forces all these problems could potentially be exacerbated. Furthermore, the price of electricity remains high and is affected by the political instability, and while electricity demand is increasing, the political system is too weak to implement adequate means of producing and distributing electricity, which is a further serious concern for the Iraqi government. But according to one view, the greatest threats to the peace process in Iraq are Iraqi minorities who may not see it as in their own interests to follow this process, and Iraq's neighbours who have the potential to influence Iraq's domestic situation.



Robert Kagan on EU-US relations after the American elections

As America's military presence will be diminishing, growth in the European political engagement in Iraq would be desirable. In particular, the Europeans could support the efforts to rebuild the country by providing electoral monitoring for the elections in 2009; training the police and advising on police reform (the support provided by the Italian Carabinieri was being cited as a model example); and by providing investment in the dilapidated oil sector, and in the economic and political stability of the country.

Afghanistan

With respect to Afghanistan, there is a reverse consensus, though: unlike the war in Iraq, this war remained largely supported by the Americans, but it is believed to be going wrong, with the general situation in Afghanistan believed to be consistently deteriorating. While it has not yet reached catastrophic proportions, as it did in Iraq in 2006, support for the US and NATO is diminishing, and attacks are increasing. NATO, as one American panellist put it, is failing in Afghanistan, and the US should concentrate on winning the war in which it is involved rather than looking for new conflicts. Thus, NATO and US allies need to put success in Afghanistan at

the top of their agenda. One European panellist argued that Afghanistan was a clear example of NATO failure, as a result of the lack of a comprehensive strategy, and suggested that the EU and the US must urgently define their objectives together and agree on a coherent approach. Furthermore, the barrier between NATO and the EU in Afghanistan also needs to finally be broken.



Radoslaw Sikorski, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs and John Bruton, Head of the European Commission Delegation to the US

While it is reasonable to expect that Obama's first request to Europeans will be to receive quantifiable support in Afghanistan, one panellist observed that troops themselves will not be sufficient to effect a change there. What is needed in particular are more trainers to assist with the objective of doubling the Afghan army. Importantly, no matter how successful the allies may be in Afghanistan, it will not be sufficient if they fail to deal with Pakistan: assistance needs to be offered to Pakistan in dealing with its border regions, many of which have been excluded from the Pakistani social services network and political institutions. The Pashtuns living in Pakistan extend their influence into Afghanistan, and most of the insurgency in Afghanistan is made up of Pashtuns who live in Pakistan. Addressing the challenges of those tribal areas needs to become a part of the strategy in Afghanistan.

There is also a serious problem with the way in which the transatlantic alliance is structured in Afghanistan: the NATO command and the US command do not run in parallel. General Petraeus will have control of less than one third of the forces in Afghanistan, and one speaker proposed the creation of a new NATO command for Afghanistan. The recommendation entails scrapping the Transformation Commands, such as the one in Norfolk, Virginia, and transferring responsibility to SHAPE in Mons, Belgium. At the same time, a new command structure would be established in Tampa for General Petraeus, a type of SHAPE-CENTCOM: this would make NATO and US chains of command parallel, even if they are not necessarily combined into one.

Iran

The 15 September 2008 IAEA report on Iran was a source of concern for American and European participants alike.



Miguel Angel Moratinos, Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs

Some speakers stated in this context that the report gives further credibility to the argument that Iran was quickly approaching the point when it would become a 'threshold nation', able to produce a nuclear weapon within a short space of time. This issue was discussed both in the plenary sessions and in the working group on non-proliferation, as was the question of engagement.

In the run-up to the elections, Barack Obama argued in favour of America's full diplomatic engagement with Iran. In this respect, some American participants felt that the President-elect should not rush into negotiating with Tehran as the success of such an exercise may prove elusive at the expense of the President's credibility. A speaker also recommended that the administration should wait with talks at least until the end of the parliamentary and presidential elections in Iran. Whilst the US should join the European diplomatic effort vis-à-vis Iran, the recommendation was for the US to work with Europe in building the dialogue at an administrative level, where one can have more sustainable discussions.

