

**"THE INTERNATIONAL IMPLICATIONS
OF THE AMERICAN ELECTION"**

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THE INTERNATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE AMERICAN ELECTION

Undoubtedly the result of the last American Election may be seen as strong support for Bush's foreign policy. First and foremost with a margin of victory of 3,5 million votes more than those for John Kerry, GW Bush's triumph can't be challenged. Second, it's clear to me that the main reason of such a vote is that Americans didn't want to change their "commander in chief" in the face of a dangerous situation for American troops abroad. It's only natural, even for those who opposed it - that Americans did not wish to put into question the Iraq war.

1. In such a context I'm not sure that Bush's foreign policy will critically change. As you know GW Bush likes to stress he's someone who believes in finishing the job he starts. That was by the way one of his electoral slogans during the campaign. He will thus have at heart a continued focus on the "war on terrorism" -- which means threatening to use strength when deemed necessary.
2. That said I'm convinced there'll be some changes for the sole reason that the foreign policy actors will not be the same. The nomination as Secretary of State of Condi Rice cannot but have an influence on this policy. Mr. Bush is reputed to be slavishly loyal to Ms. Rice, as she is to him. In the same way Steve Hadley's appointment as the new National Security Advisor means that the President doesn't want to see divergence any more between Foggy Bottom and the White House.
3. Major changes might occur in my view in the transatlantic relationships. It is indeed time for the Europeans and the Americans to try and rebuild a relationship of trust based on partnership rather than rivalry. This has recently been stressed by Michel Barnier, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs. Will this renewed relationship allow critically needed progress, especially in the Middle East in view of solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? This, as you well know, is a main concern of Europeans. It now seems to be a common objective on both sides of the Atlantic. But much will depend on events we cannot predict: namely the results of next Palestinian elections.

Let me develop these three ideas.

I. The mainstream of American foreign policy will not dramatically change given G W Bush's strong convictions on how to protect American security and to defend democratic values throughout the world.

Everyone agrees that we live in a very dangerous world. In this post cold war world, threats such as terrorism, organised crime, weapons of mass destruction are global, difficult to identify and thus to fight. And 9/11 blatantly proved that Oceans no longer protect even the US. That stated however there are different opinions worldwide on how to tackle these radical threats. Bush will likely not find the other approaches to these threats to be persuasive, however, because his vision is grounded on strong beliefs.

The first belief is that the US has to take action right now to ensure its security and likewise defend and spread democracy. This means stopping terrorism dead in its tracks. In my view and as far as I can understand from conversations with my American counterparts when I was minister, this view doesn't mean that the US government opposes multilateralism as such, only that under the circumstances multilateralism is less important than taking immediate action. To me this is very much in the American way of thinking. In other words,

the US has no qualms about going it alone if necessary. Result: feathers have really been ruffled in Europe and international organizations such as the UN feel marginalized. Yet I'm not too pessimistic when I see the consensus obtained on the UN resolution on the Ivory Coast.

The second belief has to do with projecting power and military strength. This leads to pre-emptively searching out one's enemies. Let me just quote from a September 2002 White House statement on national security strategy: "*The US can no longer solely rely on a reactive posture as we have done in the past...We cannot let our enemies strike first*". In a way this pre-emptive war doctrine is a sea change in American foreign policy. That's why I agree with Madeleine Albright when she wrote in Foreign Affairs that "*those who suspect the war in Iraq was a grab for oil are mistaken; it was a grab for a place in history*". This isn't to say that the US Bush administration will try to launch another pre-emptive war. My point is that the US will continue to be more aggressive than we Europeans towards States which endanger the world's security. Look at the negotiations going on now between the EU3 (Germany, France, UK) to stop Iran's uranium enrichment program. The Bush administration doesn't mince words in saying it wants the program halted and in criticizing the draft agreement that came out a few days ago. It'll be interesting to see what will come out of the Atomic Energy Agency meeting next week regarding this.

II. To have a clear idea of the possible change in American foreign policy, it's necessary to know the new actors.

Although we don't know the names of all these actors, what strikes me at first glance is that the new appointments are from true blue Bush's loyalists whom he took on for their proximity and trust rather than ideological worldview. They mostly are from within the White House and close to the President.

The second point, which is far from being negative, is that with the appointment of Steve Hadley to replace Condi Rice, there will smoother relations between the State Department and the NSC. I have to admit I appreciated the moderate stance that Colin Powell brought to help patch up relations between Europe and the US. If he didn't succeed it was only because he was stuck between a rock and a hard place. Not only Americans, but also we Europeans, and especially we French, weren't at that time always at our best conciliatory form. That's why I was very heartened to read the French Foreign Minister's recent Wall Street Journal editorial reaching out to Americans.

The third and last point has to do with the make up of two main actors of future American policy - Condi Rice and Steve Hadley - whom I very much enjoyed talking with when I was minister. Let me mention in passing that contrary to you might have read Condi Rice is not an ideologue. She has a conservative edge, of course. She shares Bush's viewpoint on America's mission "to extend the frontiers of freedom". She's often spoken of the need for America to push forward democratic transformation of the Middle East. I don't know what her exact part was in the definition of the "Greater Middle East Initiative" launched at the G8 last June, but I suspect that it was pivotal. As you know, this strategic initiative, modelled on the 1975 Helsinki accords, has been slightly modified to take into account some European reservation. Nowadays it's obvious that it will be a more open ended and flexible approach allowing more of a dialogue to take place with each country concerned. Middle Eastern countries continue though to regard this strategy as aimed at maintaining American world dominance. It remains to be seen whether Condi Rice will push this plan forward in spite of the existence of strong reservations in the Arab world.

