

COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

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Symposium on American, Europe, and the World April 23, 2008

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The international system is changing in ways that make transatlantic cooperation even more imperative than when the West dominated global affairs. “[T]here is this global awakening, which is more directed against the West than anything else,” said **Pierre Hassner**, emeritus research director of the Centre d’Études et de Recherches Internationales (CERI), at a symposium held on April 23rd at the Council on Foreign Relations. Hassner posed the central question of the day during his keynote address, “How can we defend our principles, our interests and our influence in a world which we no longer control—if we ever did—and in which our legitimacy is challenged?”

The event, entitled “America, Europe, and the World,” was part of a two-year program to examine how America and Europe are managing global challenges funded in part by the European Commission and the German Marshall Fund and organized by **Dr. James Goldgeier**, the Council’s Whitney Shepardson Senior Fellow for transatlantic relations. The symposium examined a range of global issues, and speakers addressed the commonalities and differences in American and European approaches.

The sentiment that the world has changed and that Western hegemony is waning echoed throughout all sessions. “Obviously there is a shifting power base in international relations,” said **Eberhard Sandschneider**, noted China expert and Otto-Wolf-Director of the Research Institute of the German Council on Foreign Relations, “...and what we still seem to primarily use is the way of thinking about global relations as we learned it during the Cold War and shortly afterward.”

Panelists pointed to, among other things, the increasing assertiveness of Russia, the burgeoning relationship between Africa and China, the U.S. economic crisis, the difficulties in stabilization and reconstruction efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, the continuing economic growth of the BRIC countries and the competing ideology of “authoritarian capitalism.” “[T]he U.S is no longer the dominant economic power in the world. You have Europe that is united for the first time also; you have Japan out of their 20-year-long depression; and you have emerging markets who are no longer emerging markets... So it is a situation where we are really seeing a multi-polar world in action,” said **Angel Ubide**, director of global economics at Tudor Investment Corp.

Other Findings:

- Anticipating and planning for both the potential rise and potential instability of China and Russia should be major foreign policy priorities for both the United States and Europe. “It is in our interest – that’s an aspect we certainly agree on – that China continues to change, to improve human rights, to stick to international rules, to respect intellectual property rights. It is in our interest that China keeps changing. At the same time, it is also in our interest that China maintains stability. This huge country is so much interwoven into a global economy that whatever should happen in terms of destabilization in China would immediately affect us, certainly our economies,” said **Sandschneider**. China’s cooperation is also essential for addressing critical issues such as climate change. “[I]f the US and the EU are the two largest economies, the first and third largest emitters, and we need to get China involved, it seems like their cooperation and cooperation in getting China involved is going to be rather critical.” said **Billy Pizer**, senior fellow and research director at Resources for the Future.
- There was consensus that Russia should be seen less as a “rising power” and more as a “recovering power” or “country past middle age.” However, there are divergences on both sides of the Atlantic, and within the EU and U.S., on whether Russia is a foreign policy priority, as well as what are the most effective policies for managing it. “[T]he real issue is not now to know how to engage Russia but how to engage Russians...it’s very important, in my mind, to initiate a joint project between the EU and the U.S.,” said **Thomas Gomart**, head of the Russian/Newly Independent States Centre at Ifri.
- The issue of open communication and constructive dialogue with China came up in all sessions. “Keep communication channels open. Talk to them. Negotiate. Don’t blame and shame them, as we are doing with China now and as we are doing with many other complicated and dangerous actors in international relations as well,” said **Sandschneider** in reference to improving relations with China. “[W]hen we, separately or together, make our representations to China to express our interests, it’s very important that what we say is seen as broadly reasonable; in other words, that it’s seen as legitimate, reasonable, based on a balanced understanding of the situation, and should be accompanied by offers of cooperation and conciliation where appropriate, not simply presented as demands that the Chinese must necessarily accept,” said **Harry Harding**, university professor of international affairs at The George Washington University’s Elliott School of International Affairs. This “united front” of the U.S. and Europe should also include members of the developing world.
- In addition, Harding also stressed the importance of strengthening Western institutions such as the UN, the IMF and the World Bank; completing the Doha Round; maintaining close working relations with other advanced Asian economies and close coordination with and through the ASEAN Regional Forum, the OECD and the G-7; and policy-relevant research.
- On climate change, “Europe has gone further in linking energy security and climate security,” said **Tom Burke**, environmental policy advisor to Rio Tinto plc and a visiting professor at Imperial and University Colleges in London. For the

transatlantic partnership to move forward to address climate change, "...it's not about the conversation internationally, it's about walking the talk because if you're going to get others to do things with you, you'd better look as if you're doing them yourself, and we're not doing that." American environmental expert **Billy Pizer** agreed, "...I think the first step has to be domestic U.S. action, a significant step."

- Transatlantic policy recommendations on climate change included spending money on energy efficiency, working towards carbon sequestrating and storage, and setting standards. Doing more shared political thinking and policy analysis is also key. "[W]e've done very little policy analysis, shared policy analysis in this issue, and that's an issue under which we could really do a lot. There's an awful lot of policy ideas around, but actually shared policy analysis across the EU and the U.S. hasn't really been done," said **Burke**.
- Panelists **Neil Crompton**, Counselor and Joint Intelligence Committee Representative, Embassy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and **Steven Simon**, Hasib J. Sabbagh Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern studies, Council on Foreign Relations, offered contrasting views on the situation in the broader Middle East. On Iran, "I think our approach needs to be one of strategic patience...And I think we also have some levers," said **Crompton**. "[T]he twin track approach of sanctions, incentives, dialogue, increasing pressure. I think an important lever is international unanimity. We should stick with the E3 plus three process."
- A critical issue for the transatlantic partnership will be its dealings with Hamas in the Middle East peace process. "[O]ne issue that the new American administration and its European allies will be likely to have to grapple with at the outset is how to deal with Hamas because in order to take any of the remedial steps that are necessary to ensure that there is some kind of functioning Palestinian society in existence in the next couple of years Hamas will likely be brought into the equation one way or another and the issue is will they be brought in some kind of coordinated synchronized European-American diplomatic process or will it happen messily?...." said **Simon**.