

European Elites Survey

Survey of Members of the European Parliament &
Top European Commission and European Council Officials

Key Findings 2007



COMPAGNIA
di San Paolo


CIRCaP
Centre for the study
of political change

European Elites Survey

Survey of Members of the European Parliament &
Top European Commission and European Council Officials
Key Findings 2007

a project by



supported by



Technical Note: TNS Opinion was commissioned to conduct the European Elites Survey using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews in nine EU member states. A total of 169 Members of European Parliament (MEP), 50 top-level officials of the EU Commission, and 50 top-level officials of the Council of the European Union were interviewed in the period between May and July 2007. The survey queried MEPs from the nine EU member states (France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, and the United Kingdom) that were surveyed in the annual Transatlantic Trends survey conducted by the German Marshall Fund of the United States, the Compagnia di San Paolo, and other partners. (As newly entered countries, Romania and Bulgaria did not have elected MEPs during the survey period and are therefore not included in this report.) To compare the data from the European Elites Survey with that gathered by Transatlantic Trends, we weighted the results from the general public by the size of each member state. The results of the survey of MEPs were weighted by the size of the respondent's national delegation and by the size of each European Parliamentary Group. All analysis included in this report is given in valid percentages, that is, calculated as a proportion of total valid answers, including "Don't Know's" "Spontaneous answers" and "Refusals".

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction5

Highlights of the KeyPoints6

The Pillars of the Transatlantic Partnership8

Threat Perceptions and Policy Preferences12

Persistent Differences Among Officials, Members of Parliament, and the General Population21

Conclusion23

I. Introduction

The European Union (EU) finds itself in a period of transition. After expanding by 10 new members in 2004, voters in France and the Netherlands rejected a proposed Europe-wide constitution in 2005, which would have increased the scope of the Union's power. Since then, Bulgaria and Romania have joined the EU, and the arrival of new national leaders in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom signals a shifting political climate. In 2007, progress was made on mending the rifts that emerged after the rejection of the draft constitution, culminating at the June 2007 European Summit, during which EU leaders agreed to the principles of a new treaty to reform EU institutions, bringing back the prospect of a European Union more capable of taking united positions in global affairs. EU countries have fielded peacekeeping troops in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and southern Lebanon, and have recently agreed to send a force to Chad in an effort to protect refugees from the Darfur region of Sudan, providing a few, nascent examples of EU member states coming together around a common foreign policy. Meanwhile, Turkey, Croatia, and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia await possible entry into the EU. This second round of the European Elites Survey was carried out against this mixed backdrop in an effort to gain insight into the thoughts and motivations of those in Brussels responsible for the governance, integration, and expansion of the EU, and the parliamentary oversight of these activities. As with last year's survey, this report compares data from a survey of European elites to that gathered on the U.S. and EU general public in *Transatlantic Trends 2007*, a project of the Compagnia

di San Paolo, the German Marshall Fund of the United States, and other partners.¹ As in the first (2006) survey, we included Members of the European Parliament and high-level officials of the European Commission. This year, however, we expanded the survey to also include top-level officials working in the Council of the European Union.² In keeping with the role of the Council, officials there generally tend to have perspectives closer to the national positions of their member countries, while simultaneously sharing similar backgrounds and viewpoints with the staff of other EU institutions. The inclusion of this data adds a layer of detail that was unavailable last year. When discussing the opinions of both the general public and the elites, we have normally grouped all of the countries together, since discussing each nation separately would prove unwieldy for our purposes. However, responses to some survey questions illustrate the existence of differences among national perspectives on particular issues, and these are discussed where appropriate. Similarly, the opinions of Council officials were in line with those of the Commission on most issues, and therefore they have been grouped together in most sections of this report. However, there were several notable exceptions to this rule, and these are discussed separately below.

¹ Details of the *Transatlantic Trends* report are available at www.transatlantictrends.org.

² Throughout the text of this report, we use the term 'European elites' to refer to the combination of Members of the European Parliament and officials working in the secretariats of the EU Commission and Council. To avoid redundancy, terms such as "top-level officials", "Commission and Council staff", "officers", or "officials" are used interchangeably to indicate the surveyed officials working in the secretariats of the EU Commission and Council. Similarly, we use the terms like "EU public" or "general public" to mean those surveyed members of the greater society not engaged in the business of running the EU's administrative or political affairs. No prejudice is to be intended or implied in the use of any of these terms.

II. Highlights of the key points

The following report looks at the results of the 2007 European Elite Survey with respect to the transatlantic relationship, foreign policy challenges facing the EU, and the ideological structure of the EU leadership. We would like to highlight the following key findings:

- There remains a sizeable divide between the views of the European general public and those of the governing elites. The elites tended to favor strong U.S. leadership on international issues and close cooperation between the EU and the U.S. The general public was more skeptical of U.S. motivations and policies, and more wary of working too closely with the U.S. to address foreign policy issues.
- Only 36% of the European general public felt strong U.S. leadership to be desirable compared with 74% of MEPs and 77% of top EU officials. Only 38% of the general public thinks that relations between the EU and the U.S. will improve after the U.S. Presidential election in 2008, while majorities of MEPs and EU officials feel that relations will improve after the election.
- Both the elites and the general public are deeply suspicious of the current U.S. administration. By large majorities, respondents across all categories expressed disapproval of U.S. policies on international issues. When asked to choose among options, most survey respondents cited either the war in Iraq or President Bush himself as the biggest reason for the transatlantic relationship's decline.
- Very few in the surveyed groups expected the relationship to get worse.
- While there may be differences in the level of anxiety expressed about various threats facing the EU, there is broad general agreement between the elites and the general public about which threats are the most pressing. Differences begin to emerge, however when we look at specific threats and the various policy options that should be prescribed for dealing with them.
- By sizable majorities, the EU general public and the elites named foreign energy dependence and global warming as the top two threats facing the EU. The global spread of avian flu was viewed as the least pressing threat, although the general public was more concerned about it than the elites.
- The survey found widespread support for increasing the amount of humanitarian aid the EU distributes around the world. There is also substantial support for the deployment of peacekeeping troops in conflict areas. Support dropped off precipitously in all surveyed groups for the deployment of combat troops.
- The riskier and more violence-prone the mission is expected to be, the more rapidly support for troop deployment declines. There was much greater support for peacekeeping missions in the Balkans than there was for combat operations against the Taliban in Afghanistan.
- Iran acquiring nuclear weapons and Russia's role in providing energy to Europe both figure as threats to a greater or lesser degree among each surveyed group, but there is a lack of broad consensus on the nature of these threats and how to deal with them.

- We found substantial differences between the EU elites’ perception of China and that of the general public, with the public much more likely to perceive China as both an economic and a military threat. Sixty-five percent of the general public felt China was a threat both economically and militarily (roughly the same proportion as in the U.S. public), while 39% of MEPs and only 18% of EU officials felt this way.
- Turkey’s potential membership in the EU divided the respondents. The general public appeared to be the most neutral, with 42% of them finding Turkey’s EU membership to be neither good nor bad. Commission officials were the most positive, with 60% of them feeling it would be a good thing. Among MEPs, we found Turkey membership to be a polarizing issue, as they were almost evenly divided between thinking it was a good thing and thinking it was a bad thing, and were far less likely to adopt the middle ground.
- While a gap exists between the elites and the general public on particular issues and what to do about them, divisions also exist between MEPs, Commission officials and Council officials. While not usually as dramatic as the division between the general public and the elites, these differences provide insight into the makeup of the EU’s governing bodies.
- Commission officials are generally more enthusiastic about both current and future transatlantic relations, more optimistic about expansion of the EU, and less worried about specific threats than the other elites. Top-level officials at the Council tended to be marginally more skeptical of transatlantic relations, less encouraging of EU expansion, and more concerned with particular threats.
- Council staff were less likely than Commission officials to favor the inclusion of Turkey in the EU. MEPs were also less likely to feel that Turkey would eventually join the EU.
- Council officials were also more likely to support the deployment of troops for combat operations, and to feel that individual countries should be bound by any EU-wide decision to use military force.
- MEPs tended to occupy a space somewhere between the Commission and the Council on the one hand and the general public on the other. They were closer to the other elites in valuing the transatlantic relationship, and more likely to cite the war in Iraq as the key reason for its recent decline. They were also less likely to feel that Turkey would eventually join the EU.

