



Transatlantic Programme
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Global Leadership Forum: The 2008 US Presidential Elections and the Future of World Politics¹

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In partnership with



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Summary

The Global Leadership Forum brought together top Washington and London foreign policy analysts, thanks to the collective efforts of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and the Princeton Project on National Security at Princeton University, Newsweek, Berwin Leighton Paisner, and the Royal United Services Institute for Security and Defence Studies (RUSI). The focal point for the conference was the United States, and its current position in the world as well as forecasts of policy-making in Washington post-January 2009.

Each session highlighted a particular challenge to the future of the US and its allies with particular reference to the British perspective. The level of expertise of the panellists was of the highest calibre, and the discussions enjoyed a frankness that would be difficult to imagine in Washington. While many of the panellists enjoyed close ties or advisory roles to the presidential candidates, all of the remarks were made in their personal capacity.

Resources

RUSI Global Leadership Forum homepage:
<http://www.rusi.org/globalleaders/>

Princeton Project on National Security Global Leadership Forum blog:
<https://blogs.princeton.edu/globalforum/>

Streaming audio from Policy Review TV:
http://www.policyreview.tv/system.php?page=conf/podcasts&conf_id=103

Streaming video from Fora TV:
<http://fora.tv/>

Newsweek Q&A with Professor Michael Clarke:
<http://www.newsweek.com/id/134935>

Newsweek Q&A with McCain's foreign policy adviser:
<http://www.newsweek.com/id/134919>

Anne-Marie Slaughter in *Newsweek* on the East-West Divide:
<http://www.newsweek.com/id/135062>

Opening Remarks

Following some bright and insightful opening comments from Simon Allan of Berwin Leighton Paisner (BLP), Professor Michael Clarke (Director, RUSI) and Anne-Marie Slaughter called for increased dialogue to create the fabric of the new trans-Atlantic bargain.

Panel One: US Foreign Policy and the 2008 Elections

The first session brought together an all-star panel of Washington analysts from both sides of the political spectrum, as well as the London School of Economics IDEAS Chair, Professor Michael Cox. Each panellist called for essential changes or continuations in current policies emanating from the White House. On the left side of the spectrum, Ivo Daalder of the Brookings Institute and Kurt Campbell of the Center for New American Security spoke and highlighted current challenges facing the next American president. Each speaker emphasised different requirements for the approach to foreign policy, but it was clear that Iraq, Afghanistan, climate change and the nuclear agenda should all be top priorities, regardless which side of the aisle the new president comes from. Generally in agreement, the panellists choose to emphasise slightly different issues. Daalder stressed the need for a stylistic change, embracing multilateralism to restore the world's trust in America, while Campbell cautioned to carefully negotiate the 'Siberian dilemma' of a time table for the withdrawal of troops in Iraq.

On the right side of the spectrum, we heard from Robert Kagan from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Peter Wehner from the Ethics and Public Policy Center. Kagan called for a re-integration of the US as a good global citizen, leaving behind its narrow approach to national interest and implying a more multilateral approach, but recognising (as he does in his most recent book) American exceptionalist self-imaging. Wehner, speaking in what appeared as his official capacity as an advisor to Senator McCain, made five observations along the lines that McCain has been following in his campaign statements, with a marked emphasis on the need not to succumb to 'defeat' in Iraq.

Michael Cox, the director of LSE IDEAS at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) offered a sober analysis of the state of play. He emphasised the decline in American moral authority, the sustainability of anti-Americanism and the need to accept the erosion of American influence. Interesting themes emerged from the panel and the question and answer session. The mood of the panellists indicated the election is still anyone's game, despite the heavy favouring of the democrats in the twilight of the George W Bush era. While this clearly brings the optimistic hope of new policies, the panellists were all cautious to recognise that a Democratic administration in 2009 will not be an instantaneous remedy for the slightly more disparaging issues brought up by Professor Cox. During the questions session, Gideon Rachman of the *Financial Times* brought up McCain's recent reference to the 'League of Democracies' a concept that has been sprinkled through recent foreign policy speeches. The panellists were quick to shoot this concept down for plausibility, but generally welcome it as an added term to the electoral foreign policy lexicon. The session was insightful and frank, a pleasing departure from typical election-year rhetoric.

Panel Two: The Future of Transatlantic Relations

The speakers represented both sides of the Atlantic, and all sides of the debates surrounding whether or not the classic strategic partners need or in fact want that partnership to continue. Professor Christopher Coker, Chair of the Department of International Relations at the LSE, expressed strong opposition to NATO's out of area mission in Afghanistan calling for a return to its original mandate of providing security for Europe proper.

