

Institute for the Study of the Americas

# Transatlantic Tensions

A comparative case study of the Bosnia and Iraq crises

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## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Chapter 1.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Chapter 2.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Chapter 3.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>41</b>

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## INTRODUCTION

Not many topics have sparked as much discussion among international relations scholars as the state of transatlantic relationship in recent years. Countless volumes cautioning about the *Alliance at Risk* and *Partners at Odds*, and others debating *The End of the West?* or whether Europe and America are *Growing Apart?* does not seem to bode well for the future of the transatlantic alliance. The question on most observers' mind is whether we are witnessing mere transatlantic rifts that can be mended by closer cooperation and more tactful diplomacy, or whether we are seeing a wider drift apart that cannot be stopped easily, if at all. Most of the scholarly literature draws attention to the fact that the causes for recent transatlantic tensions lie deeper than the war in Iraq and President Bush's foreign policy. They cite the end of the Cold War and differing interests on both sides of the Atlantic most commonly as a reason for the current state of transatlantic affairs.

The most notable work on transatlantic differences since 9/11 comes from Robert Kagan. He writes that "it is time to stop pretending that Europeans and Americans share a common view of the world, or even that they occupy the same world."<sup>1</sup> His explanation for this occurrence is twofold. Firstly, the transatlantic power gap is responsible for divergent views. Europe – compared to the US – is weak, therefore viewing the world differently and these different points of view, weak versus strong, have produced differing strategic judgments and assessments of threats and of the proper means of addressing them. Secondly, Kagan argues, ideological divergences have also emerged between Europe and the United States. Because of its unique historical experience over the past 50 years, Europe has developed a set of ideals

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<sup>1</sup> Kagan, *Paradise & Power*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2003), p. 3

and principles with regard to the utility and morality of power different from those of the Americans, who have not shared this experience.<sup>2</sup>

A more positive view comes from Timothy Garton Ash, who contends in his book *Free World* that American and European values and interests are not to blame for transatlantic tensions, since they have not diverged that much. Views within America and within Europe might differ because of the great diversity of both the US and Europe, but the European democracies remain closer US allies than the people of any other region are, or are likely to become anytime soon. Their tactics might differ but Americans and Europeans broadly share the same democratic, liberal values for their societies and for the rest of the world.<sup>3</sup>

Realists, unconcerned with ideology, share the view that Europe and America still share common strategic goals. However, as Stephen Walt argues, it was the end of the Cold War and with it the disappearance of the common communist threat that brought about transatlantic tensions. During the Cold War, Europe had no other choice but to fall in line with the Americans who secured Europe's security.<sup>4</sup> But this has changed in the post-Cold War world and Europe has become more independent.

Some, like John McCormick, are hailing *The European Superpower*, which – according to Mark Leonard – will run the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Because globalization and interdependence have undermined old-style power politics and replaced it with a more complex set of international relationships, their argument goes, the EU has become a new breed of superpower, which is more effective by relying on cooperation than the American way of coercion.<sup>5</sup> But these different approaches do not necessarily come with more transatlantic agreement.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 10-1

<sup>3</sup> Garton Ash, *Free World* (New York: Random House, 2004)

<sup>4</sup> Walt, "The Ties That Fray," *The National Interest* 54 (Winter 1998), p. 6-7

<sup>5</sup> McCormick, *The European Superpower* (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 2

Joseph S. Nye Jr. and Mark Hertsgaard have given still another reason for transatlantic disputes since the end of the Cold War. They warn of the danger of American unilateralism, which Nye labels the ‘arrogance of power.’<sup>6</sup> In reference to US-European relations in particular, he points out that the US has been more inconsiderate towards multilateral institutions since the end of the Cold War. Consequently, the US has gained the reputation for not paying enough attention to its allies’ concerns, thus causing resentment in Europe.<sup>7</sup> This resentment has been reinforced by President George W. Bush entering the stage and representing this American “arrogance of power” with his rhetoric.

There are many reasons for tensions in US-EU relations and while the past fifty years were anything but a period of transatlantic bliss, the crisis over the 2003 invasion of Iraq has eclipsed previous American-European conflicts in magnitude and within the scholarly literature. Of course, there have been conflicts before, like the American opposition to the seizure of the Suez Canal by French, British, and Israeli troops in 1956; France’s withdrawal from NATO’s integrated military command in the 1960s; the battle over Euro Missiles in the early 1980s; and the clash over how to stop war in the Balkans in the 1990s.<sup>8</sup> The 1993-5 crisis over the war in Bosnia, in particular, is often mentioned in passing as an example of transatlantic quarrels. Detailed examinations resembling the scope of the Iraq War coverage in terms of transatlantic differences, however, are rare.

Curiously, most of the mentioned works on transatlantic tensions make reference to the Bosnia crisis, but mostly as a brief example of how it supports their thesis. For example, Ash is drawing attention to the fact that it was the Europeans who pushed for ground troops in the Balkans at a time when the martial Americans “were still bombing from 15,000 feet in case

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<sup>6</sup> Hertsgaard, *The Eagle’s Shadow* (London: Bloomsbury, 2002) and Joseph Nye, *The Paradox of American Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)

<sup>7</sup> Nye, “US and Europe: Continental Drift?” *International Affairs* 76, January-February 2000, p. 51-9

<sup>8</sup> Asmus, “Rebuilding the Atlantic Alliance,” *Foreign Affairs* 82 (September-October 2003), p. 21

one of their warrior pilots got his little finger burnt.”<sup>9</sup> But Kagan, too, uses the Bosnia intervention to make his point that Europeans were too weak to even handle their backyard problems.<sup>10</sup>

Detailed studies on Bosnia in regards to US-European relations like *Friendly Fire* by Elizabeth Pond on Iraq are hard to find, but the academic literature on the Balkan crisis is vast. Many works refer to the aspects of humanitarian intervention in regards to the conflict, like *Empire Lite* by Michael Ignatieff and Robert DiPrizio’s *Armed Humanitarians*. Some accounts draw attention to the diplomatic aspects of the crisis like James Gow’s *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, others focus on US policy towards the Balkans like *Getting to Dayton* by Ivo Daalder and Wayne Bert’s *The Reluctant Superpower*.

Bosnia had become a concern for the international community after the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe after the end of the Cold War, when the wars of dissolution began in Yugoslavia. This led to several regional disputes, one of them affecting Bosnia where the situation turned into armed ethnic conflicts. The Europeans took action in order to preserve the balance of power and geographical stability, and to avoid a regional war that could develop into a global conflict, as had happened in 1914.<sup>11</sup>

The US let the Europeans handle the Bosnia problem at first. Due to the humanitarian dimension of the conflict they entered the scene by pushing Europe to recognize Bosnian independence. But this did not have the hoped for effect and according to James Gow, Bosnia soon became a constant source of friction between the international organizations involved, especially the European Community and the UN.<sup>12</sup> These frictions also affected NATO and threatened its credibility.<sup>13</sup> The US was not ready to let NATO dissolve and entered the

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<sup>9</sup> Garton Ash, “The Great Divide,” *Prospect* (February 20, 2003)

<sup>10</sup> Kagan, p. 42-3

<sup>11</sup> Garton Ash (2004), p. 96

<sup>12</sup> Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 67

<sup>13</sup> Daalder, *Getting to Dayton* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), p. 2

conflict in support of the Atlantic Alliance. Still, US-European tensions developed, and persisted even until after the Dayton Accords were signed to end the Bosnian War.

This paper will examine the reasons for US-EU tensions for both cases in detail. In the first chapter, the alteration of the strategic landscape brought about by the end of the Cold War will be examined. Furthermore, it will be looked at the impact of the September 11 terror attacks on transatlantic relations as well as the implications of the European project.

