# Partners Apart? The Foreign Policy Attitudes of the American and European Publics

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## Abstract

It is often argued today that a deep and troublesome gap across the Atlantic has been developing and that Europeans and Americans no longer share the same view of the world. On the basis of data gathered in the 2002 Transatlantic Trends Survey, held in the USA and six European countries, this article assesses whether there is indeed such a gap at the mass level. It focuses on three major dimensions of world views: (1) perceptions of threats (2) the sense of affinity with other countries in terms of allies, friends or foes, and (3) attitudes toward the use of force, both in general and in specific circumstances, more particularly the war over Iraq. It concludes that European publics in 2002 looked at the world in a way that is rather similar to that of many ordinary Americans including harbouring deep reservations about the conduct of certain aspects of U.S. foreign policy. Both publics share fundamental worldviews. On Iraq, Europeans and Americans agreed in some respects (such as the necessary role of the UN) but disagreed on other. In many respects at the mass level the differences across the Atlantic are of degree, and not fundamental. They result from disaffection with the present administration rather than with US policies in general. Moreover, the alleged European 'anti-Americanism' is a misnomer, which hides the considerable sympathies and warm feelings towards America, and the perceived common interests and values.

## Introduction: a transatlantic gap?

It is often argued today that a deep and troublesome gap across the Atlantic has been developing and that Europeans and Americans no longer share the same view of the world. The nowadays most widely quoted and best-known proponent of the

Transatlantic Gap thesis, Robert Kagan, opens up his book stating upfront 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 . . . . Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus' (Kagan, 2003: 3). He then adds 'When it comes to setting national priorities, determining threats, defining challenges, and fashioning and implementing foreign and defence policies, the USA and Europe have parted ways' (Kagan, 2003: 4).

In the wake of these and similar writings it has become conventional wisdom to argue that there is indeed a gap, and that it is widening and also becoming increasingly difficult to manage and perhaps impossible to bridge. To the extent that a Transatlantic dialogue is still taking place, it seems to be a dialogue of the deaf only.

One may argue, of course, that differences of opinion and heated debates have been part and parcel of the Transatlantic relationship for over 50 years, and that the present tensions are hardly a new phenomenon. It is also impossible to deny, however, that at the governmental level the gap is becoming more obvious and glaring and that the debate rages across almost the whole range of foreign policy issues: from environmental to arms control issues, from trade to the problems of the Middle East, and that a resolution of these differences is not in sight.

The gap seems to grow with each consecutive step of the Bush administration and the confused and mixed reactions this elicits in a Europe that continues to show its inability to speak with one voice. The renewal of American foreign policy in recent years has culminated in a new *grand strategy* that includes such central elements as the notion that one should not doubt American moral superiority nor challenge its status as the only military superpower, that for the US international law is a liability rather than an asset, and that those who do not side with her are considered to be her enemies. Eventually, the Iraq crisis and subsequent war brought all these differences to the surface.

The Transatlantic debate concerns many specific issues, but it centres on the role of power, military power in general, and the question of what can be achieved by it. Briefly put, the Americans seem to be mesmerized by the notion that they are living in an international jungle, where only superior military power can provide security, while many Europeans seem to cherish another illusion: that any international problem can be solved in the conference room. The recent debate on the necessity of a war against Iraq, as well as its legitimacy and the likelihood of a successful and effective result of such a conflict is only the most recent example of the existing apparently fundamental differences of opinion on the use of force. The debate is, however, not merely a Transatlantic one, but also one creating and maintaining divisions among Europeans.

Two major shortcomings affect the present debate. First of all, judgments are often offered on the present gap in Transatlantic relations without any effort to provide the historical background and the criteria against which the present state of relationships can be evaluated, or to compare the present evolution with past periods, in order to show similarities as well as differences in the present relations among European

countries and the USA and those in the more and less recent pasts. What is lacking, in other words, is a comparative perspective on the basis of which one can estimate the relative novelty or the depth of the present crisis and its consequences.

While some argue that the emergence of the Transatlantic gap is a new phenomenon, others would stress that differences of opinion have divided the Atlantic alliance before, or would even wonder whether, in the post-World War Two world system, Europeans and Americans ever shared a common worldview. Thus, to give one example, another careful observer (and shaper) of Transatlantic relations, Henry Kissinger (1966: 23), already noted many years ago the structural strains on Atlantic relationships: Europeans and Americans, he said, have a different 'historical perspective'; the Americans are convinced that 'any problem will yield if subjected to a sufficient dose of expertise', while the Europeans sit on 'a continent covered with ruins testifying to the fallibility of human foresight'.

