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American troops at the US cemetery of Isigny-sur-Mer, Normandy,
remembering the dead from the
Second World War
(Phot: Martin Roemers)
For some time, observers were not quite sure what foreign policy to expect from new British Prime Minister Gordon Brown. The speech of his Foreign Secretary, the young and ambitious David Miliband, at the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium, on 15 November – and particularly the events surrounding it – clarified much of the Brown government’s European and security policy.

At the College’s campus, Miliband would obviously not be able to ignore the haunting image of Margaret Thatcher, who had delivered her ‘No European Superstate’ sermon there in 1988. And indeed, Miliband almost immediately quoted from Thatcher’s text. In her speech she had declared: ‘Our destiny is in Europe’. She had stressed the economic benefits of European integration. Still, Miliband acknowledged, her speech was to be ‘haunted by demons’: a ‘European superstate’, Thatcher believed, would bring in socialism by the back door, strip nation-states of their identity, and deliver us Utopia instead of practical results. Critics argued that the new Foreign Secretary had come to reassert Britain’s role in Europe and to ‘put those demons to rest’. Did he succeed?

If it weren’t for Mr Brown, the answer on 15 November would have been affirmative. In Bruges, Miliband argued first of all that Europe had not become a superstate after all, since it applied, among other things, the principle of subsidiarity (that is, if the member states are best placed to legislate on a specific topic, ‘Brussels’ should not). This would not prevent Europe from being a ‘leader’ in the world, Miliband went on to say, yet as a ‘model power’ rather than as a superpower.

Here Miliband referred to the power of persuasion: the EU’s increased security, peacefulness and wealth would ‘seduce’ others to adapt themselves in order to be allowed in: the classic example of soft power. But what about the other half of the equation: hard power? As Joseph Nye has argued, soft and hard power – both indispensable at the international arena – complement each other. He calls the ability to combine them into an effective strategy ‘smart power’.

It isn’t that Secretary Miliband did not mention hard power – more specifically, military means – in his speech, but the way to generate it (the seemingly eternal British ‘choice’ between going transatlantic or European) was kept blurred, as if the British, again, feared to take any next step on the path to European defence integration. The interesting part, however, was that the version of Miliband’s speech that was distributed among the press one day earlier did not give that impression. It included a substantial proposal on European defence, with an ‘EU military capabilities charter’ to be concluded by the member states. Under this charter, the European governments would agree on targets for defence investment, research and training. After French President Nicolas Sarkozy had made clear some months ago that France for its part would put forward proposals to reinvigorate European defence, the charter concept would align Britain with Sarkozy’s course, and would renew hopes for a ‘St Malo II’ – a second, bold Anglo-French initiative to bring European defence forward.

Things worked out differently. Miliband’s listeners were kept waiting for the passage. It appeared that it had been scrapped from the text. On 16 November 2007 The Times reported that Miliband had been ‘humiliated’ by Prime Minister Brown, who had ‘forced’ his Foreign Secretary to drop the policy initiative from his speech. Even though Brown’s interference was subsequently denied by the Foreign Office, Miliband had to answer some questions in Bruges. When asked whether or not he would be in favour of taking the next step towards European defence, he declared: ‘Let's not [...] duplicate the work that is done either by NATO or nation-states...’ Didn’t Margaret Thatcher’s Bruges speech say: ‘Europe must continue to maintain a sure defence through NATO’?

No demons were laid to rest after all.

| David den Dunnen |
Seven weeks before the first primaries in the United States’ presidential elections, Republican Congressman Tom Tancredo tried to attract attention to his campaign by airing a new television ad. According to opinion polls, only one per cent of the Republican voters would support Tancredo, and he needed voters quickly if he wanted to stand any chance. Tancredo decided to focus on national security. While showing images of a hooded person moving around a shopping mall, a narrator told the viewer: ‘There are consequences to open borders beyond the 20 million aliens who have come to take our jobs. Islamic terrorists now freely roam US soil. Jihadists who froth with hate, here to do as they have in London, Spain, Russia. The price we pay for spineless politicians who refuse to defend our borders against those who come to kill’. After the sound of an explosion, the screen read: ‘Tancredo… before it’s too late’.

Not all of the candidates were as outspoken as Tancredo on the dangers of foreigners to the United States. Yet, during the ‘war on terror’ and the military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is no surprise either that international relations play a prominent role in the presidential elections. This does not apply to all important international issues, however. North Korea, Pakistan and Darfur get sparse attention. Senator Hillary Clinton and Senator Barack Obama are, for instance, the only two candidates who include China in their campaign speeches. This selective interest leads to the question of how serious the candidates are about foreign affairs. The limited attention to international relations can be partly explained by the overall importance of domestic issues to the voters and partly by the expectations of presidential elections.

The dominance of domestic politics over international affairs can be illustrated with topics like the environment and immigration. Most candidates debated these issues as if they were solely domestic problems – only Democratic Senator Mike Gravel and Congressman Dennis Kucinich talked about the environment as an international problem.

A consequence of voting for a president is that the campaigns are not only about policies, but also about personalities. Voters want to know what a candidate stands for, but they are also curious about how the candidate would act under duress – that is why the debates can be important. Candidates offer policy standpoints during the campaigns, but especially want to emphasise their leadership qualities. Topics that voters find interesting, such as Iran, Iraq and the ‘war on terror’, are used by the candidates to show off their leadership qualities, and not necessarily their detailed knowledge or insight in international affairs.

‘Front-loading’...

Before I go into the details of international relations during this campaign, I would like to address two general topics concerning this election. First, the election season has changed in character. As Iowa and New Hampshire – the first states to hold their primaries – got so much attention from the candidates and the media, other states moved their primaries to an earlier date as well, or were ‘front-loading’, as the process is called. Consequently, the primary season will take place from January to June. In 2008 there is a good chance that already on ‘Super Tuesday’ – 5 February, when about twenty states will have their primary election – it might well be that the presidential candidates for both parties are known. With 26 to 27 states having their primaries in the first month of the primary season, candidates need substantial campaign funds to be able to compete in all of these states simultaneously.
The second general point is how much interest the primaries raise among the American public. According to a USA Today/Gallup poll of March 8, 2007 almost half of the Americans (48 per cent) have given ‘quite a lot’ of thought to the 2008 election. Since the pollsters did not define ‘quite a lot’, it is difficult to know what it means. On the NBC programme Meet the Press of 25 November 2007, four campaign managers discussed the primaries, and they agreed that the public only begins to pay attention shortly before they can vote. When the editor of Atlantisch Perspectief approached me in spring 2007 to write this essay, he asked me, since I was in the United States at the time, to reflect on how Americans discussed the elections. I was indeed a ‘legal alien’ in the United States (in the lingo of United States Customs) as the Erasmus Lecturer at Harvard for the spring 2007 semester, and I did not do any of the things that Congressman Tancredo expects aliens to do. It is obvious that Harvard University is not the United States, and my experiences in Cambridge, Massachusetts, must be limited in how they represent Americans thinking about the elections. No doubt the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard will pay more attention to the primaries when the voting takes place, but in spring 2007 the focus was very much on events in Iraq. I happened to live in one of the student houses – Mather House, with about 400 inhabitants – and I noted that the elections were hardly ever a dinner table conversation topic among the students. I should mention that quite a few of the students are politically interested and active, but they do volunteer work in the poorer neighbourhoods of Boston or focus on specific issues like the environment. Some students attended Barack Obama’s fundraising event at Boston University in April 2007, but that was just about the only moment the elections came up. The debates were not watched on the public television sets in the house.

This lack of attention to the primaries was partly explained by one of my American friends, who told me that by the summer she was already fed up with the campaigns, hearing the same political messages over and over again. Since Harvard is located in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, I should also add that it is unlikely that the presidential campaigns will focus on this state. Massachusetts has only twelve votes of the 538 on the national Electoral College. Also, Massachusetts almost always votes Democrat in national elections. When I studied in Massachusetts in 1988, Michael Dukakis, presidential candidate and Governor of Massachusetts, visited the town that I lived in once, but I never saw anything of a Republican campaign because the Republican candidate, Vice President George H.W. Bush, had given up on Massachusetts and focused on other states to gain votes. In other words: to a substantial number of American citizens the elections
happen only to a limited extent, because of the voting by state and the role of the Electoral College (which also helps to explain why the number of Americans that vote is lower than in many other democracies). Only if Mitt Romney is elected as the Republican presidential candidate will we see a serious Republican campaign in Massachusetts, because Romney has been its Governor.

International Issues

How important international relations are and continue to be during the campaign is not completely clear. In the past, when I wrote essays on the importance of international relations during the elections, I could base my analysis in part on opinion polls about what topics voters found important. That type of opinion poll has not (yet) been carried out or made public. The three major candidates of each party have been able to publish an essay on their foreign policy ideas in *Foreign Affairs*, in addition to using their campaigns, their websites, and the debates to state their views (the Democrats held fifteen debates before 15 November 2007, and have five more to go; the Republicans held eleven debates before 15 November, with five more coming up – not all of the candidates, however, were invited or attended all of these debates).

Eight years ago, during the election campaigns of presidential candidates George W. Bush and Al Gore, their international relations advisers were the ones who wrote an essay in *Foreign Affairs* (for example, Condoleezza Rice wrote an essay about a future Republican foreign policy). Perhaps because of the front-loading, and perhaps because Americans want to hear what the next foreign policy will be since President Bush is not likely to change his policies, six primary candidates were now asked what their ideas on international relations are. The fact that six candidates (Republicans Romney, Senator John McCain and former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani; and Democrats Clinton, Obama and Senator John Edwards) have written these essays could indicate the importance of international relations during these elections. Yet that impression might be wrong. To take just one example: Giuliani majored in political science in college (in his essay he writes about the strengths and weaknesses of the realist school in international relations) and has the neo-conservative Norman Podhoretz among his advisers. Yet in his campaign, Giuliani limits his statements on international relations: on his website he discusses only two foreign relations topics, ‘winning the war on terror’ and ‘Iraq’, and they only get seven and six lines respectively. Giuliani used the ‘9/11’ attacks to define his leadership qualities, not to discuss international relations. As he said about himself in his ad ‘Tested’: ‘[Americans are] going to find somebody who has dealt with crisis almost on a regular basis and has had results’.

With President Bush only scoring a low 30 per cent approval rating, and a majority of Americans wanting their forces pulled out of Iraq, Democrats like to attack the president’s policies, while Republicans try to avoid Iraq to a large extent, and focus on topics such as Iran and illegal immigration. Nevertheless, the candidates tend to agree on many international topics, and that is especially true for the candidates who do well in the opinion polls. In many important cases, the candidates’ ideas do not differ much from the policies executed by President George W. Bush.

In general, the candidates are in favour of a multilateral approach. It should be said that international cooperation is put in terms of the United States being a world leader, which gives a specific meaning to the concept ‘cooperation’. Most candidates also see a role for the United Nations in international politics, but both Republicans and Democrats agree that the UN should be reformed. Most candidates want to be tough on Iran to prevent it from becoming a nuclear power, and are willing to use military force if needed to stop its nuclear programme. The question of whether military action would be used against Iran is not necessarily answered according to party lines: Democrats Clinton, Edwards, Obama and Senator Christopher Dodd, and Republicans Giuliani, McCain, Romney, Congressman Duncan Hunter and Senator Fred Thompson support the possible use of military force against Iran; while Democrats Senator Joe Biden, Gravel, Kucinich and Governor Bill Richardson, as well as Republican Congressman Ron Paul, are opposed. All of the candidates want to increase diplomatic pressure on North Korea. Most of the candidates emphasise that negotiations should take place in an international context, with an important role for China. None of the candidates pays much attention to North Korea in their campaigns, however.