Furthermore, the US should take a number of bold initiatives signalling a more open attitude towards Tehran. These could include the opening of the US diplomatic section in Tehran, clarification of the US's intentions and refutation of the regime change policy. Some also argued that a removal of the threat of an US military intervention is likely to weaken the existing conservative regime. One observer highlighted that the present structure of the discussions should be maintained, including the current dual track approach and the format of six countries with a permanent presence of the United States. However, as the US moves to engage with Iran, it needs to be very clear on its carrots and its sticks.

Russia

On the question of whether the Obama administration is generally expected to heat up or cool down relations with Russia, and whether the EU's point of view on this issue would converge or diverge with that of the US, some participants felt that in fact it will come down to Russia to decide the nature of its relations with other powers. Others again took a more conciliatory tone and argued that it is possible for Europe and the US to form a coherent policy on Russia, but that some pragmatism on issues such as disarmament and non-proliferation may be required. On the question of transatlantic consensus on

relations with Eastern Europe – especially Georgia and Ukraine - one panellist observed that it is difficult to find consensus on an issue on which there is no consensus in Europe itself.

Generally, participants felt that Obama will tend to show more sensitivity in his approach towards Russia, particularly regarding its demands in Eastern Europe and on missile defence; for instance, he may decide to suspend the missile defence project promoted by the Bush administration, which would delight Moscow and some EU member states, but would disappoint others. However, while some speakers argued that Obama will support the further expansion of NATO to Georgia and Ukraine, others felt that he would not prioritise the issue of these countries' membership over having Russia on board on the issue of Iran and Afghanistan.

Global Governance

During the Bush Presidency, the international system evolved towards multipolarity. With the emergence of China and India as major powers, and the resurgence of Russia, the US and the EU can no longer dominate global governance even when they fully agree. There was a consensus at the forum that this new reality must be reflected in the multilateral institutions that were shaped by the realities of the post-World War II order.



Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the CFSP in conversation with Álvaro de Vasconcelos, Director of the EUISS

As for America's role in the international order, one speaker noted that while Americans increasingly understand that they confront a world in which security threats are transnational – such as climate change, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, and financial insecurity – they still have less of an understanding that approaching transnational threats requires a shift in foreign policy, and in particular requires cooperation with other states to meet such threats. He explained that there is only the beginning of the recognition in the US that it will not be at the centre of global governance. Nonetheless, the speaker cautioned that one should not overestimate this assessment since the US will certainly remain an essential leader. And what is needed from the US is sustained leadership that uses American power to underpin and not to undermine the importance of international institutions, and to focus the attention on global crises.



Session 1 from left to right: Radoslaw Sikorski, Miguel Angel Moratinos, John Bruton, Gérard Araud, Karen Donfried, Daniel Hamilton

With regard to the G20 summit assembled by President Bush in response to the global economic crisis, one panellist observed that it was a 'successful failure': a failure, because the attempt to create a new international financial architecture did not get very far; however, successful because it underlined the weaknesses of current international institutions, reflecting a growing recognition that existing structures are no longer effective. Crises in themselves can thus also be regarded as opportunities, and in this case the financial crisis has helped to move the reform of the global financial institutions forward. Some panellists also expressed the view that the G20 should become a permanent fixture.

Others, however, were not convinced that the G20 would necessarily create opportunities in the architecture of the relationship between the US and major rising powers, acknowledging though that going back to the G8 may be no better.

As for the question of how to confront global challenges ahead, some of the following propositions were put forth: the Doha Round of trade negotiations should be resumed. In this respect, a speaker argued that the US, India and the EU would have the ability to negotiate together a decrease in the use of subsidies. While Security Council reform should be put back on the agenda, it is also clear that that is very hard to pursue prior to the rearrangement of the relationships between the major powers. The presidencies of the World Bank and the IMF would need to be reviewed: it may become necessary for Western powers to relinquish their lock on top-jobs in international financial institutions. NATO's relationship with Russia needs to be rethought, and the potential long-term goal of Russian membership in the alliance considered. In this respect, the question of missile defence in Europe would also need to be revisited. Emissions ceilings for China and India would have to be introduced; one panellist argued in this respect that a deal on climate change would in fact be attainable for Obama's administration. Energy security will not be obtained if the IEA stays under the control of OSCE countries. More nuclear cooperation is required, with a first initiative from the US and Russia. And finally, work on a new non-proliferation regime would have to begin soon.

