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**REPORT ON THE VISIT TO WASHINGTON OF A
GROUP OF ITALIAN POLITICAL SCIENTISTS AND
POLITICIANS IN JULY 2005**

by Gabriele Tonne

Report on a visit to Washington organized by the IAI for a group of Italian opinion- and policy-makers
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As in previous years, the IAI organized a visit to Washington for a group of Italian opinion- and policy-makers. The institute considers going to the heart of the US policy establishment and government circles as one of the best ways to further a more profound reciprocal understanding of the views held on important global issues. The visit took place from July 6th to 8th.

Although the major transatlantic rift caused by the Iraq war has to some extent been mended, a number of international matters, including the persistence of the insurgency in Iraq hindering the fundamental tasks of reconstruction and nation-building, Iran's intention to develop military nuclear power and, closer to home, the recent defeat of the referenda on the European Constitution in France and the Netherlands, were all questions on which Italians were eager to have an exchange of opinions with their counterparts in the United States. The Italian group was composed of an Italian member of Parliament, heads of Italian civilian and military think tanks, professors of political science and researchers (list attached). The visit provided an opportunity to involve three members of the IAI 's newly established transatlantic program advisory committee.

Meetings were arranged in three different sectors:

1. Administration

- State Department (Kathleen Allegrone, Karen Volker and Jeff Hovenier from the EU and NATO Depts)
- National Security Council (Richard Philips, Russia, and William Toby, non-proliferation)

2. Congress

- United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (Antony Blinken, Democratic staff director for Senator Joseph Biden)
- Congressional Research Service (Paul Gallis and Francis Miko, Foreign affairs, defense and trade division)

3. Think tanks

- Brookings Institution (Philip Gordon, Jeremy Shapiro, Michael Calingaert)
- American Enterprise Institute (Radek Sikorsky, Michael Ruben, Ida Garibaldi, Vance Serchuk)
- CSIS (large assembly, detailed list attached)
- RAND (Steve Larrabee, Robert Hunter, Seth Jones, Keith Crane, John Gordon).

The group also met with the Italian ambassador in Washington.

The agenda was dense and the interaction always lively and interesting. Discussion time was unfortunately never sufficient. The subjects most commonly broached, in addition to the latest developments in the European Union, Iraq and Iran mentioned above, were the new foreign policy directions in the United States and Italy and recent developments in Russia, China and the broader Middle East.

It is felt that the often very candid exchange of views between opinion- and decision-makers contributed to achieving some of the trip's fundamental objectives, that is increasing the awareness of the main determinants of Italy's foreign and security policy

among US government officials and foreign policy experts and vice versa. The visit also provided an excellent way of identifying the problems and sounding out the potential of the US-Italy partnership to make it more effective in improving transatlantic cooperation.

Europe - EU, transatlantic relations

With the recent defeat of the referenda in France and the Netherlands, there was much concern about Europe's future and the impact of its Constitutional crisis on transatlantic relations. All this at a time when it was generally agreed that the majority in the Bush Administration and the US Congress now see the European Union positively: it is felt that the EU is a good model, has been successful in bringing together the European countries and should be strengthened – a strong EU means a stable Europe. While the problems with ratification of the Constitution have strengthened anti-EU voices in both Europe and the US, the US President expressed his disappointment for the results of the French and Dutch referenda. It was pointed out that it would be helpful for pro-European forces in Europe if the president were actually to state that the US wants a politically integrated Europe.

It would help pro-European forces if President Bush were to state that the US wants a politically integrated Europe

It was stressed that the second Bush Administration's relationship with the EU is qualitatively different – Bush's February message on the value of Europe and his visit to Brussels in spring being evidence of this. Nevertheless, all official references to the EU underlined that the US wants a strong and united Europe, but one that acts as a partner to the US. Officials reiterated that the US is seeking consultation with Europe on all important foreign policy issues, not just through NATO or bilaterally but also through the EU, and is actually exploring ways to increase this consultation.

While the agreement on Libya, a common stance on Lebanon, Bush's statement on the Palestinian state, agreement to play the European card in Iran seem to have mitigated the crisis, there was some scepticism about this rosy picture of the EU-US relationship. There seems to be convergence on fundamental things but there is still divergence on how to go about them. Both want stability and democracy but the EU seems to be more lenient, the US more inclined to take action. American interlocutors from non-governmental circles also saw things in a slightly different light. They generally felt that the Administration had not concluded that its approach towards the EU had failed and consequently changed strategy. What has changed are the circumstances. There has been a shift towards a more pragmatic – less ideological – policy aimed at seeing how best Europe can be brought in to collaborate.

A deep-seated division between the US and Europe over the legitimacy of the use of force remains

The biggest division between the US and Europe still seems to be on the legitimacy of the use of force. The US feels that legitimacy is domestic, that no institutions can block an American decision to take coercive actions, while Europe feels much more bound to the consent of international institutions. In Europe, the US is seen as multilateralist when it can be, unilateralist when it must. It was noted that the US has always seen multilateralism as instrumental, but that the Bush Administration has a peculiar view on how multilateral institutions can be used. Previous administrations were concerned with values in the long-term. The

Bush Administration has a different theory on how to rally international support – a strategy that worked in the beginning but is starting to falter because it can only be pursued as long as you're winning.

