

SHIFTING VALUES AND CHANGING INTERESTS:  
THE FUTURE OF GERMAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS

# AICGS GERMAN-AMERICAN ISSUES

## 03

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## AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY GERMAN STUDIES

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

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ISBN 0-941441-86-5

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## FOREWORD

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During the past two years, there has been an argument across the Atlantic about arguments. Are our recent troubles cyclical or are they harbingers of a deeper and growing divide between Europeans and Americans? After all, frictions in the transatlantic relationship are nothing new. Others argue, however, that the rift in the wake of Iraq is really more serious and that we have lost our anchor. During the Cold War, the German-American relationship was encased in a framework in which the choices we faced were clear and consistent. Germany was divided, American force was needed to protect German and American interests in Europe, and the Soviet Union was an identifiable antagonist posing a clear threat on which we mostly agreed. We had an equation of power and principle as a common bond. Germans could leave or take what they wanted from the American culture that surrounded them. And Americans had a good deal of exposure to Germany through the millions of American military and their families who spent time there.

Over a dozen years after the success of our Cold War efforts to achieve German unification and a unifying Europe, the old equation of power and principle has not been replaced with a new one. Germany and the United States are no longer clear about whether they need each other or what they have in common. Our domestic debates about ourselves and each other seem to be diverging.

Why do Germany and the United States appear to be badly at odds? Is it due to a shift in power relations? Or are we seeing evidence of a deeper rift between our cultures, a rift that appears to have taken so many by surprise given the many ways in which our cultures have been intertwined at so many levels? Is the set of reference points we shared in the Cold War era now submerging into history on both sides of the Atlantic?

The two authors presented in this Report provide different answers to these questions. James Kitfield argues that the preponderance of U.S. power and the way it is used by the United States as the remaining superpower is at the roots of this divergence. In his view, the debate in the United States is less about culture and social values and much more about whether the American people are prepared to endorse a "radical reformation of U.S. foreign policy" in response to the threats manifest in the September 11 attacks. Robert von Rimscha examines burgeoning German criticism of the Bush administration and the United States, which, in his view, is as much about European identity formation as critique of the U.S. social and political model. Still, there is a growing perception of the United States among some Germans as an anti-model for Germany's future course, when it comes to dealing with healthcare, welfare, the death penalty, or the use of force and power.

Both essays offer critical views of these German and American debates. In fact, one can find echoes of the American domestic debate in Germany and, particularly as this is a presidential election year, one can hear echoes of the German debate in the United States. Perhaps we are more interconnected than we sometimes realize.

One need not agree with all the arguments both authors make to conclude that there has been a significant transformation in the German-American relationship that still needs to be plotted. These two provocative essays offer some tools for that purpose.

We are grateful to the DaimlerChrysler-Fonds im Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft for its support of this project and this publication. We would also like to thank Ilonka Oszvald for her editorial and administrative support in the preparation of this volume.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jackson Janes".

**JACKSON JANES**  
Executive Director  
AICGS

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01

## OF POLITICS & POWER: THE DEEPENING TRANSATLANTIC DIVIDE IS MORE ABOUT POWER POLITICS THAN CULTURAL TRENDS OR A PERCEIVED "VALUES" GAP

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JAMES KITFIELD

These are the times that try the souls of transatlanticists. Europeans visiting the United States now routinely complain about an America that assaults continental sensitivities. They bemoan the Bush administration's unilateralism and military assertiveness. They deride the Darwinian capitalism of the United States and are concerned about a perceived increase in religious fundamentalism and social conservatism here. The Europeans object to "knee jerk" U.S. support for Israel in the Middle East conflict.

U.S. officials returning from the continent likewise complain about a Europe that astounds American sensibilities. They complain about vitriolic and largely unchecked anti-American rhetoric echoing across Europe. They fear the European Union is increasingly masking a lack of individual or collective will in Europe to confront growing threats around the world, militarily if need be. They worry that European-style socialism is unsustainable in a global economy. The Americans object to "knee jerk" European support for the Palestinians in the Middle East conflict.

Analysts who have spent the better part of a decade warning about a widening transatlantic divide can finally take a well-deserved rest. The political and cultural gap they have been writing and speaking about for so long has arrived, and this is what it looks like. Many of its contours show signs of significant durability.

In order to manage that divide, and still forge consensus on issues of common interest, U.S. and European officials and the publics they represent need to understand the fundamental forces pushing them in different directions. Far too often, both sides resort to gross caricature in defining their differences

with the other, as witnessed in the shrill polemics that preceded the war in Iraq. The Bush team was depicted in Europe as a bunch of Texas cowboys and yahoos, as bellicose as they are unsophisticated and bloodthirsty. The Europeans, in turn, were painted as effete boulevardiers and peaceniks, easily encompassed in the memorable description of the French as "cheese-eatin' surrender monkeys." Such gleeful parodying even among those who should know better is as fun in the short-term as it is dangerous and damaging to transatlantic relations in the long-term.

Dispassionately grappling with the true forces of transatlantic divergence is more difficult. The political and sociological currents involved are complex and fluid, and they defy summary in glib criticism and put-downs. There are also some uncomfortable truths lying like shoals beneath the soothing surface rhetoric of "common values" and "shared interests" in the Western alliance. Any discussion of trends likely to effect future transatlantic relations, then, has to begin on this side of the Atlantic with the most salient feature on the U.S. domestic landscape.

## A Divided America

After watching the almost tragicomic events in Florida in 2000, most observers understand that the contest between Democrat Al Gore and Republican George W. Bush was the closest presidential election in the history of the United States. It followed by just one year one of the rare impeachment dramas in U.S. history, when a sitting president was very nearly removed from office almost exclusively by members of the opposing party. The deep political division revealed by those two events has greatly impacted the evolution of both major political parties in the United States, and it has direct implications for the future of transatlantic relations.

At the end of the 2000 presidential election, Democrat Al Gore received 48.2 percent of the vote versus 48.1 percent for George Bush, easily within the statistical margin of error. After three years of the Bush administration, that even split remains essentially intact, with a November 2003 Gallup Poll showing that 44 percent of Americans say they will vote to reelect Bush, and 43 percent saying they will vote against Bush.

Beneath the statistical dead heat between Democrats and Republicans, however, are a number of interesting demographic and sociological trends. Traditional breaks between the parties held true once again: married Americans voted 55 percent for Bush versus 40 percent for Gore; women voted 50 percent for Gore versus 43 percent for Bush, while men voted 51 percent for Bush versus 43 percent for Gore; Blacks voted overwhelmingly (93 percent) for Gore.