III. The Pillars of the Transatlantic Partnership

A large portion of the European Elites Survey focused on opinions inspired by the relationship between the European Union and the United States. Respondents were asked a series of questions designed to elicit their views on various aspects of this relationship. As was the case last year, we found a large divide between the European elites' view of the transatlantic relationship and that of the general public, which is perhaps best illustrated by looking at these responses side-by-side (Chart 1). The general public rated nearly all of the survey's measures of EU-U.S. cooperation lower than the elites, sometimes dramatically lower. In the one exception to this rule, respondents were asked whether or not they

The proportion of MEPs and the general public expressing a desire for U.S. leadership was roughly the same as it was the previous year, while the proportion of top-level officials doing so actually increased 10 points. When asked about the direction of EU-U.S. relations during the past year, more than twice as many parliamentarians (35%) and nearly three times as many Council members (44%) felt relations had improved, compared with the general public. Only 16% of the EU public and 9% of the U.S. public felt that way. Further, only 38% of the European general public thought relations between the U.S. and the EU would improve after the U.S. Presidential elections in 2008, while majorities of

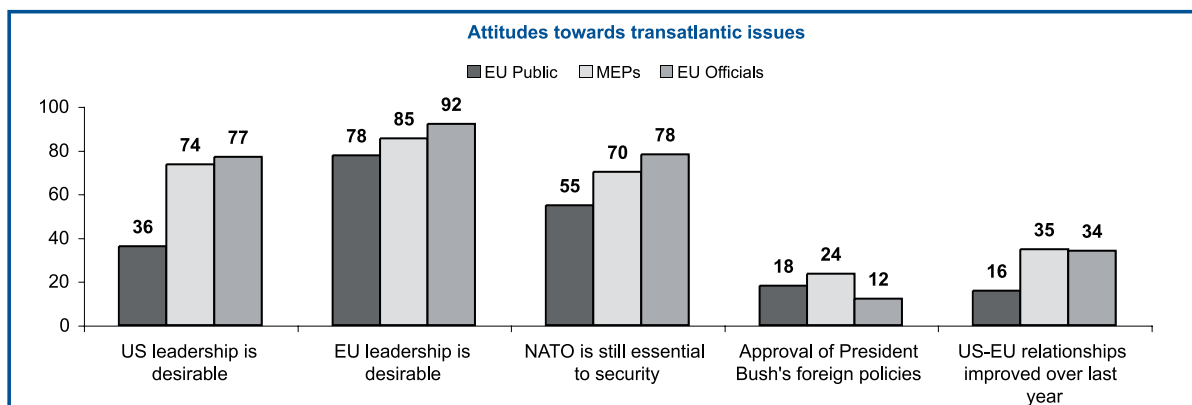


Chart 1

approved of President Bush's handling of foreign policies, and officials from the European Commission and Council, who presumably have greater knowledge of the specifics of those policies, rated them lower than the general public. As we look at each of the responses in greater detail, the overall pattern becomes more evident.

For example, when asked whether they felt strong U.S. leadership in the world was desirable, only 36% of the general public felt that it was, while in contrast 74% of MEPs and 77% of high-level EU officials valued U.S. leadership (Chart 2).

MEPs (58%), Commission officials (76%), and Council officials (54%) felt relations would improve, indicating that the general public remains highly skeptical of U.S. policies and motivations, compared with the elites' more optimistic view of the relationship.

Very few in the surveyed groups expected the relationship to get worse. In fact, data showed that even among those EU citizens who feel that the U.S.-EU relationship got worse during the last year, 45% look forward to better relations in the future. It is

worth noting that this same optimism does not hold for officials in the EU Council. Council officials who believe relations have deteriorated recently are evenly split on whether relations will improve (33%), get worse (33%), or stay the same (33%) after Bush's administration comes to an end.

more optimistic than both the EU and U.S. publics. Only one third of the EU public and a fifth of the U.S. public who approve Bush's foreign policies foresee improvement in U.S.-EU relationships after 2008.

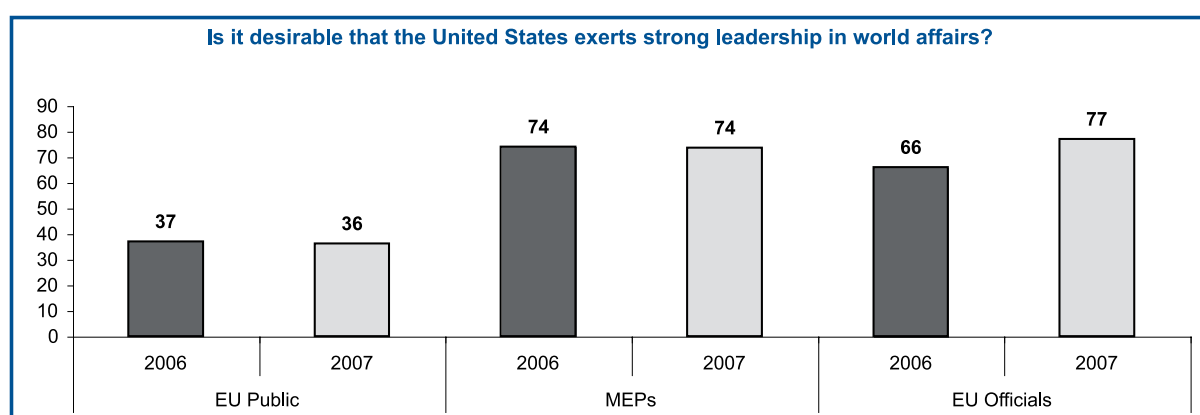


Chart 2

By large majorities, respondents across all categories expressed disapproval of U.S. policies on international issues. While the Bush administration has a somewhat higher approval rating regarding its international policies among the general public of the U.S., and is somewhat more likely to garner support among EU Parliamentarians (24%), approval for the current administration's international policies, which was already at a low level in 2006, has even declined among the MEPs since then, while holding steady among the general European public.

We also found some evidence that suggests evaluations of Bush's handling of foreign policies affects assessments of the status of future U.S.-EU relationships. Forty one percent of MEPs and half of EU officials who approve Bush's handling of international policies think relations will improve after 2008 U.S. presidential elections. These two groups are

Further, despite the transatlantic controversies that have characterized recent years, a large majority of the elites surveyed (80%), and a comfortable majority of parliamentarians (69%) felt that the EU should address various international threats in concert with the U.S. rather than independently, while a bare majority of the general public (54%) felt this way (Chart 3). Only the French MEPs supported an independent path for Europe, a strong majority of them (70%), feeling that the EU should address threats independently from the United States. The next closest were the MEPs of the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, where around 40% of the parliamentarians felt an independent path was preferable.

This pattern of public-elite division is further illustrated by respondents' attitudes toward the NATO military alliance, views of which provide a benchmark of transatlantic cooperation at the practical

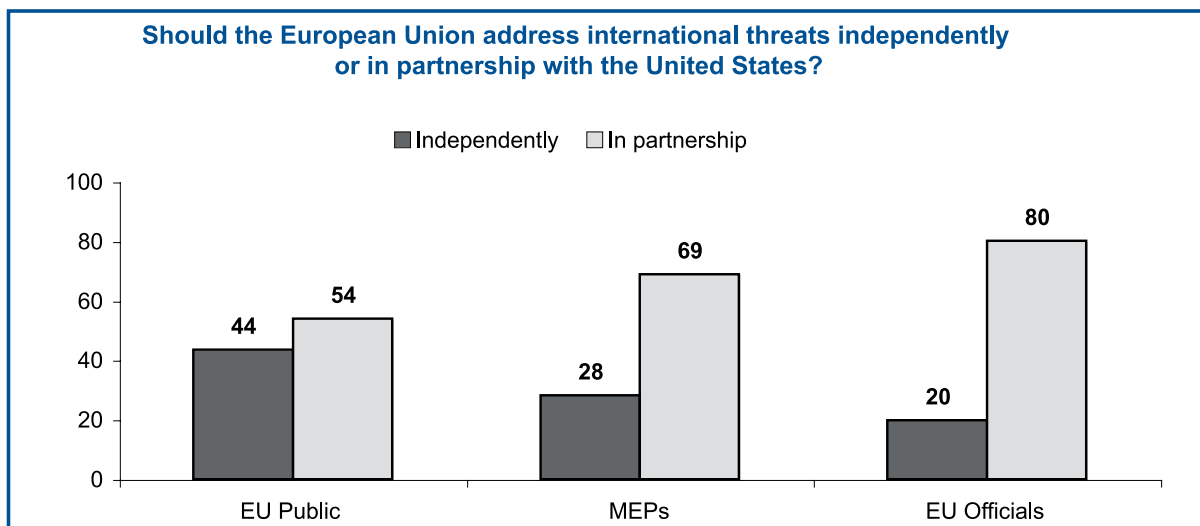


Chart 3

level (Chart 4). Seventy percent of parliamentarians and 78% of senior Commission and Council staff members take the view that the alliance remains essential to the security of their country, while 55% of the general public adopts this view. While one might expect reticent inter-organisational rivalry to diminish the EU staff's opinion of NATO, it is possible that, contrarily, the EU officials' relatively high regard for NATO is a result of working in close cooperation on a fairly regular basis compared with the average citizen, who naturally has little or no exposure to NATO's day-to-day activities. Interesting nuances appear as we delve further into the respondents' perceptions of transatlantic relations. Participants were asked to indicate which of a list of causes mentioned had contributed most to the deterioration of transatlantic relations in recent years (Chart 5). The possible causes given were: the

management of the war in Iraq, President Bush himself, the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, and the fact that the U.S. is not a signatory to the Kyoto Treaty on global warming. Strong majorities pointed to either the management of the Iraq war or President Bush himself as the key causes, which may be a result of the connection many people make between the President himself and the war for which he is politically responsible.

