



Jean-Yves Haine

U.S. Elections: What Impact on the European Union's Policy?

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On 15 November 2004, the Institute organized a brainstorming among Europeans experts on the US elections and their consequences for Europe. The seminar was organised in three parts. In the first session, the focus was put on the US Presidential election and what it could tell us about the evolution of American society and policies. The second took a broader view, analysing deeper forces behind the victory of George W. Bush. Lastly, and most importantly, the third session analysed the European foreign policies vis-à-vis the United States. One of the main conclusions of the discussion was that the former divisions among Europeans over US leadership and policies had disappeared: there was a general scepticism and concern about the future US policy, including among scholars and officials from the new member states.

In the first session, there was a general consensus on the likely continuity of President Bush's second-term foreign policies. The general assumption was that US foreign policy would perhaps go through some stylistic changes but with no major reassessment or change in its overall direction. In view of the election results and, particularly, of their interpretation by the Administration, there is a compelling case that continuity is the most likely scenario. The personality of the President, the tone of the campaign stressing the war on terror, and its result giving a clear majority for the Administration, constitute unambiguous elements of a vindication of President Bush's policies. George W. Bush did not win simply on the moral issues dear to the religious right, but also on his ability to disconnect the "war on terror" and the Iraq conflict, and to make the "war on terror" an issue of character and determination in pursuing not only the issue of safety of US citizens but the reaffirmation of the main principles that define their identity. In this sense, the election was a referendum on leadership. As far as religion is concerned, it was also stressed during the discussions that the US does not have the same Muslim minority as in Europe. Half of this minority are African-American and only 1/8 are of Arab origin. This constitutes a major distinction from Europe where the constraints of geography and demography are largely different. Moreover, compared to the worldwide spread of religious fundamentalism, Europe appears today as an exception.

To this continuity, several caveats were, however, underlined.

First, shocks and contingencies could always transform foreign policy orientation. Before 11 September, the foreign policy agenda of the first Bush administration was rather modest and isolationist in tone. Another shock like 9/11 could have devastating effects on what is left of the transatlantic alliance, which could again be divided on the interpretation

of what is a legitimate use of force. International events, particularly concerning Iraq, rather than European preferences will determinate US foreign policies.

Second, the first area where the results of Bush's victory will be felt is domestic politics. With control of the House and the Senate, the GOP has achieved a clear victory. Yet, it was also reminded that the US electorate is still largely polarized. In order to consolidate its conservative agenda, the Bush administration may have to convince the other half of America. In a sense, the popularity of the Bush camp has peaked and it cannot grow further. Given the current economic imbalances, the unity of the Republican Party displayed during the campaign may rapidly vanish, especially in economic policy where fiscal responsibility may defeat initiatives like partial privatization of social security or permanent tax cuts.

Third, it was underlined that the new Bush Administration might take a more cautious and constructive approach to world problems. The 'second term' effect could lead to a fresh start, especially regarding the Middle East. In that sense, Bush, not having to stress his reputation for toughness, could indeed rebalance the militaristic approach with diplomatic initiatives, especially in the post-Arafat Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Yet the scale of such a change might be modest. There is no Gorbachev on the horizon and the neo-conservatives may feel emboldened by the election, and a new hubris could simply blind them to their past mistakes. Ideology had often been a powerful determinant of policy choices in the past four years. It led to what experts call cognitive closure, i.e. the inability to change or modify course when facing difficulties. Some participants stressed the fact that the ideology of spreading democracy would disappear in favour of a more pragmatic approach in the Middle East.

Fourth, the events in Iraq will continue to absorb the bulk of U.S. efforts in the region. The unfolding of events in Fallujah, and the spreading of violence elsewhere, seem to indicate that at least on the short term, the military option on the ground is likely to be the preferred tactic in order to permit the Iraqi election to go ahead as scheduled for 30 January 2005. In that respect, several speakers underlined the Vietnam-like dilemma: the more you act, the more you are likely to provoke opposition. If this is true, the opposition to the war may increase in the United States. This in turn might lead to a new burden-sharing policy whereby more Muslim countries would be called to take part in the stabilization process. In other words, a U-turn in doctrine is unlikely, but a shift in practice may occur.