Other questions on which the two differ also surfaced: the environment, international justice and international governance. There was debate on whether this difference is peculiar to the Bush Administration, or whether it is just more accentuated under Bush. Most people in the United States agree that it's Bush: it was pointed out that Clinton tried to push many of these issues through Congress but didn't make it because the US has been on a conservative trend in the last decades, but the real difference has come with Bush and, above all, 9/11.

It was noted that European attitudes towards the United States can be grouped together under four major headings

- Atlanticists (mainly UK)
- anti-Americanists
- Euro-Gaullists (in favour of independence from US and a sort of Euro-nationalism)
- Euro-Atlanticists

It was stressed however that there is no single European model. The recent US "multilateralism *à la carte*" seems to have been to the advantage of the Euro-Gaullists.

Italians generally fall into the Euro-Atlanticist category. It was remarked that there is no major problem of anti-Americanism in itself in Italy: for example, the centre-left is not anti-American even though it has significant members that are. The problem is that there are strong anti-capitalistic roots in the country: neither the Catholics nor the Communists like the competitiveness of the "Anglo-Saxon" model. This has been coupled in recent years with opposition to certain US foreign policies. To some extent, the same problem arises in the EU. Blair has tried to clarify what his idea of capitalism is all about – but it is viewed all the same with suspicion in Italy.

What became clear is that there is an urgent need for new forms of EU-US consultation. The US would like to be more informed or involved in dialogue among EU countries on important questions, while Europeans would also appreciate more consultation so as not to be faced with *faits accomplis* by the United States. What is needed is a forum for EU-US dialogue outside of NATO. It was mentioned that an EU caucus was set up in Congress in spring to facilitate meetings between members of European parliaments and members of Congress, but broader and more far-reaching channels of consultation have to be found.

There is an urgent need for new forms of US-EU consultation

European dynamics

Despite mixed views on the Constitution – one person called it an appalling document, too vague, making interpretation rely too heavily on judges and bureaucrats – the document's symbolic importance was generally recognised and there was widespread concern about the consequences of the failed referenda. One of the preoccupations was that the EU might become more consumed by internal issues. All agreed that the failed referenda have dealt a blow to the EU, taking it back to the Treaty of Nice, but it was

After the failed referenda, efforts will have to be made in Europe to keep up the momentum

also noted that European integration has suffered setbacks before. Efforts will have to be made to keep up the momentum. Hopefully it will be possible to salvage some of the instruments envisaged in the Constitution to avoid a worsening of the crisis. For example, the creation of a European diplomatic service has

already been started and will surely continue, even though there are now doubts on how to proceed since the target of a foreign minister no longer exists.

In any case, there are serious structural problems in the EU that urgently have to be addressed. The democratic deficit and therefore, the need for more political and democratic credibility, for example, is a crucial one. The referendum itself is a perfect example: if it had been held in a pan-European democratic space rather than at the national level, where issues are often exploited for domestic use, the outcome might have been different. But there are also a number of other fields in which political and democratic credibility have to be further developed. Paradoxically, the Constitution made substantial progress in this direction.

More than one person ventured that the Constitution may have been too big a step. Introducing a single currency was in some ways easier. Till now, all enlargements, including the last, were aimed at stabilising Europe and were generally considered inevitable and accepted by all. Political integration will now have to spread roots and grow from the bottom up. Europe has reached a turning point. In answer to the question, what does the EU stand for, it was pointed out that that is exactly what Europe is debating and what the Constitution was/is all about – it was an attempt to define Europe. But turning the Union into a political reality will involve taking on the responsibilities and costs of greater integration and this may take some time.

It was suggested that the EU reform process might be jump started by external factors, such as terrorist attacks. The attack on London on July 7 – especially if followed by others or the threat of others – could force the EU to accelerate integration in the justice field. In fact, Blair stressed the need for greater police and justice cooperation after the London attack.

Aside from economic problems – with the euro and the Stability and Growth Pact – it was pointed out that the Franco-German duo, which has driven integration in the last decades, is in serious trouble. In defence, security and justice policies, the real engine recently has been the French-British duo, but there are fundamental contrasts between these two on economic and social policy.

Nevertheless, with the current six-month UK presidency of the European Union, Blair is being offered a chance to demonstrate his leadership. Many considered his opening

Following the latest terrorist attacks, attempts to accelerate European integration could well be concentrated in the III pillar

speech to the EP impressive. He spoke out not only in favour of Europe, but also in favour of greater integration. He asked for more credibility to keep moving forward. He seemed ready to make concessions and suggested a compromise on budgetary questions: a substantial progressive reduction in the British rebate in return for discussion of reform of the CAP. There was widespread consensus that this will be difficult, first, because Blair is isolated on this issue and, second, because Chirac will oppose any substantial reform of the agricultural policy. It was suggested that, after the London bombings, Blair will probably concentrate on the III pillar as it is the field in which it is easiest

to find a compromise.

Some scepticism about Blair's European convictions was expressed. The fact that he called a referendum on the Constitution in the first place and that he put it on hold only seconds after the French referendum failed do not speak in his favour. It was speculated that a transition from Blair to Gordon Brown would definitely mean a more Euro-sceptical direction in British foreign policy.