**Iraq**

At the beginning of the campaign Iraq was an important topic, especially among the Democrats. Recently, however, Iraq has received less attention because the number of Iraqis and American soldiers killed has declined over recent months, which complicated the discussion beyond the earlier catch phrases used by most candidates. In a recent opinion poll, 61 per cent of Americans want a troop withdrawal from Iraq within a year.² Even though most Republicans and Democrats disagree on whether American
military forces should remain in Iraq, almost all of the candidates seem to agree not to debate the details of the future of Iraq.

If the Republican candidates discuss Iraq, they are in general opposed to setting a timetable for the withdrawal of American troops. They want a stronger Iraqi government first. Ron Paul has a different position than the other Republican candidates. He wants an end to American military presence abroad. McCain, however, wants to increase the number of American troops in Iraq. Thompson wants American forces to remain there, although he refers to Iraq in only one sentence on his website under the heading of national security (in which, for instance, missile defence receives more attention). Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee (whose campaign is approved by action hero actor Chuck Norris, his website proudly announces) wants a regional summit, in order for ‘Iraq’s neighbors [to] become financially and military committed to stabilising Iraq’. Tancredo wants to stick to President Bush’s agenda, to move responsibility to the Iraqi government and regional powers. Giuliani compares a withdrawal from Iraq to the Vietnam conflict. He puts forward the assumption that by 1972 the Vietcong had been defeated, the South Vietnamese government was on its way to political self-sufficiency, but failed because the United States withdrew its support, making it possible for the North Vietnamese to win the conflict. Romney does not want to pull American forces out of Iraq, because it would endanger success in the ‘war on terror’. On his website, Romney does not mention Iraq, but he does have a heading ‘Defeating the Jihadists’, under which he discusses how to be tough on Iran. Hunter and Alan Keyes do not even mention Iraq on their websites.

In the Democratic Party, views on Iraq range from complete troop withdrawal, immediately or within one year (argued by Kucinich, Gravel, Obama, Richardson, Dodd and Edwards) to partial troop withdrawal (Biden and Clinton). In all of the scenarios, the Iraqi government has to take more responsibility for security and governance. Obama and Clinton, in particular, have used the topic of Iraq as a way to define their campaigns. The point was not so much about who had the best ideas on the future of Iraq, but rather who would be the best political leader. According to a Gallup poll, Democratic voters preferred Mrs Clinton over Mr Obama because the former has more political experience. Obama decided to emphasise that he had opposed the war against Iraq from the beginning, while Clinton voted for it. In other words, Obama stressed that he preferred to be right rather than having experience in making the wrong decisions. Clinton responded by stressing that Obama was ‘naive’ and ‘irresponsible’ in international politics, since he – as president – would be willing to talk with the leaders of Iran and Cuba.
The ‘War on Terror’

Another important point of debate is the ‘war on terror’ in a broader context. The major candidates tend to agree on this topic as well, with Obama and Edwards as exceptions. Among the Democrats, Biden does not believe in a ‘war on terror’, because the phrase and doctrine are ‘problematic’. In Biden’s view, terrorism is a method, which makes it hard to identify the enemy and difficult to know how to win. Obama sees the reaction of the Bush administration to ‘9/11’ as traditional thinking, and wants to focus on supporting moderate Muslims in the Middle East, by focusing on education, health care, trade and investment in the region. Edwards believes that the ‘war on terror’ is a ‘bumper sticker’, intended ‘for George Bush […] to justify everything he does: the ongoing war in Iraq, Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib, spying on Americans, torture’. Gravel and Kucinich agree that there is no ‘war on terror’.

Clinton does believe in the ‘war on terror’ and wants to wage it by building a broad international coalition. Richardson agrees with her. He wants to move forces from Iraq to Afghanistan to focus on al-Qaeda. Dodd also wants to pay more attention to ‘Jihadists’ and less to Iraq. Except for Paul, all of the Republicans agree with the Bush administration’s take on the ‘war on terror’. All of the Democrats want to shut down Guantánamo Bay and disagree with torture as a method of interrogation. All of the Republicans support these Bush policies, except for Paul and McCain.

Expanding the Armed Forces...

Most of the prominent candidates, both Republican and Democrat, want to expand US armed forces – few of them discuss the need to increase the budget of the Department of Defense, but given their policies it is obvious that they would need to. Among the Republicans, Giuliani wants to add at least ten new Army combat brigades (that is, 30,000 to 50,000 soldiers), as well as additional submarines, long-range bombers, and in-flight refuelling tankers. Romney wants to invest ‘at least an additional $30-40 billion annually over the next several years to modernise our military’. McCain is planning to ‘increase the size of the US Army and the Marine Corps from the currently planned level of roughly 750,000 troops to 900,000 troops’, believing that is possible to increase defence spending, ‘which currently consumes less than four cents of every dollar that our economy generates – far less than what we spent during the Cold War’. Thompson wants a ‘larger, more capable, and more modern military that can defeat terrorists, deter adversaries, and defend the US and our interests’. Huckabee also wants stronger American military forces, even if only to deter possible enemies: ‘Having a sizeable standing army actually makes it less likely that we’ll have to use it. So I will increase the defense budget’. Among the Democrats, Hillary Clinton supports the idea to expand the armed forces by some 80,000 soldiers, specifically with Special Forces. As a Senator, she also voted for further development of the missile defence system. Barack Obama wants to expand the Army by 65,000 soldiers, and he wants an extra 27,000 marines. Dodd has a record of supporting defence spending (he is a Senator from Connecticut, where the Groton Naval Submarine Base is located), and he has stated that he wants to expand the Army and Marine Corps too.

Ron Paul is the only Republican who wants to decrease defence spending and the American military presence abroad. Democrats Gravel and Kucinich agree with Paul, and object to the influence of the military-industrial complex. Richardson wants to decrease defence spending by US$ 57 billion, while getting rid of Cold War weapon systems. Edwards does not want to make a statement on force levels. He wants to create a ‘Marshall Corps’, made up of 10,000 civilians who will be sent to countries after international interventions.

...But Who Would Decide on Deployment?

In the context of increased defence spending, it is also interesting to note how the Republican candidates think they would come to a decision to commit American forces abroad. During the 9 October 2007 debate at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, Romney was asked if, as president, he would need authorisation from Congress to take military action against Iran’s nuclear facilities. Romney began his answer with the statement: ‘You sit down with your attorneys and [they] tell you what you have to do…’. The moderator pursued the question of whether the president should get approval from Congress for a military action abroad. Hunter did not believe so. Paul, the third to answer, asked his colleagues to read the United States Constitution, in which it is stated that Congress has the right to declare war, not the president. Huckabee still believed that he should act independently as president. Finally, McCain framed the right answer, which the rest of the candidates then repeated, in which he stated that he would act immediately to protect the United States against attack, as the president swears in his oath of office, and if he had time, he would go to Congress first.
A Look Ahead

According to national opinion polls, Clinton and Giuliani will be the presidential candidates. Until recently polls showed that Clinton would win the election by a small margin, but in the two most recent polls Giuliani was ahead by a four-point margin. Al Gore and George W. Bush reminded us in 2000 that national popularity is irrelevant in the American elections; you have to win the Electoral College, state by state. Clinton is losing support in both the Iowa and New Hampshire primaries, and while she is still ahead of the other candidates, Iowa has become too close to call. She is still the most likely candidate for the Democratic nomination, but it is going to be harder for her than opinion polls suggested until one month ago. Giuliani will probably not win in either Iowa or New Hampshire, and will have a tough time securing his party’s nomination, with Romney, Thompson and Huckabee as his biggest challengers at the moment.13 No matter who will be the Republican nominee, Republican campaign strategist Karl Rove has already announced that Clinton has too many negatives to become the next president of the United States.14

Considering the front-runners in the primaries (Clinton, Obama, Edwards, Giuliani, Thompson, Huckabee and Romney), it is unlikely that there will be a tremendous change in US foreign policy compared to the policies of President Bush. A Democratic president will probably end the use of torture and internment at Guantánamo Bay – and those are important changes – but only Obama and Edwards would pull all of the American forces out of Iraq. All of the candidates speak of re-establishing the role of the United States as the leader of the international community and multilateral action. Yet all of them, except for Edwards, also want to increase the size of US armed services. Considering the amount of money that the United States already invests in defence spending, and the willingness of most candidates to commit US armed forces to preventing Iran from becoming a nuclear power, the use of military force seems to remain a prominent option in American foreign policy.

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13. For recent tracking polls on the candidates’ support, see www.rasmussenreports.com.
Foreign and Security Policy of the

Democrats

Senator Hillary Clinton

‘The next US president will have a moment of opportunity to reintroduce America to the world and restore our leadership’

Senator Barack Obama

‘I’m running for president to change our politics and our policy so we can leave the world a better place than our generation has found it’

Senator John Edwards

‘We cannot only be warriors; we must be thinkers as well’

• America needs to rebuild its power and restore its global standing. To achieve this, getting out of Iraq, rebuilding the US military, and developing a broader arsenal of tools in the fight against terrorism are necessary. Also, rebuilding relations within alliances and re-establishing the traditional relationship of trust with Europe are important.

• The first step must be to bring an end to the war in Iraq. US troops must be brought home, starting within the first 60 days of the administration. Military force in Iraq will be replaced by an intensive diplomatic initiative in the region. To counter terrorism, specialised units will engage in targeted operations.

• By reinforcing US military efforts in Afghanistan, the ‘war on terror’ can be won. To be effective in the region, the United States will play a role in counternarcotics efforts and the funding of crop-substitution programmes, a road-building initiative, and of institutions for effective governance.

• Nuclear materials must be removed from vulnerable sites. The security of chemical plants needs to be improved in order to keep materials for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) out of the hands of terrorists. By establishing an International Fuel Bank, countries can have access to nuclear fuel for civil purposes. The United States itself should take dramatic steps to reduce its nuclear weapons’ arsenal.

• Bringing an end to the war in Iraq is the priority. To achieve this, troops must be withdrawn from combat operations at a pace of one to two brigades every month. To leave Iraq a better place, Sunni and Shi’a factions must be pressured to find a lasting political solution. The Iraqi government will have to meet thirteen benchmarks for security, political accommodation, and economic progress.

• The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction must be stopped. In this, the United States must lead by example: it will lead a global effort to secure all nuclear weapons and material at vulnerable sites within four years. The nuclear ambitions of states like Iran must be prevented by a strong international coalition.

• Diplomacy is a top priority. Foreign aid will be doubled by 2012. To earn this aid, developing countries must take concrete steps to establish a democracy that respects the rule of law and human rights, and have transparent, accountable government institutions. Through both ways, the moral leadership of the US can be re-established.

• To meet global challenges, it is necessary to renew alliances and partnerships. NATO must be strengthened. Afghanistan is an important mission for the alliance, but has also shown the gap between NATO’s expanding missions and lagging capabilities. New alliances in other important regions, such as Asia, must be built.

• US foreign policy needs to be driven by a strategy of re-engagement. America has to reclaim the trust and respect of those countries whose cooperation it needs.

• The war in Iraq will be ended. An immediate withdrawal of 40-50,000 troops should take place. To ensure national security, the US will enhance its diplomatic efforts through talks with the leaders of Iran and North Korea, among others. ‘Hard power’ needs to be replaced by ‘smart power’.

• The US needs to provide assistance to peacekeeping operations, such as the United Nations/African Union operation in Darfur. Troops will be assisted by a newly established ‘Marshall Corps’, which will consist of civilian experts who are specialised in reconstruction, stabilisation and humanitarian missions.

• The United States must lead the effort to enhance international intelligence and non-proliferation institutions and halt the trade of the most dangerous technologies by strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

• The US military will have to be reformed. A national security budget will include all security programmes and eliminate counterproductive overlaps and agencies. Investments in recruitment, equipment and insurance will also be raised.
Six Major Presidential Candidates

Republicans

Rudy Giuliani

'We have responded forcefully to the terrorists’ war on the US, abandoning a decade-long and counterproductive strategy of defensive reaction in favor of a vigorous offense.'

Senator John McCain

'I am running for president of the United States because I believe in the greatness of this nation as a beacon of goodwill throughout the world.'