As anyone who has seen an electoral map of "red" (Republican) versus "blue" (Democrat) states can attest, the more telling breakdown of voting in the 2000 election may be by region. The blue states of the urban Northeast went solidly for Gore by an electoral count of 53 percent versus 40 percent for Bush. The industrial and farm belt states of the Midwest were competitive, with 46 percent voting for Gore and 45 percent for Bush. The southern states were solidly in the red, with 53 percent voting for Bush and 43 percent for Gore, himself a southerner. The western states were equally a sea of red with the

exception of populous and blue California, which evened out the western electoral count to 46 percent Gore versus 45 percent for Bush. That red/blue split is also evident in the votes of urban and rural Americans, with 59 percent of city-dwellers voting for Gore versus 34 percent for Bush, while 59 percent of country folk voted for Bush versus only 36 percent for Gore. Significantly, Bush won the key battle for the ever-growing suburbs by 49 percent to 44 percent for Gore.

A close study of that red/blue divide in America suggests a fairly dramatic change in a Republican Party that now controls the White House and both arms of Congress for one of the few times in the last 100 years. As the map suggests, Republicans have devised a successful electoral strategy that makes the party more reliant upon, and reflective of, the views of suburban and rural voters from the West and especially the South. While any generalizations of those views are broad brush at best, surveys have long shown voters in the West and South are more suspicious of federal power in Washington, or super-federal power as represented by institutions such as the United Nations and World Bank. They are protective of states' rights and national sovereignty, and they tend more toward cultural conservatism than voters in other regions of the country. They in fact place great weight on politicians' views on "guns, gays, and religion." Thus in 2000, 58 percent of gun owners voted for Bush versus 38 percent for Gore, while regular church-goers sided with Bush 55 percent to 38 percent for Gore. That strong relationship between religious conservatives and the new Republican Party comes through in virtually every poll, with people who say religion is very important in their lives, and who attend church every week, the most likely to support the job President Bush is doing.

That is not to suggest that the true issues in the transatlantic divide are differences over "faith" or "values," though they can certainly be irritants. Before the Iraq war or the inauguration of the Bush administration, however, no one identified differences of opinion on the death penalty or drug laws, out of wedlock births, or abortion as potentially insurmountable transatlantic problems. In fact, American attitudes on these "value issues" have remained relatively

constant over the past decade. If anything, the more dramatic change on these issues has come not in America but, rather, in Europe, where fewer and fewer claim that religion is important to their lives. Though many Europeans deride President Bush for his strongly held religious beliefs and frequent references to God, it should also be noted that they seemingly had no such problems with the last two Democratic presidents, Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter, both of whom also expressed strong religious faith. Nor is British Prime Minister Tony Blair chastised in Europe for his own strongly held religious beliefs.

No, the real issue is not “faith” or “values” or “social conservatism.” In the past, Americans and Europeans maintained equanimity in their relations by agreeing to disagree on what mostly amounted to domestic matters. The real issue is about how core values influence a leader’s and a political party’s worldview. The real issue is about power, and how it is wielded.

It is one of the ironies in American political life that even in a period when the country constitutes the world’s sole superpower, politicians are elected almost exclusively on the basis of their domestic platforms. Thus both Bill Clinton and George W. Bush came to the White House as former southern governors with little experience on the world stage or in international affairs. Yet standing on opposite sides of America’s domestic political divide, both men and the political parties they represent reacted in radically different ways to the two seismic events of recent history—the fall of the Berlin Wall and the September 11 terrorist attacks.

### A Lonely Superpower

It is easy to forget how strategically adrift the United States was left after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The “containment strategy” around which a bipartisan political consensus had jelled in the United States for nearly fifty years of Cold War no longer served as a foreign policy anchor. The United States was left with a superpower military and security commitments stretching from the western borders of NATO through an arc of instability in the Middle East and east all the way to the Sea of Japan—with no superpower rival. At

that point, the nation’s political leaders might reasonably have followed American tradition by bringing all the troops home and disbanding the Cold War coalitions—the “entangling alliances” about which Founding Father Thomas Jefferson had warned.

Indeed, for a time in the early 1990s the Jeffersonian path seemed to be America’s chosen course. After the Security Council reached consensus prior to the 1991 Persian Gulf War, there was hope that a United Nations freed of its Cold War divisions would finally live up to its early promise. After Iraq invaded Kuwait, the community of nations stood together as one against the scourge of the twentieth century—state-on-state aggression. Experts spoke of a benign “New World Order,” and scholar Francis Fukuyama wrote of “The End of History.” Soon after, President Clinton announced a one-third cut in the size of the U.S. military, promising a domestic “peace dividend.”

Only the New World Order never arrived, and history continued to unravel in a typically messy spool. First Somalia and then Haiti, Rwanda, and Bosnia suggested that regional conflicts kept in a deep freeze during the Cold War would superheat in its aftermath. The United Nations and Europe proved incapable of stemming ethnic cleansing in the Balkans without U.S. leadership and military muscle. The U.S. military drawdown was halted, and instead of disbanding NATO, the Clinton administration proposed its rapid expansion.

During the mid-1990s, the United States made the critical decision not only to accept, but also to indefinitely prolong its unparalleled position as the world’s only military superpower. The U.S. military would maintain its stabilizing presence in a transoceanic series of economic zones. When crisis erupted, as it did in Kosovo in 1999, the United States would lead like-minded coalitions such as NATO, hopefully, but not necessarily, with the imprimatur of the United Nations.

In trying to define the U.S. role in this era of benign hegemony, the Clinton administration settled on America as the “Indispensable Nation.” “What I think that term means is that the United States is in the midst of a period when we’re the largest power in the

world, and that's both a great gift and in many ways a dangerous burden," Samuel R. "Sandy" Berger, the Clinton administration's National Security Adviser, explained at the time. "The United States has a unique opportunity to shape the world we'll face in the twenty-first century. When American interests are at stake, and our engagement can make a difference, we have to be prepared to lead, hopefully in coalitions with our allies, but sometimes unilaterally."

With that decision to essentially maintain indefinitely a unipolar world, the dye was largely cast for a period of increased transatlantic tensions. Throughout history, a preponderance of power by any one nation has been met by resentment in other nations and, usually, by counter-balancing alliances. France has been particularly outspoken about its distaste for and resentment of such a unipolar world. Yet Paris and other European capitals showed no inclination to increase military budgets in a way that would either challenge U.S. supremacy or allow them to share the burden of global security. Even under a Democratic President who was often criticized at home for undue fealty to the United Nations and the principle of multilateralism, the "Indispensable Nation" was reluctant to limit its range of action with constraints such as the multinational Landmine Treaty and the International Criminal Court, thus increasing transatlantic strains.

During that tumultuous post-Cold War period, the domestic political dynamic in the United States was also in a state of profound flux. In 1994, a "Republican Revolution" swept through the halls of Congress, for instance, sweeping aside many of the traditional Republican internationalists who had shepherded the party during the Cold War. This new generation of Republican lawmakers heralded bold new thinking on the proper role of the United States in international affairs. Many of the intellectual architects of the Republican Revolution viewed the United States not as indispensable but, rather, as the "Exceptional Nation."