The second session focused on deeper factors at play in the election. First, it was noticed that US power was still largely dominant but suffered from several weaknesses: a risk of becoming militarily overstretched if Iraq requires more involvement, a decreasing attractiveness around the world and an increasing economic interdependence. Second, the "imperial moment" seemed to be over. The neo-conservatives are not as powerful as they were before. The situation in Iraq is not getting better on the short term and if violence continues, the Vietnam shadow may come back sooner than later. It was remarked that the rise of a counter-culture in the 60's coincided with the increasing troubles in Vietnam. On the other hand, the heartland constituency of President Bush is not really interested in a democratic Iraq, and there could be some incentives to cut and run if casualties continue to increase. Consequently, it is likely that the US may try to reach out for more burden-shifting to and cooperation with Europe. It is thus up to Europe to offer a unified response. If not, the divide and rule strategy is likely to grow.

Third, conservative values (the 3 Gs, 'Guns, Gays and God') may have won the election. Values may seem to be increasingly different but Europe should not forget that it

also suffers from extremist political parties from the right and from a different form of populism, which includes a rejection of the electoral process, as the very low turnout in European elections has demonstrated. Moreover, the cosmopolitan America that still exists on the country's two shores may reassert itself. There is, however, a crucial difference between values and world-views. The essence of US foreign policy is a Wilsonian philosophy that has received several applications throughout US history. The first was isolationist; the second was a soft emphasis on human rights and independence of nations as framed in the Wilson's original 14 points; the third was a more aggressive way of imposing democracy that existed already with Theodore Roosevelt at the end of the 19th century and which is the prevalent model in today's Administration. This model contrasts heavily with the European model as stated in the Solana document. In that respect, the embedded liberalism that was at the core of NATO consensus is no more. Briefly put, in Europe there is too much emphasis in ethics and not enough on actions. In the US, it is currently the other way around. As was stated in the seminar, "the Europeans understand the world better but they don't know what they want, while the US does not understand the world but has no doubt about what to do".

Lastly, regarding America's future partners, China will increasingly become the highest priority for the US. As far as Russia is concerned, it seems clear that Putin has adopted a common stance with Washington on terrorism as a way of advancing Russia's own interests in its neighbourhood. Yet the prospects of a privileged partnership with Moscow are relatively slim. It was noted that some of the neo-cons were actually reluctant to engage with Russia beyond a tactical rapprochement over terrorism. In the same vein, Condoleeza Rice, who was educated as a Soviet expert, has so far not displayed deep Russian affinities.

Several conclusions for Europe were drawn.

First, the new Bush administration is likely to continue its cherry-picking policy of ad hoc coalitions. It was suggested that in some circles closely associated to the Bush administration, the very idea of European unity is already perceived as a counter-balancing tactic against America.¹ It is up to Europe to present a more coherent and unified view and attitude vis-à-vis the United States if the Union wants to counter this strategy. With the end of the Cold War, Europe is important to the US neither as an arena nor as an actor. Americans tend to see in Europe a collection of weak and ineffective states that are neither willing to follow obediently nor able to help effectively. The negative image of Europe, first displayed at the Republican Convention, is likely to continue inside the Administration. Three scenarios were mentioned. One is that the US will continue to see the European Union as irrelevant in world affairs. Second, there could be a more assertive divide and rule strategy, especially if the idea of Europe as a counterbalance to the US becomes more popular. Third, even if the EU is accepted as an international actor, the US will try to change it the way Washington likes it most. The current emphasis on Turkey's membership is an illustration of that effort.

