

Going Nuclear in the Middle East

In search of an European Middle East policy

THURSDAY 28th JANUARY Opening Session	3
Gérard LARCHER, President of the French Senate	3
Josselin de ROHAN, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee of the French Senate	6
Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East	8
General overview Nuclear Islam in the Middle East	12
Robert MALLEY, Director of Middle East and North Africa Program at the International Crisis Group (Washington DC, USA) and Former Special Assistant to President Clinton for Arab-Israeli Affairs	12
How likely is a successful dialogue with Iran? Panel.....	23
Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, Senator and Co-author of the Foreign Relations and Defence Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East -	23
Ladan BOROUMAND - Research Director, Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation for the Human Rights and Democracy in Iran	24
Anthony H. CORDESMAN, Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington DC	27
Mustafa ALANI, Senior Advisor Director, Gulf Research Center, Dubai – Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen	32
Bernard HOURCADE, Senior Research Fellow at CNRS (Paris)	36
What Future for the Palestinian People? Panel	44
Monique CERISIER-ben GUIGA, French Senator, Co-author of the Foreign Relations, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's Report on the Situation in the Middle East.....	44
Muzna SHIHABI - Member of the Palestinian Negotiation Team, Representing Saeb Erekat, Chief Palestinian Negotiator	45
Mike SINGH, Ira Weiner Fellow, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy –	50
Henry SIEGMAN, Director of the U.S./Middle East Project and Former Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations	55
Yves AUBIN de la MESSUZIÈRE, Former Director, North Africa/Middle East at the French Foreign Office, Former French Ambassador, President of La Mission laïque française (the French Lay Mission)	57
Friday 29 January 2010 A Renaissance for Iraq? Panel	63
Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East –	63
Boris BOILLON, French Ambassador to Iraq	63
Fareed YASSEEN, Ambassador, Government of Iraq	70
Masroor BARZANI, Head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party's (KDP) security and intelligence agencies	73

The Latest on Al Qaeda? Panel.....	83
Monique CERISIER-ben GUIGA, Senator, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East.....	83
Alain CHOUEY, Former Chief of the Security Intelligence Service, French Foreign Intelligence Service	83
Jean-Pierre FILIU, Professor, Middle East Chair at Sciences Po Paris, Visiting Professor at Georgetown University	88
François HEISBOURG - Special Advisor at the Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique in Paris.....	93
In search of a European Union Policy for the Middle East Panel	102
Jean François-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East.....	102
Jean-Dominique GIULIANI, Chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation.....	102
Dr Muriel ASSEBURG, Head of the Middle East and Africa Research Division at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs	107
Dr Claire SPENCER, Head of the Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House...	110
In search of a European policy for the Middle-East Closing	123
Javier SOLANA, Former High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union.....	123
Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East	127

THURSDAY 28th JANUARY

Opening Session

Gérard LARCHER, President of the French Senate – Mr Chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Defence and Armed Forces Committee, dear Josselin de Rohan, Mr President of the Robert Schuman Foundation, dear Jean-Dominique Giuliani, ladies and gentlemen Ministers, ladies and gentlemen Ambassadors, dear colleagues Senators, Ladies and Gentleman,

I am delighted to be here this afternoon to open these two days of discussion where we will be looking at the Middle East here in the French Senate.

The Middle East today is quite clearly one of the global hotspots of the world. It is also a big challenge for the international community. I am delighted that the Senate has led a major initiative in this sense over the last few months, initiated by Mr de Rohan.

I would also like to congratulate those who are behind this seminar: our Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee and the Robert Schuman Foundation.

I would also like to express my undivided admiration for our two colleagues who have produced the Committee's report that is the origin of this meeting: Mr Jean François-Poncet and Mrs Monique Cerisier-ben Guiga. They spent a year working on this, which involved visiting 17 countries. Often very tiring and difficult trips were made. They went to Gaza in January 2009, 10 days after the end of Israel's Operation "Cast Lead". They also went to Baghdad.

The result of those visits and studies produced an outstanding report last September. I would like to pay a special tribute to the authors because they reflect the quality of the Senate reports and the work done by your Committee, Mr Chairman. Just like the parable of the talents, I am sure we will be able to multiply that input during these two days.

I would also like to congratulate a Senate professional staffer who assisted the two Senators along their mission : Mr Frederic Mauro.

I smiled when I read the first sentence of your report, which was « *If you have understood something about the Middle East, it is probably because you have had the wrong explanations.* »

You refuse the excuse of the complexity of the Middle East situation – on which there is no doubt – which leads some people to stage unnecessarily

complex explanations, due to nuances and false subtleties. Yours is not such a case. Your report is clear and precise about many aspects of the political situation. It puts everything in perspective, explains the links and connections, and explains, in simple terms, things that are fundamentally complex.

Complexity does not hide the major issues, though.

Finally, you have looked at the links between this region and the Western world – Europe and France, in particular. This is a very sensitive issue of vital importance for us.

The two authors of the report had intimate knowledge of the region, where they knew many political actors. They looked in-depth at the underlying facts and did not hesitate to challenge some accepted beliefs. Their assignment was carried out with full intellectual freedom and vision. I am sure that you will listen to their conclusions with great interest and attention.

The round tables today and tomorrow will give us input from a wide range of different specialists. They are dedicated experts on these sensitive subjects that are of vital importance to our common future; I am not thinking only of the terrorist threat but also of the necessary balance between different parts of the world.

I am not going to anticipate the subject of those debates because you are all specialists in that area, but I just want to share the reason why I pay so much attention to this topic and why I think it is very much at the heart of the Senate's role to organise this kind of conference.

What is a Parliamentary Committee report? It is a decision-making tool, not a substitute to it. In our country, it is the role of the Executive, under the authority of the President, to shape and conduct the foreign policy. As a long-standing Gaullist, I am very much attached to the role of the State and I respect the balance of powers between the Executive and the Legislative.

As President of the Senate, I pay attention to the fact that the three missions of our Assembly are thoroughly fulfilled: legislation, control and prospective. This report is at the core of two of them: law enacting and control of the government.

The Senate is there to lay down the path of the future, whether it be in domestic or international affairs.

Mr Chairman, your Committee has spent a lot of time and work on the Middle East. The Senate is a major contributor to the definition of our foreign policy and provides a useful parliamentary viewpoint. The public debates organised by the Senate two weeks ago showed this quite clearly. So does today's meeting.

The Senate is open to partners' points of view. We will pursue this dialogue next month with the Ambassadors from the member states of the Arab League, whom we will host at the Senate's Presidency with my fellow Senators, as well as Chairmen of parliamentary groups of friendship.

It is due to René Monory, former President of the Senate, that we have this Senate's open-mindedness on the world, on international affairs. The Senate listens to the world and contributes to looking for solutions. Therefore, I believe that our assembly fulfils its institutional mission.

I must tell you that I have not just an interest in this region, but almost a passion. This part of the world has been the cradle of so many great civilisations and religions. We are all aware of the political challenges embedded in the Middle East, which to a certain extent determines the stability of the world.

The challenges are great and the stakes are high for all of us.

I decided to focus a substantial part of my international work in this area, and to concentrate there our cooperation, in addition to the strong, decentralized cooperation of many other institutional bodies. My first official trip, last January, during the Gaza crisis, was to Egypt. Two weeks from now, I will undertake an official visit to Lebanon.

Over the past 12 months, I have met a number of politicians from the region: the President of the Knesset, the Vice-Prime Minister of Israel, the President and the Prime Minister of Lebanon last week, and the Iraqi President, the President of the Iraqi Parliament, the Emir of Qatar and the Syrian President a few weeks ago. I also had the pleasure of meeting President Gül of Turkey, whose country is diplomatically active in the Middle East. In fact, I have also visited Ankara and Istanbul because it seemed important to me, following the work of Josselin de Rohan, that we establish with this country an open and dignified dialogue.

With all these different interlocutors, I covered the ground that you will be talking about – the situation in Iran and the Iranian nuclear programme, and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, which is such a long, slow process. There is also the situation in Iraq and its renaissance after a nightmarish decade. Then we went to Afghanistan. I met the President of the Pakistani Parliament less than a month ago because I think that international stability is very much at stake in this country. We talked about the social evolution; the large youth in these countries, and their problems and frustrations. We also talked about the dialogue between civilisations and about cohabitation between different religions. We talked also about a secular society. I remember two meetings with people who were not politicians: Mr Bartholomew I, Archbishop of Constantinople, and Sheikh Tantawy, of Al-Azhar University, whom I met in Istanbul and Cairo, respectively, and I remember their calls for understanding and tolerance. I have a specific recollection of each one of those meetings. I saw that there was a desire for dialogue. Our involvement is well known and expected. Parliamentary

actions are not a carbon copy of Presidential diplomacy. They are something different.

There are a large number of universal questions raised in the Middle East. These issues can also be raised on our own domestic scenes. I think our own social cohesion depends on them being resolved. We have seen that some of these problems, due to tensions in the Middle East, have spilled over into our own societies. I must say that we cannot speak of social cohesion if we do not take a look at this open and global world. In this global world, the worst temptation would be to draw back within ourselves and within our certainties, whereas we should be talking about universal values.

Therefore, I hope, Chairmen, that after you have heard from Mr François-Poncet and Mrs Cerisier-ben Guiga, you will be able to contribute to the progress of these important ideas so that this brazier in the Middle East can transform into flames that carry warmth up to our hearts and let us hope.

Josselin de ROHAN, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee of the French Senate – Mr President of the Senate, ladies and gentlemen Ambassadors, dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my honour to chair the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee of the French Senate. In September 2008, two of its members, Jean François-Poncet and Monique Cerisier-ben Guiga, were asked to report on the situation in the Middle East. The two rapporteurs went to all Middle Eastern countries except for Iran, as the authorities did not give them entry visas before the elections of June 2009. Neither were they received by the leaders of Israel because they had met with Hamas political leader Khaled Meshal in Damascus. Nevertheless, they were able to enter Israel and go to Gaza 10 days after the end of Operation Cast Lead. They also spent four days in Iraq and met with high-ranking officials there. The two rapporteurs had over 250 meetings and hearings abroad. They also consulted with most of the Middle East experts in France. They undertook all of the necessary visits in order to fully understand the stages involved in making nuclear weapons. The two rapporteurs also went to Washington and New York, where they met with the main institutional players in the United States. They also met with the so-called “Pro-Israel Lobby.” Finally, they went to Brussels where they met with Mr Javier Solana, the Representative of the EU for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, who will be meeting with us tomorrow.

The rapporteurs submitted their report to the Committee last September. I am pleased to have heard the words of praise voiced by the President of the Senate regarding this report. Of course, the report was adopted by the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee of the Senate.

Its analysis is very topical, and was widely disseminated in both the French and English language versions. It was the basis of public debate held here in the Senate on January 12, 2010.

Today's and tomorrow's discussions are an extension of this overall reflection which will be given an international dimension as we bring in foreign speakers. I thank them for coming, in many cases from very far away – Dubai, Palestine, Washington, Berlin and London – to speak to us here. They are some of the top specialists on matters of this region.

I would like to thank Mr Gérard Larcher, President of the French Senate, for making this event possible, and thank the President of the Robert Schuman Foundation, Mr Giuliani, for his very important contribution.

Before giving the floor to my colleague and friend Jean François-Poncet, who will be giving the thrust of the conclusions, I would quickly like to make three points of personal thought on the subject of a European policy for the Middle East.

Rather, I will make two observations and ask one question.

The first observation is fairly straightforward. The Middle East is very important for Europe. The interests are due to geography, history, economics and also to the fact that the Middle East is important for the security of all Europe. The best way to counter what we often vaguely call "Islamic terrorism" is lasting and fair peace in the Middle East. We must also recognize the presence of large Middle-Eastern communities in our countries. There are between 15 and 20 million Muslims living in Europe. In France, the Muslim community numbers over five million people, the largest such community in Europe. It is also the case with the Jewish community, which is estimated at 500,000 people.

Next, to invert my previous observation, Europe is not that important to the Middle East. When we travel there, we see that they have expectations for Europe, where "soft power," as opposed to the "hard power" of the United States, is prized. We are reminded of our historical relationship. The people say that they are interested in our businesses, our products and our culture, but we have to realise that as soon as things get complicated, they turn to the United States. It has never been truer than since President Obama's election. He held out his hand to the Muslim world through his Cairo speech. Yet, Europe was the first to recognize the two-state solution with the Venice Declaration of June 1980. It also played an important role in the Madrid Conference and the Oslo agreements of 1991. However, since then, Europe had stepped back. It did not bring its weight to bear during the Bush years. The Quartet was established, whereby the US coordinates diplomatic efforts and acts as a guarantor of security, while Europe pays the bill. The contribution of European states to compensate for the consequences of the Israeli occupation in the West Bank totalled more than 1 billion euros in 2009. The financial commitment is large in spite of the fact that the EU's political commitment is marginal.

After these two observations, my question is simple: why ? If Europe is powerless, it is because it is divided. It is unable to speak with one voice on the central issue in the Middle East: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To define a

policy is not an easy thing to do, but it is possible. It is up to you to say this. The subtitle of this symposium specifically alludes to this by asking, “What European policy for the Middle East?”

I hope you have an interesting debate and thank you for your attention.

Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – Mr President of the Senate, Mr Chairman of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee of the Senate, Mr President of the Robert Schuman Foundation,

I would like to start by expressing thanks quite obviously to the President of the Senate for the exaggeratedly flattering nature of his statement. He should know that Ms Cerisier-ben Guiga and I are highly appreciative of it.

I would like to remind you that this symposium is organised by the Senate with, of course, the close cooperation of the Robert Schuman Foundation. We will hear about European policy from the Foundation's President a little later on. I would like to thank him and the Robert Schuman Foundation for participating in and co-organising this symposium.

As the Chairman from the Foreign Affairs Committee said, this symposium is, to a certain extent, the culmination of the mission entrusted to us by the Committee. That is to say entrusted to Ms Cerisier-ben Guiga, who knows the subject very well, and myself. We were actually asked to produce a synthesis at the end of the mission. As has been said, this meant that we made half a dozen trips to the Middle East and talked not only to authorities in the different countries, but also to independent interlocutors and to journalists, to the extent that you can find them there – with a bit of effort you can. The result is that the report that we have drafted draws on a number of different sources. It is a report that has tried to be as objective as possible.

Now, as we embark upon this symposium, you have to remember that the Middle East is probably the part of the world to which Europe is closest. It imports a substantial chunk of its energy from there. It also imports terrorists. Obviously, this is not its preferred form of imports. In addition, Europe has with the Middle East a fairly close human link because of the significant Muslim minorities in Europe, especially in France.

That is why events in this region are of enormous interest to us. It is true that what is happening is often more on the negative side but we should not forget about the positive side that does exist and is often underestimated.

Two issues create serious concerns in both Europe and the United States: the Iranian nuclear programme and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We will have one roundtable on each of these two subjects.

Let me briefly say something about each. The uranium nuclear programme, if we have understood correctly through our dialogue with experts capable of assessing it – the French Atomic Energy Commission, for example – should make it possible for Tehran to have a low-level, modest, but operational nuclear weapon around 2015. The fact that Iran will acquire a nuclear weapon is not necessarily a threat to Europe in and of itself, but it will have a ripple effect. Saudi Arabia and Egypt will be tempted to follow the Iranian example, either under their own steam or together with the Pakistanis. It is hard to imagine that Pakistan would be able to resist for long the attraction of the financial incentives that the Saudi regime is able to offer. There are three dangers involved: firstly, the fact that such an unstable region as the Middle East would become nuclear. Secondly, a nuclear Iran – and the accompanying technological expertise – would undoubtedly bolster its influence in the Middle East, thereby increasing the instability of that region. Thirdly, Israel has made it clear that should Iran – whose President seems to be calling for the end of Israel every three months – acquire such an arsenal, it would obviously constitute an existential threat for Israel. At the moment it does not appear that Tel Aviv is thinking of undertaking airborne action against Iranian nuclear plants, but one cannot rule out such an eventuality in the future.

The second problem that has worried us for such a long time is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. What one can say in a nutshell is that this is a conflict whose resolution has never seemed more remote than today for two reasons. Firstly, despite US pressure, Israel has not agreed to put an end to its settlement programme. All you need to do is take a map and see that their expansion means that the creation of a territorially coherent future Palestinian state becomes extremely difficult. Also, divisions within the Palestinian movement between Hamas, controlling the Gaza Strip, and the Palestinian Authority, controlling the West Bank, mean that to date – and for the moment one cannot see much likely change – it is not possible to appoint a sole negotiator for the whole of the Palestinian people. The future of the Palestinian people is a concern shared by all Arab countries, and for these countries a solution to this problem is the litmus test for Western governments. I can tell you that as I travelled around with Ms Cerisier-ben Guiga, every single country raised this particular issue.

The third country that we will have a roundtable on is Iraq. Iran's nuclear programme and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are fortunately not the only issues existing in the Middle East. They are not the only developments one can see in a general survey of that region. Others are more positive. Iraq is a country with as much oil as Iran and only slightly less than Saudi Arabia, and certainly has the potential of being a huge oil-producing country. Unfortunately, because of certain decisions taken by President Bush, it seemed doomed to permanent and bloody insecurity – until 2007. The United States, who are often unfairly criticised, have 150,000 men on the ground and have achieved considerable successes that enable us to believe in Iraq's future. They have managed to convince many of the Sunni tribes who were behind the insurgency to join with them in exchange for funding and to turn against al-Qaeda, for whom Iraq was becoming a major base of activity, but whose blind attacks on the civilian

population had led to their growing unpopularity. Now I think it is fair to say that al-Qaeda for the most part has been thrown-out of Iraq. Unfortunately, they seem to have landed in Yemen. Yemen has never been a very stable state and the result is that it is now facing growing problems. Iraq is, of course, a fundamentally divided country, divided along religious lines with the Shiites in a large majority and the Sunnis in the minority. There are also the Kurds who account for 20 % of the population and who in the north of the country have created an autonomous region with its own independent armed force, the Peshmerga, who I can assure you are very worthy and well-disciplined fighters. The future of Iraq remains unsure. There are regular series of murderous attacks in Baghdad. There are problems that are difficult to resolve, like the future of Kirkuk, which is a large city in the north of the country. It is problematic but the Iraqi Prime Minister Mr Al-Maliki is a strong man who has appealed to the patriotism of all Iraqis and who could well have a positive influence on the future of the country as long as the parliamentary elections scheduled for February or March enable him to maintain or reinforce his position.

Perhaps lastly I will give a couple of words on other countries – Saudi Arabia and Egypt – that have not been given specific roundtables in this symposium.

At the moment, the Saudi monarchy seems fairly well established. A law concerning succession within this enormous family seems, at least for the moment, to have settled the problem of the succession and transition from generation to generation. The 82 year-old King Abdullah prudently but firmly is pushing through reforms that are gradually modernizing the country and transforming a society that has remained very conservative.

As for Egypt, its future really depends on what happens after Mr Mubarak, who is now in his eighties. It is said that he will stay on until the bitter end. The question of his succession is still open. What one can legitimately assume is that the security apparatus, which is very extensive throughout the country, and the army, which is the dominant force there, will organize some kind of ordered transition.

Now I will stop this brief overview there. All I wanted to do was paint the general picture and it is now up to the roundtables to go into the greater details. Thank you for your attention and I will now give the floor to Mr Robert Malley who is the Director of the Middle East and North Africa Program of the International Crisis Group that maintains a presence in all of these countries. One of your delegates in Damascus, Syria, enabled us to meet Mr Khaled Mashal, who is the political leader of Hamas. The result of which was our blacklisting by the Israeli authorities. That is not very important because there are independent think tanks and independent journalists in Israel. There is no problem finding information without having to speak to officials, who in any case can only tell you what they are allowed to tell you.

Mr Robert Malley will now give us a general rundown on the situation in the Middle East, and then we will move into the first roundtable on the Iranian nuclear programme.

General overview

Nuclear Islam in the Middle East

Robert MALLEY, Director of Middle East and North Africa Program at the International Crisis Group (Washington DC, USA) and Former Special Assistant to President Clinton for Arab-Israeli Affairs – Thank you very much. It is an honour and pleasure to be invited here to Paris, France.

However, I will surprise you because I am going to begin with some criticism and I will do this in spite of the fact that I am a guest here. It has to do with the French title of my presentation, "*Le croissant et la bombe (The Crescent and the Bomb)*," and the title of this symposium, "*Going Nuclear in the Middle East*". I know people like strong titles that get people interested to come so they try to use things that are provocative. But I wonder about the intellectual reasons for this and even more about the political implications. Nobody would dare talk about a Christian bomb or "the cross and the bomb" or "the Star of David and the bomb". Of course, there is no Muslim bomb. There is not a Jewish or Christian bomb. Even though the world, and especially the Western world, are particularly interested in Islam. Now I am just making the comment not to be provocative but most importantly I think this example of an innocent title that catches your attention is a good illustration to the points I am making today.

Indeed, all of us here are analysts, politicians, decision-makers or witnesses. We all very much depend on the ways of thinking in our own countries. When we are considering the Middle East as we are doing today and tomorrow, we can prefer either a particular subject matter or a particular vantage point for analyzing or a particular way of interpreting things. These are choices and these choices have consequences.

This is a topic I want to talk about during my overview right now : to take a critical view of the ways in which France, the United States, and the West more generally, look at the Middle East and understand it.

The title of our talk, as I said, is just an example of some of these points. I think it is true today that this example is symptomatic. It is true of my country and I think it is also true of your country; we in the West have our eyes riveted on Iran as previously some had their eyes riveted on Iraq. There has been a sort of shift from one obsession to another. We have to realise that there is no coincidence here. It is precisely because of the tragic war in Iraq that we saw a strengthening of Iran's position in the region so that today we are worried about Iran.

The Iraqi obsession therefore has led to the “Irani” obsession. Having one obsession is very risky; we fully understand what the consequences might be. You may then neglect other crises, for instance the Israeli-Arab crisis, or might imagine that all players in the region view the danger in the same way as we do. Another pitfall is that you may take disproportionate measures in terms of the real size of the threat.

Now of course we cannot ignore Iran and we must not underestimate the risks of a nuclear crisis. Senator François-Poncet has just explained this to us very well. We must look at this, but not too much, and we must do it differently. I will come back to this in a moment.

Now, though, I would like to make some more general points. I wanted to say the following: we must not just work with preconceived notions. On the contrary, we have to push them aside. We have to break taboos and, as the report by the Committee has done, we have to really look at reality clearly and ask the difficult questions. We have to confront our certainties and call into question our dogmas, considering the current situation and the overall process underway.

In President Obama’s State of the Union address, he describes the health of the union – whether it is in a good or bad state. We can say that the Middle East is in a bad state. We could describe it as follows, which may be an exaggeration:

- Almost all of the regimes have a serious lack of legitimacy.
- Whether talking about the monarch system or even a republican system, succession is more and more like a hereditary type of succession.
- Traditional allies of Western policy in the region are struggling, especially Egypt and Jordan.
- We see sectarian ruptures taking place in Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen, worsening and spreading throughout the region.
- In Yemen, the State is falling apart, and in Iraq it is difficult to get the State back on its feet.
- In fighting terrorism, the terrorist ideology seems to be growing rather than weakening.
- Militant Islamism is taking root.
- We are seeing more and more belief in violence and military action, both in Israel and among Palestinians, as well as among other Arab countries.
- We are seeing some disaffection with the West.
- There is a loss of influence and deterrent capacity of the United States, especially after the Iraq War and also due to the effects of the Afghanistan War.

- We are seeing the collapse and the disrepute of the Israeli-Arab peace process.
- We are seeing a geographical, political and social scattering of the national Palestinian movement.
- We see populations and public opinions in Israel moving to the right. They no longer believe in peace.
- There is increased risk of nuclear proliferation and conflicts due to the Iranian nuclear programme.
- There are increased threats of deadly, costly and inefficient wars between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip and Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

It is very unfortunate but my list is not an exhaustive one.

We must therefore re-examine some of the pillars of Western policy, which clearly is not reaching the objectives. What do we mean by re-examination ? There are a few ideas here today.

The first example of this is the most fundamental one, having to do with the way we in Europe and the US often view the region. We look at the major fault lines, the cleavages and the definitions of who are enemies and allies are. This type of vision, especially in the US but I also think it is often the case in Europe, works on the basis of the axis metaphor.

On one side, you have the pro-Iranian axis including of course Iran, Syria and their alleged allies or auxiliary, or so called auxiliary Hamas and Hezbollah.

Then on the other side, you have an axis for a “moderate camp” that is pro-Western with Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan. According to this diagnosis, it also includes the Palestinian Authority and the Fatah.

This view of things does contain some truth but due to the fact that it is a static, frozen caricature and out of sync with local perception, we can say it is not really true.

This is a binary view of the region divided between moderates and militants, pragmatics and extremists. It gives rise to many political actions and certainties, i.e. that you have to isolate Hamas and not enter into dialogue. A dialogue would mean lending it legitimacy, betraying Fatah and would be fatal to the peace process. Some people have another idea that Gaza has become the Iranian vanguard and that if the population of this territory managed to live normally, it would dangerously strengthen the Islamic movement that controls it, along with their Iranian ally.

A French high-ranking diplomat who has agreed to speak here, Yves Aubin de la Messuzière, and I were recently criticized for not taking part in a boycott and meeting with Hamas. It is an honour that the Committee has also

done the same thing and has begun critical, honest dialogue with no compromise and no complacency with Hamas leaders.

I would say that anyone who criticizes and criticized us has learned nothing of the years of ostracism that were counterproductive with the PLO. You cannot ignore a movement that is rooted in public opinion. By ignoring it, you do not make it disappear.

Another result of this black and white view of the region is the illusory hope that Syria will suddenly change camp or change axis as though today it was fully a member of one side of the axis and, as if in the current circumstances, it would see an advantage in shifting allegiances.

Another possible negative consequence is the idea of a single unified front. It is not true but people hope for this and think that Arab Sunni countries would work with Israel to move together, as if Arab countries do not have to take into account their own public, who see the reality in an entirely different light.

Now there are other risks if you try to define the world in black and white fashion. This binary view tends to backfire; producing unintended effects and strengthening those that the West is trying to weaken. Today, when a young Arab in North Africa or elsewhere in the Middle East is given the choice between dynamic activism and soft non-movement, what is he going to opt for? If you give the choice in Damascus, as it was and still is done today, between discussions with Iran or denial of their alliance and ideas, what is it going to opt for? If you think that Hamas has a choice, they gave up what they believe in and accepted the conditions of the Quartet, that is accepted things done by the adversaries. As a result, they participated in and won the 2006 elections. Alternatively, they can be condemned to isolation. Saying that is guaranteeing that you will get them to make the wrong choice.

In all of these cases, having an inflexible attitude means it is even less likely that there will be change towards greater realism or greater pragmatism with either Arab citizens, Syria, Hamas or Hezbollah – change that they might accept under better conditions.

There are divisions – Sunni/Shia, Persian/Arab. By making use of them, we play the game of extremists from both sides who are manipulating sectarian and ethnic polarisations. We know that the extremists on both sides would win out if we let this happen.

The most striking and tragic example comes from Iraq. The Bush administration had prejudices and ignorance and they projected their own ethno-sectarian view of that country, seeing it as being clearly divided in three: Sunni, Shia and Kurd. They treated it that way and actually awakened and exploited this. They politicized the situation and institutionalized the ethnic and religious rivalries that Iraq is still suffering from today.

They said that all the Sunnis were Baathists and were, therefore, enemies. That is one of the original sins of the US in its Iraqi endeavours. We see this again with the purges on the electoral lists.

After awakening these sectarian demons in Iraq, we congratulate ourselves for what Iraqi politicians are now saying: that they have a nationalist discourse. It is a welcome discourse but it is a bad substitution for the emergence of real national institutions, an actual political and social contract between the various Iraqi groups, the rule of law, and an actual national reconciliation. Now I would say in Iraq there is still too much sectarianism and ethnic intolerance. People today who claim that they are not acting in a sectarian manner are often intolerant in terms of ethnicity. We see this in many opportunistic and perilous speeches against the Kurds.

Iraq is doing better. We have heard this and it is true, but still it is not doing *that* well. It must rid itself of three things from the past: Saddam Hussein's regime, the US occupation, and its accompanying sectarian political model. This last legacy is not necessarily the least of the problems.

A second danger of seeing the region in this black and white fashion that we are trying to contend with is that Europe and the United States, based on this attitude, do not see some of the changes afoot that are not in line with their imposed model. This means they are spectators to the real transformations that are taking place. I just want to give you a few examples. Let us take a look at what has happened in recent months.

Saudi Arabia has got back together with Syria after a long period of being estranged. Together the two countries have agreed to oppose any Iranian interference in Yemen and, more quietly, have found common ground in Iraq.

Contact has also been re-established between Riyadh and Hamas after the failure of the Mecca Agreements. The leader of Hamas has also visited Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, where there was a reaffirmation of the Arab nature of his Islamic movement.

In Lebanon, the line between the long-standing "March 14" and "March 8" camps is starting to become blurred.

Then, in Iraq, there are the Syrian/Israeli allies who, in addition to the Yemeni disagreements, are now vying for influence by interposed parties. Strangely, this is a little bit like what happened in Lebanon a few years ago with the difference being that in Lebanon, they shared a number of common interests that they do not seem to share in Iraq.

Then Turkey is stepping up its presence in the region. It is mediating left, right and centre with Israel and Syria, while deepening political and economic links with Damascus. It is contacting all stakeholders, whether it is the Palestine Authority, Israel or Hamas, and putting extra effort into Iraq.

One could almost conclude that the real rivalry in the region is not between those that are pro-Iranian and those that are pro-Western, but more between a vision forged by Iran and another forged by Turkey.

The first is about resisting Western influence and Israel, which is the Iranian view. It is a response to a kind of Third World desire for dignity and self-determination among the Arab and Muslim worlds. It is mainly activist driven.

At the other end, you have the Turkish vision. It is more about diplomacy, refusing, boycotting or non-dialogue. It favours economic integration and regional interdependence.

Neither vision is Arab, but both are pertinent, are well known in the region, are popular among the citizens of the region, and benefit from legitimate support.

Unfortunately, we cannot say the same about the American vision. For the moment it is absent even despite Obama and his administration. It depends too much on a conception according to which these developments (i.e. the bridge-building between Syria and Saudi Arabia, dialogue between Saudi Arabia and Hamas, the multi-party diplomacy in Turkey, the repositioning in Lebanon, and tension between Iran and Syria) do not have any sense, readability and interest.

All of this is ignored or overlooked by Washington because they are trying to isolate Hamas and Hezbollah completely. They are worried about inter-Palestinian reconciliation and they are demanding of Damascus a clear choice. All these nuances and subtleties and all the not fundamental but minor shifts are “off the radar” for Washington. The opportunities that these represent for fostering those modest but important shifts – either by Hamas, Damascus or other actors – are all missed and spoilt.

Now, after a quick look at this first problem of a binary approach to the world, let us move onto another issue: Iran and how one should view Iran. I was saying just now that it is important to think about this, but not too much and, above all, differently.

Obviously, one should think about the issue. Whatever you might think of the Iranian nuclear programme and whether it is legitimate or not, today nobody can underestimate the risks of proliferation or even pre-emptive attacks. Some believe and some fear that Israel might carry out attacks on uranium plants.

We should worry about it too much because I was talking about the dangers of fixations and obsessions. There are downsides to all of those. That is what drove the vain idea of an Arab-Israeli front against the Persians, and the dangerous temptation of inciting tensions between Shiites and Sunnis or Arabs and Persians. Other excesses are due to the obsession on Iran. Iran is suspected of having a hand in everything – Gaza and Yemen. Its nuclear programme would be

a threat to the whole world and even war would be justified to hold down this growing power.

You have to think of it differently, and that is what my colleague Frederic Tellier and I have worked towards on Iran in the *International Crisis Group*. I do not really have a conclusion to give you as to whether Iran will go ahead and construct a bomb or not, but it has done a lot to raise suspicions. However, maybe after giving itself the potential of a nuclear weapon, aware of the dangers that represents to society, it has decided not to go through with it. It is capable of developing a nuclear weapon, but it is aware of the dangers its acquisition would bring. Now I do not know exactly what the consequences are of the tumultuous events since the controversial elections last June in that country, or whether the regime is willing or able to talk to Washington.

I know even less where this will lead, though I think one can be fairly certain that this is an unprecedented breakdown in the history of the Islamic Republic. The legitimacy of the regime and its authority will be affected for a long time.

As to whether the regime will fall, as quite a number of people in my country are saying, I would say that having spent 30 years cut-off from and ignoring Iran, you cannot suddenly overnight become an expert. You certainly cannot base your policy on the abstract possibility of a different regime in Iran when you look at the pressing needs of the present and when there are, in the US at least, fundamental interests at stake in Iraq and Afghanistan, in particular.

However, I am absolutely sure that the policy to date has been totally ineffective. Iran has been called upon to make an impossible sacrifice, giving up its domestic uranium enrichment programme. To do so, an instrument has been used that illustrates our ability to understand the drivers of this regime, which are more punitive than persuasive economic sanctions and given the type of regime will never bring the hopeful concessions. Then there is a waiving of the threat of military attack, which would be as costly for the countries that would lead the attack as for those who would be the target. All of this enables the Iranians to believe and to convince others that the ultimate aim of the West is to bring down and destroy their regime.

It is an elusive objective with ineffective tools and unwise blackmail, and the result is expensive and very disappointing.

We need to think about this differently to do this means coming up with a solution to the problem of the Iranian nuclear programme, other than simply stopping their enrichment programme. It would be a solution that boosts Western confidence about the Iranian objective and reinforces the Iranian right to enrichment. It would also mean that we have to look at to what extent Tehran's legitimate regional security issue can be addressed. For the United States, it would mean that a dialogue must be entered into, not only about the nuclear question but also on matters of mutual interest, such as Afghanistan, Iraq, drug

trafficking, and the ultimate taboo of entering into a discussion – with an open mind – of what the consequences of a nuclear Iran would be.

Now I am not at all sure that any solution can be found in the current state of affairs. We have to be very prudent when looking at what has happened with the enrichment programme, but persisting in an approach that leads only to a dead end and that will not prevent Iran from continuing its nuclear programme, seems to me neither logical nor defensible.

