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The US: Unique or Open to Everyone

The Choice between George W. Bush and John Kerry is a choice between to global ideas. It will be crucial for the EU opportunity to fulfil its historic peace project. The Feature Writer is Master in Political Science.

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The American Presidential Election stands between President George W. Bush and the Democrat, Senator John Kerry, which won the largest support among the Democrat Delegates on the so-called Super Tuesday in March. As president for the world's most powerful nation, Bush or Kerry in the White House will have great influence on the rest of the world and not least on Europe. In America there is a tradition for the president to draw the foreign policy and therefore the outcome of the presidential election is not unimportant to the outside world. There is a large difference between the foreign policy that Bush and Kerry put forward and especially in relation to Europe on security matters, which is high at the political agenda not least after the latest terror attacks and the disturbances in Iraq.

Bush and Kerry are not just presidential candidates; they are representatives for either side of a historic battle. A battle between Democrats and Republicans about drawing the dominant understanding of what it means to be 'American'. The understandings builds upon the same founding ideas about 'America', but some ideas have more weight to the Republicans than to the Democrats and vice versa.

It is the difference in the ideas given attention that makes a Democrat and a Republican follow different foreign policies. Democrats and Republicans are fundamentally parted in their views on: who 'America' is, what 'America' stands for and how 'America' should play its role in relation to the outside world. Simply said, two American minds exist or an American dual-mind.

Democrats as Bill Clinton for example perceives in larger amount than the Republicans 'America' as the community that is 'open to everyone'. 'America' is build by immigrants from all corners of the world and is in contrast to a more homogenous society as the Danish one in larger amounts multicultural. Single groups are not excluded on the grounds of their ethnic origin, but gathers around a common set of values as democracy, human rights and a country ruled by law. That is why the Democrats views 'America' as the modern nation. A nation, who represents 'progress' and should play the role as a moral responsible friend, who unites the world. 'America' should show the way to others and as the peaceful nation 'help' others toward a better place.

Republicans as George W. Bush in contrast to the Democrats perceives 'America' more as the 'unique nation' in relation to others. 'America' is the 'land of opportunity' created by the settlers as the different and better alternative to the world from which they fled. It is different because 'America' is built on values, which by principle could be applied to everyone. Therefore in the eyes of the Republicans 'America' represents a special and almost divine 'destiny', as 'America' is unique. In America you are free, independent and have the opportunity to be the master of your own destiny. This idea is historical inherited as a contradiction to especially the old Europe, which was dominated by a tyrannical and suppressing upper class.

To the Republicans 'America' needs to be protected as the unique nation, that others should try to be like. If 'America' does not follow the almost divine and chosen leading role, it could be spoiled by the evilness of others from outside. Therefore 'America' as a world leader, in the eyes of the Republicans, is more characterised by 'dominance' that makes it possible to secure Americans from others.

The American dual mind makes the crucial difference in the foreign policy directions of Bush and Kerry. Bush wants to split the world in two: the 'good' ones against the 'bad' ones. He meets the world with the perception of 'America' as unique. On the contrary, Kerry wants to unite the world. He meets others with the perception of the world society as something that does not exclude, but is 'open to everyone'.

Bush excludes states from co-operations, if they do not share the American points of views. This could among others be experienced in connection with the Iraq War. Here the Bush Administration excluded traditional close allies from influence. Bush much more sees coalitions as temporary. They are easily dissolved, when they have done the job to protect 'America'. Coalitions could corrupt the nation as unique, especially if the coalitions are permanent.

To Bush, coalitions do not contribute, but on the contrary corrode the American power and strength by not being used in line with American desires. That is why Bush as president does not put the destiny of 'America' in the hands of organisations like the UN and NATO. The world is split between those, who is included in a temporary cooperation 'with America' and those, who is excluded – 'against America'. Bush has put forward his foreign policy as "an America that leads the world, with strength and confidence".

This is exactly the policy, which not surprisingly has made Kerry to express, that Bush has "pursued the most arrogant, inept, reckless and ideological foreign policy in modern history". To Kerry the world society is 'open to everyone'. That is why he will not 'exclude' others from co-operations, but 'include'. To a larger extend he wants to strengthen the collective security and an international community. Coalitions in his foreign policy is broader, more open and at the same time more enduring. International organisations will be able to get new vitality and Kerry could be expected to restore some of the mistrust, Bush has created in relations to several countries.

Kerry at some point will return to the foreign policy of Bill Clinton that was based on cooperation. Bush as early as the presidential campaign in 2000 criticised Clinton for the building of alliances, which did not serve American interest. This continued permanent cooperation with the Europeans in NATO and the existence of American troops in Europe has long been uncertain. There is a good reason to expect, that Bush have plans to move American bases from several European countries. This does not mean that Kerry will let American bases stand, but he will consult the Europeans as members of a community.

Kerry's policy is more patient, when it comes to diplomacy. To Bush diplomacy and long lasting dialog is tantamount to being irresolute and it weakens 'America' as unique. With Kerry as president 'America' will, as Bush says, be "an America that is uncertain in the face of danger".

Bush's 'America' as unique makes his foreign policy confronting. He meets the world with the perception: that the American model is chosen by God, it is destiny. That is why others must submit themselves to America. Kerry's 'America' on the contrary is 'open to everyone', which makes his policy consulting. He meets the world, with the perception that the American progress can be exported – America can make the world a better place.