Commission staffers as a group were nearly twice as likely as either Council officials or parliamentarians to single out Bush himself, and 5% more likely than the general EU public to do so.

Although only 35% percent of all respondents feel the transatlantic relationship has improved recently, very few in any of the surveyed groups expected things to deteriorate further after the coming U.S. elections, probably because of perceptions that the

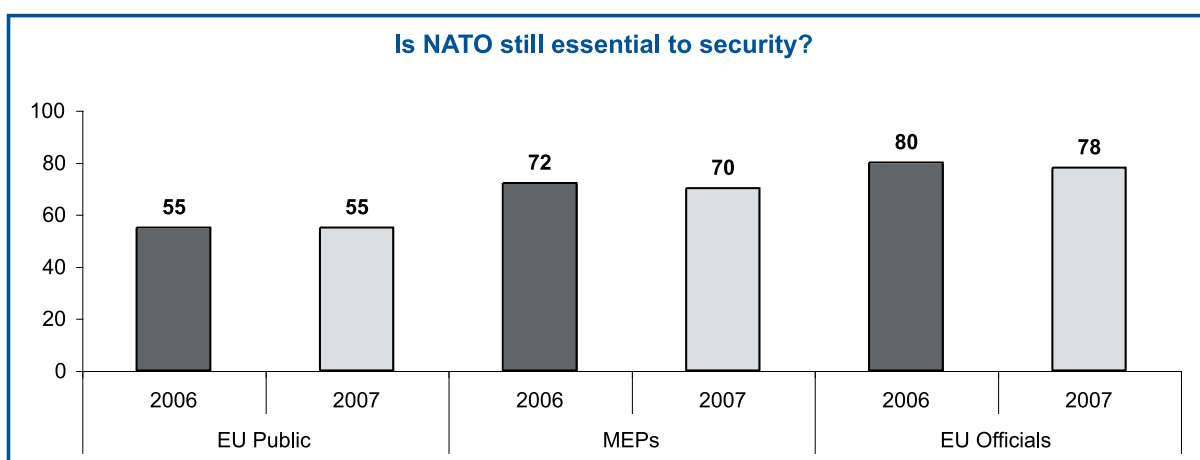


Chart 4

relationship is already at such a low point that few think it can decline further.

We also noticed some disparities in points of view between MEPs from different countries.³ While support among MEPs for U.S. global leadership remained high, the distribution of that support along national lines has shifted. While staying the same or declining slightly among most countries, support for U.S. leadership increased substantially among British (77% to 92%) and Spanish (40% to 63%)

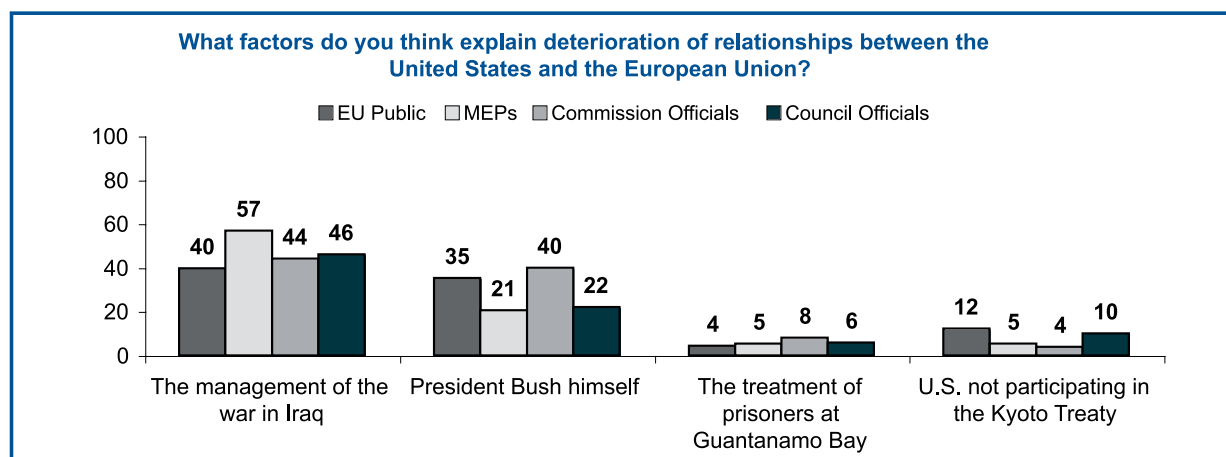


Chart 5

MEPs. Support for the Bush administration's foreign policies decreased among most national groups, precipitously so among German MEPs (from 40% to 18%), but it also increased moderately among the Portuguese (9% to 13%) and Spanish (7% to 11%). In response to a question about whether the EU should address threats independently or in partnership with the US, majorities from each country except France felt that partnership was the best approach, and a majority of the MEPs from every country except France (35%) also felt that transatlantic relations would improve after Bush leaves office.

³ The elite sample from each country in absolute numbers is relatively small, so we have only reported the survey results here and elsewhere in this report and have refrained from drawing any conclusions based on this data.

IV. Threat Perceptions and Policy Preferences

Respondents were asked about their personal feelings toward a list of eight different global threats and their potential to impact them personally (Chart 6). Energy dependence—defined in the survey as the reliance on foreign countries to supply energy—topped the list in every group except the EU general public, where it was named as the second most pressing threat. Ninety-one percent of top EU officials expressed concern over energy dependence. On the other hand, the EU public named global warming as the threat most likely to affect them personally, while this was the second most common threat cited by the parliamentarians and the EU officials. On the other side of the Atlantic, the U.S. public saw a major economic downturn as the most pressing threat. Each of the European groups saw an influx of immigrants as the third most

were the European elites.

Of the threats enumerated in the survey, we were able to determine the most pressing concern among the MEPs from particular countries. The issue of greatest concern among most, by far, was their dependence on foreign sources of energy, but there were exceptions. Seventy-five percent of the French MEPs for example, were most concerned about international terrorism, while those from the Netherlands and Portugal were most concerned about global warming. International terrorism was highest among the MEPs from France (74%) and German (70%), but lowest among the Portuguese MEPs (88%) who saw it as an unlikely threat. Immigration was most viewed as a threat by MEPS from Slovakia and the UK, and least so as far as Portugal was concerned. Iran acquiring nuclear

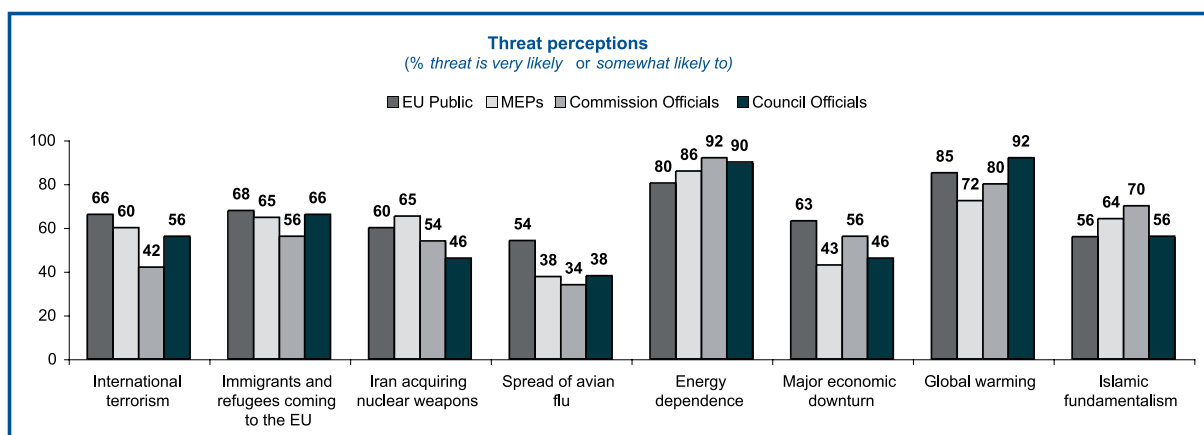


Chart 6

worrisome issue, while the U.S. public named international terror third most frequently. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism ranked much lower among the public's concerns, while the elites were slightly more concerned about it. The global spread of avian flu ranked as the least worrisome of all the threats cited across all groups, but the general public of both the EU and the U.S. were much more likely to see it as a threat than

weapons was of greatest concern among Germans and Slovaks (81% and 83%, respectively), and of least concern among the French (50%). Energy dependence was the most pressing international issue for every single parliamentarian surveyed from Spain and Slovakia, followed by 96% and 94%, respectively, of German and Polish MEPs. In contrast, energy dependence is least troublesome for the Portuguese, French, and Dutch.