Second, the transatlantic business space remains the most important in the world, and its growth accelerated dramatically in the last decade. It generates roughly \$2.5 trillion in commercial sales a year and employs over 12 million people in jobs funded by Americans in Europe and Europeans in the U.S. Despite cultural divergences, nobody has

¹ On that matter, the Heritage foundation has recently published a study on the reasons why the Bush administration should oppose a united Europe. It is the logical follow-up to a paper written in August 2003, by John C. Hulsman, Cherry-Picking: Preventing the Emergence of a Permanent Franco-German-Russian Alliance, Heritage Foundation.

an interest in starting a trade war. But the question remains: could mutual economic interests become the guardian of a transatlantic community divided on geopolitics? Can economics offer the same glue as the Soviet threat? Here the prospects are not exceedingly optimistic. Budget deficits and the exchange rate between the Euro and the dollar are likely to raise difficulties. Many participants believed that economic tensions would increase in the next four years.

Third, there was a consensus about the need for Europe to be more proactive. The transatlantic relationship must continue where there is agreement, as in the Balkans. On the other hand, cooperation will remain difficult if there is no consensus on the use of force. Precisely because NATO went global, agreements about world order, and not only regarding a specific threat or a particular crisis, are a necessary precondition for the functioning of the Alliance. So far, this condition has not been met. Some participants also stressed that the nature of the transatlantic relationship has changed: since the survival of Europe is no longer at its core, US and Europe are not bound anymore together on all issues. Common interests rather than common values will thus drive the Atlantic relationship.

The last session was dedicated to the European side of the transatlantic coin. First, Angelika Beer, Member of the European Parliament, recognized that Europe is not an actor for the United States. The current trend is that Washington proposed and then the EU reacts. This is not a healthy situation. There is however one area where the Union has been actively involved, i.e. Iran. So far, European initiatives have not received US support. In that respect, Iran will on the short term become the litmus test of transatlantic cooperation. Gunnar Wiegand from the Commission stressed the positive aspects of the current transatlantic relationship. For him, there is a new willingness in Washington to work more constructively with Europe. Because the US runs the risk of being militarily overstretched and economically dependent, it has a strong interest in a close economic relationship with Brussels. In terrorism, he stresses that the Homeland Defence Department is ready and willing to work with the Union. The US will listen to Europe if the Union has a united position. In that respect, the Middle East Peace Process must be put back on track and a unified position must be implemented regarding the Wider Middle East initiative that will remain a priority for the US administration. Peter van Ham from the Clingendael Institute offered six balanced scenarios. The first sees a more proactive and united Europe, which could run the risks of antagonizing further the US. The second is a bottom-up approach to restore cooperation through common engagement on the ground. Yet in that respect Europe has few military capabilities and will remain largely absent of the decision-making process. The third is the good cop/bad cop scenario whereby a division of labour takes place between soft/hard power. Yet, as the case of Iran demonstrates, common agreement between the two approaches is difficult. Fourth, European obstruction to US action increases in order to gain concessions. The past has showed, however, that the US administration has been ready to act alone. Fifth, new commitments are given to NATO from both sides where strategic interests are discussed in a more balanced way. This implies a European caucus in NATO, a perspective that is not welcomed by Washington. Sixth, the European Union invests in its own model. But this requires a more active Europe in Africa and a commitment to Turkey's membership. Neither prospect, however, is currently favoured by public opinion in Europe. Lastly, Christiane Höhn, from the General Secretariat of the Council, stressed the 'first 100 days' factor whereby common opportunities should be seized, especially in the Middle East. She also argued that the Union has to communicate more and better with Washington. A

special US envoy to Brussels should match the EU representation in Washington. Most importantly, the Union must deliver on its own commitments. In foreign policy, the Union cannot wait for the ratification of the Constitution. For now, the relationship must be based on strategic interests rather than love-hate feelings towards America that divide rather than unite Europe.

In the debate, several initiatives were discussed.

The fact that the US needs more help from the EU could be a good starting point for a more constructive transatlantic partnership. The EU must be pragmatic and seek to improve cooperation where it is possible rather than to aim at a global understanding.