It was hypothesised that there could be a crisis in France. It's not clear whether Chirac, in his current weakened position, will be able to hold out until 2007. If Nicholas Sarkozy were to rise, he could want to revamp foreign policy. Sarkozy is less Gaullist, less wedded to the old social model. He's against the entry of Turkey and reluctant to consolidate the alliance with Germany. In the same way, it was mentioned that if Angela Merkel were to win the elections in Germany in the fall, this could change Germany's direction towards Turkey as well as its alliance with France. There was speculation that this could lead to a different relationship between the US and Germany as well. Merkel was generally considered more pro-US, less Franco-centric, less pro-Russia, although some questioned her pro-US stance.

The weakening of the French-German duo is already leading to a repositioning of others, such as José Luis Zapatero, the Spanish prime minister, who is visibly in search of greater room for maneuver in the European diplomatic game.

Italian national elections are scheduled for 2006. It was stated that polls peg the centre-left opposition as the winner, but it is divided and finding it hard to produce a common programme. Given that victory is predicted, the political groupings on the opposition are putting more effort into vying for positions within the coalition than working out a platform.

The next government will have to face a difficult economic situation. Several economic indicators in Italy have deteriorated since the introduction of the euro. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, the euro was presented as a point of arrival, rather than a point of departure, while the changed situation, in particular the inability to resort to competitive currency devaluation as happened in the past, would have required structural economic reforms. Second, the change-over was poorly managed. But the problem is not only Italian. France and Germany and other European countries are also having difficulties and there is widespread consensus that the Stability and Growth Pact has to be further reformed. But even though northern Italy is one of the main industrial centres in Europe, Italy has lost credibility recently due to its economic difficulties, and this has reduced its ability to propose reform at the European level.

It was generally felt that neither left nor right will stress foreign policy during the election campaign or do so only in an instrumental way. For example, part of the current centre-right government is trying to use the euro as a scapegoat for economic problems.

It was remarked that neither of the big coalitions has anything to gain from bringing up the issue of Iraq in the next elections: the right will not stress it for obvious reasons; the left, even though it may be against the war, will not want to seem weak on terrorism. But someone pointed out that it will be difficult for the left not to take a precise stand on the war. Indeed, 60% of Italians think the war in Iraq has seriously increased terrorism.

Prodi, the presidential candidate of the opposition coalition, has not held a firm line on this issue. At first, he was against the war. Then he claimed that it's one thing to be against the war, but another to talk about withdrawal once you're involved. Later, reinforced by Spain's withdrawal, he said Italy should pull out. In Washington there was no general consensus about whether a new centre-left government would pull Italian troops out or not. It was pointed out that the present government is in any case likely to withdraw 800 troops by September. Furthermore, it was suggested that the

whole question might be less critical by 2006 or, alternatively, that everyone may be working on some kind of exit strategy by that time. (In August, Prodi announced that he

**Prodi has
announced that
he will withdraw
Italian troops
from Iraq if he
comes to power**

will withdraw Italian occupational troops from Iraq if his coalition – the Union – wins the elections).

There may be some discussion of the European Union during the next election campaign – where it's headed and what Italy wants from it – but the European Union has always been a bipartisan issue. Italy has traditionally been pro-Europe. Getting into Europe – and later moving to the euro – was considered a necessary step in modernizing the country. In fact, Italy was one of the first countries to ratify the new Constitution. It's actually new for EU policy to be a matter of debate in Italy. The divisions in Europe are putting it in a relatively difficult spot, however, and it will have to take a position at some time and take on the relative costs if it wants to remain a part of the leading group.

For the first time, with the referenda and the debate on the Constitution, there seems to be a clear cleavage between two alternative approaches towards Europe, neither of which is perceived as entirely satisfactory: institutional primacy, rationalising the EU through institutional reform (traditionally a French elite perspective), and the English approach in which institutions follow policies (the accent is on economic change –

EU policy has always been a bipartisan issue in Italy – it is new for it to be a matter of debate

innovation). Both are needed to some degree, but it's unfortunate to have to choose between the two extremes. There seems to be a consensus that Italy will have to work out its own path between the two.

In line with the rise in nationalism and populism in both France and Germany, the nationalistic dimension has increased in Italy, too. Furthermore, the foreign policy stances of Italian parties tend to be volatile. For example, the Lega Nord used to be rather pro-EU, whereas it's now anti-Europe, and Rifondazione Comunista may be anti-US, but it's not pro-EU either. There's a kind of *non-bellis* nationalism. Basically, however, Italy is considered too weak to go it alone, so it has to enter into alliances of some kind and it's generally felt that the longer-term the better.

It became clear that enlargement to Turkey was only really brought to the fore as an issue by the Constitutional referendum campaign. In Italy, for example, a recent survey showed that people on the street have little or no interest in the question. Whether or not it becomes an issue in Italy depends on how it is managed. The Church is against Turkish entry and this could play a role in Italy. In the referenda Turkey was used as a test for what Europe stands for – or doesn't stand for – in terms of borders, identity, social and economic model. There are also demographic projections that cause concern. Turkey is causing heated debate because it sums up these many factors.

NATO and ESDP

In line with the US' general approach towards the European Union, it was reiterated that the US also accepts ESDP as long as it is complementary to NATO. Officials stressed that there has been a change in attitude: in the past the US mostly talked *at* allies, now there is more dialogue, more response to EU expectations.

