

## Mutual Incomprehension: U.S.-German Value Gaps beyond Iraq

Winston Churchill once said that “there will always be ‘a German problem.’”<sup>1</sup> In light of his dispute with German chancellor Gerhard Schröder last autumn, it is likely that George W. Bush—a well-known admirer of the British statesman—would heartily agree. The crisis in U.S.-German relations erupted in August–September 2002 during the German election campaign when Schröder stated unambiguously his belief that “it would be a mistake to intervene militarily in Iraq”<sup>2</sup> and subsequently ruled out the possibility of making German soldiers available for such an action, whether or not sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council. Yet, the crisis was not merely caused by electoral statements made in desperation during a closely fought election campaign, as some believers in the firm foundation of U.S.-German relations suppose. Nor did the German discussion over whether the West should be prepared to embark on a preemptive policy of regime change in Iraq “symbolize the end of an era in close post-war relations between Washington and Berlin,”<sup>3</sup> as some authors have dramatically maintained.

The dispute over Iraq policy has revealed the existence of fundamental problems at the core of the U.S.-German relationship that go far beyond the conflicting personalities of the two leaders. Nor do wide transatlantic power gaps or disparate European and U.S. economic and social philosophies adequately explain this state of affairs.<sup>4</sup> Instead, the recent tension demonstrates that U.S.-German relations are characterized by a mutual incomprehension of each other’s political culture and deeply held political values. Especially evident is the profound difference between the two countries’ positions on the permissibility of the use of military force in interna-

---

Klaus Larres is the Kissinger Professor in Foreign Policy and International Relations at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

---

Copyright © 2003 by The Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
*The Washington Quarterly* • 26:2 pp. 23–42.

tional affairs—between the Bush administration’s inclination to go it alone and the German penchant for multilateralism.

Overcoming the deep value gaps that have emerged will prove difficult, but the two governments can work to compensate for them by intensifying cooperation in four areas of mutual importance. A strengthened multilateral approach to international politics on the part of the Bush administration, as well as a greater effort toward resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, would go a long way toward convincing the German government of Bush’s seriousness about tackling pressing issues in a constructive way. In turn, Germany’s readiness to make an even stronger case for Turkey’s membership in the European Union in the near future and greater German efforts to address the increasing military-capability gap between Europe and the United States would considerably help convince the Bush administration that Germany remains a reliable international partner.

### **Differing U.S.-German Perspectives on Iraq**

---

Schröder’s criticism of President Bush, U.S. Iraq policy, and U.S. foreign policy more generally was highly popular in Germany and proved to be a major contributing factor to his very narrow electoral victory in late September 2002. Vice President Dick Cheney’s August 2002 speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Nashville, Tennessee, gave the German chancellor particularly good reason to believe that the United States intended to take preemptive military action to change the Iraqi regime. In an interview with the *New York Times*, Schröder explained that the problem was that Cheney, and by implication Bush, “has or seems to have committed himself so strongly [to war] that it is hard to imagine how he can climb down.”<sup>5</sup> He also resented learning of Cheney’s speech through the media rather than hearing about it directly from the White House.<sup>6</sup>

With the country’s economy declining, Schröder reassured German voters that no resources would be squandered, ruling out the possibility of German financial aid for any upcoming war against Iraq. Although Germany had provided such assistance during the Persian Gulf War in 1991, Schröder declared as early as August 5, 2002, that “the time of check-book diplomacy is over once and for all.”<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Schröder also indicated in a flippant aside that he was prepared to stand up to Washington when he told his supporters that he certainly would not “click his heels” if approached by the United States about the anticipated war with Iraq.<sup>8</sup> Schröder was not influenced just by electoral concerns, however. With the operation to root out the global Al Qaeda network hardly underway, he was sincerely convinced that fighting a war to unseat Saddam Hussein would be a great mistake. Ber-

lin did not consider Iraq an imminent threat to the Western world. After all, despite all attempts, the United States had been unable to link Saddam to the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

To the German government, therefore, it appeared that a policy of containment rather than forced regime change—which could potentially provoke Saddam to use biological and chemical weapons—was more than sufficient to deal with Iraq. Although fully in favor of allowing UN weapons inspectors to search for secret weapons of mass destruction (WMD) Saddam may have been developing, Berlin saw the Al Qaeda network as much more of a severe threat to the Western world than the Iraqi dictator. Thus, unless Saddam again initiated aggressive acts of war, no justification for invading Iraq and forcefully bringing about regime change existed.

In fact, Schröder saw embarking on a war in Iraq not only as a distraction from the pursuit of global terrorism but even as greatly counterproductive as it might further radicalize anti-Western opinion in the Middle East and elsewhere. Rather than forcefully remove Saddam, Berlin felt Washington should expend greater efforts to obtain the long-overdue resolution of the Israel-Palestine problem, arguing that this step would most contribute to regional stability and help prevent the further development of anti-Western sentiment and terrorist onslaughts. Furthermore, the Schröder government believed preemptive military action to be a breach of international law, which would set a dangerous international precedent; and he viewed the U.S. government's general tendency to inform rather than consult its NATO allies in the fight against terrorism with great skepticism, fearing that Washington would neglect to consult with its allies specifically over whether or not an invasion of Iraq should occur. Schröder even told a journalist that "consultation cannot mean that I get a phone call two hours in advance only to be told, 'We are going in.'"<sup>9</sup>

From the Bush administration's point of view, the crux of the matter was not just Schröder's rejection of German participation in an invasion of Iraq. The White House would have been unlikely to ask for German support in light of the overstretched and poorly equipped nature of German forces. Two particular, much broader issues irked the administration. Above all, the overconfident if not arrogant and moralizing tone of several of the chancellor's electoral statements appeared to indicate the Germans' certainty that they knew best how to deal with the Iraq problem. The Schröder government, for example, emphasized that he believed in the pursuit of a nonviolent "German way"—"made in Berlin"—to bring about a resolution of the conflict.<sup>10</sup>