The third and last example that I will end with is the peace process that has been a thorn in our side for so long and with nothing looking like peace in sight. How many taboos have to be broken and preconceived ideas turned down, or at least revised?

Firstly, the idea that bilateral negotiations between Israel and Palestine can lead to a final peace is surely an illusion. The Americans, together with many European countries, have set as an objective the resumption of such talks as if it was the lack of negotiation that has been blighting the process for the past 16 years. It is rather the lack of creativity, courage and imaginations. There has been no lack of negotiations, by any means.

So let us clearly look at reality. The National Palestinian Movement is split between Fatah and Hamas, Gaza and the West Bank. The PLO lacks legitimacy. The Diaspora feels left out more than ever. Palestinians from Jerusalem have been cut off from their brothers and all of this means that there is a serious crisis of Palestinian political representation. Israel has played its part in that, but it is not solely responsible either. We need to seriously and sincerely look at the ability of current political leaders to sign an agreement and have it supported by their people and keep it long-standing in force.

On the Israeli side, it is a different process but conclusions are similar. Whether it is Labour or Likud, left or right, no government has been able to carry out comprehensive negotiations with the Palestinians. None of them managed to survive after making a concession, even a minor one, apart from one exception. No government has done away with any of the settlements in occupied territories, but Ariel Sharon's government was the exception and they did not do it as part of negotiations but as a unilateral decision.

For most Israeli politicians, it is all about cost-benefit calculations. For those that govern in Jerusalem, whether it is today or in the past, on one side you have the cost of a difficult confrontation with tens of thousands of settlers, and the deep social and political strife it would produce by removing those settlements and by withdrawing from the occupied territories. On the other side, you have the uncertain benefits of an agreement. Obviously, the choice is clear.

Even worse than that, 16 years after the Oslo Accords were signed, virtually no Israeli or Palestinian seriously believes in the process started by those agreements and nobody takes any interest whatsoever. It is not that they

have lost the hope that an agreement could be signed, it is that they doubt that even if it was signed, the agreement would meet their most pressing needs or desires.

Palestinians feel that the creation of a state offered by Israel will not give them the dignity, honour, sovereignty or recognition of the historic injustice against the refugees. More than anything else, that is what they want, the state being just an expression of that.

Most Israelis feel that a peace agreement signed with the current Palestinian entity would not give them meaningful security and safety. That is to say, the sincere acceptance by Palestinians, in particular, and Arabs, in general, not simply of the existence of the Jewish state, but of its legitimacy. The other security, that is to say the practical and military security that weapons can provide, is something they already have, at least to the extent that they believe possible. They prefer to rely only on themselves to maintain it. Moral and psychological security, this deeper form of safety, is what they aspire to and is what they fear more and more will not be achieved through an agreement.

Any bilateral agreement would be at the cost of the credibility of Palestinian president, who promised not to start negotiations again without any complete stopping of the settlements. There is also no need to start bilateral negotiations again if the following fundamental issue is not addressed: why should one believe that any such negotiations would reach a successful conclusion and settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, given that they have always faltered in the past when the circumstances were better?

There is no point resuming a failed process in the past. It worked neither under Clinton nor Bush, nor under Yasser Arafat and Ehud Barak, nor under Mahmoud Abbas and Ehud Olmert. So we need a new start, even if it takes some time to get there.

Henry Siegman, my colleague from whom you will hear later and whom I think is unrivalled in his temerity, intellectual honesty and creativity, has come up with an alternative and he will give you the details of that. Very briefly, I think we can say it is about imposing peace. Its merit is that it is a break with the past and it does not solely rely on parties that have shown 100 times that they are unable to solve the problem alone. I find it intriguing, but it is also a problem.

I have mentioned this on many occasions because I doubt that the US administration would be able to go so far in imposing a solution and weather the inevitable crisis with Israel.

I do not know if, in this way, one can put an end to this historic conflict. Reducing it or alleviating some of its most harmful aspects, I say yes, but actually ending it forever, I have doubts. It is certainly an avenue to explore.

But I think what is vital is to find a way of broadening the scope so that whatever the process is, it does not remain solely in the control of a small Israeli or Palestinian group. For the first time, the process has to be credible. How can you achieve a lasting peace if one excludes the most dynamic and mobilised forces? Those forces could either stand in the way or make it legitimate. That is to say, the Islamist refugee Diaspora on the Palestinian side, and the Israeli settlers and religion on the other side.

It is about the method. Who will talk and speak on behalf of the Israelis and Palestinians? It is also about content. Here, too, we need new ideas to make sure that the final agreements, even if they were like the Taba or Geneva or Clinton ideas, can be enhanced and include factors that emanate from those who have been left out of the peace process.

I will just end with a word on my home country and one word on my host country.

I said of Barack Obama that his was a revolutionary candidacy, but that his presidency would not be revolutionary. This was not a criticism but an observation. I think we can see this as far as the Middle East is concerned. Obama is the beacon for change, but he is also the heir to the past. In a sense, he is a kind of hostage, in the practical and concrete meaning of the word. He received a situation that he is finding very hard to come to terms with. This is a war in Iraq that he did not want and that he cannot suddenly end. He cannot stop the negative effects on US credibility, regional polarization, and sectarianism that are exported. There is also the inheritance of a bankrupt peace process that even under ideal circumstances would be hard to repair.

There is mental and psychological – not just practical – inheritance in that habits have become deeply rooted. There is the idea that you could make the West Bank exemplary and forget Gaza, or the idea that you could reinforce the moderates and isolate the so-called extremists. There is the idea that you all just have to threaten sanctions against Iran and keep the military option in order to be taken seriously. There is the idea that you just have to resume the process and correct the mistakes of the past. Bush's legacy, in this case, was doubly bad. What he did badly meant that his successors thought they could do it right by doing it better. Because of his intellectual background, Obama needed to delve into subtleties and nuances, but he has had to stand in the full glare of fake certainties. As I said at the time, it is inevitable and this is what has happened. Now when his Middle Eastern policy is hitting a wall as could be expected, the real challenge and real question begins: What will Obama's policy be?

The worst flaw of President Bush, and there were many, was his obstinate nature and his refusal to test his beliefs against reality. Obama seems to be much more intellectually flexible. Now that he and his team have failed in most of his attempts, it is up to him to show that, although weakened by the political defeats and under the threat of upcoming elections, he can adjust, take risks and succeed.

As for France, and you know better than I do, I would venture a bit to say that it lies between the two extremes: the binary view of the world and the more subtle, fluid view. It has a very hard line against Iran but has an innovative policy, which is more or less successful, when it comes to dialogue with Syria. It refuses to engage in talks with Hamas but has a willingness to consider an exchange of prisoners which would free a French citizen and which, by definition, would mean contacts with the Islamic movement. All of that is spiced-up with a clear desire to be active, and offset by a realisation of actual limits. It is viewed as dizzying from the outside, but I cannot help believing that given the Western European and American vacuum in the region, about which I am sorry, France actually can change things if it wants to. It can further broaden the scope of discussion if it wants to, and be both a bridgehead and a bridge if it wants to be. It could do more. It could do things differently. Within the limits of its resources, one might dream that it could actually make a difference. Thank you.

Jean FRANCOIS-PONCET, senator and co-author of the Foreign Relations and Defence Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – Many thanks to Mr Malley. We see he is a true analyst for the real situation in the Middle East. I do not know from what he said if we can draw conclusions as to what we need to be doing but certainly, we can look into these various points and look at what we should be doing during our debate.

How likely is a successful dialogue with Iran?

Panel

Jean FRANCOIS-PONCET, Senator and Co-author of the Foreign Relations and Defence Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East -

Let us now move along and start with the first roundtable session, which has to do with Iran. At our table, this so-called roundtable, we have people who are very knowledgeable in these various areas.

Ms Ladan Boroumand is a historian from Iran, Specialist in Human Rights Matters who studied in Washington and also did a doctoral dissertation in History in France. She keeps abreast of changes in the situation in Iran. It is often difficult for us to keep track of these changes in Iran.

Next we have Mr Anthony H. Cordesman who works at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), which is probably one of the most important think tanks in Washington. He has done a great deal of studies on US strategy, both in their defence and more general policy. He has also looked into China's military power and modern warfare. He was one of the Directors of Intelligence at the US National Defence Ministry. I apologise to him for not being able to go through his entire resume in detail. I just wanted to give you an idea of his background and the breadth of his knowledge.

Then we have Professor Bernard Hourcade who has a Doctorate in Geography. He is Professor of Geography and a Senior Research Fellow at the CNRS. He has marvellous knowledge of this region, both in terms of politics and of civilisation issues.

Next we have Dr Mustafa Alani. He is Director of the Gulf Research Centre in Dubai. He has studied in many different places. He was at the Royal United Service Institute for Defence and Security Studies in Whitehall, London.

That is all so we are going to begin. I will be giving the speakers the floor. After the round table session, we will organise a debate among them and then of course, we will open up to Q&A from the room.

Ladan BOROUMAND - Research Director, Abdorrahman Boroumand Foundation for the Human Rights and Democracy in Iran – Thank you for the honour of this invitation and the opportunity to speak. By inviting me, you do not know what risk you are taking. Human rights defenders are not accustomed to talking in a diplomatic and politically correct fashion.

A retired US Diplomat who has been working for years for rapprochement between his government and the Islamic Republic said to me a few weeks after the major demonstrations against the presidential election results that he was going to be meeting with Iranians in New York. Somewhat maliciously, I asked him if these were dissidents who had recently arrived from Iran. He looked at me apologetically and said, “No, I will be meeting with Jaferi Sarif, Ambassador for the Islamic Republic to the UN” He added “I will meet the real people.” That type of frankness for a diplomat speaking to a human rights defender is unusual. Nevertheless considering the people in power or near power as being the only people who count is a widely held view. My presence is odd today at this round table session since we are talking about discussing nuclear weapons and negotiations with “the real people.”

What kind of contribution can I make to the debate? I am a political historian who has been interested in the French Revolution to better understand the Iranian Revolution. My work has been to carefully monitor and track the human rights situation in Iran. Today we are trying to explore the likelihood of success for dialogue. But the interlocutors are the leaders of a repressive state whose victims have been the people trying to defend human rights. The question is if we can make this dialogue with the victims more intelligible and if that can help improve the effectiveness of diplomatic dialogue with the state that is oppressing these people.

When we are talking about international relations, any fruitful dialogue requires in-depth knowledge of the political entity represented by the negotiators. We are talking about, first and foremost, evaluating whether this entity is compatible with liberal democracies. In other words, we have to find out if our interlocutors are partner countries or adversaries. We have to do this appraisal and then design the dialogue accordingly. Having a dialogue with Swiss diplomats about the safety of the Swiss Confederation in Europe is not the same as evoking the safety of the Soviet Union with Stalin in 1945, as it required imposition of the Soviet political model and ideology on half of Europe. By the same token, we must make the point regarding the safety of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The regime says that its legitimacy comes from God and it declares openly in its Constitution its international calling and its objective of imposing an Islamic government on the world. This is a regime that officially states that human rights and the principles of Western liberal democracy constitute a major threat that they now have to cope with. This is a regime that tortures its citizens so that they might confess that their minds were corrupted by the theories of liberal democracy. Lastly, it is a regime that says it needs a nuclear weapon for its security - in other words, to win out over human rights and liberal democracy.

We cannot predict or know what the reactions will be or what the Iranian partners will say if we continue to see the Islamic Republic as a nation-state like any other nation-state. Like the Iranians, we could be pleased when we see a convergence of interest in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iranians will tell anyone that the stability and security of the two countries are as important to them as to the Western countries. However, we must not then accuse them of duplicity because Iranian manufactured bombs, or bombs paid for by Iran, explode in Iraqi cities. What constitutes security and stability for Western democracies represents chaos and a threat to the Iranian regime. The idea of order for some people is the same thing as chaos for others. In other words, they will not have the same definition of security or the same meaning and there is no real convergence of interest. It is just an optical illusion.

It is semantic trickery and this is something that is carefully cultivated by the spokespeople of the Islamic regime. This causes confusion in Western foreign affairs offices. The Committee's report alludes to the election of Ahmadinejad in 2005 and the figures produced by the Interior Ministry of Iran are taken without reserve. This also suggests that the right to nuclear technology is the subject of national consensus that brings together all the factions of the oligarchy that is in power, as well as the people.

According to this report, Iran feels entitled to have a nuclear weapon as a guarantee of national independence because, among other reasons, in 1953 they were victims of a coup, which had been caused by foreign powers. This was the coup organised by the secret services of the United States and the UK, which led to the fall of the government of Mohammad Mossadegh, who had nationalised the oil industry in Iran.

On these points and due to these distorted concepts used by Iranian diplomats, as a historian and human rights defender I can try to make some clarifications.

I might first of all say something about the 1953 coup. Iranian diplomacy uses this often to its end to bring up the bad conscience of Westerners as colonizers. It would be appropriate to ask the Iranian diplomats what Ayatollah Khomeini was doing in August of 1953, and see how embarrassed they would be to answer that question. The Ayatollah was over 50 years old at the time and he did nothing whatsoever. His future partisans were involved in the coup alongside the CIA and the British government. The ideological movement of Khomeini was opposed to liberal democracy and has always felt Mossadegh and his supporters were an enemy. To make further problems for the Islamic detractors of the 1953 coup, we could ask them what has become of the political formation founded by Mossadegh and his activists since the arrival of the Islamic Republic. His formation was banned. Many of his militants were arrested and some of them were executed. Of the three people who were leaders in 1978, one of them ended up dying in exile, another one, Shapour Bakhtiar, was assassinated in Paris in 1991 and the third one, Dariush Forouhar, was stabbed along with his wife at his

home in Tehran in 1998 by agents from the Information Ministry. The Islamic regime did not just keep them out, but actually annihilated them.

We are talking about an Orwellian universe created by a totalitarian machine. In this context, we have to take everything with a grain of salt, whether we are talking about claims of support for people or the results of elections. Elections in Iran do not serve the same function or have the same meaning as in a liberal democracies. The Iranian Constitution actually turns around the function of elections from the way they are in liberal democracies. It is the opposite actually. Elections in liberal democracies make it possible to manifest the sovereign will of the people, whereas in Iran sovereignty comes from God who designates the supreme leader who is not elected but recognised by an oligarchy of experts. The only sovereign in the political body, the supreme leader delegates political power to an oligarchy that is renewed through cooptation. This is why candidates for election are all carefully selected and appointed by the oligarchy for choice by the people. The voters do choose but they choose a candidate that is not their candidate, so they are approving the legitimacy of this system where God's elected officials select the candidates. By casting your vote, you are approving the negation of your own sovereignty. It is not an exercise of people's sovereignty. These elections are turned into a type of approval of the divine sovereignty of leaders. This regime is using a democratic mechanism, i.e. elections to then pervert this mechanism and turn it into an anti-democratic mechanism. It is an excellent strategy, which has made it possible for 30 years for the regime to do two things at the same time, i.e. force the voters to act as an accomplice to the violation of their own sovereignty and make the international community believe that they enjoy popular legitimacy.

It is true that the spontaneous anger we saw from the voters due to the massive fraud during the elections of June 2009 shows the limits in the totalitarian State's ability to make a travesty of democratic institution at least in the mind of voters and in a world where information flows freely. The current crisis shows us that there are two peoples in Iran. There are the imagined people by the totalitarian leaders, which I would call the "people-orthodoxy". Then there are the people that we saw would go out into the street to try to cast their vote. Which of these two peoples is in favour of acquiring the nuclear weapon? What do the "real people" think about this? For the time being, no one has been asked by the real people to give their real view of this. Anyone who tries to do so does something foolish, whether it is a journalist or politician or expert. That would be a lack of caution on their part.

Nevertheless, we can say that among the dissidents and human rights defenders, many of them are concerned at this possibility for two reasons. The first is ecological due to a total lack of faith in the regime's ability to manage nuclear power plants in a responsible fashion. Another reason is political because once they have a nuclear weapon and felt they were no longer vulnerable, the regime may well increase repression.

Shirin Ebadi, the Iranian Nobel Peace Prize winner, has always asked the Iranian government to find a way of agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Another Iranian dissident and former guardian of the revolution, Akbar Ganji, calls for the denuclearization of the entire Middle East including Iran. Lastly, the Islamic student associations are in favour of democracy in Iran and support proposals by the European Union on settling the nuclear issue. This is to say that there is not consensus in Iranian public opinion regarding the nuclear question.

The totalitarian fiction is strength for tyranny. They try to make this fiction accepted as truth by the citizens and the international community. The totalitarian regime is trying to make everyone their accomplice. Refusing to become an accomplice by accepting totalitarian propaganda is the only way you can have successful dialogue with Iran. To do this, we need to be more attentive to the voices of Iranian civil society that are manifesting the democratic beliefs courageously and with perseverance, and are showing themselves to be an important part in this difficult dialogue that must continue on the nuclear question. Currently, the government is beginning bloody repression of civil society. This morning two young people who were arrested before the elections and were, under torture, forced to say that they implemented protests against electoral fraud on behalf of political organisations located abroad, Ali Zamani and Aresh Rahmanipour, were executed in Iran. These murders were designed to intimidate the population that will be demonstrating again on 11 February.

Human rights defenders have always feared that the nuclear question would be used by the regime to hijack international attention and stop it from focusing on human rights. It is my opportunity today to be heard here by the “real people” and to use this opportunity to speak as a French citizen to my representatives. I look at officials and ask them to clearly react to these executions. Thank you.

Jean FRANCOIS-PONCET, Senator and Co-author of the Foreign Relations and Defence Committee’s report on the situation in the Middle East - Thank you very much. That was very much a committed presentation but no less interesting for that. You told us very interested things about the regime and how the elections work.

Anthony H. CORDESMAN, Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington DC – Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen. The title of this panel is «What are the Chances of a Successful Dialogue with Iran?» The question, as always, is which dialogue about what subject, and what the definition of success is. Let me focus on the military side, and more broadly than on the prospects of a nuclear bomb, which are often discussed out of context.

First, we need to remember that Iran’s programmes began under the Shah. Iran’s nuclear efforts are not new, they are not regimes specific efforts, and there is nothing new about Iran’s ambitions in the Gulf. It was the Shah who seized

Aba Musa and the Tumb Islands. The Shah made claims to Bahrain, and Iran's process of lying about the nature of its nuclear efforts has more than a 30-year history. When I was an Assistant to Ambassador Helms in Iran, I remember meeting with Iranian officials who flatly denied that they had illegally imported weapons related technologies, even though we had photographs and actual, physical knowledge of where the equipment was. While people have forgotten this, the US went to the point in the mid-70s of having the CIA put out an unclassified white paper describing some of these nuclear programmes.

I have now been meeting with people from Iran – with both from the opposition and the government -- and talking about these programmes for more than 20 years. Some of this second track dialogue has been useful. Much of it has just consisted of listening to almost professional apologists. Sometimes, outside the meetings, I have actually learnt something. On many occasions, I have been at the meetings, and learnt nothing. The reason is many of these Iranian's who come to talk at such dialogues know little or nothing about their country's military programmes, and nothing about nuclear weapons. They are policy people and policy people in a very broad meaning sense.

When I have met Iranian diplomats on a number of occasions, I have often had considerable technical evidence to show they were not being frank. It also has not always been a pleasant experience. When I was invited back to Iran under the Khatami regime, I was also invited out of Iran by members of the Majlis who attacked me for having served in the country under the Shah. In other cases, I have spent several hours or days either being lied to or hearing that progress is impossible without one-sided concessions that simply are not practical. Dialogue is a very mixed bag on occasion.

Mention has already been made of regime change. I hope it happens. I hope the Iranians accomplish it. Let me say, however, that this is one of those areas where people who have never done it, or have never been involved in it, are often very quick to make very positive proposals about doing it, either peacefully or covertly. Most of the time, meaningful efforts at regime change are far harder to even begin than you would think and then do not work.

To focus of the military side of dialogue, it is important to remember that far more is involved than Iran's nuclear programs. Iran's nuclear programs do not operate in a vacuum, and they have already triggered the beginning of a nuclear arms race in the region. It is obvious that some of Israel's submarine-related programmes include now include long-range cruise missile programmes. They are almost certainly related to extending nuclear strike capabilities against Iran. Israel was able to improve the range of its missile boosters long ago, and they can almost certainly reach Iran. The two countries are already focusing on targeting each other, potentially with nuclear weapons. At the same time, you have countries in the Gulf already buying missile defences to deal with this duel. You have the United States considering not simply conventional strike options but the option of extended deterrents.

Iran understands this, and we need to understand in any dialog that it is a skilful and well-informed player. Iran is not passive in strategic planning and in surveying outside strategic literature. From what I saw in Iran, their knowledge of strategy and study of what other countries are doing is actually quite good. This knowledge is also reflected in both their classified and unclassified literature. Let us remember that any meaningful form of dialogue on this issue is not an exercise in arms control alone. It is an exercise in military power. We already have elements of a nuclear arms race in place.

When we talk about official dialogue, we also need to remember that the key dialogue is not dialogue between diplomats and NGOs and scholars alone. The primary military planning in Iran is done under the Iranian National Security Council and not done by diplomats. Most of them are totally excluded from it. Most diplomats are not fully briefed on the nuclear programmes, and indeed Iran has sent people around claiming to be Iranian experts who cannot even locate the Iranian facilities properly when they talk in open dialogues or meetings.

The key decision makers in any dialogues in this area will be people in the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, people around the Supreme Leader, and people around the President. They will often be people who have been involved in these programmes since the mid-90s and some will have been involved since Iran brought its nuclear programs back after being under chemical attack by Iraq. Moreover, these people shape Iran's military forces broadly, and integrate the nuclear efforts with the missile efforts, with Iran's conventional force developments, and with its steadily growing capabilities for asymmetric warfare.

Since I have ten minutes, let me note that I have put an analysis of the overall trends in Iran's forces and the regional balance on the Internet site for the conference. It shows that Iran's nuclear efforts have to be discussed in terms related to their missile programmes. At this point in time Iran's longer-range missile programmes make no sense unless their warhead is a weapon of mass destruction. The missiles are not lethal or accurate enough to serve a purpose at long ranges without those capabilities. Yet, these missiles are one of the highest investment areas in Iranian forces.

Iran's nuclear programs also affect all aspects of the military balance. Once you acquire some kind of nuclear capability, it can compensate for weaknesses in conventional forces. And Iran's forces do have serious weaknesses. A lot of Iran's conventional equipment dates back to the time of the Shah and Iran has fallen far behind its neighbours and the US.

Over the last decade, the Gulf Cooperation Council alone, ignoring the United States, France and Britain in the Gulf, spent 13 times as much on arms imports and more than eight times as much on defence as Iran did. Iran has been pushed into asymmetric warfare and into different types of combat. One way to give these types of capability credence is to either have a bomb or the threat of having a bomb hidden away. This deters conventional options and conventional strikes on Iran.

This has clear implications for dialogue. It would be very, very much better for all of us if the people who talked about the Iranian nuclear program talked about it in terms of how it relates to all of Iran's military programs and strategic objectives. Most of what I read about dialogue now is all politics. It is all policy. It has nothing to do with the details.

Moreover, there is far too little attention to the technical details of what Iran is known to be doing. If editors would actually insist that reports read the entire IAEA Report rather than the summary, it would also help journalism a great deal. It would help if editors occasionally did fact checking. Remember the United States "invaded" or "attacked" Iran at least three times according to the London Times and Telegraph, but each story proved to be wrong in almost every respect.

We also need to realize we are dealing with a country that knows we are no longer debating peaceful enrichment for nuclear power purposes. First that is not being denied to them. Second if anything there have been strong incentives that would cut the cost of enrichment to a power programme. Third they already have the centrifuge capabilities they need. If they really wanted to bargain seriously for peaceful purposes, they have ample opportunity to do so.

Moreover, if you look at the long series of IAEA Reports on Iran's nuclear programs, we know physically that they have been involved in research in every area related to the production of a nuclear weapon.

Now they have found various explanations for this. They can always claim that every new IAEA discovery is a peaceful research programme. Yet, they were machining fissile material, which they were not supposed to do, and they hid this. They were developing polonium, which is one key element of the nuclear initiator in a nuclear bomb, and they may have developed another. They have experimented with highly explosive lens technology, and are acquiring high-speed trigger devices. There is simply no key element of a weapons design that we cannot physically document and which the UN has not found.

The debate, the extent it exists, is whether they have an overt nuclear weapons programme. Here we need to understand the limits of what dialog and negotiations can accomplish. Even if we had a full Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NNPT) inspection and we had the advanced protocol, we could not stop Iran under either of them from going ahead into far more advanced centrifuges, which would be far easier to disperse and conceal.

There are no unclassified lists of Iranian nuclear facilities. Most of the literature that you read focuses on only three or four. There is enough other literature however to indicate that they have over 80 nuclear related buildings. Some of their production facilities for the centrifuge, for example, are in Mashhad, the far north-west part of the country, which is the area furthest away from Israel. We know they have two types of more advanced centrifuges actively

being tested. We have seen two additional types, and the President of Iran has posed in front of them. These are not areas of controversy or uncertainty.

Once Iran gets truly advanced centrifuge capabilities, which can have anywhere from 10 to 15 times the output of the current centrifuge, creating small dispersed facilities becomes radically different. It also may require much less fissile material than many studies indicate. It is important to understand that many arms controllers use nominal data for how much fissile material that is needed for weapons that is now 35 years old and was never accurate when it was issued. Countries like France have demonstrated quite conclusively that you can produce nuclear weapons with far less material than the arms control thresholds that are often used for the calculations per weapon.

The difficulty in actually producing a weapon that requires all of this technology is how well you can integrate it. How quickly can you integrate it? How reliable is it? What yield do you get? Can you go on to boosted or thermonuclear weapons? The answers keep changing as Iran improves its technology. Iran also has the ability to use passive testing methods. Iran does not require an actual weapons test to do much of this simulation and modelling. It can do a great deal of actual physical testing, including missile warhead testing without actually exploding a device.

Now to be blunt, anyone who discusses proliferation and does not make this kind technical discussion as part of their policy analysis, does not know what they are talking about. If you have read the literature, you may have an unfortunate familiarity with the degree to which people who are political scientists attempt to make conclusions about nuclear weapons that are technically absurd.

We also need to understand in any dialogue or negotiation that we cannot stop the flow of technology and Iran's research and development. We can certainly slow them down somewhat. We can detect overt deployment of a weapon, and we may limit covert deployment through negotiations but Iran can then use its ongoing nuclear potential to make threats and to support its military options with nuclear intimidation as well as carry out arms control efforts, frankly in ten minutes.

I could go through a great many more options that Iran will have even if it accepts the current terms it is offered, and the IAEA was allowed to fully resume inspections, if I had the time. However, the key message is that Iran's nuclear programs cannot end or be safely limited with one negotiation. It will not end even if Iran ever fully accepts the advanced protocol or the NNPT. If Iran does accept our terms, we still face an indefinite period of potential nuclear competition and uncertainty.

Let me also note that nuclear weapons are not the only such problem we face. We are headed towards a future five to ten years from now where most of the countries in the world will be capable of producing advanced genetically

engineered biological weapons. We are talking about futures where countries like Iran can in five to ten years probably have warheads that are terminally homing conventional warheads. Now that does not sound too much when it is a 2 000 pound conventional weapon but if it hits something like a desalination plant, you have to remember that it is not just the size of the bomb; it is the critical nature of the target such as desalination plants, energy facilities and so on.

Let me close with the point that several hundred years ago, Europe and a Unified Catholic Church attempted to ban the crossbow. The crossbow was eventually virtually eliminated. It was only eliminated, however, when the musket and the rifle replaced it as far more accurate killing mechanisms.

I think we have to be much more frank about the prospects for the future, and putting real world limits on weapons of mass destruction. As long as you have regimes that wish to pursue this course, there will not be some simple, black and white arms control answer to either dialog or arms control negotiations. This is an enduring technological and a powered duel, which will go on indefinitely into the future in ways which will constantly change and mutate. It is a duel which we may be able to limit and accommodate but that can never be totally halt. Thank you.

Jean FRANCOIS-PONCET, Senator and Co-author of the Foreign Relations and Defence Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East - Thank you very much. That was especially interesting because really gave a practical analysis of the means and resources that Iran has. It is quite clearly one of the areas where analyses are somewhat lacking.

Mustafa ALANI, Senior Advisor Director, Gulf Research Center, Dubai – **Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen.** You heard the view from the United States and some views from France. I think you need to hear from the people who live next to Iran and the people who are going to be the first victims of not necessarily the Iranian bomb but Iranian intimidation of a nuclear era.

I am here hoping to reflect the views from the Gulf region and in particular our assessment on whether or not dialogue with Iran could produce any result for a peaceful settlement of the dispute. The problem we face in the region is that we do not know the reality about Iran's nuclear programme, the objectives or the nature of the programme.

We in the Gulf region consider ourselves as a partner in the process of solving the problem. We feel that our views and our national interests must be taken into consideration in any future settlement of this issue. When Mr Obama asked for all options on the table to deal with Iran, we discovered after a year that that means there is no option on the table. I am sorry to say this but from our contact with America, especially in the Gulf Research Center where we represent the interests of the six GCC states we have a number of American delegations coming to us and we have discovered so far that there is absolutely no policy. The administration is still searching for a policy.

It is wrong to talk about the Arab perception towards Iran; there is no “Arab” perception towards Iran. We are living just across the water from Iran and the UAE has different perceptions from an Arab who lives in Morocco or Mauritania. We have completely different perceptions. I heard so many times from Algerians or Moroccans that we should let Iran become a nuclear power. For the Gulf States, it is completely different. For us, it is a nightmare scenario for a number of reasons. In the Gulf region, we have had long engagement in Iran. Most of it has been negative engagement. For us, Iran emerging as a nuclear power is completely different from the Egyptian or Moroccan perception. In the Arab world, we have a common view regarding the Palestinian issue. Yes, every Arab has a more or less unified view towards the Palestinian issue. However, when it comes to Iran, we have completely different views.

Then there is the question about what we want in the region. The Iranians claim to have a right for a nuclear program because the Israelis have nuclear arms, this is a non-starter for us and for a very simple reason. Iran signed the NPT willingly and voluntarily. Iran placed itself under legal obligation. It was a contract between Iran and the international community not to develop nuclear military power. Neither Israel nor India nor Pakistan can be compared with Iran. These countries from the beginning decided to go nuclear and they decided not to be part of this deal. Iran signed this deal. Iran signed the additional protocol in 2003. It has not yet been ratified, but the fact that the Islamic Republic’s government signed the additional protocol has been an act of recognizing the principle.

For us in the region, the policy must not be more armament to solve the Israeli problem. Disarmament must be our focus. We must focus on disarming the existing power and basically not encouraging other powers to go nuclear.

Before trying to answer the main question of this meeting, I wish to give you a quick outline of the basic component, which shape and influence our position on the issue under discussion in the Gulf region.

The first one is that the Gulf region seriously, wishes and hopes that discussions over the Iranian nuclear programme could be settled by dialogue and negotiation. This is not because we love Iran but because we love ourselves. This region has suffered enough with wars and instability since the Iraq/Iran War. We do not really wish to see another military conflict, which would undermine our stability, our economic development and could even destroy the minimum level of regional harmony which exists today between us and Iran.

However, dealing with Iran’s assumed nuclear ambition must be the international community’s responsibility. It is not our responsibility. NPT is not a regional contract; it is international. There is no doubt we could play our part within this framework. For us the outcome of this issue will be a decisive factor, not the question of how the balance of power is going to be developed in the region.

I can tell you here about the discussion now in the region. The discussion in the region now is very simple. If the international community is not successful in stopping Iran from emerging as a nuclear power, we have no obligation – legal or moral – towards NPT. This is the end of NPT and this must be very clear. This must be very clear.

The talk now is of what the value of NPT is for us. Iran is a signatory of the NPT from day one and a signatory of additional protocols. All of us can suddenly emerge as a nuclear power.

The discussion here is not whether Iran is going to emerge as nuclear power or whether the NPT is going to survive or not, but whether the nuclear regime is going to survive. I think this is the way we look at it in the region. This is one of the reasons why we have started to accept the principle or introduce the principle of nuclear power in the region.

We understand all our programmes now are civilian but you have to remember that no programme starts as military. We need to know how. We need to prepare for the day when we are going to be left behind and the international community is not going to do its job. We have to consider the nuclear option if this happens.

The Gulf States are convinced beyond any reasonable doubt that Iran was and probably still is working and aiming to acquire a nuclear bomb or possibly not a nuclear bomb but a nuclear capability. For us, whether a nuclear bomb or a nuclear capability, there is not much difference between the two concepts. A development like this requires serious action on our part to redress the delicate balance of power in the region. The loss of Iraq as a counterbalance and buffer zone between Iran and the GCC was a major, major development for the GCC states. They are not ready to accept a new reality again with Iran emerging as a nuclear power. We have already suffered from this. We already have no answer to redress the balance which we lost by the loss of Iraq but again there is a question now. What are we going to do?

The Gulf States recognise and accept Iran's right to develop a civilian, peaceful nuclear programme. We have absolutely no problem with that. We ourselves are now adopting this strategy so we cannot deny the right of Iran for this sort of technology. Having said that, our relationship with Iran is dictated by the facts of geography and history, religion and culture and other links. You have to remember that we cannot de-select Iran as a neighbour. This is a reality of geography and a reality imposed on us whether we like it or not. We can deal with Iran as an enemy or as a friend. This is our option. We cannot change geography here.

For this reason, we have to be very careful in the frontline of confronting Iran when we have no trust in United States policy or even EU policy. We might come in the first line to confront Iran but we are going to be abandoned halfway and left alone to be cut to pieces. We are very careful. All the leaders in the Gulf

States are very careful not to regionalise the problem. It is an international problem. We can play our part but we do not like anyone asking us why we do not pressurise Iran. We will pressurise Iran within the framework of the international community.

The question is whether negotiation with Iran is going to be fruitful or not. I can give you our experience with Iran. Because we are neighbours, we have long experience of negotiations with Iran. I can give you a very simple example of our negotiation or attempt to negotiate over the occupation by Iran of the three UAE islands in 1971. Now after nearly 40 years, we are still knocking on the door of Iran for negotiations without any success.

