

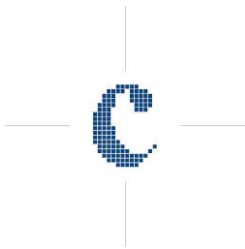
Conference Report

'Transatlantic Dialogue on
Middle East Policy'

The Hague, Friday 5th March 2004

International meeting of experts organised by the Clingendael Institute
(The Hague) In collaboration with the Council on Foreign Relations
(New York)

June 2004



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Foreword

The idea for this seminar emerged before the rift in transatlantic relations occasioned by the Iraq war in 2003. But the war and its aftermath demonstrated that constructive dialogue on Middle East policy was critical to avoid such rifts in the future and to address the serious challenges the region poses to the security of the United States and Europe. Indeed, the Iraq war underscored the importance of the Middle East for alliance politics, making such meetings essential to understand respective perceptions and positions on key regional questions. Such discussions are particularly relevant given the series of transatlantic meetings convening this summer, like the G-8 meeting in Sea Island, Georgia, and the NATO -summit in Istanbul.

The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs played a critical role in support of this meeting, and has generously provided financial backing. Given its upcoming presidency of the European Union beginning in July 2004, the Dutch MFA was particularly interested in promoting dialogue and the ideas that it would generate. Indeed, the Dutch commitment to this meeting rose to the highest levels, as the hosting of the opening dinner by Foreign Minister Bernard Bot suggests. However, the Dutch MFA preferred that non-governmental organizations take the lead in shaping the meeting to ensure that a frank and open discussion could emerge. This explains Clingendael's sponsorship of the seminar and active support by its director, Alfred van Staden, in cooperation with the prominent American foreign policy think tank, the Council on Foreign Relations, with Henry Siegman, its director of the US/Middle East Project, serving as the central contact. With Clingendael and the Council on Foreign Relations in the lead, our goal was to bring together a group of influential American and European foreign policy analysts, largely from outside governments, not merely to compare and contrast American and European approaches to Middle East policy issues but also to offer suggestions on how to foster cooperative policies in the region. In order to avoid a dialogue solely focused on transatlantic relations and divorced from regional realities, we also invited regional participants to share their perspectives. We hoped that the nature of the participants would produce thoughtful analysis of the transatlantic relationship and Middle East issues—in other words, a real dialogue as opposed to a platform to express already well known official positions. In addition to an

introductory session, where the American Greater Middle East plan received some attention, three major themes were addressed: Gulf policy, the Middle East Peace Process, and the problems related to Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and the rise of international terrorism.

As readers will see from the report that follows, the results of the meeting met these goals and exceeded our expectations. Convening nearly a year after the Iraq war, the participants were able to step back and offer insights and lessons and engage each other constructively on ways to move forward. We hope that such dialogues will continue and multiply in light of the importance of the transatlantic relationship and this troubled region. That said, as some of our participants observed, such meetings should not just take place for the sake of transatlantic therapy—as necessary as that might be—but also as a means to help improve the stability and well-being of the region itself.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Maarten Lak, director of the foreign policy planning staff of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to Peter van Ham, Clingendael's Deputy Director of Studies, to Jonathan Lincoln of the Council on Foreign Relations, and last but not least to Bart David van Mourik, who as a Clingendael-intern has assisted with preparing this report in a most helpful way.

Dalia Dassa Kaye
Alfred Pijpers
(Project co-ordinators)

The Hague, June 2004

Programme of the Conference

*Transatlantic Dialogue on Middle East Policy
Clingendael Institute, The Hague
March 4-5 2004*

*Organised by the Clingendael Institute in The Hague in collaboration
with the Council on Foreign Relations in New York*

THURSDAY 4 MARCH

All day Participants arrive in The Hague

6pm *Dinner* at 'Diner Thuis', Raamweg 18, 2596 HL The Hague,
tel: 00-31-70-3607558

Dinner speech by Bernard Bot, Foreign Minister of the
Netherlands

FRIDAY 5 MARCH

9-9.15 am Participants arrive at Clingendael

Chair: Alfred van Staden (Clingendael Institute, The Hague)

9.15-10.30 am *Introduction: Europe and the US in the Middle East:
Past, Present and Future*
How well are the US and Europe coordinating Middle East
policy nearly a year after the Iraq war? On which issues can the
US and Europe agree on a common vision and strategy for
addressing Middle East problems? Should political and
economic reform be part of the transatlantic agenda for the
future Middle East? What are the prospects for transatlantic
cooperation on the American Greater Middle East initiative?
What might be the future role for NATO in the Middle East?

Rapporteurs: Robert Malley (International Crisis Group,
Washington D.C.)
William Wallace (London School of
Economics)

10.30-11.00 am Coffee break

11.00-12.30 pm *Panel One: Gulf Policy*
How well are the US and Europe coordinating efforts to re-
build Iraq? What are the current key similarities and differences
in US and European approaches toward Iran? What explains
the nature of these differences? How high of a priority should
democratization be in a Western Gulf policy? Should the West
focus on particular areas of reform or particular countries (e.g.,
Saudi Arabia)? What concrete steps might be taken to improve
transatlantic cooperation toward the Gulf region?

Rapporteurs: Gregory Gause III (University of Vermont)
Volker Perthes (Stiftung Wissenschaft und
Politik, Berlin)

Discussant: Jon Alterman (CSIS, Washington D.C.)

12.30-1.30 pm	Lunch <i>Chair:</i> Dalia Dassa Kaye (The George Washington University, Washington D.C.)
1.30-3 pm	<i>Panel Two: The Future of MEPP Diplomacy</i> Is the Quartet still the best mechanism for moving the peace process forward? Can and should Europe consider other alternatives if the United States does not make peace process diplomacy a top priority? Is there agreement on both tactics and strategy for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Can the US and Europe coordinate a strategy for a post peace Middle East? What would it look like? <i>Rapporteurs:</i> Steven Everts (Centre for European Reform, London) Henry Siegman (Council on Foreign relations, New York) <i>Discussant:</i> Stefano Silvestri (Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome)
3-3.15 pm	Coffee break <i>Chair:</i> Dr. Abdel Monem Aly (Centre for Political & Strategic Studies, Al Ahram Foundation, Cairo)
3.15-4.30 pm	<i>Panel Three: WMD and Terrorism</i> How do threat perceptions vary regarding WMD and terrorism? Can the recent diplomatic success with Libya provide a model for future US and European coordination in the non-proliferation area? Are American and European security strategies moving closer or further apart in their views of how to address these core security issues? <i>Rapporteurs:</i> Peter van Ham (Clingendael Institute, The Hague) Jonathan Stevenson (IISS, London) <i>Discussant:</i> Mark Heller (Jaffee Centre for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv)
4.30-5.30 pm	<i>Conclusion</i> Jim Goldgeier (The George Washington University, Washington D.C.)
5.30-6.30 pm	Reception

Words of Welcome

Alfred van Staden

Ladies and gentleman, it gives me much pleasure to welcome you to the Clingendael Institute for this transatlantic dialogue seminar on Middle East policy. I would like to extend a very warm and special welcome to our many guests from abroad. I would like to single out Henry Siegman of the New York Council on Foreign Relations and co-sponsor of this meeting. I very much appreciate the Council's efforts in paving the way for this seminar and this venture. Can I also express my gratitude for the work done by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their material and non-material work and for the excellent dinner they and the Minister organised last night. Thank you very much indeed.

Please allow me to kick off with a few introductory remarks. A conference on the Middle East seems to be timely and well chosen at any moment. Unfortunately the tryst of events never leaves any breathing space for the people in this ill fated region, nor for the people of the United States and Europe who are helping to create more security and better conditions there. The Middle East has turned into the world's foremost geopolitical epicentre where economic interests and religious values clash and where issues of cultural identity and national aspirations command almost permanent attention.

The stated purpose of this seminar is to gain a better understanding of the policies being conducted and pursued by the United States and by Europe. Clearly the major dimensions of these policies on both sides of the Atlantic concern, firstly, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or rather the Arab-Israeli issue; the stalling of the peace process. Secondly, the threat of WMD proliferation, with a special emphasis on the position of Iran, and thirdly, the advancement of democracy and economic development in the wider region.

Looking at the positions taken by the United States on the one hand and the European governments and European Union on the other, there are areas of convergence, but clearly also areas of disagreement. Let me focus on an important source of disagreement, namely the preconditions of a successful Middle East peace process. Whereas the United States is of the view that the overall political and economic backwardness of the region is at the root of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Europeans, broadly speaking and leaving aside some intra-European differences, tend to believe that this conflict is primarily

accountable for the ills of the region. Putting it simply, does the road to peace lead through Baghdad or Jerusalem? A related question is how to promote democratic change. Americans and Europeans concur on the view that there is no incompatibility between democracy and Islamic or Arab culture. Still, apparently, they differ on the possibilities and feasibility of enforcing democracy by outside intervention. At any rate there is wide-spread scepticism in Europe on furthering democracy by force. It runs counter to the idea that democratic development is an organic, time-consuming and multi-faceted process that is highly dependent on the operation of indigenous political and social forces.

In trying to better coordinate American and European policies it may be tempting to aim on a division of labour that is built of the familiar division of hard power and soft power, where the Americans take care of the hard power and the Europeans the soft power. I firmly believe, however, that the European role can and must be something more than pouring in money and playing the role of the frustrated banker and making troops available for peace keeping operations. The latter, assuming they are eventually needed; referring again to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

I do not want to pre-empt the discussion so I shall leave my personal views for what they are now. I am happy to be the chair at the first session this morning. In this session we will try to put down a framework for the ensuing debate. There are two speakers to enlighten us, the first of these is Robert Malley. He is now the director of the International Crisis Group's Middle East programme since 2002. He has served as the special assistant to President Clinton on Arab-Israeli affairs and some of you may recall that some years ago he wrote an interesting piece in the *New York Review of Books* on this very issue; I found it was quite revealing in many respects. Dr. Malley, you have the floor.

Introductory Session: Europe and the United States in the Middle East. Past, present and future

Robert Malley

The question that was asked is how well are the United States and Europe coordinating Middle East policy nearly a year after the War in Iraq ended. The short answer is probably: not very. I shall take it from the US perspective. Over the last two decades the United States has twice tried to re-shape the reality of the Middle East through very different means but in both cases investing considerable amount of economic, diplomatic, political and – in one case potentially, in the other actually – military power. The first, which occurred in the nineties, is referred to as the peace process, though it encompassed a lot more than just the peace process itself. It encompassed a number of core assumptions about the region, how it works, and how best to influence its behaviour. It was based on the premise that by achieving Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli- Arab peace you could not only resolve that issue but also address wider strategic problems in that area. The best way of containing what in the US were described as ‘rogue states’ was getting to what was viewed as the source of tensions in the region: the Arab-Israeli conflict.

There are related points. Democratisation and political and economic reform, while important objectives, were put on a backburner, because one did not want to alienate regimes whose help was needed to achieve peace. Centralised, even authoritarian regimes were in fact viewed as most likely to produce a peace deal and sell it to their people; as a result, strongmen, far from being challenged, were nurtured. In short, an array of assumptions regarding the centrality of the peace process led to a particular approach regarding what the U.S. should countenance and what it should encourage in the region. The primary focus during this era was on stability; yet, as we all know, it ended with the collapse of the peace process, the second intifada, conflict and bloodshed.

The second effort to reorganise the region is currently underway. Its outcome is still in some doubt. It began with the advent of the Bush administration and, later, with the attacks of 11th September 2001. Again, a number of key assumptions stand out. For a number of reasons, the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab conflict were no longer considered as keys to the stability of the region nor was their resolution regarded as critical to its evolution. Other issues – political and economic reform, the fight against terrorism, against the proliferation of WMD – instead those centre stage. The

dominant assumption was turned on its head, and it was now believed that by addressing such issues it would be easier to come back and solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In short, basic presumptions were challenged – concerning the relative virtues of stability and instability, the importance of maintaining relations with strong, centralised Arab regimes, the role of violence and the use of military power. The new conceptions follow from a very different understanding about how the region works and from the assessment that attaching primary importance to stability above all else could lead to greater instability in the future.

The implications of this shift on the transatlantic relationship vis-à-vis the Middle East are clear. The Europeans are much closer to the former vision; the Bush administration to the latter. This has, to some degree, poisoned transatlantic cooperation on things Middle Eastern.

This at least is the conventional wisdom, and not necessarily the wrong one, about the stark difference in approaches that have developed with the Bush administration and the events of 11th September. What I would like to offer are some relatively counter intuitive thoughts on this issue and some observations that I think we can discuss in this session and following ones later on today.

The first counter intuitive observation is that the differences between Europe and the United States are not as deep as they may appear, but neither are they as transient or as temporary as some may hope. First, that that they are not as deep as they might appear: by that I mean that it would be an oversimplification to assume that the above description applies to all US policies. Indeed, we could go down the list of issues where this administration has kept faith with previous policies and has kept in tune with the European approach. For example the formal adoption of the two state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian issue is something that former administrations have never done quite so clearly, certainly not as early on in their tenure. In this case, in fact, the Bush administration did it upfront and did it early – and went so far as to recognise a Palestinian right to self-determination. Concerning the approach to rogue regimes and the notion of and relative importance of stability versus democratisation and political reform, Bush's treatment of Libya is a perfect Clintonesque approach, in which strategic interests such as the dismantling of WMD take precedence over all other issues. One does not hear from this administration any talk on reforming the Libyan regime – which, of course, in no way resembles the democratic ideal the administration has been pushing for. I think if you look at the Greater Middle East Initiative, it is not that different from past efforts in terms of the emphasis on civil society as opposed to hard politics, on a gradual, long term approach as opposed to a rapid democratisation effort, and on its focus on building the rule of law, education, and the media.

In fact, it is almost identical to plans that were hatched in the US plans in the eighties and nineties and, as we all know, it is very close to the European's own approach. So while there are differences, there are important commonalities: a generally a-political approach, geared not toward supporting opposition political parties but rather civil society, and to doing so from the ground up. There is, in sum, more continuity than discontinuity.

Even with regard to Iraq, we are seeing greater convergence today as reality sinks in. The United States is realising that it must work with others to spread the burden, to spread responsibility and to increase legitimacy.

On several of these issues, in other words, it would be wrong to see a dramatic departure from longstanding US policy or a dramatic break from Europe.

Yet at the same time, those differences that do exist are neither as transient nor as temporary as some may think. Some in Europe may assume that once the Bush administration is over, whether in 2004 or 2008, things would go back to normal and there would be greater consensus. But this is the same approach that tends to minimise the clear differences that existed between America and Europe prior to 2000. In fact, the multilateralism of the peace process that we see today was totally absent from the Clinton administration. The notion of including Europe began tentatively with the Sharm al-Sheikh summit at the end of 2000, but it really only took hold with the establishment of the Quartet during this administration.

The charges against the U.S. – regarding its unilateralism or tendencies toward being a ‘hyper power’, were all made prior to 2000. So it would be a great simplification to suggest that we are now in an era of turbulence and divergence between Europe and America that can be quickly remedied if a more moderate republican or democratic team were to come to power in the US.

The second counter intuitive observation is that there is an equal danger in a lack of consensus as there is in a contrived consensus and that the search of multilateralism at all costs could be as costly as the absence of multilateralism. It is clear that if Europe and the United States could work together and pool their tools and arsenals together, then much more could be achieved. One could look at the case of Turkey, a country with which the US enjoys its own relationship and over which the Europeans carry enormous leverage because of the prospect of EU membership. The combination of the two has had a far more powerful impact than if either one had been acting alone. Likewise, were both sides to work in tandem on the Palestinian issue, much more could be achieved. There exists a complementarity of interests and tools. But at the same time, I would warn against trying to reach consensus at all costs for the benefit of European participation. Participation for the sake of participation risks inflicting greater harm than acknowledging the differences and working with them. Two examples if I may: One is on the peace process, the Road Map and the Quartet. I have been a critic of the road map from the outset, and I have been a critic of the way the Quartet has functioned from the outset, and I think that the price that Europe, the Russians and the UN have paid for their right to participate has been to accept the reordering of the political agenda. Even though the Europeans continue to say that the key to the conflict is resolving the territorial disputes there has been an implicit acceptance of the view that changing the leadership on the Palestinian side is as important as, and almost a prerequisite for, the rest. And while the Europeans have devoted considerable time and energy on the reform side, the U.S. has put in very little on the political one, thereby damaging the peace process as a whole. The net result is

that, internationally, it no longer is considered outrageous to believe that one has to change the Palestinian leadership before one can achieve fundamental peace. Regardless of whether this is in fact Europe's position, its determination to maintain a united Quartet front has meant that Palestinian reform now ranks at least equal to a political resolution in the hierarchy of priorities.

The second is on the greater Middle East initiative. Europe has a long tradition of trying to promote this objective in the region. Yet joining hands with the US at this particular point in time ultimately may be counterproductive because of the US image in the region. In a sense, association with the U.S. could end up contaminating the European agenda. In other terms, sometimes separating efforts may be just as valuable as combining them.

Next point. Sometimes the danger lies not so much in the existence of disagreement in the relationship as in the dysfunctionality in the way the US and Europe work together. Two quick examples. In the handling of rogue regimes, including today Iran and Syria, the real problem is not so much that the two disagree, but that when both policies are implemented at the same time one gets the worst of both worlds. The US view of Iran is that at this point engaging the regime before it makes fundamental changes is giving it a new lease on life and allowing it to perpetuate its game without being forced to make fundamental choices. The US believes that that policy cannot succeed. The US policy of pure pressure in my view cannot succeed either, because Iran has no incentive and no comprehensive solution is offered to it that takes its legitimate national interest into account. When you put the two policies together, two things happen. On the one hand, it leaves Iran (but Syria is similar), off the hook: they always know that they have Europe to turn to. On the other hand, it leaves Iran without the necessary incentives to modify its behaviour that only the US could offer. So US pressure cannot pay off, because the Europeans do not join; and European incentives cannot suffice, because the U.S. is absent. I am not arguing for one view or the other. It is the dysfunctionality of the two operating at the same time that raises real questions.

I want to end with a couple of observations on a number of key issues that both Europe and the United States need to take a hard look at. The first is a question that I raised at the outset and has to do with what are the core motivations, incentives and modes of behaviour of regional actors. I think the neo-conservatives in the United States have given the wrong answer to the right question. The right question is why policies in the past have failed. Policies that have put a premium on stability and on trying to address the interests of the regimes currently in place have not worked. The Arab world today is not better off by virtue of these policies than it was. The paradox of the neo-conservatives' answer is that in order to produce change, they bank on threats of regime change and incentives of economic wellbeing – threats and incentives that would not have any influence on them, were they their targets. The question of what motivates the behaviour of political actors in the Middle East must be addressed head on and find a path between seeking to address the interests of the regimes in place and threatening them with regime change or military assault.

The second big question involves the issue of democratisation, which is different from the question of institutional, economic and political reform. The Greater Middle East Initiative is a remarkably a-political document, even though the objectives on their surface appear to be very political. I am fairly dubious that one can achieve the kind of political changes it purports to want while at the same time steering clear of political means to achieve them.

Finally, a core question that cannot be eluded concerns the role of Islam in Arab politics. There has been too much of a tendency in the past to say that Islam as a religion is something we can live with, but Islam as a political force is something dangerous. I would suggest that in some ways it might be the opposite. In some instances, Islam qua religion is problematic, in particular when carried to intolerant extremes. But Islamism as a political force in the Arab world is in many ways an appropriate and powerful vehicle that needs to be taken seriously into account if one wants to promote political changes, political reform, democratic reform. We can deal with Western oriented reformists all we like, but today it is the Islamists that represent the most vibrant and in some ways the more forward looking forces in Arab societies today. I think that that is a key issue that the Europeans and Americans have to think about. What is the role of political Islam in the Arab world?

Coming back to what is my personal obsession: the peace process. I think that we are at a turning point. While this is a term that is often abused and misused, I believe that it is applicable in this instance for two reasons. One is Prime Minister Sharon's unilateral disengagement initiative which, I think, poses genuine strategic challenges and opportunities for the United States and Europe. What will the situation be like if Israel were to leave Gaza, parts of the West Bank. Continued to build the fence along lines that would make it difficult for a viable Palestinian state. What does that mean for the future of the region?

There are ways in which this could lead to short-term stability and even a gateway to a renewed peace process and others in which it could effectively end the prospect of a two state solution. At a minimum, in determining their reaction to the Prime Minister's plan, the Europeans and Americans must be very clear about what happens in the West Bank even as they pay close attention to what happens in Gaza.