WORKSHOP REPORTS

During the afternoon session, participants split up into three working groups: 'Managing Unresolved Conflicts in Europe: Lessons from Georgia', 'Non-proliferation and arms control', 'The Middle East: The Regional Dimension of the Arab-Israeli Question.' The choice of these working groups was determined by some of the key issues which dominated political debates and discussions in think tanks and political circles on both sides of the Atlantic in the autumn of 2008: these were firstly the conflict between Russia and Georgia in the summer of 2008; secondly, Obama's embrace of the concept of nuclear-zero, and its implications for a policy shift by an Obama administration on nuclear non-proliferation; and thirdly, the Arab-Israeli conflict and its centrality to regional stability in the Middle East and the US's relations with the Muslim world, which Obama wants to revamp.

MANAGING UNRESOLVED CONFLICTS IN EUROPE: LESSONS FROM GEORGIA

- **Need for more coordinated and coherent EU-US Russia policy**
- **Budapest commitment on NATO membership should be adhered to, but no quick moves should be made**
- **Market liberalisation within the EU and solidarity mechanisms for the Eastern neighbourhood would reduce Russia's energy impact.**

Origins of the crisis

In the broader historical perspective the Rose Revolution and the coming to power of a political leadership in Georgia pursuing an ambitious domestic reform agenda and an explicitly pro-Western foreign policy brought a first rift between Russia and Georgia after 2004. In Moscow, the Rose Revolution and the resulting political changes were perceived as a threat to Russia's position in the CIS.

Geopolitical factors also contributed to the increase of tensions between Russia, Georgia and the breakaway regions in the following years. Georgia's declared will to become a member of NATO was taken by Moscow as an unacceptable intrusion into what it considered as its traditional sphere of influence. Kosovo's declaration of independence had considerable impact on developments, because it was perceived by Moscow as a major humiliation and seen as an exposure of Russia's weakness in the Yeltsin years. In about the same period, Russian foreign

policy became increasingly assertive, aiming at reestablishing Russia as a great power on the international scene.

As far as the eruption of the Georgia-Russia war is concerned, different factors were at work on both sides. In the months before the war Russian policy aimed at consolidating control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia, while much was done to provoke the Georgian side into a violent reaction. Speakers also pointed out that the policy of the Saakashvili administration was to a great extent shaped by the personality of the Georgian president, who pursued a double-pronged approach seeking a negotiated settlement on the one hand and taking hawkish positions and stoking up nationalist sentiment on the other. After a long period of deterioration in relations between Tbilisi and Sukhumi and Tskhinvali, hawks in Tbilisi gained the upper position, arguing that Western allies would not prevent Russia from the creeping annexation of the two separatist entities and that there was no other option than taking South Ossetia back by force.

Implications of the war



Discussions during Workshop #1

The war has far-reaching consequences for Georgia. Speakers agreed that Georgia has lost Abkhazia and South Ossetia for the foreseeable future. Conciliatory steps from Moscow or the two entities are not to be expected any time soon. One speaker quoted the Cyprus scenario as a possible option, in which rapprochement would be possible at some point in the future, but under the condition of domestic changes in both Russia and Georgia.

At a regional level, the war has caused shifts in the strategic balance the consequences of which are yet difficult to estimate. On the one hand it drove a wedge of Russian power into Georgia and the South Caucasus. On the other hand some positive developments in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict were to be observed as a reaction to the August events in Georgia.

