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## **GLOBSEC BRATISLAVA GLOBAL SECURITY FORUM 2013**

**Michal Číž\***

### **Introduction**

As the eighth year of the GLOBSEC Bratislava Global Security Forum has come to a close, the time has come to summarise the Forum's content and key messages voiced during the three-day event. GLOBSEC 2013 welcomed more than 110 discussants engaged in substantive and fruitful discussions on foreign policy and security issues – with the participation of more than 1000 registered guests from 62 countries. In addition to that, with more than 150 political and expert side meetings and events, GLOBSEC considerably increased its policy-shaping and networking value and included a number of closed-door discussions on the future of transatlantic relations, Moldova and Belarus, and defence cooperation within the Visegrad Group, to name but a few.

The subject matter of the Forum was wide-ranging and discussed within twelve main conference sessions, GLOBSEC Chats and Debates as well as a Keynote Speech by Dr. **Zbigniew Brzezinski**. GLOBSEC also provided a platform for off-the-record discussions at four night owl sessions and fifteen closed dinner sessions. At the main panels, the debate evolved around the following themes: the US' reassessment and redefinition of its transatlantic agenda; Europe's changing approach to the changing status quo caused by the rise of Asia; NATO's need to find a new purpose after ISAF; the European Union's institutional makeup against the backdrop of burning economic challenges; the Central Europeans' ambitions and plans to increase cooperation amongst the V4, which would enable them to speak with a single voice within transatlantic structures; and the current challenges to homeland security as well as non-proliferation threats world-wide.

All in all, the feedback received from discussants, guests and the media suggests that GLOBSEC 2013 has been a success once again and that it remains one of the top foreign policy and security events of its kind in the transatlantic area.

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## **Official Welcoming**

The conference was formally opened by Ambassador (Ret.) **Rastislav Káčer**, President and Chairman of the Board of the Slovak Atlantic Commission. Ambassador **Káčer** then handed the floor to Slovak Prime Minister **Robert Fico** for an introductory address.

The Prime Minister congratulated GLOBSEC, noting how it had grown over the years into a “major international event in our region”. He described security as the prerequisite for stability and economic prosperity. Having made a brief reference to developments in Syria and Korea, Mr. **Fico** stressed that the key task for this part of the world was stabilising the European economy and what he called the unfinished business of integrating the continent.

He reminded the audience that 2013 marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Slovakia’s independence: “We have proved we can manage our domestic affairs democratically,” he said. NATO and the EU – Slovakia is a member of both – formed the basis of security and stability: “Today we are providers rather than consumers of security”, he added.

## **Opening Session: Visegrad Going Strategic**

The first panel of the conference, chaired by Ambassador **Káčer**, brought together the Visegrad foreign ministers: **Miroslav Lajčák** of Slovakia; **Radosław Sikorski** of Poland; **Karel Schwarzenberg** of the Czech Republic; and **János Martonyi** of Hungary.

Mr. **Lajčák** remembered aloud the first Visegrad meeting in April 1990, which he joked was, “the biggest mess I have ever been in”, adding that, nonetheless, the ideas were there and the goals were there - it took time to define the V4’s *raison d’être*. But now, “we see more and more reasons and more and more areas” where cooperation is mutually beneficial, he said.

Mr. **Sikorski** stressed the role the V4 had had in winning the argument in the wider EU for a better coordinated energy policy: “Energy is something that we Central Europeans have won the argument over in the EU”. A decade ago we got strange looks, he said. Now, everyone in the EU understands its importance.

Foreign Minister **Schwarzenberg** of the Czech Republic remembered the days when the whole Visegrad idea was founded. We never claimed to represent the whole of Central Europe or the whole of post-communist Europe,

he said, adding that, so as not to become too top heavy, the group was limited to three and then four (when Czechoslovakia split into independent nation states). “We are the happiest divorcees in Europe”, he said with reference to the split.