**Schröder was not only influenced by electoral concerns.**

In light of German history, this statement naturally raised concerns about a new German *Sonderweg* (special path), even though Schröder had a nonaggressive, peaceful approach in mind.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, there very well may be some truth to Henry Kissinger's allegation that Schröder's Germany "seeks its security in an abstract moralism veering towards pacifism, which enables it to feel superior to its powerful ally."<sup>12</sup>

The White House was nearly as offended by the anti-U.S. tone of so many of Schröder's campaign statements, including a number of implicitly derogatory remarks about Bush's alleged adventurism, his lack of intellectual capacity, and his leadership qualities in general. Bush believed

**Berlin saw Al Qaeda as a more severe threat than the Iraqi dictator.**

that, during his May 2002 visit to Berlin, he had reached an implicit understanding with Schröder on some degree of German participation or at least German political support for war against Iraq, which led Bush to feel severely let down during the election campaign, not only by the substance but also by the tone of the chancellor's utterances.<sup>13</sup> As early as August 6, Schröder had declared that, although he was more than ready to "give soli-

darity" to the U.S. fight against terrorism, he was strongly opposed to a very risky and destabilizing military intervention in Iraq: "Under my leadership, this country won't participate in any adventures."<sup>14</sup>

Bush took Schröder's statements personally; the U.S. president felt that he and his office had been grievously insulted by one of the country's hitherto most-trusted and reliable—if not subservient—allies.<sup>15</sup> In the president's view, his increasing distrust was confirmed just prior to the German election, when Justice Minister Däubler-Gmelin remarked that Bush had initiated his Iraq policy to divert attention from his unsuccessful economic policy at home, calling this move a "classic tactic ... that Hitler also used."<sup>16</sup> Despite Schröder's immediate attempt to distance himself from the justice minister's remark by writing a personal letter to Bush, the president deeply resented the incident. After all, Bush largely saw himself in the role of a contemporary Churchill fighting today's Adolf Hitler in Saddam Hussein.

The personal relationship between Bush and Schröder and the political relationship between the two countries hit rock bottom. When the chancellor reiterated his opposition to war against Iraq immediately after election day and then again over the course of the following weeks, emphasizing that no German troops would participate in an invasion of Iraq,<sup>17</sup> an "ice age" descended upon U.S.-German relations, with the White House convinced

that Schröder had managed to retain his job only “by planting his feet firmly on Uncle Sam’s face.”<sup>18</sup>

Although the two leaders’ divergent personalities and incompatible political styles certainly contributed to the bilateral frost, they are not sufficient to explain the recent rift. For electoral, personal, and long-term strategic reasons, Schröder is keen on pursuing a more independent and confident German foreign policy. Bush, in contrast, believes strongly in his personal mission and the “manifest destiny” of the United States, placing a high premium on loyalty and reliability in domestic as well as international affairs. That being said, Bush certainly does not appear to forgive personal slights easily.<sup>19</sup> Schröder, for example, did not receive the customary congratulatory phone call from the U.S. president following his election victory. Instead, both National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld emphasized that U.S.-German relations had been “poisoned.”<sup>20</sup> Rumsfeld even went so far as to refuse to talk to his German colleague, Defense Minister Peter Struck, at a two-day NATO ministerial meeting in Warsaw in late September. Rather than call him by name, Rumsfeld repeatedly referred to him as “that man.”<sup>21</sup> As late as the end of October, Rice told her staff that she did not wish to see visiting Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer in the White House; he was granted a brief meeting with Secretary of State Colin Powell but was not allowed anywhere near the president.<sup>22</sup> There were many other indications from the U.S. government, not least from the U.S. ambassador to Berlin, David Coats, that the White House regarded Schröder’s campaign-time antiwar utterances as highly objectionable, unacceptable anti-U.S. statements.

Washington’s response surprised the Germans, who were astonished about what Berlin regarded as Washington’s exaggerated sensitivity. On the whole, the German government assumed that the Bush administration would forgive Schröder’s indiscretions, uttered during a close election campaign where the chancellor was battling for his political survival. In light of Bush’s experiences with the controversial U.S. presidential election in 2000 and his highly partisan involvement in the 2002 congressional election, Germany assumed that Washington would regard any campaign rhetoric with a degree of generosity. Precisely because of the long-standing friendship between Germany and the United States, Berlin assumed that a warm handshake between Schröder and Bush or their foreign ministers, Fisher and Powell, could quickly overcome any irritation.

Their assumptions, however, clearly proved mistaken.

**U.S. policymakers  
hardly recognize  
German anxiety  
about nationalism.**

## Mutual Incomprehension

---

Washington's response to Schröder's alleged anti-U.S. statements during the election campaign and German astonishment, annoyance, and great disappointment over the apparent inability of the United States to appreciate German hesitations about war against Iraq reflect both nations' increasing incapacity to understand the other. This mutual incomprehension and the differing priorities between the United States and Germany go far beyond the crisis in Iraq. Rather than serve as the source of conflict, the Iraq question merely brought three growing and fundamental value gaps in U.S.-German relations, and to some extent in transatlantic relations more generally, to the surface: multilateralism, nationalism, and the role of force in international relations.