Kerry wants to create a better world through the export of the fundamental American values as human rights, rule by law and open markets. Bush on the opposite has less confidence in global progress.

Bush perception of 'America' as unique makes the American model the 'good' one opposite others tyrannical and 'evil' models. America must free and protect not only others, but first and foremost Americans from others 'evilness'. Other states cannot be as 'good' and modern as America.

Bush's policy is therefore based on fear. A fear, that 'today's friends' will become 'tomorrows enemies'. Therefore America must secure its own freedom from others possible 'evilness'.

This more confronting policy has among others been expressed in the 'axis of evil' concept. Here the 'good' ones are the states, which are 'with' America – as for example Denmark today. The 'evil' ones are those, who are 'against' America – as for example Iran and North Korea.

The 'evil' must be fought for example through pre-emptive attacks as was the reason for the American invasion of Iraq or through exclusion of those, who takes the 'wrong' not-American point of views on security matters.

Kerry's policy is consulting in contrast to the confrontational line of Bush. It is through an open international society that the American model can be exported. Therefore, the two American constructions like the UN and NATO that is founded on American values are important tools in modernising the world.

Bush's unique 'America' makes the American leadership role something, which by all means must be preserved not only tomorrow, but also in the far future. The leadership role is essential to protecting America against 'evil'. Kerry's open 'America' makes on the other hand the leadership role a tool, which can help others toward a better place. Here the power can be shared along with progress through international cooperation.

Bush rather goes it alone than compromise. He has allies or 'friends' as long as they share the American point of views – if they don't, they are 'enemies' and must be fought. Important decisions cannot be left to international organisations, which want to minimise American power. The Bush Administration precisely criticised Bill Clinton for selling out of American power by only seeing 'partners' and no 'enemies'. Bush also in his first months in office was quick to change American 'partnership' with China to 'strategic competition'.

Kerry will in his policy cooperate in international communities, as they are based on openness and the belief in progress. He speaks of creating a hole new 'area of alliances' and like Clinton he wants to see 'partners' rather that 'enemies'. The drive in his foreign policy is progress and the idea of creating a better world in opposition to Bush's fear and war on 'evil'. If Bush is re-elected as President, it has different consequences for Europe, than if Kerry is elected.

Bush as President is less lucky for Europe. He fears a strong and united Europe. This is the fear of a European evil, which will corrupt the unique 'America'. Europe cannot be modernised to the full extend as America. Kerry as president is better for Europe. Through his idea of 'openness' and 'progress' – in a new era of alliances – Europe can be united and strengthened. Maybe Kerry could even stop the EU from building new walls in Europe and thereby from destroying the historic peace project.

Bush will fight a European evil. Especially the EU could in the near future become a threat to America. Europe is, in the eyes of Bush, not free from the ways of doing things in the past and represents to some extent 'the old Europe' – especially France and Germany. It is only an American destiny to be unique. That is why it is not in the interest of Bush to cooperate on a common basis with a united EU, only if it is an arena where to meet and an insignificant club for discussions. He will play the Europeans against each other. This, we just saw in connection with the Iraq war. Here Bush formed the so-called 'coalition of the willing' – a temporary alliance that split Europe in two camps.

A strong united and common defence in Europe will on the long-term be a combatant and possible future 'enemy' of Bush's 'America'.

Therefore a Europe like this must be split and weakened, so that America will preserve its leadership role. European military forces and money contributions are received with pleasure, to be used freely as an American toolbox, submitted to American leadership. This will financially relieve America and save the lives of American soldiers and by this secure American global leadership years ahead.

Kerry will not in the same manner fear the EU like Bush. EU is rather a friend also in a far future. Kerry needs a strong Europe, who together with America can make the world a better place. In spite of that, he will have concerns about the EU building new walls between 'an inside EU' and 'an outside EU'.

This is caused by the idea about being 'open to everyone' – to create a new 'era of alliances'. Kerry will stop the EU from spoiling the European peace project, which the EU once was put into the world to solve.

Essential to this project are Turkey. Turkey as a Muslim country in the EU proves, that the EU really is 'open' and not just an exclusive Christian club. This is why, the EU also from Kerry, will be confronted on this issue, if not the idea about 'openness to everyone' is followed.

He will limit the self-determination of the EU on defence and security matters. Likely, by putting pressure on the EU to work submitted to American leadership in NATO – already carried out by the Clinton Administration – and thereby American control and leadership. This will complete an all-embracing security community for every European country in Europe.

Denmark takes great advantage by Bush in office, as a nation who is 'with America'. Crumbs fall on Denmark and we are closer to security decisions and economically gains together with the superpower. Denmark rises above its role as a small and weak European power that disappears in the power struggles between the great European powers France, Germany and Great Britain.

But when America, Denmark and single other EU member states walks hand in hand, it paralyses the EU to take actions and splits Europe on vital security matters – a familiar problem within the EU community.

This is the never-ending problem by which Europe must struggle, where states follows short-term interest and splits Europe apart. The history and future of Denmark and the rest of the European states will always at best be formed in a European context.

It does not strengthen the EU, that single member states go its own ways. A strong EU takes long-term efforts. Now we will only have to wait for the next time a group of states wants to break from the common historic peace project in Europe, which may never be completed in the ballet following changing American administrations.

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