Mitt Romney

'We are a unique nation, and there is no substitute for our leadership.'

- Peace in the Middle East can only be achieved when force goes hand in hand with diplomacy. However, US diplomacy needs to be a better advocate of its core purpose: presenting US policy to the rest of the world. Diplomats have to be ready to walk away when talking is not leading to success.

- A quick solution to the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan will not be found. It takes time to build stable governments and societies. Iraq and Afghanistan are only two battlegrounds in a wider region that is the breeding ground for terrorist groups.

- The US needs to rebuild its military force. Chemical, biological, and nuclear challenges must be faced by strengthening the Proliferation Security Initiative and the national Patriot Act. Also, the development of a missile defence system will continue. The intelligence capabilities of the US need improving.

- The role of NATO and the UN should be re-examined to make sure that both can meet the challenges of the new century. NATO’s membership should be open to any state that meets the basic standards of good governance, military readiness and global responsibility. The UN is useful for humanitarian and peacekeeping functions; it has, however, proven irrelevant in fighting terrorism and resolving conflicts.

- The United States can win the ‘war on terror’ and the war in Iraq. To be successful in the region, more troops are needed. With sufficient troops and a good strategy, America can give the Iraqis the capabilities to govern and secure their own security.

- The situation in Iraq also affects neighbouring countries, such as Afghanistan and Pakistan. The US needs to make a recommitment to Afghanistan. Permanent US military bases in Afghanistan must be established. America needs to take the responsibility to help Pakistan to resist extremism by making a long-term commitment to Pakistan.

- All democratic nations must be brought together in one common organisation: the League of Democracies. This League can play a role in relieving human suffering, and confronting environmental and economical crises. It will not replace the United Nations or other organisations, but complement them. The transatlantic partnership is very important and must be revitalised to confront today’s worldwide challenges.

- Nuclear technology can never spread without creating the risk of more nuclear weapons, something the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty does not sufficiently address. A worldwide summit must be held where arrangements can be made to decrease these risks. One arrangement should be an increase in the budget of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to perform its monitoring and safeguarding tasks.

Sources: US Senate, Royal United Services Institute, Foreign Affairs, websites of the candidates, and other internet sources

Annemarie van Campen and Tjitske Risselada
Now is a suitable time to make an assessment of America’s international performance since its emergence in 1990 as the world’s only superpower. Dr Zbigniew Brzezinski, the Polish-American political scientist, geostrategist, and statesman, who served as National Security Adviser to US President Jimmy Carter from 1977 to 1981, tries to undertake such an appraisal in his latest book Second Chance: Three American Presidents and the Crisis of American Superpower.¹

On the basis of which criteria can such an appraisal be made? More at the heart of the matter: which elements should America’s Grand Strategy contain? According to Brzezinski, as the world’s most powerful state the United States has three missions:

• To manage, steer and shape power relationships in a world of shifting geopolitical balances and intensifying national aspirations, in order for a more cooperative system to emerge;
• To contain or terminate conflicts, prevent terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and to promote collective peacekeeping in regions torn by civil strife, with the aim of global violence receding rather than spreading;
• To address more effectively the increasingly intolerable inequalities in the ‘human condition’, in keeping with an emerging ‘global conscience’, and to prompt a common response to environmental and ecological threats.

Which of these missions has been accomplished since 1990? Not a single one. The next question must therefore be: can America lead at all? Brzezinski asks this question as follows: does America have the stuff to lead the world at a time when the political and social expectations of mankind are no longer passive, and the coexistence of different religions and cultures is being compressed by the impact of modern ways of communication? Three American presidents – George H.W. Bush, William J. Clinton and George W. Bush – had the opportunity to answer this question.

George H.W. Bush and the ‘New World Order’

Let us start with the first global leader, George H.W. Bush. His trademark and slogan was ‘The New World Order’. Yet it was never quite clear what characteristics such a ‘New World Order’ would have. Actually, he took the term from Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Bush’s first test was to handle the collapse of the Soviet Union. He proved to be a great crisis manager but not a strategic visionary. He could manage a problem, but not solve it correctly – actually a characteristic that one would associate with European leaders. Brzezinski shows in great detail how Bush managed and handled the collapse and dismantling of the Soviet Union with great self-assurance. At the same time he shows brilliantly that the concept of a ‘New World Order’ was just ‘nice talk’ and not much more. An example of this is that when
Brzezinski: "The war in Iraq has been a geopolitical disaster..." (Photo: Pentagon/N.A. Hernandez)

communism lost its credibility in the Soviet Union, China also seemed to be on the brink of explosion. In China, however, social unrest was harshly suppressed by the regime. What was Bush’s reaction? According to Brzezinski, ‘the US response reflected the traditional mind-set of his administration. It involved caution, secret diplomacy, reassurance and continuity, while avoiding any ringing self-identification with the cause of the demonstrators. [...] Accordingly, he chose to react with a relatively mild public rebuke, followed by a secret mission to Beijing by Scowcroft to reassure the Chinese that the US reaction would be perfunctory’. Such a pragmatic policy has, of course, nothing to do with a ‘New World Order’ concept.

Another example is the Iraq challenge. Here, too, Bush only managed the problem and did not try to solve it for good. He mounted a successful diplomatic and military response to the Iraqi seizure of Kuwait. Saddam was defeated and humiliated but stayed in power, and the region’s malaise continued to fester. According to Brzezinski, there is a tragic connection between what did not occur in winter 1991 and what did occur in spring 2003. Had the outcome of the first Gulf War been different, a subsequent US president might not have gone to war in Iraq. Another failure in Iraq was the Shi’ite rebellion against Saddam, which was stimulated by the US, but then crushed by the Iraqi military, causing the Arabs to think that the US was toying with them. In short, President Bush did not take advantage of his victory in Iraq strategically, or in accordance with his ‘New World Order’ vision.

In brief, with the end of the Cold War, the world was yearning for a vision, yet Bush Senior conducted pure Realpolitik. His greatest shortcoming was not what he did, but what he did not do: he had the opportunity to shape the future, but he did not.

Bill Clinton and Globalisation

Unlike George H.W. Bush, President Bill Clinton was a visionary with global foresight. To Clinton, foreign policy was the extension of domestic economic policy. His slogan and trademark was ‘Globalisation’. Bill Clinton was young, intelligent and idealistic. He was accepted as a world leader and could offer what Bush could not: a vision for the future. But he failed as well. In the Clinton administration there was no dominant voice on foreign policy. According to Colin Powell, Clinton’s Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the atmosphere during foreign policy discussions was ‘as if we were at the coffee house’, thus showing the lack of serious interest in world political matters. By contrast, the National Economic Council (NEC) was disciplined, and functioned in a professional manner.
Let us analyse two political challenges and opportunities that were not exploited well: first, the build-up of nuclear arsenals by India, Pakistan and North Korea, and the way that this influenced the Iranians to intensify their own nuclear programme. In this important case the Clinton administration did not pursue a clear policy. All of these states felt free to work on and acquire their own nuclear arsenals. The second example is an opportunity that the Clinton team did not seize: to deepen transatlantic relations and to expand NATO. Despite Russia’s positive response to Polish NATO membership in 1994, the Clinton administration remained cautious about NATO’s role.

Clinton’s main vision – ‘globalisation’, in his own words, as ‘the economic equivalent of a force of nature’ – was not accomplished either. Globalisation actually had its reverse side: the economic crisis in East Asia, growing anti-Americanism in the world and a growing anti-globalisation movement worldwide are just a few examples. And as if this was not enough, he became involved in a personal scandal that damaged his credibility as a leader. Clinton, too, was not successful in accomplishing the above-mentioned three missions for an American ‘grand strategy’.

One of the main challenges with which every American president, willing or not, has to deal is the Middle East ‘peace process’. Except for the Oslo accords, we see setbacks here too. The only political success that Clinton’s team booked was their response to the Balkan wars. Overall, according to Brzezinski, ‘Clinton did not leave a historically grand imprint on the world. Complacent determinism, personal shortcomings, and rising domestic political obstacles overcame his good intentions’.

**George H.W. Bush proved to be a great crisis manager but no strategic visionary**

Brzezinski is very clear about George W. Bush: ‘Catastrophic Leadership’ is the title of the chapter that analyses the achievements of the third ‘global leader’. In contrast to his father, Bush Junior tries to be a ‘problem solver’ instead of trying to manage problems. He believes in the confrontation between good and evil – and the good, of course, must prevail. The epiphany for President Bush was the attacks of ‘9/11’. From then on the United States became ‘a nation at war’. The initial results of his administration were encouraging: the Taliban in Afghanistan were overthrown by military intervention, and Saddam’s regime in Iraq was destroyed within a month. For a while it seemed that George W. Bush also wanted ‘to do Iran’. A senior adviser to President Bush, probably feeling like a pharaoh, told Ron Suskind in a 2004 interview with *The New York Times Magazine* that ‘we’re an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you’re studying that reality – judiciously, as you will – we’ll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that’s how things will sort out. We’re history’s actors […] and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.’ What was the Bush administration’s miscalculation? They were right: they were able to start a war between ‘good’ and ‘evil’, but they did not know that they would not be the ones that were able to finish it.

George W. Bush was not a foreign policy specialist from the start, but his top associates were. Of course they had their own, neo-conservative agenda, with one purpose: creating American global military superiority. Gaining ‘hard power’ in this concept was far more important than gaining ‘soft power’. According to Brzezinski, neither hard nor soft power was being realised, however. The Bush policies have only had negative consequences for the United States’ image in the world:

‘[…] the war has caused calamitous damage to America’s global standing […] America’s moral standing in the world, an important aspect of legitimacy, is also compromised by the prisons at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo […] The war in Iraq has been a geopolitical disaster […] The war on terror, with no clearly defined enemy but strong anti-Islamic connotations, unified Islamic opinion into growing hostility toward America, thereby creating fertile soil for new recruits to terrorism against either America or Israel […] George W. Bush misunderstood the historical moment, and endangered America. Europe is more alienated. Russia and China are more assertive and more in step. Latin American democracy is becoming populist and anti-American. The Middle East is fragmenting and on the brink of an explosion. Throughout the world, public opinion polls show that US policy is widely feared and even despised.’

Bill Clinton was a visionary, but did not leave a grand imprint on the world

George W. Bush and ‘Solving Problems’

Bill Clinton was a visionary, but did not leave a grand imprint on the world.
What Should America Do?

This is Zbigniew Brzezinski in 2007.

His book gives a fine description of a now familiar interpretation of American global leadership that is being associated with incompetence. The question is whether America will have a 'second chance', and, if the answer is in the affirmative, what must change?

It is interesting that when it comes to formulating new strategies for US foreign policy, almost all of the political scientists in the US come to more or less the same conclusions and guidelines. Whether it is Brzezinski, or others like Charles Kupchan or Peter Trubowitz, they find that the United States needs to pursue a new 'grand strategy' based on the following recommendations:

- The US must deepen its ties with emerging regional powers such as Brazil, China and India. Only in this way will Washington be able to influence their behaviour. Instead of gaining power to destroy, America must expand its soft power to control.
- When it comes to terrorism, US strategy should target terrorists rather than regimes or a religion. Moreover, it must now be clear that reform in the Islamic world will be slow in coming. The only way to achieve democratic changes in the Arab world is through economic development, and here patience is needed.
- It is essential that America strengthen its transatlantic ties. America needs a politically decisive Europe as a strategic partner. Traditional Western dominance is in decline. The Atlantic community must open itself to other powers that share the same worldview. A good example in this case would be Japan.

Brzezinski in particular criticises the role of the US Congress in foreign policy. In his view lobbies such as the Israeli-American, Cuban-American or the Armenian-American lobby, all deploying substantial resources to influence congressional legislation and all having different goals and confronting interests, cause fragmentation in foreign policy-making. This is one of the weaker points that Brzezinski tries to make. He does not pay attention to the changing politics of foreign policy. In theory, Brzezinski might be right: only specialists should decide foreign policy. But times have changed. Different forces and actors at different levels – local, regional, national and transnational – pursue their own objectives. It is only natural that a global power pursues different (and sometimes conflicting) interests at the same time. This of course might cause fragmentation. Yet this fragmentation will not vanish; its effects can only be moderated.

