

LEADING SECURITY AND FOREIGN POLICY CONFERENCE IN CENTRAL EUROPE
SHAPING EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY AGENDA



GLOBSEC 2011

SUMMARY

BRATISLAVA
GLOBAL SECURITY
FORUM



Hosting more than 400 guests from around the world in the Slovak capital of Bratislava, this year's GLOBSEC Bratislava Global Security Forum was the biggest yet, securing the Forum's place as the leading such annual event in Central and Eastern Europe. Dignitaries from the world of high politics were joined by top journalists, leading analysts from think tanks in the United States and Europe, diplomats, and business leaders.



After a **welcoming reception** by **Pavol Frešo**, the President of the Bratislava Self-Governing Region, at the historic building which used to house the Slovak Parliament, the preliminaries to the Forum began in earnest at the newly opened Kempinski Hotel River Park Bratislava on the banks of the Danube River. Three **"Night Owl" sessions** took place there according to the Chatham House rules to allow for free and frank discussion.



In recognition of the implications for Western security of the sweeping cuts to defence expenditure that have been taken by many countries in the NATO alliance, one such session addressed the question of whether we could really "do more with less?" There was general consensus that the answer to that question was "no", and that even with improved efficiency less spending would result in less capacity. One participant, however, pointed out that a freer market in procurement, with governments seeking the best value for money in the purchase of equipment, could be one way in which efficiencies could be improved. It was widely noted that NATO's recommendation for defence expenditure to meet the level of two percent of gross domestic product (GDP) had long been disregarded by many countries and that in some cases defence expenditure had now fallen below one percent of GDP.



At another parallel Night Owl Session, the financial-strategic implications of the recent problems in the Eurozone were discussed. The strategic importance of the euro was defined in terms of the stability of the main global institutions generally. Problems with debt were identified as serious and painful for governments and public alike, but not necessarily fatal to monetary union. One speaker, a self-identified supporter of the so called Austrian school, identified the Keynesian approach to economic governance as essentially unsustainable and a core failing which has led to such serious problems. The debate centred on the political will of many in the Eurozone to overcome, in one direction or the other, the key tension at the heart of the currency zone, namely the presence of monetary union at the same time as fiscal variability among the member states. Blind faith in the status quo was largely dismissed as illusory, and the need for structural reforms, with far more robust fundamentals, was stressed as a necessity. The recklessness of both lenders and debtors (not just debtors) was held to be a matter that needed greater attention. Governmental irresponsibility in some countries was held by one discussant to be even less of a problem than the irresponsibility of private lenders.



The third session of the evening addressed the vexed issue of cyber security, a subject that now features widely at the world's top security conferences. The cyber attack on Estonia in 2007 formed something of a reference point for many discussants and members of the audience. The lack of consensus on what NATO should do about cyber defence was quickly identified as a problem. Some, it was argued, believe that the EU rather than NATO would be the most appropriate organization to take the leading role on cyber defence issues. One expert suggested we take a step back and think why we're actually discussing this matter, which of course was the Estonian attack. Discussants stressed that much is in fact being done, that the nature of the problem is recognized, but that getting to a satisfactory policy conclusion was difficult at a time when issues such as Afghanistan are taking up so much attention. Some countries such as Britain were held to be ahead of others in how far they have gone in engaging government, military and security in a coordinate response.





The following morning the Forum was **formally opened** by **Amb. (Ret.) Rastislav Káčer**, President and Chairman of the Board of the Slovak Atlantic Commission – the main organizer of the GLOBSEC Forum – and by **Milan Ježovica**, State Secretary at the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador Káčer noted that this was the sixth annual GLOBSEC conference in Bratislava, thanked key partners and supporters and handed the floor to Mr. Ježovica who reminded the audience that GLOBSEC had now become a “trademark among security experts in the region and beyond.” This year, he noted, the Forum coincided with the meeting of the Visegrad Group and Eastern Partnership countries’ ministers of foreign affairs in Bratislava, which provided the perfect setting for the event.



