

For Compass: A Journal of Leadership Fall 2003**How damaging is the transatlantic rift?****Bush's leadership and America's allies.**

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In retrospect, the outcome of the US invasion of Iraq may have been to win the battle and yet to have lost the war. The transatlantic alliance was put under the greatest strain by events leading up to the Iraq conflict. Internal divisions within the European Union over foreign and security policy were most dramatically highlighted in the war, where Britain, Italy and Spain (and Poland and Romania) supported the United States-led intervention using military force, while France and Germany (and Russia) argued most forcefully for multilateral policies of continuing arms inspections through the United Nations. The diplomatic debacle split the UN Security Council, generated deep divisions among political leaders within the European Union, and created rifts in the transatlantic alliance.

The central question raised by these developments concerns whether the transatlantic rift is a temporary phenomenon, that can be patched up by judicious diplomacy and the passage of time, or whether it highlights a deeper and more enduring fault line between the contemporary worldviews of Europeans and Americans.

On the one hand, disagreements between American and European views of foreign and security policy may rest primarily upon the leadership of President George W. Bush. If elite-led -- reflecting the impact of specific events, the aggressive philosophy of the neo-cons in the White House, and the policies of the Bush administration -- then any differences among allies can be expected to gradually fade over time, especially under any new American administration. After all, during the 1990s President Clinton was widely popular throughout Europe, with the worldly Brits, French and Italians appearing more forgiving and less shocked by his human foibles than puritan America. Despite policy differences between the European Union and the United States over the Gulf war, Bosnia, and Kosovo, a broad transatlantic coalition worked together during these events. The traditional transatlantic alliance seemed to have survived the end of the Cold War, although the balance of power may have shifted from London and Paris to Berlin and Brussels. If the old alliance broke down over Iraq, it could be that this was due, at least in part, to the personal laid-back Crawford-style of President Bush -- his anti-intellectual 'good 'ol boy' folksiness, his black-and-white lack-of-doubt 'good-evil' religious morality, his furrowed-brow struggles with the English language -- all of which seem to appeal to many Americans, yet which may be the very characteristics that strike exactly the wrong note for the suave European chattering classes.

On the other hand, as Robert Kagan has recently argued in a controversial study¹, differences between European and American foreign policy may reflect a deeper and more enduring cultural rift that has slowly developed during the last fifty years among the mass publics on both continents. The main divergence in strategic perspectives, he suggests, concern the appropriate deployment of military might over transnational negotiation, approval of the role of unilateral action over multilateral cooperation, and preferences for the policies of coercion over persuasion. Kagan believes that this deep rift among the transatlantic alliance has been exacerbated, but not caused by, the events of 9/11 and its aftermath. Nor is this just the result of reactions to the Bush administration. Nor is this regarded as simply the by-product of globalization, and the rise of multilateral institutions such as the European Union, NAFTA, and the World Trade Organization, and new conventions and regulations of international and multilateral governance on issues ranging from trade to human rights and environmental protection².

Instead, according to Kagan, transatlantic differences over foreign and security policy, which came to a head in the Security Council debates over resolution 1441, have become ideologically rooted in popular culture in the United States and Europe due to their divergent historical experiences and contemporary strengths in the world.

“On the all-important question of power -- the utility of power, the morality of power -- they have parted ways. Europeans believe they are moving beyond power into a self-contained world of laws and rules and transnational negotiation and cooperation. Europe itself has entered a post-historical paradise, the realization of Immanuel Kant's "Perpetual Peace." The United States, meanwhile, remains mired in history, exercising power in the anarchic Hobbesian world where international rules are unreliable and where security and the promotion of a liberal order still depend on the possession and use of military might. This is why, on major strategic and international questions today, Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus: They agree on little and understand one another less and less.”

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, America became a unipolar power, outstripping all its rivals in the size of its investment in military and defense forces, and more willing to deploy these resources. This process can be dated back well before the current administration to the U.S. invasion of Panama in 1989, the Persian Gulf War in 1991, as well as a succession of interventions in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo. In the post-Cold War world, many foreign policy analysts such as Samuel Huntington predicted that the coalescing of the European Union would lead towards a ‘multi-polar’ world balancing and checking the military power of the United States³. Instead the Iraq conflict highlighted the impotence of the European Union as a global player, while by contrast the United States has become the de facto single military superpower. America appears increasingly willing to intervene militarily in international conflict without agreement or constraint within traditional multilateral institutions, including the United Nations and NATO, while the Bush Administration has proved actively hostile to the idea of the International Criminal Court, and the Kyoto convention on global warming.

Meanwhile within the European Union, Kagan argues, the process of European integration has gradually engendered a culture of diplomatic bargaining, conciliation and persuasion, with economic, legal and commercial ties binding nations closer together within the borders of the EU and, by extension, providing a successful model that can be applied to resolve other international conflicts elsewhere as well. The rejection of military intervention preceded the Iraq war, for example the European Union faced problems in mounting a coordinated foreign policy using force in the Balkan war in the early 1990s, and later in the Kosovo conflict, both occurring on their doorstep. In both cases, European forces played a vital role as effective peacekeepers in the aftermath of conflict, but the EU was unable to agree upon an effective military strategy until American intervention with decisive force had stabilized the situation. EU policies towards other international conflicts reveal similar limitations, notably in the Middle East.