Henry Kissinger famously asked whom to call if he wanted to speak to Europe. Until Europe has a phone number and at the other end someone to speak on the EU's behalf, it will be difficult to speak about European involvement in any crisis without addressing the policies of its member states. According to Ash, "Europe's true hallmark is not weakness but diversity."<sup>14</sup> Despite the successes of European integration, this diversity is still reflected quite obviously in its member states' divided foreign policies in many areas. This is not to say that the US is not diverse, but there was one US policy on Bosnia and one US policy on Iraq. In Europe there were many. Of course, an exhaustive examination of all of them would go beyond the scope of this paper, even though the focus of transatlantic tensions limits the affected states somewhat. Nevertheless, France, Germany and Great Britain as the key players in Europe will be the main focus of the following analysis. The wider issue of European public opinion, which seems to be more united in its opposition to the US lately, deserves consideration in this context as well. However, this issue and the resulting difficulty for adopting a coherent approach to Europe, will be addressed in the second chapter.

This chapter will also explore several other explanations for the tensions, mostly put forward by Kagan. It will be looked at the importance of power and weakness, as well as the impact of differing worldviews on US-EU relations. Chapter 3 will provide an in depth look at the Bosnia and Iraq crises in terms of diplomatic failures, personal differences and the 'arrogance

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<sup>14</sup> Garton Ash (2003)



of power.’ By drawing comparisons between both crises throughout the paper, it will be established that a combination of the factors was causing disputes in both cases. Evidence for changed geopolitical realities as well as diverging values and differing worldviews based on different power capabilities, as Kagan has argued, can be seen in the reasons for the Bosnia as well as the Iraq crisis. At the same time, tensions can be attributed to one-time factors of different circumstances, such as domestic politics and diplomatic gaffes. The comparison also shows that European nostalgia for the Clinton administration is in many aspects misplaced, in particular in regard to unilateral action.

## CHAPTER 1

“The political “West” is not a natural construct but a highly artificial one.”<sup>15</sup>

When Owen Harries made this observation in 1993, he was witnessing transatlantic disputes as a result of the Bosnian War. “It took the presence of a life-threatening, overtly hostile “East,” he wrote, “to bring [the West] into existence and to maintain its unity.”<sup>16</sup> Whether the Alliance could survive the disappearance of that enemy, Harries found doubtful, and was supported by turbulent post-1991 times in transatlantic relations. As soon as the Soviet enemy had crumbled, the transatlantic gloves came off, it seemed.

Beginning in the fall of 2002, his thesis was again confirmed; this time by an even bigger transatlantic dispute over the US led intervention in Iraq. Whereas many different factors contributed to the transatlantic crises over Bosnia and Iraq, geopolitical changes go a long way in explaining why the US and Europe clashed in these instances. This chapter will examine how the end of the Cold War and its implications has changed transatlantic relations, and – unfortunately, not for the better.

Western policy on Bosnia, at least initially, has often been described as a failure.<sup>17</sup> The West stood by while innocent people were raped, slaughtered and expelled from their homes in a self-described Serb campaign of “ethnic cleansing,” in terms of brutality and number of casualties last seen in Europe during the Second World War.<sup>18</sup> European leaders seemed determined to find a solution for the problem by themselves, prompting European

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<sup>15</sup> Harries, “The Collapse of ‘The West,’” *Foreign Affairs* 72, 4 (September/October 1993), p. 42

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42

<sup>17</sup> Daalder (2000), pp. 1-2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5

Commission President Jacques Delors to say, “We do not interfere in American affairs. We hope they will have enough respect not to interfere in ours.”<sup>19</sup> And German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher asserted that for every European problem there is a European solution.<sup>20</sup>

Bosnia thus marked the first serious attempt at European independence from its Cold War patron. The crisis has shown that in the absence of a common enemy, Europe and the United States still share common goals, but the extent of their urgency and seriousness is not the same on both sides of the Atlantic. This has led to the fact that conflicts of interest are becoming more visible and significant. The US does no longer automatically receive the respect that it enjoyed as the protector in the fight against a common, mortal enemy.<sup>21</sup> Both Europe and the US now have a wider selection of options. As Stephen Walt argues, “the rigid logic of bipolarity limited choices on both sides of the Iron Curtain, which meant there was little debate about the fundamentals of Western grand strategy.”<sup>22</sup>

The Americans for their part were turning more inward after they had with Bill Clinton elected a president who was going to focus “like a laser” on the economy and remove foreign policy from his list of priorities. According to Wayne Bert “the US found itself without a clear mission for its armed forces, and with a realization that the military would see few crises jeopardizing its vital interests and requiring a quick response that would automatically be supported by the public.”<sup>23</sup> Clinton thus continued his predecessor’s policy on Bosnia, who

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<sup>19</sup> Mowle, *Allies At Odds?* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), p. 118

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in “Ugly Nationalism” in *The Economist* 320, 7726 (September 28, 1991), p. 20

<sup>21</sup> Mathews, “Estranged Partners,” *Foreign Policy*, 127 (November-December 2001), p. 51; Walt (1998), p. 4

<sup>22</sup> Walt (1998), p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Wayne Bert, p. 7

had let the Europeans take charge in the Balkans after recent US engagement in the Gulf War, and in May 1993, affirmed to Atlantic allies that Bosnia was a “European issue.”<sup>24</sup>

When it became clear that the Europeans were incapable of putting an end to the suffering in the former Yugoslavia, however, transatlantic problems started to take on a serious dimension and soon turned into public feuding. Europe was calling for American help, but the Americans were not willing to provide the help in the way the Europeans had hoped. This in turn led to finger-pointing in NATO and bickering over who is to blame, while each threat of military intervention went unmet.<sup>25</sup>

The European-led Western response in the early stages of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia had been to condemn Serb actions and impose a total economic embargo on Serbia and Montenegro to force an end to their involvement in the Bosnian War. In addition to that, European troops were sent as part of a UN peacekeeping force to protect humanitarian relief supplies for affected communities. But the results were mixed at best. The embargo was devastating the economies of Serbia and Montenegro but not Belgrade’s support for Bosnian and Croatian Serbs. The UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) protected relief efforts and prevented an even worse humanitarian disaster.<sup>26</sup>

In September the UN passed a resolution to allow the use of NATO airpower to support UNPROFOR protection of aid shipments and the following month a no-fly zone was imposed over Bosnia. However, NATO took no action until February. Only when the Serbs attacked a marketplace in Sarajevo on 5 February, did NATO issue an ultimatum to the Serbs to move their weapons 20 km outside of Sarajevo. The Serbs complied but responded by attacking the

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<sup>24</sup> Bill Clinton quoted in Paul F. Horvitz, “Intervention in Bosnia: Clinton Mutes His Fervor” in *International Herald Tribune*, May 13, 1993.

<sup>25</sup> Cohen, “Finger-Pointing by NATO Allies Delays Help for a Bosnian Town” in *New York Times*, January 22, 1994

<sup>26</sup> Daalder (2000), p. 5

safe haven of Gorazde and taking 200 UN peacekeepers as hostages, deterring the UN from authorizing further air strikes for several months. More hostages were taken in November 1994 and peace plans continued to be rejected, leading to rising frustration in European capitals.<sup>27</sup> But not until August 1995, did the US finally decide to take matters firmly into its own hands, when it became clear that “the risks of taking the lead were nonetheless less than the risks posed by any alternative course.”<sup>28</sup>

After the successful US initiative, the Dayton Accords were signed in December 1995 and for a few years the Bosnia situation calmed down before NATO decided to attack Yugoslavia in a successful bombing campaign in order to stop Serb aggression under Milosevic.

Then came the September 11 terrorist attacks and Harries' prediction seemed to have been correct again: “The concept of “the West” is likely to revert to what it has been for most of the past: a concept of last resort, held in reserve for when things go seriously bad and individual countries or restricted alliances are unable to cope on their own.”<sup>29</sup> The US intervention in Afghanistan gained unconditional support from European leaders and NATO invoked Article 5 for the first time in its history. Transatlantic peace after 9/11 did not last for long, though. After all, the major difference was that while Europe had needed the US security umbrella to protect it from communism and US commitment to deal with Bosnia, the US was not dependent on the Europeans to take out Saddam Hussein for his ties to terrorists and his desire for weapons of mass destruction.