- First, on short-term foreign policy initiatives, it was recognized that the Palestine issue offers the best chance for a more constructive approach between Brussels and Washington. It is better to propose on questions where Europeans can deliver than to wait for US demands in areas where the EU cannot deliver. If the EU is going to help the Palestinians, the EU must sell its contribution to Washington.
- Second, a more proactive initiative regarding the status of Kosovo would be welcome in Washington. Yet this may cause troubles with Moscow. Here, it was noticed that a more constructive relationship with Russia could only benefit the Union.
- Third, a transatlantic discussion on the use of force is urgent. Without an agreement on that crucial issue, NATO will remain severely limited in its actions. This could be part of a larger discussion regarding UN reforms that will be launched next December.
- Fourth, the current NAC-COPS forum is not working. What is needed is a US-EU institution to discuss strategic interests. Although this may cause difficulties with Washington, the current lack of dialogue cannot continue.
- Fifth, the Union should be more active in engaging US public opinion and US transnational actors and organisations, like academic centers and universities. The increasing disinterest in European affairs among US universities is a worrying trend. An Erasmus Programme for the transatlantic area was explicitly mentioned. A more efficient public diplomacy from the Union is thus required beyond official contacts in Washington. This cooperation could also involve some states in the US that might be interested in implementing Kyoto or willing to sign environmental agreements with the EU for business and trade purposes.

List of Participants

- Judy **BATT**, Research Fellow, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris
- Angelika **BEER**, Member of the European Parliament, Brussels
- Sylvie **BERMANN**, Ambassadeur, Représentant Permanent de la France auprès du COPS, Représentation Permanente de la France auprès de l'UE, Bruxelles
- Henrik **BREITENBAUCH**, Research Assistant, Danish Institute for International Studies, Copenhagen
- Luc **CARBONEZ**, Directeur, Sécurité européenne, Ministère des Affaires étrangères, du Commerce extérieur et de la Coopération au Développement, Bruxelles
- Christopher **COKER**, Professor, Department of International Relations, London School of Economics and Political Science, London
- Marta **DASSÚ**, Director General, International Programmes, Editor Aspenia, Aspen Institute Italia, Rome
- Steven **EVERTS**, Senior Research Fellow, Centre for European Reform, London
- Ireneusz **FIDOS**, Counsellor, Transatlantic Relations, Permanent Representation of Poland to the EU, Brussels
- Nicole **GNESOTTO**, Directeur, Institut d'Etudes de Sécurité de l'Union européenne, Paris
- Borut **GRGIC**, Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council, Washington - Director, Institute for Strategic Studies, Ljubljana
- István **GYARMATI**, Ambassador, Chairman, Centre for Euro-Atlantic Integration & Democracy & Senior Advisor, Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), Budapest
- Jean-Yves **HAINE**, Senior Research Fellow, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris
- Pierre **HASSNER**, Directeur des Recherches émérite, Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales (CERI), Paris
- Christiane **HÖHN**, Administrateur, Relations transatlantiques, Secrétariat général du Conseil de l'Union européenne, Bruxelles
- Tõnis **IDARAND**, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Estonia to the PSC, Permanent Representation of the Republic of Estonia to the EU, Brussels
- Beata **KOLECKA**, Deputy Director, EU Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Correspondent, Warsaw

- Natalie **LA BALME**, Program Officer, The German Marshall Fund of the United States – Paris Office
- Dov **LYNCH**, Senior Research Fellow, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris
- Victor **MAUER**, Deputy Director, Center for Security Studies, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich
- Antonio **MISSIROLI**, Senior Research Fellow, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris
- Martin **ORTEGA**, Senior Research Fellow, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris
- Andrés **ORTEGA KLEIN**, *El Pais*, Madrid
- Olaf **OSICA**, Researcher, Department for Social and Political Sciences, European University Institute, San Domenico di Fiesole (Italy)
- José Júlio **PEREIRA GOMES**, Ambassadeur, Représentant permanent du Portugal auprès du COPS, Représentation permanente du Portugal auprès de l'UE, Bruxelles
- Anna **PETRÁŠOVĀ**, Third Secretary, Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU, Brussels
- Walter **POSCH**, Research Fellow, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris
- Federico **ROMERO**, Professor of US History, Dipartimento studi storici e geografici, Università di Firenze
- Alexander **RONDOS**, Former Ambassador, Athens
- Adam Daniel **ROTFELD**, Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Warsaw
- Stefano **SILVESTRI**, President, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome
- Burkard **SCHMITT**, Assistant Director, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris
- Bruno **TERTRAIS**, Senior Research Fellow, Fondation pour la Recherche stratégique (FRS), Paris
- Zoltán **VARGA**, Conseiller, Représentation permanente de la Hongrie auprès de l'Union européenne, Bruxelles
- Peter **VAN HAM**, Deputy Head of Studies, The Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Clingendael
- Gediminas **VARVUOLIS**, Head, Threat Analysis, Crisis Management and Operations Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vilnius
- Daniel **VERNET**, Directeur des Relations internationales, *Le Monde*, Paris

