

US Serious issues at stake in US polls

By Paul Marie de La Gorce

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THE United States presidential elections, a little less than four months away, will decide not only its own political future but also that of the broader community of nations. In this election, there are serious issues at stake.

The Protestant religious right heavily influences American politics from within, and also outside through its fine alliance with the most committed pro-Israeli lobby, which supports the Ariel Sharon government. US President George Bush will pursue this road, just as he will pursue the war against terrorism and that against the proliferation of the so-called WMDs.

Bush will impose on Iraq a government that the Americans and their Iraqi associates desire. On the whole, he will prolong, accelerate or further expand his military interventions, either acting directly or through his allies in Afghanistan and Pakistan, in the Arabian peninsula and in Saharan Africa.

It is this political stance, with its strategic parameters, that the American public opinion opposes. The question is whether the voters will really have the choice of a policy that would clearly be the opposite. The answer lies, mostly, in what has been said by the Democrats.

Until now, we have had two

main accounts: that of Zbigniew Brzezinski, former head of the National Security Council during the Jimmy Carter administration and still the most influential consultant for the Democrats, and the comments of the present Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry.

In fact, Brzezinski, in a collection of texts entitled "The Real Choice", puts forth a new strategy for the war against terrorism in order to preserve American world leadership.

In essence, he suggests the US forge a large alliance with Muslim countries around the world. What he does not say is how would he

not go their own independent ways, above all in strategic and military matters.

It could be said that for the US this "true choice" would mean that all problems are solved. Yet they are not, given the political and social situation that prevails in the Middle East.

Kerry has deliberately adopted a tone meant to negate all accusations of weakness being made against him. "Everything shall be done to defend our national security and we shall continue to retain the strongest army in the world," he declared.

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go about convincing governments in Muslim countries to participate in this coalition or how would he replace them.

Meanwhile, what he does let through is his relentless hostility towards Russia, which is nearly identical to the one he felt during the Cold War, which led him to advocate a total end to all Russian presence in Central Asia, and even the secession of all Muslim ethnic groups north of the Caucasus.

As for America's European allies, Brzezinski wants to associate them with American businesses. However, what remains clear is that they should

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So far his comments on the backing of Israel have been without nuances. He has also had the former head of the National Security Council during the Clinton administration, Sandy Berger, write that a "Democrat government will have to reaffirm the United States' determination to use military force — unilaterally if necessary — in order to defend its vital interests."

The candidate himself has even more categorically warned, "Our enemies shall never be able to

doubt my determination to use force if it should be necessary." In practice, he has seen an increase in military force in ground wars, control over territories and populations, and information. This worry prevails in regard to the fight against the spread of "WMDs".

By contrast, are the accusations made against the Bush administration of being "unilateralist" despite the recent pleas for support to old US allies and the UN, and if possible NATO.

We are just at the beginning of a decisive campaign. It appears that what is relevant are the differences in methods and strategies, and not objectives.

Brzezinski offers a wider choice of alliances, and his dream of a coalition between America and the Muslim countries reminds us irresistibly of the times when American diplomacy, under a number of presidents, searched and often succeeded in rallying against the Soviet Union the most traditional forces in the Muslim world.

But has it not so overwhelmingly changed that the fundamental factors are no longer the same? And what are the changes that could lead European countries to adhere completely to America's policy when we have witnessed the French President, Jacques Chirac, backed by a number of his European colleagues, bring to a complete halt Bush's attempt to enlist all of NATO in his war against Iraq?

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