Special remarks were then made by Slovak Defence Minister **Ľubomír Galko** and **Davor Božinović**, Defence Minister of Croatia.



Minister Galko stressed the need to prioritise key goals and tasks at a time of austerity but agreed that that was not enough, explaining that his Ministry had launched a major Strategic Defence Review to further his aims. He warned that: “The gap between a few strong European nations and the rest of Europe is widening, and may result in unforeseen and unwanted consequences. We are risking the loss of our ability to act in solidarity and to cooperate together. This must not happen.”



Minister Božinović thanked his hosts stressing the “unique reputation” the conference has been building. He acknowledged that unfortunately defence spending was usually the first casualty of budget cuts in times of economic hardship. Referring to Croatia’s integration into NATO, he pointed out that even before accession Croatia had been reviewing its strategic capabilities and capacities. “While our immediate concern to balance the national budget may drive us to look for the most obvious budget cuts and make decisions that bring relief in the short term, we have to remember that most defence spending involves long term commitments,” he said.



The **first open-session** of the Forum began with **a discussion of Belarus** following President Lukashenka’s brutal crackdown against pro-democracy protestors after the rigged December elections. The panel was chaired by **Roland Freudenstein**, Deputy Director and Head of Research of the Centre for European Studies in Brussels. Joining the discussion was **Aliaksandr Milinkevich**, Chairman of the Movement for Freedom and the leading opposition presidential candidate at the last Belarusian presidential elections.



Balázs Jarábik, from PACT/FRIDE, **Pavol Demeš**, Senior Transatlantic Fellow from the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF), **Eugeniusz Smolar**, Senior Fellow at the Polish Institute of International Affairs in Warsaw and **Alexei Pikulik**, analyst at the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies in Vilnius, spoke of their distress at the crackdown and on the need for a fundamental rethink of how the transatlantic strategy towards Belarus should now be formulated. The release of the political prisoners was stressed as a top priority by all. Several former leading lights of the Belarusian opposition were also present and joined the debate with their comments.



An address was then given to the audience by **Karl Lamers**, President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and Deputy Chairman of the German Bundestag’s Defence Committee. Mr. Lamers stressed the centrality of human rights to NATO’s policies while also running the gamut in his remarks from democracy promotion in the Mediterranean region, through more constructive relations with Russia to cyber security and the NATO-EU relationship.

Senior International Editor at the Economist **Edward Lucas** opened up another discussion in the subsequent session on the question: **are we heading towards a multipolar Europe?** Joining him was **Jaap de Zwaan**, Director of the Netherlands



Institute of International Relations in the Hague, **Oksana Antonenko**, Programme Director for Russia and Eurasia at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, **Serhart Güvenç**, Professor of International Relations at Kadir Has University in Istanbul and **Hryhoriy Nemyria**, former Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine and foreign policy adviser to former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko.



The discussion bounced off last year's ECFR (European Council on Foreign Relations) report on a multi-polar Europe which argued that Europe was "becoming increasingly multipolar, and in danger of lapsing into separate spheres of influence". The picture was characterised by an increasing reluctance on the part of the US to get engaged in Europe's internal security matters. The EU, Russia and Turkey should come together, the report argued, "to build a new European security architecture".



Panellists highlighted the inward looking nature of Russia as one problem faced by modern Europe. Workable relations with the country were viewed as a necessity. The issue of Turkish integration and the difficulties encountered by both sides on this issue was also raised. The new developments in the Middle East may now be changing the dynamics, it was opined, in that Turkey is now being set up by many as a potential model for what are hoped to be emerging Arab democracies. The notion of the frozen conflicts in the Eastern region was also discussed. Belarus itself was now seen by some as being a kind of frozen conflict in its own right. The to-ing and fro-ing in Ukraine between reform and reaction was similarly raised as an important question to which the answer was not yet clear. Nonetheless, the sense of Ukraine as a potentially vital strategic asset for Europe of the future must not be underestimated. For some, the notion that there was such a thing as multi-polar Europe was misleading. Instead, we see a "non-polar Europe" in which major players are taking a less robust approach than in the past.