International Threats and the European Union's Role

When asked whether or not the European Union should take on a greater role in dealing with the types of threats mentioned previously, overwhelming numbers of each respondent group—ranging from 86% for the parliamentarians on the low end to 91% of top EU officials on the high end—felt that greater EU responsibility would be desirable. However, when provided with specific policy decisions or options that could signify steps toward this goal, the results became more varied (Chart 7). Almost unanimously (between 84% and 91% of those surveyed in all groups), respondents felt that the EU should provide more money for development aid. Support was roughly equal when respon-

dropped off precipitously in all groups, maintaining positive support only among the U.S. public.

Support for the Deployment of Troops in Specific Cases

In addition to questions about their preferences on the use of certain policy instruments to deal with international threats in general, respondents were also asked whether or not they supported the use of their country's troops in support of a range of specific objectives in specific regions. In general, the European elites were more likely to support the use of military force than was the general public. Moreover, they were also more likely to feel that individual countries should abide by EU decisions to use military force once such a decision

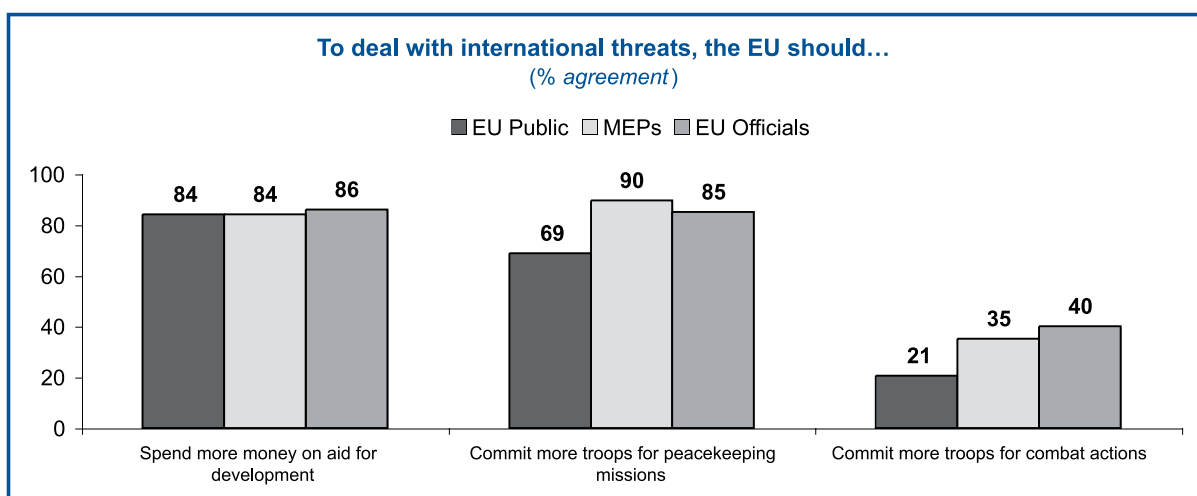


Chart 7

dents were asked if the EU should commit more troops for peacekeeping operations, except among the general EU public (where it dropped to 69%). When asked if the EU should increase the use of trade to influence other countries, support was very strong among the EU elites, but dropped off slightly for both the EU and U.S. publics.⁴ And when asked whether the EU should commit more troops to combat operations, support

was made.

On the whole, we found that the riskier and more violence-prone the mission was expected to be, the more rapidly support for troop deployment declined, especially among the general public (Chart 8). The pattern among the elites was similar, but the decline was considerably less rapid. Ninety-two percent of EU officials and 84% of parliamentarians supported sending troops

⁴In the U.S. the question also referred to potential EU actions, not whether the U.S. should or should not take certain actions.

to maintain peace in the Balkans, with slightly lower numbers supporting deployments to maintain peace in Darfur, monitor the ceasefire in Lebanon, or provide reconstruction aid in Afghanistan. Conflict in Sudan's Darfur is daily news in Europe, and perhaps due to media exposure, 81% of the EU public felt that troops should be deployed to maintain peace in this region. However, they give the opposite response regarding troop deployments to fight against the Taliban. In fact, the use of national troops to fight against the Taliban garnered least support across all European groups sur-

group. Iran ranked least warmly in all three groups. Compared to last year, the feelings of both the general public and the elite towards Turkey have stayed roughly the same. All three groups rated Turkey less positively than they did the EU as a whole and the U.S. The general public rated Turkey less warmly than China and Russia, while the elites rated it more warmly.

Specific International Challenges and Possible Policy Responses

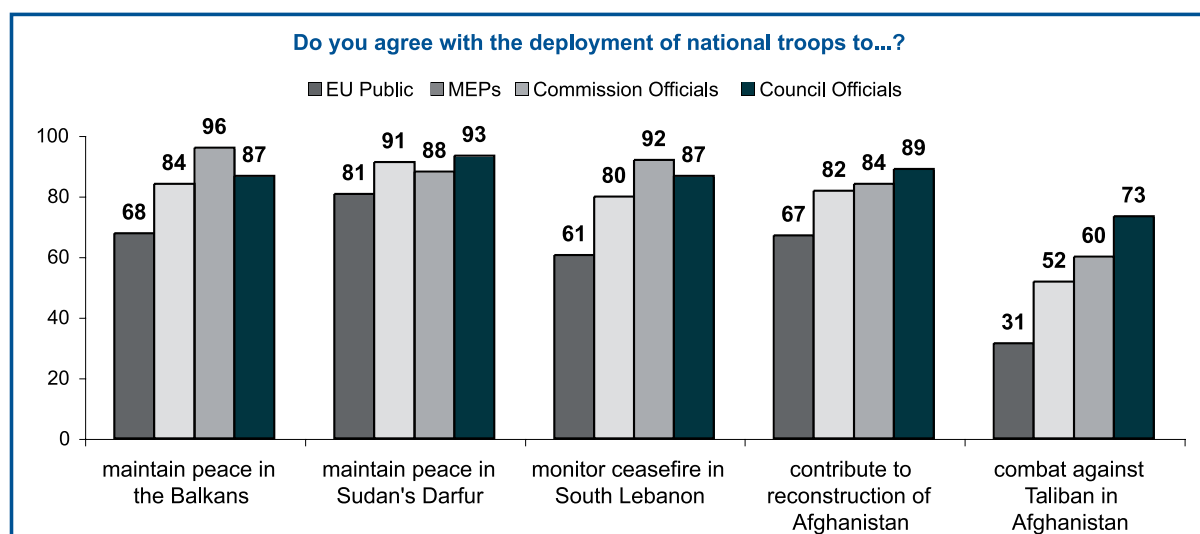


Chart 8

veyed, with a greater proportion of Council officials (73%) supporting it while only 31% of the general public did so. US citizens are more inclined to support troop deployments to maintain peace in Sudan's Darfur, combat Taliban, and help reconstruction of Afghanistan, than to maintain peace in the Balkans or monitor ceasefire in South Lebanon.

Gauging Feelings Toward Other Countries

We asked respondents to rate their feelings toward various countries on a 100-point "thermometer", with 100 representing "very warm" feelings, 50 representing "neutral" feelings, and zero representing "very cold" feelings (Chart 9). Unsurprisingly, all the EU groups surveyed rated the EU the most warmly. The U.S. was ranked second in each group, with China, Russia, Turkey, Palestine, and Israel ranked in various places bunched in the middle, depending upon the surveyed

Apart from threats emerging from certain developments or events, respondents were also asked how they felt about the actual or potential threat posed by the existence or actions of specific countries, such as China, Russia, and Iran. The responses to these questions, when examined in detail, reveal interesting contours in the sample groups.

Iran's Potential Acquisition of Nuclear Weapons

As in 2006, this year's survey included a battery of questions about Iran, the country ranked least warmly on the feelings thermometer by all surveyed groups. Its pursuit of nuclear weapons was perceived as the third most pressing threat MEPs worried would affect them. Survey respondents were asked to choose from a list which specific events or developments they felt would occur if Iran does obtain nuclear weapons (Chart 10).

