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**Conference notes IRRI-KIIB**

Summary of the conference  
  
***"The Vital Partnership at Half Past Bush: Europe Stalled, America Challenged"***

**Prof. Simon Serfaty**  
Director of the European CSIS programme  
Brussels, 5 December 2005

Summary; this is not an official record of proceedings and specific remarks are not necessarily attributable.

Simon Serfaty provided a personal view of the American-European relationship and the perspective of Europe.

***The American-European relationship***

According to professor Serfaty, 2005 was a good year for the Transatlantic Alliance. There was a strong will to renew a partnership. Both sides wanted to change the tone of conversations given the effectiveness of complementary actions that have been undertaken in late 2004 and early 2005 by Americans and the EU. According to Serfaty, there is a synthesis of interests. We would be linked together by respective capabilities and weaknesses. A synthesis would enable Americans to soften their hard power and enable Europeans to harden their soft power.

It seems to him that the relationship appears to be re-launched. The crisis of 2002/2004 needs to be understood. It was neither bilateral—not even between the United States and France, the most outspoken critic in Europe. Nor was the crisis personal— not even over European’s mistrust of President George W. Bush and members of his administration. Rather, the crisis was one of organic irrelevance. The changes over the last 12 years put in question the extent to which Americans could and wanted to work with Europe in the context of the Alliance rather than on the basis of ad hoc coalitions, and conversely whether enough of Europe wanted to follow America, it appears to be matched given the renewal of the European power. This crisis of confidence could not be ended with simply two visits or summits.

Simon Serfaty referred to the "tests of efficacye. This test "will define the ability to consolidate in 2006 the positive stuff that was made to the renewal of the Alliance... Tests of efficacy are necessary to uncover what we can do together!"

The speaker singled out three of those tests of efficacy.

First, the situation in Iraq is a test for America. Iraq is not Vietnam. Failure in Iraq is not an option. The strategy in Iraq relates to four separate missions: stability, reconstruction, rehabilitation, reconciliation. He thinks this strategy will be tested in 2006 in the context of political and military process. He supposes that the withdrawal of foreign forces will begin at request of the democratically elected government.

The second test is Iran; a test of EU efficacy. In 2006, Iran has the potential to become even more divisive than Iraq was in 2003-2004. It is the "most difficult crisis we face for the coming 3 to 8 years". There are two positions: according to the EU, "what Iran is doing, is irreversible. For the US, it is unacceptable", Serfaty said. This crisis has to come to "some resolution over a relatively short period of time". The level of cooperation between the EU and the US is relatively good, but "probably, this issue will find its way to the UNSC in 2006 and then it is possible that the fireworks might begin". But, the EU has done well over the past two years in stalling the process and it has assumed a constructive role in Iran.

Finally, Afghanistan is a significant test of efficacy for NATO and the EU. The ability to deal jointly with the questions of Afghanistan will tell us whether there is a willingness on the part of US and EU to return to a more accommodating relationship in the context of the Alliance and the attempt to renew the partnership can be sustained, so that we can move on to the celebration of the sextieth anniversary of the NATO.

***Europe***

From the European perspective, the development of the EU stands as the most significant geopolitical development of the second half of the 20th century. The crisis that the EU faces, is one of institutional relevance. It is a bottom-up crisis, not managed by governments. It reflects the anxiety on the part of the younger generations. They believe those institutions have not delivered on issues like prosperity, security...

According to Serfaty, it is essential that Europe is able to act as entity, as an effective counterpart. In some cases, there is some stance that America is favourable of a united and strong Europe up to a certain point. Beyond that point, America fears that Europe becomes a weak ally. Prof. Serfaty is concerned about the condition of the EU. He stressed that "pour faire l'Alliance, il faut faire l'Europe".

Serfaty made clear that both sides of the Atlantic remain committed to the idea of an Alliance that should continue to be the institution of choice on security issues and to the "completion of an EU that would complete the recasting of Europe into member states and the consolidation of the political space". "If the EU can meet its own test of efficacy, then, probably, we have to start determining how we want to live together. Quite clearly, we have to think in ways whereby the two visions that shape the nature of the Euro-Transatlantic relations after World War II, would be developed in such a way as to redefine the modalities of our relationship", he said.

Serfaty then went on to discuss the notion of the collective "We". It is necessary to define who "We" is!

He is convinced that a sort of Euro-Atlantic finality over the next 10 years would attempt to do three things together. One is to achieve more transparency in NATO and the EU. These institutions should rethink their roles, as well as their relevance. There is a need to understand how these institutions work. Second, there is a need to rethink the terms of the EU-US relationship. The communication is not as fluent as it should be! Third, it is important to rethink the terms of EU-NATO relationship. This has been underway for two years, but much more needs to be done. The EU helps soften NATO's hard power and NATO helps harden EU's soft power. It is indispensable in their completeness.

Serfaty is convinced that "if it is possible over the next years to work on the transparency of the EU / the Alliance, to work on more intimacy between the US and the EU, to work on the better coordination between the EU and NATO, then we will have come to a point where it is possible to acknowledge that we have realized a Euro-Atlantic community of 32 members that belong to either one of both of those institutions, and like-minded states that share compatible values and common goals and on that basis can engage in a community of action which in the framework of an increasingly multipolar world will satisfy the interests and the values of both sides of the Atlantic effectively".

More information:

- Simon Serfaty: [expert profile](http://www.csis.org/index.php?option=com_csis_experts&task=view&type=34&id=60)

- <http://www.csis.org/europe/>

- Prepared Statement. Prepared statetement. - Dr. Simon Serfaty, Zbigniew Brzezinski Chair & Senior advisor, Europe Program, CSIS, WASHINGTON, DC - Emiment scholar & Professor of U.S. Foreign policy, Old Dominion University. - HEARING - Subcommittee on Europe - HOUSE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE - ["TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS: A POST SUMMIT ASSESSMENT"](http://wwwc.house.gov/international_relations/108/ser071504.pdf) -July 15, 2004

Report made by Vanlauwe