The role of Central Europe in the transatlantic relationship was also the subject of a major discussion chaired by the GMF Senior Fellow **Constanze Stelzenmüller**. The panel included **A. Wess Mitchell**, President of the Washington based Center for European Policy Analysis, **Andrew A. Michta**, Senior Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center, **Marcin Zaborowski**, Director of the Polish Institute for International Affairs in Warsaw and **Tomáš Valášek**, Board Member of the Slovak Atlantic Commission and Director of Foreign Policy and Defence at the Centre for European Reform in London.



While acknowledging that there had been much talk in recent years of unexpected problems between Central Europe (CE) and the United States, for some there was plenty to be positive about in the region. Central Europe had never been more prosperous, free or in control of its own destiny, one participant said. The situation in US-CE relations might not be as "sentimental" as it was before Iraq, for example, but it was certainly far better than the troubled days over missile defence. Russia, as ever, and its revisionism were highlighted as major concerns that would affect the US-CE relationship.



The question of whether, in any meaningful sense, there even is such a thing as Central Europe also arose. The answer, according to many present, was that due to history, geography and values it did make sense to talk about Central Europe as a political-strategic concept in its own right. Nonetheless, it was much less of a cohesive unit than it used to be with many countries in the region having once had very similar goals – the EU and NATO membership for example – which in most cases had now been fulfilled.



Regional issues which did provide residual cohesion included energy security, for example. It was also noted that there were simply some issues that marked out CE from other regions of the world. The fact Belarus and the problems that that country posed merited the very first panel of the GLOBSEC Forum, one participant pointed



out, was itself evidence that there were bound to be certain perspectives and interests that gave form and substance to the notion of CE as a meaningful entity. The differing reactions to the conflict between Russia and Georgia in Warsaw and in Brussels, by way of two contrasting examples, highlighted much the same point.

Never far from the discussion at the Forum was **the role of the EU**. This was the subject of a panel chaired by former Slovak Ambassador to the United States **Martin Bútor**, which included Czech Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister **Karel Schwarzenberg**, Hungarian Foreign Minister **János Martonyi** and State Secretary for European Affairs at the Polish Foreign Ministry **Mikołaj Dowgielewicz**.

Minister Schwarzenberg set the discussion in historical perspective, pointing out how different things looked today now that the countries of the Central European region are members of the EU and NATO. Nonetheless they retained common interests and problems. He stressed the viability and importance of the Visegrad Four in the EU, and beyond.

Minister Martonyi, whose country holds the presidency of the EU, also stressed his support for the Visegrad Four, noting the scepticism in which it was held by some when it was inaugurated. He noted how important group it was in the EU, while having managed to overcome fears by some that it would form some sort of a bloc. The priorities of the Hungarian presidency of the EU were always, he said, "a strong" Europe, which required a strong economy and a strong common currency. Even those countries not members of the Eurozone clearly had an interest in a stable euro. Setting the horizons for the future he said: "First and foremost we all know that without an effective and efficient and successful cohesion policy there will be no successful Europe 2020 strategy." This crucial point was accepted not just in the Visegrad Four but across the EU, he said.

State Secretary Dowgielewicz, whose country takes over the EU presidency from Hungary in the middle of the year, noted the crucial issue of economic conditions in the Eurozone and the progress that still needed to be made to ensure long term stability. "We can turn the economic crisis into a much more solid foundation for European integration," he said. It was necessary to try to build conditions for economic consolidation, growth, better regulation of the markets and to address the issue of the multi-annual budget, and the internal market. "This would be priority number one for the Polish presidency." He noted the challenges posed by what is going on in the southern Mediterranean. Separately, he stressed the tough message being given by the EU to Belarus and the importance of that issue to Poland and Europe as a whole.

Keynote speeches were then given by **Štefan Füle**, Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy of the European Commission, and **Philip H. Gordon**, U. S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs.