ESDP continues to make incremental progress, but defence spending is still insufficient

In Europe, there seems to be strong determination to continue with ESDP in spite of the constitutional setback. Cooperation will continue in the European Defence Agency (EDA), the European Planning cell, the battle groups, etc. New engagements will be taken on in the Balkans and elsewhere. There will be no big qualitative jumps but continuous progress – the general direction has not been put into question.

It was pointed out, though, that in real terms the defence budgets of the EU states are still declining. How can this be reconciled with ESDP? The response was that budget problems are less important than how money is spent. The challenge is to coordinate 25 members as a single federal state. Together they account for around 20 percent of world defence spending and 40 percent of the US defence budget. They spend \$40-50 billion on procurement. But with no federal state, defence spending remains a national prerogative. This explains why the emphasis is on structures for how to spend.

Progress is being made in the restructuring and integration of the European defence industrial system. It is coming up against few obstacles as it makes sense both economically and politically. Nevertheless, while desirable in order to allow Europe and the United States to operate together, there are problems related to US-EU technology transfer. True, it would be unfair for the EU to claim for free what the US has paid a high price to develop. But there are cases in which Europeans have invested large amounts of money and then have not been able to bring home the final product (with the same capabilities as in the US). The joint strike fighter is an example: Italy invested \$1 billion, yet the US has not been willing to provide Italy with planes that have the same capabilities as those

Problems remain with US-EU technology transfer

available in the US or to other allies. The reasons adduced are fear of technology transfer to China. Another example is a large investment made by the French firm Thales in the production of radios: the technology added for US troops could not be brought back to Europe. It seems that Congress sometimes adds protectionist elements to normal technical assessments in that technology transfer is seen as threatening.

By the same token, the question was raised whether the EU is still in favour of a vigorous Atlantic Alliance. The response was that for Europeans, NATO is still a net gain. European countries' assets operate mainly within NATO. Therefore, when they talk about defence, more often than not they mean NATO.

Nevertheless, NATO has a different configuration from the EU, and while ESDP is not seen as providing an alternative to NATO, it does have a unique, broader civilian-military perspective. For example, the new EU civil-military cell's approach of combining military and civilian capabilities is unique to the EU. It was stated, in particular, that the EU is gradually adopting an increasingly larger concept of security that will eventually lead to defence.

At times, it was pointed out, Europe is irritated by the US wanting to decide for it on important matters, such as what kind of duplication is good and what kind is bad (EU-NATO bad, infra-EU good). Otherwise, Europe is quite willing to accept an alliance with the US. A division of labour would not, however, satisfy European interests (nor US interests, for that matter).

The concern that the US has lost interest in NATO and now merely sees it as a pool for menial labour was denied. It was pointed that, while there seems to have been a period of benign neglect for NATO at the beginning of the first Bush Administration, initiatives such as the NATO response force, Prague, the transformation commitment, etc, were all put forward by the US.

Europeans fear that downgrading the importance of deterrence could downgrade the alliance itself

There were differences in views on NATO's future development. Americans stressed that Art. 5 is still the centrepiece – it is seen as being just as important now as it was in the past. It simply has to be clarified how the Art. 5 guarantee can be invoked in ways in which the alliance is configured to work.

Decision-making and implementation of decisions have to be improved. There was concern among Italians about what would happen to the strategy of deterrence (also an integral part of the EU's security strategy). It was mentioned, in fact, that NATO seems to be downgrading the importance of deterrence and this could downgrade the alliance itself.

Americans also stressed that NATO has to leave the door open to new members. NATO has been an important incentive in democratising and it must remain such. It was pointed out that enlargement is also a way of keeping the threat away from one's borders. The criteria for further membership are democracy, and whether the country is a net contributor to or taker of security.

Iraq

The second area of greatest interest to all was the situation in Iraq. It was generally agreed that there are three major problem areas in Iraq: economy (reconstruction and development), institutions, security. As concerns the economy: foreign investment is still seriously lacking. Despite the Brussels conference, pledges have not translated into disbursements. As for institutions: creating a strong government meant, at the time, including the Sunnis in the drafting of the Constitution. But the problem of security still overshadows all else: the insurgency is still very strong and affects the other two fields. For example, the population is suffering from a lack of fundamental services and while donors are loath to pour money into this kind of reconstruction as long as risk of sabotage exists, the discontent with the poor living conditions is to some extent fuelling the insurgency and at the time hindered the creation of an inclusive government. It emerged that given the continuing difficulties, there may be a willingness on the part of the US government to accept the establishment of any kind of government as long as it can rule, even if this means that some groups might remain outside the institutions.

A key to finding a way out of the Iraq morasse could be to work more with the other countries in the region

It was remarked that treating the Iraqis as Kurds, Shias and Sunnis has been a mistake: tribal ties which are much stronger run transversally. Furthermore, it was noted that a partition along religious/territorial lines should be avoided not least because it would create problems of control over oil: if the Kurds are given the oil-rich north, the Shias the slightly less oil-rich south, the Sunnis will be left with the desert.