Russia demonstrated that it is willing to use force against a neighbour in situations in which it considers its interest or perceived zone of influence threatened. Some participants pointed out the weaknesses of Russia's policy during and after the war. Moscow was not able

to convince its allies to follow its recognition policy, which was depicted as a major soft power problem and a demonstration of the limits of Russia's control over the region. In any event, however, all actors involved in the region have to reckon with a Russia which has used military force against one of its neighbours for the first time since the demise of the Soviet Union.

Last but not least the Georgia crisis has prompted deeper EU involvement in the region. The brokering of a ceasefire, the quick deployment of an EU monitoring mission, the organisation of a donors' conference on 22 October 2008, and the launch of international talks in Geneva have demonstrated the EU's capacity to act as a peacemaker in the region. It was also pointed out, however, that the EU was in a particular situation during the French presidency which enabled it to overcome the divisions which usually characterise its policy towards Russia and the Eastern neighbourhood. Therefore, although the overall assessment of the EU's actions during the crisis was positive, speakers wondered if this can be a model for the future.

Lessons

The EU and the US need to develop a more coherent and coordinated policy towards Russia. After the Cold War there had been a consensus uniting the EU and the US in their desire to support democratisation in the former Soviet Union and to turn Russia into a reliable partner. At some point, this consensus broke, after which the US followed a tougher line in relations with Russia while the EU, despite internal divisions, was more concerned with engagement. The main task for the EU and the US now after the Georgia war is to reestablish a consensus on a constructive and mutually reinforcing policy towards this conflict-ridden region. For this to be possible both sides need to communicate more systematically about their perceptions, strategies and aims. A first step in this direction could be a joint reassessment of policies as well as relations with Russia.

At a regional level, support for democratic development in the Eastern European countries needs to be continued, but with a more critical perspective on developments on the ground and less focus on individual personalities. There was broad consensus in the Working Group that immediate NATO accession was not an option for Ukraine and Georgia under the current circumstances. Neither country yet fulfils the necessary criteria, with a majority of the population against NATO membership in one of them and unresolved conflicts within the borders of the other. It was also pointed out that NATO would risk serious damage to its credibility were it to accept membership under these conditions. Moreover, one American speaker said that the continuing emphasis on NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia could create problems between the US and its European allies which may run counter to other policies the new American president will want to implement in this context. Therefore, it was argued, NATO should stick to the Budapest commitment and keep the door open, but it should not move ahead quickly.

Another point was made regarding European energy dependence on Russia, which was seen as an important lever for Russia to influence relations with the EU as well as the EU's policy towards its Eastern neighbourhood. Market liberalisation within the European Union as well as solidarity mechanisms in case of crisis would reduce Russia's impact considerably. Eastern neighbours, particularly Ukraine as a key country, should be included in the creation of such mechanisms to protect them (and also the EU) from the consequences of a sudden rise in gas prices. Some participants pointed to an EU membership perspective for Ukraine as a possible means to stabilise the region.

It was argued that the EU's policy towards Russia is closely linked to its policies towards the neighbourhood, particularly the unresolved conflicts. The same can be said of US policy towards the region. In general participants agreed that keeping the door open for dialogue with Russia is essential and hence there was not much alternative but to resume the talks about the treaty replacing the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). The EU and the US also need to clarify their positions regarding the European security architecture before they enter into a broader debate and respond to recent Russian proposals concerning a pan-European security treaty. It was argued that Russia may find itself in a weakened position in the near future given the diplomatic setbacks it experienced after the Georgia war and the financial and economic crisis it is facing.

NON-PROLIFERATION AND ARMS CONTROL

- **Debate in the US shifts from arms control and non-proliferation to nuclear disarmament, with a bipartisan embrace of the concept of a nuclear-zero**

- **Missile defence will take a backseat under the Obama administration**

- **Consensus that Iran is close to nuclear break-out capability, and thus need for coordinated and careful EU-US response to coming challenges.**

After eight years of unilateralism and isolationism under the Bush administration, the election of Barack Obama as the next US president has generated huge expectations about US global security policies in general and arms control and disarmament in particular. Nonetheless, there is a need to preserve a high degree of realism. The Obama administration will inherit a mountain of problems, but the president-elect views this both as a challenge and an opportunity. It is anticipated that he will lead on the threat posed by nuclear terrorism, pursue deep reductions in the US and Russian nuclear arse-

nals, and strengthen the global nuclear control regimes. In particular, he may push for ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty early in 2009.