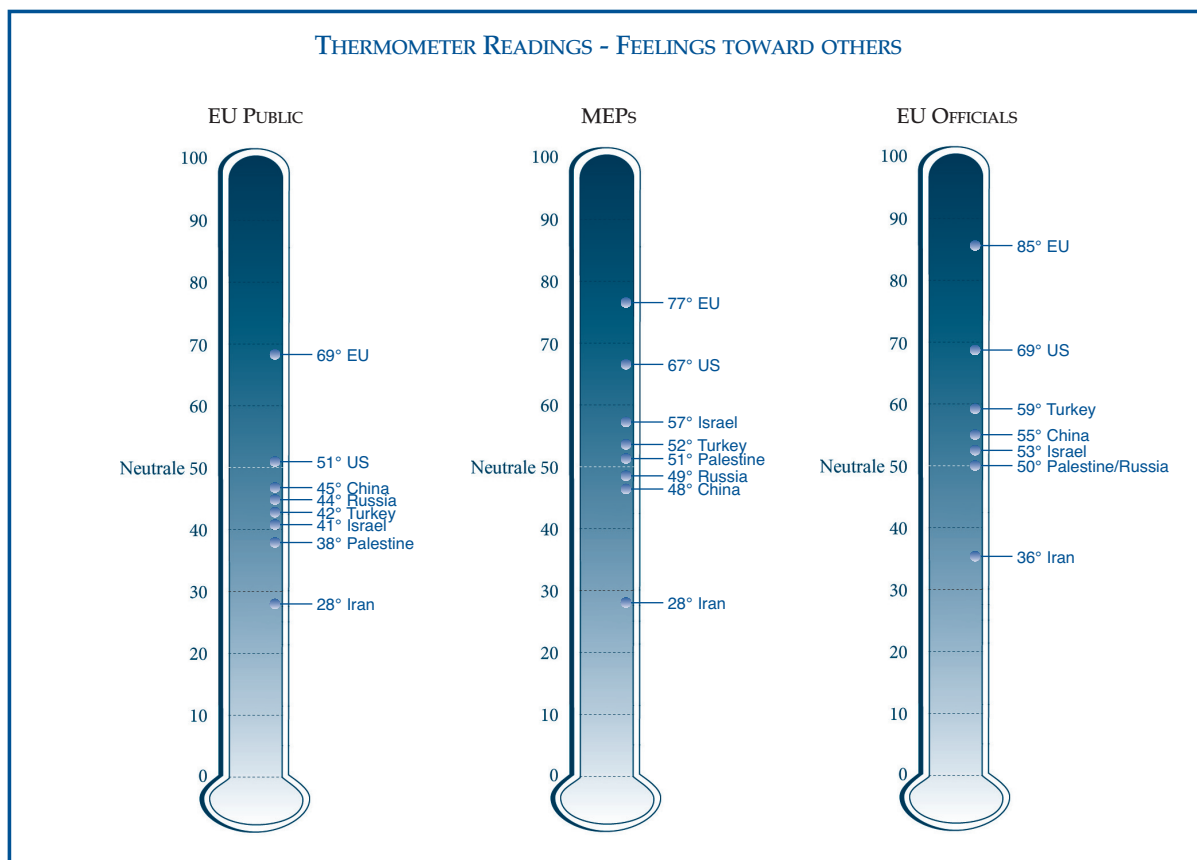


Chart 9

Most of the EU and U.S. public thought it likely that Iran would attack its neighbors if it acquired nuclear weapons (63% and 75%, respectively). Far fewer parliamentarians (48%) and EU officials (32%) believed this would happen. The numbers break down in a similar way regarding the potential for Iran to threaten Europe

with these weapons. However, all of the surveyed groups foresaw the likelihood that Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons would spark a regional arms race, and majorities of all but the senior EU officials found it One interesting way to look at this data is by cross-tabulating the responses across questions to determine

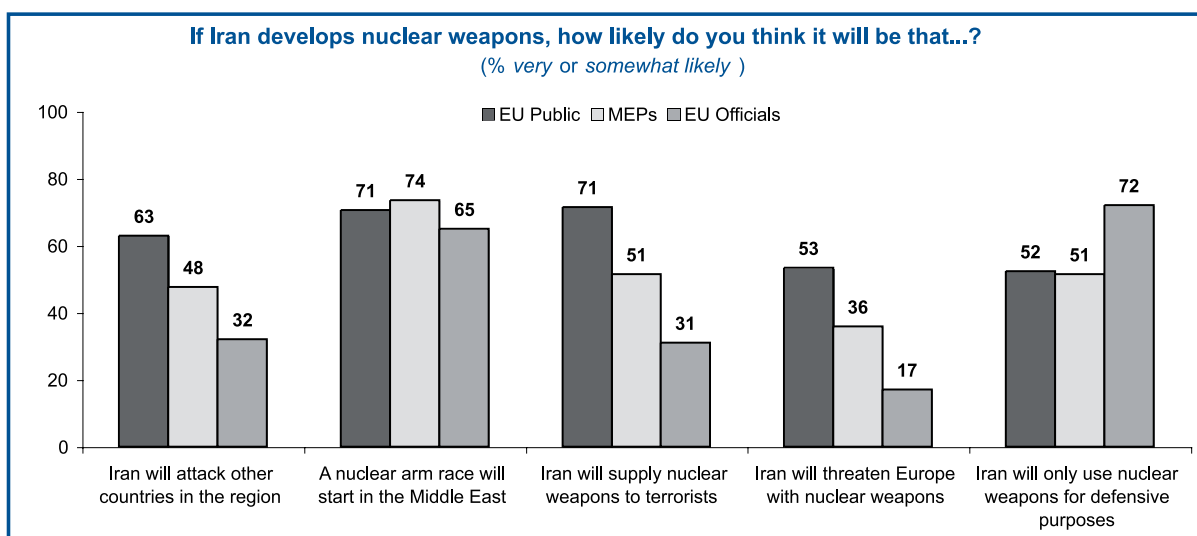


Chart 10

likely that Iran would supply terrorist groups with these weapons. Respondents were subsequently asked what methods they would support to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons in the event that present diplomatic efforts fail. In this context, the EU general public and parliamentarians were more inclined than

were the most supportive of the use military force as a last resort to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

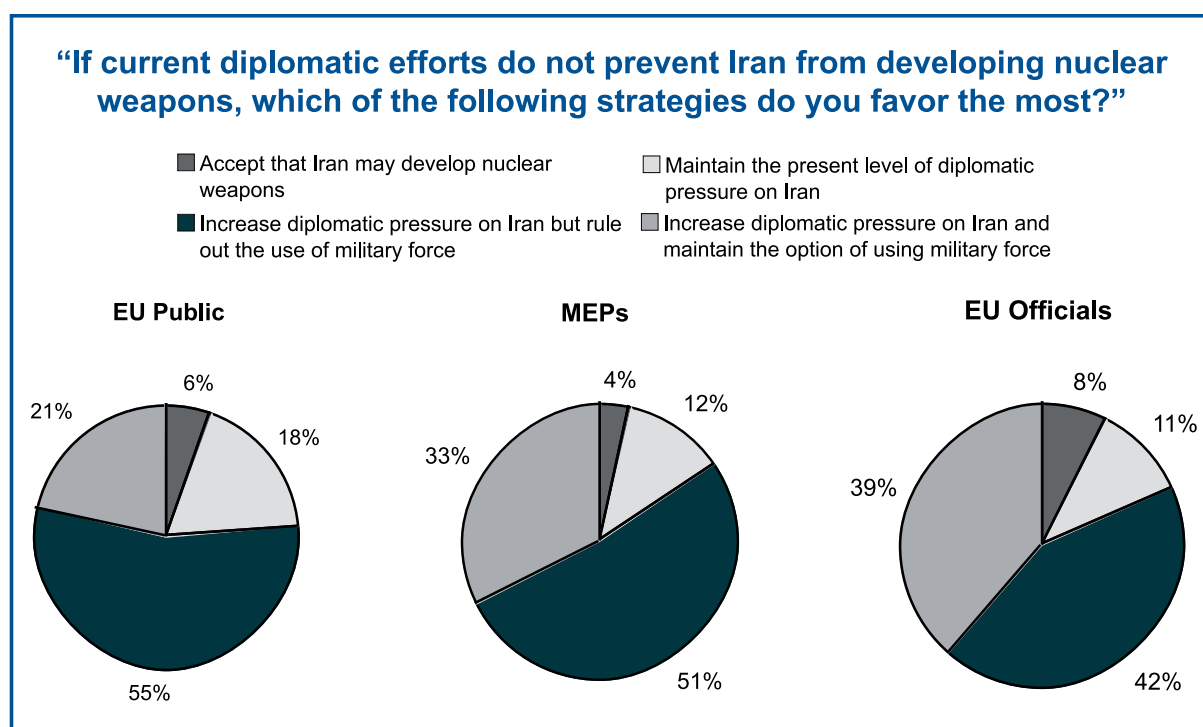


Chart 11-13

EU Officials to rule out the use of military force (52% and 51% respectively) than either the parliamentarians or the top officials. (Charts 11-13)