If you go by the Iranian official statements, they do not call it occupation. They call it misunderstanding. Even over misunderstanding, they refuse to negotiate. Take the Iran/Iraq War. There were eight years of bloody war. The Iranians refused to negotiate for seven years. Eventually they accepted the terms offered to them in 1981; they accepted them in 1988. We are talking about a country that is very difficult to negotiate with. This is our experience.

I will just try to answer the question of how likely successful dialogue with Iran is.

First, the Iranians will show interest in any invitation for talks as they will be keen to display their interest in a diplomatic settlement. There is no doubt about it. They believe that no invitation for talks should be rejected as this could negatively reflect on their image. Iran wishes to appear as a party that seeks a diplomatic solution to the nuclear programme.

Secondly, the Iranians will be ready to talk to the EU and other nations or international organisations but their real interest rests with the United States, not with the EU, and establishing direct talks with the United States. They believe that talks with the US will be the key for changing the international community's attitude towards Iran. They believe that any negotiations without direct involvement of the United States will not bring any necessary outcome.

In any negotiation with Iran, Iran will aim at securing a grand bargain. They will not accept a discussion on the Iranian nuclear issue separate from other issues. They demand all the cards on the table. The aim of this policy for us is that our feeling is that Iran wants to emerge as a super regional power. This is the Iranian objective and the nuclear problem must fit within this jigsaw. Iran has no need for a nuclear arm to defend itself if it needs the nuclear capability to emerge as a superpower. This is what they want from the United States and the EU. They want to be recognised as a super regional power. For us, this is absolutely not acceptable. We lived through this problem with the Nixon administration and with the appointment of the Shah of Iran as a policeman of the region. They asked us to knock on the door of Tehran whenever we make a strategic decision. We are a mature state now. I do not think we will accept this again.

Thirdly, the Iranians are well known for tactics of involving their opponents in prolonged and endless negotiations with limited outcome. This is not a secret. I am not revealing secrets. This is the reality. These tactics include the bringing up of multiple issues and not just one issue, shifting of priorities, making linkages between issues and, in general, having an unfocused approach to the negotiations.

Fourthly, the Iranian negotiation style is based on the strategy of offering concessions in instalments. A major breakthrough in the negotiations cannot be obtained in one session. Fifthly, the Iranian strategy of agreeing to a dialogue might have other objectives apart from a genuine desire to seek a negotiated settlement for the nuclear issue.

Negotiation tactics here could be used for one of the following reasons. First, it could win time to allow their national nuclear programme to progress towards establishing a new reality on the ground. In any military nuclear programme, time is a major factor here. We are talking about time as a major factor. My engineers need time to work on their projects. As a politician, it is my policy to give them time as much as possible to progress and to reach the threshold where the nature of the negotiation is going to be changed completely. Any technical advance will have an impact on the manner of the negotiation and the objective of the negotiation.

Secondly, negotiation tactics could be used to show the Iranian public that the government is doing everything possible to defuse the conflict and avoid confrontation. The responsibility of the failure to achieve a diplomatic solution will be placed at the door of the Western countries or the enemies of Iran.

Thirdly, negotiation tactics could be used to test and explore the other parties' options, especially the credibility and seriousness of the threat of a military action. Yes, negotiation with Iran is possible but we have doubts about successful negotiations. I will stop here. Thank you very much.

Bernard HOURCADE, Senior Research Fellow at CNRS (Paris) – I will start by saying that we all heard very clearly what Ms Boroumand said about the situation in Iran. It has lasted over 30 years and it is getting worse every day. As an academic, we are very affected by the fact that Clotilde Weiss, a student who went to Iran to learn Farsi, finds herself still under house arrest after six months. The problem is not what is happening but how we can change it and finally take Iran seriously.

I also listened to what Robert Malley said. He talked about nuclear capabilities, and the title of the conference, not really being the relevant issue. Of course it is very important, but it is no more topical given what happened last June. I think the emergence of a new democratic phenomenon, this is to say street demonstrations, has completely changed the situation when you are talking about Iran.

We must also realise that, on the one hand, international nuclear policy has failed because it has been said Iran has an obvious nuclear capability. If one day the Iranian government wants a nuclear weapon whatever her government might be, it will have it. On the other hand, there has also never been a tougher Iranian regime than today. The international sanctions and embargos that we have had for the last 30 years have failed miserably.

On a number of occasions, the French, the Europeans and the Americans looked to coordinated their actions, but we must remember that in 2003 the Iranians accepted for the first time to step back and that they would clarify their nuclear policy. That was about avoiding nuclear proliferation and the US did not like that because they did not have the same aim.

Europe wanted to fight against nuclear weapons and proliferation of them. We wanted to avoid a proliferation that would apply to Iran and then to Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Brazil, Argentina and many other countries in the world.

However, for the US government, it was about regime change. If that is the precondition, it means of course there was no attempt to solve the crisis. The Bush government showed their support for a confrontation with Iran that first required getting rid of the Islamic government. The result is that we have today a stronger Islamic regime, which is more repressive than before, and a nuclear weapon, if it is planned, is closer than ever.

Iran does not really epitomize the nuclear problem, but is connected to it. This very serious issue is focused on Iran, but we are wrong to ignore the fact that today the nuclear problem is not only that of Iran, but also of Brazil, Argentina, Algeria and many other emerging countries. Iran is just one example. If we focus on it, we are blind to the rest.

The Iranian issue today is raised by the Iranians themselves. I have been analysing Iran for the last 40 years from the bottom up and not from the top down. As with all researchers in social sciences I have found that over the last 30 to 40 years, there has been a profound change in Iranian society, quite apart from the government. This change is neither because of the Islamic Republic nor is it against it.

We all know the essential role of Iranian women. There are in a majority at universities. Iranian society, open to the 21st century, has had successes where other neighbouring countries have not. The problem is moving between the sociological and the political. It is quite clear that Iranians do not agree with their government. Eighty percent of the people who voted for Ahmadinejad are critical of his policies but they could not, or would not, make a vote of change in the June 2009 elections because the repression was already in effect and, as Ms Boroumand said, the elections served only as pretext. Since then, things have changed because Iranian society had the courage to become political. In some areas of Iran, notably in Tehran, people were strong enough and brave enough to take to the streets in protest.

The second important thing is the speech of President Obama to the Iranian people. Certainly, people are a little disappointed: “You said ‘*yes we can*’ but you have not actually done much in a year”. But, concerning his Norouz (the Iranian New Year) speech, what other country in the world merited a speech from the President of the United States? Only Iran. This is a major event. He recognized the “Islamic Republic” twice. It implies the end of the embargo and of the desire for regime change in order to bring back the Shah’s son or some other political officer. For the first time, Iran was taken seriously by the United States and it changed things considerably. In other words for the first time, Iranian elections last June actually had something at stake.

Usually, it is said, elections in Iran serve nothing but to legitimize the winner. But this time, for the first time, there was something at stake. Barack Obama destroyed one of the pillars of the Islamic Republic: he destroyed the dogma of opposition to the United States, which is the founding pillar of the Islamic Republic. He peacefully destroyed it. This led to panic in the Iranian political class. Slogans such as “down with the US” did not mean anything anymore. Thus, the elections were really about something this time because the winner was going to be able to virtually shake the hand of the American president and therein to obtain the lasting recognition of the Islamic Republic. It explained internal rivalries between Rezai, a former commander of the Pasdars, Mousavi, a former Prime Minister of Khomeini, Karoubi, who belonged to all governments, and Ahmadinejad. They were all fighting for the electoral pie because there was, for the first time, a real pie to be shared: the international opening of the country. This is why there was a coup by Ahmadinejad and a countercoup from the Iranian society. The question is not really what happened but what we do today. What is the balance of power now ?

On the one hand, you have the more conservative elements saying that the Islamic Republic is in danger. Today the western countries are absent from Iran. Perhaps 2,000 or 3,000 westerners reside there. If you open the frontiers and symbolically shake the Americans – and, to that extent, the Europeans, the Australians and all others’ – hands, in a few years you would have 200,000 or 300,000 foreigners coming to work in Iran. The most conservative Iranians consider this peaceful and insignificant potentiality as a foreign economic and cultural invasion to which the Islamic Republic could not withstand. Therefore, they are against all talks with the US.

Ahmadinejad came up with a second solution, which notes that a compromise must be found. It is a China-esque solution: internal repression showing that the Islamic Republic will be eternal. You lock up, kill, and massively repress, all while maintaining a few exit doors. Then, very tactically, you open one of the doors thanks to a few agreements with the United States, perhaps on the nuclear question, which is no longer a major issue. Nuclear weapons are not really a strategic issue for Iran: their army is numerous and strong, there are 75 million inhabitants, and the strength of Iran – as was previously noted – is a geographical one. Even if it does not have the nuclear

bomb, for the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain or Qatar, Iran remains a political, economic and cultural monster. Nuclear capability is, therefore, not a priority. Ahmadinejad thus proposed, in Vienna last October 7th, a technical agreement on the research reactor in Tehran. It was all about a friendly deal to reduce the pressure and open limited negotiation with the US. Like the Chinese model, they are closed on the inside and open themselves, in a controlled fashion, to the outside, in order to assure the survival of the Islamic regime.

In the Western camp, some people say that is not acceptable because Iranians no longer accept this political system after 30 years of the Islamic Republic. Furthermore, in the United States and in Europe, we will not be satisfied with any halfway house solution.

This new balance of power led to the rise of a third power: an opposition. It is not the green wave – that is very brave and needs to be supported, but who is harshly repressed because of organisation and strategy – but it is the opposition of the inside men, that of the Revolutionary Guards. Now this might shock you but it is perhaps necessary. As Robert Malley said, the vast network of Revolutionary Guards is not without similarity, structurally and not in terms of values, to the French Resistance in 1945. You have many Iranians coming to the revolutionary movement just like in 1945 you had French people who came out of the resistance. It is a simple historical fact. All the Revolutionary Guards fought to defend their homeland and the third-world revolution they made, but the heterogeneity of Guard veterans is extremely large, even if all are more or less tied to terrorist acts. They planted bombs on rue de Rennes here in Paris, they assassinated Ghassemlou in Vienna and Charaf Kandi in Berlin among others. But among these people there are some who want a “normal” Iran, open to the 20th century while staying loyal to the Islamic Republic. These veterans of the Iran-Iraq War are staying, for the moment, discreet. Despite their unity, some former Pasdars are in exile, others support the Reformists, the green movement, while others still are ready to defend the Islamic regime using any means necessary.

In the current deadlock, we should not worry about the rise to power of the Revolutionary Guards. However, we have to ask who these men are and we have to realize that today the Islamic regime has never been so divided because the power is in their hands. As in all the countries of the world, after 30 years in government together, rivalries and feuds are at their height. The core of the Islamic Republic is divided and ready to explode. Ahmadinejad is confronted by the opposition in the street and subjected to pressure from America and especially within his own camp, where some do not want him to shake, even figuratively, the hand of Barack Obama.

We assist, then, with the implementation of a radically new system of power relations. How can we help the Iranians while defending our interests and international security threatened by the incertitude of the Iranian nuclear programme? How can we help them get out of this deadlock? The analyses and strategies of the Western camp do not seem to have taken into account the

changes occurring in Iran when we consider the continuation of sanction policies. When we see high-level diplomats and ministers of the six world powers get together to see what new sanctions can be dreamt up against Iran, it seems that they have not considered that sanctions are helping Ahmadinejad and making the nuclear bomb come closer, if it is to exist. Although the United States has changed its strategy, keeping an outstretched hand despite everything, even if they do not receive a response because does not want, nor know how, to respond.

What is the fear of the regime? It is not sanctions, which reinforce the regime and affect only the living standards of Iranians. It is not an Israeli bombing that would only revive nationalist sentiment around President Ahmadinejad and show that international Zionism supports the “green wave”. What is the real fear of the regime’s most radical factions? The worst sanction against Iran would be to lift the sanctions.

Iran will not stay for eternity under a regime of sanctions, and in all hypotheses, it is not useless to imagine the effects of a post-crisis agenda. We have to think of the day when oil companies can invest in Iran, contrary to the D’Amato bill of 1996. It takes five years before a new oil well is profitable, so the Ahmadinejad government would not benefit from it. If the embargo on civilian planes and scientific works – know that Iranian universities have not been able to freely purchase foreign scientific publications for the last 30 years – were lifted, in other words if we were to open Iran, if we were to take at their word the government’s request for economic relations and if we were to respond to the demand of the Iranian people who want to live normally in the 21st century rather than follow what Ahmadinejad and his fellows are doing: things would change. The balance of power would change. This sanctioning through opening is, without doubt, academic naiveté.

The difference, compared with 30 years ago, is that on June 15 last year a large part of the Iranian population crossed a political threshold. This movement will be without a future if the international community continues to support the isolation of Tehran. If, however, diplomats and European and American politicians can change their mindset and peacefully “invade” Iran, for the sake of lasting cooperation, things will change. The type of regime in Tehran is an Iranian problem; it is not our role to choose. In this strategy, which is not anything new, Europe – who has long attempted a “critical dialogue” – could have played a go-between role. But alas, she is not there, we’ll talk about that later.

We must take Iran seriously and not give it intentions, a force, or a role that it does not have. Iran is not a regional power, capable of promoting a regional consensus, and she never will be because the Persians are isolated in a region populated by Arabs and Turks. With its population, its size, its society and its riches, Iran knows that it will be feared, but it will never be a strong enough country to lead and be respected by its neighbours. Despite its renewal, Shi’ism is a minority in the Muslim world. Iran is not an Islamic power. Iran failed clearly at being the leader of the Islamic world. What has happened with

Hezbollah, Lebanese political party and a radical Shi'ite group, is the proof. Iran is, rather, an emerging power like Brazil or Indonesia or so many others that today have between 50 and 100 million inhabitants, have a new middle class and a new political culture.

Let us look at Iran and its people differently. Just take a different perspective. If we want this to be a country of human rights and international rules, all while conserving its identity, there is a way to act differently and to support the Iranians in respecting their diversity not by sending naive messages via the Internet but by creating a lasting businesses presence on the ground in Iran. Thank you.

Jean FRANCOIS-PONCET, Senator and Co-author of the Foreign Relations and Defence Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East - We have heard from the various speakers. We certainly have got elements for dialogue with the audience. However, we do not have much time for that dialogue now since we were supposed to have finished 15 minutes ago.

I would like to ask a question to Mr Cordesman. Does Israel have the capacity to destroy the Iranian nuclear sites, through an air attack or submarines launched missiles?

Secondly, do you think this hypothesis is plausible or not as it is often bantered about?

Anthony H. CORDESMAN, Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy, for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington DC – I do not think anyone in Israel believes that they can destroy Iran's technology base for nuclear systems. What Israel is talking about is slowing Iran down by several years. Part of the reason for the Israeli debate is whether you believe that slowing them down for several years a) works and b) does not end in actually provoking them to a much more open deployment on a much larger scale of effort.

The closest to any unclassified discussion that I have seen of Iran's technology base in targets is on the Web from something called the Nuclear Threat Initiative. I say that because none of the governments that have discussed this issue have ever provided any useful information whatsoever on the technology base or targeting. I think that the Nuclear Threat Initiative is probably correct in point out well over 50 sites. We know that quite a number of these are confirmed. What it also points out is we have no way to characterise those sites precisely. How well Israel or the United States or anyone else can locate what is in an individual site here is critical because to conceal key technology and manufacturing quality, much of which is mobile and easy to disperse, is absolutely critical. It is a game.

The fundamental difference from Israel and a power like the United States is that Israel could probably only launch one strike as a major strike against a limited number of targets. The United States could go in, hit once, destroy the air

defences and conduct a series of strikes. Now that is a theory because it would require political support from the Gulf and it would not use carriers. Something that I find extraordinarily irritating is when you see a journalist referring to carriers being used as the primary weapon for these strikes you know the article is ridiculous. It is simply not the proper platform.

Again can I tell you how quickly any of these countries would recover? At this point in time, Iran still has problems with the P1 centrifuge. We know it has a P1 improved. We know it has a P2 and a P3. We have seen images that indicate it has a P4. If Israel hit today's facilities and it went ahead and successfully built those centrifuges and dispersed them, we would be talking about very significant nuclear weapons production capability. However, we do not know when and we do not know how much material they would use.

Let me just say when you say knockout capability, it is not just having one bomb that weighs a couple of thousand pounds. You need a nuclear missile warhead or a bomb in a device that weighs well under 1,000 kilograms. These are the real issues here. Again it is a 10/15/20 year time horizon and not next week's negotiations.

Jean FRANCOIS-PONCET, Senator and Co-author of the Foreign Relations and Defence Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East - Thank you. Shall we have one question from the floor? We will not be able to field more than one question but we have accepted the principle of the Q&A session.

From the Floor – I have a question for Mr Cordesman. Considering the difficulty in having a clear, readable US policy at any given time regarding Iran, what is his view when we look at the different movements? Does he see a change in the US policy towards greater firmness or change towards greater flexibility? Thank you very much.

Anthony H. CORDESMAN, Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy, for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington DC – I think the answer is really very simple. United States' policy is responding in many ways for the lack of an Iranian response. Part of that may have been dictated by the election crisis but the administration has made a number of overt and covert efforts. It has done it not simply individually but has worked through Europe and other initiatives to try to do this.

I think Mr Alani raised the issue that so far we simply have not had the response where we have been easily able to pursue any new option. Secretary Clinton has made that quite clear. I think if you look through what she has said, the problem has been the initiatives the administration tried to begin with, which were low level informal contacts, have simply gone the same path as those that occurred when Secretary Albright made similar attempts. We have not been able to pursue it. Do we have a policy that is still essentially the one which is the Six or, if you will, the Quartet. I always have trouble with how we are defining

numbers nowadays. Evidently in France, four equals six where in the US, six equals four. Those are the policies but will they move forward under this government? If they will, we have no indication.

What Future for the Palestinian People?

Panel

Monique CERISIER-ben GUIGA, French Senator, Co-author of the Foreign Relations, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's Report on the Situation in the Middle East – The first round table discussion was very interesting. The question for us to ask now is : what is the future for the Palestinian people ?

Let me say just briefly that if you look at the current situation in 2010, we wonder if there is any other choice for the Palestinians than being either enclosed or exiled. By enclosed, I mean the blockade of Gaza or the enclaves that are getting ever smaller and ever more isolated in the West Bank. Since the punitive operation by Israel against Gaza, the situation in the occupied territories has worsened and become dramatic in every sense. I will give some figures. 2009 saw the arrest of 3,459 Palestinians, the destruction of 300 houses, the detention of 12,000 prisoners including compatriot Salah Hamouri, the loss of their statute as residents by 4,577 Palestinians from East Jerusalem. That is just as many as the entire period of previous occupation. All of this is to say that things are deteriorating for Palestinians.

Before giving the floor to our speakers, I would further specify that in the West Bank when there is protest, there is heavy repression. I would mention recent extrajudicial executions in areas of Palestinian sovereignty in Nablus after the assassination of a settler. I would also mention arrests of Abdallah Abu Rahmah, coordinator of the non-violent Bil'in movement, Jamal Juma, coordinator for *Stop the Wall* campaign as well as many other peaceful pacifists. The arrests have been denounced by an NGO in a recent report, Hamoked. I will also mention the administrative detention of several hundred Palestinians, two-thirds of whom have been in detention for over a year.

Probably even more serious, if we can talk about degrees of seriousness, it is very clear that the Israeli government's policy is targeting an "Israelization" of East Jerusalem. Arab inhabitants are being pushed out and their houses are being destroyed. Settlements continue in two continuous lines to completely cut off Jerusalem from surrounding Arab areas. This is particularly clear regarding Bethlehem. Bethlehem is a Christian city, which is seeing a real brain drain caused by Israeli politics. It is not by chance that Bethlehem has been encircled by settlements and cannot communicate with the surrounding environment. Lastly, a bill is being drafted to deprive the residency in Jerusalem of a large number of Palestinians who are fortunate to hold a nationality other than, so to speak, the "Palestinian" nationality, which does not exist because there is not a Palestinian state.

In Gaza, we are seeing the organisation of “halting in development”. We are seeing problems in agriculture and industry due to the bombings. The blockade continues to be made tougher. No rebuilding or reconstruction is possible to such an extent that the UNRWA has had to build clay houses as there is no cement to shelter refugees.

The question is what are our speakers going to say regarding this topic.

First of all, I would like to give the floor to Ms Muzna Shihabi. She is from the negotiation team of the Palestinian Authority. She will tell us how she views these issues as a Palestinian and a specialist in negotiations. Initially Ms Shihabi was a specialist in communications. That is what she studied. She has acquired a great deal of international experience, working at the UNDP and the WTO.

Secondly, and to some extent to answer her, I will be giving the floor to Mr Mike Singh, Researcher at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy after being top official at the NSC. He will be giving us the view of an American who is very familiar with negotiations. He will tell us how he sees the possibility for resumption in negotiations that would lead to some results and not to a negotiating process that would lead to nothing, which has been the case in the past 15 years.

Lastly, I will be asking Mr Henry Siegman, who has very original ideas as to how to overcome the problems. For 30 years, he has published over 100 articles in American journals and newspapers. His articles are always very striking. He is recognised as a specialist in Israeli-Arab relations, a specialist on the peace process and the US Jewish community. He will be able to give us his view.

Then Yves Aubin de la Messuzière will, to some extent, conclude by telling us how he sees things and how he considers this idea that we are hearing more and more about - this proclamation of a Palestinian state. Yves Aubin de la Messuzière is an Arab-speaking diplomat. He has been an Ambassador to Chad, Tunisia and Italy. He was the French representative to Iraq in the dark, bleak years of 1997 to 1999. He is a very active retiree, chairing the French Lay Mission and the Mission for the Museum of Civilisations in Europe and in the Mediterranean. By giving him the floor last, I think we will be closing our debate by hearing from someone who is very familiar with this region from the inside and he will be able to open us up to some interesting and original ideas as well.

Muzna SHIHABI - Member of the Palestinian Negotiation Team, Representing Saeb Erekat, Chief Palestinian Negotiator – Actually listening to the discussion about the Iranian regime just now, I found a lot of similarities with the Israeli regime. That seems strange but two things struck me: how the Iranians seem to elude negotiations just like the Israelis do, and how peaceful demonstrators are being arrested in the two countries. You might say the remedy

is different and sanctions have not worked with Iran but maybe we should try as we have not tried yet with Israel.

To talk about the future of a Palestinian state you need to understand the Palestinian struggle. This struggle for a state, human rights and dignity is simply a just cause. It is a fight that is very similar to the combat against apartheid in South Africa or the anti-colonial movement in the previous century.

It is also important to understand the essence of this conflict. It is about rights and more specifically the rights that are refused to Palestinians living under occupation and also the rights refused to the seven million Palestinian refugees. According to our calculations, there are seven million. But the UN Agency for Refugees (UNRWA) registered only 4.5 million refugees.

The only obstacle to peace is Israel's refusal to comply with international law and the UN resolutions over past decades. To date the PLO has remained faithful to its national objectives aimed at putting an end to more than 40 years of occupation and 62 years of dispossession and exile. The objective is to create a sovereign, viable and independent Palestinian state on only 22 % of historical Palestine, that is to say the occupied territories from 1967, with East Jerusalem as the capital.

We still believe that negotiations are the only way to reach that objective. Now when we started negotiations in Madrid in 1991 and then signed the Oslo Accords in 1993, no one believed that it would be an easy process. It is true that we have not made any progress there and you could even say that we have moved back. However, we have learned a lot.

What are the challenges and the strategic choices facing us today in order to move forward with our national objectives ? What is the outlook for a fair and lasting peace? How should the Palestinian struggle develop and change?

The future of the Palestinian struggle, to a large extent, depends on the outcome of negotiations. Can these lead to fair and lasting peace? I think that, despite the extent of the challenge, it is not insurmountable.

It is important to understand that the peace process will not survive a further failure in negotiations. Palestinians today agree that the priority is not about restarting a negotiation process but restoring the credibility of that process. This is the position taken by Palestinian leadership. It is why a total settlement freeze is necessary before negotiations can resume.

If there is one lesson that we have learned over the last 16 years, it is that words do not replace actions. During negotiation, Israel produced one *fait accompli* after another and ignored international law and the related commitments in existing agreements. We heard the details and statistics from Ms Cerisier-ben Guiga, but worse again is that they have strengthened occupation, increased collective punishment against Palestinian people, and

eroded the two-state solution. The erosion has been fuelled by the fact that the Israelis have refused to freeze settlements. The restrictions on the movement of goods and people have undermined the credibility of the peace process. There is another factor that has made the situation worse, which is keeping up the Gaza siege despite international pleas – even by the Quartet.

A credible peace process is in the interest of both peoples – Israeli and Palestinian. This process would mean that they would both have to face up to their commitments. The real litmus test of each party's commitment to peace is not what is said before, during, or after negotiations, but what actually happens on the ground. It is for this reason that the Palestinian leadership has, to date, remained firm in respect to its demand for a settlement freeze, including East Jerusalem.

This is not a precondition, as has been said. It is not a condition imposed by Palestinians. Neither is it a concession by the Israelis. It is an obligation on the "road map" signed in 2003 by Ariel Sharon's government. This paper does not talk about temporary or partial freezes. Israel must totally stop settlements and show that it is serious about negotiations if it really wants a two-state solution both living side by side in peace.

Why is it vital to stop the settlements ? It is because they are the most serious threat to the two-state solution. These settlements use the lands and resources that would be necessary for a future Palestinian state.

I am going to discuss just a few statistics. During negotiations, before and during Annapolis, I will show you what happened with the settlements.

These are the calls for tender for housing units in the Israeli settlements. They are all illegal because they are on occupied territories. Before Annapolis, from December 2006 to November 2007, there were 137 calls for tender for housing units. During Annapolis itself, while there were negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians, there were 2,300 calls for tender. There were about 1,700 in East Jerusalem alone.

There were also building permits granted by the Israeli state to the settlers. Between January 2007 to November 2007, 704 permits were granted to the settlements. This is just in the West Bank, not East Jerusalem. During negotiations, it went up to 1,926.

If this is supposed to be a credible peace process, it was not for the Palestinians. While they were negotiating, settlements were being added. It is not just settlements; there were also closures. Before Annapolis, there were 563 physical obstacles in the way of people circulating in the West Bank. The number of physical barriers or obstacles increased after Annapolis. Unlike what you often hear in the media - namely that Israel has alleviated the suffering of the Palestinians and removed some checkpoints - I can assure you that while a few

were removed immediately after being reported in the media that Israel had made efforts and so on, just a few days after that those checkpoints reappeared.

Everyone knows that the United States and the EU are able to influence Israel. Everyone knows that the attitude of the Obama administration will determine whether or not negotiations in the future fail or succeed, whether they act as an honest broker or not, and whether they create an environment that respects international law or not. It also depends on whether they recognise Palestinian fundamental rights and the injustice created by the occupation or not.

Israel has shown many times that it does not really intend to put an end to the occupation or to comply with international law of its own accord. Here I could tell you lots of stories. Firstly, recently, only a few days ago, we had a statement from Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister. He clearly stated that he is going to increase Israeli military presence in the Jordan Valley, which represents 28.5% of the West Bank territory. It is an occupied territory lying at the frontier with Jordan and it is obviously very important for national resources. One wonders who wants peace and who really wants negotiation. In addition to what Ms Cerisier-ben Guiga said, there was the massacre of three Palestinians in Nablus: they were fathers who were sleeping and were killed in front of their wife and children. That was 26 December 2009. Moreover, 28 Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem will be evicted and be replaced by Jewish settlers. Four of them have already been evicted. There were many arrests of pacifists, even Israeli pacifists who came to support Palestinians, who simply organised demonstrations against the wall and the theft of land, as Ms Cerisier-ben Guiga said.

How can the Palestinian leadership come back to the negotiating table against such a background of people being evicted from their homes and murdered in their homes?

Only last week there were Palestinian Presidential Guards that were not in uniform but in plain clothes. They were going from Bethlehem to Ramallah. They were stopped and searched – and even stripped naked – at an Israeli checkpoint in view of all the passers-by.

These are just a few stories but I could tell you others.

It is why the Palestinian leadership says that it is necessary to define a specific framework for negotiations on the permanent status. We can no longer negotiate for the sake of it because negotiations are not an aim in themselves but a means of achieving a goal. What does this mean? We say we want productive negotiations that involve five factors. Firstly, negotiations must be restarted at the point where they stopped in Annapolis. Secondly, we must look at all of the underlying issues with no exception: Jerusalem, refugees, borders, water, removal of settlements and security. Thirdly, we must define in advance what is meant by the end game. That is to say an independent and sovereign Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as the capital of the 1967 territory in accordance with

international law and Resolutions 242 and 238. Fourthly, we need a specific timeline for negotiations and the creation of a Palestinian state. We also need a method for tracking progress just to see who has or has not complied with their obligations. There has to be a verification mechanism to check and verify all actions as in the roadmap.

What is the role of the international community in all that ?

A failure to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not because nobody knows what a fair and lasting peace is or what measures are needed to get there. International law and the UN resolutions are clear. The roadmap and the Arab Peace Initiative are also clear. What is lacking is political will to end Israeli occupation and make it possible for Palestine to take its place among a community of nations.

Against this background the international community, particularly Europe, have a crucial role to play. Time has come to translate international consensus in favour of a viable independent sovereign Palestinian state into specific tangible progress that can give hope to the Palestinians. It is also the duty of the international community to produce the aforementioned verification mechanism so that it can be an impartial judge. There is a very wide range of measures possible: incentives, pressure and sanctions. The recommendations concerning Israeli action in East Jerusalem are well documented in the reports of the EU representative in Jerusalem dated November 23, 2009. It is very clear. I recommend you read it.

I could pick out a few examples of what the international community could do. An example is the closer linkage between Israel's compliance with international obligations, particularly the settlement freeze and the financial aid that it receives or the association agreement with the EU. Another example is prohibiting settlement products on national EU markets or at least making sure that those products do not get preferential commercial treatment. Also, those entities giving settlements the money could be refused charitable association status. Public investment, notably through pension funds, in favour of those companies involved in Israeli's colonial actions could also be stopped. European consulates in East Jerusalem should stop recognizing settlement addresses as being in Israel, for example, for visas.

International organizations can also play a role and it could be a Palestinian strategy when talking about their future. I believe that we should use bodies such as the International Criminal Court, the UN or the International Court of Justice much more often than we do at the moment. International law is not just the best solution in order to reach an end to conflict, it is also an alternative to violence. As stated in the Committee's report, Palestine is at the top of the Arab world's agenda so let us avoid giving extremists a pretext for using that to political ends.

Some of you probably remember the advisory opinion given in 2004 by the International Court of Justice saying that the wall built by Israel and the settlements are illegal. Unfortunately, this opinion did not prevent Israel from continuing to build the wall and its settlements. The international community, however, has not followed the court's recommendations. The problem is not the court but the impunity that encourages Israel to flout international law. We should try to change that climate rather than, as some of suggested, to think about a change to international law.

The Goldstone Report is very important as well. It accuses Israel of war crimes and crimes against humanity during its aggression against Gaza. The report comes down to one word: accountability. Israel must account for international law and international community. Crimes committed by Israel in Gaza must not remain unpunished. That includes the siege imposed by Israel, which is continuing today.

One option for Palestinians would be to request a second advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice disputing Israeli policies in occupied territories, especially with what is happening in East Jerusalem today and the Gaza siege. This is all a violation of international law. Such an option would mean a statement by the court on the illegality of all Israeli policies and their occupation. The legal consequences relating to such a statement could be considerable.

In conclusion then, maybe the time has come to forget negotiations. I do not think so, but they should not prevent us looking at alternative tactics away from negotiations if these can strengthen our negotiating position. The International Court of Justice is just one example. There are other options. The option that we do not have and that I think would go directly against Palestinian interest is violence. We are still waiting for the Israeli Prime minister who was said to agree with the minimal commitments of a fair and lasting peace. As I said, peace is possible. It must be based on international law. Israel has several options too, at least two. It can negotiate a fair and lasting peace based on a two-state solution or they can try to manage the status quo with a de facto apartheid state where Palestinians would demand the same rights and obligations as Israelis. It is up to Israel to decide. Thank you.

Mike SINGH, Ira Weiner Fellow, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy – Thank you very much Senator and thanks to all of you for being here today. I want to make an initial comment about the subject in general. I served for ten years as a US diplomat. Recently I was a Senior Director at the White House for the Middle East. My portfolio included all the countries from Morocco on one side to Iran on the other with the exception of Iraq, which was a separate bureaucracy under our administration.

I will say that I think we should be aware of caricatures of US policy under different presidents. I know there are strong feelings about both President Bush and President Obama here in Europe. However, my experience is that US

policy under President Obama towards the Middle East is largely one of continuity with previous administrations and not just the previous administration but also the ones that came before. I think that Mr Malley alluded to this as well. That is because US policies largely reflect a consensus judgment of US interests, which do not fluctuate greatly from one administration to another. Of course, the tone, the atmosphere and the rhetoric all change considerably.

I think that we should also be careful when we are talking about an issue like the peace process and the Palestinian conflict to avoid solipsism and to avoid elevating our own role to an exaggerated degree. I think that frequently when we talk about this issue, we can overstate our own influence over events. We need to be a little bit more modest perhaps about what we can achieve. Especially since the US and France do not have an unqualified history of success in the Middle East, we should be modest and put our focus on the parties and what we can do to assist them in their efforts to achieve the peace that they both want.

I want to offer my observations from having participated in the negotiations from 2006 to 2008, including the Annapolis Conference and what preceded it and what followed. I also lived in Israel for two years and worked on the issue there as well.

The topic of our panel is: What is the future of the Palestinian people ? Obviously that is inseparable from the peace process, and that is what I am going to focus on. I would say that 2009, this past year, was a lost year for the peace process. That is not to say that nothing occurred on the ground or nothing occurred between the parties. By all means, many things did occur; quite a few negative and some positive. However generally this was a year of missed opportunities, I think. Perhaps this was inevitable. The President of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas desired and still desires to resume negotiations where he left off with Ehud Olmert at the Annapolis Conference.

However, Olmert's successor Benjamin Netanyahu had no intention of doing that. He was deeply opposed to the types of concessions in the process which Olmert made and did not want to continue down that path. Given these circumstances, a head-on collision between the two men probably would have been difficult to avert under any circumstances.

Nevertheless, the events of the past year served to exacerbate the already significant divisions between these two leaders and their peoples. The fallout from the conflict in Gaza and the fracas over an Israeli settlement freeze particularly strained their relationships with each other and with the international community, to which previous speakers have already alluded.