### COOPERATION AND MULTILATERALISM

Washington policymakers today barely recognize the influence that successful integration into the European Community, as patiently guided and supported by the Truman and Eisenhower administrations in the 1950s, has had in shaping German political values since 1949. After World War II, West Germany was able to reestablish itself as a respected member of the international community only by integrating and cooperating with its European partners on all levels, even when it meant sacrificing a good deal of its sovereignty. Indeed, the Schröder government and all its predecessors have acted on the premise that ever-deeper integration with its European partners is in Germany's foremost national interest.<sup>23</sup>

This multilateral and cooperative foreign policy style has become second nature to German politicians. During and after the Cold War, cooperation with its NATO partners—not the least of which was the United States—was one of the few possible ways that Germany could make its voice heard in a wider international arena. Although the West initially intended for Germany's full integration with the North Atlantic alliance to serve primarily to contain German power, NATO membership also significantly helped the Federal Republic to overcome widespread suspicion of its aggressive past and earn the respect of the West. Germany's contemporary respect for NATO also stems from the fact that the Federal Republic joined NATO in 1955 while neither West nor East Germany became UN members until 1974. Although West Germany never became a permanent member of the Security Council, it was a member of NATO's nuclear-planning group and became one of the leading members of the alliance, only surpassed in importance by the United States and Great Britain. This role allowed it to significantly influence Western military policy and play a crucial role in formulating

the West's Cold War and post-Cold War strategy, particularly toward Russia and Eastern as well as Central Europe.<sup>24</sup> The Bush administration's tendency to downplay and often ignore the importance of NATO, the EU, the UN, and other international organizations has therefore perplexed Berlin, which, for good reason, highly values the benefits of a multilateral approach.

In this respect, Schröder has been the most outspoken, but certainly not the only, European politician to criticize the Bush administration frequently for its largely unilateralist approach to Iraq. Great discomfort about many aspects of the Bush administration's foreign policy is evident among the people of many if not most European countries. As early as January 2000, Rice's declaration that a Republican administration would "proceed from the firm ground of national interest and not from the interest of an illusory international community"<sup>25</sup> caused great concern in Europe before Bush had even entered the White House. Soon, disputes over the development of a missile defense shield, U.S. imposition of protective tariffs on steel and then on agricultural products, and doubts about the U.S. commitment to the Kyoto Protocol and the International Criminal Court, among a number of other contentious issues, gave rise to a significant level of European disenchantment with the new administration and its apparent lack of interest in cooperating with its European allies.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, in his 2002 State of the Union address, when Bush referred to an "axis of evil" (Iran, North Korea, and Iraq) and the need to "deny terrorists and their state sponsors" WMD to make a "sudden attack" impossible, European governments did not overlook that the president never once specifically mentioned cooperation with the EU or NATO. He only vaguely referred to "our coalition" and "our allies."<sup>27</sup> Moreover, Europe was barely taken into consideration in the Bush administration's national security strategy, issued in September 2002.<sup>28</sup>

Despite Washington's belated October–November 2002 appeal to the Security Council to seek a resolution on how to deal with Saddam's WMD, the general public in continental Europe, particularly in Germany, continued to believe that Bush and his closest advisers had already made up their minds and were merely looking for an excuse to invade Iraq, regardless of what the country's European allies might say. This perception led to the firm conviction throughout Germany and most of continental Europe that the Bush administration displayed a "condescending indifference to outside opinion," with Powell representing "the lone voice of multilateral moderation in

**Germany tends to view international politics in largely moral, rather than realist, terms.**

Bush's administration."<sup>29</sup> The author Salman Rushdie neatly captured how the Europeans feel: "Unilateralist action by the world's only hyperpower looks like bullying because, well, it is bullying."<sup>30</sup>

### **NATIONALISM AND PATRIOTISM**

The two societies also hold vastly differing views of nationalism and flag-waving patriotism. Because the exaggerated nationalism of the Nazi years led to such disastrous results, post-1945 Germany has been characterized by strong antinationalist and antipatriotic sentiments. To a considerable extent, Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik* of the 1970s was based on the insight that it might be best not to pursue a nationalist policy but to accept and recognize the division of the country, including the continued existence of two German states, and to give up hope of reuniting Germany for a very long time.<sup>31</sup>

This thinking, which became the conventional wisdom in the Federal Republic in the 1980s, also explains why many western Germans were not enthusiastic about German reunification in 1990. Whereas many worried that the economic burden of integrating the German Democratic Republic into the Federal Republic of Germany would prove to be too heavy, they were far more concerned that, within a few years, the politicians of a united Germany might become too confident and too nationalistic. For example, Günter Grass and Jürgen Habermas—probably postwar Germany's most important intellectuals—argued strongly against the reunification of the German nation. The philosopher, Habermas, felt that a new German national identity with all the burdens of its past was dangerous; rather, what was needed was a minimalist "constitutional patriotism"—one limited to being proud of the re-creation of German democracy. Although this belief in the self-denial of a new postwar German nationalism and the long-standing, somewhat parochial and angst-ridden perception of Germany's place in the world has gradually eroded over the last 10 years,<sup>32</sup> the fear of once again being too assertive in world politics is still widespread among the German people and significantly influences German politics and society.

Policymakers in the United States hardly recognize this anxiety. In contrast, many U.S. citizens believe that they are indeed involved in a war and that, as a wartime president, Bush must be granted special prerogatives—as the U.S. Congress dutifully did in October 2002—to be able to respond to the threats facing the United States and the West. In fact, a year and a half after September 11, 2001, most Americans are still scared stiff of being attacked again and believe that Iraq has the potential and inclination to assist anti-Western terrorists.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, the U.S. population largely looks to their president for decisive leadership and to take action. As Mary McGrory has written, most people in the United States "don't mind [Bush's] UN-bait-

ing or his inconsistent approaches to Iraq and North Korea. They are constantly reminded of multiplying and unseen threats.”<sup>34</sup> After all, the United States historically has not been accustomed to feeling vulnerable to domestic terrorism, surrounded by two vast oceans on both sides and two peaceful neighbors to the north and south.