## Republican Revolution

Because the Cold War and opposition to communist tyranny arguably energized Republicans more than Democrats, the Grand Old Party was set more philosophically adrift by the disappearance of the overarching Soviet threat. The 1992 defeat of Republican President George Bush by Bill Clinton, whose campaign mantra was "It's the economy, stupid," almost certainly heightened that sense of confusion.

So adrift was the Republican Party for a time in the 1990s that it flirted with the isolationism of its past. In the 1920s, for instance, Senate Republican leader Henry Cabot Lodge took the lead in rejecting Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations, a precursor to the United Nations. In the 1930s, congressional Republicans passed the Neutrality Act of 1935 in an effort to keep the United States out of war in Europe.

The most notable voice among Republican isolationists in the 1990s was former Republican presidential candidate Pat Buchanan. In his book, *A Republic, Not an Empire*, Buchanan argued that arrogant U.S. foreign policy elites had over-committed America to war in regions where it had no vital interests, and betrayed U.S. sovereignty by tying its fortunes to agencies of "an embryonic new world government," such as the United Nations, World Trade Organization, and International Monetary Fund. Among many Republicans who harbored a visceral dislike for Bill Clinton and objected to his interventions and nation-building efforts in Haiti and the Balkans, Buchanan's argument resonated strongly.

Many of those Republicans rose to power in the Newt Gingrich-led Republican Revolution of 1994, when the Republicans took over both the House and Senate. The revolution heralded a generational change within the Republican Party and a passing of the torch from an aging cadre of Cold War warriors, many of whom were moderate "Rockefeller Republicans" from the Northeast and Midwest. Grasping the torch was a new, younger generation of Republicans largely from the South, who were committed to shrinking the size and scope of govern-

ment—including the role of the United States overseas. Among their leaders were House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Georgia); House Majority Leader Dick Armey and Majority Whip Tom Delay (both from Texas); and former Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Mississippi).

These insurgents quickly allied themselves with powerful southern holdovers such as the late Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, and especially Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina, who, after the Republican Revolution, became the powerful chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Under their leadership, the United States started withholding its dues to the United Nations until by 1999 it owed \$1.9 billion, making this country the biggest debtor nation to the UN. Congressional Republicans also dealt Clinton a stunning foreign policy defeat by rejecting the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1999, and refused to authorize U.S. involvement in the Kosovo air war even after it was underway. A number of Republicans called Kosovo “Clinton’s war.”

With the 2000 election of Texan George W. Bush, and Vice President Dick Cheney, a Texan by way of Wyoming, the Republican Revolution was complete. The Bush administration quickly articulated a vision of the United States not so much as the “indispensable nation” but, rather, as the “exceptional nation” facing an increasingly dangerous age. Given America’s special responsibilities, the Bush team argued that the United States must be excepted from constraints on its freedom of action, whether from arms control treaties or international war crimes courts. Other nations should rationally forgo developing nuclear weapons, but the exceptional nation not only must retain its arsenal, it also must reserve the right to test those weapons and likely develop new ones. In such an age of American hegemony, the administration postulated, alliances function best when the superpower leads and others follow or else get out of the way.

The Bush administration wasted no time in beginning to implement its new foreign policy reformation. In a remarkable first eight months in office, the administration pronounced the Kyoto Global Warming Treaty dead, unilaterally withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic

Missile Treaty, suggested withdrawing U.S. troops from the Balkans, rejected the Land Mine Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention Protocol, and the International Criminal Court, and suggested that it would oppose future monetary bailouts by the International Monetary Fund.

Given that worldview, there was no doubt that a Bush administration confronted with the horrors of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks would respond assertively. The resultant Bush doctrine proclaimed war not only on Al Qaeda, but also on international terrorism writ large, and on any nation that would support the terrorists. The Bush administration ignored the proffered hand of NATO, stating that it would act preemptively and preferably with ad hoc and malleable coalitions of the willing, but unilaterally if need be.

Remarkably, the American people have yet to either endorse or reject what amounts to a radical reformation of U.S. foreign policy engineered by the Bush Administration and congressional Republicans. Foreign affairs and national security barely registered in the 2000 presidential election. The situation stands to possibly change, however, with a 2004 presidential election that is shaping up to be a referendum on the Bush administration’s handling of the war on terrorism and Iraq. After its troubles in Iraq the Bush administration itself is showing signs of rethinking some of the tenets of its own doctrine.

Either way, a reckoning on U.S. foreign policy is long overdue. Unless and until Americans breach their own deep political fissures and reach consensus on how the United States should best use the historically unprecedented power and influence it wields, the superpower will continue to send confused signals that anger and alienate friend and foe alike.

Does the United States really continue to adhere, for instance, to a doctrine of preemption in light of the significant intelligence lapses and the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq? Does the United States’ more multilateral approach recently to WMD programs in Iran and North Korea—the other members of the ‘Axis of Evil’—signal a philosophical change in an administration noted for its unilateralist

tendencies? Are new U.S. proposals on non-proliferation an attempt to construct a viable regime to replace the interlocking non-proliferation treaties that the Bush administration has largely walked away from? Do U.S. attempts to enlist the help of the United Nations in Iraq signal a recognition of the importance of the world body in bestowing international legitimacy? Can the Republican Party reconcile the unquestioning support of Christian fundamentalists for Israel with the U.S. need to play the role of honest broker in the Middle East peace process?

Perhaps most importantly, how might a Democratic president with "blue state" sensibilities answer each of those questions differently from a "red state" Republican? Issues such as the death penalty, taxes, and gay marriage may divide Americans internally and decide the next presidential election. They certainly excite commentators on both sides of the Atlantic, but it is the preponderance of American power—and the manner in which it is wielded—that is truly at the bottom of the transatlantic rift.





02

# THE DEEPEST OCEAN AFTER THE GERMAN-AMERICAN CLASH OVER IRAQ: CULTURAL AND GENERATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF THE TRANSATLANTIC RIFT

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ROBERT VON RIMSCHA

The smoke seems to be clearing. One year of bitter accusations between Germans and Americans lies behind Berlin and Washington, from Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's run for reelection in the late summer of 2002 to the aftermath of the Iraq campaign in the spring of 2003. Recently, the exchange of insults has given way to moderation, to the search for common ground, and to business as usual.

It might well be that it is simply a new set of dark clouds that has pushed aside the transatlantic smoke. This time, it is the opaque unease coming straight from the not so pacified postwar Iraq, for the unresolved questions pertaining to the future of Iraq and NATO's role in it remain highly sensitive on the diplomatic stage. Diplomacy, however, prefers coded language and subdued gestures. Thus, one has the impression that the Americans and Europeans, namely the Germans, could be brethren again. Or could they?