I think that significant diplomatic efforts are now required to overcome these obstacles and heal the wounds that were sustained in 2009. However I would also say that even if these diplomatic efforts prove successful, the chances are small that the resumption of negotiations itself will lead to the resolution of the conflict.

As my colleagues have already mentioned, successive rounds of talks and focusing on core issues over the decades yielded little progress, with concessions offered by either side not doing much to move the other. Indeed with the passage of time, agreement has come to seem less rather than more likely. Israelis, while still seeing few viable alternatives to a two-state solution, are cynical about the value of a peace agreement, given the violence that followed the withdrawals from Gaza and Southern Lebanon. I think there is actually a chart in your report, which covers this quite nicely on page 50. It describes Israeli attitudes about, let us say, a two-state peace agreement.

On the Palestinian side, I think there is a large segment of the population that is also unconvinced and sees the alternatives to a two-state agreement - whether that would be a single multi-ethnic state or continuing in some form of armed resistance to Israel - as attractive and perhaps increasingly attractive. This is due in part to the failure of negotiations over the years.

One of the chief aims of the international community has to be to create an atmosphere in which both parties see an agreement leading to a two-state solution as the best most feasible option. However even if such an agreement was reached, this would merely be a milestone on the road to peace, rather than an end to the conflict. A Palestinian State cannot simply be declared with the stroke of a pen. It has to be built from the ground up, indeed as the Palestinians are trying to do. There is a document which I think was published in the last couple of days by the Office of the PA Prime Minister about priority interventions which the PA is seeking. It is a very sensible list of projects that they want to engage in to build a state. This work of building a state needs to be redoubled. It is a challenge for the international community to do this if we hope to secure the future of the Palestinian people.

Given these challenges, I would say that our traditional – that is the traditional US and European – approach to the conflict cannot succeed, whether it is novel proposals to resolve the core issues, or pressure on one party or another that fluctuates from time to time. A successful approach must focus on the fundamental causes of the conflict's persistence as well as on helping Palestinians to build a state that will survive past its Independence Day.

What should be done ? In my view, the US, Europe and our allies should organise our efforts along two broad lines of action. The first of these is countering those who oppose peace, chiefly Iran and its allies in Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah and other groups. I would recommend three goals. First disrupt the flow of arms, finance and other support from Tehran to these proxies or militant groups. These arms, such as the rockets which precipitated last year's Gaza war, provide militants with the capability to derail peace negotiations. If and when peace talks resume, tensions and violence are likely to increase rather than diminish because those who oppose them will want to put an end to them. This makes international interdiction efforts vital. As the technology available to

these groups improves, especially with respect to the range and accuracy of light rockets, disrupting these networks will only increase in importance.

Our second goal, with apologies to my colleagues who hold a different view, should be to sharpen the diplomatic isolation of groups such as Hamas and to hold to account the states that sponsor Hamas. As long as these groups reject the legitimacy of Israel, eschew a peaceful resolution of the conflict and aim to undermine responsible Arab leaders, international and regional engagement with them can only harm the peace process.

This is not ideology. In my view, this is pragmatism. If given the choice between regressing twenty years by returning to the question of Israel's right to exist and Israel's recognition of whatever the group is on the other side, which is what Hamas wishes to do, or moving ahead with talks with those who are already committed to peace, I think we should choose the latter.

Finally, on this first prong, Israel, the Palestinian and Arab states should be encouraged to consider joint security arrangements for their mutual benefit. As the security landscape has changed in the Middle East over the last several decades, there has been a convergence in the threats that are perceived by these parties. Israel and the Arabs have long been mired in an apparent zero-sum game with an unmanageable trade-off between Israeli security and Palestinian sovereignty. Today's realities offer an opportunity for win-win security solutions.

While these three efforts that I have just described are necessary to ease the pressure on both Israel and the Palestinians, they are not sufficient for creating the right conditions under which progress can be made.

That leads me to the second prong of action, which I want to describe. That is to foster constituencies for peace in Israel, Palestine and the broader region. To this end I think we also should start with three actions. First the two-state vision should be reaffirmed by the international community as the only one which we will support. Israel and the Palestinians should be asked to reaffirm their commitment to this framework not merely in word but also in deed: for Israel, by ceasing the expansion of settlements; and for the Palestinians, by ending any incitement and challenges to Israel's legitimacy.

Second, other states in the region must step up their support for the peace process. To date those expressions of support and interest have not been matched by a commensurate level of material support. Budget support to the Palestinian authority must be increased. However efforts to dictate or constrain Palestinian negotiating positions should be ceased. Furthermore Arab states should reach out to Israel and eradicate the anti-Semitism which poisons the future of Arab-Israeli relations and is rife even in states like Egypt in the official media.

Finally greater attention and support must be given to Palestinian efforts to build institutions and spur economic growth. I think there has been progress in

this in the last year. We have newly trained professional Palestinian security forces which are establishing some law and order in the West Bank. Salam Fayyad has put in place sensible plans for growth and development which deserve our support. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has to a great extent followed through on pledges to remove roadblocks – although Ms Shihabi disagrees with how extensive that has been – and improving movement and access in the West Bank. The IMF for its part has said that because of some of these changes, they predict 7 % growth in real GDP in the West Bank for 2009. It remains to be seen what the actual number will be, but this would be the first increase in living standards in the West Bank since 2005.

However, I do not think this should be seen as success. What has happened on the ground in the West Bank over the past year is merely a foundation for future success. Despite these advances in security reform, for example, complementary institutions such as courts and prisons remain underdeveloped. In fact, if you look at this new document that came out from the PA, they remain unfunded by the international community. Health and education systems are inadequate. Political party reform has only seen halting steps forward. The easing of closures of checkpoints is welcome, but it is not by any means sufficient. Significant barriers to Palestinian exports and foreign direct investment in the West Bank remain, as we saw from the Wataniya Telecom case, for those of you who are familiar with that.

To build upon some of the economic successes of the past year, both Israel and the Palestinians should be asked to commit to steps they can take together which may serve to rebuild trust and some momentum that could lead to future political negotiations, which I do not think are possible right now.

I think it is in areas such as this where Israeli and Palestinian interests converge or dovetail that confidence-building measures should be focused and could be effective. I think asking any party to make what they perceive, whether we agree or not, as premature concessions on the core issues is likely to fail and result in greater frustration and tension.

It is tempting but ultimately mistaken for we in the United States and Europe to focus exclusively on the core issues that have captivated diplomatic attention for so long. If we instead focus our efforts on the fundamental issues I have just talked about, it is likely the parties themselves can tackle those core issues with minimal outside assistance. There has been no shortage of creative ideas coming from both Israelis and Palestinians.

If, on the other hand, we neglect these fundamental issues and these obstacles to a sustainable peace, the chasm between the parties is likely to deepen and the mounting tensions and frustrations may once again erupt in violence. Thanks.

Henry SIEGMAN, Director of the U.S./Middle East Project and Former Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations – I must say at the outset that I regret that I am constrained by a text that I have prepared here and that I must stay reasonably within the ten minute limitations imposed on us. I would have much more enjoyed engaging with Mr Singh and discussing the content of his presentation.

I hope we will have a chance to discuss our differences afterwards. His proposals for confidence-building measures and for telling the Israelis that they should not be building settlements and should be freezing them all made good sense fifteen years ago. To hear them fifteen years later with the implication, that nothing has changed on the ground and that the confidence building is for a Palestinian State that, in fact, may no longer be possible, I find astonishing.

The first point I would like to make is that Israel's relentless drive to establish facts on the ground in the occupied West Bank has finally succeeded in establishing an irreversible situation. I think that is something that anyone who takes the trouble to go to the West Bank and see what has happened on the ground must realize.

If it is up to an Israeli government to modify significantly or undo this settlement or colonial project that it has in the West Bank, no Israeli government can ever again, in my view, do that. Indeed, it is impossible even for those who have pledged to take down minor hilltop outposts. They have not even been able to take down one of those. The expectation that they are going to be able to undo what have become cities all over the West Bank is utterly unrealistic. That is one of the transformed realities on the ground that I think most diplomats simply have not taken into account.

Of course, what also happens is that once this becomes irreversible, Israel crosses the threshold from being the only democracy in the Middle East to the only apartheid regime in the Middle East.

Some people get terribly upset when this is suggested. In fact, this point was made most forcefully by Israeli prime ministers, including Sharon. Olmert himself repeatedly warned that if Israel did not succeed in establishing a Palestinian State next to itself, then it would turn into an apartheid regime. Of course, when President Carter used that term, the roof fell in on him. When the Israeli Prime Minister used it, it was okay. Now it is widely recognised in most Israeli circles, but is denied by Israel's government. Settlements are so widespread and so deeply implanted in the West Bank as to rule out the possibility of their removal, as I indicated, by this or any other Israeli government except through outside intervention. Until now, for very good reasons, this was considered highly unlikely.

We need to bear in mind that the Jewish settlements and their supporting infrastructure are not a wild growth that just happened when people were not looking. They have been carefully planned, financed and protected by successive

Israeli governments and Israel's military. Their purpose has been to retain Israeli control of Palestine from the river to the sea. This objective precludes, by definition, the existence of a viable and sovereign Palestinian State east of the pre-1967 border, which is presumably the objective of the Roadmap that all parties signed and obligated themselves to.

Already following the 1967 war, Moshe Dayan was asked: What will be the future of the occupied territories? The answer he gave was that the future is maintaining the present. What is now must stay the way it is. Of course, it was a point of view that for those of you familiar with history was also endorsed by Israel's cabinet and by General Yigal Allon. He developed the security doctrine that mandated this kind of Israeli permanent presence in the territories. It became the central guiding security principle of Israeli governments, and shaped the current reality.

Prime Minister Netanyahu's conditions for Palestinian Statehood would leave most of the settlers in place and fragment the contiguity of the territory remaining for such a state. His conditions would also deny Palestinians even those parts of East Jerusalem that Israel unilaterally annexed immediately following the 1967 war. It is territory that is several times the historic area of Jerusalem. It was never previously part of Jerusalem.

In summary, Netanyahu's conditions for Palestinian Statehood would meet Dayan's goal of leaving Israel's de facto occupation permanently in place.

Given these realities, the problem is not how to improve diplomacy or to tinker with the mechanics of negotiations. It is how do you confront the fact that one of the parties has the overwhelming power and the ability to sustain its policy and to achieve its policy objectives while the other party is powerless? In other words, the question is how do you get Israel to do what it absolutely does not want to do?

Because of the presentation, that President Obama made in Cairo - the new language that he used, the new approach he had to American diplomacy, his promise to deal with the Israel-Palestine conflict in an even-handed way - all of this generated a worldwide expectation that he understands this is the real problem. The expectation was that the United States would say "enough" to Israel and draw on the vast credit accumulated by previous U.S. friendship and support for Israel to obtain compliance with the Roadmap and other international agreements. The expectation was that we now have an American president who will be as demanding of Israelis when they violate agreements as we have been of Palestinians.

Unfortunately, as we see from the recent statements by the President as reported in Time magazine, those expectations are being disappointed. This notion that we have endless time to go back to confidence building is an illusion. If the two-state solution has not already become impossible, one would have to move quickly to save it. Widespread anger over this disappointment may lead

various parts of the international community, hopefully with Europe in the lead, to bring this issue back to the United Nations. Prime Minister Salam Fayyad's efforts to establish the institutions of statehood, if successful, should provide context for a Palestinian declaration of self-determination and statehood that the UN would accept. While the U.S. would not support such an initiative, it would find it difficult to prevent it. If such an initiative fails, then a one-state solution becomes inevitable.

Yves AUBIN de la MESSUZIÈRE, Former Director, North Africa/Middle East at the French Foreign Office, Former French Ambassador, President of La Mission laïque française (the French Lay Mission) – To add some further points to those already made, let me briefly analyze the Palestinian political context. The Palestinian movement is having to cope with an in-depth crisis of its political system. I would say that it is a crisis of confidence and a crisis of legitimacy at the same time.

The crisis of confidence is shown through recent initiatives taken by the various authorities of the Palestinian Authority. Unfortunately, sometimes this seems like just pushing ahead to no success. For example, the resort to UN, as mentioned earlier by Henry Siegman, to proactively get recognition of the future Palestinian state. This was immediately withdrawn. Also, you have statements that have been made on the Palestinian Authority dissolving itself. There is also some confusion regarding bringing things to the UN General Assembly on the Goldstone Report. Of course, there are also threats of resignation by Mr Abbas. We see the Palestinian Authority is at a loss during this crisis of confidence. They are subject to strong pressure to resume negotiations. I do not see very well how in the near future the Palestinian Authority and Mr Abbas would be able to resist pressure, particularly US pressure. We know that during his tour in Europe and elsewhere, Mr Mitchell has been asking partners to exert pressure on the Palestinian Authority without any real underlying vision.

We are familiar with crisis of legitimacy. For the Authority, this was worsened after Hamas' wins of elections in 2006. In January 2009, the Islamist Movement, which already rejected the legality of the Fayyad government as Ismail Haniyeh felt he was the legal Prime Minister, declared illegal Mahmoud Abbas whose term came to an end. If we look at the image of the Palestinian Authority, we can also observe that it has deteriorated in public opinion. Sometimes it is perceived as an institution that is managing Palestinian territories on behalf of Israeli authorities. This is not criticism but analysis. Gradually the PLO and its main component, Fatah, seem to operate like some Arab regimes, as a government party which first and foremost wants to maintain power as opposed to actually reform the system.

We can also say it is a crisis of objectives in these constant negotiations since the Oslo Accords as though we have forgotten that the final objective was to create a Palestinian state on 22% of historical Palestine.

Now let us talk about Annapolis since Mr Singh alluded to this. I have written down what I observed. I feel this was an exercise that was abstract and disconnected from field reality. We saw this in the West Bank and in Gaza in the field. I would also say the process does not mention Jerusalem and refugees. There were negotiations and a couple of percentages were obtained regarding borders. Beyond that, I have not seen much progress made. We are talking about a new US strategy and I am afraid it will be the same situation again.

All in all, I think we can talk about backtracking. I do not know why people talk about the peace process. In Latin, the origin of process means progress or forward. Maybe we should reinvent this as “recess” or “retrocessive” process of peace. At any rate, it is backtracking. I am afraid what we are going to see once again is management of crisis or perhaps almost micromanagement of crisis as opposed to actually moving towards a resolution of the conflict.

I am not trying to paint a bleak, black picture. Let me say that I think Salam Fayyad’s action has made it possible to make progress in cleaning up finances, public order, security and fighting corruption. This summer the Prime Minister presented a well-structured reform plan for gradually establishing institutions. The objective is to create the foundations for a future Palestinian state that would be proclaimed around 2011. I see this as a strategy of responsibility but I would also observe that there is probably no consensus within the Palestinian Authority. Among other things Abbas has not said this; this is a type of disconnect between the team in charge of negotiations and the Authority itself, which is managing the territories.

All in all, this is also paradoxical. We see a weakened authority from a political point of view and at the same time it is reformed or at least in the process of reform. There is clearly a problem of Palestinian leadership, which Israeli authorities do realise. They are very much responsible for the situation. The Israeli authorities can declare that they do not have or no longer have any partners for the peace process. The main problem that the National Palestinian Movement has to confront is its strong and lasting division. Since the breakthrough of the Hamas in Gaza 2007, a sanctioned autonomous entity has gradually been created. In spite of statements and conversations I have had in Gaza with Hamas officials, it is not their intention to create what is called “Hamastan”.

Negotiations for inter-Palestinian reconciliation are in a deadlock. I see now through the various declarations that reconciliation of Palestinians is no more considered a prerequisite for the stabilization of the Palestinian territories and establishment of a favourable climate for resumption of negotiations.

Who is talking about Gaza? Gaza is no longer on the international community’s radar screen. People are no longer talking about the necessary dialogue with the Islamist Movement that was recognised after the Gaza tragedy by a large proportion of the international community as a player or even an interlocutor. In the interim, people have become more reserved and fear that

dialogue with the Islamist Movement would weaken the Palestinian Authority. Yesterday I saw a headline in «*Le Monde* » talking about prospects for dialogue with the Taliban. Maybe we need a few more years to see that type of headline regarding Hamas because whether you like it or not, it is a lasting reality. It is part of the Palestinian landscape. However, analysis and polls, which are efficient in the Palestinian territories, have shown that they do not have the majority in these territories.

Now let me mention Hamas strategy as I have seen it when I had contacts with the Islamist Movement in Gaza. The ideological change in Hamas took place in 2006 when they decided to take part in the elections process. This was an indirect way of recognising the Oslo Accords. Al-Qaeda realised this full well because the Hamas was severely criticised in several press releases of Al-Qaeda, including recently. There were several statements made recently by the political bureau of the movement in Damascus that refer to a Palestinian state within the borders of 1967, and to acceptance of a peace agreement negotiated by the Palestinian Authority provided it is approved by referendum. This was after Jimmy Carter's visit to Damascus. He obtained a paper that was published in the press. It was not widely seen. In Gaza, you do not have this type of statement I have mentioned. But from conversations and contacts we can deduce that they very much agree with the declaration made by the political bureau in Damascus.

Recently I saw the declaration by the Palestinian National Council (PNC) President Aziz Douik also talking about a Palestinian state within the borders of 1967 and going further as he said that the Hamas charter should be rescinded even if it does not have a status as the PLO charter had. This statement was refuted but, in my opinion, there is a recurrent trend here.

The pragmatic view is still in place in Gaza and I think Hamas has not really changed its strategy fundamentally. They are observing current diplomatic movements, convinced that they will fail so they do not need to try to act as an obstacle or impede them. In the same time, the positions are consolidating though. We see there is strong pressure exerted on Gaza society. We are wondering if there might not be reconciliation, if gradually Hamas may come back to its religious basics. Through the very lengthy talks I have had, for instance, with Mahmoud Zahar, the idea is that Islamist movements think in the long term. They are not in a hurry in the region. When the time comes, Islamist movements will take power. I do not think their strategy is one of trying to win over the PLO. Nevertheless, they say they want to belong to it as they represent 30 to 40%.

Let me make a few points regarding the Palestinian state as the issue is really the focus of the debate. Before going onto this, we have to push aside the idea of a two-nation state that some people allude to, which the PLO had been in favour of in the 1970s. That is utopian and also despairing from mostly the young generation. It is also a question of rhetoric. I do not know if you could confirm the Saeb Erekat talking about that option. How could you imagine this? Israel demands the Palestinian's recognition of the Jewish nature of their State.

There is another option, that is the devolution of the West Bank to Jordan and of Gaza to Egypt. It is mentioned even in foreign ministries. This is what I will call virtual diplomacy.

Often we hear people talking about the irreversible nature of the settlements and annexation of Jerusalem and, therefore, the impossibility of establishing a viable state. People say that what would have been possible if the Camp David negotiations had been successful is no longer possible due to the fragmentation of territories, the separation wall, Jerusalem encircled and the lasting dissidents in Gaza. I think that if we look at these situations, this is all reversible if there is a political will to do so. That is an international political will. This is one of the options alluded to in an article by Henry Siegman recently. Maybe the international community should stand in for parties. There are several ways of standing in for parties. The described situations are reversible because first of all there is broad consensus internationally in favour of a Palestinian state if it is a viable state with Jerusalem as its capital. We can only be glad though there were some reservations by the Palestinian Authority on the recent European declaration. I think that this will be part of the set of statements by the European Union, which comprises the Venice Declaration in 1980 about recognition and self-determination, the Berlin Declaration in 1999 about a viable Palestinian state. There were both French initiatives and Jean François-Poncet was one of the craftsmen of the declarations. Opinion is changing in Israel. A recent poll shows us that there is a broad Israeli majority in favour of a Palestinian state.

Furthermore, regarding the Fayyad plan, which was very well structured, I do not know if there is actual implementation. I saw via press analysis – Israeli, US and French press – that there was an American plan for two years. There is some convergence here. I wonder whether there might not have been some Palestinian-American consultations on this and regarding the timetable.

The main obstacle is obviously the Netanyahu government, which is the most right-winged government in Israel's history. We must underscore that the Prime Minister is a great tactician and he has become more popular than ever before. In little time, he has managed to reduce US pressure, which has now been placed on the Palestinian Authority and Abu Mazen.

Now Israel's political system also has a recurring leadership problem which prevents any government from really having a vision of peace and so preferring the status quo.

Briefly I will talk about recognition of a Palestinian state. As I see it, we should not go directly to the UN. There is a complex process involved. First of all, there has to be a request from the state to the UN Secretary General, which is handed onto the Security Council to get their approval. Then it is sent onto the General Assembly who will vote. At this juncture, there is always the possibility there of a US veto. There could be unilateral proclamation of a state if there was a deadlock. I think that is a possibility. It is a political act whether you recognise

a state. For many European states and France there is no legal obstacle to this type of recognition, which was not the case in 1988 when the Palestinian National Council had proclaimed the Palestinian state. According to case law, there is a doctrine, which is the French position. According to the effectiveness principle even if a territory is not completely constituted, it can enter negotiations and discuss of borders based on the UN resolutions. There is the Palestinian Authority though it is limited. You have the three elements that constitute a Palestinian state. International practice tells us that for effectiveness to be established, you do not need to have the borders of the territory to be fixed once and for all.

In conclusion, unilateral proclamation of a Palestinian state by 2011 if negotiations do not succeed, which is, unfortunately, most likely may make it possible to trigger a movement – a political movement, not a violent movement. There may be a real new type of process, which would not be like the Oslo method. It would turn around perspective. Negotiations would follow the creation of the state. In this scenario, hopefully in advance, elections would take place. I am trying to put together a scenario for if there was unilateral proclamation. Maybe 140 or 150 countries would recognise the Palestinian State. I think 130 States that were part of the UN General Assembly had already recognised the Palestinian State although the pre-configuration of 1988 did not yet have all three elements. The scenario is all the more relevant since, in 2010 and 2011, there will probably not be any significant progress in terms of resumption of negotiations. If they do resume at best, there would be a process that I would call “Annapolis Plus”, designed to manage a conflict that is considered to be a low intensity conflict. If none of these scenarios were to develop, we can say that as of now in the next two years, once again we will see an explosion of violence in Gaza, almost a war, and maybe we will see the emergence of a third Intifada. I apologise this seems so pessimistic but this is the same as the pessimism held by most analysts that we encounter regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict

Lastly we can regret that President Obama, in my opinion, has probably not changed his view as he has reaffirmed the centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the arc of crisis from the Mediterranean to Afghanistan. I do not think he has changed his view but as we have seen very well, for instance, from the State of the Union address, there was not much mention of foreign policy and nothing about the Middle East. I hope this means that thought is underway and his strategy is being worked out. He would be well inspired to get in touch with Europeans on this since there is more and more convergence among Europeans and Americans. Nonetheless, we observe that they are all working on things separately. Thank you

Monique CERISIER-ben GUIGA, French Senator, Co-author of the Foreign Relations, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's Report on the Situation in the Middle East – Given that we are running late, I am not sure if maybe I can take just one question.

Participant – I want to talk about isolated negotiations. Where do we actually stand in that respect? Who is in charge in Hamas? Is it Ismail Haniyeh or Khaled Mashal?

Monique CERISIER-ben GUIGA, French Senator, Co-author of the Foreign Relations, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's Report on the Situation in the Middle East – Who can answer that one? The first part of the question may be for Ms Shihabi.

Yves AUBIN de la MESSUZIÈRE, Former Director, North Africa/Middle East at the French Foreign Office, Former French Ambassador, President of La Mission laïque française (the French Lay Mission) –What I have learnt is through the press alone but what strikes me is that there has not been any change. Negotiations concerning the exchange in two steps between Sharit and 1,000 prisoners under the allegiance of Egypt dragged on. The problem is that they are people with blood on their hands. Hamas made a choice. I am not absolutely sure but I believe Hamas are talking about the possibility of Barghouti. He is in prison and in contact with other prisoners. I know they have produced a common document one and a half years ago that some people consider as a reference. But I do not really know. It is said that the Germans could be mediators but if there are problems, it is probably on the Israeli side. There is the idea that many prisoners would go not to Gaza but elsewhere. It could be Egypt but it would obviously be seen as a huge Hamas victory. Remember the pictures we saw a couple of years ago when there was the exchange of corpses of Israeli soldiers against hundreds of Hezbollah prisoners. The main problem of Hamas is an image problem, especially in Gaza because they were not able to deal with the situation there so it is less popular. The strong pressure on the society to strengthen Islamism is a problem.

Who is actually in charge? I did not see any major divisions between the leadership in Gaza, who are the important ones as they are on the ground and up against the radicals, and the leadership in Damascus. They are in regular contact because the Hamas leaders in Gaza exit via Egypt and they meet often. Even if they have different approaches, I would say there is a certain amount of agreement. But open statements are made in Damascus and not in Gaza. They say it during discussions but they do not want to state it although they are dealing with the radical movements, the radical current in Hamas and even worse because there have been confrontations with Jihadists who are listening to what al-Qaeda is saying. Maybe they are not as important as some have suggested but they are still there so I do not really think there have been any major differences in the positions taken by Hamas.

Monique CERISIER-ben GUIGA, French Senator, Co-author of the Foreign Relations, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's Report on the Situation in the Middle East – We have to thank our speakers. Each provided very interesting, different input. We need to continue working and thinking. Thank you for being here this afternoon.

Friday 29 January 2010

A Renaissance for Iraq?

Panel

Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – This morning, we will be starting with an assessment of the situation in Iraq, where along with Madame Cerisier-ben Guiga, we were able to visit Baghdad, and Irbil in the north. It is not exactly the capital of the state but of the Kurdish autonomous region. We met some officials and observers of civil society.

Now, it is our good fortune to have with us for the roundtable Mr Barzani, who will obviously be talking to us about the Kurds. He is the head of the intelligence service in the Kurdish autonomous region. We also have the French Ambassador to Iraq, and we are delighted to see him. Also joining us is Mr Yasseen who is a senior official in his country, and Ambassador of Iraq. He has been monitoring developments in his country, and he will doubtless explain how he speaks such outstanding French.

Ambassador, maybe we could start with you, tell us how Iraq is doing.

Boris BOILLON, French Ambassador to Iraq – I have 20 minutes to speak and so I obviously cannot give you a very detailed analysis of Iraq. I will be looking at one issue, how specifically France is contributing to the renaissance of Iraq.

On a more humorous note, we know that Iraqis sometimes describe themselves as the Seven Sleepers (Ahl al-Kahf). They have been cut off from the world during thirty years because of the embargo and successive wars and now they have to reconnect to the outside world and make up for lost time. This is exactly what France is trying to do in Iraq, contribute to the rebuilding and rapid normalization of this country after three crises: post-dictatorship, post-embargo and post-interconfessional war. Obviously, for the Iraqis, a martyred people, it is very important

But also for the international communities, it is vital that Iraq be restored to a pole of stability. It is necessary Iraq becomes again a strong and stable country in a strategic part of the world where balances are fragile. Let us not forget that with a population of 33 million Iraq is, after Iran and Turkey, the largest country in the region. It is a rich country that has the third largest oil

reserves and maybe even more, and the market for reconstruction is huge and estimated at \$600 billion, so we can see the stakes are high for the international community.

French support to Iraqi reconstruction and renaissance is very wide ranging but it focuses on three main areas, which will structure my discussion. Firstly, I will speak about political support for the new Iraq, the new Iraqi institutions, and support to international and security normalisation. Secondly, I will be talking about economic and financial support, and thirdly, the French support for reinforcing rule of law in Iraq through a strong cultural, scientific and technical cooperation.

Let us start with political support for Iraq. France is very clearly working alongside Iraq and its new institutions. France defends Iraq's unity, sovereignty, and the federal nature of this republic, and without formal interference, it supports national reconciliation and the democratic evolution of the country.

This political support is clearly manifested in excellent in-depth dialogue. Think back to 2007/2008, and visits by Bernard Kouchner which marked the French comeback. In 2009, we had returned to an unprecedented pace of interaction between officials in this region. There was a surprise visit by the President recently, and at the very highest level, there have been visits in both countries each month: Mrs Idrac in February, the Vice President Abd al-Mahdi in April, and Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in May. Prime Minister François Fillon came in July with Minister Lagarde, and all of this culminated in the state visit in November. I could also list others, such as the Head of the Parliament. Many others have been from Paris to Baghdad, and vice versa, and that is a flow that is continuing to expand because 2010 will be a year of the deepening of these relations and implementation of the commitments on the ground.

These are very substantial commitments that were formalised during the State visit, very briefly I can sum that up. Firstly, the two countries decided to enter into "unlimited reciprocal cooperation", this is what Presidents Sarkozy and Talabani said, in the framework of an exemplary, strategic partnership. Secondly, we set a very ambitious roadmap that it is my responsibility to implement as fast and efficiently as possible. Agreements were signed, and they underpin our scientific, cultural, military and economic cooperation. The bilateral agenda is really very extensive involving lots of visits, and a few weeks from now the French Minister of Industry will be going to Iraq. Above all, we have set up really original tools tailored to the specifics of the Iraqi situation. I will come back to these later.

In the area of political support, there is a strong commitment on the ground. I am in daily contact with Iraqi forces that refuse the violence. There has been a military and economic mission reopened, a new French Embassy is under construction, the French residency, after almost eight years of being closed, is now open. There is a new consulate general in Irbil, a new one is being prepared in Basra, and two French cultural centres are running flat out.

Also, in the political sphere, France is very clearly supporting improvement of the security situation in Iraq, with supporting cooperation between services. Also we will have an internal security officer there soon.

Maybe I can briefly tell you something that I think will be interesting, because I know there are a lot of clichés about this. It is about security in Iraq and the way that I see it, and the way it affects me in Baghdad moving around. It is true, there are spectacular attacks targeting the Iraqi state every month and a half. The last one took place on January 25th. There was one on August 19th, October 25th and December 8th going backwards. They are very spectacular, but the overall trend is a major improvement. Statistics are morbid, it is true, but very illustrative. In 2009, on average there were eight fatalities a day. In the previous five years, 2004 to 2008, the average was 60 per day. You can see that the difference is remarkable. I do not want to talk about statistics when it comes to such tragedies but this is the reality.

One can unfortunately expect further attacks in the next few weeks especially before the March 7 elections, but the trend is extremely encouraging. The people behind these attacks are in three groups, al-Qaeda, extremist Shi'ite Militias, and the Ba'athist Nationalist Militias, who sometimes enter into temporary alliances. There are three causes of the improving security. The first is that, paradoxically, the American withdrawal means that there is no legitimacy for the armed groups, and this is contributing to security. Secondly, the Iraqi security forces are efficient, extensive, out on the field, they know their job. They work well and everyday they book successes. The third cause is that the Iraqi population is now tired of 30 years of violence and civil war, and wants to move on.

Geographically speaking, violence is in two areas, the mixed Kurd-Arab areas in the north, Kirkuk and Mosul. The second main violent area is Baghdad, and its suburbs. You can see that geographically there is shrinkage, and also a change in nature. At the moment the armed groups rather than trying to reignite the confessional war as in the past, are targeting state symbols. I also note that Mafia-type violence is competing more and more with terrorist violence through kidnappings, for example.

That was just a digression, but I think it is important for people from the field to come talk about their reality. I am not saying that I know the only reality but it was my reality. I can say that French people who want to return to Iraq, and I would encourage them to do so with the necessary precautions, that is to check out the French Embassy website. There are two main security risks for the French people generally. Firstly, you can just get unlucky if you are in the wrong place and the wrong time when a bomb goes off, and it happens every day in Baghdad. The second is kidnapping by Mafia-type bands. To deal with that, if you come to Iraq, you have to work with security companies. There are French ones, who will provide you with a secure vehicle and some people to accompany

you. Those are the ways of dealing with the main dangers. I am not saying they do not exist but there are ways of working with them.

I will end the first part concerning political support from France by saying that, obviously, France offers Iraq international support. Iraq can count on French support in all multilateral bodies, the Security Council and also in the Paris Club. Iraq wanted to get its rights on the international scene back and move on from Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, and France will do what it can. We in France are not scared of a strong Iraq, because it is a democratic country now, and democracy means respecting neighbours and civil society. Military adventures are now over in Iraq, as we see it. This is why France offers unreserved support to modernisation and training of the Iraqi Army. We have undertaken major cooperation with them so that the Army can fulfil its functions defending its country and its people.

The second area that I will look at is France contributing to economic and financial recovery in Iraq. Here again we are very clear and very determined. We set an example, as of 2004, writing off most of the Paris Club debt, and the various debt slices of almost EUR 5 billion have now almost been completed. *

Obviously, French companies are interested in the Iraqi market. In 2008, French businesses had 0.5% of that market, which is virtually nothing, EUR 173 million of French exports, whereas we imported EUR 1.5 billion worth of hydrocarbons. You can see the huge imbalance, and the very low level that we had reached.

I do not have the figures for 2009, but I can tell you that things are really going to be taking off and this is a good thing. We achieved excellent results this year, and we will be doing even better in 2010. I know some contracts have been signed, so you can see that this is a living business relationship. Technip, Total, Air France will be coming to see me next week. A contract signed this year is General Electric France, it is a contract worth EUR 1 billion for electric turbines, built in Belfort. Another one was a EUR 150 million contract with Degrémont for a drinking water plant that I will visit next week with the Baghdad's mayor. Saint-Gobain also signed a contract and ADPI an exclusive one for airport construction.

There are French businesses investing, and I pay tribute to them because they are courageous and visionary. Lafarge, for example, in Kurdistan, invested EUR 650 million in a cement plant, which is the largest and most modern in the Middle East. They are going to do the same investment in the South, at Karbala. I can tell you that Lafarge is an exemplary company because they are taking risks. At the moment Lafarge accounts for 60% of Iraqi cement construction, that is obviously a good choice if you see how extensive the construction is in the country. CMA-CGM also invested a lot and it controls currently 30% of the maritime traffic in the harbour of Umm Qasr.

Lastly, I can say there are ongoing negotiations with quite a number of companies, Technip, Alstom, Peugeot, Thalès, Veolia, Renault, EADS, France Telecom and Air France. I hope these work out. You can see that things are moving forward.