At the same time, the disappearance of a common enemy had come with a certain loss of credibility for the United States. As long as the Communist threat loomed, the US had an

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<sup>27</sup> Mowle, p. 119

<sup>28</sup> Daalder (2000), p. 163

<sup>29</sup> Harries, p. 53

obvious interest in keeping Europe independent of Soviet control.<sup>30</sup> The US was on a mission that was accepted by its European allies. With the Cold War over and the mission gone, however, Europeans think twice before they accept or support any military action the US takes, as French and German divergence over Iraq has shown. Germany and France strongly opposed the US decision to go to war in Iraq due to a variety of reasons but mostly because the US seemed to be bound to act, with or without French or German support.<sup>31</sup> Transatlantic name-calling ensued, potato dishes were renamed, and diplomatic gaffes on both sides did nothing to relieve the icy climate between America and Old Europe until long after Bush had landed on the aircraft carrier and declared the mission in Iraq as accomplished.

The post-Cold War era had changed European and American political priorities and 9/11 reinforced this trend. While it was the US that focused on domestic issues during the early 1990s, it was the Europeans that were turning more and more inward by 2002. The EU has become the focal point of European policy and activity over a vast range of areas, from trade and monetary to social policy.<sup>32</sup> EU enlargement is also a very ambitious project, one that will come with continued costs and consequences, not just for the EU itself but also for the future of Atlanticism. David Long defines Atlanticism as an Atlantic identity that existed before NATO became a pragmatic response to threat or a useful device. Long writes “Maintaining transatlantic solidarity, a difficult business in any event, is made all the harder because it is being undercut by another transnational collective identity project, the EU.”<sup>33</sup> Widening and deepening of the EU is undermining Atlanticism because the increase in the size of the EU and its greater coherence and cohesion, resulting from the growing importance of the EU as the hub of regional cooperation in Europe, is the basis of a stronger sense of identity as well

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<sup>30</sup> Walt (1998), p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Merkl, *The Distracted Eagle* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 6

<sup>32</sup> Daalder “The End of Atlanticism,” *Survival* 45 (Summer 2003), p. 163

<sup>33</sup> David Long, “NATO after Atlanticism” in Osvaldo Croci and Amy Verdun (eds.) *The Transatlantic Divide* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 27

as a tendency for the policy of its member states to oppose the US rather than each other.<sup>34</sup>

The severity of the crisis within the EU that followed disagreements on whether to support US military action in Iraq, in particular with regard to the new Eastern European member states, seems to support this outlook.

While Europe is chiefly concerned with EU integration and expansion, the US has a more global outlook since 9/11. Since the attacks, Washington is concentrating on defeating terrorists, rogue states and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.<sup>35</sup> Having come eye to eye with their own vulnerability, Americans realized that the “survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands.”<sup>36</sup> And as Donald Rumsfeld explained:

we acted [in Iraq] because we saw the existing evidence in a new light, through the prism of our experience on 9/11... that experience changed our appreciation of our vulnerability and the risks the US faces from terrorist states and terrorist networks armed with weapons of mass murder.<sup>37</sup>

Clearly, the US and Europe no longer focus on transatlantic relations to the degree they did during the Cold War. Instead, one is focusing globally now, and the other locally. While this role was somewhat reversed in the early 1990s, it was still becoming clear that the end of the bipolar international system and shifting priorities were working against continued strong transatlantic ties. Whether this means that Harries is right with his prediction that the West will see further clashes in the absence of a common enemy because it was born out of fear and danger instead of common values remains to be seen. He points out, however, that everyone who argues for the importance of common values for Western unity should consider the fact that while common features had existed long before the Cold War, “they had never created or

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<sup>34</sup> Long, p. 30-33

<sup>35</sup> Daalder (2003), p. 162; Nye (2000), p. 55

<sup>36</sup> George W. Bush, Second Inaugural Address (January 20, 2005)

<sup>37</sup> Rumsfeld, “Prepared Testimony,” Senate Armed Services Committee, Washington (July 9, 2003)

sustained a united West before the appearance of a shared and formidable enemy.”<sup>38</sup> Many observers have taken a similar view on common values and pointed to a transatlantic gap in this regard as reason for US-EU disputes. This argument will be looked at closer in the next chapter, where will be examined why Europe and America have drawn different conclusions from the changes in the geopolitical environment and how those can be related to rifts over Bosnia and Iraq.

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<sup>38</sup> Harries, p. 47



## CHAPTER 2

“Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus.”<sup>39</sup>

Robert Kagan clearly thinks that the powerful Americans and the weak Europeans share little common ground.<sup>40</sup> Although his characterization is somewhat of a caricature, Kagan is right in that Europeans and Americans do perceive the world differently in many respects. This chapter will examine to what extent these differing worldviews, resulting from a military power gap and ideological differences, have caused transatlantic tensions over Bosnia and Iraq.

According to Kagan’s power gap thesis, capabilities determine action. The US is using military force because it can. Europeans are weak and therefore oppose military action: “When you don’t have a hammer, you don’t want anything to look like a nail.”<sup>41</sup> Of course, a military power gap between the US and its European allies cannot be denied. The end of the Cold War also came with the emergence of the US as the only superpower, unrivalled in its military capacity by anyone.

That different outlooks on the use of military power create problems for the alliance is plausible. However, the power gap between the US and Europe has always been a part of the transatlantic relationship. During the Cold War it was precisely American power that protected Western Europe from communism. Europeans do not necessarily have an aversion to power or the use of it. In the words of Gordon and Shapiro, “While the Americans limited themselves to bombing, the British, French and Dutch deployed a Rapid Reaction Force on

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<sup>39</sup> Kagan, p. 3

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 27-8

the ground.”<sup>42</sup> Great Britain, Spain, Italy, Poland and a number of other European countries joined the US intervention in Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein. Even the French and Germans promised “unlimited solidarity” for an attack on Afghanistan and sent troops to support the US. Nor does US “hyperpuissance” make Americans always rely on force more than they should, as US policy on Bosnia has shown.

The war in Bosnia has clearly demonstrated European weakness. But it also reveals that Kagan’s argument about the psychology of power and weakness is not as straightforward as he makes it out to be. When European inability to deal with the problem in Bosnia became clear, they called for American involvement. But what did their Martian allies do? They tried to avoid ground troops at all cost: “At the core of its failure to adequately address the Bosnian crisis was a collective will on the part of Western leaders, especially America, to make the hard choice to intervene with force.”<sup>43</sup>

The conflict was ended when the Clinton administration finally was determined to use force, leading Wayne Bert to conclude that the interesting question “is not what US capabilities are, but rather what role it wants to play in international politics.”<sup>44</sup> But Bosnia came at a time when the US was lacking determination in terms of its goals on the international stage. Clinton’s secretary of defense, William Perry later acknowledged that “we should have been prepared to use or to threaten to use military force from the beginning.”<sup>45</sup> And Richard Holbrooke observed after Dayton that “even those who chafed at the reassertion of American power conceded, at least implicitly, its necessity.”<sup>46</sup>

Evidently, the use of force is often contended in US-EU relations, but not necessarily because the US is acting militarily and Europe is against it. One of the reasons why the Europeans,

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<sup>42</sup> Gordon and Shapiro, *Allies at War* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004), p. 190

<sup>43</sup> DiPrizio, *Armed Humanitarians* (Baltimore, London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), p. 103

<sup>44</sup> Bert, p. 9

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Sciolino, “Bosnia Policy Shaped by US Military Role” in *New York Times* (July 29, 1996)

<sup>46</sup> Holbrooke, *To End A War* (New York: Modern Library, 1999), p. 351

especially the French, were unhappy with how the US handled things during the Bosnia crisis was because they were pressing for a more aggressive policy against the Serbs, while the US was not prepared to change the status quo of the Bosnia intervention. According to General John Shalikashvili, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under President Clinton, the people in charge thought that “we could somehow let them be on the ground and we would be in the air and that would be enough, but there is a very important lesson that you cannot be in an alliance with nations and somehow step back from a leadership position.”<sup>47</sup>

In many ways it was the French that finally pushed Washington into action. They took a more aggressive approach in 1995 under the lead of newly elected president Jacques Chirac. He was concerned with French credibility as a Great Power as well as the credibility of NATO and thus viewed US passivity on the Bosnia issue with resentment.<sup>48</sup> After his return home from talks in Washington in June 1995 derisively announced that the position of the leader of the free world was “vacant.”<sup>49</sup> In July, he unleashed more criticism of the allied performance in Bosnia, clearly directed at the United States, saying that some countries were behaving irresponsibly, “preaching democracy and human rights but being increasingly unwilling to put out money or soldiers to defend them.”<sup>50</sup> Eight years later, over the Iraq issue, Chirac was again not happy with the US, but this time because they were prepared to put soldiers on the ground for democracy and human rights. Of course, there were other issues at play in the French reaction to the Iraq invasion, but it can be concluded that it is not American use of force by itself that creates tensions within the alliance, since the lack of it also caused rifts.