**János Martonyi**, foreign minister of Hungary, also reminisced on the beginnings of Visegrad, which took place amid the early transition from communism. He said that, soon after those early days, it became clear that there was real strategic value in continuing and developing a Visegrad group built around a very special history. Turning to the group’s funding arm, the Visegrad Fund, he said: “The fund is functioning very well; it is being expanded.”

## **Session 1: Energy Geopolitics of Central Europe**

The next panel, chaired by Edward Lucas, International Editor of the Economist, turned to the question of Energy Geopolitics of Central Europe.

The panel was composed of Polish Foreign Minister **Sikorski**; **Reka Szemerkenyi**, chief advisor on foreign and security in the office of the Hungarian prime minister; **Pawel Olechnowicz**, chairman of the board of Central Europe Energy Partners in Brussels; and Professor **Alan Riley** of the City Law School at City University, London.

**Edward Lucas** repeated and thus underlined the point made by Minister **Sikorski** about Central Europeans winning the argument on energy geopolitics in the EU. How did we get here? he asked.

Mr. **Sikorski** noted a perverse reality that helped: “We were helped by the Russians”, he said. When Russia started cutting off energy supplies they made everyone wake up. Today, Poland is investing widely and is doing better at conserving energy, he added. If Ukraine was as energy efficient as the Czech Republic, a useful proxy for the European average, Ukraine would be self-sufficient in gas.

Ms. **Szemerkenyi** from Hungary noted that Central and Eastern Europe had set up what she called a “grand design”; a plan of what the region really wanted to achieve. What was lacking initially was a strategic approach to its implementation. Stability would be created via “reciprocal dependence”. She added that Central Europe had been successful in taking the case to Brussels in a coordinated and convincing way.

Mr. **Olechnowicz** joined the debate by arguing that it was good to speak

with one voice to Brussels. Our view is very much to address the issue from the position of a Central European country recognising the need for the EU level to engage, he said.

Prof. **Riley** suggested that the Russians think the European Commission is picking on Gazprom. But it isn't. The Commission had hit monopoly companies in Western Europe too.

Generally, Professor Riley thought it was true to say that on energy policy we have struggled over the last two decades but, nonetheless, we are moving in the right direction. These days, shale gas is playing a very big role in helping to diversify the market, which has more and more liquidity, he said. This puts more and more pressure on traditional domestic monopoly companies. If one or two European countries start producing shale gas, this would have a profound displacement effect. If the UK started producing shale gas, you can bet that the French shale gas ban will not last long, he added.

## **GLOBSEC Keynote**

With an introduction from Ambassador **Martin Bútorá**, the honorary president of the Bratislava-based Institute for Public Affairs, a keynote speech was then delivered by Dr. **Zbigniew Brzezinski**, former National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter and one of the world's most respected political scientists and geostrategists.

Dr. Brzezinski said how much at home he felt in Bratislava: a beautiful city but also a testimony to what can be achieved in the post-communist, Central-East European region. He remembered being in Bratislava more than two decades ago, sitting down with **Václav Havel** and having the feeling that something dramatic was happening, as he put it.

What can we learn from these 25 years that have transpired? - he asked. How well or how badly have we done? What is Europe's current challenge? What can Central Europeans contribute? What is America's role? What is the central mission of the West today?

Using the end of the Cold War as a starting point, America did well, said Dr. **Brzezinski**. NATO was expanded, even in the face of opposition from some in US politics. What would it be like today with Putin's Russia flexing its muscles against an unprotected Central Europe? he opined. Subsequently, America, unfortunately, let itself be drawn into costly ventures in the Middle East: 3 trillion wasted dollars; 35,000 US casualties; US leadership delegitimised.

Europe initially also did well, he said. A Europe, “whole and free” were the watchwords. America and Europe worked together in the Balkans, and Afghanistan. But, “before long, major flaws in the European architecture”, became exposed. Today’s EU is more a union of banks than of peoples, said Dr. **Brzezinski**.