French companies have three advantages. The first is past reputation as they operated in Iraq in the 1970s and 1980s. The second strength is that the Iraqis are clear that they want diversification, they do not only want to work with Anglo-Saxon companies, so the French are welcome. Thirdly, perhaps unexpectedly, the Americans themselves are very much in favour of this. They know they are pulling out of Iraq, they want to do this on schedule. By mid-August there will be a major pull out, and then next year all troops will have gone. To meet these deadlines they need to be able to handover under good conditions. The French companies involved in reconstruction are all very welcome.

The most important part of this second section is to show how France and its Ambassador actually support day-in day-out the return of French businesses, so we are working very hard there. We are going to open the French Business Centre which will be inaugurated by Minister Estrosy at the end of February. It is very much an innovation. It is a public-private partnership (PPP), that will mean that any French company that wants to go back to Iraq will be met at the airport, will be secured, will be hosted under safe conditions, will get a customised programme and through the Centre will be able to meet all the major business stakeholders in Iraq. It is innovative, it is original and it cost the French taxpayer nothing, because it is all self-funded. It is something we have worked very hard on. We are very pleased that we will be opening this Business Centre at the end of February.

The second innovative tool that we have set up is the French Agricultural Centre, to be opened in March, we hope with the presence of a French Minister. The reason for this, as you probably remember, is that Iraq is 'Mesopotamia', the country between the two rivers, and there is a major agricultural tradition that we should remember. It is the orchard and wheat granary of the region and at the moment it has to import 80% of its food. France is a great farming country, so why not work together, this is what we are trying to do with the Agricultural Centre. There will be various areas of research, such as seeds, trade, research, training, water. All this is being done in Iraqi Kurdistan, in Erbil. A building is being restored and will be opened in March in partnership with French agri-food companies, and I think this is a wonderful innovative project, and meets real Iraqi needs.

The third tool that we are setting up for French businesses is the set of financial instruments, for example a seed fund of EUR 10 million for those businesses that want to train Iraqi engineers in France. Coface is once again operational there in the short term and hopefully in the medium term. AFD will be in Baghdad for the first time with its financial engineering tools and credit systems, and we just signed an agreement to protect our investments. There are

also institutional instruments, fairs in Baghdad and Irbil, and also farming fairs where we will be present. In November, France was the only Western country represented with about 100 businesses in Baghdad, and it was a huge success.

My conclusion in relation to economic support by France to the restoration of Iraq, is to say that because the Iraqi market is complicated, it is profitable. You cannot have your cake and eat it too. Obviously, there are risks in returning to Iraq, but they are limited, and they are certainly measurable and controllable, and this is very important. The problem, when you talk to Iraqis, is not really security, it is governance.

This is a good transition to the third section, how France is helping in governance. I do not like the word too much, but it is about how we strengthen and support the rule of law in Iraq. This is the third area where we are working, there are four priorities: governance, civil society, training the elite, and cultural cooperation.

I will start with governance. Iraq is moving on from its professional conflict now, so we need to close those religious, ethnic and tribal gaps, so as to restore confidence of citizens in an impartial state which has the legitimate use of power. It is also a State that can generate solidarity, and citizens must have confidence in their state.

And France is helping in every way possible. Firstly we support the reform of the judiciary, and we have very strong cooperation there. We are working on cooperation with the Iraqi Supreme Court, the equivalent of the French Constitutional Court, Court of Cassation and Higher Council of Magistrature. We are going to receive the President of the Supreme Court in February in Paris. In December, there was a delegation from the Iraqi Council of State, and we are working very hard to establish strong partnerships with the main institutions to reform the judiciary system.

Secondly, and I am delighted, Minister, to be able to say here that we are working with Iraqi Parliament, as you know full well. You very kindly met the President of the Iraqi Republic who was delighted to be here too. You also met the Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament in September, Mr. Al-Samarraï, and you have just met the Secretary General of the Iraqi Parliament to look at possibilities for specific cooperation between parliaments. There was, in fact, a memorandum of understanding signed with the lower chamber of the French Parliament. This means that you in the Senate can also make a major contribution. According to the Iraqi constitution, there should be a Senate in Iraq, which does not yet exist, so that is an area of cooperation for you, because there was strong ethnic and religious cleavages in the country, so doubtless a Senate will help to enhance representatives of society.

Now, the third action in governance is in the area of criminal law and making all the stakeholders there professional. You know that there is a European programme, EU-Just lex that is training program for magistrates and

police officers. France is the major contributor to that. We have been able in that framework to provide training for over 400 people in France. Bilaterally we have decided that there will be an internal security attaché returning to Iraq, and we will be working with magistrates.

The fourth area of action in governance is making sure the security force is professional. That involves a whole programme of training with the Iraqi Police Force, and we will also help them to set up a gendarme force.

Last but not least, we will observe the next elections. In addition to the observers that will be sent from Europe, there will also be French Parliamentarians there, including some Senators at least, MPs, and some French MEPs.

Very briefly, I just want to say that we work very closely with the civil society and there is a programme for elite training, however, I cannot go into details. We have 200 trainees that came to France. It is a real effort to help the Iraqi University to recover. There is also a research development, and here I want to talk about the last innovative scheme we have set up. There is a French archaeological and social science research centre to be opened at Irbil in September with support of other French institutions, and this is very innovative.

In conclusion, reconstruction and renaissance of Iraq, as Kant would say, is a moral imperative whether it be political, geopolitical, economic or cultural. I hope I have convinced you that the decisions taken by President Sarkozy, and implemented by Minister Kouchner are very clear and determined. We are working alongside this new Iraq in this transition phase. Obviously, it is surrounded by some uncertainty, but also huge opportunities. It is now that France has to take up position and work alongside Iraq, not tomorrow. Thank you.

Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – Thank you, Ambassador, that was a very interesting presentation. However, you did not describe changes in the domestic situation in Iraq but we will come back to that point. We all feel that up until mid-2007 Iraq seemed lost, there was bloody insecurity, which was basically everywhere. Things have improved, it is one of the countries where the US has acted fairly and jointly with some success, we have to say. They were helped to some extent by some excesses of al-Qaeda, which made them hated and that helped. Iraq is a country with religious problems and these are difficult ones to tackle. You have not really given us all the information we had hoped to get, Ambassador, through your very interesting contribution.

I would like to give the floor to Mr Yasseen, who is going to tell us first of all how it is that he speaks such perfect French. That is not an easy thing to do for someone who is an Ambassador in his country and senior official at the very

highest level. Yesterday, over dinner, I was asking him if he did not intend to get involved in politics. He said, 'absolutely not'. I think that is probably a wise choice, Mr Yasseen. Please, sir, if possible give us an overview of the situation, where we come from, where we are headed, and how this transition - which has looked much more promising that we might have originally thought - is taking place.

Fareed YASSEEN, Ambassador, Government of Iraq - Thank you, Minister. I had thought I would speak English if people told me my French was good, but the only reason I speak French like this is because I, as you sir, am the son of a diplomat. I would like to thank you for inviting me to speak to you about the Iraq of today.

I think the title of our session is very appropriate and highly relevant. I think it is a good description of what is going on in Iraq right now. In Iraq, after a period, or a long absence, observed by my neighbour, we are seeing renewal, a renaissance. However, there is some irony in the title of this session. When you talk about renaissance, implicitly there is an idea of destruction. Iraq was destroyed through dictatorship based on the totalitarian Ba'ath ideology, which in Arabic means "renaissance."

Now, Iraq is being born again in a different form through a complicated political process which is not over with yet. It is a process that began through US intervention which pushed out the past regime. However, there are two features in this process, first of all, as in the first day, there was Iraqi will, that sometimes had to cope with some US reluctance to bring the process forward. Next, we can say the process contains within it the sources of its legitimacy, first of all internationally by involving, to the extent possible, the UN and the UN Security Council. There is also popular support through elections; the next ones will take place on March 7. However, the process has encountered resistance and I will talk about that later.

Why am I talking about a rebirth or renaissance in a different form? I am talking about it because we want to draw the lessons from our past and mistakes made in the past. Since the creation of Iraq, there has been a real contradiction. You see great centralisation of the super-structures of the Iraqi government and yet a very diverse population with many different communities, notably the Kurds. We have seen repression and militarism, which led to various coups, the first taking place back in the 1930s. This also explains the many wars conducted by the governments against several Iraqi communities in the south and the north; some of these wars lasted decades.

This is why the leaders of the main political parties in Iraq have negotiated with the agreement of the US occupation authorities on an action programme, on November 15, 2003, to engage Iraq in a process establishing a constitutional government in 2006. This process, approved by the UN Security Council in Resolution 1546, led to several stages. The first stage, the restitution of authority to an interim government approved by the United Nations, was done

in June 2004. The second stage, elections for a constitutional assembly, forming a transitional government entrusted with drafting a constitution was done in January 2005. The third stage, approval of the text of the constitution was undertaken in October 2005. After which election of a constitutional government took place in December 2005.

However, for us, that is not completed yet. First of all this has been scheduled, and we heard that there will be constitutional revision and the establishment of second house or Senate. Next, we have problems which we have inherited that need to be solved. What will we do with Kirkuk? There are internal borders that need to be redrawn, etc. These are matters that are going to require a great deal of attention, a great deal of goodwill and careful thought.

First of all, I would like to observe that the US occupation authorities wanted a completely different process. They wanted a process that would spread out over two years, leading to elections, not in 2005 but in the end of 2007. The reason why the Iraqi political forces exerted great pressure to obtain elections earlier was firstly to ensure legitimacy for the government up until the elections. There were people who said they were speaking on behalf of the Iraqi people, but we needed for that to be elections, a government that was legitimate and representative that could speak on their behalf and not be contested. Secondly, there had to be peoples' representatives, elected by the people to draft the constitution. The main idea the Americans had in mind at the time was the constitution would be written by experts. This was a point that Ayatollah Sistani, the religious authority most influential in Iraq, emphasised. I think he was right in lending great emphasis to that point. I mention this point because we often meet people who say the Iraqi constitution was written by American experts, I read this recently in *Le Monde*, and sometimes that newspaper does make mistakes.

What are the consequences of the political process? They are major consequences of historical order in Iraq. First of all, our Government is more representative of Iraqi diversity. This mainly means that the Shi'ite majority community in Iraq is no longer without a voice, sometimes this leads to reactions. People talked about Shi'ite dominance and this is a consequence of democracy.

A second point is the recognition of the Kurdish communities' accomplishments, which manages matters that are not constitutionally under the responsibility of the Baghdad government.

The third point is the decentralisation of power as shown through the Federal budget just passed, giving substantial resources to Governors. This is an important point for French businesses that wish to invest in Iraq. You will have to speak to people not only in Baghdad but in various Governors' offices.

The fourth point is readjustment of US presence and influence in Iraq leading to normalization. In the space of a few years the Americans have turned

from occupiers to partners. This is largely through their own will. Our relations are now governed by strategic agreements. One such agreement is a framework agreement, which includes many different economic, social, political and cultural relations. Also, we have an agreement which manages the presence of US forces in Iraq, who will be leaving Iraq once and for all at the end of 2011.

This did not all happen easily. We had to cope with insurrection, unprecedented terrorist activity, and with what I would not call civil war, but a war against civilians. Boris Boillon talked about an average of 60 deaths a day. In 2006/2007 but there were about 100 people killed a day in Baghdad alone. It is a huge figure. Regions and whole cities were forbidden areas with no state presence.

All of this has changed, as the Minister said earlier, and a new strategy has been enacted. We talked about the American surge, which was not just a military strategy but a political strategy also. Thanks to which it was possible to really turn things around completely. That strategy which was successful has meant that the insurgents and the terrorists are no longer a strategic threat for Iraq. They are still a threat as has been shown in recent examples alluded to by Boris Boillon - I almost was involved in one of those recent examples - but they are not going to be changing the forward-moving process.

Now there is worldwide acceptance of Iraq. France was one of the first countries to accept Iraq, thanks to the visits alluded to by Boris Boillon, but France is not the only country. There have also been very important regional developments. Egypt specifically, among others, made a strategic choice to come to Iraq's side, appointing an Ambassador. Recently they received our Prime Minister and we signed over 40 economic agreements with Egypt. Our neighbours from Turkey and Iran are competing with each other in Iraq in every field, the economy, politics and elsewhere. Very recently, international oil companies have committed to invest substantial amounts in Iraq which will mean that within about 10 years time, Iraq will hold the same position it held previously in OPEC, it might be the second oil producer in OPEC.

In a nutshell, I would say we are witnessing a true restoration. In the 1950s, Iraq was moving forward, this was all halted through a coup in 1958, then in the 1960s we continued moving forward to some extent, but that was really inertia more than anything. Then the Ba'athists arrived, Saddam's regime, which threw us to the sidelines. Now I believe we are very much in an upswing. I think this is all going to be consolidated through the upcoming elections that I have been mentioning. These elections are very important. Everything that has happened so far has been temporary or interim. Even the constitutional government we had, which lasted four years, seemed in many respects like a transitional government.

The strength of these elections is that we have an electoral legislation that gives special importance to the Iraqi voters compared to the parties. The previous elections were governed by a different electoral law, which favoured parties. The

elections to take place in March of 2010 will make it possible for Iraqi voters to vote for individuals. All Iraqi politicians are taking this very seriously now. Some of them are actually afraid at this point. I am here instead of the Vice President for that very reason. The Vice President is currently in election campaigns, I think he is campaigning in his home constituency right now. There is something very interesting in terms of these elections. It is not so much the elections themselves but rather the political process that will take place after the elections. In Iraq, initial elections gave rise to identity-based coalitions. I think in the March elections we are going to see some competition between the communities, and this may lead to the formation of coalitions that go beyond identity-based coalitions. We will see the emergence of politics like you are accustomed to here in France. Only time will tell.

Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – I would now like to give the floor to Mr Masroor Barzani. You know, Barzani is a true dynasty in Kurdistan. When we were in Irbil with Ms Cerisier-ben Guiga, capital of the Kurdish entity, we met with the President who was a Barzani, and I think the representative in Paris is also Barzani. I think if you are not a Barzani in Kurdistan, you have a hard time of it.

Mr Barzani, we have expectations of you. You are in charge of security and intelligence in your country, and we are hoping you will tell us where things stand for the Kurds. Can we talk about a Kurdish state? I do not know. What is the appropriate term for the situation because of course Kurdistan is part of Iraq but it is very autonomous. It has its Peshmerga, the defence force, a true army: they are highly disciplined and highly motivated. Kurds are part of Iraq, and at the same time they have made so much progress toward autonomy, have attracted foreign investments and have built a major modern airport in Kurdistan. When we were in Irbil we did not have to transit through Baghdad, we went directly to Irbil.

Tell us about Kurd autonomy. What are the prospects? Also, talk to us about the points that are still a source of disagreement with Baghdad, the central government, and particularly Kirkuk, the capital in the north. Where are things headed in Kirkuk? What solution do you envisage?

Masroor BARZANI, Head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party's (KDP) security and intelligence agencies - Thank you very much. I would be more than happy to give you a Kurdish perspective, a general overview of the situation in Iraq, and I would like to focus on what we believe may be the main problem, what the solution is and the best way forward. In that I hope that you find the answers to some of the questions that you raised.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is truly an honour to address you today. I have prepared a paper, so I am just going to read it out to you. In the birthplace of many of the democratic ideals towards which we now strive, as I stand before

you, I am reminded of the great traditions of the French people, the commitment to liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression. Those principles have been laid out over two hundred years ago in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. These values based on fraternity and equality, remain the foundation for all those seeking a more just world, a world where all men are presented fairly by their political institutions and where no man suffers brutal injustice by those entrusted to protect, preserve and promote the common good.

Inherent in the struggle to realise these goals, and the Declaration itself, are the warnings of the Baron de Montesquieu, that constant experience shows us that every man invested with power is apt to abuse it and to carry his authority as far as it will go. He wisely recognised, and history has since proven, that no government can aspire to the most basic of democratic ideals and no people can realise the most fundamental of human rights without adhering to separation of power, without the knowledge that the government should be set up so that no man need be afraid of another.

Few places so clearly symbolise the inherent danger of ignoring this edict than Iraq. Since Iraq's independence, Kurds, Arabs and other communities, have suffered from the unwillingness of some of Iraq's leaders to accept these basic principles. Religious and ethnic minorities have faced genocide at the hands of leaders intent on creating an idealised, strong central State out of the post-war fabrication that is Iraq. In their never-ending quest for uniformity, they have not found unity but division and ruin. The results have been devastating for all concerned, hundreds of thousands massacred, the vast promise of our people on oil wealth squandered. As one of the main components of Iraq, the Kurds have been the subject of a genocide war, they have been the victim of chemical attacks and a series of infamous and foul operations during which more than 182 000 people, mainly women and children perished and 90% of our villages were destroyed and levelled to the ground. This is well-known history, one that has resulted in a deep sense of mistrust and fear between individuals, communities, the people and the Government, where the disadvantaged, weak, or vulnerable, expect the strong to pillage and where a culture of revenge and retaliation have ruled.

It has been our hope that this tragic cycle would be broken by the adoption of federal democratic principles and the 2005 Iraqi Constitution ratified by over 80% of the voting Iraqi electorate. It has been our hope that a new era would begin, where our differences would no longer be misconstrued as our greatest weakness but instead become our greatest strength, each component competing peacefully and contributing to the betterment of the whole. A future where power would be dispersed and limited and as Montesquieu advocated, no man need fear another. However, the last few years have shown that many challenges remain. The security vacuum that has existed in many parts of the country has proven an invitation to international and local terrorists, who have played on our history of mistrust and won over segments of the population. The repugnant attacks have rejuvenated the sense of insecurity between Iraq's

communities, especially Shi'ite and Sunni, which undermine even a basic sense of fraternity between us.

Weak leaders have turned aboard allowing foreign entities with dubious intentions to play a role in directing our development, and ineptitude has bred invasive corruption that has permeated our bureaucracies, attracting profit seekers rather than civil servants. Under these circumstances, loyalty to sect and ethnicity, not surprisingly, continues to come before country. This is the reality of Iraq and wishful thinking, and lofty solutions cannot change this legacy. We must accept and understand it if we ever want to move beyond it and change the course of history. None of Iraq's people can thrive while some languish in fear. No progress or development can be realised without confidence in the fundamental rules of the system.

The Kurdistan region, however, despite all of these challenges, has managed to largely contribute to the unity of the country. It is today the safest and the most peaceful and secure part of Iraq which in turn has helped the economy of the region to flourish. This was mainly possible because of the dominant culture of tolerance and religious co-existence. The whole Kurdish experience, and the national reconciliation practiced in Kurdistan, could be a clear indication of how Iraq could move forward. At its heart, this is our struggle to establish the sort of division of power and rule of law that characterised modern democracies. These values are embodied in our constitution but it is only in their full and just implementation that we can find peace and progress. Without embracing these values we will inevitably slide again towards despotism, regardless of who leads. For the constitution is greater than any one conflict, issue or law. It extends beyond oil and gas, parliamentary seat allocation or budgets. It is about what type of state, what type of people and what type of community Iraq will become. It is the source of our ability to feel confident and safe to know that the new Iraq will be a break from the repressive past. It binds us together as different communities secure in our differences, but united in common goals of progress and justice. I stand before you committed to the federal and democratic principles laid out in the Iraqi constitution not because I am a Kurd but because like all Iraqis I am a victim of a despotic past.

In its recognition of the importance of strong local and regional government, the constitution reassures the long suffering Iraqi people that the new Iraq will avoid the over centralisation of power that has brought such devastation. For the betterment of all Iraqis it lessens the ferocity of the competition over any particular office by delegating authority and responsibility more widely. This delegation is essential for addressing corruption and creating the virtuous cycle of peaceful competition that reduces incompetence over time.

My message to you today is not pessimistic then, in many ways we are at an advantage, we have the answers to our biggest problems, we have voted on them, and agreed to their promise. We know what we must do. All that remains is the fortitude, wisdom, and courage to implement the democratic and federal system proven so effective to governing diverse societies and protecting

individual rights. This is the only way forward, the only way Iraq and its people have for creating the sort of unity and progress found elsewhere.

We as Kurds, and more broadly as Iraqis, and you as Frenchmen, Europeans, and more broadly the international community, cannot waiver in our commitment to these shared values. To overcome its most important hurdle of disunity, Iraq must be able to protect its people and give them confidence in its benevolence. It must reassure us that the powerful will no longer be oppressors, that regardless of religion, all Iraqis from Basra to Zakho, from Erbil to Baghdad, will have a say in their fate, will have the rights granted to them by our constitution. This is the basis for our fraternity and the only hope for Iraq's future. Thank you.

Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – Before I open the floor for questions I will kick-off myself. I find that our speakers, in particular Mr Barzani and the French Ambassador, have avoided the delicate issues, the tricky questions by deciding to talk about what France is doing in Iraq, which is very interesting of course. The Ambassador avoided giving an assessment of Iraq, he talked about the security problem much more. Mr Barzani has expounded a certain number of sentiments that we all subscribed to, he said nothing about Kirkuk.

I am going to corner them, and I am going to ask our Ambassador to explain to us and remind us why Iraq in 2007 seemed a lost cause but evolved. Everyone has criticized the United States, saying it was a terrible idea to invade Iraq. Since then things have turned around, why and how, Ambassador? Can you give us a quick run down on that please?

Boris BOILLON, French Ambassador to Iraq – **It is true there has been a turnaround in Iraq** - In a couple of years we have gone from total chaos to today's situation of much greater optimism. I think there was a partial answer to your question in Fareed Yasseen's statement. He talked about the American surge, which was the start of the change, and then there were other milestones such as the regional elections in January 2009. However, for the first time we could clearly see emerging an Iraqi national sentiment. Some political parties whose programme was about national unity won the election. Since then I think one can clearly see, emerging in all parts of Iraq, its desire to move on from the divide.

Even physically, one can see an explanation. The Algerian humorist Fellag said that when you dig deep enough, there comes a time when you stop and you can only go back up. Iraq went very far. Fareed Yasseen said in 2007 and 2008 we were talking about 150 to 200 fatalities a day in Baghdad and this cannot go on forever. There comes a time where you reach the low point and people start to change things. 2008 was really the change. Things have improved since then.

That is why these elections are a turning point, a watershed, which will lead us to further progress. There are five main coalitions that are standing for election, that of the current Prime Minister, the coalition that is lead by the Shi'ite Party, there is the Kurdish coalition, and there are two others that are so called secular coalitions, one headed by Allawi, former Prime Minister, and the other by Bolani, current Defence Minister. What is interesting is that all these coalitions have a programme that openly aims to move beyond religious and tribal differences. Now some people would say that this is just words, maybe but at least the words are being spoken. This exit from the crisis and conflict in Iraqi means that words are important.

You asked me about the root causes of this change in Iraq. Without wanting to be a barroom psychologist, it is the fact that people are talking now, and when people say that there is now a democratic basis in Iraq, it is not just words, it is true. I would say Iraq is the country in Arab Muslim world where there is the greatest and clearest freedom of the press. Each newspaper is attached to a certain party or trend, but there is freedom of the press. You can read in Iraqi newspapers now a very lively debate, exchange of ideas or criticism. I think it is this process too of speaking out, of saying certain things, that will help heal the wounds. This is a slow process that has started in Iraq now, and I personally think it is very dynamic.

Obviously, it is a question of whether you see the glass half-full or half-empty. Things are not perfect; there is a lot that is problematic. It has been very difficult to pass the electoral law. However, what is positive and encouraging in this crucible of new Iraqi democratic developments is that consensus is now possible in Iraqi institutions, for example, the current triple Presidency is not written into the constitution. It arose out of the conditions at the time of the civil war which was so atrocious that they felt it necessary to have three Presidents, each one representing a given confession. Now we are moving on from that, because after the upcoming elections there will be only one President.

The institutions that were set up *ad hoc* have created consensus, and the Presidential trio is absolutely outstanding. When there is a problem or a debate, the President and two Vice Presidents, get together, talk, and generate consensus, and things move forward, sometimes slowly. You were talking about Kirkuk just now, but I could talk about the hydrocarbon law. In fact there are four pieces of legislation in there. I could also talk about budget share-outs between Kurdistan and the rest of the country. Obviously, there are problems there, but there are issues in every country.

My personal view about this is not going to get us anywhere, although I have to be very careful with what I say, of course, because I do want to stay Ambassador. Kirkuk is a problem for the long term. It is a human problem of huge scale. There was terrible suffering, ten of thousands of families that were deported, I talk about bloodshed, death, awful memories, and this cannot be wiped away by an act of Parliament, this will take time. I think what is required

is trust in the Iraqis because they are in the front line. They have already solved a lot of the problems, and the March elections are a miracle. Indeed, I do not know many countries in the world where in a situation like Iraq two years ago, they would have been able to find the necessary resources to organise the regional elections that happened last year, and it will be the same this year in March. This is really exceptional and one cannot but acknowledge that.

Let us not put the cart before the horse. A lot of issues have already been solved by the Iraqis themselves, sometimes with the support of the United States whose positive role I underlined. The Americans did do a lot of damage but they also contributed, assisted and they put a lot of resources and effort into this. As for the big central issues, like Kirkuk, because here we are talking about identity issues, that will take time.

I would just like to stress that there is a living democracy now in Iraq that counts. It is not perfect. In the current elections, there have been problems like candidates who have been sidelined for rather unclear reasons. But overall the job is being done and things go forward.

Because you were talking about Kurdistan just now, I would say that the Iraqi constitution does plan for the creation of regions, because it is a federal republic. At the moment, there is only one region which is called KRG, the Kurdish Regional Government with provinces of Sulaymaniya, Erbil, and Dahuk, all within 15% of the surface area of the country. There is discussion between the regional government and the central government at the moment. Masroor Barzani quite rightly talked about this long tradition of distrust and that is not going to evaporate in a couple of months. However, work is underway, a commission has been set up by the central government and the regional government, in particular, to look at the so-called “disputed territories”. That is a good thing in itself. The UN is working presently in the field and they will help people to go forward. Obviously, there are discussions. There is a question of what percentage of the national budget should be allocated to Kurdistan.

The last point is that for me Kurdistan in Iraq is a fantastic gateway to the country, because there is total security, there are local specificities, local regulations that are very conducive to foreigners and foreign investment. It is true that we in France would like to use the north of Iraq, the KRG, which remains Iraqi, as a way to organize seminars and meetings. For you, the French people who want to enter the country, this could be the way in because from Erbil or Sulaymaniya you can then move to the rest of the country.

There is just one point that I have to be clear on as Ambassador. Iraq is one country, and I cannot imagine that that would change in the next 100 years. I think the Kurds and the Arabs has understood the advantage of their common interest to be united. There is clearly existing Iraqi identity which appears in the local dialect and references. There is an existing past, loaded with hatred, but there is a country that is called Iraq and that will last, I am absolutely convinced of that. Quite apart from conflicts that might well exist naturally as we do have as

well. France is a centralized country but think back to the beginning of the 20th century when the Bretons had French clubbed into them at school, and so this was what France was like not so long ago.

Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – Thank you very much for that interesting explanation. We will now open up the discussion to the floor.

Patrycja SASNAL, Polish Institute of International Affairs, Analyst, Middle East- I have enjoyed all three talks of the honourable panellists, I find it astonishing that all of you have painted the very same positive, optimistic picture of Iraq. I will give you just one number that I find alarming. The general perception is that Afghanistan and Pakistan are now the most dangerous parts of the world, and that this is the bloodiest conflict that we are facing. However, the recent reports give us a number of 2,500 civilian deaths in Afghanistan and 3,000 in Pakistan, whereas the official Iraq body count toll is 4,500 civilian deaths in 2009. I am thinking now if Iraq is the safest place in the region, and Afghanistan is the most unsafe place.

You are forgetting about the Ba'athist problem, because the Ba'athists do still have a lot of support within the Sunni community. The Shi'ites and the Kurds have their voice, but the Sunnis feel deprived of their voice. It is great that there is the tripartite Government, and there is a Sunni representative, but that does not mean that there will be no violence on the part of the former Ba'athists whose offices are still in Jordan or Syria. How do you see the integration of these people in Iraq? Do you think it is possible? Do we try to have connections, with these people? Do you see a solution to this problem?

Masroor BARZANI, Head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party's (KDP) Security and Intelligence Agencies - When I was talking about the security and I think a peaceful place, I tried to mention that the Kurdistan region is relatively secure and safe in comparison to the rest of the country. Nobody could deny that there is still violence and there are still bombings and there are still problems in the rest of the country, but it is our hope that the model followed in the Kurdistan region could be practiced elsewhere in the country. We could overcome the problems over the years and the time to come. We believe that the main problem is political before it is a security issue. If people do not have a reason to join insurgency or to allow particular terrorist organisations to come into the country, then they probably do not have to do that and this requires a compromise from all sides.

You mentioned the Sunnis who may feel that they are excluded from the political process. As a main component of the country, Iraq will never be complete without all the people that make up Iraq, so Sunnis are a main component of that country. They have to be a part of the political process in order to succeed in any process and in the upcoming elections too. The problem with the Sunnis in the last election is that they themselves decided to boycott the

election. We hope that this will not be repeated in this upcoming election. It will be up to the Sunnis to participate in the political process.

You mentioned the Ba'athists; obviously we have to make a distinction between those who have committed crimes during the Saddam era and those who were forced to become Ba'athists to keep their jobs and to avoid being expelled. If we make that distinction, I think there is a legal way to bring those who have committed crimes to justice. While those who were just simply Ba'athists because they had to be have to be given an opportunity to participate in the political process and to be reintegrated in the community.

Fareed YASSEEN, Ambassador, Government of Iraq - You talked about the Sunnis, there are Sunnis in the government, and there will be a lot of Sunni candidates standing in the elections in the next few weeks. The Sunnis will have a role in running the country, a voice in government. Does it exclude others? No. That is not possible any more. Their inclusion in the political process is a decision by all the Iraqi stakeholders in politics.

I will give you an example. Masroor Barzani has just said that the Arab Sunnis boycotted the elections to the constitutional assembly in January 2005. It is true, there were very few candidates representing them because of the electoral system that was inherited from the UN, but that is another question. What do we do? We made sure we included people who had not been elected and who represented that community in order to draft the constitution. I will give you two examples: Adnan Pachachi, who is an eminent diplomat, former Foreign Minister, and Saleh el-Motlaq, who is being talked a lot about today. They both were involved in writing the constitution so there is an effort towards inclusion. The criterion from the next government is that it is an inclusive one. I think, and hope, it will meet the criterion.

I would just like to add something, because you asked Boris Boillon for what reason Iraq has moved on from the hell it was in 2007 to something acceptable in 2008. There are several reasons. Firstly, the US surge and developments in the Iraqi Sunni community that turned against Al Qaeda, that is a very important factor, made this evolution possible.. Then there was a political decision by the Prime Minister to act against the Shi'ite militia in Basra and then Baghdad. That really made a difference.

Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – This is especially important because the Prime Minister himself is a Shi'ite. By acting against the Shi'ite insurgency in the south, he showed that he was above religious divisions, which conferred national authority upon him, and in fact his campaign platform was about national themes. However, I don't know whether the upcoming elections will enable him to continue in that direction, I think I asked this question yesterday, and you said it is impossible to know.

Fareed YASSEEN, Ambassador, Government of Iraq - I have a comment on the elections next March. Nobody can reliably predict who will be the Iraqi Prime Minister. I think that is meaningful, because it is the elections that will give a verdict.

Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – That is a very good sign, as long as the best man wins. I like elections, they are a good idea, but sometimes they return a rather surprising result, which is what happened with Hamas. I remind you that Hamas in the last elections in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, came out well ahead. Nonetheless, the Western world, led by the US, probably at the instigation of Israel, all stated that the voters had got it wrong, and just ignored Hamas and thus the elections. Sometimes the ballot box gives you a result other than the one you wanted. Despite the scepticism, I think we have time for two more question.

From the floor - In the 1980s I worked in Iraq a lot at the time of Saddam Hussein. Women played a very important role. I was in telecommunications, there were women who were heads of department, directors and engineers. Will this new society be a secular one, and will women play that sort of role? Moreover, what will happen to the Christians?

Philippe de SUREMAIN, former Ambassador to Iran - Just now you talked about the re-emergence of an Iraqi state. How do you see its relations with two major neighbours, Iran and Turkey, because Egypt is not the only one involved?

Fareed YASSEEN, Ambassador, Government of Iraq - 25% of the Iraqi Parliament are women.

Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – We here could not claim the same.

Fareed YASSEEN, Ambassador, Government of Iraq - They really are playing a role. I was very proud recently because there was a new round of Ambassadors appointed including three women. This is an excellent idea and I attach great importance to this. My mother was a university professor and now a retiree. My aunts were doctors. And it is still like that. If you go to Iraqi universities, you will see that most of the students are women and those who come out top of their year are usually women. Sooner or later, we will be governed by them.

As for the Christians, that is a major issue. The presence of Christians is vital, essential, to Iraq and I speak as someone who studied in a school founded by American Jesuits, where I had a lot of Christian friends. Iraq would not be the

same without them. They have to stay, they have to be protected. Unfortunately, it is a vulnerable population, they have been horribly targeted. But I can assure you that the State is doing everything it can to protect them and to make sure they play their full role.

Iran and Turkey are our two most important neighbours, and not just because of water. Iraq is one of the few countries that, because of natural interest, is obliged to have excellent relations with Iran and with the United States. I think we are managing to do it. Sometimes we managed to bring them together, get them sitting around the same table. Our problem is to make sure that we can speak to them on an equal footing. To do so we have to build our country and that is what we are doing. Iran has been at our side in rebuilding Iraq. I remember the first visit of the new government to the United Nations in 2003: we were virtually ignored by the representatives of the Arab countries, but we were invited to dinner by the Iranian permanent representative. A lot of our leaders spend years of exile in Iran, they have personnel friendships with Iranian and Syrian leaders, so we have a good relationship with Iran.

Turkey is our main trading partner and that is not likely to change. For the Turks, it is fair to say that they are now reaping the benefit of their courage because over the last six years they have been present throughout the country. They were the first movers and they have had the first movers' advantage with respect to the Iraqi economy. You have to see what they are building and investing into Kurdistan. We are in the process of building a centre that will host the government, in the Green Zone, and it is a Turkish company that is involved in that.

The Latest on Al Qaeda?