This current feeling of vulnerability is not widely shared in Germany, where the population was exposed to the left-wing terrorism of the Red Army Faction during much of the 1970s and 1980s,<sup>35</sup> or shared elsewhere in Europe for that matter, where people are more familiar with the experience of unexpected terrorist attacks. The preoccupation with entirely different concerns on either side of the Atlantic does not bode well for relations between the two. Europe and the United States look at the post-September 11 world in very different ways. Moreover, in times of war, the U.S. population is generally not amused by European attacks on Bush’s strategy toward Iraq. “Don’t mess with the commander in chief” appears to be a widely shared notion in the United States.<sup>36</sup>

**Even the use of military force to depose the Taliban was hotly debated in Germany.**

### **PACIFISM, WAR, AND INTERNATIONAL MORALITY**

Over the course of the post-1945 era, Germany has become an increasingly pacifist nation. In addition to its tendency toward multilateralism and subdued nationalism, Germany’s responsibility for Hitler’s rise to power, World War II, and particularly for the six million deaths during the Holocaust still considerably shape German society’s worldview. No event in recent U.S. history, not even the significant impact of the Vietnam War on the American psyche, is comparably profound. Whereas in U.S. politics and society it is fully acceptable to use the term “war” to refer to political strategies—for example, the war on drugs or the war against terror—German politics and society forbid this terminology.<sup>37</sup> Since the end of World War II, Germans associate war only with negative and indeed aggressive and offensive connotations. Similarly, even more than 50 years after Hitler’s defeat, the military remains discredited in German society. Although professional soldiers no longer provoke outright hostility when they appear in public, as they did in the 1950s and 1960s, Germans still display a degree of suspicion, often wondering how anyone could be so misled to embark on such a dangerous and destructive career.

Although Washington, and London as well, deplore the lack of military enthusiasm and effort of post-1990 Germany, it is in part a result of the successful effort that the United States and Great Britain made after 1945 to

transform Hitler's militaristic Germany into a more peaceful and cooperative country. The Anglo-American reeducation programs in occupied Germany laid the foundations for a free, democratic, peaceful, and antimilitaristic nation. When West Germany's first chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, complied with U.S. wishes to set up a new German army in the 1950s, he encountered a widespread popular protest movement, particularly among young Germans and members of Protestant churches.

More than a decade afterward, the Vietnam War and reflections on the reasons for Hitler's rise to power contributed to a politically hyperaware generation in Germany—one that displayed strong pacifist tendencies and impatiently demanded that German society own up to an array of crimes and injustices committed under the Nazis. This movement was revitalized in the late 1970s and early 1980s with the widespread protests against the intention to deploy short-range missiles and cruise missiles on German soil. Combined with global concerns about the environment and social issues of justice, fairness, and equality, this antiwar movement helped establish the Green Party in January 1980,

which first entered Parliament in 1983 and is now Schröder's important coalition partner as well as the country's third-largest political force.

During the Cold War, Germany was an important but still largely passive factor in East-West politics. Since unification in October 1990, however, it has had to get used to being thrust yet again into a more active role on the world stage. The country's strong pacifist sentiments—amassed during the previous five decades—have further tempered this already rather slow process. German society and politics now tend to view the world of international politics in largely moral terms rather than Anglo-American realist and power political terms. Ironically, it was precisely this moral imperative that Fischer and Schröder used in 1999 to convince Parliament to permit the German government to participate in the military action in Kosovo—a highly controversial political decision in Germany.

In Kosovo, for the first time in German foreign policy since World War II, German soldiers and the German air force were deployed beyond NATO territory and in a role that clearly went beyond the purposes of peacekeeping and self-defense. The government used largely moral arguments to convince the German population of the necessity to use force against Serbia. Fischer's arguments were critical to tipping the balance in favor of popular and parliamentary support for action in Kosovo. He maintained that Ger-

**Germany would prefer more resources be dedicated to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.**

many had to join its Western allies in Kosovo to prevent the Serbians from expelling and slaughtering Kosovo's innocent Albanian population. Germany, he proclaimed, had learned from Auschwitz; and the lessons from Auschwitz demanded that, this time, Germany be found on the side of justice and human rights. Thus, it was for reasons of both morality and history—directly interrelated for the Germans—that the Schröder government was prepared to participate militarily in the Kosovo war.<sup>38</sup>

The government's decision to participate in the air war against the Taliban in Afghanistan in the aftermath of September 11 caused even greater controversy. Although Germany had promised unrestricted solidarity to the United States immediately after September 11, the use of military force to depose the Taliban was hotly debated. Ultimately, Schröder was only able to obtain parliamentary approval to send German soldiers to Afghanistan by linking the question to a vote of confidence. By combining the vote on participation in the Afghanistan war with a vote on whether or not he should stay in office as chancellor, many of his own party's Parliament members felt compelled to grudgingly support the government. Even so, the chancellor managed to obtain Parliament's agreement only by the slimmest of majorities—he received 336 votes, two more than necessary.<sup>39</sup> Of all the Western leaders whose countries participated in the Afghanistan war, Schröder was the only one who had to steer such a risky course and invest a great amount of political capital to secure parliamentary and indeed popular approval.