Someone suggested that one of the keys to overcoming the situation in general could be to work more with the other countries in the region which all have a stake in the stability of the region. Seemingly, a proposal to establish a contact group including neighbours, the EU, the UN and major countries has been aired.

Four possible US strategies for the future were envisaged:

- more of the same (considered a recipe for failure)
- pull out (civil war)
- timetable for pullout (build up Shias and Kurds in meantime)
- do more and do it better (change Iraq policy in US – the request of Democrats).

It was generally agreed that there has been a change in attitude on the part of the Administration: Bush has opened up to Europe and its suggestions on how to proceed. His trip to Europe and the Brussels conference on June 21-22 were taken as proof of this. But although the President is still behind the venture, sources close to Congress reported that many Republicans are getting nervous. They are worried about stability, loss of US and Iraqi lives, Syria and Iran operating in Iraq. The price of oil and the

budget are also major concerns. Yet, while there have been calls for a date or for benchmarks for withdrawal, the Administration does not want to give deadlines right now because it feels it would cause unease among the US population and swing the tide of sentiment, making it easier for people to say the whole undertaking is falling apart. It seemed that at that time, in July, most people still hoped that it would be possible to get a handle on the insurgency.

There was some scepticism as to whether Bush actually has a convincing strategy for Iraq. Many Democrats were disappointed by his nationally televised speech on Iraq the

There was skepticism as to whether Bush has a convincing strategy for Iraq

week before (June 28). More openness had been expected. But it was also pointed out that the President's rhetoric has always been so high that if he were to lower it even a bit, it would look like defeat. Some suggested he may just be playing for time. It would seem that the "strategy" at the moment is to train the Iraqis and put things in their hands. All participants agreed that the emphasis must be on training the officer corps for the creation of a non-confessional Iraqi army. But whether this strategy can be effective in the short term and is actually being pursued was put into question: on the one hand, it seems that both Chirac and Mubarrak offered to train Iraqi security forces in their countries and never received a response. On the other, Italy has already trained some Iraqi officers and this was not described as too successful an endeavour because the officers seemed to have serious problems identifying their loyalties.

It was noted that the quadrennial defense review will be fundamental in dictating strategy. The review will make it clear to what extent the US military is being redirected towards low-intensity operations. Before 9/11, transformation meant high-level technology. Now, whether they like it or not, the military will have to move towards counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism and operational costs. This is exactly what happened during the Vietnam war.

It was generally agreed that there is now talk of an exit strategy. But the 9/11 card, used as a lever on the American public, gives the President plenty of time. There was speculation that Bush might start withdrawing troops before the next US elections – just telling the American public "we did it".

But how would the US be able to keep control over oil in such a scenario? The strategy described was the Churchill strategy of 1922: withdrawal into the countryside keeping overall control from there (similar, someone quipped, to a "Los Angeles strategy": surround the area and shoot at anything that comes out). The political advantages of declaring victory and going home, it was pointed out, would be halting US deaths, diminishing social problems, and putting Democrats in a hard place.

Even as it is, the Democrats are in a hard place. Italians were told that the Democrats are not exploiting the current situation because they feel it would be unpatriotic. They

The Democrats are hesitant to come out against the war for fear of being seen as weak

also hesitate to oppose the war because people would take it as a sign of weakness. (Polls during the 2002 mid-term elections showed that Democrats were favoured over Republicans by about 10 points on issues like the economy, social security and medical insurance. But Republicans were favoured by between 30 and 40 points on issues of national security/terrorism. For example, "which party do you trust to protect America..." produced a 40 point margin for Republicans.) Furthermore, since the Democratic Party split in the late 1960s over Vietnam, with an anti-war "peace wing"

emerging, it has since been portrayed/caricatured as a weak party. It was suggested that it is no coincidence that the Democratic Party has won only three presidential elections since then: Carter (1976) as a reaction to Watergate; Clinton (1992 and 1996) after the end of the Cold War and before 9/11 – a period in which national security was not a leading concern. Now that it is once again, Republicans have regained the natural advantage they have held on these issues since the late 1960s.

Some Democrats are asking for more troops, arguing that it is unthinkable to try to control the terrain with a force of the current size, knowing however that commanders in Iraq don't have enough resources to fulfil their tasks even now and that reserves and recruits are diminishing. Some believe that the best course is to engage insurgents in as many ways as possible in order to diminish their base. Some are asking for a more comprehensive regional strategy.

In any case, there is no single Democratic stand on Iraq. The basic distinction between the Republicans and the Democrats is that the premise of conservative realists and

In the US, terrorism is presented as an existential threat, while in Europe it is seen as a political issue

neocons is US military power, while most Democrats start out from the premise that there's no unilateral military solution to most challenges. In the case of Iraq also, Democrats put the accent on institutions more than elections.

The problem of US credibility after the torture scandals in Iraq and Guantanamo was raised. There was a demand in Congress at the time for an enquiry into Guantanamo. But since the war in

Iraq has been presented in the United States as a war against terrorism – terrorism seen as an ideology not a tool – a logic has been created that is hard to break out of and the scandals have not had strong repercussions on US public opinion.

Furthermore, as pointed out, terrorism has been used as a wild card in the United States with terrorist incidents hugely leveraged. In the US, terrorism is presented as an existential threat, as compared to Europe, where it's seen more as a political issue. In fact, in Blair's reactions to the London terrorist attacks which took place during our visit, he attempted to downplay this use of terrorism.