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European attitudes towards the United States have already begun to change, as reflected in the elections of Angela Merkel in Germany and Nicolas Sarkozy in France. Both leaders want a better relationship with the United States than that enjoyed by their predecessors. In the United States, the field of presidential candidates is so large that it is impossible to speculate in any detail about future policy. However, as the general consensus is that one of Bush’s biggest failings was his poor relationship with Europe, any new incumbent in the White House would most likely want to improve transatlantic ties substantially.

If we therefore assume that, on both sides of the Atlantic, political leaders will want to improve transatlantic ties, two questions arise: what constraints will they face in pursuing this aim in the next three to five years; and what concrete goals can they realistically expect to attain? This article will identify several key constraints: continuing differences in security threat assessments; the lingering effects of ‘Bush-hatred’; and declining US interest in and knowledge of Europe, particularly the EU.

As for achievable goals, the article will recommend that NATO focuses more on the territorial defence of Europe, and that the US and EU develop a closer security relationship, particularly in the counter-terrorism domain. Governments must take the terrorist threat more seriously, attacking its ideological roots, as well as improving cooperation both within Europe and the United States, and across the Atlantic.

The Constraints

Differing Threat Assessments

The foundation of any security relationship is general agreement on the threat faced by the parties. The United States and its European allies have had strong differences over the threats that they face since the end of the Cold War. While those differences have decreased somewhat in recent years, the two sides still remain quite far apart.

The United States sees itself as the global peacemaker of last resort, and is focused primarily on combating terrorists, rogue states, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and any nexus between the three. After several years of reduced military spending in the 1990s, the United States began to rebuild its forces and to transform them – with difficulty – into lighter, more mobile expeditionary forces.

Europe’s response to the fall of the Berlin Wall was different. Its citizens perceived no significant external threat, unless from non-traditional dangers such as food safety or global warming. Military
spending fell to low levels, most of it used to maintain existing territorial forces rather than on the research and development of new technology, or restructuring to develop expeditionary forces. Military reforms are advancing very slowly, and in piecemeal fashion, and there is general agreement that Europe will do well simply to maintain its current level of military spending. European governments agreed to a first-ever out-of-Europe military deployment in Afghanistan, but are far from embracing an aggressive strategy against terrorists or rogue states.

Similar differences characterised the US and European responses to Islamist terrorism. The US response to the 11 September 2001 attacks was to commit itself to fighting an offensive, rather than a defensive war against terrorists. Europeans were divided, some agreeing on the need to counter this new threat, while others seemed to feel that the United States ‘had only gotten what it deserved’, or that it was good for the United States to feel vulnerable.1

After the terrorist attacks in Madrid and London and any number of thwarted ones in Spain, Denmark, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and elsewhere, many Europeans are increasingly concerned about the terrorist threat and are demanding that their governments do more to protect them. However, unlike the United States, when Europe talks about terrorism, it remains primarily focused on the domestic, or European, threat, rather than the global one.

Other differences over strategic threats extend to foreign policy. Many Europeans believe that their terrorist threat has been brought on them because their governments have followed the US foreign policy lead in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East. They also believe that the US intervention in Iraq has increased, rather than decreased, the terrorist threat.

Such views may become more pronounced as Muslim minorities in key European countries exert more influence on foreign and defence policies, including where or how those countries intervene abroad. As a document issued by the European Defence Agency states: ‘Governments and societies increasingly concerned about internal security and social cohesion may be even more hesitant to undertake potentially controversial interventions abroad – in particular, interventions in regions from where large numbers of immigrants have come’.2 Many of these regions are precisely those that are prone to conflict – and where either NATO or the EU might in future want to consider a military operation.

Finally, there are signs that the years of relative peace and quiet in Europe may be drawing to a close. Europe’s success in expanding the European Union has brought it into direct contact with Russia, and the potential for political friction over the future of countries such as Ukraine or Georgia. At the same time, growing dependence on foreign energy sources has added to Europe’s sense of vulnerability to

“How would Europe react to US success in Iraq?” (Photo: Pentagon/D. Myles Cullen)
pressures from Russian or Middle Eastern suppliers. A militarily weak Germany, in particular, at the centre of Europe yet without sufficient will or capabilities to protect itself, is vulnerable to blackmail from a resurgent Russia or a nuclear-armed Iran. Any threats to Europe are of concern not only to Europe but also to the United States, but the two Atlantic partners may disagree on how to respond to them.

'Bush-Hatred' Has a Cost...

In my view, an obsessive hatred of President Bush has greatly damaged the Democratic Party in the United States by crowding out all other thoughts, such as the formulation of alternative, workable policies regarding Iraq or the 'war on terror'. What is true for American Democrats is also true for the many Europeans across the political spectrum who have succumbed to the same illness.

The practical impact of 'Bush-hatred' is visible in the US Congress today. Elected by a majority, the Democrats now enjoy a level of popularity even less than President Bush's – and his is very low. Their lack of achievements, whether on energy, immigration or health care reform, has certainly contributed to these ratings. And yet their biggest challenge still lies ahead: what if the surge in Iraq goes well and the Iraqis manage enough political reconciliation to make the country of Iraq a going concern? Having wagered their all on failure in Iraq, the Democrats risk being left high and dry should events turn out any other way. As former Democratic Senator Joe Lieberman noted in a recent speech: 'Democrats remain emotionally invested in a narrative of defeat and retreat in Iraq. [...] For many Democrats, the guiding conviction in foreign policy isn't pacifism or isolationism – it is distrust and disdain of Republicans in general, and President Bush in particular'.

Both Chancellor Merkel and President Sarkozy won on platforms that were neither anti-American nor anti-Bush, which is an encouraging sign. Nevertheless, to project realistically what transatlantic relations will look like in the post-Bush era, the following question must be asked about European politicians and publics: how would the majority react to US success in Iraq? This blunt question may anger many readers, but it needs to be answered, because it will reveal the degree of flexibility at the European end of the transatlantic relationship.

A cautionary note is also in order regarding the second half of the political slogan cited at the start of this article – the implicit expectation that US foreign policy will change as soon as George W. Bush leaves office. This expectation is probably misplaced. As US analyst Kori Schake notes, it was President Clinton, not President Bush, who bombed Iraq, attacked Afghanistan, or started a war (the air campaign in Kosovo) without UN Security Council approval. She cautions that European expectations that the policies of the next US president will differ profoundly from those of President Bush are unlikely to be fulfilled.

A second cautionary note should be added regarding anti-Americanism. Defined as an ‘obsessive hatred’ of the United States extending beyond any rational criticism of specific faults or actions, anti-Americanism has a long history in Europe, particularly in France and Germany. Previously confined to the elites and the left and right fringes of European society, today it has spread to the mainstream and most of the media. This situation will not change quickly or easily.

... And So Does US Inattention to Europe – Especially to the EU

'Freedom fries' aside, Americans tend to spend much less time denigrating Europe than Europeans spend denigrating the United States. In principle, that is a good thing. However, they also spend much less time thinking about Europe at all – and that is not at all a good thing. Surveys by the German Marshall Fund, and others, typically report that majorities of Americans want to improve US-European relations, but that sentiment does not lead in practice to more knowledge of, or engagement with, Europe.

In fact, one of today's best-kept secrets is the constantly expanding and constructive relationship between the United States and the EU, including on security issues. Security ties received a big boost after 11 September 2001, and a second boost after President Bush made better relations with the EU a priority for his second administration. Unfortunately, too few senior career officials in the foreign policy apparatus have followed his lead.

At the working level (and occasionally above), the EU and the United States now consult and cooperate on a range of issues, from law enforcement, regulatory and border security, and counter-terrorist cooperation, to foreign policy regarding the Middle East, Russia, Iran, India-Pakistan, East Asia and elsewhere.

The lack of senior-level focus, however, means that US policy-makers remain largely unaware of these developments. When cooperation proceeds smoothly, this is not an issue. But when problems develop, considerable damage can occur if they are not resolved in a timely manner. For example, information and intelligence-sharing are the keys to combating terrorism, particularly in the law enforcement and regulatory areas. The United States is moving towards greater protection requirements for such data, while the EU is recognising that it too needs to share such data urgently. Yet there is a distinct risk that this convergence could be obstructed by perceived differences over what constitutes an adequate data protection regime.

One issue that has succeeded in catching the attention of the American public is the impact of growing Muslim minorities in Europe, as well as the expanding influence of radical Islam. The actual and projected decreases in native European populations and the perceived
lack of confidence in defending Europe’s culture or values give cause for concern. A Europe in which radical Islamists exert a decisive influence on politics and society would clearly not be in US interests. Nor would it be to the US advantage if far-right parties gained power because they were the only ones willing to take on the radical Islamists.

However, what many Americans are just beginning to suspect is that while the dangers from Muslim extremism may be more visible in Europe, they also exist in the United States. Indeed, although a recent study concluded that most American Muslims were doing well economically and had not been isolated in ghettos, some 15 per cent of the under-30 age group (equivalent to over 100,000 people) felt that suicide bombings could be justified. While this does not mean that they themselves are likely to become terrorists, it does suggest that the ideology of a ‘global caliphate’ dominating the West is seductive in the United States as well as in Europe.

To date, transatlantic cooperation related to the Islamist threat has been largely restricted to law enforcement, financial sanctions, and border and transportation security. While important, these measures do not address the broader political and societal issues. The EU is seeking to address societal issues, with varying degrees of success. The United States could benefit from a serious dialogue with Europe, including the EU, on such things as Islamist recruitment and radicalisation, as well as Islam’s treatment of women and those considered to be blasphemers or apostates. By not paying sufficient attention to Europe, the United States is missing an important opportunity and constraining potential gains from transatlantic ties.

Achievable Goals

If one assumes that the United States and the vast majority of European countries want to repair transatlantic ties, yet must confront or somehow circumvent the obstacles described above, what can realistically be expected of US-European security relations in the next five to ten years? This analysis will look at the potential within the two main transatlantic channels for discussing security issues: NATO; and US–EU ties.  

NATO

NATO relationships were badly damaged by the dispute over Iraq. Some of that damage has been repaired, and further improvements could be made if, for example, France was to rejoin NATO’s integrated command. Nevertheless, the disparity between available forces on either side of the Atlantic will inevitably colour the overall security relationship. It may be time to accept these disparities, and to build from there.

Most of the discussion about NATO has revolved around NATO’s role in
providing expeditionary forces for trouble spots outside Europe. Yet it is difficult to imagine that NATO’s role will develop much beyond where it is today, given the shortfall in trained personnel and operational capabilities.

Of the 1.7 million European service members, only 40-50,000 are estimated to be available for ‘robust combat operations’ at any given time. European allies were thus poorly positioned to respond to the challenge of Afghanistan. They now find themselves committed to a dangerous mission in a faraway land, but are not prepared to embrace combat operations. (In the International Security Assistance Force, US, British, Canadian and Dutch forces have done most of the fighting.) The NATO Response Force, which was intended to develop NATO’s expeditionary capabilities and take on the more difficult tasks, has instead been dubbed the ‘Rolls Royce in the garage’ – it has yet to be used in Afghanistan. Rules of Engagement restrictions keep many national forces from direct combat engagement. That is unlikely to change any time soon, as, according to a recent poll, European support for combat operations is only about 31 per cent.

There is little doubt that ‘NATO would be shattered’ by failure in Afghanistan. However, it is unclear how the situation there will evolve in the next year. Much will depend on whether Pakistan reduces the ability of al-Qaeda and the Taliban to conduct operations in Afghanistan from its territory. In addition, the situation in Afghanistan could be affected by progress in Iraq.