Another interesting question is that of the American policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In my view Condi Rice's appointment won't diminish American support for Israel. She's known as being very supportive of Israel in the past. The real question now is how she and more broadly the Bush administration will handle the new situation after Arafat's death. All will depend on who's elected in January 2005. If it's Mahmoud Abbas, there will undoubtedly be a new start. Sharon will have somebody to talk with and the American government will wish to help rapprochement. In that case the fact that Condi Rice has had rather good contacts with some of the Palestinian cabinet ministers could be of help. This could help the Bush administration to push more for reform of Palestinian institutions. But one has to be a realist: the Roadmap agreed by the Quartet – the European Union/ US/ Russia/UN – has a long way to go. Although, all of us wish that the Palestinians live in peace in a democratic state and the Israelis live without the constant threat of terrorism, it will be very difficult to achieve this goal. My fear is that in spite of what President Bush has recently said, the Israeli-Palestinian issue won't stay at the top of the American agenda. I note that during his meeting with British Prime Minister Tony Blair in Washington last week, Bush didn't go out of his way to commit his support to organizing a Mideast conference or even sending a US envoy.

III. What about the future of transatlantic relationships?

This is undoubtedly an opportunity to get on a better footing. Here lies my greatest hope and also I admit the greatest uncertainty. It's obvious that the war in Iraq has provoked a split amongst Europeans which has spilled over into the transatlantic relationships. There are two major subjects of controversy. The first has to do with NATO, the role of which gives rise to diverse viewpoints amongst European states. The second cause of tension is due to misunderstandings about the very purpose of European integration. For sure, to suggest that the European Union should be a counterweight to American power, even a rival, cannot be seen as a positive way to promote a transatlantic relationship of trust. On the other hand, Europeans feel sometimes that they should be taken more seriously when their analysis of the international situation differs from that proposed by the US. In that respect, one can be more optimistic today. Transatlantic relationships have recovered from some of the worst reverses they suffered in 2003. Moreover there's no reason to doubt of the good will of President Bush when he declared, the very day of his re-election, that he wished to work more closely with the Europeans. More recently, at his meeting in Washington with Prime Minister Tony Blair, he said he looked forward to using "*the combined strength of Europe and America*" to advance freedom. This was indeed the very purpose of the construction of Europe strongly favoured by the US at the time of the Marshall Plan in 1948 and ever since. At that time, building an integrated Europe was aimed at gathering countries of the "Free World" to combat communism. Is Europe in the same way aimed at combating terrorism? That's the question.

Let's look at the debate about NATO's role in our post cold war world. Some Europeans – and more recently the 8 former Soviet bloc states among NATO 26 members – think that this role is essential not only to ensure the security of Europe's Eastern borders, but also as a stabilizing force in Europe and in the rest of the world. This viewpoint is in accordance with NATO's presence in Afghanistan and with its training of Iraqi security forces. NATO has indeed decided to send about 300 experts together with a protection force, to set up a military academy in the Middle East. Let me recall that France heads NATO's operations in Kosovo and Afghanistan, and is the second largest contributor to the NATO reaction force. But the US would like to go further as was suggested by its Ambassador to NATO's who has recently urged the alliance to take on "*a collective military role in Iraq*".

Not all of NATO's member states favour the idea of such deployment of the Organization's troops in particular in the Middle East. France, Germany, Spain and Belgium fear that the presence of such forces will be strongly rejected by the Arab world and thus cause trouble instead of ensuring peace. The way this issue is addressed will be key to the future of the transatlantic alliance. I personally hope that the tensions raised when the European Constitution was being written about a real purpose of the new Europe defence policy will be put aside. It's more than urgent in our dangerous world. We are facing a paradox: on the one hand, the US remains frustrated at Europe's insufficient military resources, while being at the same suspicious about Europeans' goal to compete with NATO instead of cooperating with it. I very much hope that we iron out these problems before President Bush's visit in February at NATO's headquarters in Brussels.

This visit is a good signal. I'm convinced that there is a way to build a stronger European military capability while consolidating NATO's new role.

In the same spirit, it's nonsense to suggest that a more integrated Europe would be a rival to the US. I can't deny that it's frequently thought in Europe that the US no longer favours the EU project. I have myself realized, during my visit to Washington last February, that Europe is not at the top of the agenda of American foreign policy. However everyone agrees, on both sides - one way or another - that we have to come together. We share values and common grounds. Europeans are eager to avoid a "clash of civilization" between the Western world and the Muslim world. But they are also outraged by the torturing and killings by Islamic extremists. Intelligence experts and police forces work hand in hand on both sides of the Atlantic to search and arrest terrorists wherever they are hidden. A few weeks ago the EU pledged financial and personnel support for the upcoming national elections in Iraq to be held in January 2005. The prospect of the revival of the Quartet Road Map could also help to bring both parties together. To help Israeli and Palestinians to make peace on terms acceptable for both, taking advantage of democratization within the Palestinian Authority is seen by most European governments as the biggest challenge of the transatlantic relationship.

It is well understood by all governments concerned – European and American - that the world will be neither better nor safer if Europe and the US don't get along well. The transatlantic relationship turned into a success story after last World War II in the context of the cold war; and this in spite of the many tensions that occurred from time to time. We have no choice but to renew this success, which is my view will be a stronger priority for the new Bush administration. I'm thus reasonably optimistic.

Noëlle Lenoir, Brussels November 18th