There have been repeated calls in Europe for a clearer distinction between Iraq and the war on terror

It was maintained that Blair's stress on the need for policing without mentioning a military response could be a prelude to a reassessment of the US' global anti-terrorist strategy, which many in Europe feel has gone astray in Iraq. There have been repeated calls from Europe for a clearer distinction between the commitment in Iraq and the fight against terrorism.

Finally, although opinion polls seemed to indicate an ebb in Bush's popularity in the United States, in July the tide was not yet turning. Despite growing concern and doubts about the US involvement in Iraq, it was generally thought that it would take some time for the American people to change their minds about the war. It was pointed out that the opposition to the Vietnam war mounted among the people as the number of deaths slowly started to rise. In July, it seemed that the majority of Americans did not want to give up on Iraq. They may not necessarily have thought that the venture was worth it, but they wanted to stay the course because they thought it would be worse if the US were to leave.

Middle East

The US policy towards the greater Middle East and North Africa has placed a growing emphasis on democracy promotion. In fact, President Bush firmly believes that

democratisation can help solve the problems in the Middle East and, furthermore, that democracy can be imposed from the outside. Europe, on the other hand, has different views not only on what democratisation is, but also on how it can be achieved.

During her trip to Egypt in June 2005, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was bluntly critical of Egypt for its slowness in opening up to democratic change, raising concern in Europe about the destabilizing effect of such an approach. What if elections were won by Islamist groups, would the US be prepared to live with such a result? Other difficulties inherent in this policy of democratisation were also pointed out: for example, the US supports democracy in Egypt, but is not putting the same kind of pressure on Saudi Arabia, even though it has an equally bad track record.

European problems with the Middle East include immigration – given the proximity – and energy vulnerability. But it was underlined that the EU does not have a convincing or coherent policy in the Middle East. The Barcelona Process has been a failure and the new European Neighbourhood Policy, although better because more flexible, also has

Unlike Americans, Europeans generally tend to give priority to stability over change

some drawbacks: above all, it does not seem to provide a suitable multilateral framework. In general though, Europeans continue to give – perhaps excessive – priority to stability over change.

Europeans also feel much more strongly that there can be no peace in the Middle East until the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is resolved. Even those who feel that it is not the key conflict, agreed that resolving it would take the excuse away from Arab countries, leaving one problem less. It was stated that a

Democratic government would raise pressure to solve the question. But it was also claimed that any negotiations would have to involve two very high-ranking people – someone with the prestige of James Baker for example – or recriminations would start. However, some expressed the concern that, in such an undertaking, the only role envisaged for the EU was a coordinated minor role under US leadership.

Iran and proliferation

In response to Iran's announcement in 2003 of its intentions to recommence development of nuclear power again, France, Germany and the UK (EU-3), with the support of the High Representative for CFSP, Javier Solana, undertook a diplomatic initiative to reach a negotiated agreement to ensure that this was not directed at a military nuclear capacity. These efforts led to the Paris agreement in November 2004, which offered trade and other concessions in exchange for a suspension of uranium enrichment activity.

Despite concern in the United States about Iran's intentions and Bush's threats to use force to dissuade Iran, the US government has acquiesced in letting the EU-3 deal with Iran. Nevertheless, clear differences in the approaches to the problem remain.

Iran seems to be one case in which European countries are speaking with one voice. The EU is against Iran developing nuclear power for military purposes, but unlike the United States, it is not categorically opposed to its development of nuclear power for civilian purposes – something which, in fact, is not prohibited by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to which Iran is a party. However, in order for Iran to be able to develop civilian nuclear power in a controlled environment, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) would have to be strengthened and a non-discriminatory control regime for uranium enrichment set up.

Europeans are concerned that the US could undertake military action against Iran, but the military option seems to be opposed by the State Dept. and the military

During the visit, European concerns that the US could undertake military action against Iran, further destabilising the Middle East area, were mollified by reassurances that the Administration is not in favour of regime change. The military option seems to be opposed by the State Dept. and the military (to some extent due to a scarcity of resources). Furthermore, Rice's successful strategy in Libya had shown that the strategy of changing the regime's ways, instead of changing the regime itself, can pay off.

Government officials reiterated that the Administration would like the US and Europe to go ahead in parallel. The US prefers a negotiated solution. It emerged that Iran is not close to being independent in developing a nuclear capability and gets

substantial help from the outside, meaning that the risk of an Iranian nuclear bomb is in any case not imminent. Officials stated, however, that that is precisely why the Administration is against an open fuel cycle and outside help.

The Administration's acquiescence in letting the EU-3 pursue negotiations with Iran was regarded as part of the 2nd Bush administration's policy shift. The change in the State Department, putting Robert Joseph instead of John Bolton in charge of non-proliferation, was also seen in this light and could allow the IAEA to play a greater role, in accordance with European strategy. Confirmation of Mohamed El-Baradei as the head of the IAEA, who had been opposed by the US, was also seen as positive.