- Veronika **WAND-DANIELSSON**, Minister, Permanent Representation of Sweden to the EU, Brussels
- Gunnar **WIEGAND**, Head of Unit for Relations with the US & Canada - DG RELEX - European Commission, Brussels
- Dirk **WOUTERS**, Ambassadeur, Représentant Permanent de la Belgique auprès du COPS, Représentation permanente de la Belgique auprès de l'UE, Bruxelles
- Marcin **ZABOROWSKI**, Research Fellow, Centre for International Relations, Warsaw

OBSERVERS

- Alessandra **HEINEMANN**, Intern/Visiting Fellow, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris
- Fredrik **LINDHE**, Intern, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris

ANALYSE

Les choix diplomatiques de Mr Bush et Mrs Rice

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Après la réélection de George W. Bush, les alliés comme les adversaires des Etats-Unis guettaient les premières nominations du président pour tenter de déchiffrer ses intentions en politique étrangère. Avec cette interrogation récurrente : poursuivrait-il dans la veine unilatéraliste, voire impériale, de ses premières années ou reviendrait-il à une approche plus traditionnellement "réaliste", suivant en cela la règle qui veut qu'un second mandat ne ressemble pas au premier ?

La nomination de Condoleezza Rice comme secrétaire d'Etat à la place de Colin Powell constitue certes une première indication, mais elle n'écarte pas toutes les ambiguïtés. Car c'est d'abord sa plus proche conseillère en politique étrangère, celle qui l'a initié aux arcanes des relations internationales à l'aube de sa première candidature, que George W. Bush a choisie pour diriger la diplomatie américaine. Pas la représentante de telle ou telle tendance. Il serait d'ailleurs bien difficile de rattacher Condoleezza Rice à l'une ou l'autre école de politique extérieure, si tant est que ces catégories aient une pertinence pratique. Universitaire, elle s'est spécialisée dans le monde communiste et plus particulièrement l'URSS. A ce titre, elle a une connaissance approfondie du phénomène totalitaire, qu'elle peut avoir tendance à transférer sur le fondamentalisme islamique. Comme le font volontiers les néoconservateurs, mais aussi les libéraux antitotalitaires.

Seulement, elle a fait ses classes politiques au Conseil national de sécurité du temps de George Bush père, dans l'ombre du général Bernt Scowcroft, un proche d'Henry Kissinger et un adepte de la ligne "réaliste". Pendant la campagne de 2000, alors qu'elle était chargée, avec d'autres, de proposer au candidat Bush une politique étrangère en rupture avec la période Clinton, elle a poursuivi dans ce registre. Contre les aventures militaires extérieures quand la sécurité des Etats-Unis n'est pas directement en jeu, contre le *nation building*, cette aide à la création de la démocratie dans les Etats défaillants, contre l'utilisation des soldats américains dans des missions de maintien de la paix...

Elle reconnaît cependant que la fréquentation de George W. Bush l'a transformée. Les convictions morales du président l'ont entraînée plus qu'elle-même n'a influencé ses décisions. Les attentats du 11-Septembre aidant, elle est devenue plus idéologue, convaincue que le changement de régime en Irak serait le point de départ de la démocratisation du Moyen-Orient comme la démocratisation de l'Allemagne après 1945 avait été le point de départ des changements en Europe. Sa première préoccupation n'était pas alors le conflit israélo-palestinien que, devant un interlocuteur européen, elle qualifiait de *"mythe utilisé par les dirigeants arabes pour refuser de faire des réformes"*.