Looking closer at the Bosnia crisis, it also becomes clear that the Americans are not the only ones driven by traditional power considerations, trying to navigate the anarchic Hobbesian

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<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Sciolino (1996)

<sup>48</sup> Lucarelli, *Europe and the Breakup of Yugoslavia* (Hague, London: Kluwer Law International, 2000), pp. 170-8

<sup>49</sup> Sciolino (1996)

<sup>50</sup> Mitchell, “US Weighs a Response to French Call on Bosnia” in *New York Times* (July 15, 1995)

world. Of course, the fact that Europeans were calling for US help to bail them out, is proof positive for Kagan's thesis that the US helped to create a Kantian world of "perpetual peace" in Europe, by taking care of their security and letting Europeans focus on their economic prosperity.<sup>51</sup> But his contention that Europe is not ambitious for power anymore rings hollow when examining the European policy rationales in Bosnia.<sup>52</sup>

When the crisis emerged in Yugoslavia, it was President Bush's secretary of state James Baker who dismissed US intervention in Bosnia with the realist observation that the US has "no dog in that fight." The US did not have a national interest at stake in Bosnia. But neither did the Europeans, who treated the troubles in Yugoslavia initially largely according to Bismarck's belief that the "Balkans are not worth the bones of a Pomeranian Grenadier."<sup>53</sup>

It might have been military weakness that led Europeans to arrive at the consensus to "risk the least" in Bosnia.<sup>54</sup> But it also shows that European actions based on realist calculations are not a thing of the pre-World War II era. The EU, as Robert Jervis points out with reference to the more recent Iraq crisis, responds to its most powerful members after all:

[t]he dominance [East European] nations fear most is not American but Franco-German. The United States is more powerful, but France and Germany are closer and more likely to overshadow them. Indeed, French and German resentment toward such nations is no more surprising than Washington's dismissal of Old Europe. The irony is that even while France and Germany bitterly decried US efforts to hustle them into line, these two nations disparaged and bullied the East European states that sided with Bush – not exactly Venus-like behavior.<sup>55</sup>

Similarly, the Balkans might not have posed a direct threat to the Europeans, but they did see strategic interests at stake. Sonia Lucarelli, for example, observes that France exerted the greatest constant pressure for something to be done in ex-Yugoslavia because it was trying to create an "effective European pillar within the Alliance with France on top" and because it

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<sup>51</sup> Kagan, p. 3

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55

<sup>53</sup> Rupnik (ed.), *International Perspectives on the Balkans* (Clementsport: The Canadian Peacekeeping Press of the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, 2003), p. 5

<sup>54</sup> Lucarelli, p. 168; John Major, Interview in *Der Spiegel* 17 (April 25, 1994), p. 28

<sup>55</sup> Jervis, "The Compulsive Empire," *Foreign Policy* 137 (July-August 2003), p. 86

was worried about German hegemony in a fragmented Yugoslavia.<sup>56</sup> Germany for its part was, according to foreign minister Klaus Kinkel, not prepared to “break with the European position,” after it had unilaterally recognized Croatia and Slovenia in 1991 and had earned great criticism for this decision, some even saying that it had made war inevitable.<sup>57</sup> After this disaster, its national interest dictated Germany to go with everyone else on the issue. All the while, Britain had ruled out using an expeditionary force to protect Bosnia unless there was substantial input of US ground troops.<sup>58</sup>

If anything, therefore, the Bosnia crisis has shown in what disarray Europe is in terms of foreign policy cohesion. Despite their attestations that the European countries were not divided on the issue of Bosnia, policy makers in Britain, France and other European countries were struggling to coordinate their response.<sup>59</sup> They agreed on the need for more troops and equipment, as well as the need for a mobile rapid intervention force to avoid similar crises in the future. But the French and British seemed to have different visions of what that force should be. In June 1995, Britain announced the increase of its troops by at least 1,000 and potentially more, but France “seemed to have something grander in mind: a large force, between 4,000 and 5,000 men, stationed in a central location, highly mobile and heavily armed.”<sup>60</sup> This was not the only instance of European disagreements over and, by extension, failure on the Bosnia issue. How was it possible that Europe did nothing? The answer, Jonathan Eyal says, is rather simple: ‘Europe’ as such did not exist.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Lucarelli (2000), p. 170-6

<sup>57</sup> Kinkel quoted in “Wie in Somalia,” *Der Spiegel* 49 (December 5, 1994), p. 20; Friedman, “Foreign Affairs: Proceed With Caution,” *New York Times*, (October 11, 1995)

<sup>58</sup> Sharp, “Britain’s Policies on Bosnia” in Rupnik, p. 87

<sup>59</sup> Genscher claimed in his memoirs that the Balkan crisis did not split the EC states (*Erinnerungen*, p. 967)

<sup>60</sup> Darnton, “Clinton’s Offer of Troops Pleases Europe” in *New York Times* (June 2, 1995)

<sup>61</sup> Eyal, *Europe and Yugoslavia: Lessons From a Failure* (London: Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies, 1993), p. 78

In the same way, nearly a decade later, the furor over Europe's divisions hid an unstated assumption that Europe should be united on an issue like Iraq.<sup>62</sup> However, in terms of European foreign policy coherence nothing much had changed, leading Ash to conclude that Kagan is actually too kind to Europe, "in the sense that he elevated to a deliberate, coherent approach what is, in fact, a story of muddled seeking and national differences."<sup>63</sup>

When Kagan speaks of pacifist Europeans, he seems to describe first and foremost the Germans, "who seem to live in a postwar, postconflict geopolitical fantasyland, where the greatest threat to existence, it seems, is the mixing of green glass with brown."<sup>64</sup> Considering Germany's historical baggage, it is neither a bad thing nor necessarily surprising that the Germans have dedicated themselves to fighting holes in the ozone layer. But then there are the Britons, traditionally a warrior nation, with their imperial history.<sup>65</sup> Should this background not make them more like the trigger-happy Americans? The actions in Iraq under Tony Blair certainly look that way. Even John Major concluded in regard to Bosnia that "Our instincts and outlook were more often in tune with North America than with Western Europe."<sup>66</sup> And yet, all across Europe, people demonstrated against an invasion of Iraq, even in countries that militarily supported the US. By simply looking at the Bosnia and Iraq cases it is difficult to gauge the extent or even existence of this alleged "ideological divide."<sup>67</sup> Even when comparing public opinions in favor of intervention, it needs to be considered that the Bosnian War was fought because of humanitarian reasons. CNN pictures about the atrocities of ethnic cleansing on Europe's doorstep are bound to, and in many cases did, generate more public support than an invasion aimed at preventing another terrorist attack that did not directly affect Europeans.