Outlining the historical perspective, he noted that Central Europe became a region of independent states after 1919; Central Europe’s first 20 years until 1939 were marked as much by democratic failure as by democratic success. Central Europe then fell victim to World War Two and communism. And it was not until after 1999 that Central Europe also started doing well. However, the risk now is that people view the EU more as a “piggy-bank” than as a locus of shared values.

In Europe today there was a dearth of global ambition, he averred. That posed specific challenges for Central Europe, which needed to assert its democratic entitlement for decision-making in the EU. Only when Europe becomes a political entity will its political power match its economic power, he argued.

For its part, Russia was described as a confused and nostalgic post-imperial state. Vladimir Putin’s concept of a Eurasian union was unrealistic and Russia could join with Europe and the US, but only if it democratizes. If Russia decided not to be part of the West, it still had another option, Dr. **Brzezinski** stressed: “To be a satellite of China”. Political ridicule was very significant in modern Russia, he said. People are laughing at their elites. This is a good sign for future democratisation prospects, as is the reduction in the amount of fear in society.

He went on to emphasise that it was the shared responsibility of all of us to define the democratic vision of the West: “The shaping of a more vital West is a task in which Europe has to be directly engaged.”

Noting the rise of Asia, Dr. **Brzezinski** said that the international system as a whole was being challenged by changing dynamics. He argued that despite the traditional theory it was not a necessary truth at all that a rising China should get into conflict with the current declining hegemon, the United States of America.

Today, in the US a serious consideration was being given to the Transatlantic Free Trade Area, he said. This could create increased transatlantic bonds that could have major ramifications for the West’s power in the world.

## **Session 2: A New Vision for Redesigning Europe?**

Day two of GLOBSEC 2013 kicked off with a panel discussion on Europe. Moderated by Philip Stephens of the Financial Times, participants were invited to mull over the question whether there is a New Vision for Redesigning Europe.

The panellists were **Toomas Hendrik Ilves**, President of Estonia; Slovak Foreign Minister **Miroslav Lajčák**; **Maroš Šefčovič**, Vice-President for Inter-Institutional Relations and Administration at the European Commission; **Franco Frattini**, President of the Italian Society for International Organisation; and **Charles Grant** of the London-based policy institute, the Centre for European Reform.

**Philip Stephens**, framing the discussion, asked whether Europeans were going to be able to raise their sights above the Eurozone crisis that had consumed the continent in recent years. “The existential threat to the euro we saw last year has gone,” he thought, “but the threat within the euro to our economies, to our polities is still there.”

Minister **Lajčák** reacted by saying that the crisis in Europe had been exaggerated. He stressed that it was primarily a crisis of confidence. The EU had lost the confidence of markets, of people and of ourselves.

President **Ilves** said that we needed greater clarity on what we meant by Europe. He called for a moratorium on the much overused cliché “more Europe” without a proper definition of what that term stands for. The President went on to note the problem of some countries, which take rules of the European game more seriously than others, particularly in terms of spending, deficits and borrowing.

**Maroš Šefčovič** said that even amid the crisis he felt that a common European vision remained. He praised the EU for having helped keep the peace in Europe and reminded the audience that the EU had received the Nobel Peace Prize, and that that was well deserved. Mr. **Šefčovič** said sceptics had underestimated the resolve of the EU to do whatever it takes to save the euro and the overall project. He acknowledged that the more integration that goes ahead, the more questions arise about democratic scrutiny.