Despite Germany's involvement in the wars in Kosovo and Afghanistan, Germany, along with much of the rest of Europe except Great Britain, views military force as a very last resort—only after all other alternatives have been exhausted and if everyone involved agrees. In U.S. and British government circles, the deployment of military forces at an early stage in a crisis—increasingly as a first resort to threaten or even take preemptive action—and, if necessary, as a unilateral step is entirely acceptable under certain circumstances. Moreover, as Washington increasingly fights wars with unmanned and highly sophisticated technology and relies on aerial bombing, Germany and much of Europe tends to see this *modus operandi* as immoral. In Germany, the concept of war fought more fairly with ground troops and large armies is still prevalent, whereas the United States regards such tactics as the exception rather than the rule in modern warfare.<sup>40</sup>

## **The Iraq Dispute and Lessons for the Future**

---

When considering its policy toward Iraq, it appears that the Schröder government has not fully comprehended the implications of two factors, both of which are critical for Washington's political environment and the policy

evolution of the war on terrorism. First, it is clear that the German government, as well as many other European administrations, has recognized neither the dramatic depth of the emotional and political upheaval in U.S. politics since the September 11 attacks nor the genuine, popular U.S. concern over vulnerability to international terrorism. Consequently, there is very little understanding of the not-so-intellectual but politically successful gut-feeling approach that Bush has used to guide U.S. responses to the post-September 11 world situation. Bush fully recognizes the mood and the widespread fear in the country at large; in fact, he basically shares them. He has

**Germany has, in fact, recently become the champion of Turkey's cause within the EU.**

a deep sense of moral purpose and mission, driven by his intense religious convictions, and a strong commitment to protecting his country; most U.S. citizens fully approve of his attitude. Bush's firm, outspoken, and unambiguous leadership style has won him extremely high popularity ratings in the United States and allowed him firmly to consolidate the shaky authority with which he began his presidency after the 2000 election contro-

versy.<sup>41</sup> This style continues to be more than controversial in Europe, however, where he is considered a cowboy in foreign affairs.

Rather than attempt to understand the enormous changes currently underway in U.S. society and foreign policy, Germany and many other EU countries are mainly preoccupied with their own problems, such as the economic downturn; the composition of a European constitution; and, not least, the eastern enlargement of the EU and the structural decisionmaking reforms necessary to achieve it. These are massive undertakings for European governments, and they leave comparatively little energy for focusing on the world beyond Europe.

The second factor that Germany in particular and continental Europe as a whole does not fully appreciate is the Bush administration's overall strategy in the war on terror. With Bush's success in securing the unanimous passage of Resolution 1441 by the Security Council in November 2002, it has become difficult to argue that the White House has embarked on a unilateral strategy and is not cooperating with its allies. In the absence of clear evidence linking Saddam with the September 11 attacks and Al Qaeda, however, Germans still widely repudiate the connection made in Washington between regime change in Iraq and the pursuit of the war on terror.

Rather than focus on Iraq, Germany and most other EU countries would prefer more resources and efforts be dedicated to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet, it seems that the Bush administration seeks to

strike the next blow in Iraq and address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by starting a process in Iraq that could undermine and ultimately remove reactionary regimes throughout the Middle East, thereby eliminating the principal breeding ground for terrorism.<sup>42</sup> If this is indeed Bush's grand strategy, as John Gaddis has argued, then Germany and the EU need to understand and recognize this rationale and integrate it into their assessments—even if they do not agree with it.

It is unlikely that the significant value gaps between the German and U.S. foreign policy approaches—as they have been demonstrated in addressing the Iraq question—can be easily reconciled; but if the gap in the bilateral, and even the transatlantic, value system is not bridged, the very notion of an Atlantic alliance with common interests and values, and thus the bedrock of German integration into transatlantic relations and world politics, is bound to be severely undermined. Rather than moving forward together, Germany and the United States will drift further and further apart, becoming global rivals not only on the economic front but also in security and political issues—a scenario that would benefit neither the United States nor Europe.<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, all is not lost. There remain some reasons to be optimistic that the bilateral value gap can be bridged. Transatlantic economic and trade matters, for example, have not been affected at the operational level by the recent U.S.-German rift. Despite occasional difficulties in intelligence cooperation due to the cooler state of U.S.-German relations as a whole,<sup>44</sup> cooperation in gathering and sharing intelligence information to trace Al Qaeda members and undermine the terrorist network's financial resources has actually improved substantially since September 11.

Opportunities for closer cooperation in some or all of the four following areas, in particular, could help the two nations to overcome the dispute over Iraq. Although this cooperation cannot quickly resolve the value gaps underlying this dispute once and for all, it would certainly help to bridge them by contributing to the development of renewed trust and confidence in U.S.-German relations.

### **THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT**

Germany and nearly all other European countries expect the United States to expend greater efforts to help resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Most experts in Europe as well as in the United States argue, with justification, that only a peaceful and long-term solution to the Middle East crisis can halt the spread of anti-Western fundamentalist Islamic thinking. Europeans, and particularly Germans, feel that coming to this resolution, however, will require that the United States become less inclined to favor Israel

and assume a genuinely neutral mediating position. This might entail applying the model used by the Clinton administration to deal with the conflict in Northern Ireland, which proved fairly successful.

In Northern Ireland, the Clinton administration largely managed to dispel the notion of its traditional ties to the Republican Sinn Fein politicians and embark on much closer cooperation with the Unionists in the Province, who aimed to maintain Northern Ireland's close link with Great Britain. The Clinton administration also appointed former senator George Mitchell (D-Maine), respected by both sides, as a neutral mediator who worked constructively with both the British government in London and the Irish government in Dublin. Not least, Clinton himself did not hesitate to get

involved in the nitty-gritty, frequently pushing together politicians of all political parties and groups in Belfast. These efforts did not solve the conflict for good, but it certainly contributed to a major decrease in violence as well as substantial progress toward finding an eventual political solution to the Irish "Troubles."<sup>45</sup>

If the United States were to assume a genuinely neutral mediating position in the Middle East conflict with Bush, as well

as other high-ranking politicians, personally involved, there might yet be a chance of relaunching an effective Middle East peace process. A joint multilateral approach with the so-called Quartet (the United States, Russia, the UN, and the EU) might offer the best hope for progress. U.S. cooperation with the EU, traditionally seen as sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, would indicate a new, constructive, and less biased policy toward the Middle East, potentially persuading the Europeans and Germans, in particular, that the Bush administration genuinely saw the just and durable solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an integral part of the fight against terrorism. It is thus likely that the EU, including Germany, would view this as a decisive step toward preventing the further development of anti-Western terrorist activities.