The Causes of the Transatlantic Rift

While the 'Venus and Mars' thesis has generated a stimulating argument in contemporary foreign policy circles, the core ideas remain ill-sketched out, and there are many unresolved issues about the evidence at the heart of these claims. We can highlight two here.

First, to suggest that the primary cultural division exists between Europe and the United States fails to account for the major differences *within* the European Union which became evident over Iraq, with the foreign policies of Britain, Spain, Italy (and to a lesser extent Poland and Romania) officially supporting the United States, while many other EU states, led by France and Germany, proved highly critical of military intervention. The dramatic confrontations were illustrated most clearly by the heated debate between Jack Straw, Britain's Foreign Secretary, and France's Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, over the implementation of resolution 1441 at the UN Security Council. Even within the Bush Administration there were well-known differences of opinion towards Iraq between Colin Powell's softly-softly State Department and Donald Rumsfeld's gung-ho let's-roll Pentagon, rather than a single unified perspective. Therefore the thesis may grossly oversimplify the situation by overlooking vital differences over foreign policy among and within governments, especially in the newly-enlarged European Union-25.

Equally importantly, even if there is a growing transatlantic rift at elite-level, it remains unclear whether there are indeed genuine and enduring cultural differences among the *mass publics* in the United States and in the European Union about issues such as the deployment of military power, willingness to engage in humanitarian intervention, the appropriate role of international institutions including the United Nations and NATO, perceptions of international security threats from countries such as Iraq, Iran and North Korea, preferences for multilateral cooperation through negotiated conventions and laws or unilateral military action, and views about the role of the United States and the European Union in the world.

Comparing Transatlantic Attitudes

To consider some evidence concerning transatlantic attitudes towards the United States in general, and the leadership of George W. Bush in particular, we can turn to the *Pew Global Attitudes* survey, conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press in twenty nations in April-May 2003, released in June 2003. We can also draw upon the Gallup International Post-War Iraq poll conducted in 45 countries in April-May 2003. Rather than analyzing all countries in these surveys, American attitudes can be compared with those of its traditional allies, all major players in world politics and influential members of the G-8. Britain, Spain and Italy officially sided with the United States military intervention in Iraq, although only Britain actually contributed troops, and we can also compare public opinion in France, Germany and Canada, all countries that opposed unilateral military intervention without UN backing in Iraq. These countries share many common values with the United States as Western democracies and postindustrial economies, similar to America in many regards, as well as being traditional allies, although of course it should not be assumed that the publics in Britain, France, Germany and Italy necessarily reflect opinion in the smaller

As many polls have registered, in the immediate aftermath of the Iraq war favorable attitudes towards America sharply dipped worldwide. As shown in Table 1, the change in attitudes among the mass publics in the transatlantic allies in the period from September 2002 to May 2003 were largely in line with official foreign policy; favorable opinions, which started lowest, fell most in France, America's most vociferous critic on the UN security Council. Favorable opinions also fell in Germany, traditionally pacifist in international affairs and working closely with France on mobilizing diplomatic action against unilateral military intervention without a new UN resolution. A more modest erosion of approval of America registered in Italy and Canada, while Britain had the least change, and 70% retained favorable attitudes towards the United States.

[Table 1 about here]

But what caused the slide in public opinion among the traditional allies? The survey asked whether those with an unfavorable opinion attributed this to the Presidency of George W. Bush or whether this reflected a more general problem with America. Overwhelmingly in all countries the majority of critics of the United States said they held this attitude because of Bush far more than blaming America in general. Contrary to the Kagan thesis, this suggests that the Iraq conflict did hurt the image of the United States among its transatlantic allies, but this could be temporary damage that could fade under new leadership.

[Table 2 about here]

To explore this further, people were asked how far they had confidence that a series of six political leaders would 'do the right thing' in world affairs. Table 3 reveals that across all the transatlantic allies, the most popular leader was Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations. In this regards, Americans were at odds with their allies, giving Annan lower ratings than the other six nations. Tony Blair was also widely admired among the publics in these nations, and indeed far more popular in the United States than at home. Jacques Chirac had the ironic experience of being more widely admired in Germany than at home, and Gerhard Schroeder was similarly more widely regarded in France than in Germany. But among the six world leaders, George W. Bush attracted the lowest confidence among the publics in these countries, although well-regarded in the United States. Again this suggests that one result of the Iraq conflict has been to highlight public criticism of the American president, which may prove a temporary phenomenon rather than leaving a lasting legacy in diplomatic alliances.

[Table 3 about here]

But what of more specific attitudes towards the Iraqi invasion, especially in the aftermath of the downfall of President Saddam Hussein? How did the publics react to these events? The Gallup International poll conducted in mid-April to early May 2003 monitored public opinion in 45 nations. The survey asked people whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements. The results in Table 4 show that differences among the transatlantic allies stretches beyond the president to broader disagreements about foreign and security policy. When asked whether the military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq made the world a safer or more dangerous place, the only positive balance was found in the United States. In every other nation, including Britain, the publics overwhelmingly believed that these actions made the world more dangerous, probably fearing a backlash from terrorists or simply destabilization in Central Asia and the Middle East. When asked whether military action was justified in Iraq, following the destruction of President Saddam Hussein's regime, two-thirds of Americans agreed with this statement, and a majority (54%) of Brits though the action to be justified, but only about overwhelming majorities of those in Spain, France and Germany thought it unjustified.