We found, perhaps unsurprisingly, that those who felt Iran would threaten Europe if it acquired nuclear weapons were also more likely to not rule out the use of military force to prevent Iran from obtaining them. When looking at the data by country, we found that a slim majority or substantial plurality of most EU nations' MEPs were in favor of ruling out the use of military force to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. The exceptions were the Netherlands and Poland, where 40% and 50%, respectively, of surveyed MEPs favored keeping the military option on the table. Concern over potential negative consequences in the event Iran acquires nuclear weapons was highest among MEPs from Portugal, UK, Poland, and Germany and lowest among MEPs from Slovakia, Italy, France and Spain. In 2006, Italian Parliamentarians

The Rise of China as a World Power

Respondents were asked about whether they felt the rise of China represented an economic threat to their jobs and economic security, or rather an economic opportunity in terms of new markets and potential investment. While the Europeans tended to view China as an opportunity (59% of parliamentarians, 76% of Council officials, and 82% of Commission officials), the general public of both the U.S. and the EU (50% and 54%, respectively), tended toward the opposite view and regarded China more as an economic threat. When respondents were next asked whether China represented a military threat, most Europeans said they generally did not feel this to be the case (57% of the EU public, 58% of Council officials, 64% of MEPs, and 70% of Commission officials), while half of the U.S. sample felt China to be a military threat.

which groups were more likely to perceive of China as a combined economic and a military threat, and which were likely to view China as neither (Chart 14). We found once again that the divide between the general public and the elites is evident in their views on China. The EU and U.S. general public came out nearly equal, with 65% of the EU public and 66% of the U.S. public viewing China as posing both types of threats. On the other hand, 69% of the MEPs and fully 84% of the EU officials felt that China posed neither an economic nor a military threat.

Comparison between country MEPs indicate that while Dutch and German MEPs are the most likely to see China as an economic opportunity, China represents an economic threat for half of the French and Polish parliamentarians. In turn, two fifths of Dutch, Polish and Slovak MEPs think China is a military threat. This figure contrasts with the three quarters of German and Spanish parliamentarians who think the opposite.

Interestingly (but understandably), those respondents who were more concerned about the possibility of an economic downturn were also more likely to view China as an economic, and also a military, threat. Once again, the elites were much less pessimistic in their perceptions of China, either economic or military, than was the general public.

Developments in Russia

The survey also contained several questions about Russia. Respondents were asked to consider which among a list of reasons given caused them the most concern about Russia. In this instance, the European elites expressed greater concern than either the U.S. or EU general public about Russia's role as an energy provider, the weakening of democracy in Russia, and Russia's behavior toward its neighbors (Chart 15). A greater percentage of the general public (70%) than of the EU elites (68% of MEPs and 57% of officials), however, was concerned about Russia's role in providing weapons to countries in the Middle East. Those who were most concerned over energy dependence as a general threat were also more likely to be concerned about Russia in its role as energy provider.

Looking at the national pictures, concern over Russia as an energy provider ran highest among parliamentary elites from the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

On the opposite side, 60% of French and 50% of Slovak MEPs do not see this issue as a problem. Concern over Russia's weakening democracy is highest among German, Dutch, and British MEPs, and lowest among Slovak parliamentarians. In turn, concern over Russia's behavior towards its neighbors is visibly highest among Portuguese and British parliamentarians, and lowest among French and Slovaks.

Finally, while a large proportion of Portuguese and British MEPs are very concerned about the possibility

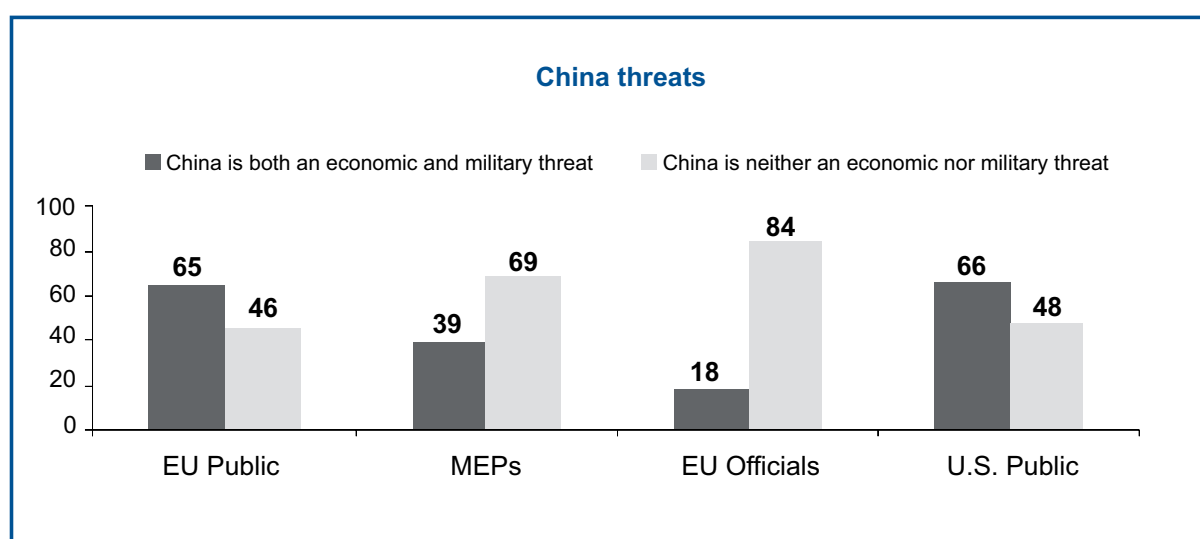


Chart 14

that Russia provides weapons to the Middle East, Polish, Spanish and French are far less concerned about this.

The Potential of Turkey's Membership in the EU

As in 2006, respondents were asked about their attitudes on the desirability of Turkey's membership in the European Union (Chart 16). When asked if Turkey's membership in the EU would be a "good thing", a "bad thing", or "neither good nor bad", a plurality of the EU general public (42%) called it "neither a good nor bad thing". In contrast, a plurality of the U.S. public, parliamentarians, and Council officials called it a "good thing", and a majority (60%) of surveyed Commission staff saw it as a "good thing". Compared to 2006, there was no significant change at the mass level and only a slight shift toward seeing Turkey's membership as 'desirable' at the elite level.

When asked if Turkey's joining the EU was likely to happen, however, majorities of all groups, whether they saw it as a "good thing" or not, found it likely to happen, except for parliamentarians, 54% of whom saw Turkey membership as unlikely. Additionally, those who were more favorable to Turkey membership also more often saw Turkey as a likely EU member, at least eventually. Positions towards Turkey's membership showed that EU Public and MEPs, on one hand, and EU officials, on the other, have markedly different

views on this same issue. For example, we observed that perceptions of immigration as a likely threat affected support for Turkey's inclusion differently across groups. Among the EU Public and MEPs, those concerned about immigration were more likely to see Turkey's membership as a bad idea than as a good one, while the opposite happened among EU officials, who tended to see Turkey's inclusion as a positive thing, despite perceptions of immigration as a likely threat. The case of the Commission officials is also worth noting. Only seven percent of surveyed Commission officials who consider immigration to be a threat also feel Turkey's inclusion is a bad idea, while 50% of them continue to think it would be a positive event. This perhaps reflects a greater willingness on the part of EU officials to deal with immigration by incorporating the immigrants into Europe.