Mr. Füle noted as some recent achievements for the EU's Eastern Partnership the opening of negotiations with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova and that progress had been made with Ukraine. He noted the potential for strengthened democracy, trade and economic relationships to the mutual benefit of all. Turning to the dramatic events in the southern Mediterranean, he said that change was, as it must be, driven from within. "The lessons that we draw from 1989 and from the events in recent months in the southern Mediterranean are that the political reforms are not only essential to the creation of dynamic, innovative, prosperous and just societies, they are also critical to our long term stability."

Assistant Secretary of State Gordon thanked his hosts and pointed to Slovakia as an example of success in democratic reform, and also in terms of a strong strategic



partnership with the US: "The United States... is proud to count Slovakia as a close friend and ally and we value its contributions to regional stability, contributing to integration in the Balkans but also more globally, including its contribution to our common interests in Afghanistan". He added that that success mirrored "the leadership and growth that we have seen throughout Central Europe."



In tandem with the sentiments voiced by Mr. Füle, Assistant Secretary Gordon noted that: "As Secretary Clinton said in Geneva earlier this week, while the circumstances in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya are each unique, in every case the demand for change has come from within, with people calling for greater civil liberties, economic opportunities, and a stake in the governance of their own societies".



At a time of upheaval in the Middle East, GLOBSEC organizers convened a **Night Owl Session** on the subject that evening. It attracted enormous interest. There was near universal agreement that Western governments and civil society institutions had a role to play in supporting the move to democracy in Middle Eastern countries but that it was up to the people of those countries themselves to define their own national destinies. Humility in Western circles was the order of the day.



Some concerns were raised about the possibility of extremists (in the Muslim Brotherhood, for example) taking control, especially in Egypt, and making for a more repressive rather than a more enlightened model of government from what preceded it. Nonetheless, there was much resistance to the notion that this was inevitable. One speaker said the key was to ensure democratic constitutions were observed by all parties in the long term and to allow the people to vote for parties of their choice. The unfolding problems in Libya were also addressed with some participants saying NATO should be prepared to help while others sounded a notion of caution about getting too heavily involved, especially in a military capacity.



Another Night Owl Session addressed the question of sorting out cooperation between NATO and the EU. Participants agreed that better cooperation was needed and that rivalry would be counterproductive. One of the key foundations of the NATO – EU cooperation was described by some participants as deriving from events and responses to those events in the former Yugoslavia. Cooperation there had created hope that successful cooperation was in fact possible. Since that time it had been a period of ups and downs. Nonetheless, at recent summits both organisations had declared a strong interest in cooperating, though theory was easier than practice. The question of Cyprus was also raised as an issue where NATO – EU cooperation mattered greatly.



Participants and questioners also referred to the issue of which EU institutions NATO would cooperate with: the European Parliament? The Commission? The Council of Ministers?. This had become especially relevant after the Lisbon Treaty. Similarly it was not clear to some participants whether the real impetus for cooperation came from the side of NATO or from the side of the EU.



The third Night Owl session of the evening asked whether Ukraine, following recent political changes, was now heading East or West. Of the Eastern Partnership countries, Ukraine was the largest suggesting that it would inevitably have a profound impact on the region. All in all Ukraine posed a major challenge for the Euro-Atlantic structures. The ups and downs of excitement and disappointment were referred to as having defined the relationship with Ukraine for many Europeans, especially those keen to give Ukraine a Euro-Atlantic perspective.

One speaker noted that East or West was not so much about geography as about values. The direction in which Ukraine had been moving since the Orange Revolution was inevitably referred to as a key point in the discussion, but clearly, not the end



point after the ejection from power of the avowedly pro-Western forces unleashed by that revolution. It was pointed out that many people (inside and outside Ukraine) are in a wait and see frame of mind about President Yanukovich, while others view his rise to power as problematic mainly in far as domestic reforms are concerned. Another point of view was that there was still the matter of the divided nature of Ukraine. The country was divided territorially, linguistically, religiously and also economically. Ukrainian elites were also divided. Some faced eastwards; some westwards. A consistent strategy of development in one direction or another ("East" or "West") was thus immensely difficult to achieve. The "post-imperial" ambitions of Russia in general and towards Ukraine in particular were held by some to be crucial though others took a different view. If it was difficult for Ukraine to work out its direction it was that much harder for the West to work out a coherent strategy for dealing with the country.