According to Rumsfeld, the United States is quite capable of fighting two wars at the same time;<sup>46</sup> Germany is convinced that Washington has the resources but lacks the will to pursue several concurrent peace initiatives. Taking this greater step toward the resolution of Israeli-Palestinian hostilities before tackling Saddam would certainly help to calm German fears of widespread anti-Western turmoil in the Middle East, should the United States invade Iraq.

**Bush's unpopular policy should not be confused with anti-Americanism in Germany.**

### **MULTILATERALISM AND CARING WHAT OTHERS THINK**

It is clear that Washington's European allies expect the United States to adopt a more multilateral approach in international affairs. Bush's speech before the UN General Assembly in September 2002—in which he stated that he was in favor of attempting to achieve a UN resolution to the Iraq question—and the subsequent U.S. cooperation with UN weapons inspectors could serve as the model for this approach.<sup>47</sup> Due to Germany's deep integration within Europe and the country's close coordination of its foreign and economic policies with its EU partners, improving bilateral U.S.-German links would best be pursued through multilateral and transatlantic channels. With the possible exception of Great Britain, U.S. relations with European countries are, for the most part, no longer conducted within a bilateral framework; they are largely conducted through a multilateral and transatlantic approach. Moreover, the EU Commission also plays an increasingly important role in European foreign policy making. Germany's prominent role within Europe means that any bilateral rift is bound to have repercussions on transatlantic relations in general. Thus, resolving the Iraq crisis through multilateral channels would boost the German as well as the greater European belief in the Bush administration's genuine commitment to the long-standing, cooperative values of the transatlantic alliance while mitigating their concerns about its reliance on the pursuit of more traditional power politics.

### **RECONSIDERING TURKEY AS A MEMBER OF THE EU**

For primarily geopolitical and strategic reasons, the United States expects Germany and the EU to embark on more constructive efforts to allow Turkey to become an EU member. Washington would like to see the EU agree on a firm date for Turkey's admission to the EU and to do this as soon as possible. Turkey's geopolitical position at the nexus of Europe, the Middle East, and Asia make it a strategically important country. If Turkey had not already become a member of NATO in 1952, the recent eastern enlargements of the alliance would certainly have included Turkey. Turkey is the only NATO country with an overwhelmingly Muslim population; the nation is thus important for dispelling the notion that the North Atlantic alliance is a coalition of white Christian countries that has embarked on a crusade against the Islamic world. Turkey is also the only NATO country that shares a border with Iraq and thus could provide a crucial staging post for invasion with ground troops from the north. Turkish bases are also important, though not indispensable, for conducting an air war against Saddam.<sup>48</sup>

Germany, which has had a large and growing population of Turkish immigrant workers and their families since the 1960s, used to be skeptical about Turkish membership in the EU. As EU membership would grant Turkish citizens the right to settle anywhere within the EU, Germany feared a massive influx of additional Turkish immigrants. This attitude has changed. The Schröder government, though not the parliamentary opposition, supports Turkish EU membership, based on its realization that Turkey's integration,

**Washington will ultimately need to grant its allies a greater degree of independence.**

rather than its exclusion, would be most beneficial for the Western world in the context of the fight against terrorism and future cooperation with the Islamic world.

Moreover, Berlin has not overlooked the fact that Germany's support for Turkish EU membership would please Washington. Germany has, in fact, recently become the champion of Turkey's cause within the EU because of Germany's relative geographic proximity to Turkey; increasing economic and social links

with Turkey, including intermarriage and the large number of Turkish citizens and permanent residents in the Federal Republic; and, above all, strategic and geopolitical necessities.

### **BRIDGING THE WIDENING MILITARY CAPABILITY GAP**

Germany and other European countries need to make strenuous efforts to overcome the widespread disillusionment in Washington, particularly in the Bush administration, over the ever-widening military capability gap between Europe and the United States. The realization of the EU's long-promised Rapid Reaction Force and strong European support for Washington's proposed creation of a NATO Rapid Response Force could serve as the first steps to achieve this goal. This will require, however, that European countries allot greater financial resources to Europe's military. Although it is unlikely that the European countries will ever be able to close the military capability gap, any serious and focused effort to do so would certainly help strengthen Europe's military role in world affairs and thus signal the Bush administration that the Europeans intend to remain an important international player. Furthermore, such efforts would strengthen the European voice within NATO; for example, Germany's insistence on a greater multilateral effort by the United States would have to be taken more seriously in Washington. Enhanced European military capabilities could not overcome the underlying distinct perceptions of the role of force in international affairs nor the very different role nationalism and patriotism play in German

and U.S. foreign policy, but to some extent, steps in this direction could contribute to a rapprochement in U.S.-German relations.

## **Mending the Gaps**

---

It is not very likely that these and other efforts will be able to immediately or completely bridge the wide value gap that currently exists in U.S. relations with Germany and European countries more broadly. Nevertheless, initiatives along these lines would make an important contribution to reestablish the mutual trust and confidence that is a prerequisite for achieving a mutually beneficial realignment in transatlantic relations in general and in relations between Germany and the United States in particular.