Finally, this provocative thought: what are the options if in fact the viability of the two state solution becomes a thing of the past? If demographic changes, territorial changes and psychological changes render moot the prospect of a real sovereign Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. I fear these could be questions that will have to be answered sooner than most people expect. The paradox would then be that at the time of greatest international and regional consensus on the need for a two state solution (a president that has supported it so clearly and so early on, the first Israeli Prime Minister to accept it, Europeans accept it, it has been enshrined in a UN Security Council Resolution, enshrined in the Road Map), it may be less attainable than ever, as it slips away for reasons of politics, psychology and events on the ground.

I shall leave it at that and I am sure we will discuss these issues further.

Alfred van Staden:

Thank you Dr Malley very much for this excellent presentation offering an American perspective. More continuity in the US policy than might appear on the face of it not to change significantly with a Democratic administration. In the final part of the presentation you raised a number of interesting and important issues; our approach to democracy and economic reform, political versus a-political means, the matter of the two state solution: a thing of the past or not. I am sure we will pursue these issues in the ensuing debate. For a European perspective, I now turn to William Wallace who combines the qualities of being a scholar; professor of International Relations at the London School of Economics and being a politician. He is the Liberal Democrat Party's frontbench spokesman in the House of Lords. Lord Wallace you have the floor.

Introductory Session: Europe and the United States in the Middle East. Past, present and future

William Wallace

The title we were given for this session is past, present and future. I want to pick up on that because we have to discuss the past before we can get on to the future because we all have different concepts of how the past shapes the future. Let me try and be a bit provocative, and talk about mutual caricatures, because it is much better if we are honest or indeed occasionally abusive to one another so we will get our underlying disagreements out into the open.

We start with mutual caricatures. The Americans see the Europeans as being preoccupied with the past and focussed on the details and difficulties of doing anything grand and indeed incapable of grand visions. The Europeans see US administrations in general and this one in particular as ill informed about the past and unconcerned with it; sweeping past the difficulties and details in pressing yet another grand strategic vision on us. The Americans see the Europeans as incapable of major change or initiative. The Europeans see the Americans as prone to fashion: shifting policies with each new administration and sometimes during administrations, incapable of long term consistent policy even while telling us that they are articulating a new vision that will last for fifteen to twenty years. I say this with particular force because I worked at a think tank in London during the period in which we moved from the Nixon administration to the Ford administration, to the Carter administration and then to the Reagan administration all within nine years; when the Reagan transition team came to Chatham House one of the things they said was that it was a problem for the United States that they faced so many weak and rapidly changing governments in Europe. We had to point out that the same German Chancellor and Foreign Minister were dealing with their fourth set of American administration officials.

We also have a tendency in Europe to emphasise the diversity and distinctiveness of our southern neighbours. Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia are our immediate south; after all the Straights of Gibraltar are only half as wide as the Straights of Dover. The Gulf is where my neighbours who have money but lack taste increasingly go on their holidays. Dubai has become a great European holiday destination. For those who go horse-racing in Britain, the Al-Maktoum family have transformed British horse breeding and racing. Middle East money has transformed the top end of the London housing market. The Middle East is

part of Europe in a way that it is not yet part of the United States. The greater Middle East has been constructed by the US administration from Marrakech to Bangladesh as an artificial construct, across which the USA will bring democracy to the whole region, which is not a vision which Europeans find very easy to share.

We have to start with the past because we do have divergent perspectives on the past. In particular so because what I see, and many others in Europe also see, has been a very active operation in Washington to reconstruct history and memory both about Europe but also on the Middle East in recent years. From a European perspective, the United States has been the dominant power in the Middle East since Suez, or since the Iranian coup of 1953 which successfully overturned one of the few democratic governments in the region. The American strategy towards the Middle East was shaped by Cold War competition and oil and later by a growing commitment to Israel. It was, as Mr Malley said, support for authoritarian regimes provided they were stable. For Saudi Arabia above all, but with successful investment in key partners. Iran until 1979, then Iraq against Iran and finally Saudi Arabia. Americans resisted any autonomous European policy towards the region. Remember the year of Europe of 1973-1974 and the very sharp resistance by Kissinger and others that the Europeans could have the Euro-Arab dialogue of their own. Recall the Venice declaration of 1980-1981, a British initiative instead of a French one and the very sharp criticism of the Carter administration. It is built into diplomats and Ministers in Europe that the Americans do not want us to act autonomously in this. The Barcelona process nevertheless got underway in the context of the Oslo peace process, but was matched almost immediately by a NATO-Mediterranean dialogue which many Europeans saw as a competitive process.

That is the past. What is the present? European perspectives on the Middle East and Islamic society are shaped by our domestic politics, which are very different from American domestic politics. There are between ten and fifteen million Muslims in Europe. They have come to each European state from different regions of the world, so we have different national debates about Islam and immigration, and distinct though overlapping flows of immigrants. The European Union's neighbourhood policy is as much about North Africa as about Eastern Europe, and we see North Africa in terms of a north-south perspective – in contrast to the west-east perspective our American allies perceive, where North Africa is part of a wider Middle East, and where the further Middle East is the centre. All European governments expect immigration to continue. Some of our governments are not entirely honest about how much immigration we expect, because they know how much our populations resist the idea of any further immigration. But we cannot stop it. Look at the figures; look at the population growth and size of Egypt as well as of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. We recognise that there will be further flows.

So the interaction between the western part of the greater Middle East and Europe can only grow closer. The speech made by HM Foreign & Commonwealth Secretary (Jack Straw) last Monday on Middle East policy is well worth all our American friends reading, because it could not have been made by an American politician. It includes a reference to the 25 Mosques in

his constituency and the Madrassa opposite his house, and to the extent to which it is part of the normal process of British politics to be engaged with Islam. Yet again he makes the point that British diplomats are proud that every year the Foreign Office sets up a temporary post in Mecca for all those British Subjects taking the Hajj and staffs it with Muslim members of the Foreign & Diplomatic Service. That is an entirely different perspective on where we are. Muslim politics in Britain are extremely complicated and have been made more complicated by the discovery of a disaffected group of Muslim youth, some of whom have been out to Afghanistan. We have also appreciated the significance of the minority of deeply radical Muslim clerics, and so also of a divided Muslim community. The Muslim vote is now important. Part of the consequences of the Iraq war was that the Muslim electorate has shifted from automatically voting Labour to a substantial number voting Liberal Democrat or for other parties instead. The political engagement of our Muslim communities is a factor in British politics, just as it is in France, and in Germany, and elsewhere as we know.

We see the Israel-Palestine process very differently from our American friends – and so incidentally do significant numbers of our Jewish communities. We recognise and assume very limited influence over a region which is defined by the United States. And our media, as we all know, interpret the region very differently from the United States. Indeed part of our problem is that the splintered understanding of what is happening in the region comes from Americans perceiving what is reported through their media and Europeans through theirs. The extent to which the neo-conservative right in the United States has attacked the European media and Europeans and stuck the anti-Semitic label on them does not help. I recall sitting in a session in New York where one of the participants referred to ‘the structural anti-Semitism which dominates the British media’. Nobody apart from me blinked. Is that conventional wisdom of what it looks like in Washington? Ambassador Schnabel, the US Ambassador to the European Union, made a speech in Brussels a couple of weeks ago in which he said that anti-Semitism in Europe is worse than in the 1930’s. That is not a helpful remark nor is it in any sense accurate; it rather devalues the attempt to have a rational dialogue on the Middle East.

What are European perspectives on America’s approach to the Middle East? It is as Chris Patten said that American policy in some ways has been captured by Likud’s view of the world. Chris’ comment on the ‘Likudisation’ of American foreign policy was jumped upon in Washington, but he represented a view that is widely shared. There’s a sense that the contradictions between American energy policy and American Middle East policy undermine the consistency and rationale of the entire American approach of the Middle East. Here is a country that is dependent on oil setting out to destabilise politically the region on which it depends; with the more enthusiastic people in think tanks saying that Russian and African supplies will replace it. So the absence of an oil conservation strategy along side a greater Middle East policy seems to some Europeans as particularly damning.

European approaches to Iran, Syria and Libya have been ones where slow and painful dialogue, rather than confrontation and intransigence, are matters of strong European preference. Although on the other side Europeans see central Asia, a peripheral region of the GME, as an area in which the corrupt authoritarianism of the 'stans' is something about which we ought to very actively be concerned, and are occasionally shocked that our American friends are not at all concerned.

British government perspectives also come in here. Tony Blair, after all, has been the greatest supporter of American policy in the greater Middle East in the last two years. But it is evident that he hoped to gain a number of concessions in return, first support for active US engagement in the road map and for a vital role for the UN in post conflict Iraq. When President Bush visited Belfast just after the war he used the term 'vital' six times during the press conference, he had clearly understood that this was what Tony Blair wanted him to say. There are many within London now who believe Tony Blair has been left with nothing for what he has given. This is part of the political difficulties that he has at home; that he cannot say to the public that we have, in return, received some greater understanding and support from the United States.

Nevertheless, note that European commitment in the region is there; there are six thousand European troops in Afghanistan, there is a rising number in Iraq, and the majority of new members are sending troops to Iraq as well. We recognise that we have direct interest at stake by maintaining and building stability in the region, and we want to have a partnership with the United States in promoting them.

Let me add one more thing, and that is to half agree with Robert Kagan that the US faces a problem of legitimacy. We have to recognise that the United States has lost immense prestige over the last two years with European publics, and that the public diplomacy of the Bush administration towards Europe has been appallingly bad. We have seen Donald Rumsfeld and Richard Perle on European television screens much more than we have heard more reasonable voices from Washington. The way in which US policy is presented is in itself very damaging to the United States. So the US has a serious credibility problem with the European public, which will inhibit European governments in getting alongside the United States. There has been a loss of respect for the wisdom of American foreign policy; and of course there has been a great deal of concern about the quality of American intelligence et cetera et cetera.

So what about the future? We all recognise that the Greater Middle East Initiative is the focus of the next six months. But Europeans bear the scars of dealing with many, many previous American grand visions galloping past. There is a certain unavoidable scepticism of what will happen beyond November 2004. The sense that this is to some extent an election year mechanism, and not necessarily a fully thought out strategy. I hear people say that the underlying message of the Greater Middle Eastern Initiative is 'anything but Israel'. I hear others say that the message is 'anything but energy conservation'.

Those doubts about it weaken European support. And it also makes difficult to win European support that the noise in the background is of the Christian right and the ideological right. Charles Krauthammer's AEI speech a couple of weeks ago, has been widely read in Europe with his ideas of democratic globalism and his definition of the new existential enemy as 'Arab Islamic totalitarianism, both secular and religious, that has threatened us in both the secular and religious forms for a quarter of a century since the Khomeini revolution since 1979'. Our American friends may say that this is not a representative view. But the American Enterprise Institute is not without some influence in Washington, and in just the same way that the Middle East Media Research Institute sends across my e-mail every day as representative quotes of these dreadful anti-Semitic press reports in the Middle East, across European e-mails every day come similar quotes from the States.

There are also some concerns about NATO as a vehicle of the Greater Middle East Initiative which will follow US policy, with some suggestions that there will be a NATO division under overall US command in Iraq. And that NATO is going to be defined by what it does across the Greater Middle East but not of course in Africa, because Africa is not an American concern so the Europeans will have to deal with Africa. I heard a group of Swedish military officers recently complain of that as they prepared to deploy a peace keeping force in Liberia.

So note the differences in emphasis that we have, Schröder in Washington talking about partnership, my own Foreign Secretary talking on moderate Islam and working with moderate Islam and the need for Arab governments to have some sense of sharing in the process of reform. We have some real problems of misunderstanding and misperception to come. But we all recognise that there is a major crisis. European publics have not taken the messages of the Arab Human development reports sufficiently on board. We have all left the question of economic, political and social development of the Middle East to fester for too long. The real question we face is: can we construct a new partnership towards what from a European perspective is a very diverse region.

Alfred van Staden:

Thank you for this valuable and challenging speech. There were certainly different perceptions and interpretations on the Middle East. It was also important that you underlined the importance of the Middle East for European internal politics. In the final part you raised the difficult issue of partnership with the countries in the Middle East.. Ladies and gentleman, that stage has been set quite clearly'.

Introductory Session: Europe and the United States in the Middle East. Past, present and future

Debate

Henry Siegman:

I would like to comment on something that Robert Malley said earlier on in his presentation. I would like to suggest a slight modification on something he used on rebuilding and developing the region. You indicated that there are those that believe that larger issues cannot be resolved before the Arab-Israeli conflict is resolved. There are more recently those that believe that first the larger issues must be resolved.

I want to suggest a modification. I do not believe that the American or European view has been that the Arab-Israeli conflict must first be solved. Most Arab and European countries fully understand that you cannot hold up everything else until all of the Israeli issues have been solved and put to rest.

What stands in the way of a more accepted American role in the region is the perception that the United States approaches these issues in a very unfair and unbalanced way and consequently lacks the ability to deal fairly with these larger issues. I think there is a difference in this formulation that has a significant consequence.'

Jon Alterman:

I have a question for each of you. Mr Malley you had a comment that US policies in the Middle East have not worked, because the Middle East is not better off. I am wondering if it might not be putting too much responsibility on US policies. So how much do you think the US really can do?

To Lord Wallace, the other part of the question is the following. Is it not too much to expect the US to do more than raise questions and help frame questions? It seems to me that one of the key accomplishments of this administration is that even those that were in opposition to what the administration is doing are finally doing something and talking. See the Arab League and the European Barcelona process. This therefore may be the strongest card of the US administration because it helps you not having to do everything yourself, which is not possible anyway.'

Mark Heller:

'I guess we are all picking up on the same point and that is the debate on linkage or sequencing. I am particularly concerned about Mr Siegman's comment that American proposals for democratisation or transformation are negative, because of the perception that the American approach is one-sided. That seems to imply that if the Americans were more impartial, all those forces that resist change would then be eager to collaborate in their own demise? There's a lack of logical connection, of linkage, here.

A lot of issues have nothing to do with the Arab-Israeli conflict, but there is a political linkage. It is that the conflict provides a good pretext for the forces resisting change to enlist public support. The Israeli-Palestinian issue is now the equivalent of what Karl Marx said about religion in his time namely, that it is the opiate of the masses. My sense is that on all of these issues of convergence and divergence, there is no clear idea of who the partner is. There is a subtext in all this that perhaps the regimes are not partners (as they are with the EU) but targets (as they are more likely to be with the United States) in transformation. This may explain the easier approach by Europeans.

Still the cooperation in one's own demise looks unlikely. At any rate the US needs partners on the ground after the regimes are gone. This is very different from the issue of Eastern Europe after communism. We have Euro-American differences on these questions, but what difference do these differences really make? After all, regime responses to European proposals for transformation, in the form of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, were hardly more positive, even though no one can reasonably accuse the Europeans of the same pro-Israeli partiality of which the Americans are always accused.

Abdel Monem Aly:

To get things heated there are some absent questions around these two presentations. What are the strategic goals on both sides in the Middle East? We are talking about change the whole time, but change to what? I am not just convinced with words like prosperity, democracy and peace. I would agree with Mark Heller that the Arab-Israeli conflict is different from and should be seen separately from Middle East transformation towards democracy. The Middle East is changing already due to many different influences and is not frozen. It is changing through information, media, technology and so forth. My opinion is that change is a historical process that is happening.

Here I will differ from Mr Heller. The Arab Israeli conflict is an essential geopolitical issue and is nevertheless vital for the region. It relates for example to nationalism et cetera like the German question in Europe during the last one hundred years. A settlement must be found because it is exactly as vital and pivotal in the region.

Periods of transition take a long time, and transition is chaos. This even happens naturally without outside pressure. Any attempt to change will provoke civil war, revolution, rebellion and bloodshed. Terrorism is a long term issue, but also a security issue. We are dealing with three different realms. Firstly, terror, secondly, geo-strategy and thirdly, change; a general increase in information for even the poor is a good indicator.'

Maurits Berger:

A brief question. Differences in visions and approaches were explained of both US and European policies. However, it was all about subject matter. Are we actually taking their needs and complaints seriously? If so is there a difference in the way the US and Europe listen to the Arab world?

Gilles Andréani:

A question for Robert Malley. There is a perception of US policy after 9/11 which is dominant in Europe that the Americans decided that the status quo was not an option in the Middle East, and that the Iraq war was a consequence. Quite apart from the question on the differences of views on the war, the fact that change was coming seemed to Europeans to be an ill defined strategy. What do we do next? In what way is American policy on the need for change in the Middle East compulsive for change?

Robert Malley:

Three themes were raised. Obviously we present over simplified views in any presentation like this. Mr Heller was right in saying that there is a difference in emphasis, clearly and I think that has to be noted. I agree though only up to a point when you say that the US has to be more engaged and balanced. There is a higher standard the Arabs have. They believe that the United States can impose, and if they do not they are not trying. But can the US impose? Can they force regimes in the greater region? I am inclined to believe that they cannot just impose their will. How much can the US actually do outside the peace process? I think there is a valid critique to be made of past policies that the neo-conservatives have made.

Let me get back to the inter-link. I think there is a clear linkage between the US image in the region and effectiveness of policy. It has an impact on reformers, who can be seen as being pro-American rather than democrats. Eastern Europe could turn to the United States against the Soviet Union, but Arabs cannot turn against anyone but the US.

Finally on Gilles point. I have never thought the neo-conservative agenda on the Middle East would capture the image of the US administration. I agree with Gilles that change should be done. As the President said, do not forget the danger of stability and do not overestimate risks of change. No longer is there a given that stability is good; its going to be part of the debate and the ongoing strategy in the Middle East.

William Wallace:

The thing is that we in Europe are not sure that the views coming out of Washington are right. There are many but which is most authoritative? Just to come back to a point on Eastern Europe and Europe's different attitudes to change. Perhaps one should say in defence of Europe that the change in Eastern Europe has been a major achievement in which we have invested a huge amount and in which we have to invest large amounts for the time to come.

At the same time, I do not think there has been sufficient notice in Europe about the Arab Human Development Reports and what they say. I would love

to see a detailed work why the Barcelona process has been so unsuccessful. Perhaps we could ask the French if they would want to destabilise North Africa and accept the consequences of all the Algerians arriving in Marseille a month later. So Europe knows the problem of destabilisation and we therefore see these countries as partners rather than targets.

Finally, should we speak of the Arab world or wider world? One should not speak of the Arab world, but of the Muslim world. Radicalisation is happening not only in the Arab world, but in the Muslim world. Think of Kashmir. We, like our Singaporean friends see the issues. There are links there, this is not new. I played most of my politics in Yorkshire. The Rushdie affair grew out of competition between the Saudi's and the Iranians of influence in the Muslim community in Bradford; they are predominantly Kashmiris. One of the reasons why we have to add central Asia and places such as Chechnya is because we have disenfranchised communities. So central Asia, southern Asia and south-eastern Asia are also important as well as the Arab world and North Africa. So we must be committed to promoting social, democratic and other change in the greater Middle East as well as social change in our own societies.

Alfred van Staden:

Thank you all very much indeed. I think you will agree that we made a flying start and it was a rich debate. Still we must sharpen ideas on how we can better coordinate American and European ideas as well as European ideas themselves.

Session: Gulf Policy

Gregory Gause

Alfred van Staden:

As we proceed we focus on government policy; once again a large number of questions have been identified. We should not forget to respond to the first question, namely, how well the US and Europe are coordinating efforts to rebuild Iraq? There are two speakers and one discussant. I would like to call on the first speaker Dr Gregory Gause who is both an Arabist and a political scientist and currently an associate professor of political science at the University of Vermont and director of its Middle East Studies Programme.

Gregory Gause:

The combination of the events of September 11, 2001 and the U.S. occupation of Iraq have, obviously, drastically changed aspects of American foreign policy in the Persian Gulf region. However, both the difficulties Washington has encountered in Iraq and long-standing interests in the oil resources of the region have tempered impulses for even more far-reaching and destabilizing American efforts to alter the regional status quo. The Bush Administration has not heeded calls in Washington to change the regime in Iran and to declare Saudi Arabia a member of the 'axis of evil'. The Administration's rhetorical commitment to democracy in the region remains untested. Its time horizon seems to be long and its positive stance toward the limited democratic experiments in the smaller Gulf States give some indication of the modesty of its goals.