Considering Islamic fundamentalism to be a threat also affected opinions toward Turkey's membership in the EU differently across groups. First of all, we found that larger percentages of the EU public (38%) and parliamentarians (47%) than EU Officials (14%) who were concerned about Islamic fundamentalism thought Turkey's membership in the EU would be a bad thing. But in a kind of mirror effect was seen in the case of those who perceived of immigration as a threat, we found that EU officials, even if they thought of Islamic fundamentalism as a threat, were less likely than par-

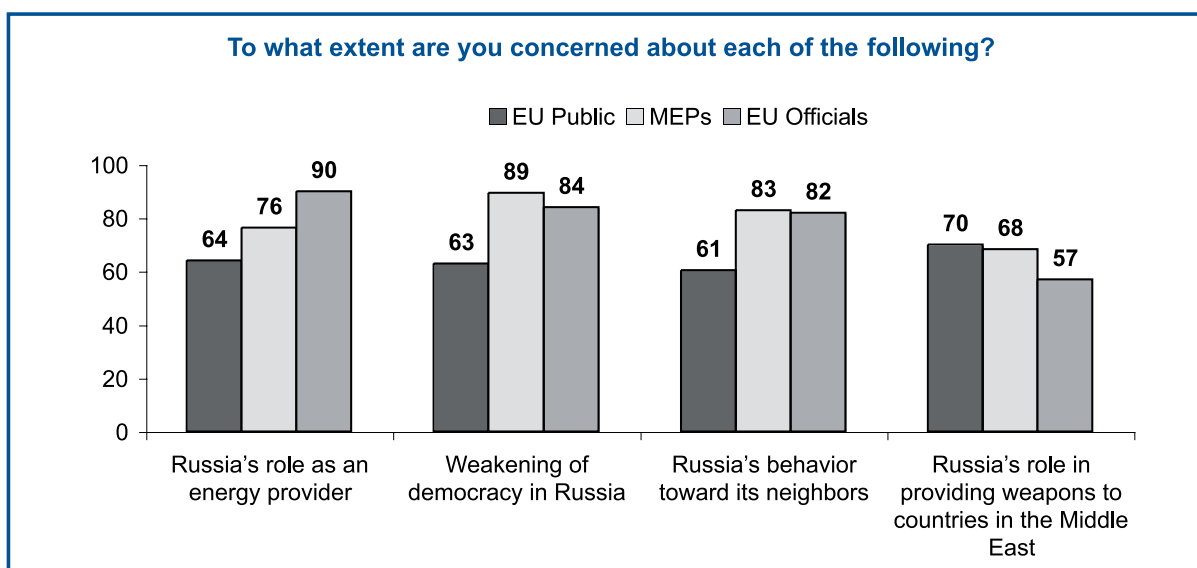


Chart 15

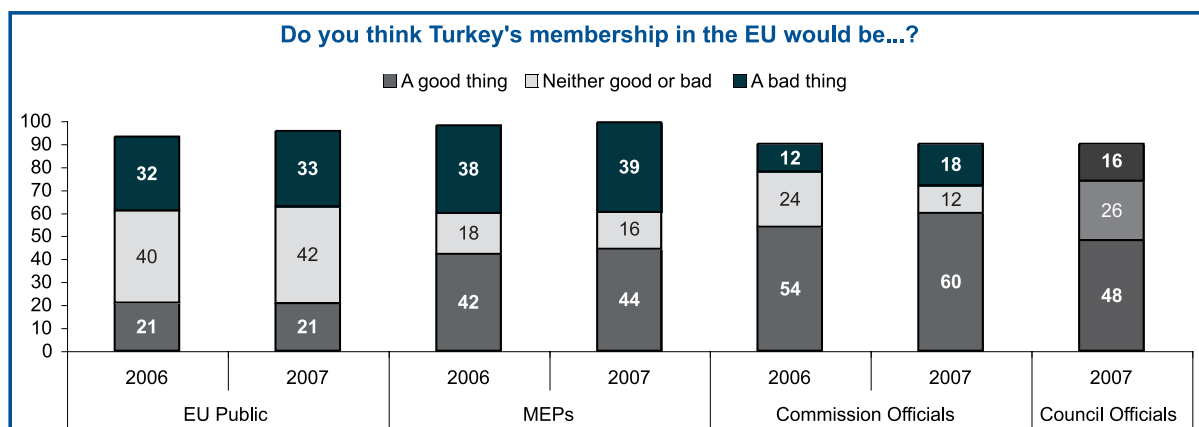


Chart 16

liamentarians and members of the general public to feel that Turkey membership was a bad thing (Chart 17).

The European Union's Role in Democracy Promotion

As in 2006, the 2007 survey contained a number of questions designed to probe into respondents' attitudes on the promotion of democracy in foreign countries. Europeans were generally more amenable to democracy promotion compared to Americans, with top-level officials (at 84%)

the most likely to support it, followed by MEPs (77%) and the general public (73%). By contrast, only 37% of the U.S. general public proclaimed support for democracy promotion. In fact, among Americans we found a direct correlation between having a favorable perception of George Bush and expressing support for democracy promotion, and vice versa, probably a result of the Bush administration's ideology and stated goal of establishing democracies in Iraq and elsewhere. As said, compared to EU general public, European elites were more likely to

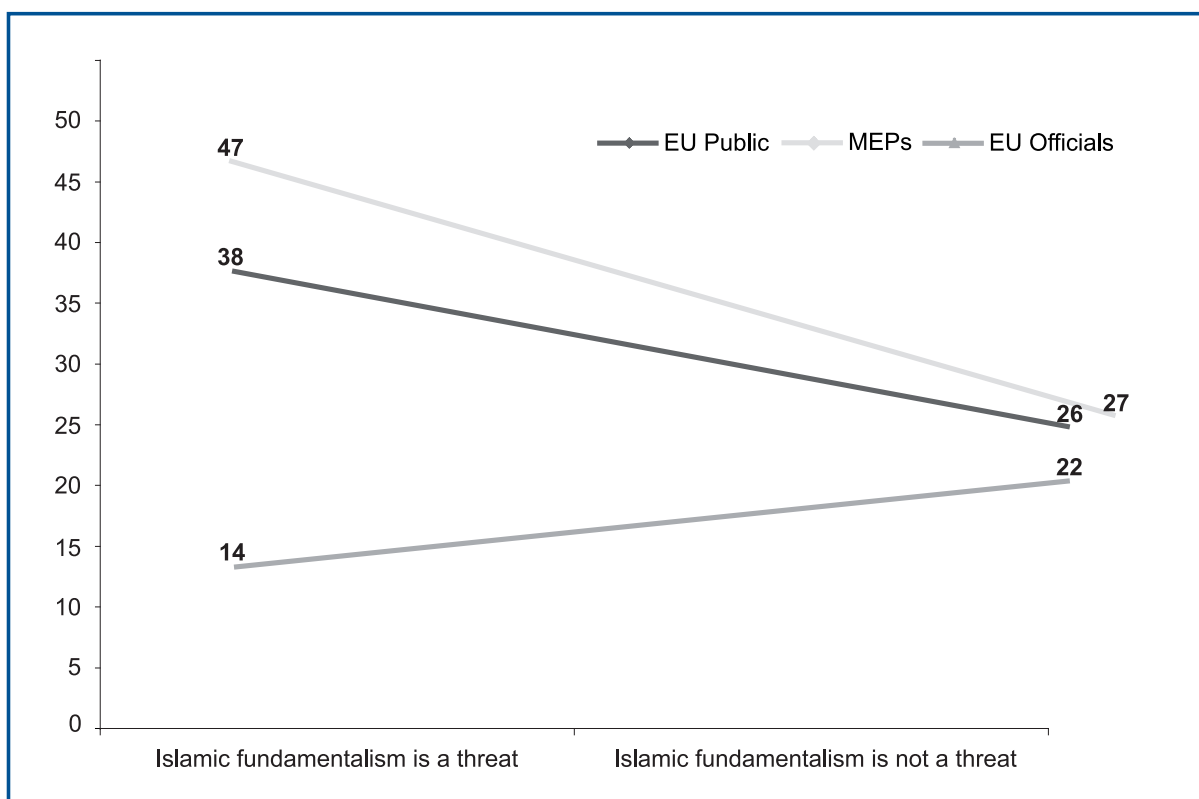


Chart 17

favor democracy promotion, even if as a result the subject country would be more likely to oppose EU policies (Chart 18). By somewhat lesser majorities, they also favored democracy promotion more than the general public even if the likely result would be the election of Islamic fundamentalist leaders in the countries concerned. The EU and U.S. general publics, however, both tended to oppose democracy promotion in the event of these likely results (Chart 18).