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<sup>62</sup> Long, p. 30

<sup>63</sup> Garton Ash, "The New Anti-Europeanism in America" in Lindenberg (ed.), *Beyond Paradise and Power: Europe, America, and the Future of a Troubled Partnership* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 129

<sup>64</sup> Erlanger, "Anatomy of a Breakdown" in Lindenberg, p. 18

<sup>65</sup> Sharp, p. 89

<sup>66</sup> Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945: From "Empire" by Invitation to Transatlantic Drift* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 255

<sup>67</sup> Cohen-Tanugi, *Alliance At Risk* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. xi

Nevertheless, this gives credit to Kagan's thesis that historical experiences do in fact have some influence on differing ideological developments across the Atlantic, which in turn leads to different perceptions on how to deal with threats. In the Iraq crisis, Europe and America differ over how to deal with Islamist terrorists. For the US who experienced 9/11 as an unprecedented attack on its soil and lost thousands of lives that day, terrorism is an act of war and needs to be tackled that way, that is, by using military force to fight back. First to defeat the Taliban in Afghanistan and then to prevent another 9/11 – or worse even, a 9/11 with WMD – by disabling potential threats that could cause such horror scenarios. Europeans, on the other hand, had not shared the same experience on 9/11. There was European outrage and solidarity, but in the end, it was the Americans that were attacked and the terrorist threat was not as imminent for the Europeans. Even after the attacks in Madrid and London, US and EU threat perceptions differed. Europeans, having dealt with IRA, ETA and RAF terrorists in the past, see terrorism as a crime and tend to think that a negotiated settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, rather than war on Iraq, would be a bigger contribution to the long-term success of the war against terrorism.<sup>68</sup>

A similar observation can be made with regard to the Bosnia crisis. According to Dana Allin, there was a transatlantic divide over whether the Bosnian War was a civil war or a war of aggression. The conflict included both, but which aspect one emphasized had great practical and moral significance. If regarded as a civil war, as the French and British did, there was little the outside world could do except provide humanitarian aid and wait until the warring parties had killed each other off. The Americans on the other hand, saw the conflict as a war of aggression, where they saw the possibility, even a duty to defend the victim and confront the aggressor.<sup>69</sup> Clinton, himself, felt there was a moral problem in not enabling people under

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<sup>68</sup> Garton Ash (2004), p. 132

<sup>69</sup> Allin, "American Power, Balkan Dilemmas and the Transatlantic Future" in Rupnik, p. 40

attack to defend themselves.<sup>70</sup> This led to transatlantic tensions early on in the Clinton administration when it rejected the Vance-Owen plan, which was developed by Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen, working for the UN and EU respectively, and suggested the division of Bosnia into ten cantons, each controlled by one of the three ethnic groups. In the US the plan was attacked as a sell-out to the Serb aggressors and ultimately rejected.<sup>71</sup> These different takes on the war led to further clashes later on. A French general spoke for many in Europe when he blamed Washington for the continuation of war in Bosnia by encouraging the belief that US military support would be given to the Bosnian Muslims: “A false impression was given to the international community to help stir the vision of the Bosnian Serbs as the enemy, and unfortunately, all this very nearly went out of control.”<sup>72</sup>

Looking at both crises, it seems that transatlantic tensions are increasingly due to differing worldviews that determine threat perceptions and when to use force. Whereas the Cold War against communism, and the atrocities in Bosnia in the end, brought America and Europe together, the war against terrorism in the Middle East is pulling them apart. The Soviet Union united the West; the Middle East divides it.<sup>73</sup> It may well be that US and EU interests simply converged or overlapped in the Balkans in the 1990s, just enough to prevent outright rupture.<sup>74</sup> The problem was not with policy – the killing had to be stopped – but rather with process and strategy.<sup>75</sup> In Iraq on the other hand, transatlantic differences took a turn for the worse. Old Europe – and many people on the streets of New Europe as well –opposed the policy of pre-emption, although strategic disputes ensued as well, most notably about the issue of Turkey’s protection. It has been pointed out, however, that unlike previous

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<sup>70</sup> Drew, *On the Edge* (New York, London: Simon & Schuster, 1994), p. 148

<sup>71</sup> Lundestad, p. 252

<sup>72</sup> Sremac, *War of Words* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), p. 169

<sup>73</sup> Garton Ash, (2004), p. 132

<sup>74</sup> Peterson, “The US and Europe in the Balkans” in John Peterson and Mark Pollack, *Europe, America Bush* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 96

<sup>75</sup> For example, *The Times* reported on September 23, 1994 that NATO governments were split on how to respond to breaches of the artillery exclusion zone around Sarajevo. The US favored a tough NATO approach, while the Europeans – with troops on the ground – were in favor of letting the commanders on the ground decide.



transatlantic crises, operations were not hampered in the end: “France and Germany both facilitated US intervention by providing access to air space and logistical support. In that sense, the Iraqi crisis was marked more by diplomatic malpractice than by the earlier, more severe mutual sabotage.”<sup>76</sup> The following chapter will look at the diplomatic dimensions of both crises in more detail to evaluate to what extent they played into the rifts. In particular, it will be looked at whether Charles Kupchan’s argument that “Europe is not balancing against US power but against US behavior,” can be supported.<sup>77</sup> As the Bosnia crisis has shown, the Europeans – with the exception of most Germans maybe – are not pacifists and not averse to the use of US power. A major point of debate during the Bosnia issue was not US power but the lack of American leadership. This suggests that there is more to transatlantic disagreements than the fact that the US has unprecedented power.

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<sup>76</sup> Hay and Sicherman (eds.), *Is There Still a West?* (Columbia & London: University of Missouri Press, 2007), p. 3

<sup>77</sup> Kupchan, “The Atlantic Order in Transition” in Anderson, Ikenberry and Risse (eds.), p. 120

### CHAPTER 3

“No European countries can ever be counted “in” or “out” completely: domestic politics change, opinion polls shift, moods will turn.”<sup>78</sup>

As outlined in the previous chapter, it is difficult to make generalizations where Europe is concerned, even more so when taking factors such as domestic politics and personal differences among leaders into account. If no European country can therefore be counted in or out, as Anne Applebaum concludes, factors like US behavior and diplomacy do matter. Joseph Nye has warned the US for years of the dangers of unilateralism and the ‘arrogance of power’.<sup>79</sup> And Stephen Walt thinks that the US “can use its power and wealth to compel others to do what it wants, but this strategy will surely fail in the long run. In most circumstances, the key is not power but persuasion.”<sup>80</sup> The following will look at whether US failure to persuade its allies had an impact on transatlantic tensions in the Bosnia and Iraq crises.

Over the past decade and a half the US has gained a reputation for not paying enough attention to the detailed concerns of its allies, which has created resentment in Europe.<sup>81</sup> The Bosnia crisis was no exception, even though it did not start out that way. In 1993, after Clinton had taken office, he was, in fact, deferring to the European allies on the question of Bosnia.<sup>82</sup> Clinton had been against the embargo from the beginning and was trying to take action against it after his election. He sent his secretary of state, Warren Christopher, on a trip to Europe to convince NATO leaders to support his policy of ‘lift and strike’ in order to reverse the disadvantage for the Bosnian Muslims and enable them to fight back. But when Christopher’s efforts ran into trouble from the moment he landed in Europe and the US

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<sup>78</sup> Applebaum, “Old Europe” Versus “New Europe” in Lindenberg, p. 37

<sup>79</sup> Nye (2000), p. 53-4

<sup>80</sup> Walt, *Taming American Power* (New York: Norton, 2005)

<sup>81</sup> Nye (2000), p. 56

<sup>82</sup> Daalder (2000), p. 163

proposal was adamantly opposed, on the grounds that European leaders feared for their troops on the ground in case of increased Serbian capabilities, the Clinton administration turned its attention away from trying to persuade its allies of the benefits of the US policy and towards how the conflict could be contained and how to deal with the humanitarian problems.<sup>83</sup> Straining the alliance did not seem to have been an option for the administration. Indeed, Garton Ash finds evidence that it was agreed among Clinton administration officials that “NATO [was] more important than Bosnia.”<sup>84</sup> Clinton later explained that preserving good relations with the alliance was more important. "We have bigger fish to fry with the Europeans," he said.<sup>85</sup> While the end of the Cold War had caused Washington to focus more on domestic issues, it had not completely forgotten about its interests in Europe, in particular vis-à-vis Russia and with regards to NATO and European eastward expansion, which the Clinton administration supported through policy initiatives like the Partnership for Peace and the New Transatlantic Agenda.