The most significant change in American policy has been toward Iraq, though Washington's ultimate goal in the country remains in flux. Policy toward Iran is more nuanced than American rhetoric would indicate. The recent reversal of the democratic process in Iran could change the bilateral relationship, either in a positive or negative way. While Saudi-American relations are being redefined, and will not return to the intensely cooperative level of the 1990's, it is clear that the Administration sees Riyadh as a partner, not an enemy, in the war on terrorism. Policy toward the smaller Gulf States continues in the pattern established after the Gulf War of 1990-91, as virtual American protectorates and hosts to permanent American military bases.

On American policy in Iraq. The Bush Administration's policy toward Iraq has gone through three substantial changes since the end of 'major combat operations' in May 2003. Initially, the Administration believed that the transition to a relatively stable Iraq on course toward democracy would be swift and easy. The American officials detailed to the country with retired General Jay Garner were all on 60-day contracts. The Administration was quickly disabused of this wishful thinking, the most serious of the miscalculations upon which Administration war policy was based, by the realities on the ground in Iraq. Ambassador Paul Bremer replaced Gen. Garner with a mandate to establish a 'provisional authority' that would control the country for an extended period and guide it toward free-market economic recovery and democracy. Bremer would be advised in this task by an appointed body of Iraqi figures, most of who were either exiles or connected to exile groups. But ultimate authority would be in his hands for some time.

The development of the anti-American insurgency, the enormous costs of the reconstruction (hardly the 'self-financing occupation' promised by Administration officials before the war), and the evident desire of Iraqi power-brokers to regain control over their country led to another round of re-thinking in Washington. This re-thinking occurred in the context of the approaching presidential election in the United States, and the domestic political pressures to both demonstrate success in Iraq and to give the impression that the costly American commitment was winding down. The result of this re-thinking was the November 2003 timetable for an accelerated hand-over of sovereignty to an Iraqi government by June 30, 2004. After sidelining the United Nations throughout the process, Washington is now seeking its help to smooth the transition. Although the Administration has abandoned its plans for indirect elections of a new Iraqi legislature in the face of opposition from Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the predominant Shiite cleric in Iraq, it holds firm to the June 30 deadline for the nominal transfer of sovereignty.

The ultimate goal of the Administration in Iraq is now unclear. It is still publicly committed to building democracy in Iraq, as the cornerstone of the overall Administration policy of democracy promotion in the Greater Middle East (Middle East Partnership Initiative). The sovereignty hand-over in June 2004 clearly does not mean the end of the American security presence in Iraq, nor the end of the American aid program there, or the end of American influence. However, it is less clear now that a fully functioning democracy is the end-goal of its policy. The costs of achieving such a goal now appear too high, politically, militarily and economically. A stable and representative government that is willing to cooperate with larger American foreign policy goals (on oil issues, on Arab-Israeli issues, on military strategy), even though it is not fully democratic, might now be considered 'good enough' for the Administration. The more ambitious goal of a Western-style democratic system in Iraq seems to have foundered on the rocky reality of Iraqi politics.

It is possible that a re-elected Bush Administration, with a continued or even increased role for the 'neo-conservatives' who pushed the Iraq war, might attempt to return to its earlier, more ambitious goal of long-term control over Iraq to bring about profound democratic change. The current downscaling of

goals and changed strategy might simply be an election-year ploy. However, it will be extremely difficult to change course once formal sovereignty is returned to an Iraqi body. Such a turn would alienate most of America's allies in Iraq, and all of America's international allies on the issue. It is doubtful that the United Nations would provide a legitimating cover to such a change. The costs of such a patently cynical reversal would be substantial at home as well. I consider it unlikely. Certainly, if the Democrats win the presidential election, the more modest goals set out recently by the Bush Administration will govern the new administration's Iraq policy. So the most likely result is a United States with substantial influence but not direct control over the course of events in Iraq, providing security for the transitional government and urging it along a path to stable, representative governance. How successful that transition will be remains to be seen.

On American policy in Iran. While Iran was included in the original 'axis of evil' in President Bush's January 2002 state of the union address, American policy toward it has been much more nuanced and flexible than that designation would imply. Washington has cooperated indirectly with, or at least has taken into consideration the interests of, Iran in its post-war policies in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Teheran has likewise played, if not a positive role, than at least not a negative role, from Washington's perspective, in those countries. While raising the issue of Iran's nuclear program to a new level of prominence, the Bush Administration did not treat Iran as it did Iraq, even though there was stronger evidence that Iran possessed an active nuclear program than did Iraq. Rather, it stood back as European countries pushed Iran toward a more open relationship with the IAEA, and supported the resulting agreement. Iran's capacity to make life difficult for Washington in both Iraq and Afghanistan has tempered the pressure from the more ideological components of the Administration's political base to put 'regime change' in Iran at the top of the American agenda.

But there are still a number of 'open files' for Washington in considering its relations with Iran: the nuclear program (with new revelations about Iranian plans to develop a weapons capacity), alleged cooperation with al-Qaeda by elements of the Iranian regime, Iran's relationship with Hezbollah and Palestinian Islamists. Any improvement in relations with Teheran will require Iranian movement on all of these issues. Paradoxically, the recent effort by the Iranian clerical elite opens up the possibility of movement here. Having sidelined its reformist foes in the parliamentary election, they might be more able to compromise on these issues than previously, when they used them in domestic Iranian politics to block reformist efforts to reach an accommodation with Washington. This depends on just how ideologically committed the ruling clerical elite is to these issues, and how much they think renewed relations with the United States could improve their political and economic stance at home.

Even if there are signals from a consolidated, conservative clerical government in Iran of willingness to come to terms with the United States, it remains an open question whether the Bush Administration would respond positively. There will be voices, both inside and outside the Administration, that say that these signals are a sign of weakness from Teheran. The clerical

elite might be seen as isolated, as a result of its heavy-handed manipulation of the parliamentary elections, and easily pressured. 'Regime change' would be seen as an achievable goal, with increased American pressure. This would, obviously, be a very risky policy choice. It would run against the caution demonstrated by the Bush Administration so far toward Iran. But it would accord with the rhetorical commitment to place promotion of democracy at the forefront of American regional policy, and would fit with the general neo-conservative approach to the Middle East. Given what is at stake in Iraq and Afghanistan, I believe the Administration will choose the more cautious approach, perhaps not seeking a new relationship with Teheran but not pushing it into a more hostile position. But there will be a debate about this in Washington, and it could go the other way.

On Saudi Arabia and the smaller Gulf states. September 11 altered the American relationship with Saudi Arabia, but not by 180 degrees. There is a new distance in the relationship, exemplified on the American side by the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Saudi Arabia (that their mission, air patrols of southern Iraq, had ended does not take away from the symbolism of their withdrawal) and on the Saudi side by the fact that no American companies are participating in the current opening of the Saudi gas sector to foreign investment. Public opinion on both sides of the relationship is profoundly suspicious of, if not openly hostile to, the other. But both governments have resisted calls to sever the relationship, and are working to find a new equilibrium for it. The interests at stake – oil for the United States and security for the Saudi ruling family – are too important.

That the Bush Administration, more heavily influenced by neo-conservative thought than any previous administration (and, most likely, any future administration), refuses to consider the Saudi government an enemy in the war on terror, is testament to the enduring importance of the Saudi-American relationship. But Washington is placing new demands on Riyadh, particularly regarding the war on terror. It is requiring of the Saudis a new commitment to stem financial flows that end up in the hands of Sunni Islamist extremists, to crack down on al-Qaeda sympathizers at home, and to use their influence in the Muslim world to delegitimize the bin Ladenist message. Since the explosions in Riyadh in May and November 2003, the Saudi government has been more forthcoming on these issues.

Since the war on terrorism remains the primary concern of the Bush Administration, it seems willing (at least for now) to exempt the Saudis from serious pressures to democratize – in all probability recognizing that an elected government in Arabia would be less likely to cooperate with Washington than the current incumbents. While there is not a complete similarity of views between Riyadh and Washington on oil questions (the Saudis are aiming for a price that is a bit higher than the Bush Administration would probably like), the basic American interest in a stable and reliable Saudi oil policy also militates against heavy pressure for domestic political reform in the country. There will continue to be difficult issues between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia: pressure from Washington for Riyadh to crack down further on suspected financiers of Islamist extremists; profound differences on Arab-Israeli questions; new

American scrutiny of domestic Saudi issues like educational curricula. The relationship will not go back to the cosiness of the pre- 11th September period. But it is clear that the Bush Administration considers the Saudi government a partner, not an enemy, in the war on terrorism.

The distance between Riyadh and Washington, particularly on military issues, is possible because the Bush Administration (as the Clinton Administration before it) has what it sees as secure American military bases in the smaller Gulf States – Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman. Kuwait was the base from which the Iraq war was launched, and has thousands of American soldiers permanently stationed there. Bahrain is the homeport of the U.S. 5th Fleet. Al-Udaid Airbase in Qatar is the centre of American air operations in the Gulf. The UAE and Oman give American forces regular access to their bases and facilities. In exchange, all these countries receive an implicit promise (there are no formal defence treaties) of American protection against larger regional neighbours (including Saudi Arabia).

Whether by design or happenstance, the United States has fallen into the role played in these smaller states by Great Britain up until 1971. These states have comfortably returned to the de facto status of protectorates, now under American rather than British protection. As the British pushed the local rulers toward mild administrative reforms at various times, Washington is now encouraging them toward mild democratic experiments. They have responded (with the exception of the UAE) with cautious electoral forays, important in the local context but hardly moves toward full democracy. The United States seems more than pleased with the extent of the electoral experiments in Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman, giving some indication of what it means by ‘democracy promotion’ in the region.

My conclusion is as follows: Iraq remains the centrepiece of the new American policy in the Gulf. A stable Iraq that is friendly toward the United States, with a representative if not fully democratic government and an oil policy aimed at meeting the continuing growth in world demand at relatively low prices, would drastically alter the geopolitics of the region from its previous pattern. Such a result would make it possible for the United States (if it chooses) to distance itself even further from Saudi Arabia, to exert real pressures for democratization on neighbouring Arab states and Iran, and to alter the regional context of the Arab-Israeli situation. But the chances of achieving this result in Iraq, which seemed so easy to the Bush Administration before the war, remain uncertain. The extent to which the Bush Administration, or a successor administration, is willing to pay the political, military and economic costs of achieving that goal is also uncertain.

Alfred van Staden:

Thank you Dr Gause for this most interesting survey of US policies towards several of the most important actors in the Middle East. Again for a European perspective, I would like to call on the next speaker Dr Volker Perthes who is currently the head of the German institute for international and security affairs based in Berlin. The floor is all yours, please.

Session: Gulf Policy

Volker Perthes

Democratisation. The US and the EU agree that a democratic transformation of the Arab world or the wider Middle East is a goal that should be pursued. Europeans will likely remind their US counterparts that Europe has pursued this goal even before September 2001, and not only 'discovered' the lack of democracy in the Arab world in the context of its struggle against international terrorism. As a matter of fact, democracy-building, the support of civil society, the rule of law, and human rights have been key elements of the political and security chapter of the 'Barcelona process' (the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership) both in its multilateral and bilateral dimensions (Barcelona Declaration and individual association agreements). Certainly, the Barcelona process has not been totally successful, and Europe may not have pushed enough for its political elements. Europe's pragmatic efforts to foster democratisation often entail embracing the unsatisfying principle of 'taking countries from where they are' and rather banking on good examples set elsewhere (best practices) and dialogue than on threats of regime change. In other words, European policy-makers may well be prepared to support even minor reform steps (education, administrative reform, or economic policies) in some countries whose speed of political development lags way behind what Europe would like to see, while criticising others countries for deficiencies of democratic development or human rights violations that may be comparatively less serious.

One of the lessons of the Barcelona process may be that it is wise to break up the concept of 'democracy' into its constituent elements, such as: the rule of law, independence of the judiciary, transparency, accountability, strengthening of civil society, etc. This may make it easier to take the elites of these countries along, and create common interests rather than fears of enforced regime change. From a European perspective, therefore, what we need is not a 'forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East' (George W. Bush), but a common perspective for political, economic and social change in our (European) neighbourhood that builds on the potentials in these countries and takes their societies along, respects their dignity, and realises the linkages that exist between political and economic underdevelopment on the one hand and unresolved regional conflicts on the other. It would be a grand illusion to think

that democratisation could succeed as long as the Arab-Israeli conflict remains without a fair and mutually acceptable settlement. We must neither underestimate the centrality of the Arab-Israeli conflict for other regional outcomes (militarisation, authoritarianism, the appeal of extremist ideologies), nor the extent to which the West's credibility in the region depends on the seriousness of American and European efforts to find a fair solution for the conflict.

Iran: Different prisms. Different US and European approaches become particularly obvious with regard to Iran. Despite shared transatlantic interests (not the least of which is the abandonment of Iran's nuclear weapons programme), the United States and Europe continue to regard Iran through fundamentally different prisms, and this will no doubt continue to stand in the way of any joint policy. Washington still considers Iran to be a 'rogue state' whose regime refuses to adapt the country's domestic and foreign policy to Western (and, probably, popular) demands. Europe, in contrast, sees Iran as a problematic partner, but also as a complex society with enormous possibilities for progressive domestic policy developments. This explains Europe's insistence on maintaining some form or other of more or less critical dialogues with Tehran.

Europe also views Iran – as may occasionally be pointed out – as currently the most pluralistic system in the Gulf. At the same time, the country serves as an example that democratisation will always be a complex and complicated process, never a linear one, and will always be marked by contradictions and occasional setbacks.

Following the Iranian elections of 2004, significant changes may lay ahead for European-Iranian relations, particularly if a rapprochement between Tehran and Washington will take place. The resumption of normal relations with the world's number one will probably weaken the interest of the Iranian elite in maintaining 'enhanced' political dialogues – rather than concentrating on trade and economic issues – with the Europeans, who emphasise human rights issues far too much for the liking of the regime's conservatives.

Saudi Arabia: Common caution. Saudi Arabia will probably not become a prime example for either European or US efforts to push a partner towards speedy democratisation. Changes are taking place, though slowly and probably too slowly. In many respects, Saudi Arabia resembles a super tanker which is difficult to move – whereas the smaller Gulf monarchies resemble light vessels that can change course in relatively quick time. At the same time, once the super tanker is on a new course, we can probably be more assured that it stays there. To be honest with ourselves, we must not ignore that the super tanker's load is what largely defines the relationship both of the US and of Europe with the Kingdom. The enormous interest of keeping Saudi Arabia stable, largely shared by the elites of both sides of the Atlantic (Europeans generally hope that voices in the US calling for or seriously considering an externally enforced overthrow of the monarchy and/or the occupation of parts of the Kingdom do not represent more than the lunatic fringe of America's political class), makes it very difficult to push forcefully for speedier or deeper political change. Not only do we, explicitly or implicitly, act on the principle that we have to take the elites

of the country along. We also all put our hopes into one elite segment that seems to be more progressive (or farsighted) than others (i.e. Crown Prince Abdallah and his team); and we will have to find out how we can enhance this group's chances of success both through our bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia and our policies in the region.

Iraq: Shared interests, but. Irrespective of the differences regarding the need for and the legitimacy of the war in Iraq, as well as the analysis of threats that was used to justify it, the EU and the United States share a keen interest in seeing a stabilised Iraq and the establishment of a sustainable pluralistic regime in Baghdad that is based on the rule of law and, preferably, on democratic participation. For reasons of geographical proximity, Europe's interest in the transformation of Iraq into a participatory, pluralist state is probably even greater than that of the United States. Anyone who doubts this should be aware that the territorial integrity of Iraq – a key prerequisite for regional stability – can only be maintained today if the new Iraq has federal structures and a representative political system that guarantees participation and minority rights. For Europe, this interest translates into a European responsibility for promoting (or helping to promote) the economic and political reconstruction of Iraq. That responsibility will also have to be reflected in financial commitments, including the willingness to cancel debts and provide financial support for the country's economic and social reconstruction. Bearing in mind Iraq's potential economic clout, a kind of new Marshall Plan will be required under which the country, once back on its feet again, passes on the subsidies it receives today.

At the same time, decisions on Europe's (i.e., EU and member states') policy on Iraq – regardless of whether they pertain to financial and technical support, police training or military contributions – should not be measured in terms of whether they help to heal transatlantic wounds, but rather in terms of whether they serve Europe's interests in Iraq and the broader region: not least, as already mentioned, the stabilisation and democratisation of Iraq itself. Regarding a possible NATO role in Iraq, this means that requests for such a role can hardly be turned down if they originate from an independent Iraqi government and are based on a clear UN mandate. Whether and how individual NATO member countries will become involved will in such a situation cease to be a matter of principle, and becomes a question of possibilities, capacities and the acceptance of the troops of particular nations by the Iraqis. Dispatching Turkish troops would remain a bad idea, even if the Alliance was called upon for help by Baghdad and New York.

A NATO deployment could hardly be justified, however, if all it did was to reduce the burden on US troops. Unless the political context in which an international force operates changes, NATO units would hardly be regarded any differently from an American or coalition occupation force.

It is particularly important not to overburden the Iraqi experiment. Iraq should be treated neither as a model (e.g. for Middle Eastern democracy), nor as a bridgehead for external projects to re-order the region. Deposing a regime by military force and even putting a new government in place is relatively easy; building a model is far more difficult and the attempt to do so would probably be asking too much of the Iraqi actors. Moreover, making Iraq a bridgehead for

regional projects would be a sure-fire way of prompting unfriendly reactions on the part of its neighbours – instead of including them in efforts to stabilise the country.

Building regional structures versus re-ordering the region

Success of Western policies towards the region will largely depend on whether or not we can win over large parts of the regional elites, convince them of a commonality of interests, and find co-operative ways of dealing with risks and challenges. Regional security may well be a field for such co-operation that still offers unexplored opportunities.

Conditioned by Europe's colonial experiences, European policy-makers tend to be somewhat sceptical about wide-ranging plans to bring a 'new order' to the Middle East. They tend to favour the establishment of regional structures that can help to reduce the potential for conflict, and institutionalise co-operative relations that would enhance security for all parties and facilitate the processes of transformation in the countries in question. Lessons learned within the CSCE process can provide useful points of departure.

One should be aware that not only authoritarian regime elites, but important segments of the societal elites in the Middle East consider the perspective of a 're-ordering' of the region from abroad a serious threat. At the same time, these same elites have an interest in containing regional conflict potentials and enhancing regional security. The idea of a Conference on Security and Co-operation in the Middle East (CSCME) was first raised by regional actors such as Jordan's former crown prince Hassan bin Talal. Most probably, it is still too early to launch and implement such a comprehensive project. Ultimately, a CSCE-type process will only be crowned with success if the territorial conflict between Israel and its neighbours is resolved, or if a solution is within sight.

Even before a process involving all the relevant countries and all the respective problems in the region is launched, however, there are good prospects for establishing certain more limited forms of regional security policy co-operation in which the United States, the EU and other actors from outside the region should also be involved. For example, it would make sense to set up a '6 plus 4 plus 1' contact group for Iraq (comprising Iraq's neighbours, the members of the Middle East Quartet, and the new Iraqi government) both as an instrument of co-ordination and as a confidence-building measure whose very existence might prompt the regional parties to sort out their legitimate interests with regard to Iraq in a constructive way.

Alfred van Staden:

Dr Perthes, thank you very much for your thoughtful observations. I was personally struck by what you said. Just to pick up one point about Iran; the zero sum nature of the dialogue between Europe and some parts of the political elites in the country and the dialogue between the US against the backdrop of this conference trying to generate ideas to better coordinate the effort on both sides of the Atlantic. To me it seems to be a very important observation indeed. However, you failed to mention the Fischer plan. We now go on to the next speaker, Jon Alterman.

Session: Gulf Policy

Jon Alterman

It is hard to follow two presentations as strong as these, but I will try just to muddy the waters a little a bit in the interest of provoking an interesting discussion. I think the first thing we have to keep in mind when we are talking about US policy in the Gulf is that it is basically a militarily led policy. I did not hear a discussion of that and I think that is one of the things that divides the US and Europe. The US thinks of the Gulf primarily in military terms. It thinks about the military presence, it thinks about DoD and its presence in Iraq. This is a militarily led, not a diplomatically led, region for the US, and that makes the region different and makes the US approach different from the European one.