To examine the wounds and scars the fight over Iraq has left behind on the psyche of the German-American relationship, one has to revisit the stage on which the insults were traded: a German justice minister comparing George W. Bush to Adolf Hitler, and a German defense minister blaming U.S. Jewry for the administration's harsh stance against Saddam Hussein; likewise, a Pentagon boss splitting Europe into "old" and "new" then likening an old ally to Cuba and Libya, and a U.S. administration characterizing the relationship with Germany first as "poisoned" and then as "unpoisoned." There were visiting ministers without counterparts to talk to, colleagues snubbed, and congratulatory phone calls never placed after an election victory. In the end, there were two leaders who remained silent for sixteen months, an offended U.S. president who felt betrayed, and a wavering

German chancellor who still toys with the gaullist notion of opposing the American hegemon—what a disastrous period it has been.

What is left behind, and what will continue to erode a relationship once deemed safe for eternity, is a suspicion that was hardly ever expressed in the political realm. The real damage, at least on the German side, has been done to the people. And the biggest disservice has been done to the young.

What will they remember? Surely not the citations of this or that politician. Surely the war. They will likely remember the image of America that has penetrated their sense of identity—a negative stereotype that Karsten Voigt, the German government's pointman on relations with the United States, has repeatedly warned of.

This essay will therefore refrain from revisiting the official exchanges. It will not try to sketch the strategic landscape after the Iraq war. It will not compare differing notions of the legitimacy of power and the military exercise of it. It will not debate whether or not the experts justly believe in incompatible concepts of preemptive or preventive actions. No Mars, no Venus. The purpose of this essay—granted, a risky endeavor—is to attempt a portrait.

This essay will paint a picture of the German psyche after a period of unparalleled bitterness, of sentiments that will be harbored for years to come—not in the minds of those who run politics, but in the minds of those who elect politicians. In doing so, one guideline is provided by Andrei Markovits, who has repeatedly argued that, in a discourse about anti-Americanism, it is impossible to separate what America is and what America does. For many Germans, Bush “does” what America “is.” The existence of anti-Bush Americans only proves that traces of “enlightenment” are still to be found on the western side of the Atlantic. As sought after as these anti-Bush Americans are, they do not, however, alter the fact that for Europe, America intrinsically is what is visible in the actions of her current president.

As a starting point, we must remember that Chancellor Gerhard Schröder had not one, but two highly successful lines during his run for reelection. One was the unwavering *nyet* with which he lashed out at impending American “adventurism” in the greater Middle East. The second cheer-getter was his renunciation of “American conditions” (*amerikanische Verhältnisse*) as a model for the German labor market, taxes, welfare, social security, and healthcare—in short all the principle topics of his reformist Agenda 2010, which, of course, was announced long after the 2003 election.

### Germany’s Disdain for George W. Bush’s America

The common denominator of Gerhard Schröder’s foreign policy and domestic reform rhetoric was their appeal to anti-American sentiments. The German people’s opposition to the war in Iraq had little to do with strategic thinking about the regime of Saddam Hussein and the ways to defeat it, but much to do with German distrust of the United States and its policies. By renouncing the war, Europeans meant to condemn George W. Bush. This underlying current became visible in the depiction of the United States in German popular culture in spring 2003.

On January 5, 2003, a high-brow television program on cultural trends on Germany’s public station, ARD, *Titel, Thesen, Temperamente*, introduced the themes,

“How belligerent is America?” and “Prone to be bombed? Iraq’s astonishing cultural landscape.” On that same day, the ARD program *Weltspiegel*, a foreign policy magazine, proclaimed the following, “Immediately after 9/11, the Bush administration rammed through several bills meant to limit the freedom of expression.” On November 9, 2002, ARD’s *Kulturweltspiegel* attacked “Bush and his military system based on fear.” The ZDF culture show *Aspekte* characterized the reality of post-9/11 America on January 3, 2003 with the statement, “In the politics of America, there is no gray area. Threats are being reacted to in an almost child-like fashion.” Also in ZDF’s *Aspekte*, on November 28, 2003, a segment on the philosopher Immanuel Kant’s “categorical imperative” and three recent biographies of Kant was illustrated with this example of a violation of Kant’s enlightenment principle: “If George W. Bush’s illegal war of aggression against Iraq was legitimate, then every nation could attack an innocent neighboring country.”

In ARD’s main evening news show, *Tagesthemen*, of December 18, 2002, a feature story showed a family of six living on Manhattan’s affluent Upper West Side in a rented apartment. The family consisted of an unemployed African-American grandmother and five grandchildren. According to the report, the family had not paid any rent for five months, and an eviction notice was in the mail. The ARD declared, “One of the richest countries in the world has no social safety net.”

Note that none of these quotes are taken from a commentary piece. All of the above claimed to be factual reporting. The German weekly *Der Spiegel* carried a story entitled, “Blood for Oil” on its January 13, 2003, cover. A few issues later, the Hamburg magazine took a turn and identified George W. Bush’s religious zeal as the central motive for his urge to force the world towards democracy. Medien Tenor, a Bonn-based research institute on media analysis, came to a peculiar verdict after an in-depth study of German television news’ coverage of the United States and the Iraq war. In September of 2003, the institute announced that it would not award its annual prize for best television news coverage, since “infotainment of horror” was the only thing to be had on the air, and nothing prize-worthy was found.

German politics, the country's intelligentsia, and popular culture sang the same tune as the television networks. In an interview on November 9, 2002 with Phoenix, Germany's equivalent of C-SPAN, Heiner Geißler, a top Christian Democrat during the Kohl era, attacked the "sexed up war-mongering of the Bush administration." Martin Walser, a renowned writer, declared in the newspaper *Mannheimer Morgen* on January 18, 2003 that, "America's desire to wage war is disastrous and fateful in a historical perspective. Europe will be an illusion if she does not manage to quell America's pretensions to exercise power."

Walser's colleague Günter Grass, a Nobel laureate author, had two days earlier accused the United States of dishonesty and hypocrisy in *Tagesthemen*. Grass identified oil as the driving force behind the impending war, lamented the "arrogance of power" visible in Washington, D.C., and described President Bush as "a danger to the common man, because he is impervious to reasoning."

Volker Gerhardt, a Berlin philosopher and member of the National Ethics Council established by Gerhard Schröder, called President Bush a "dumb-ass out of Texas." He did so in a signed article in May of 2003, not in an outburst triggered by obtrusive television cameras. On January 21, 2003, CDU parliamentarian and former Assistant Secretary of Defense Willy Wimmer evaluated the Bush doctrine of preemptive military action as a "retreat to barbarism" on the ZDF show *Frontal 21*.