Panel

Monique CERISIER-ben GUIGA, Senator, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – During our trip with Jean François-Poncet, thanks to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate, between the last quarter of 2008 and first semester of 2009, we asked ourselves several questions. We asked about the latest on al-Qaeda. We had a premonitory opening in Yemen, as it seemed to us that Yemen was obviously the next basis for al-Qaeda. Almost everywhere there was such Byzantine questions about whether it is al-Qaeda, or whether people are now doing bombings and trying to make themselves important by saying it was al-Qaeda bombing. Are they working indirectly for al-Qaeda? Are they becoming important through their affiliation to al-Qaeda? Do they commit terrorist acts on behalf of al-Qaeda in the hope of being taken on board in al-Qaeda?

For today, we have three specialists who are going to give us an opportunity to either answer those questions or reformulate the questions in more detail. The first one is Mr Alain Chouet, who is a man on the frontline. There will be no philosophy from him; he will talk about hard facts. Mr Chouet has just published an article in *Marine* magazine called, “*Afghanistan, the tartar desert?*”. Then after hearing stories from the frontline, there will be Jean-Pierre Filiu, a diplomat, currently a visiting Professor of Political Sciences at Georgetown (USA). He has published several books on al-Qaeda, the latest was called *The Nine Lives of Al-Qaeda*; it reads almost like a novel. Lastly, we have François Heisbourg, special advisor at the Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique. A year ago, he published a book called *After Al-Qaeda*. After the detailed explanation of Jean-Pierre Filiu, we will ask him to give us a conclusion on what can be expected in the near future.

Alain CHOUET, Former Chief of the Security Intelligence Service, French Foreign Intelligence Service - You may not all be familiar with the French Security Intelligence Service: we are responsible for collecting intelligence and implementing active security measures outside of our territory. We deal with counter-criminality, counter-espionage, counter-proliferation, counter-terrorism, amongst other things. We work abroad and obviously illegally and it is all very secret. It gives you quite a strange specialized vision of the world. I am not going to say ineptly what Jean-Pierre Filiu, and François Heisbourg, are going to say much more aptly later on. I am just going to give you the “intelligence” perspective of the issue.

I hesitated, first of all, in accepting the invitation to take part in this type of necromancy exercise as I think that the questions considered as Byzantine are less Byzantine than they seem at first sight. Like many other professionals around the world, I think on the basis of crosscutting information that al-Qaeda is operationally dead since the Tora Bora operations in 2002. The Pakistani Secret Services continued to make us believe that al-Qaeda was still alive between 2003 and 2008 in exchange for generosity and indulgence.

Out of the 400 active members in the organisation recorded in 2001, there are less than 50 of them, mostly sidekicks, apart from Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, who are not operational, that we feel are now living hidden in inaccessible areas and they have very rustic means of communication. There is a very good description of terrorist networks in Marc Sageman's book *Understanding Terror Networks*. With only that skeletal head group left, how can they organize a global-scale network of political violence? Now we had attacks in Bali, Bombay, Sharm al-Sheikh, London, Madrid, Casablanca, Djerba and so on. It is obvious that none of the post-September 11 terrorists ever have had contact with the head of the organization of course. Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri do sometimes claim that they masterminded these attacks. However, even if they could be authenticated, there cannot be any functional or operational links between these terrorists and the remains of the organization.

However, we still say that al-Qaeda is behind any act of violence committed by a Muslim or when there are Muslims in the wrong place at the wrong time. For example, when there was a chemical plant explosion in Toulouse, or when there are attacks that do not involve Muslims like the anthrax attacks in the US, we keep on saying that Muslims are behind all these attacks, that al-Qaeda is behind all these attacks. I think that we are giving it strength just by saying so. It is a bit like Amédée in the Eugène Ionesco play, who does not exist, but you keep talking about it, and in the end you do not know how to get rid of it.

We keep mentioning this mythical terrorist organisation, qualified as "hyper-terrorist"; it is mythical not because it was powerful, but because it went against the "hyperpower". This has had some adverse and counter-productive effects. For example, any person in the Muslim world, whatever their political place on the spectrum, if they want to undertake a violent action, they have to say that they are with al-Qaeda if they want to be taken seriously, to have their action legitimated by others and recognised internationally.

In addition, all Muslim Governments around the world, they are not all virtuous, have understood that their opponents should be labelled as belonging to Bin Laden's network, and they sometimes get help from Western powers when doing this. There are so-called designated, or self-designated, forces reportedly working for al-Qaeda in Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, the Maghreb and elsewhere on the Arabian peninsula.

That has been a very stupid move because the effect it has had is to reinforce the idea that al-Qaeda is omnipresent, that all Muslims belong to al-Qaeda and that al-Qaeda is lying in wait to attack the West, and the United States more precisely.

That sort of vision is the result of a number of judgement and perspective errors, and this also leads to responses that do not work. If al-Qaeda does not exist, the Islamic political violence does exist and the West is just an indirect and collateral victim. The ideologues of Islamist violence are not “crazy for God”: they have some specific aims. Their objective is not to spread Islam everywhere in the world without any intervention of the West, a bit like the approach of Hassan Turabi in Sudan. Now, perhaps, we as Westerners will feel our ego is weakened but we must admit that the first victims of Islamic violence and the main and most numerous ones, are the Muslims themselves.

The epicentre of the Islamic violence is neither in Afghanistan, nor in Iraq, it is in Saudi Arabia. It is that country that was the first target of the “Manifesto against the Jews and Crusaders”, which was the founding text of the Bin Laden organisation at the end of the 1990s. It also targeted the Saudi royal family before it targeted Jews and “Crusaders” and as said by Antoine Sfeir, it is the only country in the world with a family name.

Saudi Arabia is, relatively speaking, in the same situation as France was in the first half of the 1789. A family took power in 1926, whose legitimacy is based on religion. They usurp the guard of holy places of Islam to their historic guardians who belonged to the Hachemite family. This is the Saud family, who comprises about 3000 Princes. It concentrates all power, and also concentrates in its hands all the revenue from oil exploration of the most hydrocarbon-rich subsoil in the world. Therefore, the Saud family has blocked the way to any expression of democracy or pluralism in order to maintain its legitimacy faced with any contestation. It propagates a fundamentalist type of Islam as widely as it can in order not to be upstaged. It is simply stepping to the fore, a bit like the Soviet Union, they did not want any enemies or any competitors, and the Saudi family is acting in the same way.

However, oil revenues have dropped, and this has led to the development of trade and industry. Of course the princes could not keep their hands away from that, and this means that the arena is now open to non-royal blood, entrepreneurs from other countries that were of course Muslims, mostly from Yemen, and broadly from Syria, the Levant, Lebanon, and Palestine. Some of these entrepreneurs underscore, quite rightly, just like the bourgeoisie in 1789, that they are the ones who are actually doing all the work and laying the ground for the country’s future. And, therefore, they should be treated fairly and included in the exercise of power or should also benefit from the revenue of the oil industry, that until recently went straight into the personal pockets of the royal family.

Now how can these claims be heard in a country where there is no pluralist democratic speech? How can you legitimize a power that says it is in its place by divine right? How can you exert pressure on a royal family who has been enjoying since 1945, after the personal pact of Quincy between Ibn Saud and Roosevelt, the political protection and the military support of the US in exchange of the monopoly on the exploitation of their oil industry?

Opponents to this theocracy can only use a good sprinkling of revolutionary violence and of fundamentalist escalation against the ruling power and also external protectors of the country who avoid the power to collapse. It is not surprising that you find amongst the most violent Muslim activists a significant number of the children of the so-called bourgeoisie I mentioned that cannot participate actively in governing the country but that does not lack of money or ideas. That is how you found Bin Laden, that is how he was propelled into violent activity, into fundamentalism, by the Saudi royal family. They thought that it was quite expedient to have the external interests of the royal family be defended by people outside of the royal family, instead of themselves. That is a classical error made by social climbers.

There were many adventures, of course, and the children of this bourgeoisie met the wrong people, came under the wrong influence, and they came back to bite their masters on the hand. That is how in the mid-1980s this permanent escalation of religious fundamentalism and struggle for control of the Islamic world started between the Saud family and its rivals, or opponents, within and outside. The Iran-Saudi Arabia conflict was largely responsible for escalating this Muslim fundamentalist spiral.

That spiral, because there were not enough human resources, because there were no skills in external interventions, was made possible only because there was so much money in Saudi Arabia. That money is being squandered and being given to lots of countries in the Islamic world and to immigrant communities. And of course it went straight into the pockets of a structured international terrorist organisation like the Muslim Brotherhood and its violent arm, the Jamia Islamia. That is to say Islamist groups, of which the al-Qaeda of Bin Laden is only one of the components.

Everywhere jihadist violence is expressed, it is always in the weaker parts of the Muslim world, and it is always based on three components. Firstly, this ideological and financial spiralling of the Saudi regime and of its local opponents or rivals. Secondly, a strong local presence of the Muslim Brotherhood or the Jamia Islamia. They profit from this spiral, they use all political and economic and social contradictions to set public opinion against local powers and to dissuade the Western world from supporting the country or intervening. The Muslim world benefits from being hated from the outside world. For the third component, we are partly to blame. It is diplomacy. Western and US diplomacy, and intelligence services have supported, often military, the most reactionary and religious fundamentalist regimes against the Soviet Union up to the 1990s and there was the Iran containment policy in the 1980s.

For very different reasons linked to unresolved local disagreements or badly mastered external interventions, it is that cocktail, with those three ingredients, that produces the same effects in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indonesia, Yemen, Somalia, the Maghreb, the Sahel countries, Iraq, and the lawless areas amongst Muslim communities in Western countries. I will not go into the details, but you have to realise that if they all develop in the same way, it has to be admitted that they correspond to very different local realities, and the players, those responsible, do not really communicate between themselves. However, if they are all agitating the same flags and claiming that they are with al-Qaeda it is because it serves their purposes against the West and particularly the US; it strengthens them. They are all supposed to be able to support even the most controversial States.

Of course you might object that jihadi violence does exist, and is spreading everywhere along the same patterns. Does it matter that it is called al-Qaeda? This could be taken as the generic label of a globalized Jihad violence. A certain number of more cautious journalists do not talk about al-Qaeda, they talk about the al-Qaeda cloud, but that is very cloudy. However, it is because of that confusion in the language that there cannot be a proper solution or response.

Of course, there are two ways of moving into political terrorist violence: either you set up a structured political military group with agenda, objectives and clear leadership, which is like an army with professionals. Then, of course, you enter into pseudo-military clashes, which was the case of most revolutionary terrorist or independent movements in Europe, in South America, and in the Middle East, up until the end of the 20th century.

There is also the lone wolf solution, which is to say that you are both within the mainstream and with the rebellion. You rally to your side the weakest parts of society, you encourage people to undertake lone acts and strike where they can, when they can, as they can, it does not matter as the act is signed and claimed by the movement and belongs to its general strategy. The lone wolf technique is not new, it is called lone wolf because it is well known in the US. Mr William Pierce wrote a theory on it in his *Turner Diaries*, which stayed a bestseller throughout the 1990s. It is inspirational, in fact, to most white supremacists and Christian fundamentals. I will mention only the Atlanta and Okalahoma City bombings, and other individual attacks that resulted in a larger number of dead than 9/11.

That is the way of acting of several groups in the third world like the Grey Wolves in Turkey, or the Muslim Brotherhood elsewhere. There are local acts of violence in the Muslim world that correspond to the first model, but the second model explains the Jihadi violence in the West and elsewhere in Arab countries.

All intelligence services know that you cannot fight the lone wolf technique using military material means, armoured cars or increased indiscriminate security measures. The only way you can fight the lone wolf

methodology is through targeted actions that are underpinned by political, social, economic, educational, and cultural measures that will cut off the perpetrators of violence from the sources that finance them and inspire them.

There have been no real serious measures that have targeted the source of funding and ideology of Jihadi violence. Al-Qaeda was considered to be the permanent enemy and there have only been inappropriate military and security responses. It is a bit like using a machine gun to kill a mosquito, you miss the mosquito but there is huge collateral damage, as can be seen in Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and Yemen.

The first effect of that unproductive crusade was to boost and to provide more credence to the terrorists, to legitimize that form of violence and to make it the only possible frame of reference for affirmation. Let us not forget that the Muslim world has been traumatized as Muslims are often suspected, it has been under attack and massive, lasting and blind military occupation year after year. For nine years now, the Western world has been attacking the tribal areas in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, also Somalia and Palestine. Why not Yemen? Why not Iran? For Muslims, Bin Laden is still mocking the rest of the Western world by running free from the largest army in the world and the Islamist regime of Saudi Arabia is still under complete protection of the US.

To conclude, and to provide my input to this panel, what is the latest with al-Qaeda? It died sometime between 2002 and 2003, but before dying it was reinforced and strengthened by the Westerners' mistakes and by the mistakes of some Muslim regimes as well. It has actually disseminated. The question is whether we will make the same mistakes again, we will feed a spiral of violence. We hope that with partners, both Arab and Muslim, we will be able to prevent the proliferation of rhinoceroses, to refer again to Ionesco.

Monique CERISIER-ben GUIGA, Senator, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – This goes to show that field experience in difficult conditions really is food for interesting thoughts. Consider the decorations Alain Chouet has received in his career and all that experience. He expressed very original ideas that are very interesting and somewhat unusual. Jean-Pierre Filiu will now look through the various lives of al-Qaeda that he eluded to in a recent book of his, to try and answer this question, i.e., where does al-Qaeda stand now?

Jean-Pierre FILIU, Professor, Middle East Chair at Sciences Po Paris, Visiting Professor at Georgetown University - Thank you very much, Madam Senator. Thank you to Minister François-Poncet, and also thank you to the Senate Committee for providing us with this report that sheds so much light on matters. The conclusions on Yemen were very interesting, and forward-looking. We see that you have a forward-looking view. On Christmas Eve, various manipulations going on in the lower part of a passenger seat, all of a sudden meant that Yemen came to the headlines internationally. This was well after Yemen should have been in the headlines. We can say that in the past month, up

until London a few days ago, there has been a great deal of media attention, everybody all of a sudden has become worried once again about safety. I think that makes this morning's panel discussion become ever more imperative. We must never give in to fascination or amazement when we are looking at al-Qaeda.

I do not have Alain Chouet's experience from the field and I will take a different tack. I will be more basic whereas he has more of a theoretical overview that I could not make any claim to myself. Al-Qaeda did not die between 2002 and 2004. Al-Qaeda is an organisation that was established in August of 1988 by one person, Osama Bin Laden, who is the Emir, the Commander of this organization. All of its members have to pledge personal and absolute allegiance. The chief is still active, he reminded us this on Sunday by claiming the rights to the fiasco in Detroit.

However, it is interesting that Alain Chouet talks about the death of al-Qaeda, because actually this is something I have been saying in *The Nine Lives of Al-Qaeda*. The idea in my book is that al-Qaeda keeps being reborn in a different form. There is something striking, and this is a real intellectual challenge - and is, therefore, an operational challenge, a political challenge and so forth. This organization is a very limited organisation actually: Alain Chouet talked about 400 members at the time of September 11, and now there are between 1,000 and 2,000. So one-in-one million Muslims, that is a very limited proportion. This limited organization has had this incredible ability to regenerate itself, to undergo metamorphosis and to count on the mistakes of their proclaimed enemies or overinvestment, turning them into public enemy number one, and Bin Laden into the chief of some supposed international organization that just looks like an international organization virtually through the Internet. It was transformed into a rallying point and many people who otherwise would have had nothing to do with the organization, ended up within it, or identifying with it.

Al-Qaeda is highly unusual and very different, not in the methods it has used, though there was a change of scale, but it is especially different when you look at its view of jihad. This will be the first and the last organisation of its type, an incredible aberration in the history of Islam, which has been here for 14 centuries already. It is the first organisation to call for a global jihad, this is something entirely new. The idea that you are disconnecting the jihad from a people or a territory, and saying the front is a global front is totally new. In addition the global jihad is targeting individuals, and not groups or communities, as opposed to the tradition, and Islamic jurisprudence. This makes it possible to establish a link with the lone wolves that could fall into these traps.

Therefore, this global jihad is based on a dialectic which is very strong. Alain Chouet told us that the vast majority of al-Qaeda victims are Muslims and, he said, the victims in the West were "collateral" victims, that was his adjective. This is the dialectic between the remote enemy and the near enemy. The remote enemy is America and its allies, including France among others. Remember, we have gone up a couple of ranks recently in terms of potential targets for al-

Qaeda. Several rungs in fact, our country's situation has become fairly disquieting if you look at the various al-Qaeda press releases.

Then you have the closer enemy, who is the strategic enemy. It is the Muslim enemy: al-Qaeda feels it is a bogus Muslim. Al-Qaeda wants to bring him under control. It is a revolutionary organization like the Japanese Red Army, or the Red Army Faction were revolutionary organisations about 30 years ago. Just like them, al-Qaeda knows it does not have a way of actually combating the near enemy. So it is trying to combat the distant enemy, that way it can destabilize the near enemy, and at the same time generate such chaos that it is possible to use this wave of national sentiment to sometimes gain new recruits, being less and less attracted otherwise to the global jihad program.

I was struck when Ambassador Boris Boillon in the previous panel said "the Americans were leaving and therefore security is improving". That is an objective observation, but we have to carefully mull this over and think it through to understand it. It is true, the arrival of the distant enemy destabilises the near enemy, and helps al-Qaeda among others. In Iraq before the surge, General Petraeus was smart enough to accept a reality he had not created: the national and anti-American jihad. The nationalist guerrilla had identified al-Qaeda as its strategic enemy after two or three years of tactical alliances. The global jihad was in contradiction in terms of the objectives and practices, with the aims of the national jihad restricted to the territory of Iraq.

That contradiction between the national jihad and the global jihad will always be fatal to the global jihad. This is the case in Iraq where al-Qaeda was reduced to what it is today. It has not disappeared entirely from Iraq, where it continues to act under the label of "Islamic State". This is a sad irony. In October of 2006, it proclaimed a caliphate on the Internet. It is its eighth life that I call the "caliphate of the shadows". Of course, it did not work, but when you are a totalitarian organization, it is hard to accept a return to reality. We can be, strategically speaking, fairly grateful to the Iraqi guerrilla warfare to have done the bulk of work against al-Qaeda, the Americans then completed it through General Petraeus enlightened work. We can learn some lessons from this for the future.

Where does al-Qaeda stand today? It is at the end of a life, maybe a cycle, there are many arguments which would speak in favour of that. Or al-Qaeda may be preparing a 10th life, a rebirth. In that case, I think we have many sources of concern, even if we do not want to cry wolf, whether it is a lone wolf or not. Now the main trends that I am trying to describe over the 21 years of al-Qaeda's existence would speak in favour of its irreversible decline. Firstly, because it is unable to get a territorial base where it always encounters forces that are not democratic or moderate, or good. But they are active in a national framework and they try to eliminate the missile being shot at them at their operational theatre, which can disturb their own plans regarding that territory.

We can see that there is an absence of a territorial base and an inability to influence the Muslim world. What impact has al-Qaeda had on a crisis in the Muslim world, since its beginning? They had an impact on our society, but in the Muslim world they have not had any impact. Al-Qaeda has not had an impact, except as Alain Chouet said, it has just served as something that could speak out against in order to weaken some regimes.

We have seen it weakening as well, because there is a deeper discrepancy between the reality and the virtual world and al-Qaeda is using the Internet too much. Most importantly, I think al-Qaeda is condemned, not terminated, but condemned, due to its vitiated and vicious relation with Islam. I talked about the global Jihad, this is a way of very much getting off track, it is like a sect. There is a charismatic guru expressing himself from time to time; there is his Egyptian deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri; they have a speech about the Jihad. From an Islamic point of view, this is heresy; their conclusion is that the person doing the Jihad is in direct relationship with his creator, and no longer needs the mediation of the clergy. They are just conveying bits on their Internet site, and it is doing well. I will come back to that later.

These main trends would speak for weakening but at the same time, al-Qaeda can adapt very easily because it is such a lightweight organization and it is not anchored anywhere. The 10th life, which may come about in the near future, is fairly simple but nevertheless terrifying. First of all, it would be related to a direct Western aggression. We can see very well provocations are accumulating. They are meant to attract the Americans to Yemen, or maybe to Pakistan, or to Iran as Zawahiri has said several times. A conflict between the United States and Iran would really be a dream for al-Qaeda as it would weaken the Arab states of the Gulf. It would lead to religious sedition and it would lead to such chaos in the region that al-Qaeda would manage to make a go of it. Therefore, there is this aggression that could take place if triggered by various provocations, and we have to carefully analyse this possibility.

The 10th life, ideally, for al-Qaeda, would be a "Pakistanization." It is already fairly advanced if you look at al-Qaeda's references. Basically it can no more talk about any sheik, even Salafist or Jihadist and so it talks about Pakistan or Afghan sheiks who are unknown in Arab states. It contributes to the fact al-Qaeda is getting more exotic. Next, the Pakistani Taliban has grown up with the al-Qaeda ideology of the post September 11. These are fairly young executives and anti-tribal people who came about through the elimination of hundreds of tribal personalities and chiefs in border areas of Afghanistan. We see very well that though Alain Chouet continues talking about the centrality of Saudi Arabia, there is another pan-Islamism where you can withdraw, that is the pan-Islamism of a Republic which was created historically to welcome Muslims from the Indian subcontinent. It is a battle for the destiny of Pakistan and its identity. The power play is to the detriment of al-Qaeda.

But we can remind us Ahmed Shah Massoud, who was the most determined enemy of Bin Laden. During his stay in Paris in 2001, he was saying

that, “Bin Laden and al-Qaeda are the glue holding together the Afghan Taliban”. I would tend to say, today, the glue holding together the heteroclite coalition of the Pakistani Taliban, and the various Jihadist groups from Punjab and Pakistani Kashmir, is al-Qaeda, with the waves of terrible attacks, and bombings, we saw in recent months in the cities of Pakistan.

Today, therefore, towards the end of its ninth life, al-Qaeda would appear to bide its time through all provocations mentioned in the media. Their hope is there will be a breakthrough in Pakistan for the revolutionary Jihad and their allies. Thanks to which in that 10th life, they will be able to find a new area to anchor themselves. Now, a provocation might just be a mental construct but it would probably be around India. Recently people talked a lot about the Indian Airlines bombing, and renewed provocations as in November 2008 in Bombay. It would more be in that area where al-Qaeda may become active.

Where I would agree entirely with Alain Chouet is, in this second heat, so to speak, of the winter of 2001/2002, when al-Qaeda was on the verge of disappearing but did not. What we are seeing right now will be decisively important in terms of the future of global terrorism and its aftermath.

Since we do have to give some advice, I would just mention how we could contend with this threat, which I continue to view very carefully, and feel it is a very worrisome threat. In my book’s conclusion I talked about the “three D’s.” First, there is de-globalization; I think there is agreement. We have to stop constantly helping al-Qaeda by acting like they were some sort of global leaders orchestrating some local crisis. It does not mean that the crises are not important and serious, it does not mean that these are careful leaders of Montesquieu works, but it means we are talking about generally local crisis, which generally call for local solutions in terms of territory, politics, power sharing and so on. Usually when you do see an expression of this, like General Petraeus in 2007 with guerrilla warfare with the Sunni, then we can say that al-Qaeda’s approach has been emptied of its contents.

The second D is detoxifying. We have to stop mixing everything up. We know the differences between Islam, Islamism, Jihad, Jihadist, terrorism, Islamofascism, etc. We have to stop mixing up all these terms, because that is just helping the most extremist elements, and consequently al-Qaeda. Another way of reducing this toxic atmosphere is acting and using the Internet. Today, al-Qaeda has a free hand on the Internet, and it can continue spouting its messages of hatred and its calls for murder. It is a risk of one in a million, but if these calls trigger the acts of a lone wolf, then I would say this is not an acceptable risk. If there is a relationship between the information that you can draw by monitoring these sites, and the risk of letting these sites continue operations, then I think it is clear we must not be reluctant to wage war on these sites, there is no technical impediment there. We could not actually state this publicly, but we could wage an all out technical war against these Internet sites.

Then my third point, contradictory with the virtual war I talked about, is the third D, which is demilitarization. Far too often, we have used the war vocabulary which tended to increase the prestige of the martyrs and mujahideen of al-Qaeda. It is a criminal organization, these are common law criminals, and in Spain there were precedent civil rulings against al-Qaeda members. I can say that I have spent some of my time monitoring these Jihadist sites, and we can say that we have never seen pictures of the Jihadists on their websites when they are brought before the courts, whereas there were lots of pictures from Guantanamo, and military courts, and that has assisted them. I know that in this respect I am very much in agreement with my neighbour to my right, I will be only too happy to give him the floor. Thank you for your attention.

François HEISBOURG - Special Advisor at the Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique in Paris - It is a delight to be with you this morning, and just like Jean-Pierre Filiu, I would like to pay tribute to the work done by the Commission. It is really an outstanding piece of work that they have done.

The good news is that al-Qaeda, a global transnational terrorist organisation, is still alive, but it is not in good shape. Organizations like individuals have a limited life cycle. Al-Qaeda did not exist 20 years ago, and there will come a time when it will no longer exist. Let me say something about that bit of good news further on, but what I wanted to focus on more is the fact that al-Qaeda is in bad shape but it does not necessarily matter that much. What matters is a number of other things, though not necessarily good news, sometimes bad.

We have already talked about the fact that al-Qaeda is not in good shape. I, in this respect, just want to pick up on a few measures. I know one should not over quantify things too much when we are talking about complex areas where things are often not quantifiable but all the measurable indicators can be useful as well. The operational record of al-Qaeda as a global organisation is in a decline, and has been for some time. There has been no successful attack by al-Qaeda in the industrialised world since 7 July 2005 in London, apart of the Fort Hood incident in the United States, and when I say al-Qaeda, there are different definitions that one might use for that. Secondly, the human toll of those attacks - and that is an important factor, of course, apart from the theatre of operations in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in the Indian subcontinent - cannot be considered positive by al-Qaeda. Apart from those parts of the world that I just mentioned, the last attack that killed 100 people or more was Madrid 2004 and the latest to kill 1,000 or more was 11 September. Now obviously such metrics are not the only yardstick for measuring al-Qaeda, but it is still important.

Operational successes by al-Qaeda – those that can be considered like successes for it - concentrate now in its native territory. To quote Mr Filiu's recent article, he said al-Qaeda “does well near home”.

On a political and ideological record it is hardly better. Total failure of al-Qaeda in Iraq. In the Maghreb countries, it can hardly be said that politically and

ideologically speaking, they have had much success. In the Arabian Peninsula, perhaps there is some positive outlook in Yemen for them, but across the board they have not been doing that well. There I would agree with Mr Filiu when he said that they do not seem to have much clout, in terms of changing things around the world.

The reasons are well known. However, let me briefly go through them because if this is a Middle East symposium, so one tends to talk about the Middle East, which makes sense but we are perhaps missing a few other things. Why is al-Qaeda's track record necessarily disappointing for them? Firstly, a very ideological reason, al-Qaeda has a global ambition but it conveys such an exclusive message of purity that it becomes counterproductive and turns off just about everybody. The "world of non-belief is one", to quote something that al-Qaeda would say a few years back but now "non-belief" is virtually everybody. al-Qaeda has now turned against the Muslims, and brought in measures and steps that have produced hundreds of thousands of victims, which did not make al-Qaeda popular in the Muslim world. And above all al-Qaeda is responsible for *fitna*, the total disorder to quote the title of a book by Gilles Kepel.

The second main reason for the decline of Al Qaeda is the maybe inevitable but very real strategic error to go into Iraq. It was probably too tempting because as Jean-Pierre Filiu said the distant enemy has suddenly come close to your door, they were within range of bombs, grenades, and all the rest of it. It looked wonderful, and they got off to a very good start from 2003-2007. However, as Jean-Pierre said, the upshot has been that the Iraqi counterinsurgency undermined Al Qaeda and so it failed in its attempt to re-establish a territorial basis, following the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

The third cause for Al Qaeda's decline is that all services contributing to repression, from intelligence to law enforcement and policing services did quite good work. I understand why Alain Chouet did not want to make a *pro domo* appeals. 12 Jihadist attacks that have been prevented in France over the last 13 years are listed, including those on the White Paper on terrorism. If those services had not done their job, then some of those attacks would have been a success for their perpetrators. The reason they did not succeed is because there are people working out there to stop them. I would like to pay tribute to these people whose job it is, who are paid to do it, maybe they are not paid that much, but they have done a very good job. In France, Germany, and elsewhere Al Qaeda has achieved zero success, not because they did not try but to a large extent because of counter-terrorism.

Why is it that this decline that I have just described does not really matter that much, or why does it not have the significance we would like to read into it? It is wonderful, we are winning, but as we know, cats only have nine lives, they do not have ten. I think that once you have killed them nine times, Al Qaeda will go the same way as anarchism 100 years ago, or "Red terrorism" of the 1970s in Western Europe. Why, unfortunately, can we not consider that the decline of Al Qaeda is wholly good news?

Firstly, there are various ways of looking at it. There are failures by Al Qaeda that unfortunately are equivalent to victories, not from their viewpoint, but from ours. Firstly, because, and when I say we, that means in politics, and media, and analysis on both sides of the Atlantic, we report on failures as successes. The failure at Christmas was reported as if it had been a successful attack, but it did not succeed. What did not happen at Heathrow in August 2006, was reported as if it had been an attack using liquid explosive. If it had happened, the effects would have been disastrous but we behave as if the attack had succeeded, it is rather strange.

The second thing is that, largely because of that, we take measures that are those that we would have taken had the attack been successful. In other words, we do things that have a cost that by definition is vastly greater than the non-cost of non-action. I am thinking of what happened about nine years ago, because there was somebody who tried to get through the security barriers with something in their shoes, and now in American airports you have to take off your shoes. You might say it does not matter that much, but the point is, is it useful in terms of anti terrorism? The answer is no, because there is somebody from Nigeria here who had explosives in his underwear. What are we going to do? We are going to have body scanners in all airports, at least for transatlantic flights because this is what America requires. This is going to carry a very high price tag just to deal with a failed attempt, and because terrorists, lone wolf or not, know what they need to do to be successful next time. They might do what drug dealers do, swallow the explosives, but what will happen then? You will have to put everyone on the operating table and cut them open. In other words, we take steps that are reactive but are completely disconnected from what actually happened.

Connected with that, we fail to be proactive by being reactive, I will come back to that later. However, there is another consequence of that, which is of considerable importance in the fight against Al Qaeda, or its future attacks. We still seem to be leaving our adversaries with the strategic advantage. It is the prevented action that determines how we react. It is not we who are deciding on the pace of anti-terrorism, it is the terrorists who dictate our action. We know that from a strategic point of view, that is not the recipe for success if you are playing cards, chess, or fighting against terrorism.

This is one level of analysis. Mr Chouet touched on another one: the Jihad continues. Al Qaeda is not the be all and end all of Jihadist terrorism, there are others out there.

Thirdly, Al Qaeda and Jihadist terrorism in its various forms are not the be all and end all of terrorism. I would remind you, because we are here in France, that out of 400 or so French people killed by terrorist acts over the last 40 years – and this is a figure that is in the database that we produced for the French Interior Ministry – there is a very small minority that was a victim of organisations that could be called ideological Jihadists. Now, one must be careful about the figures, because there are various actions such as the Karachi attack

whose origins are perhaps not that clear, to put it mildly. I would also add that in our country, like others, terrorism has had many other different origins, sometimes very dissimilar, but simultaneous. In the 1980s, for example, we had Action directe, ASALA, FARL, Hezbollah and Khadafi against the UTA plane.

Assuming that fighting terrorism is fighting Jihadism, it might have been true at a given point in time, but it is not true over time. We should never forget that. It has been my privilege to take part in the drafting of the White Paper on terrorism a few years ago. There was a lengthy discussion about how one should qualify the terrorist threat. Some said that at the top you should have Jihad and Jihadism, but at that time that option was rejected, not because of political correctness but because the Muslim organisations felt as if perhaps it was not that good an idea to play into the hands of the Jihadists who had want to be called Jihadist, because that is a noble cause for them. However, there was also a reaction from somebody who was directly involved in the choice, who is in very eminent position today, and it was said, "What would I look like if we produced a White Paper on Jihadism and there is a sect like Aum, that then sets off a dirty bomb in the underground?". It is a perfectly understanding reaction by a politician. We should never forget that, especially since this world is populated by a number of lone wolves, not necessarily at the behest of Jihadist organisations.

Also, as Jean-Pierre Filiu said, Al Qaeda might well change.

The last point comes to the consequences of Al Qaeda's decline. Despite everything that might happen to them, including the possibility that they would completely disappear which is not where we are today, is what I recall in various articles, the "aggravation principle" in terrorism. It means that the ability to appropriate increasing violence on the part of individuals or smaller groups at lower cost is growing quite fast, because of IT developments and also other technological developments. This means that the lone wolves can now carry out extremely violent acts, which will be even more violent in the future.

You can talk about the lone wolf responsible for the Anthrax attacks in the United States, in September/October 2001. This was totally disconnected, apparently, from the Jihad, and with no intention to kill. Actually five people died, but that was not the purpose. If the purpose had been to kill with those same resources, it could have killed up to 30,000 people. This means therefore that our societies are not going to assume that if we are lowering the threat of Al Qaeda or the Jihadists, we will be able to be less vigilant in your fight against terrorism.

In conclusion, just a few points. Regarding focus of our efforts and resources, I agree with what Alain Chouet said then. All this indicates that we really need to focus on terrorists and the environments that could lead to socialisation of future terrorists and not focus our resources on methods to deal with the innocents. The billions of dollars spent each year within the framework of the Echelon system to listen to all the recorded conversations in the world might be useful but I am not sure that the efficiency is very high. The billions

that each of our countries spend on airport security, for example, are billions that are not available for smarter options. I understand Obama's anger when he had to deal with the Mutallab affair last December. The gap between the limited amounts that go into intelligence tracking of potential terrorists, and the vast amounts that go into tracking innocent people, obviously would make anybody angry.

Secondly, I come back to what Jean-Pierre Filiu said. I would say something that might seem strange, we need Eikenberry rather than McChrystal. I am talking about Afghanistan but it is applicable more broadly. What did the American Ambassador in Afghan say, who used to be the Commander of the American forces in Afghanistan? He said, "You should not send more soldiers there". He was not listened to. The demilitarization as applies to foreign soldiers in Afghanistan is something that we need to be very sceptical about.