While the State Department was doing diplomacy in the Gulf for most of the 1990's, it was often trying to get small concessions from states on the Arab-Israeli peace process. It was not developing bilateral relationships with the Gulf states and I think there are a number of people now who feel that to be a mistake. It also seems to me unfair to suggest that the US discovered democratisation after 9/11. What 9/11 did was to create the grand coalition to support democratisation. But there were lots of people, for lots of reasons, who supported the idea of democratisation in the Middle East before 9/11. As Greg suggested, many were liberals who objected to the status of women in the Middle East and a whole range of other issues. You had neo-cons who had before 9/11 seen the issue of the transformation of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union as one of their great victories and they thought that they needed a new 'big idea'. You even had a number of people who had been active in the first Bush administration who said: 'when we were in positions of influence in the Middle East after the first Gulf War we did not push hard enough on democratisation. Now we are back in government and it is time to push harder'. It does not seem to me that 9/11 suddenly woke everybody up. What 9/11 did was provide the glue for a coalition which previously had been uncoordinated.

I agree with Volker about the idea that the US policy towards Saudi Arabia is basically closely tied to Crown Prince Abdullah. That means not only that our policy is tied to an 80 year old man who has not yet become King, but also that the US may not have thought sufficiently beyond Crown Prince Abdullah. Still, it seems to me that the President's relationship is with Crown

Prince Abdullah and the President's trust is in Crown Prince Abdullah. That relationship has been getting better after May 12th especially; Saudi Arabia has been cooperating spectacularly compared to how they were cooperating before on a wide range of anti-terrorism issues, but where this relationship goes, I think, remains in question.

When I was in Saudi Arabia talking to some fairly senior people outside of the government in September, I was struck by the number of fairly influential Saudis who said: 'You know, the US government has a wiring diagram and understands exactly how Saudi Arabia works. You are the only people the royal family listens to. You have to be better monarchs, you have to be wise, firm and fair and you have to tell the royal family what they have to do and when they have to do it. You have to hold their feet to the fire and make it happen, because the only people who can really make reform happen in Saudi Arabia is the US.' The US response of course is: 'No, we should not be better monarchs; you guys have to be better democrats. You have to be entrepreneurial, you have to be innovative, you have to try things.' In many ways, that is where this relationship is going. On a reform level we want them to be more like us and they want us to be more like them and I am not sure that either one of us is going to win in a time frame that we are happy with.

On the Iran issue, it seems to me that the US does not have a policy toward Iran. In fact Iran was one of the first items on the agenda for policy review in the Bush administration, and I think Iran was really one of the issues which created the presumption in the US government that the conservatives and the realists would not be able to reach an agreement. This was one issue where the administration started talking about it and it went around and around in circles. There were people who wanted evolutionary change in Iran, and there were people who wanted revolutionary change in Iran. They could not agree on anything except we should have a declaratory policy supporting the democratic ambitions of the Iranian people. That is it and that has been our policy, which is to say we have not had a policy. It seems to me what we will do on the nuclear file is we will delegate it to the Europeans until after the election. And then we will see if we can come up with a policy, but right now the nuclear file is mostly being managed by the Europeans and you are not going to see much of an initiative until probably after the next presidential elections in May of 2005. I was surprised there was not more discussion of this.

To me there seems to be a huge question of the degree, the nature and the imprimatur for international involvement in Iraq in the next several years. Whether international institutions will be directly involved, what kind of organisations of international institutions, what level of involvement compared to US involvement and the role that the international institutions and foreign governments will play in defining the future of Iraq. It seems to be a very big question. It strikes me that when Greg talked about his three phases, the way we got into having a deadline in November was a way to get international support for the US presence in Iraq. Getting into that phase of talking about an end game was demanded by the French and others and this seems to me to be part of a trend of the administration toward opening up and it strikes me that we still do not know where this process is going.

I faulted the administration for not anticipating some of what was obvious before we even went into Iraq. US goals in Iraq, certainly the announced US goals in Iraq, were either actively opposed or at least quietly opposed both by much of Europe and by virtually all of Iraq's neighbours. The US essentially talked about Iraq destabilising the region — albeit in a positive way — and none of Iraq's neighbours wanted Iraq to turn into the strong bold beacon of democracy that the US talked about. I think many people in Europe would like to see the US get a little stuck in the mud in Iraq: 'You guys say you can do it, go do it.' Therefore one of the places we have a problem is that while the US would like to have an overwhelming victory in Iraq, most of the rest of the world would like to have the US have a bloody nose in Iraq. They do not want chaos, they do not want Iraq to turn in to an Afghanistan, but they do not want Iraq to be a city on the hill either.

I am not sure I agree with Volker that we really do agree on where we are trying to go. I think there are still many people in the administration who are trying to take Iraq in a much different direction than many in the rest of the world would like it to go.

Alfred van Staden:

Thank you Jon for these comments that seem to me very helpful for pursuing the debate. Jonathan Stevenson was the first then Mark Heller.

Session: Gulf Policy

Debate

Jonathan Stevenson:

I just wanted to put a gloss on what everybody said on Iran, I do not think anything was wrong or I did not starkly disagree with it. First is to echo what Jon said, that there was initial Bush interest, at least amongst some people in the administration, in pursuing at least warmer relations with Iran. I think four things other than the internal disagreements got in the way. One was the WMD program in light of 9/11. A second one and probably the thing that drove the president over the edge in labelling Iran as part of the axis of evil was that it decided to become a player in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in December 2001.

Then I think there were also doubts about whether the reformist movement really could overtake the conservative religious establishment and even if it could, questions about whether there was much daylight between the reformists and the conservatives on two issues; on Israel and on WMD, but now I think there may be some things happening. If there is no policy then there is at least an open door for some convergence between Europe and the US and Iran and it seems to me that Hezbollah may be turning inward, there is no conclusive evidence of that, but in any case it seems less responsive to Syria and apparently went to Iran about the prisoner exchange with Israel and Iran said all right. Iran is playing ball in Iraq, with respect to US interests and is playing ball on WMD too. I think that there have also been some indications that Teheran has reached out informally to the US about striking some kind of grand bargain and, if there is a Kerry administration they may find themselves in that position. It seems to me that those are things that are worth remembering about the situation in Iraq.

Mark Heller:

This has been a very geopolitical session; we have spoken for more than an hour now about the Gulf without once, to the best of my recollection mentioning the word 'Shia'. I am curious because one of the intellectual flavours of the month is the emergence of Shia power in the region or the intensification of Shia-Sunni contradiction. There is this traditional argument about whether the Gulf ought to be called the Arab Gulf or the Persian Gulf and we resolve it by just referring

to it generically as the Gulf, but if you look at who lives almost all the way around it, it might most properly be called the Shia Gulf even on the Western side, Bahrain and the Eastern Province. So I am wondering, is the rise of Shia power an issue on the US-European radar screens and if so what form does it take?

Alfred van Staden:

A high level of involvement marks this seminar. I have four more speakers on my list Steven Everts, Stefan van Wersch, Jim Goldgeer and William Wallace. May I urge all of you to be as brief as possible?

Steven Everts:

Very briefly then, maybe it cannot just be a Franco-German paper, but a Franco-German-British-Dutch paper, because I, like Gilles and Volker, am a big fan of this Gulf security idea, but I will not go into that. It is curious that planning staffs all over the world and indeed politicians from the region in private meetings all say it is a great idea and yet nothing happens, you have got to be careful about that, but in principle I am a big fan of that.

I wanted to say something about the triangular relationship between Iran, Europe and the US. I think that Volker is absolutely right to say that for Europeans looking at Iran we are mostly struck by a very sophisticated political scene, but I myself am quite worried about whether in the long term we Europeans have a problem. We have a short-term good policy on Iran, but perhaps in the long term we have a big problem. Let me try to say something about that.

The momentum at the moment seems to lie with moderate conservatives, the neo-conservatives, call them what you like who run very firmly on a platform of, 'we are able to deliver.' They deal with the Europeans on the nuclear issue, but also domestically, you know, these good for nothing reformists, they talk a great deal, but they will not be able to deliver. However, the talk in Teheran for what it is worth is that they will not be able to deliver domestically. They may well be able to deliver on the nuclear file, but not on the domestic economy and other things and that brings you on to the stuff that both Greg and yourself have eluded to, the prospect of a possible rapprochement with the US. What do you do as a regime; you have massive demographic pressures, legitimacy crisis of the system as such, what will make you more popular? Well perhaps an opening with the US.

That brings the question of would they pay the price that the US would demand. Nobody knows for sure, but I think there is definite interest in these neo-conservative circles in Teheran. That begs the question, should the Europeans encourage this to the extent that we have any influence over this at all and Volker, your answer seems to be, well I am not sure, and I am not sure that I agree with you on that Volker. Short term it is true politically and commercially we benefit from poor relations between the US and Iran, but I think strategically we pay a price for it. The EU-Iranian relationship cannot evolve more positively as long as there is not a parallel thaw between the US and Iran. As I said in the beginning there is a problem for Europe in the longer

term, the risk of losing Iran. Lots of ordinary Iranians are critical of Europe. They think we are cynical, in bed with the Mullahs, not sufficiently critical, so I would say that the European Commission and others should make a point of raising human rights issues, raising democracy issues. That is absolutely right and we should have the courage of our convictions because it would be very damaging to European interests and influence in the medium to longer term if people in Iran think that we are in the business of doing dirty deals on proliferation at the expense of democracy.

If I can make a brief parallel with Eastern Europe. Some people in Eastern Europe, not all, but some think that the Western Europeans were soft on human rights, insufficiently supportive of dissidents, I happen to think that that is mistaken, I think the historical record is much more complex where Western Europeans supported massively dissidents in Eastern Europe, but that perception exists and there is perhaps a parallel between that and Iran. In the short term we have a great policy on Iran, probably on the verge of a success on the nuclear file, but in the long term a problem.

Martin Eberts:

I would like to make three short remarks on each of the major countries mentioned, firstly Saudi Arabia. Greg mentioned the insistence of the US government that the Saudis do something about their instruments, their pan-Islamic instruments, their Wahabi kind of Islam they are exporting with the help of their money. The question I am asking is: can they do more than subtle changes on the surface? Because I am afraid their system is built on buying them time or security from the Islamist radicals they have been supporting for decades and decades. I think they can modify it, but it is part of the system. Also one other point, when we talked to one of the Saudi princes last year about human rights, about the prospect of reform, he said, do not talk so much about human rights or religious freedom for example, it has never been pressed from any Western government and I am afraid it is still not being done. The Saudis can still easily play the old game, saying, you should be glad to have us in charge, because if we go away the real bad guys will come and everybody is buying that argument and it is very hard to swallow. It is a little subtler now, but it is still going on.

Concerning Iraq, I will be very brief. It was just a year ago that we were in Washington talking about all sorts of things just before the Iraq war started and then there was another concept on the table I did not hear about which was 'pre-emption'. Whatever happened to pre-emption with regard to Iraq? There is one missing element and that is the role of the UN in Iraq. Of course we all agree the UN has to play a role, will play a more important role, but I see one risk as well. The UN might well take over the role as a target at least so far as the Sunnis and the former supporters of the regime are concerned. I think many Iraqis perceive the UN, as one instrument of the West to deal with Iraq so there is a certain risk that the UN will end up in a dangerous situation and we have seen the deadly attacks against the UN HQ in Baghdad already.

Finally, I think I have to say something concerning the Fischer plan, because it has been mentioned so often. I think that if I reduce it to the basic

idea that is that he wanted to kick off the discussion and to do something more visionary than we used to do. Something more than just saying, we have all these instruments and we have always applied them and they are very good and we must continue doing so. He just wanted to remind the Americans and ourselves that there is something more we can do. We do not have to reinvent everything, but we must coordinate and he wanted to do that before the discussion and the European scene being flooded with the new US initiatives. It was the right time to do so, kicking off this discussion and this plan or initiative has to become a European one, if it does not work in this way it will not work. It is not really a Fischer plan it is an initiative taken by Fischer to help foster a European initiative. So that is the basic idea and if that happens and I think we are on the right way it might contribute. It is not about merging what the Americans are doing and the Europeans are doing, but helping to coordinate.

Stefan van Wersch:

To pick up on what Dr Perthes said about Iraq not turning firstly into a transatlantic issue; I think that goes for the greater Middle East issue as well. What I have seen over time in Washington was that especially neo cons were already, years ago, pushing the issue, those were the ones you could talk to best, even if you do not necessarily share their ideas. What I have seen in Europe was that most of the Middle East experts were very sceptical about the whole issue as of the beginning, but then it started to move when it became a potential transatlantic issue, so then other parts of ministries moved in and they said, this is indeed a kind of psychotherapy we can do stuff together and we can show we have all these tools and that we can use this. The big first question is, is a self-conscious Europe very assertive that comes up with its own plan here; not the first thing we need rather than being perceived as joining up to an American initiative? It is an important one and it goes for Iraq as well.

Jim Goldgeier:

I just had a comment about Iran from the standpoint of American domestic politics. Jonathan's point about the Bush administration not having a policy, I think it is very difficult for a US administration to have a policy on Iran for domestic political reasons. Certainly if you talk to any political advisers on any Democratic campaign and I would assume that many advisers to John Kerry would be telling him this, people believe that Jimmy Carter lost the presidency over Iran and so for Democrats in particular Iran is a very difficult issue and then given Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism at least from the political side, you can argue that foreign policy people have been trying, to think of ways to come up with a policy and the political advisers will argue that it is political suicide to pursue open dialogue with a country that is a major state sponsor of terrorism. I just think in American domestic politics again going back to the 1980 election, it is very hard to have a policy.

Robert Malley:

I will try to be quick as well. Avoiding using the Middle East as therapy and whether it is the peace process or Iraq, these are issues that are important

enough, we are seeing it every day. On the issue of Islam again I made the point this morning. One point about Iran being a tough political domestic issue, the reason why they write the article that way — I think you have to understand it in domestic political terms — that was cover for the real message in the piece which is engage with Iran fully and they had to say Europe is not tough enough or else they will appear weak. My main point has to do with Iran. I agree fully with Gilles in how important Iran can be in terms of Europe, the US, but in particular Iran and I also agree with the notion of regional security structure, but I want to throw some cold water on this. Certainly the Iranian conservatives are convinced the US will move, the Europeans seem to fear that the US is going to move. I am now convinced that the US believes it is going to move, because it fears, number one, that if it moves, and I have heard this directly from people in the White House, they fear that if they move the Europeans are going run and if they give any hint of better relations with Iran the Europeans are going to be first to sign every single contract and they do not want that. They fear that any gesture is going to be viewed as premature and is going to comfort the conservatives in Iran and they are not as convinced as I am hearing here that Iran is playing ball in Iraq, they are very concerned about what Iran is doing in Iraq, they are very concerned about the WMD and they are also pretty concerned with the latest dealings between the EU and Iran. I do not think, unfortunately, the picture is quite as rosy as people like to put it.

Jacqueline de Bony:

There has been a lot of talk on democracy. But it is a vague concept and it is culture bound. What I would say is that broadly speaking democracy is a fair way of living together. The question is, what is a fair way of living together from the perspective of the eastern peoples, and what are the American and European views on how they should live together, in harmony.

Alfred van Staden:

Allow me myself to add a small footnote to the debate. I have a specific question for Volker. You expressed some doubts about any role for NATO to replace the greater part of the American forces in Iraq. You may be right that the people over there are not likely to make any difference between American occupation forces and NATO occupation forces. I believe that the general political context here may be very important, what I am thinking of is a new resolution in the UN Security Council, a higher visibility of the political role of UN there. My question would be what the alternative other than just abandoning Iraq is?

Volker Perthes:

I would not say I am agnostic about a NATO role, but what I wanted to say here is, without dealing with the issue under certain circumstances NATO could make a positive contribution, what are our criteria for deciding whether we want NATO in or not? If our criteria are whether that it please the US or heals transatlantic relations then I would be against it, it would be the wrong criteria. If we have a situation where an independent Iraqi government says, we

need help in post conflict peace building and there is a UN mandate for NATO, I think it would be very difficult to refuse it and I would be all in favour to do what we need to do there. It is really about the question what the measurement for our decisions there is. Is it healing transatlantic relations or is it doing what is good for Iraq and that has to be found out at the proper moment. It is not about saying, NATO should never be there or the UN should be there under all circumstances. It is a question, would it help or would it not help? If there is no change in political circumstances, if the situation remains as it is and we send NATO in to take over one or two provinces it would not make any positive difference. If there is independence, if there is a UN mandate, yes, NATO could probably play a positive role.

Gregory Gause:

Just two basic comments about local politics in the Gulf since the issues were raised about Saudi domestic politics. Can Saudi Arabia change? Basically it can not change if what you want to see is the Saudis becoming a liberal democracy, they can not do that. But can wahabism exist in one country as opposed to the more outward focused and there I think the answer is yes, it can exist in one country and that is what the Saudis are heading for. They are always going to play a role in the Muslim world just because they have Mecca and Medina besides their money, but I think they can disassociate themselves much more actively from the radical Salafi Jihadist movement that sprang up in the 80's with Afghanistan being a central element in how it sprang up and that Saudi Arabia both intentionally fostered and in some ways unintentionally fostered in the 90's. I think they can move away from that, because wahabism is at its base a state ideology and this is where Bin Laden and others get off the boat and why they are not good wahabis, because wahabism is a state ideology, it needs a state to exist and the historical reason for wahabism was to build a strong state in Arabia where none existed and there is still enough deference to the state among the vast majority of what you would call the wahabi intelligencia. They will not allow Christian churches to be built in Saudi Arabia, but they will follow the King when he says we have to redirect our charity out of this Madrasa and help the poor here at home.

I also think all this talk about Abdullah's centrality is absolutely misplaced. I am not that old but I can remember when Abdullah was the anti-American one. To some extent it is where you sit. If you are running the show in Saudi Arabia you cannot be that anti-American, because you understand what America means for the country and you have to kind of talk about economic reform because you face these demographic realities, unemployment being I would say the number one domestic political issue in Saudi Arabia now. So if one of the non-reformers like Sultan becomes King because Abdullah dies before, I am not so sure we will see that different a situation in Saudi.

The second issue is Mark Heller's Shia power. As Volker said it is on the radar screen in Saudi Arabia where people will ask you if you are an American, has America adopted a pro-Shia policy and even though I am not that old I can remember when the Shia used to be bad guys and the Sunni's were the good guys for America. I do not think Shia power is an issue on a state to state basis

as long as it remains a state to state issue. I do not think the Saudi government will have any problem dealing with a Shia dominated government in Iraq, as long as it does not meddle in politics in Kuwait or Saudi Arabia. That was the problem with the Iranian revolution.

Alfred van Staden:

I am once again happy to conclude that this debate was stimulating. On some issues the jury is clearly still out. Quick question, is it good for us Europeans to be seen with the Americans? Thank you all once again, we shall reconvene in an hour's time.

Session: The Future of the Middle East Peace Process

Henry Siegman

Dalia Dassa Kaye:

To start us off today, we are very honoured to have Henry Siegman, the foremost expert on the Middle East peace process at the Council on Foreign Relations. He directed a ground breaking taskforce report on Palestinian institutions and is a prolific writer; I am sure many have seen his pieces on the peace process, particularly his most recent piece in the New York Review of Books which is quite interesting. If you have not had the chance to read it I suggest you do so. Henry can you start us off on this discussion.

Henry Siegman:

It could be argued that a discussion that assumes the Middle East peace process can still be brought to a successful conclusion is an academic exercise, since events on the ground have deteriorated to the point where it is difficult to conceive that they can be put together again. We may have passed a point of no return, and the objective of a two-state solution may no longer be a viable option. That would be cause for deep despair, because the only solution in my view is a two-state solution. There are no other options that do not lead to tragedy and to grief.

There are several reasons why the two-state solution may no longer be viable. First is the extensiveness of the settlement enterprise. The settlements are so widely dispersed, so deeply entrenched, and the settlers have become so important an ideological and political force on Israel's political scene, that it becomes very difficult to imagine a government that has the ability to remove the settlements.

Second is the issue of demography. Since we have already discussed this issue, I will not belabour the point beyond noting it is only a matter of time before Jews in will become a minority.

Third is the absence of any central Palestinian authority in the territories. These areas are slowly but surely descending into a state of anarchy, with criminal elements and warlords running things. Even if, miraculously, a viable political process were resumed, who would present the Palestinian position, and who would be able to enforce an agreement if one were reached?