Of course, Clinton was influenced in his decision to abandon ‘lift and strike’ in 1993 by other factors apart from European opposition, which Christopher sums up as follows:

Enthusiasm for a bold stroke that might draw us into a Balkan quagmire had evaporated. The President reportedly had been reading books on Balkan history that presented a grim picture of prospects for reconciliation [...] Memories of Vietnam caused many, especially those in the military, to resist commitment to a dangerous and uncertain mission in a confusing and complicated conflict [...] To them, the costs seemed too high to act.<sup>86</sup>

On top of that, DiPrizio observes that Clinton’s indecisiveness and inconsistency confused the world, and his statements promised much that his policies could not deliver.<sup>87</sup> This was

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<sup>83</sup> Christopher, *In the Stream of History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 346-7

<sup>84</sup> Garton Ash (2004), p. 97

<sup>85</sup> Quoted in Sciolino (1996)

<sup>86</sup> Christopher, p. 347

<sup>87</sup> Quoted in DiPrizio p. 119

particularly the case during the following year, which was marked by “rift and drift”, where relations with NATO allies were tattered and the administration could not decide what to do.<sup>88</sup>

The US stance on ‘lift and strike,’ for example, caused transatlantic problems in 1994, when the Clinton administration chose to ignore arms shipments from Iran to the Bosnian Muslims, at a time when the US was meant to be helping to enforce an arms embargo.<sup>89</sup> The administration had deferred to the Europeans and decided not to ‘lift and strike’ and yet it was acting behind its allies’ backs. Unsurprisingly, when these allegations became public in early 1995, they caused a major uproar at NATO headquarters in Brussels. NATO officials denied any knowledge of weapons deliveries, but UN personnel said there was no doubt that the operation was induced and coordinated by the United States.<sup>90</sup>

Things had already taken a turn for the worse in November 1994, when the Clinton administration had officially announced that the US would no longer enforce the arms embargo against Bosnia. Public feuding resulted, with the American side complaining that the Europeans had caused a “complete breakdown” of NATO by repeatedly vetoing air strikes on the Serbs, and Europeans condemning US criticism considering that there were no American troops in harms way that would have to face the consequences of Serbian rearmament.<sup>91</sup> The Clinton administration had acted in response to pressure from Congress which threatened to cut all funds for enforcing the ban. The emerging consensus among Republicans in Congress was, according to Senator Richard Lugar, that Europeans cared less about a solution to the conflict than Americans. European concerns about their troops in Bosnia were dismissed by Lugar with the words that the British, French and other NATO allies were only on the ground as Samaritans, “to feed the people, not to fight. Instead of creating justice, UN troops are

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<sup>88</sup> Gow, p. 219

<sup>89</sup> Peterson, p. 92

<sup>90</sup> Sremac, p. 174

<sup>91</sup> Stevenson, “Britain and France Criticize US on Bosnia Positions,” *New York Times* (November 29, 1994)

constantly in danger of being taken hostage. They are only in the way. That annoys Americans.”<sup>92</sup>

But the unilateral lift of the embargo did not help with gaining European support for the US approach. On the contrary, they were accused of undermining the alliance and instead turning themselves into an ally of the Muslims.<sup>93</sup> British Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, said “It is a worry because this is a mandatory resolution of the Security Council and an agreed policy of the alliance.”<sup>94</sup> And NATO Secretary General Willy Claes warned the US not to depart from the common approach.<sup>95</sup> The US did not have to go that far because when the US finally decided to “put some real muscle behind [its] rhetoric,” it gained strong expressions of support from its European allies.<sup>96</sup> Other factors – most notably the fall of Srebrenica and the slaughter of an estimated 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys, which increased public pressure to do something on both sides of the Atlantic – played into the US decision to push for sustained strategic and tactical airstrikes combined with a ground offensive by local forces from summer 1995 onwards to find a solution to the Bosnian conflict and restore NATO’s credibility.

So, while the Clinton administration did act unilaterally during the Bosnia crisis in relation to ‘lift and strike,’ it eventually exerted leadership in a way that brought the allies on board with their initiative to stop the war by, for example, sending National Security Advisor Tony Lake and State Department official Peter Tarnoff to Europe to rally support.<sup>97</sup> It should be noted in this context, that while the Europeans were aware of their own incapability of dealing with the problem and repeatedly asked for the US to take the initiative, when the US finally took a

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<sup>92</sup> Lugar, Interview in *Der Spiegel* 49 (December 5, 1994), p. 150

<sup>93</sup> “NATO: Opfer des Krieges?” in *Der Spiegel* 47 (November 21, 1994), p. 140

<sup>94</sup> Quoted in Craig R. Whitney, “Move on Bosnia By US Alarms Allies in NATO,” *New York Times* (November 12, 1994)

<sup>95</sup> “NATO: Opfer des Krieges?” p. 141

<sup>96</sup> Christopher, pp. 348-9

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

tougher approach, they protested sharply. Unilateralism causes transatlantic tensions because it seems that, at the very least, Europeans want to be listened to.

Since George W. Bush took office, European suspicion of American behavior has increased enormously and more and more European politicians and academics draw attention to the problem. Tony Blair, for instance, warned the Bush administration that “people listen to the US on issues and may well agree with them, but they want the US to listen back.”<sup>98</sup> A French academic argues that “the trouble arises when we feel we’re not only not being listened to, but when the Americans make no pretence of even wanting to hear what we have to say.”<sup>99</sup> And a former German Ambassador to the US, Wolfgang Ischinger, asks “Why is it that in Washington European criticism is being treated as insignificant comments?” It would be good, he thinks, “if the US was not acting as if Europe was inconsequential”<sup>100</sup>

The US handling of this problem does not much to alleviate these suspicions, however. At the height of the transatlantic crisis over the Iraq invasion, US officials made sure to reinforce European worries that administration officials were not interested in European involvement in the decision-making process. As Richard Perle put it at the Munich Conference on Security Policy in February 2003: “I promise you one thing: If we had to choose between efficient protection against terrorism and a long list of friends, we would choose efficient protection.”<sup>101</sup> The US openly shows where its priorities are – and its allies are not it.

During his election campaign in 2000, George Bush said: “If we are an arrogant nation, they’ll resent us. If we’re a humble nation, but strong, they’ll welcome us.”<sup>102</sup> Back then, he got to the root of a major problem he has been faced with in office. Considering Bush’s words it is surprising to hear administration officials conclude that they simply didn’t understand

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<sup>98</sup> Quoted in McAllister, “Mad at America,” in *Time International* 161 (January 20, 2003), p. 16

<sup>99</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 19

<sup>100</sup> Ahlrichs, “Ein Botschafter in heikler Mission,” *Spiegel Online* (February 13, 2003)

<sup>101</sup> Quoted in Schwarz, “Eiernde Achse des Guten,” *Die Tageszeitung* (February 4, 2002), p. 3

<sup>102</sup> Quoted in Daalder and Lindsay, *America Unbound* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), p. 193

how American power could be seen as more dangerous than Saddam Hussein.<sup>103</sup> The problem is that the US wields its power in a way that is resented increasingly not just by rogue nations but by allies as well. And Bush's diplomatic style seems to represent the American 'arrogance of power' more than anything else.

Bush's style has been described as marked by a lack of diplomatic finesse and "an overweening arrogance that is a product of a combination of righteousness, pride and passion."<sup>104</sup> Bush himself says: "I kind of picture myself as a pretty good diplomat, but nobody else does. You know, particularly, I wouldn't call me a diplomat."<sup>105</sup> Indeed, it has been reported that he has been impatient with the formalities that traditionally mark presidents' relationships with their peers. Stiff photo opportunities bore him. On overseas trips, he asks aides to spare him the chitchat with other leaders that he disparages as "small talk in big rooms."<sup>106</sup> While Vice President Cheney finds Bush's direct style refreshing, others complain about his lack of subtlety.<sup>107</sup> His 'you are either with us or with the terrorists' rhetoric is causing mistrust in Europe. Unlike Clinton, he comes across as absolutist and not able to take the lead and pull people along no matter how reluctant they are.<sup>108</sup> On the contrary, Bush gives the impression that it does not matter whether the rest of the world or at least his allies are with him and this openly arrogant attitude has caused Europeans to start viewing the US with distrust more and more.