Despite its current economic and social difficulties, from which the country is bound to recover within a number of years, Germany remains a leading EU country and continental Europe's most important political, economic, and indeed military power. Germany's strategic geographic location at the center of Europe where East and West meet; its relative proximity to Russia; and its good relations with the Arab and the developing worlds, untainted by colonialism, make it one of the most important U.S. allies. Moreover, most Germans are still very grateful for U.S. aid during the Marshall Plan and the Berlin air lift. President George H. W. Bush's support for German reunification in 1990 is also very well remembered. The current unpopularity of George W. Bush's policy in Germany should not be confused with anti-Americanism. For the most part, Germans are well disposed to U.S. values and culture.

In the end, even a superpower as dominant and strong as the United States cannot afford to remain hardly on speaking terms with such an important ally. The value gaps that have developed between the two allies over significant time, therefore, must be recognized, addressed, and overcome.

The crucial importance of the United States for Germany in almost all respects goes without saying. Therefore, it is of little wonder that the Schröder government has attempted to embark on a cautious policy of rapprochement with the Bush administration. Although largely restricted by domestic public opinion, the left wing of his own party, and his Green Party coalition partner, Schröder has revised his Iraq policy to a limited extent. For example, use of military bases in Germany, overflight rights for U.S. warplanes, and the availability of German tanks based in Kuwait will not be withheld from the United States in a war against Iraq. Full German participation in the war, however, cannot be expected.

Although this will not please the Bush administration, Washington will ultimately need to adapt to granting its allies a greater degree of indepen-

dence in and responsibility for their foreign policies than they had during the Cold War. Rather than weakening the alliance, U.S. flexibility in this respect will strengthen transatlantic relations and help ensure that the United States, Germany, and the other European countries remain committed to the common transatlantic values diligently developed and nourished over the last five decades.

## Notes

1. See Klaus Larres, *Churchill's Cold War: The Politics of Personal Diplomacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 266.
2. "Schröder Says Military Intervention in Iraq Would Be a Mistake," Bundesregierung Deutschland, [http://eng.bundesregierung.de/top/dokumente/Artikel/ix\\_431789.htm?template=single&id=431789&ixepf=\\_431789&script=0](http://eng.bundesregierung.de/top/dokumente/Artikel/ix_431789.htm?template=single&id=431789&ixepf=_431789&script=0) (accessed January 17, 2003) (quoting *Süddeutsche Zeitung* article of August 14, 2002).
3. Nile Gardiner and Helle Dale, "What Berlin Must Do to Repair the U.S.-German Alliance," *Backgrounder*, no. 1609, October 30, 2002, [www.heritage.org/Research/Europe/BG1609.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/Europe/BG1609.cfm) (accessed January 18, 2003).
4. See Robert Kagan, "Power and Weakness," *Policy Review*, no. 113 (June–July 2002), [www.policyreview.org/JUN02/kagan.html](http://www.policyreview.org/JUN02/kagan.html) (accessed January 18, 2003); see also Ronald D. Asmus and Kenneth M. Pollack, "The New Transatlantic Project: A Response to Robert Kagan," *Policy Review*, no. 115 (October–November 2002): 3–18. For an analysis of the different economic and social philosophies, see Tony Judt, "Its Own Worst Enemy," review of *The Paradox of American Power*, by Joseph S. Nye Jr., *New York Review of Books*, August 15, 2002; Claus Leggewie, "Normal Crisis or New Partnership? Transatlantic Relations in Transition," (paper presented to the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, Washington, D.C., November 5, 2002). See also Karl Zinsmeister, "Old and in the Way," *American Enterprise* 13, no. 8 (December 2002): 6–8.
5. See Steven Erlanger, "Iraq Speech by Cheney Is Criticized by Schröder," *New York Times*, August 28, 2002; Steven Erlanger, "German Leader's Warning: War Plan Is a Huge Mistake," *New York Times*, September 5, 2002 (interview with Schröder). See also "Schröder's Hangover," September 23, 2002, [www.rnw.nl/hotspots/html/sch020923.html](http://www.rnw.nl/hotspots/html/sch020923.html) (accessed January 18, 2003) (interview with Nicolas Busse, political editor of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*). For Cheney's speech, see [www.usembassy.it/file2002\\_08/alia/a2082601.htm](http://www.usembassy.it/file2002_08/alia/a2082601.htm) (accessed January 18, 2003).
6. Erlanger, "German Leader's Warning."
7. John Hooper, "German Leader Says No to Iraq War," *Guardian*, August 6, 2002.
8. Gardiner and Dale, "What Berlin Must Do to Repair the U.S.-German Alliance."
9. Erlanger, "German Leader's Warning."
10. The reference to the "German way" of noninvolvement in any conflict in Iraq, and independently of what the UN would decide, was first made by Franz Müntefering, the secretary general (or party manager) of Schröder's Social Democratic Party, on August 5, 2002. Hooper, "German Leader Says No to Iraq War."
11. See Jim Hoagland, "Egos over Europe," *Washington Post*, November 21, 2002, p. A41. For strong criticism of Germany's policy, see Henry Kissinger, "The 'Made in Berlin' Generation: Germany's Rift with the United States Goes Deeper than