In a number of concrete dossiers, particularly the one relating to Iran's nuclear activities, a change in tone and tactics characterised by greater direct engagement may be expected. The United States will no longer be the obstacle to the solution; there will be a greater engagement of the European Union as well as international institutions to address current and future security concerns. Nevertheless, it will remain a considerable challenge for the USA to fully engage again in multilateral forums, including the upcoming review conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and revitalisation of the Conference on Disarmament, where the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) remains a crucial, but so far elusive, arms control goal. It will take time for the US positions on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation to change. The EU can contribute to this process, for example by presenting a unified position for the NPT review conference and by forging a solid front with the USA in the negotiations.



Jean Pascal Zanders and Jon Wolfstahl during Workshop #2 discussions

Nuclear zero

Since the start of 2008 there has been a growing debate in the United States about nuclear disarmament, rather than arms control or non-proliferation. The interesting aspect is that today the idea of nuclear zero has bipartisan support and is not merely a proposal from the left. President Obama will most likely take the proposition to free the world from nuclear weapons (as the best guarantee that the United States would not be attacked with such weapons by another state or terrorists) very seriously. The expectation is that he will work towards this goal, even though it may not be achieved during his term. The current financial and economic crisis may add impetus to the initiative as it is likely to lead to an across-the-board demand for budgetary savings.

Pursuit of this goal is likely to have a significant impact on transatlantic relations and perceptions of security in Europe. The new NATO members in Central Europe perceive the contribution of nuclear weapons to their national security differently than the older alliance partners. Similarly, the USA will need to carefully calibrate its discourse so as not to scare Japan, Turkey and other

allies. The pursuit of the nuclear disarmament ideas is also likely to provoke profound discussions in France and the United Kingdom as a significantly reduced US nuclear arsenal will alter the strategic rationale for the limited French and UK stockpiles. Both countries will need to devise new frameworks, for which transatlantic security dialogue will be absolutely critical.

The debate within the United States will develop further. The security interests involved in nuclear zero and the timeframes in which this goal is to be achieved must still be determined.

Missile defence

Under the Obama administration missile defence is likely to take a back seat. Over the past eight years, the debate was driven by ideology and not matched by technological feasibility. Progress was achieved because the normal testing and evaluation procedures for weapon programmes were not applied. President-elect Obama has expressed his support for missile defence, but his administration is most likely to treat it like any other weapon programme: feasibility and affordability will be key considerations in any future decision. Still, it will have to face up to institutional interests and bureaucratic inertia if it wishes to change course.

For the EU, the reduced emphasis on missile defence would be particularly good in its relations with Russia, because it takes away Russia's advantage in driving the European security agenda. It will also contribute to the reduction of threat perceptions, which will benefit EU-US cooperation.

New Member States of the EU, however, believe that the questions of nuclear disarmament and missile defence must be debated in NATO rather than in the EU. In any case, they consider the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) too immature to be able to deal with Russia's threat. While the pace of the debate may slow down, they do not believe that the issue will be removed from the security agenda under the new administration. To them, the missile defence programme must proceed as agreed in the bilateral agreements between the US and Poland and the Czech Republic. Both issues have a high symbolic value in those countries.

Current proliferation challenges to the NPT regime

Iran remains a major proliferation challenge. There is a growing consensus that Iran is close to achieving a nuclear break-out capability. History demonstrates that no country has arrived at this point without actually pursuing the development of nuclear weapons. It is anticipated that Iran will release a number of trial balloons in order to test the Obama administration's response. Both the USA and the EU must coordinate their response and react carefully to these challenges.