Thirdly, vocabulary is vocabulary. Terrorism and counter terrorism, it is all about messages, and symbols. The way in which we manage messages, we talk about Jihadism or we talk about non attacks and successive failures of the Jihadists over recent years, all of that is part and parcel of what should be among our priorities.

Monique CERISIER-ben GUIGA, French Senator, Co-author of the Foreign Relations, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's Report on the Situation in the Middle East – All three of our speakers have raised many questions, have really given us lots of food for thought. I would like to open up for Q&A.

Nazih EL-NAGGARY, political councillor, Egypt Embassy in Paris - I have a question, more about the political aspects, and not so much the security aspects of the issue. What is the existing relationship of having to deal with non-resolution of regional political conflicts, especially the Israeli-Palestinian one, and the possible re-launch of Al Qaeda, or some extreme Islamist movement? What is the existing relationship between these conflicts and the weakening of reforming voices embodied in the King Abdullah in Saudi Arabia, or the moderate voices demonstrating in the streets in Iran?

Jean-Pierre FILIU, Professor at Sciences Po Paris, Middle East Chair, Visiting Professor at Georgetown University - About the Palestinian issue, the most recent message by Bin Laden is quite telling in this respect. It was a minute "from Osama to Obama". He was talking about airplanes, and Palestine, using the same expressions to talk about Palestine as he was using in September 2001 in his Al Jazeera interview in the caves, saying "America will only have security when Palestine knows security". It is all just rhetoric. The reality is there is not any Palestinian active in Al Qaeda, there is no relationship between this theatre and the global Jihad, in spite of all the immoderate and repeated efforts that have been made by Al Qaeda to try to establish that link, and exert pressure in this respect.

Actually, the opposite has taken place. We have seen the Hamas and Al Qaeda at loggerheads. Last August, there were even physical elimination not just of some of the partisans, but of some of the Al Qaeda sympathisers on the Gaza Strip. If we go back a year prior, there was that type of appeal by Bin Laden during the Israel offensive in Gaza, calling for vengeance of Gaza martyrs by striking the Americans and their allies everywhere in every location. This was countered by Hamas immediately that said “anyone that listens to that appeal will be the biggest traitor of the Palestinian cause”. I do observe that Bin Laden's appeal was not heard.

We have to be very careful. The Palestinian issue needs to be settled for the sake of regional peace, and the Palestinians, not to try to dry up the hot bed of terrorism. There is no need to add to all those reasons the issue regarding Al Qaeda. On the other hand, I really would say there is a disconnect, and it is becoming ever more apparent, and yet another sign, of Al Qaeda's decline.

François HEISBOURG - Special Advisor at the Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique in Paris - I agree completely with what Jean-Pierre Filiu just said. I would just add two things briefly. First of all, regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the 1990s Al Qaeda became more powerful, and it was during the peace process. Al Qaeda's growth was not prevented, and it was prospering, which would be reason for caution in trying to assess the consequences of what would happen if there were a settlement of an Israeli-Palestinian issue. I do not think that would halt Al Qaeda.

Secondly, Israeli-Palestinian conflict is just one of the motivations of potential Al Qaeda sympathisers, specifically if you think of the Internet, and the virtual community that Al Qaeda is trying to cause. Now it would be better to be peace between Israelis and Palestinians, clearly that would be a substantial motivation element, but it would have more impact in the virtual world than the real one in my mind.

Mohammed BEN MADANI, *Maghreb Review* - I wanted your view, should we really ignore Al Qaeda's propaganda? Should it be ignored, if so how could we ignore it?

Monique CERISIER-ben GUIGA, French Senator, Co-author of the Foreign Relations, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's Report on the Situation in the Middle East – Do we really have to ignore Al Qaeda propaganda? And if yes, how? Last year I was in Mauritania for my work, and someone put a file in my letterbox at the hotel, it had to do with lectures given in schools. It was amazing to see how they try to recruit people. In the brochure it was saying that when someone from Al Qaeda kills an American in Afghanistan he becomes a great person.

Monique CERISIER-ben GUIGA, French Senator, Co-author of the Foreign Relations, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's Report on the Situation in the Middle East – We can listen to Jean-Pierre Filiu who says on the

contrary, we need to fight Al Qaeda's propaganda, and especially Internet propaganda.

Jean-Pierre FILIU, Professor at Sciences Po Paris, Middle East Chair, Visiting Professor at Georgetown University - That is very harmful propaganda so I think it needs to be countered; we must not ignore it but take it very seriously. We have to take the threats very literally, but at the same time, and this has been what we have been saying at the round table, we have to also be realistic. We must stop just accepting a lot of the points that are being bantered about, often they use the same types of phrases. They are so accessible and you are on the Internet they are just a click away to people who do not necessarily have a religious upbringing. It is very important. The Al Qaeda message is targeting people who may never have been taught in Islam and were de-Islamized. They are getting a substitution for true teachings like the ones you are alluding to there. There are buzz words and slogans that they use, but they do not have that religious meaning if you really read Islam.

Alain CHOUET, Former Chief of the Security Intelligence Service within the French Foreign Intelligence Service - I will just add a brief word. We must monitor Al Qaeda's propaganda as you said and come up with counter arguments. Al Qaeda's propaganda is on the Internet and is widely used. They are particularly targeting populations that do not view it very critically, and this is the spearhead of a type of inclusive Sunni Islamist propaganda.

This is something you can get free of charge, you find it in any cultural centre or mosque in Paris. It is a beautiful little book entitled "What every Muslim should know about the Shi'ite". It is similar, of course, to "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion". It says they eat little children and do some human sacrifices, etc. All this is funded by Saudi institutions in Europe, but I will not give the names as I do not want any lawsuits for slander. But it is given to you free of charge, and this can be the basis of the development of lone wolf techniques as François Heisbourg was saying. We have to be attentive to this type of propaganda as well, it is not Al Qaeda's, but it sort of paves the way for Al Qaeda propaganda.

Myra DARIDAN, former member of the Social and Economic Committee - I wanted to come in first of all on the little booklet you just showed us. Even the title is mistaken there, because Muslims also include the Shi'ite.

I have several comments in terms of the societal aspects of issues we are looking at today. I thank Alain Chouet for making the distinction and for saying that the main enemy of Al Qaeda is not found in the West, but among moderate Muslims. I thank Mr Filiu for continuing with that idea, and saying that we have to stop the disinformation and to detoxify the speech.

In social debates, and some of the debates we see nowadays in France, are we not precisely causing some disinformation, some of the toxification of this

subject? There are some subjects that require action, but not that much lengthy pointless discussion.

Second point, though I am not an expert I am familiar with the region. I make a distinction between the influence of local conflicts and development of Islam in Muslim countries, and particularly Arab countries, which dates back to the 1970s. I wanted to establish a link between the 1970s and a loss of face in the Middle East in 1967. We must remember there is probably a relationship between the two. We can say that a big defeat can lead to lone wolves.

Third point, talk about the Internet. Is it not already too late to try to limit Internet or access to Internet, considering the lone wolves are already here? If you go to Cairo, you can see there are many women in burqas, and men in djellabas, and they have a direct influence, they do not need the Internet anymore.

Alain CHOUET, Former Chief of the Security Intelligence Service within the French Foreign Intelligence Service - There is no doubt about it, that any conflict, any dispute that is not settled, any humiliation necessarily will lead to some violent acts. Therefore, obviously, yes, the defeat in 1967 led to some resentment. However, regarding increased political Islamism, I would say this really began mainly from 1978, at a time when there was a fight for legitimacy between two Islamic worlds, Iran and the Sunni world, and they were outbidding each other all the time. Back in the 1990s I wrote an article called the "Confiscated Islam", trying to demonstrate how each of the parties was trying to use Islam as an instrument to increase its own legitimacy and fight off the others.

I would agree about regulating the Internet but I do not know if it is possible. You talk about lone wolves, saying they already exist. But you can end up creating further lone wolves, it is not necessarily a good thing. I do not know technically though if this would be possible.

As to the burqa, and other attire, I do not say anything about that. I do not have the political stance to do that and would not want to. Countries where people who are or were in charge of special services have a political legitimacy are dictatorships, so I do not want to say anything about that type of things.

General Christian QUESNOT, president of QA International - There is one point that was not raised, that I think is very important when we are talking about terrorism, that is the destruction of Western society through drugs, that come from Afghanistan, feed the Pashtun society and go through Dubai. This traffic represents a billion dollars for domestic production, \$4 billion at the borders, \$200 billion when it gets to Antwerp and St. Petersburg. Turkish and Chechen gangs are involved, as well as some banks that are well known. Since there has been intervention in Afghanistan, drug production has increased tremendously. Is that not the number one danger that we are confronting and that we need to be counting? What are we doing to counter this?

François HEISBOURG - Special Advisor at the Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique in Paris - I have two different points on that. The first one, will not surprise you, it is that I agree with you of course. Clearly, this is a major factor in every respect. One of the major shortcomings that is the least acceptable for the NATO strategy since NATO took charge of the Afghan matters starting in 2003, has been its inability to agree among member states on what their strategy should be regarding drugs in Afghanistan. There was some hesitation, and there were three possible basic strategies. One, let things just take place to avoid the opposition of the drug lords who could then turn to Taliban. The second possibility was to eradicate the drugs, and the third one would have been either to buy drugs or develop through subsidiary other alternative crops. There was some hesitation and no decision was made, and of course the effects are the ones you have described. I am not a specialist in that, but I do know if you do not set out one single clear strategy in this area, you continue failing.

I would tend to view more favourable the development of alternative crops that would be highly subsidised, so common Afghan agricultural policy with the requisite resources. The Afghan farmers, who are at the wrong end of the chain so to speak, are getting quite little from drug crops. It is estimated that around \$500 to \$600 million per annum are necessary to meet the Afghan farmers' expenses. \$500 million/\$600 million is equal to five days of the cost of American operations in Afghanistan. It just gives you an idea as to the "incredible" effort that would have to be made.

My second and last point is something that, as an analyst, worries me. I do not know what the specialists of the relevant services would say. There's a de facto convergence between what may be going on in terms of drugs, and what might go on in terms of biological threat. You have seen a couple of things in the newspapers. In the UK, around eight heroin users died in recent weeks because it was contaminated heroin, containing anthrax. Several other people are being treated. Maybe we would have to ask the Pasteur Institute if that could happen by accident or is this a deliberate action that has taken place? It is fairly sinister new light being shed on the narco component in this subject during our panel discussion..

Monique CERISIER-ben GUIGA, Moderator - Thank you very much to our speakers, our panellists, as well as our entire audience, which has listened so carefully with baited breath.

In search of a European Union Policy for the Middle East

Panel

Jean François-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – We are now going to resume our discussions and we are now moving into the last panel, where we will be looking at European Middle East Policy. It is our good fortune to have with us to address the issue Jean-Dominique Giuliani, who will be the first speaker. He is the Chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation. I will remind you that this symposium has been co-organized by the Foundation with the Senate. Then we will hear from Dr Muriel Asseburg who will speak on behalf of Germany and then Claire Spencer, who will give us the UK viewpoint and my job will simply be to listen to them.

Jean-Dominique GIULIANI, Chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation – Thank you very much, Minister. Let me start by expressing thanks to you, Mr President de Rohan and the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee, Mrs Cerisier ben-Guiga and President Gérard Larcher who agreed to associate the Robert Schuman Foundation in the organization of this symposium. We feel extremely honoured. We do not consider ourselves to be Middle East experts, perhaps a little bit more when it comes to European matters, but I am well aware of the difficulty of the task you have given to our modest panel. We will be speaking to eminent experts like yourself who was involved in drafting the Treaty of Rome, or like Mr Javier Solana who embodies, in our eyes, all the European efforts to support a Common Defence and Security Policy in Europe in recent years. I was in Brussels a few days ago and Mr Secretary General you are already missed because you had a difficult job to do in a Europe of changing institutions, thanks notably to the Lisbon Treaty that has now come into force. Our task is difficult because I believe at the same time Secretary of State Clinton is going to be speaking here across town at the *Ecole Militaire* on the important subject of Security in Europe. We see here how wise in its choices the Senate is. We are talking about Middle East in the Senate and at the same time European security is being talked about at the *Ecole militaire*.

We will try to speak openly, forthrightly, and have a real debate because the question of a common European Middle East policy is very relevant. We will try to see if it is possible, if it exists already, what the necessary pre-conditions might be and what it could consist of. I say this in front of Javier Solana which means that, as of course we will have to acknowledge everything that has already been done.

Up to date, Europe's role in a regional settlement for stability in the Middle East has been fairly restricted. Nonetheless, the EU is increasingly involved in the Middle East. Europe is devoting more and more of its financial resources to the region and it reportedly covers most of the financial requirements of the Palestinian Authority. Member states and EU contributions to the Palestinian Authority amount to EUR 1 billion. It was said that rather than a global player, Europe is a global payer. It seemed to pay more than it actually played in the political outcome of the difficult Israeli-Palestinian issue.

Europe is a neighbour of the Middle East. Can it define its interests independently? Can it define, conduct and implement a different policy compared to that implemented until now? To say that Europe is a player and a stakeholder in the Middle East, its nearest neighbour, needs to be specified somewhat. What is obvious to observers is that this geographic and cultural proximity, human links and the trade links, have proceeded to grow over recent years. This obviously has political effects. Europe is called upon to enhance its political presence. You wrote, in your report, that 50% of oil in Europe comes from this region; 20% of imports in the Middle East come from the EU; 35% of trade exchange (imports and exports) from and to Israel are with the European Union; Iran is the sixth largest energy supplier to the EU; European exports to the Middle East come to \$188 billion and our imports \$125 billion. For example, this may be temporary because of specific contracts, but I have noticed in the statistics that in 2008 the United Arab Emirates had become the eight largest customer of the EU on a footing with India, but larger than Brazil or Canada and South Korea. It is clear that these links are strengthening and that that has tangible consequences, the result being that the European Union has become more involved in the Middle East.

At the Schuman Foundation, we have found that about 6,000 European soldiers are present and involved in various policing or peace-keeping operations in the Middle East; there are two operations in Israel and one in Iraq. Commercial and partnership agreements between the EU and amongst all the countries in the regions have been signed or are in the course of discussion - including with Iran because there is a dialogue process there. The demographics are of importance to the EU because when you compare population growth of the Middle East and Europe's immigration problems, you see a very clear correlation. It is quite obvious that the question of radical Islam concerns Europe and that relations of the 27 EU member states with the various countries of the region depend on the resolution of conflicts or crises. The Iranian question, when it comes to the area of non-proliferation, is a specific issue that obviously impacts Europe's strategic thinking, particularly in the nuclear area.

In the Middle East, more than elsewhere, the EU is looking at its own image. It has tried to change its institutions with the Lisbon Treaty now in force since the 1st December so as to increase its intervention capacity around the world, enhance its international presence. The first tangible applications of the Lisbon Treaty, of which we can engage the effectiveness of provisions of Lisbon Treaty, will probably one way or another be related to the situation in the Near

and Middle East. Obviously, the absence of a common foreign policy over recent years has always weakened the Union's position in the Middle East. Diplomats within the EU have not always have the same point of view and there have been strong divides between positions of neutral countries, those who have clear, partisan choices with stakeholders in the Middle East, the countries for whom trade or economic links are important, and between global visions of stability in the region that are not always shared within the Union. This did not helped Mr Solana and will not make it easier for those who will be in charge of the common foreign policy going forward.

As a modest observer I would say that the transatlantic alliance and the way that it has been put together has not made it easier to generate a real European foreign policy and this is something we find in other relationships with Russia or China for example. It is hard for Europe to define its own specific interests. When you have the largest GDP in the world, which is what the EU has - 22% of global wealth - you do have specific interests. Jean-Claude Casanova wrote a very interesting article in *Le Monde* a few weeks ago: "the vulgate of the transatlantic discourse has been more like a stream of lukewarm water and has prevented Europe from defining its specific interests". This is particularly true of Middle East policy.

Third thing, the European Union is the champion of soft power. When you have Europe's history, and over the last 60 years when you have been able to turn things around, we understand that imperialist tendencies should be part of the past. There is no desire to revert to that. However, European soft power seems to be a sort of substitute foreign policy and it is not overstating the fact to say that European public opinion has the impression often that in the Middle East it is better to pay than to play. It saves your conscience, you feel you are taking part in solving a number of humanitarian problems, but that does not give you either a diplomatic or foreign policy and it is not necessarily serving the EU's long-term interest. The EU is the leading provider of credit, subsidy and all kinds of aid in the region. There is general support for that among diplomats and populations, and it also developed quite a number of programs. But the UE obviously suffers from a lack of credibility in foreign policy that might be explained by the lack of military credibility due to the lack of a real common defence policy.

With the ATALANTA operation off the coast of Somalia we saw that that does not have to be the way and that Europe is perfectly capable of mobilising and responding to specific needs. The EU is a driving force behind that international operation. China has decided to get involved in the international maritime force, which consists mainly of European forces under a British Admiral which shows that things can change there too. Even if this operation is very difficult, it has recorded some successes. There are currently 12 common foreign and security policy operations going on in the world which shows this level of involvement.

The EU is seeking to gain influence and clout in the Middle East. I would not venture to talk about Iran from the European viewpoint given that Mr Solana is here; he is the person running that show. I would say that Mr Solana's mission, supported by the trio of UK, France and Germany, has been very useful in the overall diplomatic effort. EU has shown that it can play a significant role in this difficult global strategic matter that affects, not just the region, but the whole planet.

You are aware of the EU positions since the Declaration of Venice and the right to self-determination for the Palestinians, since 1999, the right to statehood for Palestinians and the various recent positions expressed: in 2008 condemnation of the attacks in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, condemnation in February 2009 of the Israeli settlements, and also of the Gaza operation in January 2009.

What one comes up with is that the EU pays more than it acts and when it does, it acts more on the side of victims. It does not act like a State, as it is not a State which has to act differently. That is the fundamental difference between the American and European positions.

In the light of all that, what might the outlook be? Is there a specific European message in the Middle East? On terrorism Europeans tend to suggest that there is a specific position and that they do not want to be stripped naked by a scanner because there is a terrorist risk in an airport. This is the whole question on the "war on terror" concept the Europeans do not accept and that even the Obama administration seems not to accept it now. Is there a European position that is specific in the Middle East? If so, which? What resources are they willing to dedicate to it?

Before looking at the content, one should look also at the means. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, clearly Europe wants to be involved in the settlement of that conflict. It provides financial resources but is it politically credible? It is more appreciated on the Palestinian side, whereas it is stymied, blocked on the Israeli side. As you saw during your trip, you were told that as you met the Hamas leaders you would not meet the people you wanted to meet in Israel. The first problem for the EU is to have respect and credibility on both sides. I think that for the EU this is a vital point. Does the EU see itself as a growing power that is in the process of constitution? Or does it see itself as a sort of customs union, Euro-driven? I think the EU has no choice: it must conceive itself as a power and it needs respect and credibility, not just from Palestinians but from Israelis as well.

I think that this should lead us to revise positions in some aspects of European Middle East policy. I am very struck by the German position. Obviously for certain reasons there are things that they cannot do there but Germany now has a presence in the maritime force off the coast of Lebanon and it has been involved in all the hostage problems. The German authorities were trusted by the Israelis and the Palestinians and we need to look at this example

because the Shoah – the Jewish Holocaust – was committed in Europe and not just on the territory of what was Germany then. Therefore, it is the European Union's specific duty for the Jewish people.

Is the EU willing to commit militarily and provide guarantees? There can be doubts about that; however, it is a vital question on the table for the credibility of all our diplomatic actions.

Iran's nuclear bomb developments represent a challenge for the EU, as it would affect recent regional stability, increase the possibility of new conflicts and lead to regional proliferation. From a purely European viewpoint, I would say that the non-proliferation treaty is now in the spotlight again. 2010 has to be an opportunity for rethinking. There are two nuclear powers in Europe: UK and France. Nuclear proliferation in the Middle East would also result in weakened credibility of the French and UK nuclear deterrents. To date they are the only ones who have actually tried to cut their nuclear forces ahead of what the Russians and the Americans are thinking of, that is their arsenals reduction.

I do not make this linkage between military presence and deterrents of two independent European powers, that tend to stay independent. But do not forget that both President Chirac and President Sarkozy said the same, which is that France's vital interests are linked to those of European partners. It means that France remains nuclearly independent but considers that its vital interests are shared with its partners in the EU. France has just started operations in Abu Dhabi, opposite Iran. Therefore it claims its interests on behalf of France but also of a European position that might be shared.

As for Yemen, it is perhaps there that we can experiment with hopefully some success Europe soft power. Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the world that is not yet a failed state. There is a major financial program within the EU called the Stability Instrument which is very well funded. Migration problems between Somalia and Yemen are growing substantially. We have a presence in the region; we have our ships there. There are possible links between the situation in Yemen and international terrorism. This has to be one of the EU's priorities and the EU should get more involved in Yemen.

The new American's political scene means that for the EU there are opportunities to take initiatives. As for the resources involved, there has to be a pioneering group of nations that take initiatives that must be open to the other member states that are like-minded but we must not wait for the EU's normal procedures, even under the Lisbon Treaty, to produce a decision. The Lisbon Treaty makes it possible to make rather bold decisions.

We are working on this at the Foundation. This is one of our conclusions that the EU must conceive of itself as a global power with its strengths and weaknesses in the Middle East and elsewhere. Its credibility is under threat and with a little bit of courage and moving a little bit outside the normal European

box it can have positive clout and contribute to solving the problems I've mentioned.

Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – Thank you, Mr Giuliani. You are a true silversmith, so to speak on this European material. Sometimes I wonder, Mr Giuliani, if European unity has progressed very much since the Venice Declaration. I am not entirely convinced of that. At the time it was not very difficult to define a common European position. Subsequently there was the Berlin Declaration. I do not know if in the interim we have made much progress. I am not at all sure. I get the impression that sometimes Europe is staying in place and having a hard time moving beyond a certain limit. If we could go beyond that frontier, then Europe could bring much more weight to bear than is currently the case.

I would like to give the floor now to Dr Muriel Asseburg. She heads the Middle East and Africa Research Division at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. You have the floor, Madam.

Dr Muriel ASSEBURG, Head of the Middle East and Africa Research Division at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs – Thank you very much. I want to point out that I am not speaking for Germany here. It is a German perspective, of course, but not an official stance that I will be taking. I would also like to say that I have enjoyed this event tremendously and I have enjoyed that we have gone into the details that characterise the region at this point in time and that characterise European relations with the region at this point in time. I also enjoyed reading the report a lot and I share a lot of the analysis and the general outlook that is presented in the report. What I would like to do now is to go through some of the recommendations that are given in the report and say where I would beg to differ with regard to the details but, as I say, not with regard to the general outlook that the report has offered. I would like to start by following one of the recommendations that is given in the report: to look at the region and taking into account the inter linkages between the different conflicts, between the different sub-regions, but at the same time, when we are trying to address the conflicts, then to tackle them separately and go one-by-one. In my intervention, I would like to concentrate on the Arab-Israeli conflict rather than addressing all of the conflicts we have been speaking about during this conference.

I would like to make five main points. The first remark is on the EU and how the EU could approach the problem institutionally – what you have termed 'the framework' in your recommendations. The other four remarks are on the content of the approach and how I think it needs to be changed so as to make European action more effective in view of developments in the region and so as to allow the Europeans to move from conflict management – which is what we have been doing over the last 15 years or so – to conflict resolution.

Let me start with the first remark on the European framework. I share your pessimism with regard to positive changes that would come through the Lisbon Treaty. The institutional framework that has been set up does not automatically increase European unity and empower the Europeans to move forward with regard to foreign policy issues. To date, individual EU member States retain strong and diverging interests - in particular with regards to the Middle East. These differing interests persist, and therefore I very much support the idea that is put forward in the report: to have a small group of member states trying to flesh out policies on the Middle East, trying to not only define common interests but then to come up with a strategy on how to go about realising these interests. We should admit, however, that this is not a completely new idea because we have seen what has been called the Quint of Europeans working in exactly that kind of fashion. We have also seen that this has not solved the problem, *i.e.*, the architecture has not helped to solve the differences between the member States on important issues. It also has not helped to create the will among these member states to, in fact, come up with a common position that would not only complement American policies, but rather to try and see where Europeans differ – for good reasons – from the American approaches and take a different line of action, rather than just trying to do the footwork for the Americans as we have witnessed during the Annapolis process and in the Obama administration's first year.

My second remark concerns the content of such an approach. We have been speaking about the urgency of a renewed international engagement in the Middle East and of settling the Arab-Israeli conflict. I do not need to reiterate why it is so urgent to come to terms. It seems to me, however, that Europeans have accepted, so far, that they do not have the power to influence events in the Middle East and that they have reduced themselves to complementing US policies. They have also not made peace-making a priority of their policies towards partners in the regions. The proceedings of the German-Israeli joint cabinet meeting have illustrated that. Germany, in particular, has made it a priority to improve relations with Israel without using its very good relations with Israel sufficiently in order to push the peace process forward. The German government has rather emphasised improving the relations with Israel, and even with the current Israeli government, which does not have the peace process as a priority.

There is urgency and there is a need for Europeans to see that indeed they can have more of an influence. I do not want to be misunderstood here as saying that they could replace the United States as the main power broker in the region, they surely cannot. But Europeans have their own interests in moving the peace process forward and in avoiding what can be seen on the horizon, *i.e.* the two-State solution very quickly becoming impossible to be realised and the next round of violence. When I say there is urgency, I am not saying that we should start a process now for the sake of having a process. I am all in favour of having negotiations, but negotiations do not make sense if they are not led by a credible mediator. That means that the international community, and above all the Americans, need to move from a position where they facilitate talks to a situation

where they mediate talks. That includes some important elements: one of them being that there needs to be a blueprint for a final status. We all know what the main elements of this blueprint are. There is no reason at all to waste time right now on rediscussing these elements and these principles. They must be there as terms of reference and they should be presented to the parties very quickly so as to move forward. There should also be a clear mechanism to monitor the progress on both sides, to monitor steps which will bring us to the final status. At the same time, Europeans, and even better if in accordance with Americans, should set very clear incentives for moving towards final status as well as disincentives so as to make reinforcing the occupation of Palestinian territories and violence less palatable. I think Europeans have not been consequential enough in the tangible signals to the conflicting parties. As has been said, we have been evolving our declaratory positions and we have had a clear line in this regard, but we have not followed up with our actions in a consistent manner.

My third remark concerns the need to urgently tackle the Gaza Strip and Hamas. It is a shame to see how Europeans have neglected the Gaza problem; how we have made available considerable sums for reconstruction, but no reconstruction has happened due to the blockade. How, with our policies, we have contributed to strengthening rather than weakening Hamas. It is Hamas that has profited from the blockade – by means of taxation of the tunnel trade and from the isolation imposed on the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip. However, there is no way to tackle the blockade and to engage in reconstruction in Gaza without involving Hamas. Do we like them? Do we not like them? It does not matter. We do need them to be able to move forward and end the blockade and to allow for a life in Gaza that is up to acceptable human standards.

Let us be honest here: It is not as if we do not talk to Hamas. Of course we already talk to Hamas. And Israel is interested in us talking to Hamas to resolve some of the mutual issues. Also, we have seen over the last two years that more and more European politicians meet Hamas representatives. It would be much more useful if that would not just happen and we did not slowly soften our isolation of Hamas by accident — but that we do so in a coordinated fashion and as an official policy with the goal of contributing to an end of the blockade, including to speak about what we need Hamas to do to allow that to happen. It also means that we should be talking about what needs to be done so as to allow the Palestinian institutions to get back their political legitimacy.

That brings me to my fourth point which is about institution building. Support for state and institution building is something that Europeans have prided themselves to be involved in for as long as the Palestinian Authority has existed in Gaza and the West Bank. In January 2010, we find ourselves in a situation where none of the Palestinian institutions has any kind of constitutional legitimacy. This makes it very difficult to keep pretending that we are building a democratic state in the Palestinian territories. We heard about the Fayyad Plan yesterday and about the idea of slowly building up a Palestinian State from the bottom and thereby *de facto* establishing this entity that would then be recognised by the international community. The Fayyad Plan has a lot of

wonderful ideas with regards to setting up more efficient institutions and increasing the capacity of Palestinian governance. However, it lacks the answer to two of the difficult issues that have to be tackled if this plan is to be successful. The first challenge is: How can institutions be built in those areas where the Palestinian Authority does not have any authority or *de facto* control, *i.e.* in East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and in Area C of the West Bank. We have witnessed that there is an interest on the side of the Israeli government to support Fayyad's activities, at least as long as they do not conflict with Israeli interests. This support has also already been used as leverage for pressure. The second challenge that is not addressed in the Fayyad Plan is the question of how to deal with Hamas and the lack of Palestinian unity. Let me stress again, the Fayyad government will not be able to build legitimate and democratic institutions as long as political institutions lack constitutional legitimacy.

My fifth and last comment is on what you write in the report about the priority of the Israeli-Palestinian track. I absolutely agree that this should be the priority. At the same time, the question cannot be resolved if the regional dimension is not taken into account. You need the regional dimension for some of the final status issues: such as the refugee question, water management and security arrangements in the region. Also, if there were a successful parallel peace process between Syria and Israel that would have a positive effect on the Israeli-Palestinian dimension and on the Israeli-Lebanese dimension. And it might also have a positive effect with regard to the Syrian-Iranian relations – in the sense that we would like it to evolve.

Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – Listening to you, I begin to regret that the German Government does not follow your advice. I think that is well-informed advice indeed. Now I would like to give the floor to the Chatham House representative, Mrs Spencer.

Dr Claire SPENCER, Head of the Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House – I think we agreed before we started this session we very much, on this occasion, want to hear your views, given that everyone is implicated in European policy and I would suggest, given your attendance here today and yesterday, very much implicated in this part of the world. So I will try to make my comments brief. I also, like my colleague, apologise for speaking English. I do wish to be quite frank and I am afraid if I try and do this in French I will be frank in the wrong way by the wrong choice of vocabulary. I am more than happy to respond to your questions in French, that is not a problem. I am one of those rare beasts, a francophone and hispanic British citizen and it is in that capacity I am speaking as an analyst and not as someone who can remotely explain British policy present and, I fear, forthcoming if we have a change of governments in the near future. We may find ourselves wasting time on debates which should be finished in Britain about Britain's role in Europe which I hope Chatham House can do something to kill off in the sense of being true and committed Europeans.

It is also a privilege to be here. I should have mentioned in my biography that I have acted twice in the capacity of Special Advisor to similar kinds of enquiries in the House of Lords in Britain. I greatly commend what you have done in this report because I think you can, in this kind of enquiry and by meeting people on the ground, be extremely frank and open and, if I may say, there are some very sensible things particularly about the wide-ranging changes in the region which you do not get unless you are actually there and talk to people on the ground.

My first European recommendation is since the most recent House of Lords enquiry into this area was on European Union policy and the European role within the Middle East peace process, that you actually find a way of liaising directly, I think you will find some of your findings and conclusions are very similar and it seems to me a bilateral forum indeed further afield if the Spanish Foreign Affairs Committee do similar things, actually strengthen the European Parliamentary reasoning for why policy has to change towards this region.

I am going to start with what sounds like a bit of a diversion. Just before I came here I had finished writing a chapter, at the request of the Director of Chatham House, on an assessment of Obama's first year as President of the US as it affects the Middle East. Very briefly there are six areas I think it is important for us to reflect on. We already heard yesterday from Rob Malley, Mike and other US perspectives, how the role of the US has changed. I think we should not think of the EU's role in the Middle East in isolation, not only the US primarily because the US role has changed the most, but obviously in distinction from the increasing role being played by China, India and states such as Malaysia. I think the politics of energy are now fundamentally changing the way regional actors engage in politics. Just look at the way Turkish policy has been changing just over the last few months. The givens about regional alliances are now changing in subtle and sometimes quite abrupt ways and I think this has a lot to do with these very brief conclusions. The way Obama has had to face the consequences of the US-led intervention - if I may use a neutral word here - intervention into Iraq in 2003 have changed things fundamentally for the US in the region in ways I do not think the US has quite come to terms with, although increasingly I think they are aware of their limitations and in ways I do not think have fully been recognised in European policy.

The first is until 2003 over a period stretching back to the first Gulf War in external terms, the second in regional terms, in otherwise Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the alliance which dispatched Saddam's forces out of Kuwait. There has been something loosely terms as *Pax Americana*. The US was forthwith, seen as the external arbiter, for people stepping out of line, shall we say, in the Middle East. Nobody was going to cross international borders without paying a heavy price. Once that threat was fulfilled however, in the case of Iraq, suddenly the taboo of regime change, the taboo of moving across international borders, of actors realigning themselves has now disappeared. I would argue that the most recent action we have seen of Saudi forces, admittedly in a defence posture, but

nonetheless Saudi forces being active in Yemen, is a precedent we should certainly be aware would not, to my mind, have happened a decade before.

The US secondly is seen now as an actor in its own right within the region. We forget. We keep talking about US withdrawal as though it has already happened. The US is still in Iraq; it will be, in some capacity or other, present in Iraq to 2011. I should say that when we're looking at the future stability of Iraq I would also argue that the balance within Iraq would not stabilise until the US has finally gone. The US is still, in some sense, a local arbiter and a local player. This is the key point. The US is seen as an actor in the Middle East which, in turn, not only constraints what the US and US forces can do within Iraq, but elsewhere in the region precisely because they are bogged down and they have to at least take into account what happens to US forces in Iraq before they do anything else elsewhere.

The third conclusion which I think Rob Malley focused on most yesterday was this business of dividing the region into "us and them", "you're with us, you're against us". This has left repercussions in the region which falsifies the real debate, in other words, this has been imposed from outside but it has condition behaviour. People have, over the last seven years, been thinking in terms of whether what they do will be seen as reinforcing their position *vis-à-vis* the US or whether, in fact, it will be seen as buying into some of the popular resentments for US and other action in the region.