Est-ce à dire que la suite est écrite et que les Européens, après avoir dû abandonner l'espoir Kerry, doivent écarter l'illusion d'une conversion de l'administration Bush à un multilatéralisme tempéré ? Ce n'est pas si simple. Deux séminaires, organisés à quelques jours d'intervalle par la branche italienne de l'Institut Aspen et par l'Institut d'études de sécurité de l'Union européenne, ont été consacrés à l'impact des élections américaines sur l'Europe. La question de la continuité ou du changement dans la politique étrangère américaine a fait l'objet de discussions approfondies et contrastées, qui n'ont pas permis de trancher clairement dans un sens ou dans l'autre.

Les arguments plaidant en faveur de la continuité, voire d'un durcissement de la politique suivie depuis 2001, sont connus. Fort de sa large victoire, George W. Bush estime avoir reçu un *"mandat"* de ses concitoyens pour mettre en œuvre ses idées, à l'extérieur comme à l'intérieur. Il n'est certes pas un idéologue, a fortiori un intellectuel, mais il professe quelques certitudes morales et religieuses qui dictent son action. Le "traumatisme originel" représenté par les attentats du 11-Septembre est loin d'avoir disparu chez les Américains, et c'est bien en chef de guerre, décidé à porter le fer chez l'ennemi, que ce président a été réélu. Enfin le mélange des sentiments de vulnérabilité et de toute-puissance (pas seulement militaire) pousse les Etats-Unis à compter sur leurs propres forces, à se méfier des organisations internationales et à rejeter toute forme de multilatéralisme, qui les amènerait, craignent-ils, à rendre leur sécurité dépendante des décisions d'autrui.

Ce n'est toutefois qu'un aspect de la réalité. Les difficultés rencontrées en Irak, beaucoup plus dures que ne l'avaient pensé les stratèges en chambre du Pentagone, ont déjà poussé George W. Bush à se retourner vers les Nations unies, à compter sur l'OTAN qui, il n'y a pas si longtemps, lui apparaissait plus comme un handicap que comme un atout, voire à en appeler à ses alliés traditionnels, même à ceux qui, à l'instar de la France et de l'Allemagne, s'étaient opposés à la guerre en Irak. Pour la tenue des élections en Irak comme pour un semblant de reconstruction du pays, les Américains ont besoin de l'appui de la communauté internationale, c'est-à-dire essentiellement de l'Europe. De même ont-ils besoin d'elle s'ils sont sérieux dans leur désir de relancer le processus de règlement du conflit israélo-palestinien après la mort de Yasser Arafat. Et ils ne peuvent négliger sa contribution à la lutte contre la prolifération nucléaire, dans le cas de l'Iran par exemple. Sans doute se méfient-ils des efforts de médiation de la France, de l'Allemagne et de la Grande-Bretagne avec Téhéran, mais ont-ils une politique de rechange ?

Les contraintes ne sont pas seulement extérieures. Les déficits cumulés du budget et de la balance des paiements montrent les limites des capacités financières des Etats-Unis comme l'incapacité de l'armée américaine à maîtriser les insurgés irakiens montre les limites de la puissance militaire, en tout cas l'inadéquation de cette (hyper) puissance à une guerre de guérilla.

Ces derniers arguments vont dans le sens d'une inflexion de la diplomatie américaine en faveur d'un rapprochement avec les alliés, notamment avec les Européens. Non pas qu'il faille compter avec un changement radical de la doctrine ou des principes fondamentaux qui guident George W. Bush depuis septembre 2001. Mais la mise en œuvre pourrait être plus souple. Le président américain passerait d'un unilatéralisme triomphant à un multilatéralisme directif. Il ne dicterait plus leur conduite à ses alliés, mais se donnerait la peine de les convaincre de le suivre. Afin d'aboutir à un véritable partage du fardeau, excluant évidemment tout partage des responsabilités.