The bilateral agreement on transfers of nuclear technology concluded by the Bush administration and India, which undermines the whole NPT and safeguards regime, cannot be challenged, but can be superseded by the nuclear zero option. Furthermore, the agreement is not self-executing and the US Congress retains the option to adopt new laws regulating the nuclear technology sales to India.

REGIONAL DIMENSIONS OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI QUESTION

- **Core issues requiring resolution remain the same, suggesting continuity of basic challenges over past eight years**
- **Political unity on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides is needed for any concessions to be made by either**
- **Disagreement on prioritisation of Israeli-Syrian or Israeli-Palestinian negotiation track.**

President-elect Barack Obama and his likely team have indicated that the search for a solution to the Arab-Israeli Conflict is an urgent matter requiring attention from “Day 1” of the incoming administration. EU Foreign Ministers meeting in December 2008 reiterated their support for the Israeli-Palestinian negotiating process under way since Annapolis, and their commitment to a comprehensive and regional approach to the resolution of the Israeli-Arab conflict. It remains to be seen how these stated objectives and intentions play out in relation to a number of other pressing priorities on the international political agenda, as well as uncertainties on the ground. These include Israeli, Palestinian and Lebanese elections due in 2009, and the highly volatile situation in and around the Gaza Strip. In the context of such uncertainties and great expectations, European and US experts and policy-makers came together for a lively, at times heated, discussion of the regional dimensions of the conflict, and proposals for EU and US policy. Two questions dominated the discussion: the question of whether and how to channel and sequence diplomatic efforts on the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Palestinian peace tracks; and how to positively influence prospects of intra-Palestinian reconciliation, considered a prerequisite for any substantial movement on the latter track.

A number of key shifts were first noted as shaping the ever-evolving challenges and difficulties faced by would-be peace-makers. It was argued that Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert’s statements marked the first time an Israeli Prime Minister had publicly and repeatedly outlined the likely concessions Israel would need to make for peace. Conversely, it was also observed that after many years



Martin Indyk and Martin Ortega during Workshop #3

of Israeli claims of no Palestinian interlocutor, perhaps now there really was no one with whom to discuss mutual concessions and actions necessary for progress towards a solution. There was however emphasis that the core issues that needed to be bridged and resolved in negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians had remained constant over the last eight years, suggesting more continuity in terms of basic challenges than political flux and change on both sides might suggest.

A number of scenarios were weighed up by various participants. In relation to the tense calm between Israel and Hizbullah, it was argued that this was likely to persist as confrontation and conflict would not be in Hizbullah’s interests ahead of 2009 general elections in Lebanon. The potential for intra-Palestinian reconciliation, or conversely for deeper division and violence, was examined in more depth, with agreement that Palestinian national unity was an important requirement for any substantial progress in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. A united Palestinian house would be needed to discuss core issues such as Jerusalem, with no Israeli leader likely to make key concessions to a Palestinian counterpart “unable to control all the guns”. It was also pointed out that national unity, perhaps a national unity government of sorts, would also be necessary on the Israeli side for necessary decisive action and concessions to be undertaken by the next Israeli government. What kind of Israeli government would in fact emerge after the elections remained an open question.

On the Palestinian side, there was discussion of the implications of deepening divisions, including the possibility of the emergence of two Palestinian presidents in 2009 unless Hamas and Fatah can agree on a mutually acceptable arrangement for elections. Intra-Palestinian violence could generate further Israeli-Palestinian violence. The question of what path might best bring about much-needed intra-Palestinian reconciliation was a matter of lively debate. In particular, there was an array of views on the question of how the US and EU should deal with Hamas. These ranged from a call to engage with Hamas, to a suggestion the EU and US lend more support to regional actors in their contacts with Hamas, to firm rejection of any engagement.