Nevertheless, for our discussion — and for the sake of my own sanity — I will assume that with changed attitudes and with changed policies a peace agreement is still an achievable goal. However, there are no magic bullets; the problem is not that the secret formula for peace-making has so far eluded us. Rather, we have failed to deal with unchanging fundamentals. Previous peace initiatives have failed because they sought to bypass fundamentals. Whatever hope there exists of going forward depends on the willingness of the two adversaries and the international community — most especially the US — to finally bite the bullet and deal with those fundamentals.

What are those fundamentals? First, it is unrealistic to believe that any Israeli government no matter how genuinely committed to compromise and peace, can engage in a political negotiation with the Palestinians as long as Israeli citizens are being blown up on the streets of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. On the other hand, it is just as unrealistic to expect that this violence can be ended by even the best-intentioned Palestinian government if Palestinians have no assurance that efforts to end violence and terrorism will actually produce a state in the West Bank and Gaza, not just in some parts of it. Of course, compromises will have to be made during the negotiations, but the process must begin at the pre-1967 lines and all changes at the Palestinians' expense must be fairly compensated.

In my view, no Palestinian leader exists, nor will emerge, who will be prepared or be able to settle for anything less. I have argued in my various writings the territorial issue is key and that one cannot begin dealing with the other complicated issues unless Palestinians can have confidence that at the end of the process they will wind up with about as much territory as they had before the 1967 war.

The problem is that the one thing Prime Minister Sharon has been entirely clear about is that he has no intention of returning to the pre-1967 lines, and that a Palestinian state will occupy only parts of the West Bank. Diplomatically, Sharon's strategic goal has always been to avoid a political process because he knows that such a process will lead to essentially the Clinton proposals. It is of the essence of his strategy to insist there is no Palestinian partner for a peace process and that therefore Israel must implement unilaterally a permanent solution to the conflict.

Also, Sharon has turned out to be a brilliant tactician. Whenever the international community becomes impatient and threatens to become more seriously involved in the peace process, Sharon manages to change the subject by making an unexpected proposal or statement, like calling Israel's presence in the West Bank an occupation. All of a sudden that statement becomes the focus of international attention: What did Sharon mean by the statement? Has he changed his views on the settlements? What does he mean by 'painful concessions?' As everyone focuses on his latest declaration, settlements continue to be enlarged, outposts continue to be converted into settlements, and the occupation is deepened.

Another such example is Sharon's proposal to leave Gaza. Even as this proposal is now being discussed, debated and speculated about, more money is being poured into the Gaza settlements and new fences are being erected

around Netzarim and elsewhere in Gaza. There is therefore good reason for scepticism about Sharon's withdrawal proposal.

Nevertheless, the international community is right in placing the best possible construction on what Sharon has said and taking advantage of the taboo he has broken in ways Sharon had not intended.

Sharon's people have come to Washington and asked for a written commitment that Israel need not engage in a political process until a new Palestinian leadership emerges. That will never happen because what Sharon seems to be asking for is a Palestinian leadership prepared to accept his diktat.

Still, the Gaza withdrawal should be supported by the European community, for such a withdrawal is consistent with the road map. At the same time, the European community should seek to translate a withdrawal from Gaza into an opening for a larger political negotiation that includes the West Bank. It should take advantage of this opening, and of its support for Sharon's proposals, to make explicit what previously was only implied — namely that any unilateral alteration of the pre-1967 border will be rejected by the international community and will receive no international recognition.

It is my impression that if Europeans will indeed take an initiative along these lines, Washington will not object, provided it is done in a manner that does not put the US on the spot. If this were to happen, and Palestinians were finally to be given a reason to believe that by ending violence, a full-blown Palestinian state is achievable, then we will have taken a first but indispensable step toward dealing with the fundamentals of the conflict, and therefore the possibility of reversing a journey that has been heading towards despair and catastrophe.

Dalia Dassa Kaye:

Thank you Henry for a wonderful start with interesting insights. I hope we can follow up on Henry's idea in the discussion and hear from the Europeans. To start off the European response we will now hear from Stevonn Everts. He is I guess an example of a Dutch brain drain to the UK; he now heads the Centre for European Reform's transatlantic programme. He is a prolific writer on all things transatlantic. Often I find myself opening the Financial Times and seeing articles by Steven, including most recently an article on regional security. Please enlighten us on the European view of where the peace process is going.

Session: The Future of the Middle East Peace Process

Steven Everts

Well many thanks for the introduction, thanks for the invitation. I will start actually pretty much on the same premise where Henry Siegman started off. I shall start with the same premise, which is that time is running out for a negotiated two state solution which was sort of the underlying assumption which underpinned all of our efforts in the last few years, this negotiated settlement that would see a Palestinian state emerge in West Bank and Gaza in a process that would provide tough and adequate security guarantees for Israel.

If you look at the dynamics on the ground, it is pretty clear that very soon it will be impossible to carve out a continuous and viable Palestinian state because of the settlements, but also because of the infrastructure that is related to the settlements; the settler roads, of course the fence. It is blatantly obvious that the Palestinian authority is so weak at the moment and so discredited both in Israeli eyes and actually in the eyes of the Palestinians, that it is very hard to see that as the main negotiating vehicle if and when political negotiations get started again. It is also true that this Israeli flirtation at the moment with unilateral engagement, provided it does not take place in a context of a broader political approach, could be very damaging. It is possible to look favourably upon a Gaza first proposal, but it is just as possible to say this is Gaza last. In the initial form Sharon suggested that this would involve the removal of all settlements; when the Israeli foreign minister visited London this week that was only included as one of the four options on the table.

So I am very pessimistic about the assessment of events on the ground. It seems that some Israelis at least are looking at a process where by they would gradually disengage, perhaps from Gaza, moving all settlements, but maybe that is not even sure, and building a fence and gradually withdraw from the West Bank as well, but in a unilateral process. They should remember what Robert Cooper put very eloquently, Robert Cooper was with us last night, he said, 'you might not be interested in chaos, but chaos is interested in you.' So that is a very difficult scenario that we are faced with. In that context it is tempting for people in the US, but also in Europe, to conclude, it is just too hard, we cannot do more than manage what is essentially an unsolvable problem. In my view that view is tempting, but mistaken. If the United States, Europe and others still want to secure what is rightly and has long been the objective of a

negotiated two state settlement based largely on the 1967 borders, then we shall have to consider making a greater commitment both politically and a greater invest militarily than we are at present willing to do.

A while ago, I wrote a little piece for the FT, which was deliberately sort of polemic in which I floated the option of perhaps getting a role for NATO in all of this. That piece got a lot of vitriol, it also got a lot of support from people, but the basic premise was as follows. The Israelis say, fully understandably, that they will not pull out from the urban centres in the West Bank unless and until their security interests are guaranteed. By common consent the Palestinian security services at the moment are not up to do the job, they are too weak, too fragmented. But it is equally clear that unless Israel does withdraw or at least offer the prospect of withdrawal there is going to be no effective Palestinian action on terrorism as Henry Siegman eluded to. So the question is, is there a role for an outside force to help build capacity on the Palestinian side to do that and maybe NATO can play a role here.

This idea was earlier dismissed as ludicrously optimistic and ambitious, but slowly people around Europe, also in the United States, and among Palestinians and Israelis as well, were starting to come out and support it. In the US, for instance, it was noticeable that Senator John Warner, not an entirely un-influential figure, supported this, some people at the NSC, some people at the State Department are also in favour of this. Some people in the Dutch government I am told are playing with this as well as indeed are people at NATO itself. Amongst Europeans there is of course an understandable reluctance to put this idea on the table, but I think we can and should be more forward leaning on this. It is right and understandable for Europe to complain about the US approach to the peace process when things got predictably difficult just after the publication of the road map, but European complaints would perhaps carry greater weight in Washington if we made clear that we would be willing to make a greater commitment to support not just a post peace settlement which is where most European efforts are concentrated on and also financial contributions, but if we were also perhaps willing to provide support for security sector reform in Palestine, but also troops for an intervention force. The essence again of the proposal is to say that the Israelis want security, but they distrust the Palestinians to deliver it. The Palestinians want an end to the occupation, but lack at present the capacity and credibility to provide it. The outside world laments the cycle of violence and is desperate to keep the two state solution alive: well maybe a NATO force can play a role here.

I was also asked in our list of questions whether I thought there was a European alternative. Is there a European peace plan in the wing and if so should we pursue it? My short answer is no. I do not think there is much viability for a separate European peace proposal. There are obviously frequent calls in the Council when violence in the region rises and the Americans seem to back away again for a European initiative usually coming from France, Spain and Greece for a more audacious more distinctly European approach and I empathise and sympathise very much with the sentiments that lie behind it. But I think it will only give us 30 seconds relief and then it will not lead us anywhere, because the Israelis will reject it out of hand and that will be the end

of it. That does not however mean in my view that there is nothing that we can do at all there. The US indispensable for any peace talks and peace efforts, but we do not need Washington's approval for how we are going to spend our money and that will be sort of my second part of my presentation. They are small steps we can take along side the NATO idea, more bite size portions if you like.

To be successful any EU effort needs to be balanced in two respects. It needs to be balanced between Israelis and Palestinians and between incentives and more coercive measures. I think with Israel the Europeans are right to insist as we have done consistently that the constant expansion of the settlements, the targeted assassinations need to stop, they do nothing for Israeli security and they are directly at odds with the road map and the commitment under that and we should stick with that. At the same time I think that there is an interesting area where we can adjust and should adjust the EU's stance which is that we need to improve the EU's image with the constituency in Israel that shares our basic objectives.

The EU has a massive credibility problem in Israel. One way we could do so is by spelling out how Europeans would be prepared to upgrade our partnership with Israel after it has concluded a settlement. As is well known Israel already has significant trade privileges, but there is still ample scope where we could deepen our relationship with Israel on various Justice and Home Affairs issues or research or various areas where the EU has things to offer that should be of interest to Israel, but rather than emphasise the technical nature of these steps I think it is important to emphasise the political aspects of this. This will give Israelis the sense that they could be part of a broader European process. If Israel is building a wall, with which region is it planning to integrate? In that sense Europe could be the strategic depth that Israel has often lacked. Israelis often complain about strategic loneliness, well we could address that psychological issue by raising the prospect of stronger links with Europe in the longer term.

In foreign policy as in personal relations, incentives tend to work better than punishment, but at the same time as Europeans we should also be prepared to make clear that certain types of Israeli behaviour carry costs. It is a long running saga in EU-Israeli relations about the rules of origin, a technical issue about the manner in which exports from the settlements enter the EU markets. It is true that sums involved are very small, but it is a touchstone issue, the settlements. The Israelis are stone walling us on this and I think we should take a tough line.

With the Palestinians I think we should adopt a similar mixture of sticks and carrots. We should continue to support those Palestinians that have said consistently in both Arabic and English and other languages that suicide bombings are morally unacceptable and counter productive. I think we can use some of our financial support for the Palestinians in a more targeted way. If we are concerned as I think we should be that the prospect of a viable two state solution is slipping away, why can we not counter some of the road building efforts that comes from Israel with some road building we could do to keep the possibility of a viable, continuous Palestinian state alive.

It is true however, that some European aid to the Palestinians has come with too little strings attached in the past. It is equally true that Israeli and US demands on Palestinian reform have been excessive; it is very hard to reform yourself under constant occupation and attack. Nonetheless Palestinian reform is an issue where Europe can lead, has led in the past actually, before it became fashionable in Washington, but is something that we can and should pursue, because a corrupt and authoritarian PA and a weak PA is not something that Palestinians deserve and is anyway not a credible partner for the Israelis either. It is true that Yasser Arafat has in my view exercised an unhealthy degree of influence over the Palestinian Authority, so maybe the Europeans could groom and empower a new generation, not because Israel demands it or Washington insist we ought to, but gradually use our links and financial instruments to empower those such as Salem Fayed and others, Maram Bargouti maybe, because the Palestinian Authority is in a real crisis at the moment and there is a real risk of anarchy breaking out, so the one thing we should not do is abandon the PA, but help to reform it.

Linked to that is a programme that is discussed in London a lot at the moment which is support for the Palestinian security services and the reform thereof and the UK is thinking very actively about a deal with the Palestinians, you bring them under unified command and we will help you to build capacity. Maybe this is something other European countries can and should support actively as well. Alongside that there a couple of other things Europeans can do, i.e. support human rights groups in Palestine etc. Of course there are lots of reasons to be pessimistic and that none of this is going to make any difference. An optimist might say that after so many years of violence which has not brought the Palestinians their state, some of them might be ready for some painful steps. Equally in Israel things are moving, we do not know exactly in which direction, but it is clear that Sharon's policy has not brought them the security that Israelis rightly crave. Maybe, we Europeans could convince that this greater Middle East initiative we discussed earlier does not stand a chance politically unless there is a sufficient and credible commitment to Israel-Palestine as well, but as I said before time is fast running out. I am one of these people that sees foreign policy as about changing things, not just managing or accepting the status quo and if you look at the dynamics and the trajectory of facts on the ground it is time to act in a relatively bold manner.

Dalia Dassa Kaye:

Thank you Steven for another excellent presentation with a lot of good practical ideas, which I hope we pursue in our discussions. I just want to note before turning to our discussion one issue that was not discussed too much in the presentations except in a negative reference, which is the Middle East quartet. I think we might want to take that up a bit and figure out where that venue is going, or if indeed it is dead. But before we do so I want to introduce our discussant who will be saying a few words before the general discussion. Stefano Silvestre is the president of the Italian Institute of International Affairs and is a regular commentator on issues of foreign affairs. He has been in and out of government for a number of years, including as an adviser for the Ministry of

Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and various Italian presidents. We are very pleased to welcome you and look forward to a few words from you.

Session: The Future of the Middle East Peace Process

Stefano Silvestri

Thank you. Well very rapidly because I think that a lot of problems have already been touched on. It is quite clear that we can treat this question according to many different angles: from the point of view of the general region, wider or greater Middle East or the smaller Middle East, or from the regional point of view or from the more narrow and direct problem of the Arabs and Palestinians and the Israeli question in the former Palestine. I think that these cut the problem in different ways and these differences at looking at it is one of the difficulties for finding a common approach. The fact is that the debate between the Europeans and the Americans does not help on the local issue, the local issue does not help in the relations between Europeans and Americans and the fact that they are at odds makes international cooperation very difficult.

The quartet has from this point of view been an exception, but an exception that may be in the end short lived. It had in fact from a European point of view been something very important; it was bringing back Europe inside the process in an official way, not only the Europeans by the way, but the EU, which was something rather new. So it was the first attempt to have a wider Middle East policy applied to the Palestinian conflict. It did not have much success. It had two effects. One, it helped put the Oslo policy to an end, land for peace. In the end it approved the idea of security first. First of all we have to ensure security to the Israelis and that is the first responsibility for the Palestinians to carry out that, before discussing peace. This has been a compromise which was excepted I think by the Europeans, the UN, etc. in the hope that the US leadership would have done enough to ensure effective results and in a way in exchange for the fact that the US leadership was opening to a contribution from the others. But it has not produced success, the road map is not working. Of course one can always say that it may revive, but it is a fallen hope. So we have to consider that the quartet is dying because it has no alternative, it can not go back, probably, to the 'land for peace' and it can not get out from the 'security first' and it has no alternatives for the road map. In the end it is practically best not convene it.

The difficulties in which the United States, Britain and the other countries are experiencing in Iraq are such that, instead of favouring an Israeli-Palestinian agreement, they are making it worse. Now the Americans in

particular, but also the Europeans can be in a way black mailed in Iraq and in that respect they have even less leverage for forcing both the Israelis and the Palestinians to do anything. So it seems to me that the situation has been made worse by the present situation in Iraq. Should the situation in Iraq evolve positively and rapidly that may change, but I would not bet on that for the moment.

The discussion on other alternatives. Yes, I realise that there are discussions on one state instead of two states, but that seems to me to be an absolute non-starter. One state was the old Palestinian request and one state without Palestine, which may be a dream of some Israelis, seems to me nothing but a dream. Something, which is clearly unacceptable on the present international rules on norms and behaviour, if implemented would create a general war situation in the region. In the end it would be thought directly even by the US. That would be impossible, because it would mean the end of the relationship between Israel and the US and that would be too stupid to be thinkable. So the solution is in my opinion, while there is the old solution of two states, another solution is the no state solution, a kind of federal agreement, a regional agreement. But we are not yet, it seems to me in the Middle East, in the process of overcoming the nation state, on the contrary we are still in the process of building nation states, so it is a completely different game, but I do not see any other alternatives to the two state solution. The question of security, can we overcome these kind of stumbling blocks? It is clear that if you are to negotiate peace in a situation like that, you have to negotiate with your enemies so it is clear also that no one wants to negotiate with someone against you. Having said that, when your enemies are terrorists it is not very wise in general to negotiate with terrorists, because terrorists are not a negotiating partner which assume commitments for which it can be held responsible. But, of course what is more true is that you can negotiate with former terrorists, with repented terrorists or disassociated terrorists and that has been done many times and that was the hope when negotiating with Arafat. Arafat has not lived up to his promises, but having said that, that is not enough of an argument to say that negotiations should not be done with someone like that.

There is a risk however, that if the situation worsens, we are now elevating, and it appears that Israel has favoured these elevations, a different kind of terrorist. Before we were negotiating with national or nationalistic terrorists, the Palestinians mainly. Now they are becoming Islamist terrorists. Should it happen that the main negotiations were to be with former Islamic fundamentalist terrorists; it will be much more complicated and possibly unsolvable and will probably link the situation in Palestine with the bad situation in the wider Middle East to a greater extent. A final consideration about Europe very shortly, what will Europe do?

Well Europe has been quite happy to let the US lead and take responsibility for many years, but the problem is of course that the situation is slowly changing. It is changing because Europe is appreciating the fact that it has to have a policy towards the Middle East, that it has energy and security problems, and that it is increasingly listed by the US in the wider Middle East, so bringing Europeans to Iraq, Afghanistan and saying that they have to be

more committed with sending men; they will need to be more involved in the wider Middle East. What could be this kind of involvement? If I have to judge by the perceptions, basically and that it is near to what Steven was saying earlier, basically what Europeans think is that they are dealing with two different kind of failed states, one Israel and the other the Palestinian state and these states should both be rebuilt in a way. Yes, in a way, failed for different reasons. One failed, because it was not able to govern itself, the Palestinians, and the other is very capable to govern itself, but is failing, because of its inability to ensure its own security and its own viability in the region. This would claim a call for an interventionist possibility, but I doubt that that can be proposed and I think that in fact an interventionist policy is out of the question. The only interventionist policy could come at a request from the Israelis and it does not seem like that is on the cards. Well of course you could declare war on Israel, but I doubt that is a very good solution. The Europeans have done that to the Israelis on a personal basis before but not on a national basis, so I think that will not happen. So I think in the end the Europeans will be prone to be more pro-Arab, but more or less as ineffective as they are today. Thank you.

Dalia Dassa Kaye:

Thank you. A lot of I think interesting material for some discussion. Please can you put your name plate up if you want to intervene. We shall start with Alfred Pijpers from Clingendael and then I will continue to take others. Michiel den Hond after Alfred.

Session: The Future of the Middle East Peace Process

Debate

Alfred Pijpers:

Just a number of points; the first point is a remark made by Steven Everts. He said that the suicide bombings of the Palestinians in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and so on, were counter productive. I doubt this; I think that they are reasonably productive. I think that the nature of the conflict between the Palestinians and Israel has changed, over the past month, over the past years perhaps. It is no longer a fight in terms of military security, about territorial security, but what is taking place through the suicide bombings is that the Palestinians seem to focus on the legitimacy of the state of Israel and I think that if we look back over the past two years since the start of second intifada there. I think that they have succeeded to a large extent in undermining the legitimacy of the state of Israel, not just amongst themselves in terms of their own perspective, but also more importantly among the public here in western Europe and perhaps also even in the US. So in that sense I would not say that their fight is counter productive, of course it is counter productive in realising the Palestinian state, it is true, but they have shifted for the time being at least, for tactical reasons, the focus of their struggle.

Also just a society remark. It is interesting to see that the only state in the Middle East of which people doubt the legitimacy is Israel. There has never been any, in the past, Iraqi Freedom, all these operations, everything about Saddam Hussein, nobody has ever thought about discussing the legitimacy of Iraq, of Iran, of Kuwait or Saudi Arabia. Of course, there has been discussion on the legitimacy of the governments. Israel is still the only state in that area of which this point is being discussed and put to doubt by a great number of people, also here in the Netherlands.