**Franco Frattini** stressed five points that need to be considered in the debate. First, it is the need to be aware of the progress that had been achieved since the signing of the Treaty of Rome. If any pillar such as the euro was to fall, it was likely that the others would fall with it, so one needed to be aware what was at stake, he argued. The second issue was that it needed to be understood

that the EU was mainly a political, not an economic project. Therefore, what was now needed was not a bureaucratic intervention, but political leadership. Third, we need to strike the right balance between diversity and unity, he said. More European integration should not be seen as being done for the sake of Brussels but for the citizens. Fourth, we need a more integrated Europe in the areas discussed, such as banking and the fiscal sphere, as well as in foreign and security policy. Last but not least, a common European policy on immigration was necessary.

**Charles Grant** of the Centre for European Reform outlined what he called three significant crises that the EU was confronted by: economic; governance; and legitimacy. The economic component of the crisis was simple: “The medicine that the EU has been applying to the problem countries is not working,” he said. “Excessive austerity is leading to shrinking economies,” he added. The political consequences were very grave, creating a fissure between “Greater Germany” consisting of Germany, the Netherlands, Finland and Slovakia – countries that follow the German economic philosophy; and the rest. The governance problem was that the Germans have had a leadership role thrust upon them and they have not necessarily been ready for it. France was weaker now than it had ever been before in the EU. Britain had also disappeared. The Commission, though technically stronger, had seen its moral authority and its legitimacy decline in quite a dramatic fashion.

## **GLOBSEC Chat**

The next session took the form of an interview conducted by Bratislava-based **Pavol Demeš**, member of the board of the newly-established European Endowment for Democracy with **Milo Đukanović**, Prime Minister of Montenegro. Referring to the process that led to Montenegrin independence, Prime Minister **Đukanović** said that “the smooth divorce of Czechoslovakia was an inspiration, for us domestically and also for our ability to get support in the international community”. **Pavol Demeš** raised the question of Montenegro’s strong international image, focusing on the televised advertising campaign on international networks with the slogan, “Wild Beauty”. Could this marketing tool be widened to the rest of the Western Balkans?

Mr. **Đukanović** said that the slogan was not chosen accidentally: “We knew we were outside the tourist map. We knew that tourists were tired of the typical destinations and that people wanted something new,” he said. That aside, the

Balkans should be sold as part of Europe, he added.

What was necessary was to implement long-term high quality reforms. In some parts of Europe there might be alternatives to Euro-Atlantic integration, but not in the Balkans, he said. It was very important that the Euro-Atlantic structures helped in the catch-up process.

The Prime Minister specifically referred to Bosnia, describing it as “dysfunctional”. The region needed to be integrated into NATO and the EU and the process should not be allowed to slow down due to the problems the world was currently experiencing. Mr. **Đukanović** stressed the importance of domestic reforms, particularly in the domain of the rule of law which served as a prerequisite for so much else.

### **Session 3: Re-energising EU Enlargement in the Western Balkans**

Picking up on some of the themes raised in the interview with Prime Minister **Đukanović**, the next session was entitled Re-energising EU enlargement in the Western Balkans. Moderated by **Tim Judah** of The Economist, the panel included **Štefan Füle**, Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood at the European Commission in Brussels; Macedonian Foreign Minister **Nikola Poposki**; Deputy Foreign Minister of Kosovo **Petrit Selimi**; former Slovak Prime Minister **Mikuláš Dzurinda**; and **Sonja Licht**, founder and President of the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence.

**Štefan Füle** stressed that while people talk about enlargement fatigue we need to address the issue of reform fatigue in aspirant states. There was nothing wrong, he said, with governments’ stressing their national agenda but that should not be made incompatible with the European agenda.

Minister **Poposki** of Macedonia noted that when you are a candidate you can do things in terms of reforms that are much harder to do when you are a member. Like Prime Minister **Đukanović** before him, Mr. **Poposki** also stressed the crucial importance of the rule of law. Agreeing with Mr. **Füle’s** point about an EU in flux, Minister **Poposki** underlined the notion that the EU prospective members will join a very different EU from that of the recent past.