Even if the NATO mission in Afghanistan ‘succeeds’, I still find it hard to see NATO’s future as expeditionary. However, the next US president will continue to worry about global threats, and will seek global friends and allies to respond to such threats. These efforts could take the shape of a proposal for a ‘global NATO’, or some other formulation.

NATO should instead enhance its traditional focus on territorial defence – now of a much-expanded group of allies. Russia has shown, through its increasingly truculent statements regarding the installation of missile defence sites in Poland and the Czech Republic, as well as military flights and cyber attacks, that it still can – and does – seek to bully Europeans. Its success in such bullying is affected by the underlying balance of military forces, even if there is no direct military threat.

In a recent interview, Henry Kissinger said that the real difference between Europeans and Americans lay in ‘what governments can ask of their people. […] Europeans governments are not able any more to ask their people for great sacrifices…’ Kissinger saw this as the kernel of the difficulty in finding consensus between Europeans and Americans. Several years ago, the then head of the EU Military Committee proposed that the American and European pillars of NATO assume responsibility for their respective territorial defences. The United States will never be indifferent to the threats that Europe faces, but it will be looking to Europeans to ‘step up to the plate’ to solve them – regardless of the party in power in the White House.

**US-EU Relations**

Upgrading and enhancing the US–EU relationship should be the priority on both sides of the Atlantic during the next three to five years. The EU and the United States should establish an ongoing high-level discussion of the security threats that they face; developing common assessments and goals is essential for future cooperation. The US government has long resisted such a step, fearing that US interests would be harmed if a dialogue with the EU (where the United States is not a member) replaced the one at NATO, where the United States has a dominant position. Similarly, some EU member state governments (most notably the French) have sought to keep the United States at arms length in order to preserve the EU’s independence of action.

Yet the world is a dangerous place – and becoming rapidly more so. The EU has capabilities that NATO does not, and it should have the self-confidence to engage with the United States across a broad spectrum of issues before its policies are set in concrete. The United States can receive benefits from using each channel, without fearing that one will undercut the other. Both the EU and United States are holding back, out of fear that they will find themselves playing a zero-sum game. If they could overcome this perception during the coming years, that would also be a large step forward.

By taking the EU channel seriously, the United States will be better able to keep open crucial information-sharing channels with Europe that are vital to combating terrorism. At the same time, as Europeans develop their approach, they should not assume that US counter-terrorist policies will change fundamentally once President Bush is gone. Some may, but others – particularly those linked to real or potential threats to homeland security – rest on a bipartisan consensus in Washington and are likely to continue regardless of who is elected president in November 2008.

Failure to resolve these information-sharing issues could result in a bureaucratic nightmare similar to the one that afflicts NATO-EU ties. While the EU and NATO have cooperated well on the ground in crisis spots, formal ties in Brussels have been hamstrung by rivalry between the two institutions and political manoeuvring by individual governments. Both the EU and the United States need to ensure
that transatlantic information-sharing is enhanced, and not obstructed, at the end of the day.

Beyond such immediate problems affecting ongoing cooperation, neither side has engaged sufficiently with the ‘elephant in the room’: the ideological challenge posed by the Islamists. Many Europeans – and Americans – have criticised the concept of a ‘war on terror’, arguing that terror is merely a tactic. Yet there is a surprising lack of agreement on just what we should be fighting, let alone what to do about it. Indeed, there is no consensus on whether such terrorism is even linked to Islam – despite the best efforts of the terrorists themselves to make that linkage clear. Opinions differ widely as to whether the threat comes only from ‘violent’ Islamists, or both ‘violent’ and ‘non-violent’ individuals and groups. Finally, there is no general consensus on what constitutes non-Islamist, or ‘moderate’ Islam, or whether Western societies should insist that immigrants accept Western legal, cultural and social traditions.

European governments have many differences among themselves, but are trying a variety of approaches. US officials – and the US policy-making community in general – could profit greatly by learning more about European experiences. Governments on both sides of the Atlantic need to acknowledge the vital importance of combating Islamist ideology as well as its violent manifestations. That will then make community in general – could profit greatly by learning more about it. Indeed, there is no consensus on whether such terrorism is even linked to Islam – despite the best efforts of the terrorists themselves to make that linkage clear. Opinions differ widely as to whether the threat comes only from ‘violent’ Islamists, or both ‘violent’ and ‘non-violent’ individuals and groups. Finally, there is no general consensus on what constitutes non-Islamist, or ‘moderate’ Islam, or whether Western societies should insist that immigrants accept Western legal, cultural and social traditions.

Finally, enhanced US-EU security cooperation will provide a better framework for the inevitable discussions, in the next three to five years, on regional or country-specific issues such as relations with Russia, the status of Kosovo, Iran’s quest for nuclear weapons, or the accession of Turkey or Ukraine to the EU. Particularly regarding questions of EU membership, US diplomats could make their case more effectively by demonstrating a better understanding of the tremendous effort, as well as the legal and political commitments involved, in accession to the EU.

Conclusion

This panorama will probably not satisfy those who believe that the post-Bush world will differ fundamentally from today’s situation. But it does represent a realistic assessment of what the US-European security relationship could become in the near to medium term. The transatlantic relationship will not return to what it was in the ‘good old days’, but it can still yield a great deal of value.

8. While the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is also an important channel, it does not bear the primary brunt of resolving transatlantic difficulties.
10. See Leo Michel, NATO’s ‘French Connection’: Plus Ça Change…?, website of the Institute for National Strategic Studies, 13 April 2007, for a discussion of France’s potential contributions.
15. NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer has referred, only half jokingly, to NATO-EU ties as a ‘frozen conflict’. See Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, NATO and the EU: Time for a New Chapter, keynote speech to the German Presidency-sponsored ESDP Seminar in Berlin, 29 January 2007.

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‘Europe and America Need to Hold on to Each Other’

On 1 November 2007 the former Netherlands Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Ben Bot, gave an interview to Atlantisch Perspectief. As a former Permanent Representative to the European Union, inter alia, Bot has extensive experience in European and international diplomacy. He discussed the chances for a European foreign policy, what this would mean for the relationship with the United States and NATO, and underlined his faith in the enduring value of the transatlantic relationship.

The interview took place on the sidelines of the seminar ‘Towards Building Bridges of Understanding between the West and the Islamic World’, organised by Leiden University and the Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf.

On 18 and 19 October 2007 the Heads of State and Government of the European Union approved an EU Reform Treaty. They established, among other things, a new High Representative of the EU, who will have to function as a ‘Minister of Foreign Affairs’. Is this the ‘single European telephone number’ that Henry Kissinger once said was needed?

The creation of the new High Representative is an important development in the process of European integration. We have managed to reach this decision. However, we have to be realistic: a minister is only as powerful as the mandate that he has been given. And it is clear that the large member states will not give him a ‘real’ mandate, for the simple reason that there is no ‘real’ European foreign policy. A minister can only be effective as long as he can outline a clear policy, either on his own, or with the Cabinet (as is the case in the Netherlands). When a new minister takes office, people have a clear idea of what to expect, which is then presented as such before Parliament. The ‘new Solana’ will need to have a mandate that gives room to act effectively on the international stage. This room he now simply does not have. Every step that he wants to take has to be agreed by 27 member states, as foreign policy decisions still require unanimity. Only minor issues within the larger picture can be decided by qualified majority, but the essential questions require consensus, such as: is he allowed to act somewhere, and what can he say? The High Representative might be given a mandate for a longer period, but his hands are still tied to the wishes of the member states.

What is more, the largest member states will continue to pursue their own foreign policy, whether we like it or not. I do not see Britain, France or Germany fully give up their sovereignty in this area. Therefore, yes, the establishment of the new High Representative is a (small) step in the right direction, but substantially there remains a lot to be done before one can speak of a ‘minister’ who is able to act effectively and is the one ‘telephone number’. If I was an American, I would still prefer to call – next to Mr Solana – the British, French or German foreign minister or prime minister – which is a bilateral matter. This also holds true for the Netherlands: we will continue to pursue our own foreign policy in many areas, if only because the EU – so far – is only allowed to deal with a restricted number of issues: the Middle East, Iran and the Balkans. But all other areas, for instance our policy regarding Indonesia, China, Japan, or vis-à-vis multilateral organisations of which we are a member, remain national foreign policy. All EU member states will continue to take the liberty of...
action, either as a niche player, or having certain economical or financial interests that you want to – and will – promote abroad.

Even many concrete aspects of external trade policy are done by the member states: we still compete with France, for instance, to sell products abroad. And for that, you need a foreign policy and a bureaucracy that look after the promotion of your (economic and other) interests, but also look after the protection of your nationals abroad, for instance.

At the beginning of 2007, an Operational Centre was set up in Brussels in order for the European Union independently to lead military missions abroad. For a long time, the Americans remained sceptical: they feared that this would duplicate existing capabilities from NATO and EU member states. Do you consider the establishment of the Operational Centre to be a good thing? What about the relationship with NATO?

They say that ‘power grows out of the barrel of a gun’. If you want to carry out a European foreign policy that has any substance, you need to develop certain military capabilities. At a certain moment, you will have to be able to support your intentions by military means, even if they are small. It is important, for instance, to have a rapid reaction force. This is necessary when, for instance, a revolt takes place in Africa and you intend to respond quickly. Then you need military means to be able to say: in case the African Union does not act, but the Africans do allow us in, we can bring in some 20,000 men and lead a military operation. Therefore, I think that the establishment of an Operational Centre is a good idea.

The question is, however, whether it will work in practice. If NATO still does not manage to get sufficient troops from member states into the difficult parts of Afghanistan, how would the EU be able to generate the member states’ interest in a hot spot? Again, the unanimity rule hampers the process. The member states decide: you do not have to take part, you are free to. Besides: financial means are very limited.

Each EU country will maintain its own armed forces and its sovereignty in foreign and defence matters. Member states may commit troops to a European mission, but the next thing you see is a Babel-like confusion with 27 member states. Even though this might be solved, the problem remains that we do not have a substantial, common foreign policy and the required military means to support our position whenever it is needed. We depend on ad hoc decisions.

Could tensions with NATO arise?

That could very well be. But my view is this: in a globalising world,
Europe and America cannot do without each other. To me, it is an article of faith that NATO is more than just a group of countries that commit soldiers and weapons. First and foremost, it is a political alliance. Only recently, journalist Jan Sampiemon suggested in the [Dutch] newspaper NRC Handelsblad to abolish NATO, since it fails in Afghanistan. I think that he fully ignores the character of the alliance. In my opinion, America and Europe are the only two ‘great powers’ that really care about peace and security in the world, about the challenges of development cooperation – in other words, the only two that look beyond their own interests. They have an eye for places with conflict, or with problems in the field of development, and they look and see whether they can help and improve things. The other, rising powers are much more self-centred at the moment. I am convinced that Europe and America need to hold on to each other. Only if we do so will we be able to promote the important common ‘norms and values’ that are universal, in my view. If we let each other go, we will both go down. China and other rising powers will then take over and might ignore important values that are so dear to us.

For some time, Europe and the US have cooperated in countering Iran. Why, then, do we hear so little from Europe when it comes to Russia? Washington and Moscow still strongly disagree on missile defence. Europe is directly involved there too: parts of the shield will be located in Poland and the Czech Republic, for instance. Why do we hear so little on a European level? Could Europe not be a mediator between the Americans and the Russians?

The answer is related to what we previously discussed. Europe, simply, is divided when it comes to Russia. There is no European policy vis-à-vis Moscow. EU member states are hopelessly divided: politically, when it comes to energy security, but also regarding the question of how Russia will continue to develop under the leadership of Vladimir Putin. It makes it impossible to speak with one voice. The Russians, of course, do speak with one – very strong – voice. We might disagree with the course of Russian democracy; we can, however, conclude one thing: Putin is the one in charge – if he says something, it will happen. That is hardly the case here: we cannot even agree on a European energy policy, let alone speak to Russia with one voice on such sensitive issues as human rights and democratic principles. Regarding missile defence, we are divided too. The Russians know that very well: they play us off against each other all of the time.

