

### He's still not a European

‘A Dream Come True’ — this is how papers across Europe greeted the new president. What dream? Actually, it consisted of two prayers. First, “Deliver us from the evil that is Bush,” and second, “Please make us love America again.”

Barack Obama was the savior, and so up to eight out of 10 West Europeans would have voted for him. Europeans want to love America again, or so they say, and they imagined that a simple act of exorcism (“elections”) would rid them of the curse.

But politics is not about redemption, nor is the 44th president a redeemer. Obama is a very smart and smooth politico, who beat the mighty Hillary machine and then rolled over John McCain by moving left to center. He is no pussycat, and will not be what West Europeans dream he is: vaguely non-American, more European — polite, social-democratic and pacific.

Obama will be the president of a superpower with an economy three and a half times larger than the second biggest, Japan's, and military spending greater than the rest of the world's put together. As the only global player, the U.S. is in harm's way everywhere, hence ready to use force, which the West Europeans think is a kind of yahoo thing to do. Obama might even invade Pakistan, and his line on foreign policy (see “The Audacity of Hope”) is sometimes pure W: no veto for the UN, pre-emptive strikes, and playing the world's sheriff, though reluctantly.

Amiability may well deliver a realpolitik bonus to Obama. It will be a bit harder for European leaders to say “no” to that lovely young man in the White House. But reality will soon bite again. Will the Euroswooners still love Obama when he presses them for more troops in Afghanistan and real sanctions on Iran? As Bill Clinton might put it: It's national interest, stupid, not niceness.

— JOSEF JOFFE, publisher-editor of *Die Zeit*