Kosovo’s **Petrit Selimi** also stressed the vital importance of the rule of law. In Kosovo, there needed to be a uniform legal system across the country. Both Serbs in the North and Kosovars needed to see that as a win-win situation. The

Deputy Foreign Minister said wryly that Kosovars and Serbs had not been doing much talking since the end of the Ottoman Empire, “so there is plenty of catching up to do,” he said.

Former Slovak Prime Minister **Dzurinda** noted that one of the most important competencies of the state was to protect national minorities. We are rich on minorities in this country, in Hungary, but also in the Western Balkans, he said. It was not only necessary to protect the rights of minorities but to be seen as protecting them. Perception was as important as reality. With this in mind, Mr. **Dzurinda** said that his own experience had taught him that reform of public administration was particularly important; new municipal and regional forms of government in particular. That said, while reforming public administration we must put an emphasis on individual rights, he added.

Ms. **Licht** continued with saying: “I believe that trust is one of the most important long-term processes that you have to deal with.” Referring to Slovakia’s importance in backing the Balkan countries, she said that Slovakia has played an immense role in helping the entire Western Balkans. Without Slovakia we would not have learned what it means to show solidarity, she added. The European perspective was a common denominator for the entire region. Good news from Brussels was one thing, but implementation was crucial.

## **Session 4: After ISAF: Still in Business?**

The next session was chaired by **Kurt Volker**, Executive Director of the McCain Institute for International Leadership and the panellists included **Giampaolo Di Paola**, Defence Minister of Italy; **Hüseyin Dirioz**, Assistant Secretary General for Defence Policy and Planning at NATO; **Alexandr Vondra**, former Czech Defence Minister; and **Alexis Morel**, Policy Planning Advisor at the French Foreign Ministry.

In the context of ISAF’s impending departure from Afghanistan in 2014, Mr. **Vondra** said that assessing what we have achieved in Afghanistan needed to be looked at from a distance and with more than a whole decade in mind. When we look at where Afghanistan was at the beginning - very significant progress has been made, he said. Al- Qaeda’s presence in the country has been very greatly reduced. The operation has also made NATO soldiers, such as the Czechs, much more battle-hardened, having seen action in a conflict environment. “I think we have to be realistic. We should not fall into a

pessimistic mood,” he said in reflecting on the operation as a whole.

Ambassador **Volker** then raised the question of whether there was a plan B if things went wrong after the ISAF withdrawal.

Minister **Di Paola** addressed that question by saying that what was important was for the people of Afghanistan to have confidence in NATO's continued support, albeit in a somewhat different guise.

On the question of NATO after Afghanistan, Mr. **Volker** said some could describe the mission, NATO's biggest ever, as at best inconclusive. One also saw new question marks over US leadership and continuing concerns over the commitment to defence spending of the Europeans. Ambassador Volker picked up on these points arguing that even if NATO had not been “operational” in its first 40 years, it did know what its mission was: to protect the Free World from the Soviet threat. But, what's NATO's mission now?

**Alexandr Vondra** said that, in fact, the mission now was similar to what it always had been, to defend the security interests of the member states. Mr. **Diriöz** said, in response to the question of what NATO's mission was, “We had similar questions after the Cold War”. But defence and defence planning was effectively an insurance policy: “If it doesn't rain, you don't throw away your umbrella,” he stressed. On Afghanistan, Mr. **Diriöz** said that it had always been important for NATO that the people of Afghanistan did not have a sense of abandonment after ISAF left. That was why the training and support roles of NATO in Afghanistan would continue even after ISAF leaves.

Ambassador **Volker** noted that France had fully re-integrated itself into NATO in 2009. Four years on, was the organisation they re-joined the one they thought it was going to be? In response to his question, Mr. **Morel** of the French foreign ministry recalled that when President **Sarkozy** took the decision to go back into the integrated military command of NATO, France knew it would be joining a “new NATO”. When the new government of **Francois Hollande** came to power it supported and confirmed all the moves regarding NATO previously made by the Sarkozy Administration. In terms of Afghanistan, Mr. **Morel** reminded everyone that we have known for a long time about the pull-out from the country and that the issues raised were therefore not new.