Support of the former position focused on the powerful message engagement would send out regarding the question of political Islam across the region. In contrast,

supporters of the latter position argued that any move by the US to engage with Hamas would undermine President-elect Obama's diplomatic chances on an array of Middle East peace objectives. Furthermore the latter group argued EU or US engagement would undermine President Mahmoud Abbas, complicate the work of Arab interlocutors heavily invested in intra-Palestinian reconciliation efforts, and send a signal that radical and violent behaviour is rewarded. It was suggested that Hamas' eventual integration, if it were to come about, would be the result of Israelis and Palestinians coming to terms with this scenario. Proponents of the latter approach were keen however to emphasize that a continued boycott of Hamas did not equate to opposing reconciliation between various Palestinian factions, and there was broad agreement across the panel that intra-Palestinian reconciliation should be a priority, with investment in a credible and viable peace process as the best means for achieving this.

There were a number of divergences and nuances in speakers' views on whether to prioritise the Syrian-Israeli negotiations track. Some traditional adherents to an Israeli-Palestinian track-first argument admitted that the current regional context and political configuration had led them to reluctantly shift to a Syrian-Israeli track-first position. They felt this track was more likely to yield much-needed results and agreement, and to positively influence other tracks, in particular in terms of affecting Syrian support for Hamas and Hizbullah. Yet this logic of sequencing was challenged by other participants, arguing instead for a "Syria-also" approach that would keep all parties engaged in serious negotiations, and not explicitly prioritise one track above another.

More widely, an increasing contagion between different conflicts in the region from Morocco to Pakistan was posited. It was argued that the Quartet should extend its mandate to all dimensions of the Middle East Peace Process, and should be at the centre of a web of concerned players as part of a more inclusive and regional approach to the conflict. How to achieve more proactive involvement in the Arab Peace Initiative was raised as a key question, as was its potential role in achieving a more inclusive international approach to the conflict. It was suggested that such an international umbrella could eventually include Iran if the latter indicated a willingness to play a constructive role in peace-making efforts. In historical perspective, it was suggested that unlike earlier region-wide shocks such as the 1973 Yom Kippur War and the 1991 Gulf War, the 2003 invasion of Iraq was not accompanied by a concerted engagement with regional peace-making.

Four guiding principles for international involvement, in particular US and EU involvement, were professed. First, it was argued that a Hippocratic oath-style mantra should guide diplomatic engagement – above all do not fail. In response, it was emphasized that a fear of failure should not weaken our resolve to try to engage constructively with the multiple challenges. It was further argued that any approach that left dynamics to the parties had been and would continue to be risky and destructive.

We should return to the idea that external involvement was good not just for Palestinians but also for Israelis. A final appeal came to move beyond the received wisdom regarding the conflict – that the solution is known and merely needs applying – accompanied by a call for proactive rather than reactive international involvement in the face of various challenges.

CONCLUSION

Timed shortly after the 2008 presidential elections in the US, the EU Washington Forum demonstrated a different mood in EU-US relations, marked by expectations on both sides of an improved and reinvigorated transatlantic partnership. While Europeans had high expectations of the new American administration, and were looking forward to a new period of openness from the US, it was anticipated that the new US administration would request more help from the EU on key challenges, such as Afghanistan and Iran, and on other issues of mutual importance. During the course of the event, it became apparent, though, that managing expectations would be a key challenge for Obama in the months to come, and that Europeans may not be able to offer all the support that the US would hope to get. Europeans will generally not be prepared to heed Obama's request for more troops in Afghanistan, but might be more forthcoming with civilian contributions to the rebuilding of the country.



Session 4 on EU-US relations: Marcin Zaborowski, Pierre Lévy and Robert Kagan

Experts and officials from both sides agreed that preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear capability remains a key priority, and there was a general consensus that US engagement of Iran would be the right course of action, but that coordination of EU-US responses would be needed. Obama's new tone with Russia will please many in Europe who are trying to manage the complex relationship with Moscow, but will disappoint those who had hoped that the new administration would retain the tougher stance of its predecessor, especially on the issue of missile defence, which looks less likely to be part of Obama's security strategy. Furthermore, since Russia has presented various common challenges to the transatlantic partners on issues ranging from energy-security to the Caucasus, there is also a greater need for coordination of EU-US Russia policy.