The election on June 17 of the new Iranian president was not seen positively. A hard-liner, there was general agreement that he is going to be difficult to deal with. Most Americans expressed tremendous scepticism that the Europeans would be able to reach any negotiated settlement with him in power. It was commented that Iran was already

Americans are deeply skeptical of the possibility of coming to an agreement with Iran

challenging the EU-3, wanting to break the IAEA seals on conversion facilities and restart conversion and enrichment. It was generally thought that Iran would test the EU's resolve on this.

If negotiations were to fail, the EU had already announced that it would want to follow precise procedures: take the matter first to

the IAEA and only then to the UN Security Council. At the time it was felt that the EU 3 would try to solve the problem politically before going to the SC. US government officials pointed out that the IAEA statute says that violations *must* be reported to the SC, but reiterated that the US would support the EU-3's efforts. However, if there were any breach of the Paris agreement, they affirmed, the matter would have to be taken immediately to the Security Council. At that point, the EU would no longer set the agenda. Not only that, it would then be expected to take sides and help push through sanctions.

It was felt that there would be a fair amount of reluctance in the SC to impose coercive measures. It was also suggested that Iran may have some interest in not letting the

The prospect of N. Korea becoming a proliferator is a source of major concern for the United States

matter go too far because it is seeking greater integration and wants to avoid condemnation. One American underlined that one card that has not been played at all is to give Iran more security.

It was mentioned that Russia recently proposed to provide Iran with six new nuclear reactors plus the re-entry of spent fuel and that Pakistan recently brokered an agreement between Iran and India for the supply of gas. While the US is strongly opposed to

the latter, the Europeans felt that the infrastructure needed to support the deal could help to stabilise relations between India and Pakistan.

The North Korean nuclear issue was barely touched upon. It did emerge however that the Americans see this as a potential area for crisis in Asia, but that they are coming to the realisation that they may have to live with it. The only thing, it was felt, that could precipitate a crisis, was if the US found out that North Korea is proliferating/selling nuclear technology or material to other countries.

Russia

A check list of priorities for presidential action towards Russia approved at Bratislava was outlined:

- nuclear security cooperation
- defence relations
- counter-terrorism
- economics/energy
- Russia in the WTO
- social/cultural policy
- AIDS
- natural disasters, emergencies

The problem areas described were many: Russia's domestic economic and political developments; free media; the near abroad, including Ukraine, where developments have turned out to be less negative for Russia than expected; Uzbekistan, where, in spite of Russia's understandable desire for stability, its support for the president is not considered a recipe for stability in the long-term; and Belarus, where change is badly need, but there is concern about what could happen afterwards. Russia-China interaction is considered delicate, but not a problem – although there could be some concern about conflicts of interest.

The US strategy is to seek to integrate Russia into the international community. The US would like to use the G8 presidency to focus on these problems. While the government would like more change more quickly, in many cases it's not clear that Russian political elites share the same values as the West and this makes things more difficult.

It was put forward that the US stance towards Russia has not always been straightforward in NATO. An incident was quoted in which the US was accused of encouraging the Baltic countries to have a confrontational approach towards Russia. It was clarified that on that occasion the President's visit to the Baltic countries had actually been planned to facilitate good relations between them and Russia. The US is now pressing both sides for border treaties.

The Ukraine could act as a bridge between the EU and Russia

As concerns Kaliningrad – which, if left to itself will always be a hot spot – the US is expecting a positive future through economic development and integration so that borders will mean less. The US has proposed out-reach events for the Russian-speaking minorities to facilitate and advance integration, which the

Russian government has grudgingly accepted.

It was suggested that Russia is actually worried about being left out of the EU. But Europeans pointed out that, even without a specific Russia policy, the EU is pro-Russia, pro-Putin. It was Putin who changed his mind about Europe and has become more

Moscovian, less-Pietroburghian. Some claimed that this was due to some extent to the situation in the Ukraine. The challenge now is to get Putin back towards Europe and it was hypothesized that Ukraine could act as a bridge between the EU and Russia.

At the same time, it does not seem that Russia has become more accepting of the US presence on its borders. The declaration issued at the Astana, Kazakhstan, meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation on July 7, 2005, in which Russia and the SCO countries invite the US to set a deadline for the withdrawal of troops from their countries, was taken as an indication of this. It was suggested that this may be Russia's way of reciprocating for the forced reduction of its presence in Georgia. (Russia decided in late 2004/early 2005 to negotiate withdrawal from its two remaining military bases in Georgia.)

The evolution of the Russian military instrument was assessed as follows: it bottomed out in 1995-96, then slowly started to recover towards the end of the 1990s. There is now an improved military capability in Chechnya. Moral and discipline are better in the officer corps. Russia is changing the system of the draft. It was remarked that Russia has capabilities that NATO could find useful. Joint operations should be envisaged as an operational goal.

China

Another area in which US and European policies have conflicted recently is China. The EU has confirmed its intention to end the arms embargo on China but has agreed to postpone the final decision. It emerged that the United States and Europe see China in quite different ways. For the US, China is the only country considered a global rival able to challenge the US' role. It is a major issue, more neuralgic than Iran, and one that should not be underestimated. It was suggested that this US concern – someone described it as hysteria – may be accentuated by the fact that the US now feels that it is facing China alone, whereas there were more players in the past.

