



4th Transatlantic Think Tank Conference

Washington, D.C. – 17/18 July 2013

Concept Note

Key Message

It is vital that individuals and organizations with similar political views cooperate between both sides of the Atlantic. Centre-right political thinkers from the European Union and the United States share democratic values, interests, and views; however, too often there are misconceptions about our political positions due to a lack of communication. In recent years the US and the EU have encountered similar political and economic issues that have affected various aspects of domestic and foreign policy. Through increased communication EU and US leaders can provide a comprehensive, unified approach that focuses on democratic ideals and values, that is the key message of the Transatlantic Think Tank Conference.

Atlanticism has fallen out of fashion, its disappearance a corollary to popular theories on the inevitable decline of the West. It has also come under direct attack from the left – mainly in Europe – and the right – mainly in the US – of the political spectrum. However, we believe that the common values which underpin this fundamental relationship between both sides of the Atlantic, democracy, individual freedom and the rule of law, are no less relevant and universal than they were after World War II. While we must not turn our back on the inevitable changes caused by the rise of the Rest, abandoning the principles which have taken the West to unprecedented levels of prosperity is certainly not the answer. Now more than ever, we must argue in favour of our beliefs and their place in a changing world.



State of the Unions

This session aims to provide an update on current political developments on both sides of the Atlantic. The re-election of President Obama for a second term has set the political landscape in the U.S. for the next few years, with a seeming dominance of domestic policy over action abroad. How the world deals with a more retrenched US is a matter for debate. While the possible collapse of the eurozone seems to have been averted, the EU is in the midst of an internal reconfiguration, the outcome of which is still uncertain.

- What are the prospects for policymaking in the U.S. after Obama's re-election, what will be the main points of contention during the next three years?
- Is the EU nearing the light at the end of the tunnel or has it stalled for good, what will be the consequences of the European elections in 2014?
- What is the state of transatlantic relations, with the negotiation of the TTIP on one hand and the spying claims on the other?

Navigating the New Middle East

The Middle East has taken on a different face in a very short time. The US withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Arab revolutions have resulted in new governments, new alliances and a new distribution of power in a region that is part of the EU's immediate neighbourhood. Former foes such as Libya have embarked on new paths, and former steadfast allies such as Egypt are embroiled in unstable processes of regime change, while the Palestinian-Israeli conflict simmers in the background and Iran heads inexorably towards becoming a nuclear power, despite the recent election of a – relatively – more moderate president.

- What is the future role of the US and the EU in promoting democratic principles and human rights in the Middle East, while discouraging potential risks?
- Will political Islam ride on the coattails of the Arab Spring revolutions in the Middle East?
- What is Iran's place and role in the new regional configuration of the region?



Workshop 1: State Power, Warfare and Intelligence in the Digital Age

Intelligence gathering today allows for unprecedented government oversight of citizens' private affairs, requiring transparency in policymaking in order for the trust and individual freedoms that are vital components of democratic societies to stay intact. At the same time, the use of drones and cyber warfare could change the face of conflict and military power. Drones and cyber warfare extend the reach of the military by offering an affordable and efficient means to execute or attack an adversary without risking lives. Nevertheless, the use of drones and cyber warfare has moral, social, and political consequences that must be considered.

- How should democratic societies deal with this new reality without sacrificing the freedoms and implicit trust which lie at their core?
- Is privacy a thing of the past and is there need for new rules in these new technologically enhanced wars?
- How will EU and US warfare and intelligence develop as adversaries are able to easily use advanced inexpensive technologies, like cyber warfare and drone policy, in the digital age?
- Are the U.S. and the EU prepared to identify the source of an attack, if an adversary uses unmanned vehicles against the populace?

Workshop 2: TTIP: A Transatlantic Agenda for Growth and Jobs

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) comes at a crucial time for EU-US relations. Currently, the US and the EU make up almost half of global GDP, however in recent years both the EU and the US have struggled with high unemployment, excessive deficits and insufficient broad-based economic growth. The TTIP attempts to alleviate these impediments by removing trade barriers and encouraging corporate investment in US and EU economies. As negotiations for TTIP begin, the US and the EU will seek to develop a deep and comprehensive agreement that leads to growth in the decades to come.

- What are the realistic gains of transatlantic free trade if an agreement is established?
- What are the domestic obstacles to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership?
- Could the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership be used as a springboard for reviving



the Doha round of multilateral trade talks?

Workshop 3: Democracy Support

After the “unipolar moment” of the 90s, efforts to support budding democracies face new challenges. In today’s multipolar world, democratic ideals are discouraged by the anti-Western media and authoritarian regimes. As technology and authoritarian government continue to develop, it is vital that the US and the EU collaborate to promote democratic values, interests, and strategic outlooks.

- What role do authoritarian economic success stories play in the narrative in favour of democracy?
 - How are new technologies and social media being used by the anti-Western media (Russia Today, Aljazeera, Press TV, Anonymous)? How can these technologies be subverted by authoritarian regimes as tools for repression and control?
 - What is the role for organizations such as the newly created European Endowment for Democracy?

Russia: Dealing with the Rise of a Declining Superpower

After playing a passive role in foreign affairs for much of the past twenty years, Russia is increasingly assertive, nationalistic and anti-American. Russia’s support for Bashar al-Assad in Syria is merely the most visible and controversial of its efforts to maintain relevance in international affairs, at a time when its resource-focused economy seems to be faltering and gas exports to Europe no longer provide it with the political leverage it used to count on in the continent.

- Does the recent unrest represent the first cracks in Putin’s Russia, or is the regime here to stay?
- Can the US, the EU and Russia still work together in areas of common interest, such as Iran?
- Are we actually facing a more assertive Russia, or are we witnessing the external signs of internal weakness?