C'est un défi auquel l'Europe est en principe habituée. Il n'est pas sûr qu'elle soit prête à sortir de l'alternative abstention ou soumission.

Daniel Vernet

La discreta fusión de la 'nueva Europa'

ANDRÉS ORTEGA

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Lo que Rumsfeld llamara la *nueva Europa*, en contraposición a la franco-alemana, se está fundiendo a medida que sus integrantes aprenden la vida en común y se percatan de los problemas de la guerra de Irak, de la que sólo han sacado desilusión. La presencia de tropas polacas en Irak, y la propia guerra, se han vuelto abrumadoramente impopulares en Polonia o en el corazón de la Administración húngara. La retirada militar de Irak o de Afganistán, o al menos una reducción drástica de los efectivos de estos países, incluida de la muy americana Holanda, está a la orden del día. Los nuevos miembros de la UE ven crecer su temor ante una Rusia que, con Putin, está recuperando su carácter imperial, y frente a la cual ven ahora útil y necesaria no sólo esta OTAN que se ha vuelto global, sino la propia integración europea. Pero también la *vieja Europa* está cambiando. Para llegar a una unión más estrecha queda mucho, pero los 25 están menos desunidos que hace un año, aunque con cierta tristeza. De ahí la importancia de no *pinchar* en la ratificación de la Constitución europea (sin la cual no tomarán a Europa en serio en Washington).

Dicho esto, tras la reelección de Bush, hay ganas de tender puentes hacia Washington, pero no pueden ser de dirección única. También Bush deberá hacer algo más que gestos. Las etapas y los mensajes de su anunciado viaje a Europa en febrero serán significativos. Los europeos quieren hacer algo para compartir la carga de Irak. Hoy se reúne la Conferencia de Donantes. Es más fácil perdonar deudas que nunca se van a cobrar y dar dinero que aportar esfuerzos. Tras las elecciones del 30 de enero -si llegan a celebrarse- se verá si la resistencia armada y el terrorismo en Irak son algo endémico o estructural. Y las respuestas irán en consonancia. Ideas hay muchas. El problema principal sigue siendo que si se envía ayuda allí o cerca -para formar jueces, policías u otros- hay que protegerlos, lo que implicaría mandar tropas, lo que parece descartado pese a que lo pueda pedir Bush-2. Es decir, que a los europeos les gustaría poder hacer algo, pero no saben muy bien qué ni cómo. Les gustaría hacer algo *blando* sin tener que hacer nada *duro* (militar). **Una reciente conferencia organizada en París por el Instituto de Estudios de Seguridad de la UE sólo entre expertos europeos, huérfanos, dejó estas dudas bastante a las claras.** Tampoco quieren todos los europeos ver involucrarse cada vez más a la OTAN en Irak por la puerta trasera.

Una vez más, Europa está financiando esta guerra, y otros desajustes de la economía de EE UU, a través de la sobrevaloración del euro respecto al dólar, una cuestión que puede llegar a ser tormentosa. Pero hoy nadie quiere agitar las aguas, aunque Chirac se mantiene en sus críticas sobre la guerra de Irak y en su visión de un mundo más peligroso por este conflicto. No le falta razón. Servicios europeos de inteligencia, citados por el *Financial Times*, han detectado ya la ida y venida entre la UE e Irak de radicales islamistas que han logrado allí experiencia militar. Se confirma así el temor a ver aquel conflicto convertido en nueva escuela de terrorismo.

La salida de Powell no ha agradado, pero tampoco sorprendido, a los europeos. Lo más importante es si el mayor responsable de todo el desastre de Irak, Donald Rumsfeld y su equipo neoconservador, seguirá o no, y, por tanto, si los políticos (no los militares) del Pentágono seguirán fijando la agenda exterior de EE UU. Si Rumsfeld sigue, incluso con Rice en el Departamento de Estado, la diplomacia no recuperará su debido peso. Con Rice, varios Gobiernos europeos piensan que tendrán acceso a la Casa Blanca. Será lo inverso, pero al menos representará la voz del presidente. Pues no se sabía bien qué representaba Powell.