While new players on the international stage are clearly affecting America's role in the international order and in global governance, there was general agreement on the need for sustained US leadership in international institutions, and to address various international crises; in this respect, the US would need to

refocus on the Arab-Israeli conflict. The US's embrace of the concept of a nuclear zero is also game changing, and signals not only that the US is likely to lead again on non-proliferation and disarmament, but that there will also be many changes for future US and EU security policies.

• 20TH NOVEMBER

Opening Session

(8:45am-9:45am)

Álvaro de Vasconcelos, Director of the EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris

John Bruton, Head of the European Commission Delegation to the United States, Washington DC

Keynote address by:

Chuck Hagel, United States Senator for Nebraska, Washington DC

Session 1: European views on transatlantic relations

(9:45am-11:15am)

Moderator: **Gérard Araud**, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris

Speakers:

Radosław Sikorski, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw

Miguel Angel Moratinos, Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Madrid

John Bruton, Delegation of the European Commission to the US, Washington DC

Comment:

Karen Donfried, The German Marshall Fund of the US, Washington DC

Daniel Hamilton, Center for Transatlantic Relations, SAIS, Washington DC

Session 2: Crisis management and conflict resolution: Iraq and Afghanistan

(11:30am-12:45pm)

Moderator: **Daniel Keohane**, EUISS, Paris

Speakers:

James Dobbins, RAND Corporation, Washington DC

Charles Grant, Centre for European Reform, London

Kenneth Pollack, Brookings Institution, Washington DC

Working lunch: Global economic crisis

(12:45pm-2:00pm)

Address:

Bruce Stokes, *National Journal*, Washington DC

Session 3: Workshops

(2:00pm-4:30pm)

Workshop 1:

Managing unresolved conflicts in Europe: lessons from Georgia

Chair: **José Cutileiro**, Special Adviser to the President and Members of the European Commission, Brussels

Rapporteur: **Sabine Fischer**, EUISS, Paris

Discussants:

Peter Semneby, Council of the EU, Brussels

Stephen Larrabee, RAND Corporation, Washington DC

Fran Burwell, Atlantic Council, Washington DC

Philip Dimitrov, Christopher Newport University, Newport News

Workshop 2:

Non-proliferation and arms control

Chair: **Marek Grela**, General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, Brussels

Rapporteur: **Jean Pascal Zanders**, EUISS, Paris

Introduction: Jon Wolfstahl, CSIS, Washington DC

Discussants:

Bruno Tertrais, Foundation for Strategic Research, Paris

Joseph Cirincione, Ploughshares Fund, Washington DC

• 21ST NOVEMBER

Workshop 3:
Middle East - the regional dimension of the Arab-Israeli question

Chair: **Marina Ottaway**, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC

Rapporteur: **Esra Bulut**, EUISS, Paris

Introduction: **Volker Perthes**, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin

Discussants:

Martin Indyk, Brookings Institution, Washington DC

Aaron Miller, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington DC

Marc Otte, Council of the EU, Brussels

Martin Ortega, Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Madrid

Dinner/reception:

(7pm)

Conversation with **Javier Solana**,
EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy

Moderator: **Jim Hoagland**, Associate Editor and Chief Foreign Correspondent, *The Washington Post*

Session 4: EU-US relations after the American elections

(9am-10:30am)

Moderator: **Pierre Lévy**, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paris

Speakers:

Werner Hoyer, Member of the German Parliament, Berlin

Robert Hunter, RAND Corporation, Washington DC

Marcin Zaborowski, EUISS, Paris

Robert Kagan, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC

Session 5: The US, the EU and global governance

(11am-1pm)

Moderator: **Angelos Pangratis**, Delegation of the European Commission to the US, Washington DC

Commentators:

Álvaro de Vasconcelos, EUISS, Paris

Bruce Jones, New York University, New York

Mark Leonard, European Council on Foreign Relations, London

David Hamburg, Carnegie Corporation of New York, New York

Lunch:

(1:30pm-3pm)

at La Maison française (French Embassy, Washington DC)

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