The entire repertoire of traditional European criticism of all things American has been on display during these weeks and months. Once again, the United States was portrayed as immature, aggressive, intolerant, uncivilized, wild, unleashed, juvenile, and childish. Such stereotypes are as old as the United States itself, and those images were always a part of Europe's view of the New World. If seen in a positive way, this view led to feelings of admiration for American power and the desire to participate in a revitalization of Old Europe by touching the western borders of civilization. If viewed negatively, the result is an image of a country that reacts impulsively, does not reflect, and is intrinsically naive—a cowboy

country without any brakes or constraints on law, regrets, or refinement. George W. Bush became the ideal canvas for these images. He seemed miraculously to confirm what Europe knew about America all along.

When on January 22, 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld labeled France and Germany "Old Europe" he unleashed a wave of public criticism that went beyond the cultural and the mitigated. German newspapers of January 24 expressed shock. The *Cologne Express* compared Rumsfeld's treatment of Europe to that of vassal states. "Just like in the times of emperors and dictators" America once again was demanding submission, the paper wrote. The *Mannheimer Morgen* called Rumsfeld "arrogant" and "loud-mouthed" and accused the Bush team of seeing those Europeans who steadfastly defended peace as a nuisance and as spoilsports. The *Berliner Kurier* wrote: "Mr. Rumsfeld: You are simply nasty and badly brought up! You simply step on all the foundations of world peace." The *Mittelbayerische Zeitung* editorialized that Washington seemed to extend Bush's "axis of evil" all the way to Berlin.

All of these papers are regional publications that do not cater to the learned German elite. Even the people in the German countryside had realized that something had happened to the transatlantic relationship. A story that had previously been an elite concern in Berlin's corridors of power had suddenly become an emotional quandary for a whole nation.

Again, politicians joined in the chorus. Joschka Fischer used an appearance in Istanbul to advise Rumsfeld to "cool down!" Angela Merkel declared Rumsfeld's opinion to be "problematic." SPD foreign policy expert Hans-Ulrich Klose characterized Rumsfeld's comments as "unbecoming." One of the more drastic wordings came from Klose's party comrade Michael Müller, deputy whip of the Social Democratic *Bundestag* caucus. America's neoconservatives, said Müller, were extending a "dark theocratic tradition" and were fighting for the "resurrection of the inquisition."

After Rumsfeld's equation of Germany to Cuba and Libya, there was no more holding back in Germany.

Former SPD chairman and finance minister Oskar Lafontaine compared “state actor Bush” in the tabloid *Bild* with the qualities the pop musician and gossip monger Dieter Bohlen would display as a head of state. The mountaineer and part-time Green politician Reinhold Messner confessed on the ARD talk show *Beckmann* that Saddam’s propaganda was not worse than that of Bush. Austrian writer Peter Handke used the Vienna magazine *News* to demand the disarmament of America. “That would be the solution, because they have the worst of all weaponry,” he said. His colleague, writer Elfriede Jelinek, added that “Bush is sick and a puppet of his advisors. America is going to implode just like ancient Rome.” Writer Peter Turrini offered another comparison: “Of course I resent Saddam Hussein. But I consider George W. Bush to be his western equivalent—as trigger happy, and of the same emotional and mental limitations,” he said. Peter Ustinov received standing ovations in Germany for declaring, “Terror is the weapon of the poor, terrorism is a rebellion against the rich.”

The German public, willingly or not, was constantly bombarded by cartoonish images of evil America. Fear of the coming war, disgust with Bush’s personality, European condescension, hatred of American power—all of these motives came together.

An almost desperate urge became visible, an urge to find another America and to use it as crown witness against Bush. Actors starred prominently in the indictment of the Republican administration. Gone and forgotten were the days when Germans made fun of actors, notably Ronald Reagan who, in the Old World, never escaped the realm of cheap Hollywood propaganda. Martin Sheen, George Clooney, and Dustin Hoffman were discovered as true spokesmen of the United States. The press carried daily coverage of Hollywood censorship and artists seemingly losing their jobs over their opposition to the war. Senator Robert Byrd’s anti-war speech was given similar attention. The ensuing impression was that of a torn country, bitterly divided with a cultural elite as critical of Bush as all of Europe.

Michael Moore (*Bowling for Columbine*, *Stupid White Men*) and Larry Hagman (star of *Dallas*) were further witnesses for the prosecution. Germans embraced the sentiments Hagman expressed in an interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, “While

Reagan, the idiot, was not really stupid, with Bush we have a different case. The country is run by a guy who is dangerous and stupid. Bush has nothing in common with what you and I would consider a civilized human being. He can’t talk. He can’t read. And here we go—he is our president.”

The vicious circle of inflammatory rhetoric and acts of self-congratulatory supremacy led to a public mood that started to misread normalcy for scandal. In Maine, thirty teachers were reprimanded because they told their seven-year-old students that their fathers were trained to be murderers in Iraq. Such indoctrination would not be tolerated in most western democracies, but in pre-war America it was read as another piece of evidence proving America’s farewell to pluralism. Consequently, ARD’s *Kulturreport* of March 9, 2003 featured a segment entitled “The End of Freedom of Expression in the United States.” No question mark, no commentary—a statement of fact.

Bush’s public image in Europe hit record lows. In February of 2003, a survey found that 73 percent of Germans believed Bush to be the “greatest danger to world peace,” well ahead of Saddam Hussein, who took 20 percent of the votes. These results were mirrored in an EU-wide survey in August 2003 that found Europeans holding Israel and the United States as the greatest threats to world peace, the world’s most aggressive and dangerous nations.

These findings have been widely read as a confirmation of the hypothesis that anti-Americanism, anti-Israeli sentiments, and anti-Semitism share vast mental landscapes. This is possible. However, the driving force behind the overlap between these favorite targets of disdain, at least in the case of Germany, is a flawed reading of history—not vicious prejudice.

Always stand for the oppressed, never tolerate violence as the political means of the stronger party: for the majority of Germans, these lessons stem directly from Auschwitz. Many Germans see Israel as the bullying Goliath versus the David-like Palestinians, while most Americans view Israel as the democratic David encircled by a vast empire of non-democratic Arab states. It is in this context that the results of a 2002 study done by Forschungsgruppe Wahlen in Mannheim must be read. The study concluded that

the more educated and affluent interviewees were, the more they were prone to be pro-Palestinian. After Auschwitz, Germans were permanently tied to allegiance with perceived victims, making sympathy for the United States or Israel almost impossible.

Rationalism and equilibrium became the first victims of the furor over Bush's course on Iraq. In July of 2003, an opinion poll commissioned by the weekly *Die Zeit* (July 24) found that one in five Germans considered it a credible theory that George W. Bush himself could have ordered the attacks of September 11 to gain a pretext for seeking world domination. Sixteen percent of western Germans and 29 percent of eastern Germans agreed, adding up to 19 percent for the whole country.