Hence, it is hardly a surprise that Jacques Chirac summed up the French attitude in 2003 as follows: "This is not about Iraq," he said at the height of the battle over UN Security Council

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<sup>103</sup> Condoleeza Rice quoted in Allen and Glasser, "Bush Urges an Alliance Against Terror," *Washington Post* (June 1, 2003), p. A01

<sup>104</sup> Keen, "Bush Has Little Use For Diplomatic Niceties," *USA Today* (March 18, 2003), p. 4A

<sup>105</sup> Woodward, *Bush at War* (London: Pocket Books, 2002), p. 342

<sup>106</sup> Keen, p. 4A

<sup>107</sup> Interview with Vice President Dick Cheney, NBC, "Meet the Press" (March 16, 2003)

<sup>108</sup> Keen, p. 4A

resolutions. “This is about the United States.”<sup>109</sup> And Javier Solana explained in 2002 that Europeans are “instinctive multilateralists” that want the US to be more committed to multilateral solutions.<sup>110</sup>

This European suspicion of US unilateralism and the increasing role it plays in creating transatlantic disagreements is, again, due to geopolitical changes since the end of the Cold War and the ‘psychology of weakness’. Multilateralism pays off for the Venusians. If everyone abides by international rules, they can only gain, despite their military weakness. This argument, made by Kagan, explains why Europeans strongly advocate multilateralism and resent American tendencies to ‘go it alone.’ If the US circumvents the UN completely, the French or British – with their seat on the Security Council – will not have the opportunity to have a say on the international stage and thus influence decisions in such a way that will benefit their interests. In the end, unilateralism comes at a cost for Europe because irrelevant international institutions mean a loss of power for the Europeans. To avoid that, Kagan argues, Europeans are hoping to constrain American power without wielding power themselves; in what may be the ultimate feat of subtlety and indirection, they want to control the behemoth by appealing to its conscience.<sup>111</sup>

For the Americans, on the other hand, “multilateral agreements and institutions should not be ends in themselves.”<sup>112</sup> It has been argued that this is a common streak in US foreign policy rather than a recent departure by Clinton and Bush.<sup>113</sup> Both crises also support the case that Europeans placed great importance on multilateral channels. In Bosnia, the British were adamant that any decision should pass through the UN Security Council, and France also avoided any unilateral action.<sup>114</sup> With regard to Iraq their positions were the same, with Tony

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<sup>109</sup> Quoted in Applebaum, p. 28

<sup>110</sup> Quoted in Pollack, “Unilateral America, multilateral Europe?” in Peterson and Pollack, p. 115

<sup>111</sup> Kagan,

<sup>112</sup> Condoleezza Rice quoted in Pollack, p. 115

<sup>113</sup> Lynch and Singh, *After Bush* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 36-43

<sup>114</sup> Lucarelli (2000), p. 42 and 182



Blair insisting that the US went to the UN to legitimize an intervention and France announcing that “no military action could be conducted without the decision of the Security Council.”<sup>115</sup> Yet, France undermined the alleged “instinctive” European multilateralism over Iraq, when Chirac threatened to veto a UN resolution on Iraq in any case. France, in this instance, placed tying down the Americans above the principle of multilateralism, which turned out to be counterproductive in terms of preserving the authority and role of the Security Council.<sup>116</sup>

In this context it should be noted that some scholars have pointed out that “the EU's instinctive multilateralism is a legitimising myth for European countries that have always been, and remain, selective in their support for multilateral cooperation both among themselves and with third countries.”<sup>117</sup> Indeed, as Richard Perle pointed out in a 2003 interview:

The [German] government and the Chancellor in particular have taken on a very, very extreme position. The Chancellor said no, Germany won't participate in any way, even if the United Nations want to sanction the use of force. I think that is a certain form of unilateralism, of which we are often accused of, but a very extreme one.<sup>118</sup>

In 1991, it was also the Germans that unilaterally recognized Croatia and Slovenia. In its relations with the United Nations, Europeans also seem to be rather selective. The UN was eased out of a front-line role in the Balkans. Especially after its humiliation in Bosnia, where UN-designated ‘safe havens’ were overrun with severe humanitarian consequences, and so the UN was thoroughly marginalized by the time of Kosovo.<sup>119</sup>

Furthermore, it was Jacques Chirac who reacted with such arrogance to the prospective new members of the EU who dared to speak up at the adults' table and express their own sovereign

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<sup>115</sup> Dominique de Villepin quoted in Gordon and Shapiro, p. 104

<sup>116</sup> Gordon and Shapiro, p. 178

<sup>117</sup> Pollack, pp. 115-6

<sup>118</sup> Perle in *Sabine Christiansen*, “Rückt der Krieg Näher – Wohin Rückt Deutschland?” ARD (TV), (February 9, 2003)

<sup>119</sup> Peterson, p. 88

views.<sup>120</sup> They called them not very well behaved and told them that they “missed a great opportunity to keep quiet.”<sup>121</sup> Arrogance and unilateralism are not exclusively reserved for the Americans, it seems. Combined with tactless diplomacy on both sides, this made the transatlantic crisis over Iraq particularly severe.

In Germany, Chancellor Schröder faced a tough reelection in the fall of 2002 and privately welcomed Cheney’s speech, declaring that the threat of weapons of mass destruction in Saddam’s hands would justify an attack, as “the miracle” with which he would launch his campaign “to woo back his disaffected left-wing and pacifist supporters.”<sup>122</sup> And so the unlimited solidarity that Schröder had talked about after the September 11 attacks, turned into an unconditional no.<sup>123</sup> He flat out rejected any military involvement and he did it openly, not in consultation with the Americans. His own party criticized him for his diplomatic manners, saying that it was a “matter of style,” that Schröder should not speak his mind about US policy publicly, but in direct talks with Washington.<sup>124</sup> On top of that, the German justice minister compared President Bush to Hitler in that he was using military action abroad to divert from domestic problems. The American reaction was understandably described as “outrageous and inexplicable,” and the incident led – in Condoleezza Rice’s words – to “a poisoned atmosphere.”<sup>125</sup>

In Paris, French diplomacy also did little to prevent transatlantic relations from deteriorating, if anything, Gordon and Shapiro observe, it seemed designed to undermine what little trust and confidence did exist.<sup>126</sup> The comments coming out of Paris were asking how Blair and

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<sup>120</sup> Erlanger, p. 12

<sup>121</sup> Shawcross, *Allies: Why the West Had to Remove Saddam* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), p. 129

<sup>122</sup> Cheney, “Remarks to the Veterans of Foreign Wars 103rd National Convention,” Nashville, Tennessee, August 26, 2002; *Focus Magazin*, 17 February 2003, p. 22

<sup>123</sup> *Focus Magazin*, 17 February 2003, p. 27

<sup>124</sup> Schuller and Inacker, “Für Bush, Gegen Bush, Für Bush, Gegen Bush,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* (Februar 17, 2002), p. 4

<sup>125</sup> Fleischer, Press Briefing, White House, September 19, 2002; Condoleezza Rice quoted in Dejevsky, “Schröder Squeezes Home in Knife-Edge German vote,” in *The Independent* (September 23, 2002)

<sup>126</sup> Gordon and Shapiro, p. 179

Bush could justify going to war with Iraq (considering that France had had a long and shady relationship with Saddam, which in turn also influenced the French decision to oppose the war, was not well received by the Americans).<sup>127</sup> Paris was complaining about not wanting to live in a multipolar world and be subject to US unilateral action.<sup>128</sup> But then it said it would veto another Security Council resolution no matter what, and later, together with Germany and Belgium, vetoed a US request for NATO to make plans to protect Turkey if Saddam Hussein attacks.<sup>129</sup>

The Americans were not much better, though. Certainly Donald Rumsfeld's input did not help the whole situation. First he dismissed France and Germany as Old Europe that had lost its relevance.<sup>130</sup> Then he compared Germany, an old ally, to two of America's biggest adversaries: Cuba and Libya. Subsequent US praise for New Europe, and the Polish in particular, just further irritated the French and Germans.<sup>131</sup> In addition to that, American efforts to communicate their objectives for the war in Iraq were spread rather thinly, as Anne Applebaum notes:

Although military planning for the war in Iraq began in the summer of 2002, there was no attempt to explain or promote the war in Europe until much later. Even after the war, President Bush rarely bothered to address himself to anyone other than his domestic constituents, although the entire world could see him and hear him every time he made a speech.<sup>132</sup>