John Ikenberry, Albert G Milbank Professor of Politics and International Affairs at the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton, offered an analysis of the current staleness of the transatlantic relationship, on the general crisis on liberal internationalism, and on institutional inability to cope with the new problems facing the Atlantic pillar, such as the rise of Asia, the decline of American power, the nuclear question and climate change.

Lord Powell of Bayswater, Chairman of the Atlantic Partnership, provided a British perspective on the situation and looked to areas outside of Europe and the US to explain the future of the Atlantic relationship, reminding us not to neglect the importance of hard power.

Phil Gordon of the Brookings Institute reiterated the need to co-operate with Europe on problems of a transnational nature, such as the looming global financial crisis and climate change. He also highlighted two tiers of issues that we must get beyond to address problems, on the first tier specific policy outlooks on Iraq, Guantanamo and climate change, while the second tier includes cultural and stylistic issues.

Karen Donfried of the German Marshall Fund cautioned on the perils of conflating anti-American sentiment in Europe with anti-Bush sentiment, while highlighting the differences of cyclical change and structural change. The session was illuminating, while incorporating various topics covered in the first session such as the decline of American power, and the measuring of expectations with the relationship. One of the most profound comments of the session came from Phil Gordon. He cautioned us on the crisis of disappointed expectations. This would mean that if or when a

Democrat is voted into the office, European sentiment might not change rapidly toward the United States. Whether in the context of sending troops to Afghanistan or general antagonism toward Americans, Americans could enter into a period of backlash, at which point the White House may have to seriously reconsider the relationship towards a begrudged partner.

Panel Three: Reconfiguring the Struggle against Terrorism

The third panel discussed the discourse surrounding the struggle against terrorism. Policy practitioners and academics from both the US and the UK examined the changing environment regarding the topic. Moderator Lyse Doucet of the BBC began the session noting the change in tone and terminology from the Bush Administration away from the War on Terror. Sir David Omand then kicked off the session with a call to civilianise the struggle against terrorism. Likening terrorism to 'ideological bird flu', he suggested that administrators approach the problem with a citizen focus within the framework of human rights and upholding of the rule of law.

Kori Schake, Principle Deputy Director in Office of Policy Planning at the US State Department, followed with her insider perspective, first discussing the problematic vocabulary of the War on Terror, and then highlighting disincentives for inter-agency co-operation in the US. She wrapped up her remarks with two seemingly contradictory comments insisting that Europe is a winnable constituency for the US in the struggle, while domestically there is or abatement in this struggle. Baroness Pauline Neville Jones, Shadow Minister for National Security, took up the discussion with the astute observation that terrorism introduced Europeans to the concept of national security. Baroness Neville-Jones provided insight into the delicate situation of handling terrorism in the UK, as the nature of the threat is internal requiring a sound approach to multiculturalism in order to mitigate the risk of further radicalisation of certain Islamic communities in the UK.

Ashton Carter of the Kennedy School of Government finished out the session by calling attention to the need for better assessment of capabilities and intentions. Despite challenges on the defence spending, Mr Carter outlined five 'investment' missions that the US government should consider: stability operations, large multinational ground force operations, better counter-terrorism technology, closer assessment of China and (a reassessment of contemporary war). An excellent discussion was generated by the question and answer session, including issues related to the problems of the term 'islamic-militant' and the need for developing a universal definition for terrorist.

Panel Four: Reinventing Multilateralism – Specific Issues Areas

While the topic of the panel was multilateralism, the panellists were given free reign to discuss some of the more important issues of the contemporary environment. Ivo Daadler began the session with remarks on nuclear power in the contemporary setting. He, like many others including presidential candidates and former statesmen, are advocating a nuclear-free world. His cautiously optimistic recommendation was for the US to maintain a minimal amount of nuclear weapons reserved explicitly for the purpose of defence if rogue states were to obtain them.

Charles Grant, Director of the Centre for European Reform, then discussed the role China will play in the West developing a comprehensive multi-lateral policy. Mr Grant highlighted the importance of China's willingness or unwillingness to engage with western (not conceived as global from China's perspective) institutions in a multi-polar world. He also noted the importance of recognising that China's policy toward climate change will play a decisive role.