My second point relates to the way the US and the EU are coordinating things over the Middle East peace process. Robert Malley has raised this point already this morning and what I think is surprising is that most of the comments are negative. People are suggesting that the quartet is not functioning, not operating that well, is not a very useful mechanism. I think we should of course make certain clear distinctions here, I mean the outcome of the quartet and the road map, there is nothing to show of, but I think that the quartet is a good formula and it is also surprising to see to what extent already

the EU is following the American lead. If we take the Middle East peace process there are at least 3 to 4 points where Europe is now more or less towing the same line with the US, take for instance the matter of the isolation of chairman Arafat, the US is doing this openly, I do not think we prefer to do it that openly, but we do it all the same and even if there are still a considerable number of contacts at the official level. A second example is that we have, under American pressure, put Hamas on the list of terrorist organisations. A third example, an example which happened two weeks ago when various states had to represent their opinion to the International Court of Justice here in The Hague about the Israeli fence and what we have seen is that the positions of European member states, I am not aware to what extents these are coordinated by the EU, but they are fairly close to the American ones. A great surprise here in domestic opinion is that the official line of our government here in the Netherlands is that we are against the fence; what we said to the International Court of Justice was exactly the Israeli viewpoint and the American one and the fourth example of the convergence between European and American viewpoints is I think that the EU has stopped criticising Israel almost all together as opposed to during the 1990's when it was always visible that the European Union adopted a much more harsher line than the US did. Of course now after Iraqi freedom, things have changed. I think that there is more or less now a straight jacket of the two-state solution, there is not much room for manoeuvre. But coming back to the point of Arafat and this is becoming more of a structural comment in the US-European relationship. We have realised that it was not helpful that over the years, Arafat, when he was put under pressure by the US, he simply went to Madrid and to London and to Paris to complain about American pressure and say, what shall we do with it, and we said in Europe, well do not worry that much. This game is now over on the other side so I do not think it is that bad in terms of coordination across the Atlantic.

I had one point for Dr Siegman. We discussed it already briefly yesterday over lunch. It is about, which I am still doubting, your point that on the Israeli side it is not made clear, not spelled out, identified the Palestinian state. You think it is insufficient, but is it not true, you said, I agree with that, what Sharon is saying about a Palestinian state is absolutely not sufficient, but if we look backwards, seeing the evolution of the Israeli viewpoints about the Palestinian political identity and what came during Camp David and afterwards with the Clinton and so on, can we not consider this as a kind of process? Israel has come a long way in that respect too. So chairman these are the points I wanted to raise.

Dalia Dassa Kaye:

Thank you Alfred, I think the convergence you pointed to might be the very reason the Europeans are getting nervous, but we can discuss that more. Michiel.

Michiel den Hond:

Henry Siegman just proposed a course of action that the Europeans might take. A constructive reaction really to what Sharon is about to do. I listened to that

with great care and attention. Steven Everts on the other hand gave a whole range of practical steps that the Europeans might take, notably in the field of security, including participating in NATO activities and strengthening Palestinian capacity to enforce security. Well, surely all this sort of activity to strengthen Palestinian capacity in the field of security and especially bringing in NATO can not be based on the sort of political frame work provided merely by a European declaration however constructive.

So I would still see a gap between what Henry Siegman has suggested the Europeans might do and the actual political framework he would really have to have on the ground before we could start doing the things proposed by Steven Everts. The question then is to Mr Siegman and to other Americans around the table, what we might expect from the US, following a European position as described by Henry Siegman, on the assumption that if the Americans are not onboard eventually on this sort of approach there would just not be enough political strength and not a strong enough political framework to make all the other steps viable. What may we expect to begin with from the Americans and Mr Heller perhaps can also give us a picture on how all of this would fly or go up like a balloon or like a lead balloon in Israel.

Dalia Dassa Kaye:

Well let us get the American perspective first, Rob Malley.

Robert Malley:

Thank you. I just want to start with the basic premise of it, I think that people would accept that many things have been tried over the last three years and have not worked and not only have they not worked, the situation today is dramatically worse then it was three years ago and I think that Henry described that very well. So I think some of the things that people are suggesting might work now. We have to understand that they have not worked and there is no reason they are going to work this time around. The notion of providing security to the Palestinians: I do not think that is a problem today and I do not want to belittle small steps, but I do think we do have to focus on what might work and what will not work. Empowering Palestinians — well from experience and I speak from direct experience — our attempt to meddle into internal Palestinian politics has invariably been disastrous and the notion that today we are going to come in and try to empower people against Arafat seems to me to be another recipe, particularly if it comes in a way that is perceived as trying to undermine him, another recipe for further chaos on the Palestinian side. I also think the notion of putting NATO troops in the political context which is how I heard, but maybe I misunderstood you, I would be the first to argue very strongly against it, even though I am absolutely in favour of international involvement. You cannot put NATO troops in an area that is still going to be considered under occupation unless it is part of an ultimate outcome.

Other things that might have worked at one point, and it is one of the rare things were I disagree with Henry on, I do not think that today, even telling the Palestinians that they are going to get a state on the borders of 1967 is going to make it possible to take the steps they should take. I think that might have been

the case a year ago, it might have been the case two years ago, I do not see it being the case now, precisely for the reasons that you yourself have described about the situation of chaos and the lack of authority on the Palestinian side. I do not think words alone today; even nice words from Europe, the Americans, the international community are going to suddenly make the Palestinians capable of taking control of their own security assuming that they want to. I think we are beyond these kinds of steps, I think there are only two avenues in front of us.

One is the unilateral disengagement. I think Sharon, for the wrong reasons, reached the right conclusion that the road map and the path of negotiations is over and he is going to try and take matters into his own hands. I think that there are opportunities and risks on that and I think that people here discussed that before. That is one avenue, which for me is not the ideal one; because I think in many ways it forecloses the real viable sovereign Palestinian state that everyone around this table so far has said is the only viable outcome. The second one is one that we have not really discussed and I have argued for, for some time, which is a more robust international engagement at least in terms of putting on the table a solution which does not only speak about the borders of 1967, but speaks about refugees to provide Israel with the confidence it needs and speaks about Jerusalem and speaks about security and tells the Israelis and Palestinians, this is what the world is willing to give in terms of NATO involvement, in terms of maybe even EU membership for Israel, in terms for Arab recognition and normalisation with Israel, the whole comprehensive menu of things that start changing the nature of the debate in Israel and in Palestine and trying to move towards a situation where the peoples on both sides through referendum, and that is the Cyprus model now, might if the political systems decide that, opt to go that way. I think short of something dramatic like that, we could be sitting here in another year and every year we say the two state solution is further away so sitting here next year having the same discussion will not do us much good.

A quick point on where that leaves Europe. I think in terms of the unilateral disengagement I agree basically with what Henry said with one amendment. I do not think it is enough for Europe to say that it will not recognise whatever Israel does to modify the pre 1967 borders. I am not sure that Israel is asking for Europe's recognition, it is not going to annex the territory. The thing is that Europe and others will not facilitate, will not be complicit in what is happening, because Israel is going to need the help of Egypt and of the Europeans in Gaza and there should be some preconditions. I think one should certainly welcome the disengagement from Gaza and one should welcome what the Prime Minister will do if he does it, but there should be some conditions under which the Europeans and others will insist upon if they are going to be part of it. As for what I think Europe can do now, on the broader scale, working with the Arabs if possible. I do not think you can influence this administration, but there will be another administration, even if it is Bush two, and I would like them to be confronted with a real alternative to the current policy which is along the lines of what I said earlier, what the Europeans and what the Arabs would be prepared to do in exchange for the

presentation by the US of a real comprehensive settlement and put on the table the kinds of things that the Europeans and the Arabs have not been prepared to do so far in terms of again NATO, EU membership, Arab recognition, but in detail.

A final point, because I cannot resist, on the quartet. I think you made my case far more eloquently than I would have, precisely because the position of the two statements you made, that the results of what the quartet has done has not worked and there is no doubt about it, we are not in a good situation today and the fact that throughout this process the non-quartet members have come along with US positions. I think if you put those two together you reach the conclusion that I reach, that it does not make sense. We cannot simply salute the fact that the Europeans have joined US positions. If that had happened between 1999 and 2000 I think it might have been a different story. It was also America's fault, but if the Europeans and the Arabs had then worked with the US towards the final settlement, the Clinton parameters, more actively again I think responsibility is shared, that is one thing, but to join policies, not only that have not worked, but from my own discussions, Europeans and people at the UN did not believe would work at the time that they adopted them. I think that is what I find most distressing about the quartet mechanism, which as a principle is fine, as it has worked I think is not.

Dalia Dassa Kaye:

I do not know if that settles the quartet question but we will move on to the region. Dr Abdel Monem Aly had an early intervention request.

Abdel Monem Aly:

I only have limited time, but unless we have a brief idea as to how we got to this point, I do not think we can move from it to anywhere else. I think we have the electrical process that took place in all the 1990's between forces that want to build a distant region and also do not actually want it for political, historical, religious reasons. Initially I think in the 90's, we moved from having an existential conflict to having a conflict about sovereign political units jockeying about water and borders and issues that people can come to grips with and handle. What happened that was not satisfactory at all to rightwing Israeli ideology and to rightwing Palestinian ideologists who believed, and we have to take them at their word, that religion matters and getting to the West Bank is in itself a culmination of a Jewish dream and the Palestinians who thought it was a bad deal from the beginning and their legitimate right for all Palestine and all of that was part of two variables.

One, that the camp of existentialists is very forcible. They did it through settlements, through suicide bombings, through working in their own political societies and the other side was squeamish and sometimes working hard, sometimes not, but certainly there was not a concerted effort to make moderates victorious in this battle. September 11th complicated the whole thing once more again. First of all, existentialism here is a very dangerous thing, that is a status quo we have. When I said the Israeli-Palestinian issue, I pointed to the general issue of the Middle East, because this issue is the central

geopolitical issue and it is affecting many of the balances, particularly the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty and the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty. Getting back into an existential conflict between the Palestinians and the Israelis will make all these fronts come again. Under the circumstances of overwhelmingly imbalance of power and another whole arms race issue in the region. One is talking about a plateau of weaponry in the region and that is really horrifying. What are the results of not making baby steps and what are the results of the status quo that is taking place and what are the implications on Iraq and on Iran.

One of the difficulties with the Iranians is that they are mingling with Hezbollah and with Hamas people and the whole issue of terror and resistance is really mixed up because of one single issue and because the Hamas people are giving a good name to anybody who is trying to blow up a building because they think that somehow it paves the way to Jerusalem. We have here a complex problem, that I think the only way to solve is through a whole system of incentives. To get back to where we were we need three conditions to be met.

One is a heavy American involvement and I mean by that the ability to twist arms and sometimes to break backs and that is including not only the Arabs, but also the Israeli's as well as an Israeli public opinion that is willing to say we will withdraw from these territories, without these conditions there is no way out. The third is to have one single Palestinian authority to deal with the issue of resistance, peace and war and whatever. One thing that Henry referred to that somebody has to say, 'here is the final end product.' I do not think that Europe is only a factor here, Europe is important, but unless a European-American agreement on that is made, that will not lead to other kind of incentives. I do not have the slightest idea how to make the Americans and the Europeans interested to that degree, but it happened before in history, that situations got out of hand and that at the end you have four or five years of spilling blood and then start all over. Thank you.

Dalia Dassa Kaye:

Thank you. We are running out of time so just two quick interventions if you can make them short. Mr Andréani and Mr Eberts.

Gilles Andréani:

One quick remark, the Americans did not want Europeans in the peace process as long as the peace process worked. They had the propriety instinct to this thing, they knew all the details, they had the files, this was their business, including from our very good friends, some of whom are here today. So that was it. As a European and also as someone who is interested among other things, in Franco-Israeli relations, I resent it deeply, because what happened was the specialisation of roles, as the Americans played the role of what they call the honest broker and this role in our eyes became less balanced as it was and by lack of proper communication with the Americans, the Americans dropped a certain number of principled positions on the nature of the occupation, the Geneva convention and so on and so forth to facilitate the process and these positions were left for the Europeans to defend. You had this

sort of specialisation of roles, which as a result of this we ended up with a European involvement, mainly in support of the Palestinians, sending money to the Palestinian authority, doing a lot of things there and you had an America by in large perceived as not terribly balanced, but running the process and that was a very bad distribution of roles.

Having said that, it is an irony that we were welcomed into this process when it stopped functioning. Maybe there is causality here. At the end of the day I prefer being here then where we were before. I think habits of working together, even in very dire circumstances, even if the Americans took some important issues outside the quartet. The Europeans outside the quartet could very well take some principle positions. It is all very well that this exists, that is my first point, but as a result I come to Henry's suggestion which is really my point, I think our best solution is simply to take whatever positive movement you detect and even invent a positive movement where there maybe a tactical ploy and therefore use the withdrawal from Gaza and say welcome, this has to be part of the road map, actually it serves the road map purposes and that is the first part of your proposal and I think that is exactly what we are trying to do essentially with the Americans.

Now the second part of your proposal how to rebuild this sense of expectation, which you had on both sides actually after Oslo, that somehow the territorial settlement will be around the 1967 borders and both sides it seems to me, I might be wrong, that expectation right after Oslo and it was destroyed progressively out of liquid policies, diminishing the expectations of the Palestinians, facts on the ground and the violence. All in all here we are, I think it is vital to rebuild this expectation, I would not want to do it as a European under a condition which boxed me back in to the place where I was before, to be seen as hostile to Israel and specialised again in the role of supporting the Palestinians. So essentially I think we should do what you say, but we should do as much as we can with the Americans to restore this notion of an expectation as to the final outcome of this territorial settlement.

Incidentally, a small note on the greater Middle East. What I dislike about the greater Middle East in this context, is that ideologically it serves the purpose of those who say that there are much deeper problems then the territorial settlement and wait for these problems to have been resolved for us to achieve the territorial settlement, because one speaks of a generational task, cultural and civilisation transformation, all such of things which I would hate to see as prerequisites to the Middle East peace process and there is a danger in the greater Middle East and I think the Europeans, and certainly the position of the French president, should do their best to avoid that and to say, this is not a prerequisite, on the contrary, we must energise what is left of the peace process as we move ahead with the greater Middle East.

Martin Eberts:

Well, we have been talking about what governments do, have done, and could do. I wonder if we should take a look at the people's concern, because I think there is good reason to worry that the public opinion is shifting also in a long-term movement. So far if you look at opinion polls a vast majority of people in

Israel are still in favour of the two state solution, the negotiated settlement, all sorts of things which are necessary, but I wonder, I do not know, I have not got the answer, it is a question, one which I think should be addressed, in which direction the public opinion is being pushed by what is happening and by what is not happening and the same is of course true for the Palestinians. If you look at the opinion polls there, you always get a majority who are in favour of suicide attacks nowadays. It depends on how and when and who you ask, of course you can get a majority also for a peaceful settlement, but understandably on the Israeli side there is a lot of suspicion that in the long run they will not accept Israel as a factor in the region.

I agree with Mr Pijpers, that it is a specific Israeli problem, that they feel even if we get to a certain point, even if we get an agreement, if we get a two state solution and all the good things attached to it, there still might be a tacit understanding on the other side that this is only for some time, like remembering Saladin and getting rid of the crusaders after 200 years so one day we will get rid of Israel as well. So how does all of this influence the public, especially on the Israeli side, but also on the Palestinian side? It might lead to a point and we are back to the question if we can get a two state solution which is functioning, not very likely, but we should take a look how is this discussion, how are developments influencing the mood of the people in the long run, not between now and the American elections or between now and the end of June or so, but in the long run.

Dalia Dassa Kaye:

I think at this point if both of you could perhaps just answer the most objectionable points perhaps and then carry on the rest of the conversation on in the break'

Henry Siegman:

Let me make it clear I am not addressing just the most objectionable points, so that is not implicit in the questions that I am about to respond, however briefly, and not in any particular order. I fully agree with your point that incentives are important, but that is precisely the heart of the proposal that I discussed. There is no more fundamental incentive on the Palestinian side then to hold out a credible prospect of a genuine Palestinian statehood and that it was implicit at first in Oslo, but never quite clear. In fact the term Palestinian state was not even mentioned and does not even appear on the Oslo documents, much less where it is going to be. I think putting down that kind of marker and taking advantage of a particular situation, in a positive context, namely the promised withdrawal from Gaza, I think offers an opening for putting down that kind of a marker.

Can Europe do this without the US? I think that if the US were to reject it, to oppose it, of course it would be meaningless and then Robert Malley's question would Israel care? Of course it would not. But I do not think the US will not do that and as I said earlier it might even welcome this kind of European initiative, because this is an example of the kind of 'good cop' 'bad cop' scenario that the US would find constructive.

Let me say something about this issue of Palestinians or the Arabs not accepting Israel in the long run. I say this, because I came across this argument that peace is impossible with the Palestinians at this point in history as well as with the Arab world, because if you listen to them, they are not prepared to say that they accept the legitimacy of Jewish claims to even the old part of Israel and of course it is true, that is what Palestinians are saying, but I think that it is absolutely misguided and destructive to draw all these kinds of conclusions, because it is kind of a one sided operation. The very demand that Palestinians and the Arab world affirm that Israel really has an historic right to let's say half of Israel is absurd. Why make the demand for them to say this. That is a question of dealing with religious claims, with mythology, with history, whatever. The important thing is that they agree to a pragmatic arrangement which they can live with and that seems to be fair, because if you reverse the situation, what if the Palestinians say fair enough, we would like you to make a claim that you recognise our legitimacy to this part of the West Bank and if you do not that means you have plans to ultimately take it back. I think they can argue this with some greater credibility if only because the settlements are all over the place, they are not in Israel today. I think one has to be careful about the drawing of large conclusions about the fact that this is for the long run or for the short run, if for the next 50 years there can be an agreement where they can stop the bloodshed, where they can develop their economies, where they develop a stake in their own success and each develop a stake in each other sides success. I think that is about as much as we have a right to hope for, rather than to say let's forget about the whole deal because in the end it will be like the crusades. Let me stop here.

Steven Everts:

Two issues, to just very rapidly come back on Pijpers point on suicide bombers and whether they are effective and productive or not. I will give you three reasons why I disagree with you. One, they do not work because manifestly they did not bring the Palestinians closer to their core objective of their own state. More importantly, they have I think contributed to the Palestinians losing a constituency in Europe that has traditionally supported them including the foreign policy elite and that was partly the reason why the Europeans took the decision on Hamas that they took. This is a territorial conflict within the wider global war against terror and that cannot be a good thing for the Palestinians to conflate those two issues. The question then arises; does that also mean the American conflict? The answer is yes. It does very much and by the perverse logic it actually contributes to that. Normally I would go into this further when I have a little more time to elaborate on these ideas.

Of course this is not about NATO fighting its way into the West Bank but this has to be in the context of a broader political process. It has to be at the invitation of both Palestinians and Israelis. I am optimistic and ambitious but not that crazy.

But it must be sold to the people. It is all about incentives; sell it to the Israelis who legitimately long for security. And sell it to the Palestinians by saying it is the only way that they will ever get their own state. It is a bad idea

but it may be a bad idea whose time has come. A while ago, in October I think, Dominique Moïsi wrote a piece but things have moved on since then. Nevertheless, it had a good headline which said: The UN in Baghdad and NATO in Jerusalem and maybe that is a better format then when we had NATO in Baghdad and Lord knows who in Jerusalem.

Dalia Dassa Kaye:

Thank you to all our discussants today. It was a very interesting discussion and much more constructive than most discussions lately considering the situation on the ground.

Session: Weapons of Mass Destruction and Terrorism

Jonathan Stevenson

Abdel Monem Aly:

We have two distinguished scholars to start off this session – Jonathan Stevenson and Peter van Ham – and as I understood they decided to switch their arrangement as it is in our schedule. I am sure you know both of them. Jonathan has a BA from the University of Chicago and JD from Boston University School of Law. He practiced Law in New York City for six years and subsequently turned to journalism, which took him to East-African Northern Island. And now he is at IISS a very prestigious research institute in London. And actually when I read that I felt quite envious because of his background in politics, legal training and journalism, that is a very impressive record. Dr Peter van Ham is director of studies at Clingendael so we are all guests of you here. And we thank you. He is specialised in International Organisations and European Politics. He has been a professor of West European Politics at George Marshall European Centre for Security Studies and as well as a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Security Studies in Paris. Well we have here two distinguished scholars and we shall start with Jonathan Stevenson.