Moreover, the link between Saddam Hussein and 9/11 that US officials gave as reason for their invention plans was never accepted outside the US. Thus US talk about pre-emptive

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<sup>127</sup> Shawcross, pp, 124-5

<sup>128</sup> Gordon and Shapiro, p. 179

<sup>129</sup> Black, "NATO Deadlocked as France and Germany Refuse to Back Down" in *The Guardian* (February 12, 2003)

<sup>130</sup> Rumsfeld, "Briefing at the Foreign Press Center" (January 22, 2003)

<sup>131</sup> Allen and Glasser, p. A01

<sup>132</sup> Applebaum, p. 35

attack in self-defense, did not find much support in Old Europe, despite the fact that Europeans acknowledged a legitimate US motive for self-defense after 9/11.<sup>133</sup>

American diplomacy also failed to counter a Franco-German alliance on the Turkey issue and the Iraq debate in the UN. While Schröder had already made his stance clear in 2002, the French government was still “uneasily sitting on the fence at the time.”<sup>134</sup> Schröder and Chirac, who had previously found little common political and personal ground, had a reason to work closely together. They both might have seen an opportunity in this new situation to influence the future of Europe. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the EU is an important factor in French and German politics and in the wake of EU expansion and increasing influence of formerly peripheral members like Britain and Spain, Chirac and Schröder probably saw an agreement on Iraq as an opportunity to re-establish their leadership of the EU. Their combined stance on Iraq gave them the chance to isolate the more Atlanticist Blair, Aznar and Berlusconi in relation to their antiwar publics. It was a chance for them to maybe not speak for ‘Europe’ but to speak for ‘Europeans’, and to make the British, Spanish and Italian leaders pay a price for falling into line behind the United States.<sup>135</sup> The United States and Britain, on the other hand, failed to convince enough friends and allies that this war was necessary, urgent, or even legal, an outcome – as Steven Erlanger points out – that the Bush administration preferred to blame on anyone other than itself.<sup>136</sup>

It also should not be overlooked that Schröder and Chirac genuinely seemed to be against a war in Iraq. Schröder had voiced his opinion long before his election campaign. Nonetheless, both leaders seemed to have valued their interests more than the Atlantic Alliance and in this sense sacrificed multilateralism to the same extent that the Americans did. Therefore, some observers have said that personal antagonism should be considered as a factor for the

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<sup>133</sup> Merkl, p. 50

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p. 6

<sup>135</sup> Gordon and Shapiro, p. 125-128

<sup>136</sup> Erlanger, p. 12

transatlantic rifts over Iraq: “Don’t underestimate the impact of the personalities of Bush and Schröder. Neither one wanted to take the first step and admit that they had made a mistake,” as one advisor in the Chancellor’s office put it.<sup>137</sup> With Bush and Chirac the situation seemed to be the same, although one might agree that Margaret Thatcher had a point when she said that “the problem with the French, is that they are French.”<sup>138</sup> After all, it is always the French that are involved in transatlantic disputes, over Suez, their withdrawal from integrated NATO command, Bosnia and Iraq. It is likely that the personalities of de Gaulle and Chirac had a role to play in these developments, but even in spite of the fact that there was an “honorary European” living in the White House during the 1990s, Europeans were not happy with US behavior during the Bosnia episode. Diplomatic failures, could have been avoided like the reality that Americans insisted, over French objections, that the peace talks be held at Dayton, Ohio and then proceeded to keep the Europeans out of the loop on the negotiations.<sup>139</sup>

The biggest transatlantic problem, however, resulted from unilateral US action, which suggests that Europeans who are blaming transatlantic disputes on George W. Bush and his policies have forgotten that the Clinton administration in the end, did not shy away from doing what they thought they had to do in Bosnia, with or without their allies, in line with a slogan that Sandy Berger coined: “multilateral when you can, unilateral when you must.”<sup>140</sup>

Overall, however, cooler heads seemed to have prevailed in the crisis over Bosnia and the diplomatic fallout was not as severe as it was over Iraq. Why? John Peterson thinks that

At least part of the answer may be that both sides remained committed [...] to joint action as a policy goal per se and, more broadly, to the ‘logic of arguing’. This logic governs negotiations in which actors seek, above all, a ‘reasoned consensus’ on

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<sup>137</sup> Quoted in Szabo, “Germany and the United States After Iraq,” *Internationale Politik & Gesellschaft* I/2004, p. 42

<sup>138</sup> Quoted in Poncet, “Is There Still a Transatlantic Community?” in Esther Brimmer, *Changing Identities and Evolving Values* (Washington, DC: Center for Transatlantic Relations, 2006), p. 3

<sup>139</sup> Mowle, p. 120

<sup>140</sup> Lundestad, p. 251

common goals, as opposed to a strict and complete fulfillment of their own fixed preferences.<sup>141</sup>

In the end, the Americans took charge grumbling about European ineffectiveness, but they realized that they had to reverse their policy of indecision, return to their leadership position and bring their allies along in order to preserve alliance unity and NATO credibility. The case was different in the Iraq dispute, however. It became so ugly because the less visible developments that have been pulling Europe and America in different directions since the end of the Cold War were worsened by irresponsibility on both sides of the Atlantic that manifested themselves in serious diplomatic gaffes. And so alliance unity turned into 'coalitions of the willing' because US priority was not to please its allies, but to protect the country from what they saw as a vital threat to its security. And since they had the means to do it, they did. In a sense that closes the circle and shows that all factors contribute at least to an extent, since transatlantic disputes result from a complex interaction of many factors.

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<sup>141</sup> Peterson, p. 96

## CONCLUSION

Due to the complexity of both crises it is difficult to determine which factor is most explanatory for transatlantic disputes. In the Bosnia case the tensions arose because Europe was not able to effectively deal with the problem and the US, for a long time, was reluctant to enter a conflict that was not directly affecting its national interests. As a result, the shifting of blame became a common occurrence and source of friction as long as the war raged on. The strongest complains from the European side, however, were made as a reaction to unilateral actions of the US. This was also a key reason for the clash over the Iraq intervention, although negligent diplomacy, domestic politics and personal differences lead to an escalation of the situation. This seems to imply that the 'arrogance' of power constitutes a real danger for transatlantic unity.

On a positive note, however, this arrogance appears to be a condition that can be changed through more conciliatory diplomatic measures as well as staff changes on both sides of the Atlantic, as has already occurred in Paris and Berlin and did indeed improve relations. Considering that Clinton acted unilaterally as well and that Europeans are not free from unilateral tendencies themselves, the differing positions on multilateralism also do not seem to be creating the insurmountable obstacle to transatlantic tranquility. As the NATO campaign in Kosovo has shown, allied unity can exist without UN authorization as long as there is a common enemy and a common strategy.

These common goals, of course, are a more problematic subject because of the underlying trends that are causing Europe and America to drift apart in this regard. The end of the Cold War and 9/11 in particular have laid open that Europeans in many respects take a different approach to the international challenges that have emerged post-Cold War and post-9/11. To

what extent these different reactions can be traced back to historical backgrounds and ideological divergences due to different power capabilities is difficult to isolate by simply looking at two instances of US-European disagreements. Even more so because generalizing about Europe is problematic in most regards. After all, the comparison of these two cases has shown that not all Europeans are averse to the use of force to the same extent and for the same reasons; the same might be said for the Americans. The power gap by itself is therefore a rather questionable reason for transatlantic tensions. What it shows, however, is that Europe needs America. In Bosnia, it became very clear very quickly and as the efforts of Chirac's and Schröder's successors to get back into Washington's good books indicate, no European leader can afford to alienate the US in the long run. Yet, the aftermath of Iraq has also shown that in regard to the US, soft power does matter, particularly when engaged in an endeavor as ambitious as the War on Terror.

Consequently, caricatures of peacenik Europeans and cowboy Americans are leading attention away from the fact that Europe and America share many common goals and purposes that are bound to keep them working together. In the end, Europe and America came to a common ground on Bosnia, and today they are fighting terrorists and not each other. We might have to get used to more frequent disagreements because of the changing nature of the international system as well as changing domestic circumstances on both sides of the Atlantic, but the demise of the West does not seem imminent.



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