This in turn is related to the fourth point which is the military presence of the US and others in the region – and this relates to the earlier session on Al-Qaeda – has raised the temperature on anti-colonial sentiments which were always just below the surface within the region, that somehow outside forces only get involved in the Middle East when they want something for themselves, when they wish to control resources, people and actually stop the local, the people of the region, developing at their own pace and controlling their own destiny. This, as we know, has been exploited not only by the Jihad Al-Qaeda manifestations but by Iran, by the Syrians in some capacity when they have been opposed to the US by Hamas and Hezbollah. I agree entirely with Rob Malley that this is a trap. Certainly viewing the region in these "us and them" terms we should no longer fall into. It is not the case that you can wean Syria away from the Iranians. The Syrians, it seems to me, quite rightly wish to expand the amount of leverage and alliances and options they have in the regions, so you may win them over but it doesn't mean to say they will stop their connections with Iran – any more than the Turks, perhaps being less than effusive about their relations with Israel this week, are going to immediately jump over the fence and get into bed with Iran or the Russians or an alternative. No, it seems to me Turkish policy is very intelligently maximising their options and looking to expand their interests in the region. We should take this into account.

I hope you will see that all of this is pertinent to the way Europe engages in future in the region. It's also the consequences of 2003 and Iraq has forced regional actors - particularly in the Gulf, particularly amongst those we usually

as a shorthand characterise as ‘moderate states’, so Saudi Arabia, Qatar, to the annoyance of some but to the delight of others, obviously the Egyptians who are frequently and continually trying to broker peace between Hamas and Fatah, the Turks have been involved - to try and resolve regional differences themselves. This has partly been a reaction to staving off the worst consequences of the logic of some US and other policies, certainly in damage limitation, in terms of also managing their public opinions. Because if you are allied at the national level with the US sometimes your public opinion does not follow you quite so fast. The problem with this and it is a good sign if it is starting, is the lack of institutional follow-through. Most of these states do not have fully-fledged foreign ministerial bureaucracies of the kind that can actually sustain these initiatives over the longer period. I think one of the successes of this has been the launching of the Arab Peace Initiative which regrettably not been taken up as fulsomely as it should be. It is still on the table but I believe we are being told it will not be on the table for long.

The final consequence, and I think others have touched on this, is that all regional issues are now inter-related in the way that while I sympathise as Muriel has said with the idea of ring-fencing the way you try to manage a single issue, like Israel/Palestine, I think it is no longer the case that you can actually isolate it from what is actually happening with and in your relations with Iran and anyone else for that matter because regional actors, State and non-State as we see with the greater activism recently of Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon, if Robert Fisk of *The Independent* to be believed, they are now repaving roads in Southern Lebanon. Why? Because they are getting ready to attack Israel again should Israel go in and bomb Iran as much of the talk has touched on recently. This means that you cannot isolate Israel and its immediate neighbourhoods from Israel/Iran, how the Iranians will react and how a whole series of State and non-State actors will react in the region.

Now I think in all these issues, and I am saying this to provoke a debate, I think the European Union recently, as the European Union, has been really behind the curve. I am not saying this in any way to reflect on any representative of the European Union. I think it is the individual member States who have not quite resolved the *conundrum*. Perhaps eventually the Treaty of Lisbon and a European Diplomatic Service will do this but I think in the interim we have seen more of a breakout of bilateralism, by which I mean individual States like Britain, France, Germany, those with the capacity to engage individually with states in the Middle East doing so, with a certain amount of coalition of the willing, if you like, certainly *vis-à-vis* policy towards Iran in the EU Troika and certainly in the efforts mentioned by Jean-Dominique in peace keeping forces. There have been some positives but the question I put on the table: is it any more realistic to think of an EU fully-fledged policy which can be implemented at the 27-member level, particularly if we carry on expanding the European Union? Will it necessarily depend on putting together some kind of common position? The EU’s position on the two-State solution for Israel/Palestine is a case in point which has stood the test of time despite the aberration of individual heads of State within the European Union, we still hold to this. The problem has been at

the 27-member level, how do you translate that into a policy which you can actually implement? I think we should make a distinction here between common positions and common actions that we can actually make a difference.

I have already mentioned that the region is changing. I do think it is high time for an EU-level strategic review. This is flavour of the month in Britain, this is a British contribution. We are having strategic defence reviews, strategic-everything review with the change of government. Well I think it is now time for a strategic regional review of the Middle East, to actually question whether the division of the region in UE terms - along the Mediterranean and the union for the Mediterranean and the GCC and dialogues which run in parallel but are not strongly inter-related and *ad hoc* policy towards Iran and Iraq - serve the purpose of Europe any more? Here I am stealing a bit the ideas of Muriel and my colleagues at Friday, the Spanish Institute, particularly Richard Young and his colleagues who have written quite passionately about how it is now time. I hope you can find it on the website. It is certainly a paper that they presented to a conference in Rome in December which argues quite strongly that now is the time the EU needs a joined-up strategy, in other words no more union for the Mediterranean on one side and GCC dialogues on the other. We have to think more clearly about putting these two together.

I will say this, as someone who spent quite a lot of last year and the previous year looking into the union of the Mediterranean. It struck me we seem to be running policies along two different lines which are not sufficiently matched. On the one hand we have had an excessive securitisation over the last few years of EU policy at the political level. Looking at North Africa, what matters is stopping terrorism and stopping migration and if you like the externalisation of justice and home affairs chapters to the Mediterranean region, that is a reflection of this. The most important public sector State-to-State cooperation with North Africa is in the field of security, intelligence sharing and hopefully also in the prevention of migration. Whereas the whole tenor of the union for the Mediterranean, in the wake of there not being new funding through the Barcelona Channels, the previous Euro-Mediterranean partnership, has been to rely on the private sector coming forward to implement what in principle are some extremely good ideas about de-pollution of the whole Mediterranean basin and of exploring and investing in solar energy. Will a private sector company really invest in a framework which consists, at the last count, of 54 different states and entities, in other words the Mediterranean basin, plus the European Union 27, plus the Balkans and the Palestinian Authority obviously as a nascent but not yet state? If I were the private sector I would probably be more interested in a bilateral deal with Morocco and get on with it and not make any reference whatsoever to the regional dimension immediately or indeed to Brussels' institution. I think rethinking some of these models is urgent.

I will just touch on the substance since I have talked mostly about process. I think we should start thinking more in the long term. I think a lot of our policy has been reactive and we know the reasons why, the shorttermism of electoral cycles. I would just say – and this is an area on which I have commented and I

have commented with Israeli interlocutors – that the unconditional support of Israel from European governments hardly backed-up by the unease of the European public is not something I think is sustainable nor in the long-term interests either of the European States themselves and the individual leaders who are leading on this policy, or indeed for Israel itself. I think the best support – and I say this as a supporter of Israel and I am tired of debates which suggest that if you are a little bit critical of either side, whether it is Palestinians or Israelis, you are somehow on one side or the other – I, as an analyst and someone whose business is to promote peace, dialogue and debate, wish to see both States flourish. I think we are kidding ourselves if we do not engage in ways drawing from our own experience. Here I think I will say controversially particularly the British and French are implicated. Over the last 50 years it is not just the Germans who are implicated in this. We are implicated in occupying territories, under our previous colonial policy, of individuals and nations who did not wish to be occupied by us and in different ways we resolved these issues. I do not think either Britain or France has been left without scares or unfinished business for having chosen to leave their various bits of empires at different times and in different ways. I think we can fully explain to Israeli decision makers and I think we should engage much more with Israeli public opinion over what this historical experience does not so much for those on the receiving end - I think we heard very fulsomely of how the Palestinians have been affected by this. I personally am more concerned by how the Israeli are affected by this and their sense of worth, their sense of values and I say this as someone who worked in a Kibbutz in the early 80s and having seen the changes and they have been quite dramatic, the changes within the internal divisions within Israel. I think it is incumbent on us to help, as Europeans with parallel experiences and having made some dreadful mistakes of our own, actually to empathise. I think our better way of helping Israel get out of the *conundrum* it is in is actually to share much more openly some of this experience. I know some of this is unpopular but I would ask you to consider what the longer term consequences of the alternative is. If we really do not think the Israelis are making enough of an effort I would suggest that relying on pressuring various Israeli governments to give up settlement activity is, with respect, the same as trying to pressure the Iranians to give up nuclear enrichments. These are both governments who are either unwilling to do what is requested and do not have a domestic constituent support for doing what is requested at them at the behest of an international community which is asking them to stop this activity so publicly. It is the equivalent of political suicide.

A lot of what I am suggesting should be done much more behind the scenes in terms of a debate with Israeli - in which Palestinians may or may not be included because things are not 100% perfect on the Palestinian side – where we ask Israelis to envisage where they think they will be in the next 10, 15 years if this untenable *status quo* continues. I throw that out as intentionally provocative because I have not entirely made up my mind about it, but I am afraid our current policy is neither good for Israel nor not good for ourselves.

I have already mentioned Iraq. I think we will not see the way Iraq settles otherwise until 2011 is over and the US finally withdraws. I would raise a

question mark as to whether the US may delay their withdrawal if things deteriorate or whether, indeed, Europeans in any capacity can envisage some kind of role, military or otherwise, within Iraq. What would happen if the US leave and Iraq deteriorates would be something we would have to plan ahead for.

Regarding Yemen, I think we should look at Yemen as a potential test case for approaching an issue that clearly we are only primarily interested in because of the security considerations but I welcome very much Secretary of State Clinton's assessment that this is now a test case for the economic and wider development needs of Yemen because this is the only way we will stabilise it. It is not being seen primarily as a way of bombing, sending in more forces, using the militaristic way. Maybe this is a test case and here I am being very optimistic for soft power because I know there is some very hard power issues involved, including the gun trade between Yemen and Somalia – and do not forget major trading routes are not just going to be attacked by pirates in future years if Yemen fails.

Finally, the big elephant in the room is how is the European Union planning ahead for what I perceive as a series – it may not be “crises” – but a series of succession issues? There are a number of leaderships and we have relied very much in recent years on personalised relationships within individual leaders, particularly in the Arab world, who one way or another will possibly and probably no longer be there in five to 10 years. Where is our strategy given the lack of institutionalised relations? With much of the Arab world we rely on personal relations. Where is the European strategy for what comes next? Who are our interlocutors? Are we going to be tempted by the way we approached Eastern Central Europe at the fall of communism where Western Europe prepared the terrain by getting involved, getting in contact with some of the opposition movements, with the democratic movements in these States so that when the communists' leaderships finally fell we were able to assist those groups of people to set up an institutional transition to democracy? We will not get democracy in the Middle East or the Arab world without the institutional frameworks to support this and we will not get this if we rely on personalised leaderships to deliver something which I would argue they neither wish to do nor they have an interest in doing. Thank you.

Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – Thank you, very interesting presentation. Now, I would like to open up to the audience. Do you have questions?

From the floor – The topic for this panel discussion was “In search of a European Middle East policy”. Do you really think we can have a European policy without changing our European mentality? We saw this through US intervention in Iraq. I apologise Dr Spencer, but the British are much more pro-American; the Spaniards and the Poles followed suit; France took another stance; Germany, due to its history has to be very cautious; and Sweden also followed

Germany's suit. Then there are other new countries that could do something but do not dare try. There are four different opinions here. Do you really believe that there is any hope of having some sort of common European policy for these Middle Eastern countries? There is a debate going on right now in the German parliament dealing with sending 1,400 additional troops in Afghanistan. There is huge debate on that point. We do not all have the same options and possibilities.

Dr Claire SPENCER, Head of the Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House – Just as you, I am fairly sceptical. I am not at all convinced but fortunately every four or five years there are changes in European leadership so things can certainly change. That is why I was talking about a strategic review, talking about where we stood now in the Middle East and talking about what the price would be. It is only through the logic of incentives that you can do things. I am very pragmatic. Recent policy has been based on fear. We are afraid of others, we are afraid of terrorism, we are afraid of illegal immigrants. However, that is not enough. We have to change the rationale saying we need energy from the region, we need labour, we need a much more subtle policy that is in everyone's interest. Business can sometimes change a bit the speeches... I went to an interesting conference on energy policy in the region last week and I can say there is quite a difference from what the oil companies like BP or Italian ENI and so forth, and the experts on terrorism say. Our priorities are completely different from theirs. I am not saying leave everything up to the business world, but I am saying that you are talking about strategic interests for all that deals with climate change, solar power and so forth. It is all about striking a balance among the vested interests and going beyond preconceived notions.

The region has changed so much and we in Europe do not fully realise that. We feel it is enough to support yesterday's friends in order to change everything. But it does not.

Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – Mr Giuliani, how would you respond?

Jean-Dominique GIULANI, Chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation – Well that is why I took the liberty of fielding the question in advance, in talking about principles. I think EU member states have shared interests very clearly in that region but the people in charge, due to reasons of domestic policy, economic and immediate considerations do not always have the courage to actually move from short-term interests to long-term interests. That is what has often happened in Europe. Europe has managed to make progress in the past because sometimes there were people who managed to get things going, who triggered movement and produced effects. Often they had to go against the national diplomacies and immediate short-term interests. Think of the 1950s and the steel industry. So you have to have the circumstances right and top level men and women in charge who are able to then move forward and bring everyone else with them. I honestly believe that is precisely the problem with the European

Union and that is exactly why right now we are in a trough of things in the EU. We are managing things in a diplomatic fashion and yet these are political considerations, politics at the highest level in the highest sense of the term are required here. President François-Poncet would say this better than I but Europe's history is not written this way. It has always been about the right people during the right circumstances, including General De Gaulle who initially was not in favour of the community method but he changed tack and ended up coming on board entirely. When he came back to power he was actually pleased at the idea of the common market because it would teach liberalism to French business people. It is not at all what can be read in the press or what we can hear, that is to say the voice of political leaders.

When it comes to common foreign policy, unfortunately the first signs after the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty are not good signals. Not because the right people are not in power - that is certainly not what I would be saying and certainly not publicly, even if conceivably I would have my own opinions – but because the motivation of decision makers that appointed them is to stay in charge and continue business as usual. I think that is not the right way to do things.

Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – Don't you think Mr Van Rompuy would be able to change this, to craft with a whip a single unified European policy?

Jean-Dominique GIULANI, Chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation – We have to give him credit and he can prove very capable. It is a huge task. As to Mrs Ashton, I would be more categorical and negative, though.

Georges SACIN, Lebanese journalist – I have a very specific but not theoretical question about the European policy for the region. A few weeks ago the European consuls in Jerusalem drafted a remarkable report. It has now been shelved. What would you suggest to actually implement proposals made by the European consuls, for this to actually be implemented in the field? There were 12 proposals made which would be quite achievable fairly easily if there was the requisite political will. What would you suggest, Ladies and Gentleman?

Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – Well, let me say that usually when you have this type of document that is drafted, it usually ends up on a shelf somewhere, on the backburner. If anybody thinks otherwise they are complete optimists.

Dr Muriel ASSEBURG, Head of the Middle East and Africa Research Division at the Germany Institute for International and Security Affairs – The Heads of Mission report that you have alluded to is an account of settlement

activity in East Jerusalem, of house destructions in the Eastern part of the city and of the lack of progress with regards to Palestinian institutions there. Actually the report backs European positions and international policies as the roadmap. In a sense, we are back to phase 1 of the roadmap. If we are serious about Palestinian institutions in East Jerusalem and if we consider, as we have done in the Council Conclusions in December 2009, that Jerusalem would be the capital of the Palestinian State, then we should act accordingly and have an active policy according to which we meet Palestinian officials in East Jerusalem (as often as feasible). It would make a lot of sense to insist on meeting Palestinians in East Jerusalem, even if this is just a symbolic policy.

In the same vein, it would also make sense to be much more consistent on the settlement issue - we discussed yesterday in detail as to how that could be handled. In Europe, we have treated the issue of settlement products as a bureaucratic problem. It is not a bureaucratic problem, it is a political problem and we need to treat it as a political problem. Still, I would say the priority should be to get back to peace making and then, while getting back to peace making, insist on the terms of reference and they are, of course, the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Dr Claire SPENCER, Head of the Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House –One way of getting this type of document discussed is to ask for the Senators or members of Parliament in the European Parliament of Brussels, but also within parliaments throughout Europe, to ask questions about this and to discuss this. We have the Prime Minister's Question Time that we can use for this. I would call the office of my member of Parliament to have him ask such questions as "Where is this report?" so that this can be discussed because it is an urgent matter. If you have been to Jerusalem recently you know that there is increased tension. We cannot just forget about this and let things wait another six months or a year. Things are very explosive. There are two very different views of history opposing each other. The frontline of the conflict is right there in the holy places in the ancient city of Jerusalem and it is a very serious matter. This is why we have got to really place pressure on the politicians. I agree with Muriel Asseburg entirely, it is a question of politics, not red-tape or management of individual settlements. Again, it is dangerous for Israel, for us and for the Palestinians.

Last time I was there I went to Tel Aviv and I saw that they do not want to know anything about what is going on in Jerusalem, they are sick of it. I get the impression almost that there are almost two separate societies. What is going on in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem is completely different, they are very separate. That is very serious because people systematically talk about Israel and Israeli interests but actually who exactly do we mean there? It is a highly divided society and that is very dangerous. It is a question of field reality.

General Christian QUESNOT – I have a question for Dr Spencer on Israel specifically. I remember the most recent war with Hezbollah. What really struck me back at that time though was what was going on in Haifa: the military,

political and civilian authorities withdrew. It was almost like the withdrawal 1939-1945. I felt the deep nature of the Israeli state was changing. The last immigrations from Russia have really changed the nature of Israeli state. At that time the sons of the Prime Minister avoided military service. You mentioned Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Tel Aviv is hedonistic; it is a case of 'everyone for himself' there. It seems to me that the fighting spirit that used to be behind the Israeli state has now been reduced. Israelis that never wanted peace with Arabs - if they had people would have known about it - and their policy was to continue repressing Arabs and fighting with them every four or five years. They were good tacticians but not good at strategy. Currently, due to the changes that are taking place, how do you think the mindset of Israeli politicians, of all ilk, can be changed?

Dr Claire SPENCER, Head of the Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House – It is a very complex matter and again I am not here to criticize Israel as such. I am just observing domestic divisions and, therefore, deciding that Europe has a responsibility to try to help the Israelis that really are looking for peace. They are still very much in the majority, according to all the polls. Some people would prefer a completely Jewish Israeli state from the West Bank to the sea but that is not realistic. We have to engage with Israeli society as opposed to imposing limits and preconditions because it has never worked with Israelis. You have to speak with them in terms of their long-term interest. We need to explain to them that "we are here to help them move on their long-term interests". If we just constantly criticise them it is not going to work. I am no Israeli but I am very pleased to see what the Israelis did. They were the first to arrive in Haiti; they did magnificent work there. The Israeli doctors and so forth were onsite in Haiti right away, very well organized. This just goes to show the very humanitarian side to Israelis whereas for the British, and I can say this as a British subject. My mother spent her childhood in India and I talked a lot with her about her time in India. I asked her about colonial times and what she was doing there then and she would say to me, "It was not all bad". We left in 1947; we understood the situation with Gandhi very well. She was young at the time and her father decided. Similarly in France and Algeria, people understood the situation and actually left in the end. This is a similar idea. We need to discuss this with the Israelis in terms of historical change in the Israeli state. It is a very young state. I am certainly not trying to criticize any internal workings and what impact immigration may have had. It did change the nature of Israel. We need to be addressing all of this, not just the political leaders.

All Israeli political leaders have continued with a policy of occupation and settlement of the West Bank. The political class will not be making the change. It is the Israeli society that will be making a change, saying, 'That is enough, it is not in our interest'. We have to be engaging with civil society.

Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – I was glad to hear you compare British policy in India with French policy in Algeria.

Dr Claire SPENCER Head of the Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House – I just meant not policy, but the principles of occupation.

Philippe MIGNAVAL – Europe is an economic giant and a political dwarf. It does not exist in that respect. Mr Giuliani used the very true words to say that it was a question of will and courage. The word “courage” was used several times and it is very interesting and important. We actually accepted the situation because we turned Europe into a sort of extended free-trade area. The question therefore is: in a Europe with 27 members, operating on the basis of consensus, in other words, where political decisions are basically blocked, can we then really expect to make any progress? Is this realistic? Is this courageous? Or are there any alternative solutions? Specifically, would it be possible to make progress with a smaller number of countries to reach some truly political objectives so that we could end up having a Europe that is a political power as well?

Jean-Dominique GIULIANI, Chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation – “When I examine myself I worry but when I compare myself I am reassured”, said Plato. We must not be too hard on ourselves. The European Union is not a political dwarf. It does not have the political power that would be commiserate with its economic power, which is true. There are 70,000 European troops in external operations right now; they are ranked second after the United States. We have achieved with 501 million European inhabitants is to establish the biggest worldwide market. We had to begin with that. If just after the Second World War we had raised sovereignty issues, which are controversial and difficult, the answer would have been no. Maybe we would need to ask President François-Poncet who is more familiar with this than me. In 50 years we have achieved results we could never have imagined. It was unimaginable really to break with 600 years of conflict – a period of 600 years during which France was in conflict at least once every 30 years with one of its neighbours or one of the European powers. That time is over. It has come to an end for quite some time, possibly forever. This is a unique success story in the history of mankind and an economic success. If you look at pictures of the post-war period and you look at statistics it was unimaginable for Europe to turn itself around like that, to re-establish itself. I share your impatience completely but we also have to realise that we have 2,000 years’ history with different identities, collective memories, a collective way of interpreting history and then individual memories that are still marked by conflicts that have taken place. We still have survivors of the major European wars.

I share the impatience through the Schuman Foundation; we try modestly to act as a driving force of the European model. I said that really we are at a time of low tides, so to speak, in Europe. Europe has grown-up; it is experiencing the global economic crises and also its own crisis. Maybe right now we do not have the very excited major European leaders but it was a dream that has really been turned into reality. In today’s world there is not any natural disaster, any conflict where Europe is not active and is not called on – in Indonesia, in Africa, in South

America or Haiti. Now we are very much stakeholders, very much participating, not separately as French or British, not with the nostalgic view of an empire, but efficiently. Europe is different to what we have been accustomed to. We have to do everything to move forward and to become that. The Lisbon institutions, and not just them, make it more and more possible for us to make the decisions, not unanimously but using procedures based on a majority decision. It is the same procedure since 1950. It is through having shared interests, as we have to do locally to solve problems, that we can manage, not to reach consensus but agreement so that some can move forward faster than others. Do we need pioneer groups? Personally I say 'yes' on global subjects of strategic importance like nuclear proliferation or the Middle East. I feel countries within the European Union that do have a global diplomatic network shoulder a special responsibility. Three or four of them could do a few things, and that is what they do. The European spirit is we must always leave the door open for any member states, including the smallest that want to join in on an initiative. Clearly when we are talking about nuclear issues with Iran or in the Security Council, we cannot do this with all 27 member States.

Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – If you look at the history of European integration since May 9th 1950, you can see various periods of time when Europe did not really move forward. You will not ever see times though when Europe actually backtracked. European integration has never gone backwards. It has continued to progress, sometimes very timidly and slowly; sometimes it even stagnated. Europeans such as myself and Mr Giuliani feel it is unfortunate that the pace is often quite slow. The Lisbon Treaty is an enormous step forward. What the actual achievements will be? We do not know yet. Will a European foreign policy actually come of this? The states have not given up their sovereign rights in terms of defining foreign policy. There can be some cacophony, though certainly a great deal of progress has been made.

Friends, it is time for conclusions, for the final fireworks, by the eminent European Mr Solana who, as you know, was in charge of European Foreign Policy. He did this with great diplomacy and great authority and he will be making the concluding comments for our symposium. It is a real pleasure for me to see that this symposium has been so interesting and that so many of you have attended, been here from the start to the end.

In search of a European policy for the Middle-East

Closing

Javier SOLANA, Former High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union – Thank you very much. Thank you President of the French Senate, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee and President of the Schuman Foundation and all of you who have organized this fascinating symposium on a vital issue, vital for Europe, but above all vital for the Middle East and for the people who live there, so close to us in heart and in flesh.

Let me briefly say something about European developments. There has been talk about Europe's role, about Europe's recent history. After the Rome Treaty, there were probably three phases in Europe's development, just to keep things simple. The first was reconciliation due to political will. This was a phase that managed to create a single market. Then there was the stage of continental stabilization, that can be called the enlargement, although some might disagree but it is however the phase of stabilization of the continent. We stabilised the continent by opening up to countries like Poland. That was a phase of determined political action. Today, I would say we are at the outset of the third phase which is that of Europe as a necessity. We cannot live and act in a world where power will change hands in the way it has been to date. Changes in our part of the world, emerging economies around the world, G20, all these things are going to completely change the world. Europe, out of necessity, has to act as such. I have just read the UK report on that. It says it is a fantasy to imagine that any European country can act alone in today's world. I totally agree with that. Now we are faced with the necessity of acting together and leveraging the Lisbon Treaty so as to make all the necessary efficient and swift efforts for implementation in spirit and letter. I say 'spirit' because that is as important as the letter.

I feel free today. I am representing Europe. I am a citizen who loves Europe, coming from a country that has suffered much, that always loved to be part of Europe. I am from a family in Salvador de Madariaga that for generations acted as responsible Europeans. And I want to say clearly to all of you from Europe, or from other parts of the world because I know you are here in this room, that we here in Europe are willing to give that necessary push towards building Europe, not just in economic but also in political terms.

I want to briefly say a couple of things about the various issues you have been discussing. There is this excellent report which has been published. I was lucky enough to meet the President of the Committee for Middle East Affairs on a number of occasions and I know the excellent work that has been done. I would revert to what was said at the end of this afternoon's presentations about the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. I had been a member of the Spanish government when I attended the Madrid conference so I was already very much involved in this process. That was the first step I think that opened the door to the Oslo conference. Since then we have travelled a long road. I am aware of the Palestinian and Israeli frustrations; everyone in this region is suffering from the absence of a final solution to the peace process. I would say that 2009 was a year of great frustration for me because it started with the hope that the situation around the world, especially the relationship between Europe and the United States, would be able to set in motion a process that would lead to peace and that failed. Now we are all frustrated to see that the efforts made by the President, and by Senator Mitchell who is a good friend of mine and with whom I had worked with before going back to the second Intifada, lack a peaceful resolution. It has been very frustrating that we have not been able to turn things around during the first half of last year. Remember the three questions that were on the table a year ago? Firstly, negotiation across the board, including all factors – that meant the borders and everything. There were two demands: that the Israelis freeze the settlements - that was our demand supported by the Palestinians or the Arab world, and that was not only endorsed but also pushed by the United States to start with; and a demand on the Arab states to launch the Arab peace initiative. That's binary, if I can put it that way, peace for recognition, recognition for peace. We sought ways of bringing in some flexibility ensuring that a step taken on one side would be met by an equivalent step on the other side, so it was not about waiting to reach the final peace and recognition before moving. The idea therefore was step-by-step progress on both sides. However, that failed. The settlement freeze was a failure and probably consequently the response on the Arab side was also a failure.

The conclusion we reached was that, as we went through all the American administrations, the acceptance of the Israeli position was the final US position. The US President said "we would not accept the continuation of settlements". Secretary Clinton said "we would not accept it" and in the end she did "we accept the continuation of settlements". There was a lack of political courage to say no and to stick to that line. I think this is going to be a vital key to success. As soon as it is done the better it will be for Israelis, for Palestinians and for peace.

Senator Mitchell has put forward a number of initiatives aimed at re-establishing bilateral contact between Israelis and the Palestinians. For now the Israelis are as ready to involve themselves as the Palestinians. But Palestinians think it is hard to accept meeting the Israelis as they continue to settle. The Goldstone Report is something which we have not mentioned and it is very important because the Palestinians found that they were virtually isolated *vis-à-vis* the Arab countries and us to a certain extent. President Abbas is really very

pessimistic. To get things going again is going to be very difficult but maybe the idea of the solution would be to start contacts at a lower technical level, to start having meetings between the two sides with the backing of the quartet. Basically in the quartet what counts is the US and us. We have people on the ground, which is not the case with the Americans. There is not a single American in the field on the ground apart from the embassy. We, apart from our embassies, have people on the ground in Raffa, in the West Bank, with the police force. I think we need to monitor very closely these developments on the ground. I would like to speak optimistically and say that I do not think that it is impossible.

I think that if we do not discuss the matter of borders we will not get anywhere. That has to be the first item on the agenda, even if the Palestinians do not have all of the territory a day after the definition. Frontiers is where it all starts and that goes back to 1967. What we are talking about is changes of 2.5% or 6%. It should be possible to reach and if we can settle that then we will settle the problem of the settlements because they will be on one side of the line or the other. And therefore there will not be any settlements. That should be the first objective and that is where the first efforts should lie. It is not out of reach, we just need the political will. The Europeans have to agree on that and I think that is the case and they have to stick to that position throughout negotiations without any backtracking. If we can achieve that we can perhaps make the progress we should have made in 2009.

However, that will be difficult because after what was said on Wednesday, in the State of the Union speech, we heard that most efforts will not go into American foreign policy but into the economy. Nonetheless, I think there is a way forward. What I want us all to do, what I call upon politicians, European civil society and others is to mobilise our efforts and political will in that direction, that is to look at the final definition of frontiers. At the end of the peace period between Israel and Egypt, the real issue was Sinai. That issue was settled on a step-by-step basis. Obviously it was different because there you are talking about two States and with Palestine you are not talking about a State. I think that if we can seriously address the question of borders, it will be a step in the right direction and it will establish the necessary credibility for the Palestinians and the Arab world.

I will come back to some others issues addressed. Throughout 2009 there were three things that were important. Firstly, Gaza. No solution has been found there. I remember the first 2009 Sharm el-Sheikh international conference on Gaza. Secretary of State Clinton was there. President Sarkozy presided over the conference and made an important statement in that meeting. It was said "We will try again but if peace is not reached by the two parties then the international community will have to find a way of imposing it". This was the first time anything similar was said in public and this should not be overlooked because we will probably have to express it again. After the Sharm el-Sheikh conference, and with all the money that was pledged, nothing happened. Gaza continued as before which is tragic. At the same time it is interesting to think there are no more rockets. Since the beginning of 2009 there has been no violence in Gaza. It

is interesting because we do not know how long this is going to last so we should take advantage of it. It is important to maintain this situation of non-violence on the ground. The third important thing to speak about is the Fayyad Plan. It is true that it does not solve all the issues but it is the first meaningful step towards institution building by the Palestinians themselves, by a group of Palestinians who, with our help and the help of other countries and non-EU members, will seek to achieve its aims. I am a good friend of Salam Fayyad. I think he is an amazing person who has done, and will continue to do, amazing things. However, at the same time Egypt, and General Souleiman, was delegated by the international community, including the Arab countries, to the role of negotiating intra-Palestinian agreements. Objectively speaking, this was a positive situation but unfortunately it did not manage to produce a solution. Hamas is obviously a very important issue. There can not be peace if there is no settlement of the Hamas issue. It is not a question of 'if,' though, it is a question of 'how and when'. I do not think there will be any meaningful peace negotiations with Hamas as it is today. Israel would never agree. We will have to negotiate with today's Palestinian Authority, try to settle peace and save time and then settle the internal Palestinian problem. I do not think you can do it the other way around. Israel and Hamas do not want to and they do not want a final agreement. They want an open and not final agreement. They would prefer to postpone negotiations and agreement and it is important to bear this in mind. You can talk with Hamas but recognition of Hamas would be a very dear price to pay and I do not think that is going to happen now. It is a very important issue and it is perhaps something that needs to be done at the right time.

Moving on to Iran. You know that I was head of negotiations, not just for Europe, but I represented US, China and Russia in these negotiations also, which was amazing. If you had said that a European could speak for all the Security Council permanent members plus the EU, it would have seemed extraordinary. Unfortunately no progress was achieved firstly because the Americans were never included. They only attended the last meeting in Geneva in 2009 where we looked at the nuclear programme with "Freeze for Freeze" (freeze sanctions and freeze the number of centrifuges). Secondly, the presence on the ground of Mohamed ElBaradei to inspect the facilities discovered in September and thirdly, and very importantly, the existence of a small Tehran reactor. These were extremely important factors which stunted any progress. You know how important this small reactor is because France has been very much involved. We had these three points in the meeting in Geneva. Then there was the referendum in Tehran, resulting in its refusal. The agreement reached has been destructed for internal domestic reasons.

All of this means that decision-making processes in Tehran are more complicated than before so we have to give serious thought to what is going to happen in 2010. I do not think we can sit back and carry on doing nothing with Tehran. It will be very difficult, but I think we have to say to do something and to opt for a double way of action if there are no negotiations. New York is still the place where we have to work on this issue. What about China and Russia? It is not going to be easy but all efforts to keep them on board must be made. We,

in Europe, must do everything we can to reach a European common position. The question of which types of sanctions is also very tricky. There are countries who say sanctions on trade or exports is stupid because then the Chinese will come in and take your place and Tehran will continue to have the means of boosting its economy. We need a serious discussion and I think 2010, over the next few months, will be the right time to do that.

There are many things I could say about Turkey, Syria, negotiations between Israel and Syria and Turkey's role. I think that in this respect some progress is being made: situation in Lebanon, the Lebanon government, etc. I think the fundamental issue is the Israel-Palestinian conflict and the only way of making progress is making it clear to everybody that the international community is going to make every effort possible to define the borders of a Palestinian state. Then we will have to negotiate how the Palestinian government will take responsibility for its territory, having a perfectly clear idea of what the borders of the state are. Without a clear definition of the borders it would be very difficult to reach an agreement that would be supported by the Arab world.

Dear friends, thank you very much for your attention. I am perhaps frustrated but, like many of you doubtless, optimistic about the future of Europe. As I said at the outset, it is not just about sentimentality now, it is necessity. European leaders now have a clear idea of where we need to go. I think the President answered a question just now about this. In international meetings, when we have 8 or 10 Europeans speaking side-by-side it is either cacophony or repetition. If it is repetition then you would say 'why say the same thing,' and if it is cacophony nobody knows what is being said. What we need is a single voice; no cacophony and no repetition. If we want to repeat anything, it should be repeating our policy every day and not changing it. Thank you.

Jean FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Senator, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Co-author of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee's report on the situation in the Middle East – Mr Solana's presentation is the culmination of our symposium here. Let me thank him once again for being here. There will be no questions, I am sorry. I see people would like to but Mr Solana has made an ex cathedra presentation so there can be no questions and no-one would dare answer for him. That is the end of our symposium. Questions will have to remain at the back of your mind for our next symposium. I wish you all a pleasant evening and fruitful meditation on everything that has been said here. I am absolutely convinced you will find all sorts of intellectual nourishment in that. Thank you so much.