## **GLOBSEC Chat: From Pyongyang to Damascus: Global Proliferation Challenges**

The second interview-format session of the conference, entitled From

Pyongyang to Damascus: Global Proliferation Challenges, was moderated by **Jozef Bátora**, Associate Professor at the Institute of European Studies and International Relations at Bratislava's prestigious Comenius University. His counterpart was **Thomas Countryman**, Assistant Secretary for International Security and Non-Proliferation at the U.S. Department of State.

Mr. **Countryman** started off the session by emphasizing that we have a common interest not only in meeting the challenges in the Euro-Atlantic domain, but that there was also a need to look globally. Getting this right required hard, detailed work in the field. The US had no greater ally than the EU, he stressed.

Turning to the non-proliferation treaty (NPT), he said that it was based on a clear bargain among states: those states that possess nuclear weapons would reduce them and not spread them; and those which did not have them would not try to acquire them. Civil nuclear power for legitimate purposes was quite acceptable.

## **Session 5: Visegrad Defence Cooperation: From Theory to Practice**

The final session of the day addressed the question of Visegrad defence cooperation and was chaired by **Brooks Tigner**, EU/NATO affairs correspondent, IHS Jane's Defence Weekly. The participants were **Karin Enström**, Sweden's Defence Minister; **Jiří Šedivý**, the Czech Permanent Representative to NATO; **Tomáš Valášek**, the Slovak Permanent Representative to NATO; and **Marcin Zaborowski**, Director of the Polish Institute of International Affairs.

The discussion was kicked off by Mr. **Tigner** with reference to the V4 battlegroup. He then widened it by asking the panellists to draw comparisons with the Nordic countries who have also been working closely together on defence matters.

Minister **Enström** from Sweden said that "in just a few years we have made much progress and moved from theory to practice". Cross-border training involved fighter jets in weekly exercises. There is coastal cooperation around the Baltic Sea, and much else besides. It had all been based on the belief that much was gained through cost and capability sharing, shared values, history and interests. The countries firmly believe they can enhance the so-called Nordic values by working together. That is why NORDEFECO was set up, she said. A third party cooperation was also possible but on a case by case basis.

Slovakia's **Tomáš Valášek** said that we were at a delicate stage right now in terms of V4 cooperation. Defence collaboration takes time in any case, he suggested. But there were also other reasons why things are lagging behind the kind of schedule many would have hoped for. For example, procurement which in principle sounds sensible and easy was very difficult in practice. The big difficulties arose in terms of timings, specifications and so on. What will the battlegroup do when it is ready in 2016? asked the moderator. Mr. **Šedivý** said in response: "We are indeed looking beyond 2016... we see it as a springboard" for other projects. Nonetheless, one should not overstate the importance of the battlegroup. "It is just a battlegroup," he said. "The Visegrad 4 group is very heterogeneous in many respects," he added. One of the main lessons we should learn from the Nordic example is: "It is a marathon, not a sprint".

**Marcin Zaborowski** said pooling and sharing should not be used as an excuse for defence cuts. Poland would not be interested in that kind of pooling and sharing. He said that for Poland the battlegroup was a test case which had to work, otherwise the V4's biggest member might simply lose interest in the whole concept.

## **GLOBSEC Debate: Securing the Homeland**

The final day of GLOBSEC 2013 opened with a debate on the subject of homeland security between **Baroness Pauline Neville-Jones**, a senior British Representative to business on cyber security and former Minister of State for Security, and **Mary Ellen Callahan**, former Chief Privacy Officer at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The discussion was moderated by **Judy Dempsey**, Senior Associate and Editor in Chief of Strategic Europe at Carnegie Europe.