Dr Jamie Shea, Director of Policy Planning at Office of the Secretary General NATO HQ began by reinforcing the fact that multilateralism is a good in itself. The thrust of his message was that while the mission in Afghanistan is important, it is lacking in a number of departments. He called for better cross-organisation co-ordination between the UN, the EU and NATO in order to create better military-civilian synergy.

Kurt Campbell then had the opportunity to discuss the impetus for a more aggressive policy towards climate change. He reminded the audience that climate change is undoubtedly an issue of national security, and that there is an overwhelming consensus in the scientific community, which is a fact that often escapes the American public. Optimistically, Mr Campbell believes that China will be on board, but that India's participation in a global initiative is still looming.

The session concluded with Anne-Marie Slaughter talking about the need for globalised networks to be able to respond to emerging threats with quickness and flexibility. She noted the need for an orchestration system that would begin domestically, but that would be echoed on an international level. Dr Slaughter

named the UN as a potential candidate for the conductor position, albeit with enhanced capability bestowed by the state.

Panel Five: Two Scenarios for Iraq and the Broader Middle East

The second day of the Global Leadership Forum kicked off with a contentious topic: Iraq and the Broader Middle East. Drawing on their academic and policy backgrounds, the panellists presented clear and nuanced views of the situation in Iraq with consideration to the wider ranges of influence coming from various actors in the region. Colin Kahl, professor at the Edmund A Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, began the session with a presentation that provided a detailed analysis of the situation on the ground, regarding Iran's influence, political progress and reassessment of US national interest in Iraq. He noted that while it is the moral responsibility of the US to prevent a genocide level of casualties, the US should still negotiate a timetable for withdrawal. However, he suggested that either potential Democratic administration, once they take the office in January must put a swift down payment on Iraq, in other words swift redeployment.

Professor Malcolm Chalmers, Professorial Fellow at RUSI began his remarks with a cautionary reminder that policy makers like to portray foreign events as though they are within their control, but when in reality, 'something unpredictable will happen'. His remarks focused on giving reference to the past, looking at broader narrative in the Middle East and to reflect on past mistakes while avoiding over simplification.

Dr Anatol Lieven, Professor at King's College, London, began his remarks in support of focusing western resources for the fight against the Taliban in 'Pashtunistan'. He also explained the role of external forces, for example the Russians in Afghanistan and the Iranians in Iraq, as malign indifference. Dr Lieven ended his remarks by insisting that western forces should prioritise the capture of Bin Laden.

Andrew Shearer, Director of Studies at the Lowy Institute, examined the when and how questions of the US leaving Iraq. Mr Shearer also insisted that we look towards Asia while examining the geo-political challenges of the day.

Panel Six: The Global Economy – Weathering the Storm

The final panel of the day addressed the current global financial crisis. The panel brought together British and American academics and practitioners to discuss the status and the causes of the current global economic situation. Willem Buiter, Chair of European Political Economy at the European Institute at the LSE began the session with the rather sobering tone suggesting that the current financial problems are the worst since the 1930s. He focused on the recent development of food scarcity, forecasted that the crisis will spread to the Far and Middle East, and reflected that the current problems were a product of the unavoidable consequence of the latest phase of globalisation. He also cautioned against the perils of self-regulation, while stating that food, water and energy were to be the root of all regional conflict in the near future.

David Drezner, Professor of International Politics at the Fletcher School, delivered remarks regarding what he sees as the existential crisis on the global economy. He called for increased control in the energy sector and on the world carbon market, and noted that trade liberalisation was dead on arrival. Contrarily to Dr Buiter, Dr Drezner believes that the upcoming economic period will look more like the 1970s than the 1930s.

Charles Dumas, Director of the Lombard Street Research Group, took his opportunity to discuss the topic of his new book, *China and America - A Day of Reckoning*. His argument began with an in-depth view of the global mortgage crisis, and outlined the economic dependence that the US now has on China. He also warned of the perils of over-devaluing the dollar and other perceived economic remedies, such as monetisation of debt.

Sundeep Singh, from the Caxton Associate in the Europe Asset Management Group, rounded out the panel giving his frank opinion on the status of economy. Mr Singh helped to explain how traders in recent years have used systemic mechanisms to manufacture profits when they were not really there. He advised that consumers should become aware they may need to reform their saving style, and to say goodbye to dollar hamburgers. The questions session brought up some interesting points regarding lay persons' understanding of complex financial ideas, as well as

the seeming turn towards socialism in terms of some regulator packages. The most insightful comment, however, came from Mr Dumas when he said that his panel should have been moved to the top of the agenda because the global economy sets out the parameters within which policy makers can work.