Jonathan Stevenson:

Since September 11, Washington has characterized non-proliferation and counter-proliferation as direct extensions of counter-terrorism. Notwithstanding important strategic and humanitarian bases for the Iraq war, the most salient one was preventive counter-terrorism – that is, keeping a state producer of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) from supplying them to terrorists who were willing to use them. This dispensation was bound up with prevailing official US understandings as to the distinctive character of al-Qaeda's religious and political agenda, which subsumes a violent eschatology, concomitant doctrinal preference for mass casualties, and verified interest in WMD.

It has become common to note that while 'old' terrorist groups like the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) or the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) used violence with restraint in order to preserve a place at the bargaining table to address negotiable grievances, 'new' terrorist outfits like al-Qaeda are not interested in bargaining and view unalloyed violence as adding

value to maximalist religious objectives.¹ The prevailing view is that Osama bin Laden's primary aim is to debilitate the US as a superpower and purge Islam of American political, cultural and economic influence enroute to establishing a global Islamic caliphate. This goal is by its terms non-negotiable from either his or the West's standpoint. Steven Simon observes that in monotheistic religions 'liturgical traditions establish the legitimacy of killing as an act of worship with redemptive qualities. In these narratives, the enemy must be eradicated, not merely suppressed.'²

In particular, al-Qaeda's eschatological vision – speculation, that is, about the end of history and dawn of the kingdom of God – as articulated by the group's spokesman Suleiman Abu Ghaith involves the extermination of millions of Americans and the conversion of the survivors to Islam.³ While it may be that WMD are not strictly indispensable to al-Qaeda's apocalyptic projections, it seems clear that they are preferable to ordinary decent car-bombs or even suicide-piloted jetliners. Notes Simon:

Apocalyptic tales circulating on the web and within the Middle East in hard copy tell of cataclysmic battles between Islam and the United States, Israel, and sometimes Europe. Global battles see-saw between infidel and Muslim victory until some devastating act, often the destruction of New York by nuclear weapons, brings Armageddon to an end and leads the world's survivors to convert to Islam.⁴

Such designs bespeak a movement that not only would have no compunction about using WMD, but would consider them ideal strategic tools. This has been the operative assumption of a US government understandably inclined, in the wake of 9/11, to base security policy on the worst case. This assumption explains a key feature of post-9/11 US policy: the emphasis on potential consequences of terrorist action over corresponding probabilities. Thus, US homeland defenses attempt to plug all conceivable vulnerabilities (maritime, aviation, immigration, whatever) while more proactive 'forward' counter-terrorism efforts lean towards pre-emption (usually a matter of law-enforcement and intelligence, but occasionally involving the use of military force).

The prevailing view in US intelligence circles that while al-Qaeda would like to develop and use WMD, it does not appear to have the capacity to do so. Thus, the CIA's unclassified May 2003 threat assessment talks tentatively about the group's 'crude procedures' for making chemical toxins and 'interest in' producing them, while the FBI's National Infrastructure Protection Center

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- 1) In establishing this distinction, the key article was Steven Simon and Daniel Benjamin, "America and the New Terrorism", *Survival*, vol. 42, no. 1, Spring 2000, pp. 59-75.
 - 2) Steven Simon, "The New Terrorism: Securing the Nation Against a Messianic Foe", *The Brookings Review*, vol. 21, no. 1, Winter 2003, p. 18.
 - 3) See, e.g., Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror* (New York: Random House, 2002), p. 397.
 - 4) Simon, "The New Terrorism", p. 20.

bulletin notes that al-Qaeda may have ‘experimented with’ such procedures.⁵ There also appears to be a loose consensus that Islamic terrorists could probably develop WMD capability only with the help of a state or state-affiliated scientists – whether by direct supply, technical assistance or the provision of a permissive operating environment. The US government is coming around to the view that al-Qaeda never established any serious operational links with any state except Sudan prior to 1996 and subsequently Afghanistan under the Taliban, and that these connections did not add appreciably to any inchoate WMD capability on al-Qaeda’s part.⁶ But revelations that Abdul Qadeer Khan, the father of Pakistan’s nuclear bomb, furnished materiel and technical assistance to North Korea, Iran and Libya, have reinforced concerns that rogue scientists could help al-Qaeda advance a WMD capability.⁷

In any case, it is probable that a terrorist group could produce a non-fissionable atomic bomb – also known as a radiological dispersal device or ‘dirty bomb’ – without state help. Dirty bombs are often labelled weapons of mass ‘disruption’ as opposed to ‘destruction’ because they would cause relatively few immediate casualties but still cause widespread panic over acute and persistent fears of longer-term health effects on the general population. Bin Laden is believed to have expressed a special interest in building a dirty bomb to a former Pakistani nuclear scientist with radical Islamist beliefs in August 2001, but the crudeness and infeasibility of the plans for such a device developed by American al-Qaeda operative José Padilla suggested that the group had no actual capability.

National Security Presidential Directive 17 (NSPD-17) establishes three pillars for US policy for countering WMD threats: counter-proliferation, strengthened non-proliferation, and consequence management.⁸ Major US non-proliferation initiatives were of course in place well before 9/11. The Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program for securing and disposing of fissile material and WMD in Russia and former Soviet territories and finding alternative employment for weapons scientists, which began in the early 1990s,

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- 5) CIA, “Terrorist CBRN: Materials and Effects (U)”, CTC 2003-40058, May 2003; National Infrastructure Protection Center, “Homeland Security Information Update: Al Qa’ida Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Threat and Basic Countermeasures”, *Information Bulletin* 03-003, February 12, 2003.
 - 6) Since the removal of Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq, it has become clearer that al-Qaeda had no operational connections to his regime, and that the regime in any case probably had no usable WMD to offer al-Qaeda at the time of the 2003 intervention.
 - 7) The general concern is registered in Director of Central Intelligence, *Unclassified Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction*, 1 January through 30 June 2003 (submitted November 2003).
 - 8) “National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction”, *National Security Presidential Directive 17*, September 17, 2002 (unclassified version released December 2002).

is particularly well suited to preventing WMD from falling into the hands of non-state actors. Federal support for CTR increased after 9/11, and the model may be extended to India and Pakistan. The recognized gap between al-Qaeda's intentions and capabilities has prompted additional forward US measures. Under the Container Security Initiative, US customs officials are permitted to check container cargo in foreign ports; under the Proliferation Security Initiative, some 16 countries cooperate in the air, ground and maritime interdiction of vessels suspected of illicitly transporting WMD or related materials. On one hand, the fact that Washington took the lead on both programs suggests that it perceives a more serious WMD terrorist threat than European capitals. On the other hand, as both initiatives enjoy wide European participation, transatlantic threat perceptions appear to be converging.⁹ The European Union (EU) has also increased its financial commitment to the CTR.

As it has become clearer that al-Qaeda and Baghdad had no planning-level connections and Iraq probably had no ready WMD, the Bush administration has adopted a more decidedly diplomatic and less dire approach to counter-proliferation with respect to North Korea and Iran. On this political level as well, American and European approaches to WMD problems have become more compatible.¹⁰ On balance, Libya's recent renunciation of WMD should reinforce rather than hinder this convergence. Some in the Pentagon may be inclined to view the tacit threat of coercive regime-change rendered credible by Iraq as a key determinant of Libya's decision. But pre-emption against North Korea would be prohibitively risky from a strictly military point of view given its artillery threat to Seoul, its regional ballistic missile threat and its probable nuclear capability. Pre-emption against Iran is politically unattractive because, despite disingenuous justifications and outright duplicity, its enrichment program is street-legal and subject to IAEA inspection, and poses no imminent threat. And of course, US military overstretch is a factor.

Furthermore, former US officials have persuasively argued that in fact a subtle blend of carrots and sticks modified Gaddafi's behaviour, and suggested that Libya probably would have abandoned its WMD programs even in the absence of the Iraq intervention. Libya's transformation began with the second Clinton administration's measured law-and-order approach to Libya's involvement in the Pan Am 103 bombing, and was nurtured by carrots dangled by the Bush administration before intervention in Iraq. These included quiet

9) Some Americans, of course, disagree. E.g., Robert Kagan, "America's Crisis of Legitimacy", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 83, no. 2, March/April 2004, p. 69.

10) Some prominent European commentators recognized a need for European governments to take the threat more seriously after 9/11. E.g., Thérèse Delpech, "International Terrorism and Europe", *Chaillot Paper no. 56*, Institute for Security Studies, December 2002, p. 31. See also "Non-proliferation in the 21st Century: A Transatlantic Agenda", *Draft General Report*, NATO Parliamentary Assembly, September 22, 2003. Other European analysts, however, have seemed self-consciously unalarmed. See, for example, Harald Müller, "Terrorism, proliferation: A European Threat Assessment", *Chaillot Paper no. 56*, Institute for Security Studies, March 2003, pp. 70-72.

US and UK pledges to end UN sanctions if Tripoli changed its tune on Pan Am 103 and American indications that US sanctions could be dropped if Libya forswore support for terrorism and WMD programs.¹¹ DCI George Tenet's recent unclassified Worldwide Threat Briefing supports this assessment.¹² So despite the Bush administration's instinctive preference for sticks over carrots, and its likely diplomatic role as 'bad cop' to Europe's 'good cop', it seems probable that Washington will opt for controlling North Korea and Iran's nuclear ambitions through some combination of qualified military threats, inspection arrangements, economic incentives and security guarantees. Such an approach would broadly square with the 'Basic Principles for an EU Strategy Against Proliferation of WMD' adopted in June 2003, emphasizing the complementarity between diplomacy and the use of force as well as multilateral and bilateral coordination – particularly with the US. With respect to Syria, which has indicated that it will not give up its WMD programs until Israel does so, the US will probably be less inclined to coordinate with Europe but still likely to opt for diplomacy, albeit of the coercive variety.

The most profound transatlantic theoretical differences with respect to counter-terrorism are probably over homeland security, but the US and Europe are closer in practice. European governments, while they certainly accept the distinction between new and old terrorism, are still more inclined than Washington to view trans-national Islamic terrorism as a continuation – if an extreme one – of the ideological and ethno-nationalist terrorist movements with which many European states have extensive experience. That experience also tilts them towards the view that even the most tenacious counter-terrorism authorities cannot always stop a determined terrorist.¹³ Both aspects of the European approach to counter-terrorism – which can be broadly described as threat-based and intelligence-driven – are somewhat at odds with the American vulnerability-based approach. At the same time, the security policies that the European philosophy has dictated – an intensified focus on civil defence, first-response and national resiliency, particularly in the United Kingdom – are quite consistent with American policies. Why? Because American invulnerability remains only an aspiration. Although the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was conceived as a mechanism for networking disparate security functions to minimize windows of vulnerability in the US homeland-security system, implementation has been fraught. In fact, so far the DHS appears to be largely a first-response agency, with very little independent preventive capacity. The desired synergies have not yet materialized.

The US aspires to virtual invulnerability, while European governments consider it chimerical. But for the moment, on both sides of the Atlantic, there is an appreciation of the heightened WMD threat posed by the new terrorism,

11) See, e.g., Flynt Leverett, "Why Libya Gave Up on the Bomb", *New York Times*, January 23, 2004.

12) DCI's Worldwide Threat Briefing, "The Worldwide Threat 2004: Challenges in a Changing Global Context", February 24, 2004, pp. 11-12.

13) See generally Jonathan Stevenson, "How Europe and America Defend Themselves", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 2, pp. 75-90.

and a de facto emphasis on prevention at the levels of proactive counter-terrorism (law-enforcement and intelligence) and diplomacy, and on response at the level of homeland security.

Al-Qaeda's political impermeability and consequent undeterrability were perhaps necessary – and certainly galvanizing – American assumptions immediately after 9/11, when the US and its partners had to re-orient hard security and self-protection to deal with a rising strategic threat. The US did not exclude deterrence from its counter-terrorism policy as applied to WMD threats, but it also was not sufficiently confident in deterrence to count it as one of the three pillars of national policy. Instead, NSPD-17 noted anticipatorily that 'more diverse and less predictable threats ... require new methods of deterrence.' Yet subsequent commentary on 'our contemporary deterrent posture' – about 'strong declaratory policy,' 'political tools,' the threat of 'overwhelming force ... including ... resort to all of our options,' effective law-enforcement and intelligence – did not specify any 'new methods' or novel thinking tailored to the new threat.¹⁴ This statement of national policy did not indicate with any particularity how the terrorist 'irreconcilables' might be deterred. But as the absence of post-9/11 attacks in North America and Europe has suggested that governments have provisionally gotten a grip on hard counter-terrorism, American analysts have started to consider in greater depth how to re-conceive deterrence to meet the WMD terrorist threat. This intellectual task involves probing al-Qaeda's religious psychology.

John Parachini, in particular, has raised thoughtful questions.¹⁵ He has illuminated the gap between al-Qaeda's intentions and capabilities; its capacity to make do with conventional explosives to produce mass-casualties; how that option could dampen WMD ambitions without appreciably reducing the overall terrorist threat and capability; and the need to preserve finite counter-terrorism resources via risk-management to a greater extent than the US government may have been willing to concede. These are all points well taken. Some aspects of Parachini's critique, however, seem obtuse. He appears almost sanguine in asserting that 'bin Laden's worldview does not depend on the use of unconventional weapons.... Attacks with explosives or crashing jetliners into buildings will suffice.'¹⁶ By broadening his theme to 'unconventional weapons,' he takes the focus off al-Qaeda and the natural linkage between WMD and (1) high political impact of threshold-crossing terrorism like the 9/11 attack, and (2) the eschatology of radical Islam.

Other US analysts are less inclined to downplay these factors. In an August 2003 symposium, Gregory Treverton, a relative sceptic on al-Qaeda's prospective use of WMD, said ruefully '9/11 was shocking but a repeat would be less so. So there may be an incentive for terrorists to look to the next level of

14) "National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction", *National Security Presidential Directive 17*.

15) John Parachini, "Putting WMD Terrorism Into Perspective", *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 4, Autumn 2003, pp. 37-50.

16) Parachini, "Putting WMD Terrorism Into Perspective", p. 43.

'stun' value.¹⁷ In the same gathering, Parachini himself admitted that there was a possibility that al-Qaeda might nurse a nascent WMD capability towards greater sophistication in the interest of achieving maximum impact.¹⁸ Alluding to eschatology, Brian Jenkins stated that, 'believing they have the mandate of God, terrorists subscribing to ideologies drawn from religion are less constrained by conventional morality or assessments of personal risk' – characteristics that would underwrite WMD use. But he added a key qualification that has been gaining traction in the US: 'al-Qaeda and its affiliates are not monolithic institutions; they are complex institutions depending on tolerance and support. Deterrence in its traditional form may not work very well against the committed core or the wild-eyed recruits of enterprises like al-Qaeda, but other parts of the system may be amenable to influence.'¹⁹

The point is that notwithstanding the religiously absolute imperatives laid down by al-Qaeda's leadership, the highly decentralized and pragmatic character of the trans-national Islamic terrorist network means that terrorists' religious and political intensity and tactical mindsets are highly variable. Like 'old' terrorist groups, al-Qaeda too encompasses professional terrorists and wavering 'fellow travellers' as well as maniacal true believers. Thus, it would be a mistake to cast all trans-national Islamic terrorists and certainly even most terrorist supporters as impervious to political and tactical influence. Indeed, Steve Simon has suggested useful distinctions even within the hardcore category. Some Muslim terrorists regard WMD as indispensable instruments of eschatology. Others, however, seem to see them merely as prime war fighting assets, useful in compensating for the conventional military disparity between Western militaries and terrorists with no state apparatus. Terrorists in the first group are liable to use WMD as soon as they have them, those in the second more inclined to weigh the political and tactical tradeoffs crossing that threshold would entail. The latter can probably be deterred – at least from using WMD. It is not yet clear precisely what the terms of the US deterrent would be, nor precisely how they would be communicated.

In light of the US WMD terrorist threat assessment – essentially, intention without effective capability – US policy has featured mainly prevention and, in case that fails, first response. But since NSPD-17 was issued, Vice President Dick Cheney has asked rhetorically, 'How do you deter terrorists who have no nation to defend and who are willing to sacrifice their own lives in order to kill Americans? These ... are problems that the American government has never before faced, and they require new thinking, courageous leadership and bold action.'²⁰ As the campaign against terrorism broadens and deepens

17) *Symposium: Diagnosing Al Qaeda*, August 18, 2003, www.rand.org/news/newslinks/fp.html, p. 6.

18) *Ibid.*, p. 5.

19) *Ibid.*, p. 10. See also Paul K. Davis and Brian Michael Jenkins, "The Influence Component of Counterterrorism", *RAND Review*, Spring 2003, pp. 12-15.

20) "Remarks by the Vice President to the Heritage Foundation", May 1, 2003 usinfo.state.gov/regional/nea/iraq/text2003/0501chny.htm.

beyond immediate hard counter-terrorism priorities, it seems likely – and surely desirable – that the US government will incorporate a more customized and nuanced conception of deterrence into its approach to the WMD terrorist threat. Given that European governments have demonstrated more confidence in deterrence with respect to WMD than has Washington, such a development would reinforce transatlantic convergence rather than divergence’.

Session: Weapons of Mass Destruction and Terrorism

Peter van Ham

Clearly, both the US and EU consider WMD-proliferation one of the key security threats. President Bush declared in his speech on non-proliferation on 11 Feb.: 'The greatest threat before humanity today is the possibility of secret and sudden attack with chemical or biological or nuclear weapons.' (Echo of 2002 NSS). The EU in its Non-Proliferation Strategy of June 2003: 'The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (...) constitutes a threat to international peace and security'. So, there is no doubt about it: Both for the US and the EU, WMD-proliferation is the top priority, the overwhelming security threat. The EU and US work towards the same goal, but obviously with different strategies, different policy-mix. It is these differences that are important, although I would like to stress that the basic goals are exactly the same.

So, what are these differences? There are few big surprises, since US and EU non-proliferation policies reflect the sometimes stark differences in worldview between the Bush administration and the EU. The Bush administration shows distrust and scepticism of multilateral frameworks; they are too slow and too naïve. The NSS introduced a security strategy which is not based on international institutions and international law, but on the twin pillars of, firstly, preventive war, as we have seen in Iraq, and, secondly, global (military) pre-eminence which is now clearly reflected in the US policy on nuclear weapons. This is combined with a very pronounced moral worldview, namely a division between 'good' states on the one hand and 'bad' or 'evil' states on the other. The EU follows a 'European way' in non-proliferation: clear preference for multilateral institutions and agreements, the rule of law, and the treatment of 'root causes', both economic, political ones, as well as the old idea that regional conflicts should be solved first, to limit the proliferation desire and momentum.

So, despite a real effort to adopt a strategy based on Realpolitik, the EU's WMD-Strategy of June 2003, and its first-ever overall European Security Strategy (December 2003), remains quintessential post-modern tracts. Europe's consensual model of engagement and diplomacy underwent a few critical 'reality checks', but it's still based on multilateralism, with only a modest bite.

The differences are clear on three accounts. Firstly, US leadership; Washington determines the foreign policy agenda. (Iraq (war); Iran/North-Korea; Libya; changing the rules of the NPT; Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI); etc.) Europe (or EU) is very clearly in a reactive mode. The US acts, takes initiative; Europe places some critical comments. Europe is becoming a footnote-continent to US policy.

Secondly, the US approach is 'mission determines the coalition', with a club of likeminded states if we can, through the UN if we must. PSI is the best example of this approach. The American idea of multilateralism is a US-led initiative with flexible rules, without bureaucracy. For example, Bush's emphasis on strengthening the Nuclear Supplier Group, a 40-state wide group of western countries who export nuclear-related technology and material, rather than a global initiative towards the same aim but through the UN. The EU gut-reaction is very different: through the UN (and other global/regional institutions) if we can, and with small groups if we must.

Thirdly, use of force. The US remains at war. President Bush declared that deterrence/containment no longer works, and that therefore traditional non-proliferation strategies/treaties should be reconsidered. The basic idea is that 'in the hands of terrorists, WMD would be the first – the preferred means to further their ideology of suicide and random murder.' (Feb 11, '04). The US will strike first, if need be with force, in order to defend itself. A preventive strike is considered self-defence. There is a good piece by Feinstein/Slaughter in latest issue of foreign affairs: 'Duty to Prevent' against WMD-proliferation. It's a right and a duty.