**Mary Ellen Callahan** opened the debate by stating that homeland security had five missions: 1. preventing terrorism; 2. controlling and defending borders; 3. administrating immigration; 4. cyber security; and 5. Resilience. Boston [the conference took place in the aftermath of the terror attack at the Boston Marathon] showed a great example this week, she said, as the community worked with law enforcement and local people helping identify the bombers. This could not have existed 12-13 years ago.

**Pauline Neville-Jones** stressed that we live in a very different world from the Cold War, where there was a very strong sense of solidarity at home. The present situation doesn't engender a fear of warfare touching our soil, but we

are increasingly worried about the solidarity of our domestic society, the institutions of state and so on, she said. As in the US, she added, all our institutions such as policing and border control are slightly different now. We have also had to build and re-invent our state structures, the Baroness added.

Ms. **Callahan** said that there had been an effort in America to reach out to disenfranchised sections of society. The nexus between civil rights and counter-terrorism was crucial but difficult. Referring to the legacy of the last decade, she said that we have to regain the trust of the American people and the Europeans. The distrust of the United States was palpable.

## **GLOBSEC Insight: The EU Economy Post-Crisis: Still a Major Player?**

The penultimate session of this year's GLOBSEC conference took the form of an interview with **Philip Stephens** of the Financial Times and **Yves Leterme**, Deputy Secretary General of the OECD.

Mr. **Leterme** said it was not so surprising that there were problems in the Eurozone. There are the two issues of the sovereign debt crisis and the crisis of competitiveness. He noted the continuing crises in Cyprus as well as the matter of Slovenia as problems. But, he added, there were also some positive signs in terms of the banking union: "We are step by step coming out of a very difficult situation", he thought.

Mr. **Stephens** talked of a half-built monetary union, and Mr. **Leterme** agreed that a banking union was the only viable solution. The OECD Deputy Secretary General suggested that European Union economies really needed structural reforms. We need to do more about research and development, he said, and education. The single market needed to be completed. A world-wide free trade needed to be addressed. We do not have one single labour market. We have to take care of the issue of social cohesion, he said.

## **Session 6: In Need of a Compass? The New Middle East and North Africa**

The final panel discussion of GLOBSEC 2013 turned to the Middle East and its relationship with the European Union.

The panel, moderated by Damon Wilson, Executive Vice-President of the Atlantic Council, consisted of Carnegie Visiting Scholar Ambassador **Marc Pierini**; **Najib Ghadbian**, Syrian Opposition Representative to the U.S.; and

**Tarek Osman**, Political Counsellor for the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean at the EBRD in London.

Ambassador **Pierini** described the situation in the Middle East today as “a lesson in modesty”. Even today we are not sure what is happening, he said. Elections had brought to power governments which, some say, are as authoritarian as the ones they replaced.

Continuing in the same vein, he said that in Egypt you have a new NGO law on the table which seems to be at least as tough as the one used by Mubarak. Torture remained a problem. Dissent was not taken into account. We could be heading towards majoritarian democracy, which is not how we understand democracy in the West, he said.

**Tarek Osman** continued by saying that there was a focus in Europe especially on the political transition, which he described as important. But the social dimension needed to be understood too. Demographics were crucial. Egypt doubled its population in 40 years or so, he stressed. The demographic shift had been very heavily weighted towards young people. But if you have 45 million people under 25, he argued, they may not relate to the kind of social contract that was in place before.

**Najib Ghadbian** said that the change that took place in the Arab world was positive. We need to reconsider our paradigm with regard to the Middle East, he said. Also, disagreeing with Ambassador **Pierini**, he said that in the past we emphasized stability over democracy. That led to cynicism about the US and Europe, especially among the young. But, of course, the process of change would inevitably be long and difficult.

## **Closing Remarks**

The conference was closed by **Róbert Vass**, Secretary General of the Slovak Atlantic Commission, who thanked the guests for coming and the GLOBSEC team for making it happen in the first place.