Even more shocking is the fact that younger Germans are excessively drawn to conspiracy theories. Thirty-one percent of adults thirty years or younger believed Bush to be the mastermind behind the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Conspiracy buffs had their heyday—never since the killing of President Kennedy had there been such fertile ground for absurd but simple sets of answers, wrote *Newsweek*. There seemed to be zero confidence left in Bush personally, his republican administration, or the motives of U.S. foreign policy in general. For this reason, no one protested or otherwise raised their voice when the PDS member of parliament, Gesine Löttsch, told the *Bundestag* on June 26, 2003, "Today, democracy is being threatened less by Osama bin Laden than by George W. Bush." Her comment went unnoticed for a simple reason—Löttsch said what millions thought.

Prior to her visit to Washington in February 2003, CDU party leader Angela Merkel had been advised to avoid a meeting with Bush because of the public furor such a meeting would create. With images of Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer conversing with the Pope about ways to save the peace simultaneously being shown on television screens, a friendly handshake with the president of the United States morphed into political suicide for a German politician.

After the fall of Saddam, Merkel was the only German leader to call U.S. ambassador Daniel Coats to congratulate him and the American people on ousting

the dictator. Such a gesture was so risky politically that Merkel did not publicly admit she had placed the call. All Merkel was ready to talk openly about was the fact that for congratulatory remarks she would use private channels, channels she would not disclose, channels she always had had, "even in these days." Her minced words signaled how embarrassing it had become for German politicians to congratulate an allied power on the eradication of a tyrannical regime.

On March 5, 2003, Walter Kolbow, Assistant Secretary of Defense in Berlin, called Bush a "dictator." Shortly after, German commentators applauded the confidence they read into comments made by Indonesian Vice President Hamzah Haz, who had called Bush a "king of terrorists." The wider public discourse in Germany had solidly placed verdicts like "tyranny," "dictatorship," and "Nazi-like" vis-à-vis Washington, not Baghdad. It is no stretch to claim that such a barrage of friendly fire had to produce a fatality—America's image.

Only few German public figures withstood this trend. Klaus Kleber, a former U.S. correspondent and host of a major evening news show, *heute journal*, pointed out the fact that Bush's college grades had been better than Al Gore's. Poet and songwriter Wolf Biermann, notorious in 1991 for his support of the Gulf War, became the most outspoken critic of Germany's Bush critics. "The vulgar hatred of the trigger-happy cowboy in the White House, in and of itself nothing but inflated propaganda, is reminiscent of a simulated paranoia. Intoxicated by their cheap peace brew, the saviors of Saddam are enraged that the holy-sober president dares to sometimes use the old fashioned and pathetic jargon of the Bible," Biermann wrote in a lengthy diatribe published on the Internet and excerpted in several German papers.

Within the governing SPD, two prominent voices attempted to stem the flood of anti-Americanism. Hans-Ulrich Klose, a former mayor of Hamburg and chair of the *Bundestag's* foreign relations committee, had a bitter confrontation with the chancellor when he accused Schröder of leading the country astray. During the session of the SPD caucus Schröder replied that Klose was not worthy of any attention. ... Schröder yelled, "And speaking of our election victory: Without it, you wouldn't be sitting here! ...

You should be ashamed of yourself! I am not going to engage in any argument with you! Those times are long gone. Don't place any bets here—I am not going to be provoked!"

Klose took refuge in the feature section of Germany's leading paper, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. In the February 14 edition, he repeated the charges that had raised Schröder's ire during the party session. Under the headline "Trapped: Schröder maneuvers Germany into the off," Klose wrote, "In dealing with the Iraq question, the German Chancellor is acting solely as a domestic politician and as a party tactician ... The Chancellor proclaimed his resounding 'No' to any military option in a unilateral way. ... Thus, he acted in precisely the fashion he accuses America of. ... At the same time, he violated core principles of postwar German foreign policy ... The international damage is enormous, as America's interests and feelings have either been stupidly neglected or consciously ignored."

Rudolf Scharping, former defense minister ousted by Schröder in July 2002, used the German Marshall Fund's "Bundestag Forum on the United States" eleven months later to castigate politicians lacking the stamina to lead "occasionally against the emotions of the population." While discussing Iraq (without explicitly mentioning Schröder), Scharping condemned leaders who acted "in a certain sense to provoke the emotions." A few days later Scharping explained, "I would have definitely preferred it if we had argued about the objective limitations of Germany in the case of Iraq." The former head of the Social Democrats wanted to see a line of debate focusing on Germany's military inability to help oust Saddam, not on her unwillingness.

Klose, Scharping, and Biermann remained solitary voices. For many, especially among the young, the widespread protest against Bush gave them a sense of national pride. TV camera crews often captured sentimental expressions, "For the first time, I'm really proud to be German!" Guilt over Germany's past, the shame of having had the United States as a liberator in 1945, and the resentment of American vulgarity and aggressiveness were blended into a crude mix, which, in its extremes, bordered not on an act of national restoration, but on a chauvinist awakening.

Young Germans were enraged that the United States did not limit the fight against terror to what was considered appropriate, namely the arrest of the perpetrators of 9/11. Strategic discussions of the significance—or lack thereof—of the assumption that the triangle of weapons of mass destruction, failed and rogue states, and Islamic fundamentalism had turned into the dominant threat to the peaceful existence of the west, did not take place. "Guantanamo" quickly became a code word for America's proven lawlessness. The notion that Bush's war was illegal under international law was not only readily accepted but also was understood to be the self-evident basis of the criticism of the United States.

When Joschka Fischer, in a discussion with British historian Timothy Garton Ash, suggested the necessity of a second Boston Tea Party, the foreign minister hit the deepest cord of dissatisfaction visible during those months. Europe was desperately in need of a revolutionary act of freedom, a renunciation of America—this was precisely what was felt on the streets of Germany. Similar sentiments were not limited to the collective belly of Europe. Gerhard Schröder toyed with the same breach of previously accepted norms. When his closest foreign policy advisors warned the Chancellor of the implications of his policy, Schröder welcomed them while taking a lengthy puff from his cigar. "Lousy times for diplomats, right?," he asked with a smirk. Schröder had been acutely aware that he had chosen German sentiments over international rationale.

### Europe's Longing for Independence and Identity

Criticism of the United States seems to be becoming an integral part of the process of identity formation in western Europe. But just as there are significant differences between Gaullist continental western Europe—in terms of popular sentiments, including pro-war-nations like Italy and Spain—and eastern European nations more recently indebted to the United States and more critical of the reliability of Parisian morality, there are striking disconnects within the image western Europe has of itself.