The EU, however, is not at war (despite all the rhetoric), but merely in a state of emergency. For the EU, proliferation can be managed, contained, but never truly eradicated. Hence: force is only an option if mandated by the UNSC, very much as a last resort. The EU Strategy is an example: aimed at addressing US (and EU) security concerns, but without endorsing US methods. To some extent, of course, this is an academic distinction, because even if the political will for a European strategy of preventive war would exist, Europe would not have the military capabilities to carry them out.

To summarise, the US takes the lead on all non-proliferation issues, gathering small coalitions of like-minded states with a forceful agenda for radical change, whereas the EU is reactive, cautious, and with a clear focus on the traditional, multilateral agenda way of doing things. Both the US and the EU can find themselves in a strategy of 'effective multilateralism', but that's where the consensus stops. The US is clearly much keener on effectiveness, whereas the EU just loves the multilateralism. This makes the next questions very relevant:

The question is, are these strategies compatible? Given the historical and geopolitical background, the EU will remain committed to non-proliferation, whereas the US will focus on counter-proliferation. In order to guarantee fruitful and effective US-European cooperation, ways should be found to capture the strengths (and mitigate the weaknesses) of both approaches in a coherent transatlantic synthesis. The EU has to rescind from its treaty-

fetishism; the US has to avoid damaging long-term non-proliferation goals by pursuing short-term counter proliferation objectives.

There is certainly a small chance that this 'convergence' of approaches may come about, especially if we will have 'regime-change' in the US and Washington's foreign policy will be under new, democratic management. Senator Kerry's approach to WMD-proliferation is clearly more EU-compatible than that of the current Bush administration. I've got the impression that the harshest criticism of the Bush administration policies – including that on WMD-proliferation and the Middle East – does not come from Europe (we seem to be a bit shy at the moment), but from the Democratic opposition. No European leader would say the same as John Kerry did last December: 'The Bush Administration has pursued the most arrogant, inept, reckless and ideological foreign policy in modern history.'

How could this US-European approach look? Reinvigorated transatlantic efforts to combat WMD-proliferation should be two-pronged, working through the EU and through NATO. It should also aim at strengthening the UN.

Firstly, a US-EU track aimed at strengthening cooperation on economic, financial, and trade issues, as well as streamlining US-EU diplomatic courses of action. Although the EU has taken considerable strides towards a more common European approach to security and defence, its comparative advantage remains in the 'soft security' sectors. For example: the EU has now accepted a WMD 'Action Plan', which has three elements: (1) a regional focus on security and stability in the Mediterranean (including proposals for a WMD-free Middle East); (2) strengthened cooperation with key partners such as the US and Russia; (3) and the notion of what is called 'mainstreaming', i.e., 'the introduction of an effective stick and carrot policy linked to non-proliferation commitments in [the EU's] relations with third countries.' The EU now commits itself to a policy of conditionality by including a 'non-proliferation-clause' in all its (future) Trade and Cooperation Agreements (TCA's). The clause aims to make optimal use of the EU's ample 'soft power' and to set clear non-proliferation guidelines for the 'third countries' it is dealing with.

Also, there is an emerging consensus for a real Transatlantic Homeland Security strategy, based upon close US-EU cooperation. This is especially important since the EU will in the future have to deal with Iran's nuclear ambitions more directly. The reasons why this is on the EU's policy-plate are clear: Iran is geographically close to Europe; its nuclear program can still be stopped by a clever carrot-and-stick-policy; and the EU has the political and economic means to influence policymakers in Tehran. It should also be noted not only to provide technical assistance to Iran's civilian nuclear programme, but also to help eliminate the causes of instability in the Middle East, ideally with a view to establishing a regional WMD-free-zone.

Secondly, NATO should be considered the preferred track to coordinate (and preferably harmonize) military and strategic issues. US Senator Richard Lugar argued (in the summer of 2002) that 'NATO must and will become an effective organization in the war on terrorism by addressing those countries directly involved and by isolating those who continue to proliferate WMD', calling for a thorough 'transformation of NATO to meet this new threat.' In a

way, NATO faces similar pressures as many European states to remain 'relevant' to America's new strategic agenda, where counterterrorism and counter proliferation overwhelm all other security concerns. NATO's new area of responsibility will shift towards the Middle East, closer to feared 'serial proliferators' such as Iran and Pakistan. It makes much sense for the US and Europe to discuss, coordinate, and plan their WMD-proliferation strategies within NATO. These EU and NATO-based strategies should be in step with each other, based upon shared threat assessments (which seems to be the case) and a good interplay of 'soft' and 'hard power.'

Thirdly, the UN should be given a much more prominent role. In retrospect, the UN proved to be correct in most of its assessments on the Iraqi WMD-programmes. It is also clear that without a dominant role of the UN, the proliferation challenge from Iran cannot be contained, and the regional (GME) crisis, which fuels Iranian nuclear ambitions, cannot be solved. The EU and US should call for the IAEA and UNMOVIC-like inspection teams to be given more authority. UNMOVIC's unique verification and inspection competences should be retained and used. Only one year ago, US vice-president Dick Cheney called UN-inspections 'a sham', and Colin Powell compared UNMOVIC-inspectors with an a mob of 'Inspector Clouseau's', probably not only mocking UNMOVIC because is was supposed to be a rather clumsy club of inspectors, but also because the 'Inspector Clouseau'-film character was French, which at that time was a double insult.

Today, the Bush administration seems keen to give the UN and IAEA a (somewhat) more prominent role, but may be afraid to lose face by publicly doing so. It is therefore mainly up to the EU to push for a greater UN role and to make this option more acceptable in Washington.

Abdel Monem Aly:

Mark Heller was silent last session, and when he gets silent, I get worried. Mr Heller, you have the floor for ten to fifteen minutes.

Session: Weapons of Mass Destruction and Terrorism

Mark Heller

I shall try to be brief. There are a couple of themes that emerged from the previous remarks. In some sense they all converge around a central organising question and that is the idea of the relative role of states and non state actors. It was suggested that WMD proliferation is an initiative that concerns states more and that terrorism is an initiative that concerns non-state actors more. I want to raise a question about that, particularly about the second issue. I tend to agree that WMD proliferation is still primarily largely a question of state capabilities. Even with the recent speculation on private development, states are still the major players. You cannot honestly believe that AQ Khan has been acting without the knowledge of the Pakistani government for the last several years.

Having said that, I would suggest that in many respects terrorism is a similar phenomenon. That is to say, that for all of their aspirations to independent action, large scale terrorist organisations and operations and capabilities exist territorially. That means they must be operating at least within the legal jurisdiction of states. That means states that are either tolerant or willing to permit these operations, or that states lack the capability to prevent them, i.e. that they are failed states. In either case whatever the answer may be, it raises the question of how everybody else is to respond to the culpability by omission or by commission of states in terrorist operations. What must everybody else do about these states?

There is a lot of hypocrisy in discussions on terrorism, particularly in making distinctions between terrorist organisations and others such as so called freedom fighters. Al-Qaeda also has deep rooted goals. The distinction that is made between terrorism that affects me and terrorism that affects you is unclear and hypocritical. There is a difference between the US and Europe, particularly after 9/11. There is, however, a convergence on the definition of terrorists.

In the immediate context the question that arises is, is there a Libyan precedent that can be applied to anyone else on the issue of WMD and terrorism? Now I do not know whether there is a deliberate division of labour between Europe and the US on Libya – the good cop and the bad cop – that has achieved the results that already have been achieved with respect to Libyan WMD. May this also be achieved for Iranian support for terrorism? That is a question that I think ought to be given some consideration, in light of the fact

that Iran has been for many years the largest state supporter of terrorism, at least in the Middle East.

The last question has to do with the US-European division of labour, and what happened to prevention. Well, one could argue that American military pre-emption in this case has been pre-empted by European diplomatic manoeuvres. I would be interested to know how much of European diplomatic intervention on the issue of Iranian WMD was motivated by concern for American pre-emption.

Session: Weapons of Mass Destruction and Terrorism

Debate

Abdel Monem Aly:

We have four or more speakers, so gentleman if you would keep it short please.

Volker Perthes:

Maybe it is a simple geographical question. What region are we planning policies for? This is important, because you could easily make the region too big or too small and therefore your policies would not fit the region. When we speak about WMD proliferation we may have the key to devise a region for policies. Which countries should be included in the nuclear free zone in the Middle East? Do we just include the Arabs only or also India and Pakistan and perhaps south East Asia? I personally think this too big, but my question is how they would define geographically the WMD (free) zone?

Jon Alterman:

I want to follow up. This question of a grand bargain between Europe and the US on Iran. I do not think it is going to happen. The US is not going to give in unless WMD is linked to everything else. So, do you think Europe would sign up to a bargain that would address proliferation and terrorism or would the Europeans rather opt for both separated?

Dalia Dassa Kaye:

This is for Peter. You did a great job analysing the convergence issue and the growing convergence between the US and Europe. We see through actions on the ground that Europeans are taking this much more seriously, most recently with these EU negotiations on a trade agreement. What we see is the EU holding up the trade agreement for a proliferation clause, so we are seeing positive signs, but I wonder if convergence is happening for different reasons. If so, will this cause problems in the future?

Gregory Gause:

I am curious as to whether there is complementarity across the Atlantic on views on the causes of terrorism. It seems to me that there are real differences. There seems to be an agreement on one element of the causes of

terrorism. I get the general impression in Europe that terrorism is seen as coming from political root causes whereas in the US it is seen in psychological terms or because of weakness of the target (lack of deterrence). The one area where EU and US perspectives seem to come together is the notion that terrorism comes from a lack of democracy, prosperity and a general lack of economic and social development. That just seems to me to be wrong, because we see terrorism from a whole range of socio-economic groups. So I wonder if we are perhaps united on the wrong effort.

Edwin Bakker:

I have a question for Jonathon Stevenson. Americans and Europeans differ thus on a variety of issues. With regard to terrorism and WMD, we also differ on the technical detail of detecting radioactive material for example. Who believes in the hard measures, because the most successful discovery was from a Dutch scrap metal dealer who for the safety of his own workforce scanned all the material and found radioactive things hidden. Who in the United States and Europe believes in the effectiveness of shock and awe measures against proliferation and WMD? If we believe in that and participate, is there a sign of convergence? I do not think so.

Peter van Ham:

AQ Kahn was mentioned and the black market. There are two options that are equally disconcerting. Either the US knew about it and did nothing or it did not know. I always wonder why we look the other way on Pakistan incidentally. Second, the question about the grand bargain. When I was talking on putting conditionality on countries like Iran and Syria it was not only on their WMD behaviour. If you look at the trade and cooperation agreement between the EU and Iran there are four clear criteria. The first is that they must stick to the WMD non proliferation measure second, they must not support and harbour terrorists. Third, a whole set of criteria on human rights and fourth a role in helping to solve a set of regional issues.

The problem is what to do when they are only cooperative on one and not on something else. My third point is that there is a superficial kind of EU-US cooperation on Iran. Many in Europe feel that because Iran is on our doorstep we should do something, and the US is letting us pay attention to Iran, because the US is busy with Iraq. It is also an election year and perhaps the US is looking to EU moves with Iran with interest.

Finally on the WMD free zone issue. Who should participate? We all know that momentum is coming from China, Pakistan and India, so the whole thing is linked. The thing is if one tries to leave aside Israel, because they are such a good country then the issue cannot be solved. Basically why does Iran want weapons, well, because of Iraq and Israel. So a regional solution is inevitable and it must include Israel and India's and Pakistan's nuclear weapons must also be addressed. Of course a nuclear free greater Middle East is, I believe, still on the table at least as an idea.

Jonathan Stevenson:

Talking about technical means used in the various security initiatives. I do not think the US places sole faith in the technical means. I think there is an understanding that security on the issue is only going to work well if there is a pool of information and cooperation on the issue. I think Americans are coming around to the view that technical means are important, but so is human intelligence when cracking nuts like Al-Qaeda.

I think there is a distinction between new and old terrorism in that the new is globally apocalyptic. New terrorists have clear reasons for acting and they can be dealt with, but we must know what the roots for terrorism are. What is the connection between terror and poverty for example?

My final point is a general one. I think one of the key effects of Iraq on foreign policy is that it will intensify the coercive content of US policy, but that also fits into the post 9/11 US direction.

Abdel Monem Aly:

I intend to use the couple of minutes I have left. I totally agree with Mr Stevenson on the wide variety of causes for terrorism. But I want to talk about something else. We used to have two major orders. Firstly, the NPT and secondly an international system that could deal with local, regional and internal conflict.

On the NPT I can be short. It used to be rock solid, there were no exceptions and only five countries were allowed nuclear weaponry. Now it is a mess, weakened by exceptions, by India, by Israel and by Pakistan. Exceptions should not be possible, because it makes them into scrap pieces of paper. On the international system. Treaties and conventions have become useless. As in our own societies, if the law is broken, punishment must follow. How to reconstruct order that is being increasingly mocked is something we should think of. We need an order to protect civil society.

I will stop here and hope you enjoyed this third session. Thank you.

Conclusion

Jim Goldgeier

Maarten Lak:

Let me briefly introduce to you Mr Goldgeier, who is waiting to draw conclusions from our conference today. He is at George Washington University and is Director of Studies for Europe, Asia and Eurasia there, which is almost the entire world. He has written a successful book on US policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

Jim Goldgeier:

Thank you very much. I want to try to provoke you a bit. As I got on the plane, there was the Washington Post. I turned the pages reading it and came across two items on Europe. One was the tariffs being imposed on US products and an e-mail sent by xx. His e-mail had a question on what the costs were of exporting US military aid to Europe in case they may need it. The second item was Colin Powell's speech to the Heritage Foundation. Asia communism is withering away. Government intervention in China is lower than it is in France; always an interesting comparison to make.

So the subject of this discussion was Transatlantic dialogue on Middle Eastern policy. The fundamental question is, in a world where the United States sets the pace globally, how much influence does Europe have. I do not think very much. During the Cold War the Europeans had a lot of influence, at least on European issues; they being the major foreign policy item then. That has gone now with America no longer having to worry about the continent.

American policy is very much a military one. The thing is that the American armed forces have no real partner they can work with effectively globally. When it does work with other partners it has to do a lot for them. There are two different ways for Europeans to influence the Americans, however.

Firstly, the British approach. Britain is close to the US and hoping that that will give influence. Lord Wallace mentioned that one of Blair's reasons was to push the US into using the UN and he also mentioned how Bush mentioned that Britain was vital six times. The problem is that the British influence is largely limited in that it is largely taken for granted.

The alternative is the French approach that tries to form coalitions to chip away at the US position. The problem with this is that it too is taken for granted.

Kagan was mentioned this morning. He is my favourite neocon. I have been fascinated in the last few months on his intellectual quandary he has got himself into. His real opposition is not the Democrats, but those in his own party that practise realpolitik. He cannot figure out how to get legitimacy in the world and hammers on NATO. Curiously the only way that is possible, that NATO could become the vehicle is to give Europeans more power, but then he does not want that to happen either.

We come on to NATO. Some argued that NATO should not be used in Iraq just to save it. I think the Kagan argument would be to use it as legitimacy. Another argument was that NATO could be used in Israel-Palestine. As we talk about NATO doing more all over the greater Middle East, the big question is: whose troops? Also on what happened to the US pre-emption. Well, some people fear Bush may use the war monger card, and he will. He will run as a war monger, because it sure as hell beats talking about jobs.

The role of Helsinki was raised a couple of times. The process was fundamental to the way the Cold War ended. From an American perspective the most important basket was that of human rights, but it was also the one that was most derided. Kissinger did not care about it.

It is possible that my answer that Europeans do not have a lot of influence is controversial, perhaps it is wrong. Perhaps my question is wrong, perhaps transatlantic relations work best with complementarity rather than raw influence.

To end, this is the first republican US administration that believes it can keep Jewish voters and Jewish money away from the Democrats and at the same time Lord Wallace talked of the influence of the Muslim minority in Europe, which just goes to show another difference.

Jon Alterman:

Two quick points if I may. On that last issue, it strikes me that equally important of the electoral role of the Jewish community is now the key to the religious right. See the coalition that the Israeli right forged in the 1990's with the religious right in the US. It was heavily criticised at the time, but it looks like it has paid off.

Secondly, Europe must prove its relevance to American policy goals. Europeans have to ask themselves (as do Americans) on which issues can the United States not work alone, and how can two separate views be managed.

Alfred van Staden:

Ladies and gentleman, thank you for attending this conference. I believe that this was a rather successful example of transatlantic cooperation. The lions share was done by Ms Dassa Kaye with the rest by us. I do believe we got the ball rolling today and there is certainly enough points of view to dwell upon. Thank you once again, good evening.

Epilogue

Dalia Dassa Kaye

We should not try to summarize the proceedings of the conference, but it is perhaps useful to highlight a number of key themes as they have emerged from the debates.

- *Continuity in US policy.* Despite the current focus on the unilateralism of the current Bush administration, American participants underscored the underlying continuity in American policy in the Middle East, and did not expect policy to fundamentally change with a Kerry or Bush II administration. As one speaker put it, differences between the US and Europe may not be as deep as they appear but they are also not as transient.
- *Transatlantic therapy vs. addressing the region's problems for their own sake.* Many cautioned against using various Middle East policy problems, particularly Iraq, as a tool for transatlantic therapy to repair the relationship; not only is such therapy unlikely to work (it may even make matters worse) but it risks neglecting finding the best means to solve the problems on the ground in the region. Addressing the region's problems, not the transatlantic relationship, should be the first order of priority.
- *Coordination on all issues may not make sense.* There were many who believed that transatlantic coordination on all problems should not be the goal; it is important to sift out the areas where coordination would be most fruitful and those areas where coordination is unnecessary and possibly even damaging. There was general consensus that Iran (and possibly other problem states like Syria) was a productive area for cooperation and has thus far produced results. Still, even in this one area of general agreement, there was some concern expressed about whether the US and Europe would continue to work from the same page if Iran, for example, continued cooperating on the proliferation issue but then went backwards in other areas, such as human rights. Still, the US-European coordination on Iran and WMD was generally considered a good example of productive cooperation. There was also some agreement

that the establishment of some sort of regional security structure would be a useful area for transatlantic cooperation. There was less agreement on the usefulness of transatlantic cooperation on the peace process (many were critical of the Quartet, for instance) and on the American Greater Middle East plan, or efforts to promote democracy in the wider region. Some participants thought the reform agenda was a useful area for transatlantic cooperation while others worried that such cooperation would 'pollute' European efforts.

- *Linkage between the Greater Middle East plan and the peace process.* Much concern was expressed from the European side that the GME plan was the 'anything but Israel' initiative. But the overwhelming view of participants was that even though the linkage between the two issues was conceptual, in practice the Israeli-Palestinian conflict impacts all issues in the region; as one regional participant described it, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is for the Middle East what the German problem was for Europe. But the American paradigm still puts regional change ahead of the peace process. One participant questioned what difference the differences made (between the American and European approach) when it comes to regional reform, as neither approach (more aggressive and more engaging) is likely to impact real change on the ground. Many others expressed scepticism about the prospects for regional reform regardless of what either the US or Europe did. Others were more optimistic that agents of change existed in the region but that change will take time and occur only after tremendous violence.
- *The peace process is in many ways a lose-lose situation for transatlantic relations.* The deteriorating situation in the region does not help transatlantic relations and transatlantic cooperation (e.g., the Quartet) does not seem to help the region. General scepticism about the Quartet and road map was apparent. But despite general pessimism, there was discussion about ways to build upon Sharon's unilateral withdrawal proposal through a coordinated US-European approach that could potentially move the process forward, or at least prevent it from getting worse.
- *Domestic politics in the US and Europe are moving in different directions* and are likely to be sources for divergent policy in the future. Both sides need to confront this reality.

A few specific recommendations:

- Create a new regional security structure focused on Iraq: a 6 (Iraq's neighbours) + 4 (the Quartet members) + 1 (Iraq itself) formula.
- Coordinate a US-European response to Sharon's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza initiative; approve of the withdrawal but agree on conditions

(i.e., the other unilateral steps that would not be accepted by the international community).

- A possible NATO role in the peace process.
- Expand the transatlantic cooperation toward Iran and WMD to deal with Iran and terrorism.

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4 and 5 March 2004, The Clingendael Institute, The Hague

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