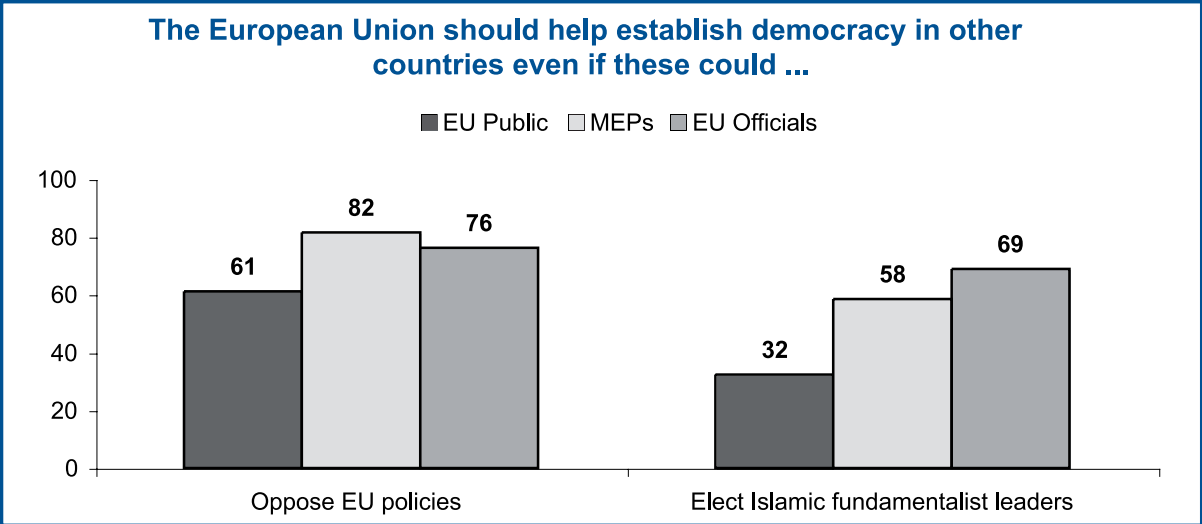


Chart 18

V. Persistent Differences among Officials, Members of Parliament, and the General Population

As stated earlier, in most parts of the survey, the responses we received from European Commission and European Council staff members were similar enough to allow us to combine the data from these two groups for the purposes of this report. While this strategy worked well for most of the areas discussed, there are several topics on which Council and Commission staff diverged sufficiently to note significant differences in their positions.

In general, we found the Council staff members to be marginally more enthusiastic about the current state of the transatlantic relationship. They were more likely than the Commission (82% as compared to 74% for the Commission) to feel that NATO remained essential to security, and they were nearly twice as likely (44% versus 24% for the Commission) to feel that the transatlantic relationship had improved over the past year.

The Commission officials, on the other hand, were far more likely (32% compared with 12%) to say they felt the transatlantic relationship had deteriorated over the past year, and far more likely (40% versus 22%) to cite George Bush personally as the reason for this deterioration. They were also more optimistic about the future, 76% of them, compared with 54% of Council officials, saying that they expected things to improve between the E.U. and the US after Bush leaves office.

Differences between Council and Commission officials also became apparent when looking at the potential expansion of the EU. Commission officials were relatively more likely (60%, compared with 48% for the Council staff and 44% for the parliamentarians) to favor the inclusion of Turkey in the European Union. They were also more likely to believe that Turkey would, in fact, eventually be admitted. Commission officials were also less likely (56% compared to 66% for the Council)

to be concerned about the effects of immigrants and refugees coming into Europe, although they were more concerned (70% versus 56%) about being affected by Islamic fundamentalism.

In general, the MEPs tended to occupy a space somewhere between the general public and the EU officials, and depending upon the issue, they could be closer to one or the other. On the issue of strong U.S. leadership in world affairs, for example, the MEPs (74% in favor of strong U.S. leadership) were much closer to the Council and Commission staff (77%) than to the general public (36%). They were less likely than either the general public or the parliamentarians to feel that Turkey would eventually join the EU. When asked about why the EU-U.S. relationship has deteriorated over the past few years, however, and they were ahead of all other respondents (57% compared with 45% of EU officials and 40% of the general public) in citing the Iraq war as the cause.

Of particular concern is the existence of a pervasive gulf between the views of the European elites on the one hand and the EU general public on the other. On a few issues—the desirability of the EU exerting strong leadership in world affairs, for example, or spending more money on development aid—the gulf narrows and there is a near convergence of views. But on many issues, and many of the most basic, the gap remains.

Less than half as many surveyed members of the general public, for example, find strong U.S. leadership in world affairs to be desirable (36%, compared to 74% of the MEPs and 77% of the EU officials). The general public is more likely to feel the transatlantic relationship has gotten worse, far less likely to value the NATO alliance (55%, compared to 70% of the MEPs and 78% of the officials), and more likely to feel the EU

should go it alone in dealing with international threats, 44% of them feeling this way, versus 28% of MEPs and 20% of officials.

The gap shows up again when looking at specific threats. The EU general public, while just as willing to spend money on foreign aid as the elites, is far less likely to support the deployment of troops, whether for peacekeeping or combat. They are far more likely to view China as both a military and economic threat (65% versus 39% for the MEPs, and 19% for the EU officials). They are also more fearful of Iran, with 71% of them (as compared to 51% of MEPs and 31% of EU officials) anticipating that Iran will supply nuclear weapons to terrorists in the event it obtains them, and 53% of them (versus 36% of MEPs and 17% of EU officials) fearing that in the same circumstance Iran will threaten the EU. The story is repeated when looking at Turkey's potential membership in the EU, with only 21% of the general public feeling this would be a good thing, compared to 44% of MEPs and 60% of officials.

VI. Conclusion

In the 2006 European Elites Survey Report, we concluded that a number of complexities and chasms characterized the European political landscape, in particular the differences between the opinions of the elites and those of the general public on central issues of international and foreign policy, and that these differences would impact European decision-making for years to come. In most respects, the results of the 2007 survey confirm the validity of the conclusions drawn last year, and its identification of problems, which still remain.

As in 2006, we found that officials working in the European Council and Commission strongly desired a close transatlantic relationship, in spite of equally strong misgivings about the current U.S. administration. They were also much more optimistic concerning the evolution of the transatlantic relationship than the general public, which did not observe such an improvement in the relationship nor seemed to share the enthusiasm of either the officials or their elected representatives for U.S. leadership on the global stage.

What was true for the officials was only slightly less true for the Members of the European Parliament, who came closer to matching popular views, although still separated from the electorate by a substantial gap. The parliamentarians, however, showed themselves to be strongly divided along ideological lines on some central issues, which could be seen as another cause for concern, although the survey's findings with regard to party and ideological breakdowns among European elites could help policymakers navigate these and other challenges ahead. On the other hand, if scepticism about Europe continues to grow at the level of the general public—as other poll data suggests may be the case—the willingness to engage in international crises such as Iran might decrease at the EU level.

The general pro-American sentiment at the elite level might be comforting for those observers who worry about a recurrent strain of, if not true anti-Americanism, then at least Amero-scepticism among the EU general public, which has shown itself to be wary of many aspects of the U.S. and its present policies. But it should also be worrisome to those who argue from the perspective of democratic theory that the views of elites and those of the general public should not be too far apart. While one can only speculate about the outcome, the question is naturally raised: will the public eventually catch up to the worldview of the elites, or will the elites necessarily shift course in order to come eye-to-eye with the voters? Perhaps we will see some combination of these two actions. (Of course the possibility also remains that we will see an increase in the growth of a Brussels-based community of European officials who are out of touch with the more polarized views held by the EU public and its representatives.)

While it is true that a new generation of political leaders has assumed the responsibility of governance in some of the larger states in Europe and each of these is making an effort to establish a new *modus vivendi* with their counterparts in Washington, most problems that marred transatlantic relations in recent years, such as Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and, increasingly, Russia, are still on the agenda. It may therefore be too much to hope that the presidential elections of 2008 by themselves (about which, incidentally, the general public is, again, more pessimistic than the elites) will lead to a transatlantic rapprochement which would also be conducive to narrowing the gap between elites and the general public in Europe. Whatever the case, manoeuvring through the varying interests at play in complex debates at both the European and national levels will continue to present a supreme challenge for Europe's leaders.

Notes

The **Compagnia di San Paolo** (www.compagnia.torino.it), founded in Turin in 1563 as a charitable brotherhood, is today one of the largest private foundations in Europe. The Compagnia pursues aims of public interest and social use, in order to foster the civil, cultural and economic development of the community in which it operates.

The **Centre for the Study of Political Change** (CIRCaP) at the University of Siena (www.gips.unisi.it/circap) conducts research on the problems and processes related to political change at the sub-national, national, and international levels. The Center specializes in the comparative analysis of the dynamics shaping the relationship between European political elites and public opinion on European, foreign, and defense policy issues.

The European Elites Survey 2007 is a project of the Centre for the Study of Political Change at the University of Siena supported by the Compagnia di San Paolo . The survey was designed and analysed by Maricarmen Hernandez Aguilar, Flavio Brugnoli, Ebru Sule Canan, Philip Everts, Mario Gioannini, Pierangelo Isernia, Nicolò Russo Perez, and Luca Verzichelli. This report was written by Stephen Dau.



European Elites Survey

CIRCaP (Centre for the Study of Political Change) supported by the Compagnia di San Paolo

www.compagnia.torino.it

www.affarinternazionali.it

www.gips.unisi.it/circap