Would Javier Solana not be able to communicate some basic European position towards Moscow? What could he say?

He cannot afford anything, that is what I argue; he can only act where Europe has given him a mandate. A mandate has clearly been given for the Middle East; next to this, he takes part in the discussions on Kosovo; he can afford something on the Balkans; and he has a mandate for the negotiations on Iran’s nuclear programme. But that is it. He has not got much else. Solana can hold discussions, but his Russian counterpart knows exactly how far he is allowed to go – and his counterpart will make use of it. He will not take much notice of Solana – but he will pay heed to what Chancellor Merkel, Prime Minister Brown or President Sarkozy have to say. The Dutch government will shortly visit Russia too: Dutch Prime Minister Balkenende will go there with a large delegation [editor’s note: they did so from 5-7 November 2007]. President Putin has visited the Netherlands twice; I received him both times and spoke with him. The Netherlands has its own Russia policy, just as France, for instance, has. We do have very different interests in Russia from, say, Switzerland or Romania.

To what extent is this policy being fine-tuned in Europe?

It is not. If the states involved do not wish, no fine-tuning takes place. You can, however, discuss the matter, and that is what happens among the ministers involved. We talk all the time about Russia, and we usually reach the conclusion that our positions are quite far apart. In the end it is just an exchange of 27 different views. At least we then know who thinks what. Some of them call on you and say: when I’m in Russia next week, I plan to discuss this and this issue; shall we take your issue along as well?

We are talking about having a sufficient minimum in common so that we are able to speak with one voice on a particular issue. Yet, in general, I think that it is well possible that there might be some ten different views on Russia.

Do you regret that?

Of course I do: it would be much better if we had a clear policy towards democratic developments in Russia, or towards human rights. There are, I think, a number of issues about which ‘Europe’ could have something to say. But to promote it brings a clear risk that some countries will be ‘punished’. We are all dependent on Russia’s energy power. If something is being said that Russia does not like, Russia is able to take measures immediately. In practice, however, it won’t happen quickly. As I always say, Russia’s interest in selling is just as large as our interest in buying energy: we are mutually dependent. But I think that we just do not realise it sufficiently. We also have a stick. Europeans would be able to say,
when it really starts becoming a problem, we will buy our energy elsewhere. But since we disagree among ourselves, we are unable actually to put this into practice.

The last couple of years we have kept hearing ‘hard power’ – that is the United States, and ‘soft power’ – that is Europe. But if we look at the Iraq disaster and the way that US foreign policy develops now, would not that black-and-white distinction have had its time?

Yes, I think so. In the US, the heydays of the neo-cons seem to be over, if one judges by recent books on this issue. To me it is clear that a more ‘mixed philosophy’ has set in. The United States is still the only superpower, actually the only one in the world, but it does realise more and more that the deployment of soft power is an essential follow-up to hard power. When you are not able to combine the two, you are nowhere. That has been proven so many times throughout history. In the US, too, ‘Venus’ receives more attention now. Immediately after you have dealt a blow, you have to shift to other means.

Vice versa, in Europe I think that we should realise that soft power alone does not suffice for a foreign policy: you need to have hard power means – guns, fighter planes and battle ships. The fact that the differences between the US and Europe regarding hard and soft power decrease is caused by developments on both sides.

I think that we should still be thankful to America for being willing to maintain its strength and its clout. To know that there is a friend over there that gives you backing when it is needed – that is something valuable. I think that otherwise things would look bleak for the West.
To Bomb or Not to Bomb: is That the Only Question?

Giles Scott-Smith

In September 2007 Michael Ledeen, the well-known hardline conservative, published a book entitled *The Iranian Time Bomb*. The press release, which is available on the American Enterprise Institute’s website, begins with the following statement: ‘Iran declared war on the United States in early 1979, when the Shah was overthrown and the revolutionary regime of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini came to power’. From this starting point Ledeen’s book continues by emphasising the consistent Iranian involvement in Middle East terrorism, including close Iran–al Qaeda ties and Tehran’s violent meddling in Iraq and Afghanistan. In response, the only sensible option for the United States is to link with discontented elements inside Iran, push for a ‘democratic revolution’, and secure a ‘peaceful regime change’. Otherwise Washington will have to ‘bomb Iran’ or face the impending reality of a nuclear-armed ‘theocratic fascist regime’.1

Ledeen’s position is interesting. The ‘bomb Iran’ mantra of the Republican hard right rarely has much nuance to it, but the point is that the US has never been able to develop a comprehensive approach towards an antagonistic Tehran. Ex-Cold Warriors such as Ledeen often look back to the anti-Soviet strategy that was developed under Reagan as a perfect model. This involved the deliberate posturing of US military strength and technological superiority to force negotiations, together with the pursuit of universal values (such as freedom and democracy) and overt and covert support for dissident movements to foster regime change (as in Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe and Central America). However, the difference between the case of Iran now and that of the USSR in the 1980s is the genuine willingness of the US to negotiate. The Soviet Union could be made to feel vulnerable, but it was not under direct threat from US military action, Dr Strangelove aside. Iran, however, is a different sized ‘competitor’, making the margins of possible US action wider, and the temptation for something ‘surgical’ all the more stronger.

Yet even here the Reagan strategy offers an example. Ledeen, as a consultant to the National Security Council, himself played a direct role in the Iran-Contra affair, which was geared not just towards selling weapons and freeing hostages but also to building some back-channel connections and cooling off mutual hostility. Some form of political dialogue was achieved outside diplomatic relations because certain senior Iranians themselves wanted to normalise the situation.2 Apparently, Ledeen’s ‘comprehensive approach’ required one section of the government to do exactly the opposite to what the other sections were doing and saying. One could be facetious and conclude that comprehensiveness is determined on a ‘need-to-know’ basis. But it certainly requires a universal message around which the US could mobilise its own forces and those of its allies. Freedom and democracy remain the keywords, but President Bush’s ‘you are either with us or with the terrorists’, and all the consequences leading from it, has undermined all credibility.

During recent weeks an opening seems to have appeared that could offer new opportunities. The ‘pro-bomb’ faction among the Republican hawks (including Ledeen) was dealt a blow on 3 December 2007 with the release of a new National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iranian nuclear ambitions. Stating from the outset that it is ‘an extensive re-examination of the issues in the May 2005 assessment’ (which claimed that Iran was developing nuclear weapons), the Estimate continued by declaring that it ‘does not assume that Iran intends to acquire nuclear weapons […] We judge with high confidence that in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program’. Iran is clearly keeping all of its options open, but there was no strong evidence that as of mid-2007 it had restarted its development programme. These are no idle
conclusions. NIE’s are compiled by the National Intelligence Council, a body designed to bridge the intelligence and policy-making communities and to provide the most up-to-date information on critical issues of national security. The signs are strong that by issuing this declaration now, the intelligence community is avoiding any further politicisation of its judgements, as occurred to justify the attack on Iraq.

But the NIE offers more than just a line in the sand that the hawks should not cross. Assessment of a 2003 halt to weapons’ development suggests that Iran was reacting to international pressure and was unwilling to defy criticism from abroad. In other words, a careful combination of sticks and carrots could be used to alter the course of Tehran’s policies. The unclassified version of the report says the following:

This, in turn, suggests that some combination of threats of intensified international scrutiny and pressures, along with opportunities for Iran to achieve its security, prestige, and goals for regional influence in other ways, might – if perceived by Iran’s leaders as credible – prompt Tehran to extend the current halt to its nuclear weapons program. It is difficult to specify what such a combination might be.3

It is indeed difficult, but this is a remarkable statement in the context of the sabre-rattling rhetoric that has been directed at Tehran over the past few years. We know from Seymour Hersh – admittedly not an unbiased source, but second-to-none in terms of top-level connections – that planning for a military attack on Iran has proceeded a long way in the last two years, and the still-suspect Israeli air raid into Syria in September 2007 was widely perceived as a dry run for the impending ‘real thing’.4 Now we have the US intelligence community lining up behind an effort to satisfy Iranian security concerns as a means to de-escalate tensions.

This is no isolated incident either. On 26 November 2007 Secretary Robert Gates, Rumsfeld’s successor at Defense, gave a speech at Kansas State University. Gates did not attend to promote the interests of his department alone, but instead spoke in a most un-Rumsfeldian manner of the need ‘to make the case for strengthening our capacity to use ‘soft’ power and for better integrating it with ‘hard’ power’. Declaring that the civilian tools of government need a serious upgrade, Gates continued: ‘Public relations was invented in the United States, yet we are miserable at communicating to the rest of the world what we are about as a society and a culture, about freedom and democracy, about our policies and our goals’.5 It is quite a while since a US Secretary of Defense spoke up for the needs of the State Department, but with State’s foreign affairs budget of 36 billion dollars being less than what the Pentagon spends on health care, it had to happen.

‘Successful diplomacy relies on mutual recognition of the status of all parties involved, a recognition tinged with respect for the others’ interests and capabilities’: a NATO military officer meets an Afghan district leader at home (Photo: Canadian Forces Combat Camera/K. Paul)
eventually. It was not the US military that won the Cold War, Gates emphasised, but the US military in combination with a whole host of non-military capabilities and institutions.

Gates’ standpoint was an echo of a longer report issued earlier in November 2007 by the independent Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Entitled A Smarter, More Secure America, the report was a product of the Commission on Smart Power, a CSIS study group. A key Commission member is Joseph Nye, the originator of the ‘soft power’ concept. Proving that Hegel and Marx had a point with their thesis-antithesis-synthesis sequence, Nye now defines ‘smart power’ as ‘the ability to combine your hard power – coercion – with your ability to get what you want through attraction, which is soft power’. The report received some serious attention in Washington for its obvious aim to lay the basis for a post-Bush foreign policy – one that takes into account the interests of others, recognises the need to bolster and maintain credible international organisations, and respects international legal norms. Once again, as with the Iraq Study Group report at the end of 2006, the advocates of this stance represent a large bipartisan chunk of policy-making Washington. In contrast to a year ago, however, it looks as if the impending presidential election and the definite change of personnel in the White House are now giving these kinds of views more credibility and purpose.

What does this point mean when it comes to US relations with Iran? Funnily enough, Ledeen’s desire for a comprehensive strategy is part of the equation. The question is how far ‘regime change’ will remain on the agenda. Since 2005 there have been moves by the US to formulate a strategy towards Tehran, but the bottom line has always been the de facto refusal to grant the Islamic regime legitimacy or to reinstate diplomatic relations. As a result, instead of being used to normalise relations, all contacts have been used, either overtly or covertly, to promote regime change.

In January 2006 US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice outlined her vision for the future outlook of the State Department. It was termed ‘transformational diplomacy’: ‘To work with our many partners around the world to build and sustain democratic, well-governed states that will respond to the needs of their people and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system’. The approach required a shift of resources from traditional allies (such as Europe and Japan) to new ideological battlegrounds in Asia and the Near East, and a regional focus that would aim to deploy a US diplomatic and public diplomacy presence that looks beyond the limitations of nation-states and bilateral relations. It also laid direct emphasis on the promotion of democracy worldwide, something that Rice made clear in subsequent testimony on the Hill. The first fruits of this approach in relation to Iran came to light in March 2006, with an unclassified State Department cable entitled ‘Recruiting the Next Generation of Iran Experts: New Opportunities in Washington, Dubai and Europe’. The cable announced the formation of an Office of Iranian Affairs to coordinate a network of outreach posts for political and economic reporting, the most significant being the Regional Presence Office in Dubai, UAE, designed to connect with the Iranian people and ‘promote freedom and democracy in Iran’. Around the same time, 85 million dollars in emergency funding were earmarked for the promotion of democracy in Iran, including support for dissidents and exile groups, 24-hour radio and television broadcasting, increasing internet gateways, and study opportunities for Iranians to go to the US.