- American Unilateralism and Disagreement over Iraq Policy," *Washington Post*, October 30, 2002, p. A23.
12. Kissinger, "The 'Made in Berlin' Generation." See also Henry Kissinger, "A Dangerous Divergence," *Washington Post*, December 10, 2002, p. A29.
  13. See also Peter Riddell, "The Danger of Being Too Close to Uncle Sam," *Times (London)*, November 4, 2002.
  14. See Josef Joffe, "Strong on Words, Weak on Will," *Time Europe* 160, no. 8 (August 19, 2002); Hooper, "German Leader Says No to Iraq War."
  15. For an overview of German-American relations during the Cold War, see Klaus Larres and Torsten Oppeland, eds., *Deutschland und die USA im 20. Jahrhundert: Geschichte der Politischen Beziehungen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997).
  16. "Bush-Hitler Remark Shows U.S. as Issue in German Election," *New York Times*, September 20, 2002. See also "Däubler-Gmelin, Bush und Hitler," *Spiegel Online*, September 19, 2002, [www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,214597,00.html](http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,214597,00.html) (accessed September 25, 2002).
  17. "Schröder Bekräftigt Deutsches Nein," *FAZ Online*, October 3, 2002, [www.faz.net/s/homepage.html](http://www.faz.net/s/homepage.html) (accessed October 8, 2002).
  18. Zinsmeister, "Old and in the Way," p. 5.
  19. James Harding, "Dynasty That Is Set to Oust the Royal Kennedys," *Financial Times*, December 28–29, 2002, p. 11.
  20. See Stefan Sullivan, "Wag the Dove: German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder Wins on Peace—and Little Else," *National Interest* 1, no. 3 (2002); "We Worry a Good Deal More....," *Financial Times*, September 23, 2002, p. 13 (interview with Condoleezza Rice).
  21. "German Defense Minister Extends Hand to Rumsfeld," *DW-World Online*, November 8, 2002, [www.dw-world.de/english/0,3367,1430\\_A\\_671991\\_1\\_A,00.html](http://www.dw-world.de/english/0,3367,1430_A_671991_1_A,00.html) (accessed January 9, 2003).
  22. See Riddell, "The Danger of Being Too Close to Uncle Sam."
  23. See Klaus Larres, review of *Deutschland in Europa. Nationale Interessen und internationale Ordnung im 20. Jahrhundert*, by Gottfried Niedhart, Detlef Junker, and Michael W. Richter, eds., *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute London*, vol. XXI, no. 1 (May 1999): 83–88.
  24. See John A. Reed, *Germany and NATO* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1987); Emil J. Kirchner and James Sperling, eds., *The Federal Republic of Germany and NATO: 40 Years After* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992).
  25. See Condoleezza Rice, "Promoting the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs* 79, no. 1 (January–February 2000): 62.
  26. See Steven E. Miller, "The End of Unilateralism or Unilateralism Redux?" *The Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (winter 2002): 15–29.
  27. See [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html) (accessed on January 9, 2003).
  28. For the National Security Strategy paper, see [www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html) (accessed on January 9, 2003).
  29. Judt, "Its Own Worst Enemy," p. 3.
  30. Salman Rushdie, "A Liberal Argument for Regime Change," *Washington Post*, November 1, 2002, p. A35.

31. See Thomas Banchoff, *The German Problem Transformed: Institutions, Politics, and Foreign Policy, 1945-1995* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999).
32. See Jan-Werner Müller, *Another Country: German Intellectuals, Unification, and National Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Hugh Eakin, "Schröder's Kulturkampf," *The Nation*, November 11, 2002, pp. 29–34.
33. Some authors even believe that there is a long tradition of a "culture of fear" in the United States. Barry Glassner, *The Culture of Fear: Why Americans Are Afraid of the Wrong Things* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).
34. Mary McGrory, "Winning on the War," *Washington Post*, November 7, 2002, p. A25.
35. See Stefan Aust, *The Baader-Meinhof Group: The Inside Story of a Phenomenon* (London: Bodley Head, 1987).
36. McGrory, "Winning on the War."
37. See German ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger, presentation during "Mending the Transatlantic Drift," CSIS, Washington, D.C., October 28, 2002. To use the term "war" in the context of fighting terrorism is controversial among many analysts. See Michael Howard, "What's in a Name? How to Fight Terrorism," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 1 (January–February 2002): 8–13.
38. See Mathias Kuntzel, *Der Weg in den Krieg. Deutschland, die Nato und das Kosovo* (Berlin: Elefant Press, 2000); Günter Joetze, *Der letzte Krieg in Europa? Das Kosovo und die deutsche Politik* (Stuttgart: DVA, 2001). See also Tony Weymouth and Stanley Henig, eds., *The Kosovo Crisis: The Last American War in Europe?* (London: Reuters, 2001).
39. See "Deutsche Außenpolitik nach dem 11. September 2001," [www.glasnost.de/militaer/aussenpol.html](http://www.glasnost.de/militaer/aussenpol.html) (accessed January 9, 2003).
40. I am grateful to Ivo Daalder, James Steinberg, Phillip Gordon, and Strobe Talbott for highlighting some of these issues during a public briefing at the Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., November 13, 2002.
41. For an interesting portrait of how Bush perceives his leadership role, see Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002). See also Michael Hirsch, "Bush and the World," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 5 (September–October 2002): 18–43.
42. John Lewis Gaddis, "A Grand Strategy of Transformation," *Foreign Policy* 81, no. 6 (November–December 2002): 54. See also G. John Ikenberry, "America's Imperial Ambition," *Foreign Affairs* 81, no. 5 (September–October 2002): 44–60.
43. See Charles Kupchan, *The End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy after the Cold War* (New York: Knopf, 2002). See also Charles Kupchan, "The End of the West," *Atlantic Monthly* 290, no. 4 (November 2002): 42–44.
44. Desmond Butler, "In 9/11 Case, Germans Note Lack of Help from Allies," *New York Times*, December 8, 2002.
45. See Conor O'Clery, *The Greening of the White House: The Inside Story of How America Tried to Bring Peace to Ireland* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1996).
46. Anwar Iqbal, "Rumsfeld Warns N. Korea: U.S. Can Fight," *Washington Times*, December 23, 2002.
47. See "President's Remarks at the United Nations General Assembly," September 12, 2002, [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020912-1.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/09/20020912-1.html) (accessed January 11, 2003).
48. For Turkey's role in the first Persian Gulf War, see Bruce R Kuniholm, "Turkey and the West," *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 2 (spring 1991).