There is abundant statistical evidence of the split in western Europe that was exacerbated by the Bush administration's policies. In June 2003, the German Marshall Fund polled 8000 citizens in the United States and several European countries. Its 2002 poll (conducted after the war in Afghanistan, but before the Iraq war) showed similar numbers on basic attitudes towards foreign policy. According to the 2003 poll data, slightly more than 50 percent of Germans considered a global role for the United States undesirable (in 2002, it had been 27 percent). Bush' foreign policy was welcomed by 16 percent of Germans (36 percent in 2002) and 15 percent of the French citizens interviewed. The Berlin-Paris axis reflected the most critical views of the United States in Europe.

On the other hand, the number of Germans who considered the EU—rather than the United States—to be the central agent in representing their foreign policy interests rose significantly, from 55 percent in 2002 to 81 percent in 2003. But the demands made of Europe remained contradictory. Whereas 71 percent of Europeans favored the status of a superpower for their continent, that number shrunk to 36 percent when the question specified that this status would entail higher defense spending. Simultaneously, a record number of Americans embraced international engagement and called for a strong European partner (80 percent). Robert Kagan's thesis of a European predisposition toward the use of soft power—and the inclination to limit power to such "soft" means—seems to be confirmed by these numbers.

Europe's attitude toward the use of military force is incompatible with that of the United States, and both sides are aware of this. Roughly 80 percent on either side of the Atlantic see a significant difference in social and cultural values. More specifically, 84 percent of Americans, but only 48 percent of Europeans, believe that wars are justified in order to correct a wrong. In France and Germany, only 39 percent agreed with this hypothesis "under certain conditions." Again, no groups were more pacifist than the French and Germans.

On February 12, 2002, fifty-eight leading American intellectuals, including Francis Fukuyama, Amitai Etzioni, and Samuel Huntington signed a pamphlet

entitled "What We Are Fighting For." The text, largely a moral and philosophical treatise, argued that universal principles of morality not only allow for, but sometimes demand, the use of force. The German Marshall Fund's data suggests that these thinkers express the beliefs of a majority of Americans.

Similarly, the words of those prominent Europeans quoted above also reflect and support popular sentiments in the old world. The German Marshall Fund poll concludes that there is an estrangement even where the theoretical danger ascribed to certain regimes and regions is similar. The concepts of legitimate, necessary, and permissible political actions are not.

There can be little doubt that because of centuries of shared history and a common cultural base, the transatlantic community of values still exists. There are no other regions of the world as close in their basic outlook—for example, on a representative and accountable form of government, on limiting the pursuits of individuals only when they infringe on the rights of others, on basic freedoms, and the separation of power. This is not the dominant discourse of our times, however. When Gerhard Schröder talks to the American Chamber of Commerce on the occasion of an anniversary celebration in Berlin, he focuses on the commonality of values. But otherwise, he, his country, and their continent do not.

At the EU enlargement summit in Athens in spring 2003, Schröder claimed that what sets Europe apart from the United States is the old world's central value of "social participation." Speaking of America, a high representative of the French government un-ironically told an audience of fellow Europeans, "We are so much more humane!" Even German president, Johannes Rau, carefully embraced similar ideas in a speech he gave on May 19, 2003 where he argued that it showed an "accurate inclination when one considered the mass protests against the Iraq war in Berlin, Rome, Paris, and London as 'founding stone of a European nation.'"

It was this new European consensus that Timothy Garton Ash rebelled against in a *New York Times* op-ed on May 30, 2003. Those who relished the juxtaposition between a brutal and utterly individualistic market economy in the United States and a European

model of solidarity and distinct, superior values, were, Ash argued, guilty of embracing Sigmund Freud's 'narcissism of tiny differences.'

Schröder repeatedly made the point that the differences were anything but tiny. During the national convention of his SPD on June 1, 2003, he picked up the line of argument he had used in Athens and said (not following his script, but improvising, as he usually does), "A strong Europe, strong in social affairs and in innovation, a Europe formed by Social Democrats, is more necessary today than ever before. Such a Europe is needed because we Europeans, based upon our unique European model of social participation, our balancing of interests, and our embrace of the welfare state, have something to offer to the whole world, something in opposition to the dangerous tendency towards confrontation and unilateralism—an alternative of just development and shared wealth."

Schröder spoke of Europe—but he meant France and Germany. In his view, America stood for "confrontation and unilateralism," and Bush's policies were equated to a "dangerous tendency." In his view, the United States' system of checks and balances was absent. Practical measures of "social participation" like home ownership, low income access to higher education, or employment for individuals with lower incomes (an area where the United States leads Germany), were absent, too. Instead, Schröder claimed the existence of a uniquely European contribution to western civilization that he clearly considers superior. The philosophers Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida echoed these convictions within a few weeks of Schröder's speech, simultaneously publishing essays in Europe's main newspapers.

Schröder's line of reasoning called for a Europe destined to limit and correct America's excesses. Europe, according to Schröder, had to do so on behalf of "the whole world." That such a definition of Europe left Eastern European supporters of the United States in a philosophical vacuum is a consequence Schröder preferred not to discuss. But some commentators raised the issue that the Schröder argument rebuilt a "Berlin wall" in the minds of the enlightened western Europeans and the U.S.-friendly and, thus, not so enlightened eastern part of the continent. The SPD's architect of Detente in the 1960s,

Egon Bahr, put similar sentiments in a language devoid of any ambiguities, "George W. Bush will remain a president of war ... Without emancipation from America, a country destined to follow its hegemonic mission, Germany will be set on a path towards becoming a colony," Bahr wrote in a book on *The German Way*, published in 2003.

Rau, Schröder, Bahr, Derrida, and Habermas were answered when British Prime Minister Tony Blair addressed a joint session of Congress on July 17, 2003. Blair stated that there was "no more dangerous theory in today's international politics" than that of a Europe designed to be a rival of America. "Such thinking was outdated and dangerous," Blair flatly declared.

In the face of two deadly waves of terrorist attacks in November 2003 in Istanbul, Turkey, Schröder again displayed the Janus-headed quality of his approach to transatlantic relations. In a speech honoring the recipient of AICGS's Global Leadership Award on November 20 in New York City, Schröder emotionally repudiated any anti-American sentiments and declared that there was no place for such feelings in Germany. The chancellor has made such statements periodically. Whenever he addresses a predominantly domestic and specifically SPD audience, however, he displays a remarkable duplicity and instead emphasizes Europe's "unique" values and the need to have these values replace reckless American adventurism.

## A Transatlantic Clash of Cultures

The German word *Systemauseinandersetzung*, or clash of political cultures, was the term commonly used during the Cold War to denote the chasm between communism and democracy, and centrally planned and free market economies. But in a position paper published November 5, 2003, two leading Social Democrats, Gernot Eler and Michael Müller, wrote about the larger significance of Germany's struggle over domestic changes in social security, welfare, labor market regulation, taxation, and health-care. "The issue today is not just reforms for our country, but something much larger, a *Systemauseinandersetzung* between liberal capitalism and a renewed model of social democracy."

