

e or the US? Britain must choose

possessed chemical and nuclear weapons, and an active programme of weapons.

Weapons were not a great issue in the Iran-Iraq war, although Iraq was against passive civilian Iraq.

It tried to develop nuclear weapons in the Gulf war, presumably for prestige, and for prestige and non-suicidal scenario was not for offensive use, by Iraq; and Iraq's leadership did stupid things it had a self-destructive tendency:

Automatically led intelligence to believe that Iraq was a threat if war in 1991 to think that Iraq was a threat and inspections, Saddam was a deterrent weapon. That Iraq was a threat seemed unlikely. But intelligence finding.

That prevailed in Western Europe, contributed to their 'vision' of one another, as marked. Chirac has been in Iraq to take a disabused if not Iraq he is told.

Damage of this affair for the Service and the CIA is that between the two is an old chieftain modern American remained ever since in a 'dependency' relationship with the 'cousins'.

He carefully managed visit to Iraq, as President Roosevelt's New York lawyer William

J 'Wild Bill' Donovan, British intelligence fostered and educated the US intelligence and political warfare organisation that Donovan, on Roosevelt's orders, established in 1941.

SIS showed its new cousins some of its secrets and trained American recruits to the American OSS. It reached an agreement on dividing the world for secret intelligence

Europeans assume that if Bush is given a new mandate, international affairs will continue to be dominated by an American government with unilateralist, pre-emptive and politically utopian policies. They conclude that events will deepen existing tension and divisions between the US and Europe, and that the argument that puts forward the shared values of Americans and Europeans would no longer be convincing

operations, excluding the Americans from most secret intelligence work in Europe and establishing strict rules of protocol.

The cold war, American money and muscle — and the Cambridge spies plus George Blake — changed this, making the SIS increasingly a subcontractor to the CIA. It nonetheless remained the only friendly global intelligence network, and brains sometimes trumped money and brute force.

At some point, probably recent, probably as a consequence of the shift in American policy after 9/11 and the decision of Tony Blair to back to the hilt George W Bush's ill-defined and open-ended 'war on terror', the intelligence relationship took a disastrous tip.

Each side began to reinforce the other's mistakes, and to feed one another's needs to supply intelligence findings that reinforced the preconceptions and rationalised the actions of a Prime Minister and a President who had already decided to go to war.

The findings that were supplied have since been blown up in their faces, to their considerable

political disadvantage.

There had been, in fact if not intention, a collaborative intelligence corruption. Had the London-Washington intelligence intimacy been less, the scramble to please would not have enjoyed transatlantic reinforcement; the dissenters in the two agencies would have been less easily dismissed, and the final output closer to the truth. Many now dead might be alive, and much misery avoided.

The Senate Committee report findings have made it possible for Bush to say he went wrong only because he believed what the CIA told him. Now George Tenet is gone, CIA reforms will make it impossible for this to happen again. The November vote can be reversed.

It is not so simple for Blair. He, his government, and the SIS have suffered most from the affair. Until now, British intelligence has had a high reputation in Washington, Western Europe and elsewhere.

Butler's citation of material sent to Downing Street (and parliament), stripped of the qualifications that said it came from sources 'open to doubt', 'severely flawed', later 'withdrawn as unreliable', or only included for its 'eye-catching character', has greatly damaged the SIS reputation for professionalism and political integrity.

This is important for a political reason, connected to Britain's relationship to the European Union. Europe's respect for the SIS as an intelligence service is one of Britain's most important international assets, ranking with the British armed services in the respect it commands in Europe.

The debate anticipating the promised British referendum on the European constitution (and euro membership) will press Britain towards a final decision on its degree of commitment to the EU.

The British government and political class continue to assume that their rival American and European relationships can be managed without drama, but this may not remain true.

The policies of the Bush administration, and Blair's resolute commitment to Bush's leadership have undermined that assumption for many Europeans. They expect American election day in November to be a crucial date in the Euro-American relationship.

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Here the British intelligence relationship with the CIA becomes a serious problem. Western Europeans have in the past made grudging allowance for the SIS's compromising Washington intimacies, and for Britain's deep involvement in a US-British-Canadian-Australian communications interception system that is widely thought by Europeans to be exploited for commercial advantage.

A second problem is Blair's decision to restructure British armed forces to function as subordinate units led by the US. This renunciation of the primordial capacity for autonomous national defence seems to them an abdication of sovereignty, far more important than anything implied in the European constitution. It will leave France as the only European country other than Russia that is capable of autonomous and integrated air, sea and ground operations under national command.

Some Europeans would welcome Bush's re-election, believing it would make inevitable a decision by the bulk of the EU countries to construct a serious European political and strategic entity. They think that essential, and want Britain to belong to it. But they argue that if Britain votes to reject a European constitution both sides should be