Break-Out Dinner Sessions were also held that evening on climate change and national security, NATO's nuclear policy, defence cooperation after the financial crisis, and energy security from the perspective of the four members of the Visegrad group – Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary.

The final morning of the Forum was opened with **keynote remarks** from former Slovak Prime Minister and current Foreign Minister **Mikuláš Dzurinda**.

Mr. Dzurinda noted Slovakia's support for the aspirations of EU partner countries and the need for stability and democracy throughout the region. He stressed the need for the Eastern partners themselves to make real progress in reforms. Turning to democratisation in particular, he pointed out that "The examples of Libya, Egypt and Tunisia show that every dictatorship has its end". He went on to refer to repression in Belarus as "unacceptable". "We are not going to discuss with Lukashenka any other issues, before the political prisoners are released and the persecution ends", he said.

A discussion, also involving Mr. Dzurinda, was then chaired by Amb. **Rastislav Káčer** and joined by Moldovan Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister **Iurie Leancă**, Georgian Foreign Minister **Grigol Vashadze**, and **Bruce Jackson**, President of the Project on Transitional Democracies in Washington, D. C.

Mr. Leancă noted the seriousness and even in some cases the "emotional" nature of the Eastern Partnership discussion at the present time. He spoke of developments in his own country and of the importance of the EU and the Visegrad Four as forces for good in terms of both strategy and values. Looking to the future, he said stakeholders such as the business community should be brought in more effectively to improve multilateral cooperation. In more general terms, there was the broader question of what the EU really wants to do in the east: "We think that [despite the] many merits and advantages that the Eastern Partnership has as an initiative, the only one thing it lacks...is a clear vision on what is the future of the Eastern Partnership."

Mr. Vashadze also stressed the vital importance of the Eastern Partnership. "Visegrad's experience is tremendously important for us." He said that all countries in the Eastern Partnership recognized they were in "the same boat", stressing the crucial importance for Georgia of two strategic goals, namely European and Euro-Atlantic integration. Despite the obvious (and longstanding) problems with Russia he noted that Georgia had many achievements to its credit: "Georgia is definitely ahead of many countries when it comes to anti-corruption measures, when it comes to independence of the judicial system, mass media, reforms of law enforcement agencies, customs agencies, border safety, and constitutional reform which... is wholeheartedly supported by the parliamentary and non-parliamentary opposition."

Bruce Jackson noted that Slovakia's remarkable transition, despite tremendous difficulties under the Mečiar government, was in and of itself an inspiration to all those



hoping for and working towards democratic change and consolidation in the Eastern Partnership countries. He pointed out that the odds of achieving properly rooted democratic change are always against us and that there is nothing inevitable about success. Mr. Jackson also reminded his audience that change was not merely something that was good, it was something that was profoundly in all our interests. "There is a tendency both in America and in Europe to think that everything we do is charity. That we do it because we're nice people. Nonsense. We are not doing the Eastern Partnership or these kinds of things because we have any affection. We are doing it because we have to."



A session on **US-Russia relations after the famous "reset"** in ties by the Obama administration then followed. It was chaired by **Stephen Flanagan**, Senior Vice-President at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D. C. He was joined by **Alexander Nikitin**, Director of the Center for Euro-Atlantic Security at MGIMO University in Moscow, **Jeremy Schapiro**, Special Advisor to the U. S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs, former Slovak Foreign Minister and current Managing Director for Europe and Central Asia of the European Union's EEAS **Miroslav Lajčák** and **Bobo Lo**, a senior analyst on Russia and former Deputy Head at the Australian Embassy in Moscow.