During the SPD party convention in Bochum on November 17, 2003 Michael Müller added that, “we cannot live with an American model based on indebting the whole world, resulting in a new colonialism.” Globalization, Müller argued, is nothing but the privatization of every public good, and this privatization equals the “destruction of democracy.”

One might, of course, question whether such juxtapositions are meant in a serious way. They could, it may be argued, be remnants of Cold War terminology, imposed upon the only “other” the current world stage has left—Washington, instead of Moscow. One could read them as a desperate longing for a “third way” or a *deutscher Weg*, as Gerhard Schröder temporarily prescribed during his 2002 campaign. One could also argue cynically that the more the German elite denounces all things American, the more this may shield them from the realization that, in fact, German society has become more Americanized than ever before.

One need only look at the discourse on television talk shows. Handing responsibility back to the citizenry, pushing back an omnipotent state, encouraging self-reliance and entrepreneurship, forcefully acting against those who cheat, cutting taxes—every single one of these neo-liberal buzzwords have become the daily staple of German political rhetoric, from the leadership of the Red-Green-coalition to the liberal FDP and Merkel’s CDU.

Facing a society like that of America, whose bottom third consists of dropouts, the long term unemployed, recent migrants and some descendants of previous waves of immigration, uprooted youth, a shrinking segment of elderly poor, a growing segment of working poor, and subsistence survivors juggling transfer benefits the state doles out with odd jobs (both legal and illegal), Germans seem to have reached a new common denominator. If, after all, our society resembles America, we still do not want to call it American. The realization that German reality has more to do with America, if openly admitted, would face stern resistance. People do believe that thanks to European culture, God, and Schröder, their country is fundamentally different than the United States. Therefore, a framework of *Systemauseinandersetzung* is being nourished on fertile intellectual ground.

Delusional as it may be, many Germans, therefore, believe that Müller and Erlers analysis is correct. They firmly believe that Europe offers a genuinely different model of statesmanship, decency, and international behavior, one whose political cultures challenges the U.S. model—one that is vastly superior. In this larger context, the struggle over the Iraq war was nothing more than a point to prove the larger hypothesis—namely, that Europe is culturally more advanced and mature than the United States. In short, that Europe is better—or, in other words, that America is to be slowed down, stopped, or overcome.

The depth to which these sentiments have spread among the populations of Europe, in general, and Germany, in particular, is the real legacy of the Iraq war. It is the most far-reaching and the most troubling legacy, as it leaves Europe and the United States as unwilling partners in a merely formal alliance forced upon Berlin and Paris by the necessity of power. If *Systemauseinandersetzung* was the accurate framework to describe German-American relations, the term “transatlantic partnership” is an illusion, for in their hearts and in their minds a majority of Europeans would much rather see those ties severed.

At the SPD party convention in Bochum on November 17, 2003, Gerhard Schröder proclaimed that his policies on Iraq were “an expression of the self-assurance of a mature democracy.” Perhaps his policies were something altogether different. Maybe “Iraq” was little more than a code word that had little to do with the realities of the Middle East, but much to do with the legitimization and channeling of a critique of the United States, an American reality which, in this era of globalization, has become less and less distinguishable from the German way of life. The Germans’ unease in the face of post-Cold War realities now had a name. Via the protest of “Iraq,” that name was “America.” Read in this way, Schröder’s policies on Iraq were an expression of a lack of confidence and showed a new stage in Germany’s permanent identity crisis.

In *European Anti-Americanism: Past and Present of a Pedigreed Prejudice*, Andrei Markovits has argued that, anti-Americanism has “little to do with the real existing America itself and everything with Europe.” He argues that “every nationalism arose in opposition to another. With the entity of Europe now being on the

agenda, anti-Americanism may well serve as a useful coagulating function ... With anti-Americanism attaining a clear function for the first time in its European history, it might very well prove to be a potent political force."

Historically, such discomfort with the United States and such disgruntlement with the "Big Brother" on the other side of the Atlantic are hardly unique. Previously, however, European governments had inserted a voice of reason. They had—apart from the majority of Europe's cultural intelligentsia—served as a filter explaining U.S. motives to the populace of Europe and European popular discomfort to America. During the debate over the first Gulf War against Saddam in 1991, there had been a German government that, through its political support, served as a mitigating factor against the furor on the streets.

In the absence of this mitigating factor, with German political elites adding fuel to the flames of already burning fires, Europe's youth was left in a position where they could feel nothing but vindication. In the future, there may well be a high price to pay for the silence of continental Europe's rulers—a total silence when it came to understanding and conveying Washington's motives. Instead, the universal trumpeting against George W. Bush's real and perceived arrogance became the lullaby for a whole generation. What Germany's youth heard were the boisterous claims of difference, moral supremacy, and civilizational superiority. These noises will be the soundtrack in the background of continental western Europe's relationship with the United States for years to come. Call it another Boston Tea Party, call it revolt or disgust after the Iraq War and the Schröder-Chirac-Putin opposition strategy, Germany is ready for it. The next transatlantic schism will splash those sentiments once again on tabloid covers and the banners of street protesters. Modesty, the arch value enabling trust and loyalty between states, has become the most costly victim of the 2003 Iraq war. If there is the possibility of a repair job, it undoubtedly is an enormous undertaking. The seeds of mistrust have been deeply planted, and will blossom in times and ways we cannot yet foresee.

In the court of European public opinion, George W. Bush has long lost his case. American arrogance,

unilateralism, militarism, and disdain for international law do not even have to be argued any more. They are firmly believed, they have become part of an entrenched canon of anti-Americanism. A mere mention of Kyoto, the ICC, Iraq, and Guantanamo suffices to reenergize this European bond.

For the time being, the waters may seem calm. European governments and the Bush administration may agree on the need to stabilize Iraq, irrespective of previous differences. But underneath the surface, European misgivings are ready to erupt. There is little to no harmony or understanding left. If George W. Bush is reelected in November 2004, a vast majority of Europeans will observe America in utter disbelief, and then turn around in shock and dismay.

A deep estrangement has eroded what had been left after 1989 of a once stable union. Differences on strategic concepts of defense policy only mirror what has become a deep seated distrust and an ubiquitous affirmation of cultural separateness. What *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman called "the beginning of the end of the West" has many facets, and the debate on Iraq served as a clarification and a catalyst, but probably did not yet mark the nadir of European-American relations. In Germany, a majority of citizens across all generations, but most visibly the young, are no longer simply saying, "without the common threat emanating from Moscow, we do not need the United States any longer." Instead, more and more are saying, "we do not want the United States any more."

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