[Table 4 about here]

Across all the other items, publics in the transatlantic allied countries proved critical of US policy; two-thirds of more thought that the US was too keen to resort to military might, the majority doubted that the Iraq war could bring greater peace and stability to the Middle East, less than one quarter thought the Iraq war would reduce terrorism, most did not believe that the diplomatic rift could be easily healed, and most said that the war had a negative effect on their attitude towards the United States. In short, the publics proved highly skeptical that the outcome of the conflict could achieve any of the goals that were used to justify the action by the United States and its allies. Of course the Gallup survey was conducted before the final removal of Saddam Hussein's

regime, but at a time when the United States and Britain had made considerable progress and victory was in sight, and well before the subsequent daily casualties from ongoing conflict and the subsequent problems of failing services and Iraqi discontent were apparent.

The evidence considered here remains very limited, and certainly inadequate to fully evaluate the Kagan thesis. Nevertheless the results are certainly suggestive that at the end of the Iraq war, the image of the United States, and particularly attitudes towards President George W. Bush, have been damaged among some of America's closest transatlantic allies by US foreign policy in Iraq and the United States willingness to engage in 'preemptive' military action despite the lack of a fresh United Nations resolution and an international consensus. Whether this rift reflects a more enduring difference in the basic philosophy and interests of the United States and the European Union, in their willingness to use unilateral force rather than the international processes of conciliation, bargaining and persuasion, remains to be seen.

Table 1: Favorable attitudes towards the United States, September 2002-May 2003

	Sept 2002	May 2003	Change
Britain	75	70	-5
Canada	72	63	-9
Italy	70	60	-10
Germany	61	45	-16
France	63	43	-20

Q: *"Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable opinion of the United States?"*

Source: *Pew Global Attitudes* survey, conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press in 20 nations in April-May 2003

Table 2: Factors contributing towards an unfavorable opinion of the United States

	Mostly Bush	America in general
France	74	21
Germany	74	22
Italy	67	24
Canada	60	32
Britain	59	31
Spain	50	37

Q: *“Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable or ver unfavorable opinion of the United States? (If unfavorable) “Is it mostly because of George W. Bush or is it more a general problem with America?”*

Source: *Pew Global Attitudes* survey, conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press in 20 nations in April-May 2003

Table 3: Confidence in world leaders, April-May 2003

	US	Britain	Italy	Spain	France	Germany	Canada	Mean
Kofi Annan	45	72	69	59	65	74	54	63
Tony Blair	83	71	57	43	40	64	75	62
Jacques Chirac	26	30	46	51	75	84	51	52
Gerhard Schroeder	34	46	44	48	76	60	48	51
Vladimir Putin	40	53	45	31	48	75	54	49
George W. Bush	78	51	43	28	20	33	59	45

Note: “Now I’m going to read a list of political leaders. For each, tell me how much confidence you have in each leader to do the right thing regarding world affairs– a lot of confidence, some confidence, not too much confidence, or no confidence at all?”

% Saying that they had ‘a lot’ or ‘some’ confidence in each leader.

Source: *Pew Global Attitudes* survey, conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press in 20 nations in April-May 2003

Table 4: Post-war reactions to the Iraq invasion

% Agree	US	Britain	Spain	France	Germany	Canada
As a result of recent military action in Afghanistan and in Iraq, do you think that the world is a safer place?	48	22	17	9	23	29
As a result of recent military action in Afghanistan and in Iraq, do you think that the world is a more dangerous place?	36	55	63	82	72	58
Now that the regime of Saddam Hussein has been destroyed, so you think that military action by the US and its allies was justified or not? (% 'justified')	68	54	22	27	28	46
The US is too keen to use military force in other countries	38	62	68	87	64	61
The (Iraq) war will result in greater peace and stability in the Middle East	56	42	27	14	26	41
The threat of terrorism has been significantly reduced by the (Iraq) war	44	20	24	12	15	26
The diplomatic rift between the US and its allies with countries opposed to the war can be easily repaired	45	38	41	43	37	46
Has military action in Iraq had a positive effect on your attitude to the US, a negative effect, or no effect? (% 'negative')	14	37	49	59	46	35

Source: *Post-War Iraq Poll*, conducted by Gallup International in 45 nations 16th April-8th May 2003

¹ Robert Kagan. 2002. 'Power and Weakness.' *Policy Review* 113; William Kristol and Robert Kagan. Eds. 2002. *Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy*. New York: Encounter Books; Robert Kagan. 2003. *Of Paradise and Power*. NY: Knopf.

² For a discussion, see David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathan Perraton. 1999. *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

³ Samuel P. Huntington. 1999. 'The Lonely Superpower.' *Foreign Affairs* (March-April)