There are plenty of pro-democracy, anti-Islamic fundamentalist groups inside Iran, and the political situation there is unstable enough for there still to be some hope that they can shift the political pendulum in a more Western-orientated direction. But telegraphing the fact that they are tools in a policy that is aimed at regime change placed potential allies of the US in an impossible situation. It turned those people who are demanding human rights and free speech into no more than acolytes and agents of the ‘enemy power’. In the words of the Iranian Nobel Peace Prize winner and human rights activist Shirin Ebadi: ‘Whoever speaks about democracy in Iran will be accused of having been paid by the United States’. As with Iraq, the influence of hardline exile groups was affecting Washington’s thinking, to the detriment of their countrymen still inside Iran. What is more, the efforts to engage with Iranians and bring them to the United States via cultural diplomacy initiatives and exchange programmes have stumbled against US security. Visa requirements and the implicit branding of all Iranians as ‘suspect’ by the Department of Homeland Security’s staff have led to delays, humiliations, frustrations, and above all a disastrous negative image of the United States. ‘It is fair to say’, writes a recent commentator, ‘that security procedures make it much more difficult and expensive for sponsored exchange programs to keep up with the demands made on them to promote better connections and understanding with the Islamic world’. These kinds of programmes only work successfully if they are run according to a sense of openness, not paranoia. But the general policy environment has to allow this.
In short, the international environment is not being managed well enough to give any chance of success for the ‘transformational diplomacy’ approach in Iran. Successful diplomacy relies on mutual recognition of the status of all parties involved, a recognition tinged with respect for others’ interests and capabilities. Instead, US policies towards Iran have effectively gone in the other direction. As one source succinctly puts it: ‘If it is true that public opinion in Arab and Muslim countries responds more to policies than to public diplomacy, it is clear that successful public diplomacy will not be able to change minds dramatically in the presence of strong opposition to policy’. Rice’s ‘transformational diplomacy’ is, in the case of Iran, little more than the strategy of pre-emption applied to the field of diplomacy and public diplomacy. It was inevitable that the US State Department would eventually adapt its purpose to the strident tones of the National Security Strategies of 2002 and 2006, and Rice duly delivered (more ‘behave or we will democratise you’ instead of ‘behave or we will bomb you’). But the whole approach is flawed. The world is indeed changing, but in ways that require a very different application of US power than has been the case over the past five years. The example of North Korea is instructive in this sense: multilateral dialogue, strong input from China (with Russian acquiescence), and a basic deal that is based on the practical mutual interests of all of the parties. Now that we are in the tail-end of the Bush era, it can only be hoped that the recent NIE and the CSIS Smart Power reports point towards a new appreciation of how the US should operate in the world.

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10. Cable available via thinkprogress.org/2006/03/01/iran-doci.
The Netherlands Extends Mission to Uruzgan

On 30 November 2007 the Balkenende government decided to extend the Dutch military mission to the province of Uruzgan, Afghanistan, until August 2010. By December 2010, all Dutch troops should have left Afghanistan. Dutch participation in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) will continue with 1,400 troops, from an estimated 1,650 now. Costs for the mission are expected to rise to one billion euro. The Netherlands, as a lead nation in Uruzgan, will receive assistance from Australian, Slovakian, French and Hungarian troops.

Allies Extend Missions

On 15 November 2007, the German Parliament voted to extend German participation in the anti-terrorist offensive operation ‘Enduring Freedom’ by one year. Germany participates with Navy personnel around the Horn of Africa as well as with Special Forces in Afghanistan. Total troop numbers might increase from 300 now to some 1,400 men.

The Czech Republic also decided to extend its mission to Afghanistan. The number of Czech troops participating in ISAF will increase from 225 to over 400 troops.

ISAF Continues Offensives

ISAF continues its offensives against Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan. At the beginning of November 2007, operation ‘Spin Ghar’ took place in the Baluchi valley in Uruzgan. Approximately 2,000 soldiers from ISAF and the Afghan National Army (ANA) tried to push back Taliban fighters. The insurgents were reported to have returned to the valley soon after the operation had ended, since there were not enough international troops to control the valley’s south entrance. A checkpoint on this side has yet to be built by the Afghans. During the operations, a 21-year old Dutch corporal died after his vehicle hit an improvised explosive device (IED). He is the twelfth fatally...
• US REPORT: ‘IRAN ABANDONED Nuclear Weapons in 2003’...

On 3 December 2007 the United States National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) presented the findings of sixteen US intelligence services regarding the nuclear programme in Iran. The report claimed that Iran had stopped its nuclear weapon programme by late 2003. The report was welcomed by the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mohamed El-Baradei. The IAEA presented its own report on 22 November 2007. El-Baradei stated that Iran had made ‘progress’ and had answered questions about its nuclear activities. Even though El-Baradei acknowledged an increased level of cooperation from Iran, he urged Iran to be more ‘proactive’ in providing information. There are still some major questions left unanswered. The IAEA concluded that it is still unclear whether Iranian nuclear activities are leading to the production of nuclear weapons, as international inspectors are only allowed access to a limited number of sites.

In reaction, US President George W. Bush maintained that Iran remains a ‘threat to the world’. According to Bush, the reports indicate that Iran did work on nuclear weapons before 2003, and that there is still a possibility that it will restart its weapons programme. Shortly afterwards, Israel pointed out that its intelligence on Iran casts serious doubts about Iran’s claim that it has fully stopped working on nuclear weapons.

... But Military Activities are Stepped Up

In early October 2007 the US Navy and UK Royal Navy held an exercise in the northern Arabian Sea. For six days, US and UK ships practised detecting, tracking and engaging ‘hostile’ submarines close to the south-eastern coast of Iran. Observers concluded that the US and UK Navies revealed details of their activities to send a signal to Iran.

Iran succeeded in developing a solid-fuel ballistic missile based on domestically developed technology, which is regarded as a ‘technical breakthrough’ for the country. The so-called Ashura missile has an estimated range of 2,000-2,500 km. Iran is now preparing for a test launch. The missile is capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

War in Iraq

US Reduces Troops

The United States has started to withdraw its first troops from Iraq. In December 2007 one combat brigade of some 5,000 men is pulling out of Diyala province. The brigade will not be replaced. This brings the total number of US troops in the country back to approximately 162,000. In the coming months, more troops will go home. The US aims to transfer the security burden to the Iraqis, while trying to consolidate the gains of the ‘surge’ of 30,000 extra US troops that entered Iraq during early 2007. The Iraqi military should therefore expand rapidly. Officials say that US commanders are drawing up a plan to expand the remaining US brigades’ role in training and supporting Iraqi forces. At the end of 2007 there should be approximately 200,000 trained Iraqi soldiers, which is to increase to 255,000 by the end of 2008. Not all US troops will be withdrawn from Iraq: on 28 November, President Bush and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki signed a treaty that lays the foundation for permanent US military presence in Iraq.

‘Iran Stops Transport of Explosives into Iraq’

After a diplomatic effort by the United States, the Iranian government claims that it has stopped the flow of explosive materials into Iraq. Major General James Simmons, the deputy commanding general of the Multinational Corps, said that he was hopeful that security might improve now that Iran has given a positive response to US diplomatic efforts.

Allies Withdraw Troops

New Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk has announced that Poland will withdraw its 900 troops from Iraq in 2008. Tusk made the announcement on 23 November 2007 while presenting the new government to Parliament. Tusk added that 1,400 Polish troops will remain in Afghanistan, and that his country will also participate in the EU’s mission to Chad and the Central African Republic. The decision illustrates the new direction that the Polish government is taking since the October 2007 elections, which ended the conservative government of Jaroslaw Kaczynski. Kaczynski was in favour of staying in Iraq.

In Australia, too, new Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has announced that the remaining 550 Australian troops will be withdrawn from Iraq during the first half
of 2008. With this announcement, he clearly distances himself from his predecessor John Howard, who in 2003 had sent some 2,000 troops to Iraq. The decision is expected to disappoint the United States, which has always considered Australia to be one of its most loyal allies. Australian troops in Afghanistan, however, will stay.

US Offers Support to Turkey

During a conversation with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Washington on 5 November 2007, US President Bush offered Turkey his support in the battle against the Turkish-Kurd separation movement PKK. Bush promised more intensified cooperation to end the crisis in the Iraqi-Turkish border region. A few days earlier, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had already promised to double US efforts to counter the PKK in northern Iraq. US support will consist of intelligence-sharing, among other things. On 20 November, US General David Petraeus, commander of the coalition forces in Iraq, travelled to Turkey to discuss any next steps with his Turkish counterparts.

The PKK aspires to create an independent Kurdish state and is not afraid to attack Turkish targets to achieve this. The United States fears destabilisation of the relatively quiet area of northern Iraq if Turkey invades the region, as Turkey suggested earlier in several threats towards the PKK.

NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer praised Turkey for its ‘remarkable restraint’ in its efforts to tackle Kurdish rebels in Iraq. Ankara insisted that it wants to hold back from a major invasion of northern Iraq and to give diplomacy a chance. De Hoop Scheffer added that NATO allies expressed ‘full solidarity’ with Turkey in the present circumstances.

Tensions Remain between Russia, West

Elections: Pro-PUTIN Party Wins

The results of the Russian parliamentary elections, which took place on 2 December 2007, were as expected: the pro-PUTIN party United Russia won and obtained 64 per cent of the votes.

Earlier, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) decided not to monitor the elections after ‘obstruction’ by the Russian authorities. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly was present, however, with a small number of monitors, and gave a mixed assessment of the elections. Opposition parties complained about ‘fraud’ and ‘harassment’. Numerous Western governments denounced the Russian elections as ‘unfair’. Earlier, Russian President Vladimir Putin said he was convinced that the West, particularly the United States, had ‘plotted together’ with the Russian opposition ‘to weaken Russia’.

Putin Endorses Successor

On 10 December 2007 Vladimir Putin proposed Dmitri Medvedev, Russia’s First Deputy Prime Minister, as the candidate to succeed him as president of Russia. Although Medvedev is considered a moderate and a ‘pro-Western liberal’, observers expect him to be substantially influenced by Putin when the latter resigns in March 2008. Besides being a member of the Russian government, Medvedev is also Chairman of the Board of the energy giant Gazprom.

Russians Consider Countering US Missile Defence

On 26 November 2007 Russia announced that it was ‘ready for further dialogue’ on missile defence with the United States. Yet until now, Russia fiercely opposes American plans to set up missile defence installations in the Eastern European countries of Poland and the Czech Republic. Russian armed forces have threatened to deploy missiles in Belarus, close to the Polish border.

President Putin regularly criticises NATO by arguing that NATO members are building up their military presence along the Russian borders. He warns that Russia ‘cannot […] remain indifferent to the obvious muscle-flexing’ of NATO. Russia has already suspended observance of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). During a speech on 20 November 2007, Putin even claimed that Russia’s nuclear forces stand ready to ‘deliver a […] response’ if needed. On 5 December Russian Defence Minister Anatoly Serdyukov announced that Russia has resumed large-scale naval exercises in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean.

The new Polish government has indicated that it needs to receive US protection of its airspace against external threats. It would like the United States to deploy fighter aircraft on Polish bases. Donald Tusk’s government is worried that the US missile defence site in Poland would make Poland a possible target.

No Cutback of US Military in Europe?

General David McKiernan, the US Army commander in Europe, stated in mid-November 2007 that the US should not cut its military presence in Europe any further because of a ‘resurgent Russia’, among other things. US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates indicated that he agreed, and that he planned to keep US troops in Europe at their present level of
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about 43,000 men. But so far Gates has not decided on exact troop levels in Europe. The Bush administration’s initial plan was to have only 24,000 US troops in Europe by the end of 2008.

Balkenende Visits Putin

From 5–7 November 2007, Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende, with a large delegation, visited Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow. The Dutch gas company Gasunie signed a contract worth 750 million euro with the Russian state company Gazprom for a share of nine per cent in the North Stream pipeline through the Baltic Sea. Gazprom took an option on a share in a pipeline running from Britain to the Netherlands. In Europe, meanwhile, concerns remain high about the dependence on Russian gas and its economical and political consequences.