China is a major issue in the U.S. – more neuralgic than Iran – and one not to be underestimated

The US' biggest foreign policy challenge is how to manage China's transition to global power. The US would like to see it remain an economic power, but although Chinese emphasizes the role of multilateral institutions, the US fears that China could emerge as an aggressive competitor. For example, while outside specialists saw the Unical case as an economic issue, in the US it was considered a national security issue.

Many in Europe still see China as an inward-looking economic superpower

Furthermore, even though Chinese military expenditure does not seem to have increased much as a percentage of GDP in recent years, there have been qualitative improvements in Chinese weaponry which the US see as posing a challenge to it.

Thus China is seen as a long-term strategic question for the US and not only because the US has a commitment to Taiwan. China is also seen as challenging the US in various areas, for example, with its growing relations with Venezuela.

In Europe, on the other hand, China is still seen by many as an inward-looking economic superpower of little or no concern. Klaus Von Sperber (director of international armament affairs in the German defence minister) spoke for most European countries when he said that the idea of putting an end to the arms embargo was mainly a matter of employment. It was pointed out that the EU, as an entity, has no

clear policy towards China. For the moment, European leaders are unable to imagine what they want from China.

2nd Bush Administration

Finally, there was no consensus as to whether the second Bush Administration is pursuing a foreign policy that is substantially different from the first. Some people thought that things were changing, that ideology had run into a wall of reality. In his second term, President Bush brought in several new, more moderate people: Nicholas Burns as Undersecretary for Political Affairs, Bob Zoellick as Deputy Secretary of State, Steve Hadley as Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Rockwell Schnabel as US ambassador to EU, J.D. Crouch as Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy. His positions on the ICC resolution (on March 31, 2005, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1593 referring the Darfur situation to the ICC, thus recognising the Court's jurisdiction over cases referred to it by the Security Council), his visit to the EU and his decision to give more aid to Africa also seem proof of this.

To confirm this to some extent was also the nomination of the new Supreme Court Justice, John G. Roberts, Jr. While we were visiting Washington, Supreme Justice Sandra Day O'Connor resigned and there was conjecture as to who would take her place. At the time, the likeliest candidate seemed to be Alberto Gonzalez, strongly opposed by Democrats because of his stance on parts of the Geneva Conventions and torture. It was stated that if Bush nominated a more moderate figure, this could be taken as a sign of the weakening of the influence of Vice President Cheney – very conservative in recent years – and this is what happened. Nevertheless, it was pointed out by others that as long as some neocons are still considering military action in Iran – against the advice of the military – there can surely be no talk of a sea-

change. Furthermore, Bush's nomination of John Bolton to the United Nations could be taken to mean that he wants to continue his former policy on multilateral institutions.

It was underlined that there has not been an ideological shift, with the realists taking the upper hand over the neocons, there is just a more pragmatic attitude. This Administration is more intent on *Realpolitik*. The real change has been in the circumstances. The strong ideological component is still consistent, but not as apparent.

It was agreed that Bush is entering a difficult period. \$40 billion had just been spent on homeland safety, the reorganisation of intelligence is in progress, but the Administration is overstretched and domestic initiatives that were supposed to be funded (Aids, etc.) were coming up against budget concerns in Congress. The President's social security reform was under attack. On the Supreme Court nomination, the president was attacked from left and right. With the rise in oil prices, energy was already becoming a major concern.

It was pointed out that Bush's majority in Congress was beginning to erode – there seemed to be a growing split between Republicans. Besides the doubts about the ongoing situation in Iraq itself and the rising death toll, the visible domestic repercussions mentioned above were causing unease. It was suggested that Tom DeLay, the Republican whip in Congress, may also be to blame to some extent because of the

recent controversies in which he had been involved. It was stated that many Republicans are unhappy with his leadership but afraid to say so because he is an important fund-raiser. Therefore, there may be a Republican majority in both the House and the Senate, but they are not in lockstep behind the president.

The President's political capital with the American people seems to be shrinking more than is usual in the mid-term

It emerged that the president's political capital with the American people seemed to be shrinking more than usual in the mid-term. In this respect it was pointed out, however, that it is far more difficult to gain and maintain consensus now than it was in the past. In Reagan's time, for example, there were only three tv networks, no talk shows, no internet. Now there are 24-hour news programs. As a result, it is much harder to advance an agenda, harder to avoid confusion.

Concern was expressed that the checks and balances between the executive and Congress, as in Europe between the majority and the opposition, have been eroded since September 11. 9/11 has been used to pass legislation that curbs civil liberties, such as the Patriot Act, which would otherwise have come up against strong opposition. And now with the new Supreme Court nomination, that body is also pro-government.

Some claimed that it was merely a matter of the pendulum swinging back and forth – there have been times when the Democrats had full control. A balance, they said, will inevitably be re-established. In fact, they pointed out, there are people in Congress – even Republicans – who feel that some parts of the Patriot Act should be reviewed (it was noted, however, that with the London bombing, which occurred during our visit, they will have been silenced once again.) Others however agreed that there has indeed been a progressive weakening of the separation of powers, from the time of Ronald Reagan onwards: not only through the nomination of political seats on important bodies, but also through the departure of many bipartisan representatives in the two houses (e.g. Bob Dole, Bob Michael and Tom Foley in the Senate). Conversely, many of those who have come in more recently support their president rather than represent their local interests. The checks and balances of the past are no longer.