It was immediately argued that the notion of a reset depended on what one was resetting. If it came to minor surface issues in the software, that was a different matter from deeply damaged hardware or incompatible systems, as one contributor put it. This raised the question from everyone present as to what extent and how Russian and U S interests and values could really be squared with each other.



One view was that however one may complain about the metaphor, one needed to remember where the Russia-US relations were in 2008 and the period which preceded it. Before the reset was announced the relationship could be considered in some respects to have been dangerous with major disputes over energy security, frozen conflicts, and even talk of a new Cold War. The point of the reset was not so much to have an idealized relationship but to have a substantive relationship founded on recognition of core mutual advantages that could be achieved if the two sides would work together. In any event, speakers agreed that some form of workable relationship was necessary over and above the low points of the past 10 years. It was also pointed out that the reset was not the only issue involved in improving relations in the last couple of years. There was also the issue of the financial crisis which showed all sides that a cooperative relationship was more productive than a conflictual one.



The final session on **NATO after Lisbon** was opened with keynote remarks by **Stefanie Babst**, Acting Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy at NATO headquarters in Brussels.



She said it remained to be seen how successful the Lisbon Summit turned out to be on what she described as its ambitious agenda. It was crucial she said to retain political unity following the signing of the Strategic Concept. It was also vital to live up to commitments and to put words into practice. She referred to three important decisions taken at the summit: 1) Afghanistan – a reaffirmation that NATO must remain meaningfully engaged; 2) the package related to capability development and defence policies was approved, this of course needed to be implemented (In this respect, a list of 10 critical capability areas was identified, and this too needed to be implemented); 3) the new Strategic Concept dealt heavily with partnerships. It was noted that in one form or another there were 50 or so partners on five continents. What was now needed was that partnership policies be modernized since such partnerships had evolved over time. There needed to be clarity about what NATO says and how it acts with such partner nations. Ms. Babst said that overall she was not





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"euphoric" about Lisbon but that it was also fair to say that the Lisbon Summit had only taken place a few months ago. There was plenty of time to get things right. Time would tell.

The panel that followed was chaired by **Ian Brzezinski**, Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council in Washington, D. C. He led a discussion involving **Jüri Luik**, Estonia's Permanent Representative to NATO in Brussels, **Adam Kobieracki**, Director of the Security Policy Department at the Polish Foreign Ministry, **Tacan Ildem**, Director General for International Security Affairs at the Turkish Foreign Ministry, and **Kurt Volker**, the former U. S. Ambassador to NATO and Managing Director of the Center for Transatlantic Relations at the School of Advanced International Studies at the Johns Hopkins in Washington, D. C.



It was argued that NATO remains history's most successful alliance, particularly in terms of its extraordinary ability to deploy effective forces on the ground, as in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, NATO would only remain as effective as its member states allowed it to be in terms of their own commitment to NATO politically, fiscally and militarily.



The importance of Lisbon in terms of capabilities was held to be two-fold by one contributor: First, it identified where capabilities were lacking in one particular operation, namely Afghanistan; Second, in a more general sense, it was stressed that NATO can only be effective if it develops and retains capabilities suitable to actual and potential needs for the future. This was important in concentrating minds.



It was also pointed out that though much good came out of Lisbon there were also confusions such as on missile defence. Another contributor noted there had been a subtle shift from seeing NATO as "us" to seeing NATO as "them". This was meant in the sense that when leaders sign up to what may be very ambitious objectives; they do not necessarily make the connection that it is they themselves that would spend more money or deploy more soldiers. Rather, this would somehow be "NATO's responsibility".



In terms of enlargement of NATO it was opined that the NATO project remained unfinished business and that it was troublesome that enthusiasm for further enlargement had stalled somewhat. Not much progress was expected on this front in the short term. Nonetheless, hopes were voiced of a renewed push in the medium term particularly in the Balkans.

Closing remarks and thanks were offered by **Róbert Vass**, founder of the GLOBSEC Forum and Secretary General of the Slovak Atlantic Commission.



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