It was claimed that Putin criticised Balkenende behind closed doors for paying ‘too much attention’ to human rights and free speech in the Netherlands’ bilateral relations with Russia. He said that he would rather see Dutch investments in Russian projects ‘for culture and the environment’. Upon his return, Balkenende was criticised in the Dutch Parliament for paying ‘too little attention’ to Russian human rights during his visit.

Turmoil in Georgia

On 16 November 2007 Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili ended the state of emergency in Georgia, after pressure from the United States and Europe to restore freedom of speech and press and the possibility to demonstrate. Saakashvili had announced the state of emergency on 7 November after mass protests in the capital of Tbilisi. The opposition accused him of ‘corruption’, ‘insensitivity’ in reforming and in the relationship with Georgia’s large neighbour Russia, and of ‘autocratic governance’ because of his proposal to postpone the elections.

After ending the state of emergency, President Saakashvili rearranged his government and installed the young Lado Gurgenidze as the new prime minister. To ease tensions between the government and the opposition, Saakashvili rescheduled the elections to the earlier date of 5 January 2008. Analysts indicated that the pro-Western president could not afford to jeopardise Georgia’s future NATO membership any further.

One of the fundamental requirements for any country to be allowed to accede to NATO is to have a democratic system and to abide by the rule of law.

The opposition, however, immediately announced new protests. In its opinion, freedom of the press had not been restored completely. On 25 November 2007, over 10,000 Georgians gathered in Tbilisi to protest again.

Saakashvili resigned on 25 November in accordance with Georgian law, in order to be able to participate in the elections. His close ally Nino Burjanadze was assigned to act as a temporary president.

Saakashvili claimed that Russia was the silent force behind the protests. Russia denied responsibility for the political turbulence in Georgia. For years, the two neighbours have had a difficult relationship. Georgia regularly blames Russia for stirring up conflicts in Georgia’s border regions, whereas Russia is irritated by Georgian gas transports that bypass Russia. Nevertheless, on 15 November 2007 Russia withdrew a number of its troops from Georgian soil in accordance with a 2005 agreement. The troops left the Batumi army base ahead of schedule.

Transatlantics

Sarkozy Visits Washington

On 6 and 7 November 2007 the French President Nicolas Sarkozy made his first state visit to the United States. On arrival he declared that the aim of his visit was to ‘conquer the heart of America’. He held a speech before Congress, where he talked about his deep respect for the United States and praised the country for its efforts during the Second World War, among other things. President Sarkozy also expressed support for the NATO-led military operation in Afghanistan, and he announced that France is willing to resume its role in NATO’s integrated military structure. He also urged Congress to do more about global warming and international poverty. During a meeting with President Bush, Sarkozy also discussed the situation in Iraq and tensions with Iran.

New Chairman of NATO’s Military Committee

On 14 November 2007 Italian Admiral Giampaolo di Paola was elected as the new Chairman of NATO’s Military Committee. Di Paola is currently the Italian Head of Defence. He will become the highest ranking NATO military officer. In a reaction, the admiral announced that he would continue reforms to modernise NATO’s armed forces. Di Paola will replace Canadian General Ray Henault in June 2008, when Henault’s three-year term expires.

Balkans

Will Kosovo Declare Independence?

On 7 December 2007, the international ‘troika’ informed the United Nations that negotiations on the status of Kosovo had failed to produce any results.

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Atlantic News
Negotiations between the Serbian and Albanian communities’ representatives had dragged on for a considerable time, with both parties emphatically stressing their diametrically opposite positions. In the following days, thousands of protesters took to the streets of Pristina, Kosovo’s capital, calling for Kosovo’s immediate independence.

On 17 November 2007 the Democratic Party of Kosovo, led by former Liberation Army commander Hashim Thaci, won the elections in Kosovo. Thaci declared that he would announce independence from the Serbian province immediately after 10 December – the deadline set by international mediators for the Kosovo status negotiations between Serbian and Albanian community representatives. The Serb minority in Kosovo boycotted the elections, claiming that they would validate Kosovo’s separation. The Serbian government has made it clear that it will not accept any independence of the province, which has been led for years by the UN.

NATO-led KFOR looks after security in the province with over 16,000 troops. Both the EU and the United States have repeatedly indicated that they will support a Kosovar declaration of independence.

Crisis Averted in Bosnia

On 4 December 2007 Bosnia and the European Union signed a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) in Sarajevo. This opens the possibility of Bosnia becoming a member of the EU. After years of struggling, the multi-ethnic Bosnian government had earlier agreed to reform Bosnia’s fragmented police force. On 30 November 2007 an agreement was reached between international High Representative Miroslav Lajcak and the Bosnian government on a set of rules that alter the way that government decisions are made. The new voting procedures prevent each of the communities from blocking decisions by simply refraining from voting. Lajcak’s proposals caused a serious conflict with Bosnian Prime Minister Nikola Spirić, who resigned after the international community backed Lajcak’s proposal. Spirić considered the rules too far-reaching. He added that ‘for twelve years, foreigners have been running this country and that is not good’. The Bosnian Serb leadership announced that it would leave the government if the reforms were carried out, which would have plunged Bosnia into political crisis.

Notwithstanding the agreements, international observers claim that violence could still easily erupt in Bosnia, where the European Union maintains 2,450 EUFOR troops.

The EU Signs an Agreement with Serbia...

European Union Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn signed a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Serbia on 7 November 2007. The agreement is considered the first step towards Serbian EU membership. The decision was made after the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) considered Serbia to be ‘cooperative’ in the international search for war criminals. Rehn emphasised, however, that Serbia would still need to extradite war crimes’ suspect Ratko Mladic before the agreement could be made official.

Analysts indicate that the agreement is a way to strengthen the EU’s relationship with Serbia now that negotiations concerning Kosovo have broken down.

... But Only Croatia is Likely to Become a Full Member Soon

EU Commissioner Rehn made it clear that it would take until at least 2012 before both Serbia and Bosnia could be considered for full membership of the European Union. Of all of the Balkan countries that have signed a SAA with the EU, only Croatia is considered ready to become an EU member state between 2010 and 2012, Rehn said.

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Iran finds itself politically isolated in the international arena. The country is threatened by Western powers with a preventive strike in the not too distant future. Recent opinion polls revealed that a majority of the European population would support military action against Iran if international economic and diplomatic measures proved insufficient in curbing Iran's nuclear ambitions. In Europe, a nuclear-armed Iran is perceived as the biggest threat to international peace and security. To what extent is this perception based on facts? Carolien Roelants, who recently visited Iran, made it clear that Iran is actually a 'normal' country instead of a dangerous, aggressive, and radical Islamic republic that is looking for world dominance. Western hostility towards Iran has been influenced by the Islamic revolution that ousted the Shah from power in 1979. The revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini did not conceal his aspirations to realise Islamic world dominance through the conquest of non-Islamic regions. In addition to this expansionist rhetoric, it was revealed that Iran was behind the kidnapping of Westerners in Lebanon in the 1980s, and proved itself willing to sacrifice thousands of children in suicidal missions during the war with neighbouring Iraq.

The Iranian elections of 1997 were won by the reformist Khatami with a large majority. Despite his promises to reform Iran, he proved unable to bring greater individual freedom to the Iranian population and to improve the economic situation decisively. The failure of the reformist regime not only restored the conservatives to power in 2005, but also created an apathetic, apolitical and disillusioned electorate. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who reverted to the original ideas of the Islamic revolution, was elected president on promises to reform Iran's economy, to improve conditions for the population and to reduce widespread corruption. Hardly any attention was paid to foreign policy. Western hostility towards Iran was reinforced by the sudden aggressive rhetoric of the newly elected Iranian leader. The conservative Ahmadinejad stated that Israel 'ought to be wiped off the map', tried to deny the Holocaust, and put emphasis on the Iranians' right to enrich uranium, which could be used to manufacture nuclear weapons.

Mrs Roelants advocated a more differentiated analysis of Iran. She predominantly focused on internal developments in Iranian society to explain Iran's political stance in the international arena. Iran can be viewed as a 'dictatorship within a democracy'. The president is elected for a four-year term by universal suffrage through relatively free elections. Although most daily decisions are made by the president and parliament, the Supreme Leader and the Council of Guardians hold virtually all of the power. Presidential candidates are approved on the basis of their allegiance to the ideals of the Islamic revolution, and the Supreme Leader can effectively veto political measures that are contrary to Islamic law.

Mrs Roelants pointed out that internal divisions within political parties complicate the decision-making process. Although the Iranian regime is now entirely composed of conservatives, political harmony is non-existent and Ahmadinejad finds himself opposed by various conservative elements in parliament. This reduces his freedom for political manoeuvres.

Even with political activism hampered by measures to suppress political opposition and restraints on student organisations, the young and well-educated Iranian population shows itself amenable to modernisation, caused, among other things, by the introduction of satellite television and the internet. At the same time, Iranians hold on firmly to their traditions, which are characterised by conservative values.

Western rhetoric of 'regime change' in Iran is based on the assumption that all conservative and anti-Western elements in Iranian society will vanish when a more liberal political leader is installed. Mrs Roelants pointed out that the reality is more complicated. Western leaders will currently not be easily tempted to launch a military operation against the Iranian Republic, while they are entangled in both Afghanistan and Iraq. At the same time it may be considered highly unlikely that Iran would commit political suicide by launching a nuclear strike against Israel. A recent rapprochement between Iran and the West only underlines the intentions of both parties to arrange a negotiated settlement for existing difficulties. Nevertheless, the political mood in the various capitals is uncertain. In Mrs Roelants' opinion, the restoration of relations between Iran and the international community will soon be given room to materialise fully. Upcoming parliamentary elections in Iran will prove decisive for Iran's future in the international arena.
The tragic events of 11 September 2001 greatly damaged the historical prestige of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which was founded in 1947 by US President Harry Truman. The inability of the service (along with the FBI) to foresee and prevent the terrorist attacks raised public questions in the United States about the quality of its foreign intelligence agency. To make matters worse, the incorrect CIA estimation in 2003 of Saddam Hussein’s alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) led to President Bush’s fatal war in Iraq. What ever had happened to the omnipotent agency since its heydays during the Cold War?

Pulitzer Prize winner Tim Weiner, a correspondent of the New York Times, even takes a step further. His main goal in the book Legacy of Ashes is to deconstruct the ‘myth’ of the CIA as an all-knowing institution with great influence abroad during the complete second half of the twentieth century. According to Weiner, the CIA, since its founding, produced a series of failures to foresee major international events, including: the explosion of the atomic bomb by the Soviet Union in 1949; the invasion of South Korea in 1950; the installation of Soviet missiles on Cuba in 1962; the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979; and the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1989. Because of mismanagement by successive CIA directors and a huge political dependence on (and obedience to) the White House, the CIA, Weiner argues, neglected its main task: to practise espionage. Instead, the CIA got involved in paramilitary activities, violated human rights and plotted the assassinations of foreign leaders. The ‘golden era’ of the CIA prior to ‘9/11’ was, according to Weiner, an ‘illusion’ to begin with.

Harsh criticism of the CIA is, of course, not entirely new. But Weiner’s use of 10,000 declassified documents, the lack of anonymous quotes and his interviews with several former CIA directors make the book a unique document. Finally, Weiner’s comprehensive thesis raises frightening questions about the CIA’s – and other secret services’ – capabilities to prevent international terrorism in the nearby future.
Space, even here the Thales Anti Air Warfare Suite detects a threat, tracks it and takes the required action to eliminate it.

Tactical Ballistic Missiles are a serious threat to regional or global stability. Thales has extended the already impressive capabilities of its sophisticated naval Anti Air Warfare system. Participating in a major test led by the US Navy at the Pacific Missile Test Range in November and December of 2006, this AAW system detected and tracked all ballistic missiles fired. This remarkable performance demonstrates Thales’ front-running capability to participate in NATO’s ALTBMD program.