Secondly, and even more seriously, an effort is rarely made in this debate to state clearly how one would measure the state of Transatlantic relationships in a more than intuitive and essayistic fashion. What is needed in particular is to define more precisely what one means by 'the Europeans' and 'the Americans'. In this connection, one can in principle think of individual leaders, of governments and elites, or of public opinion at the mass level – or all of them together – and it matters a great deal which focus one chooses. It looks evident that at the governmental level strong and persistent differences of opinion have developed across the Atlantic. But what about the other levels, those of elite and mass opinion? It may be true that in the realm of foreign policy most governments enjoy a considerable freedom of manoeuvre, expressed by the term *permissive consensus*. However, in the end they can neglect public opinion only at their peril, if they do not already anticipate what they think the public will support or reject. For a full picture, mass public opinion will have to be taken into account. This is even more true in matters of war and peace (Everts, 2002). The existence of an informed, interested and motivated public opinion, able to assess alternative policies and to make choices in a rational way, as well as a degree of responsiveness of public policymakers to those opinions, are among the crucial prerequisites of democracy. One should acknowledge that in foreign and defence policy, the viability and relevance of these two prerequisites have been particularly questioned, not only with respect to their empirical validity, but also as regards their normative validity. A conspicuous and well-established strand of thinking exists (Tocqueville, 1951; Waltz, 1967 and for a concise analysis of the 'incompatibility hypothesis' Goldmann *et al.*, 1986), arguing that there is a fundamental incompatibility between public opinion and foreign policy, which prohibits the applicability of the two above-mentioned prerequisites. Others argue differently, however, affirming that foreign policymaking is advantaged in a functioning democratic system. Particularly, it is argued that foreign and defence policies are more similar to domestic policy sectors than is commonly assumed. Moreover, public opinion can exert a positive role to lead governments towards more pacific policies.

In this paper we want to examine the present status of the Transatlantic relations in a comparative perspective, in order to assess whether and to what extent there is a

gap at the mass level. To do so we will focus our attention on three major dimensions, along which to compare American and European public opinion. The first dimension is the perception of threats; the second is the sense of affinity for one another and with other countries, whether they are allies, friends or foes; the third is attitudes toward the use of force, both in general and in specific circumstances. We have chosen these three dimensions because they tap different aspects of the structure of beliefs of the public, and therefore their analysis can shed some comparative light on the issue of whether and how the publics in the USA and Europe share a common way of structuring their attitudes toward foreign policy. Moreover, these are three dimensions, which several commentators have pointed at to argue the existence of a gap between Europeans and Americans. The data on which this article is based come mainly from a major new series of comparative surveys, the *Transatlantic Trends Survey 2002*, undertaken in the USA and in a number of European countries under the auspices of the German Marshall Fund for the USA in 2002.[1]

### How Europeans and Americans see the world

Attention to the nature of public attitudes on international affairs in general and Euro-American relations in particular has been a constant since the very inception of a North Atlantic security community at the end of the Second World War. This interest for what the public thinks on foreign and security policy rests on the conviction that public opinion support is a crucial requirement of any successful politico-military strategy. In fact, since the creation of NATO in 1949, the member states have been struggling with the double need to satisfy the requirements of a credible deterrence on the one hand and public reassurance on the other (Howard, 1982/1983).

We can distinguish at least three waves of research on public opinion attitudes on transatlantic relations. The first wave of studies took place in the late fifties, with the studies of mass and elite opinion by Karl Deutsch and collaborators (1957, 1966, 1967), Gorden and Lerner (1965, 1969) and Free (1959), all pointing to the emergence of a pluralistic security community among Western European countries and the USA. This first wave of attention was mostly focused on European attitudes (one notable exception being the study of Free (1959)). The main reason for it was that until 1968 the prevalent view among scholars and practitioners was that in the USA an overall stable and unproblematic 'cold-war consensus' on foreign policy issues existed at both the mass and elite level (Mandelbaum and Schneider, 1979). The Europeans' images

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[1] This large scale opinion survey was first held in June 2002 among representative samples in both the USA and in six European countries (France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and the United Kingdom). The poll was deliberately comparative. Since 1974 the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations has polled Americans every four years, and in June 2002 for the first time a survey with many directly comparable questions, and sponsored by the German Marshall Fund, was held in Europe. As a consequence of this experience, the German Marshall Fund of the USA (GMFUS) has decided to launch a multi-annual project aimed at investigating attitudes of the American and European publics on a range of foreign policy issues: the *Transatlantic Trend Survey* (TTS).

of the international system, the main threats and ways to cope with them, on the contrary, were deemed to be more diverse and volatile. The empirical results, however, showed a European public opinion quite close to the USA. Deutsch and collaborators (1966, 1967), using elite interviews, mass opinion polls, surveys of arms control and disarmament proposals, content analysis of prestige newspapers and transaction data, found a quite robust link between the major European countries and the USA. Using elite interviews, Deutsch (1966: 360) argued that 'Majorities of French and German leaders see their countries as linked by long-run political and military interests more strongly to the USA – and in the second place to Britain – than they are linked to one another'. Similarly, at the mass level, Deutsch found that the European public had a more positive image of the USA than of the other European countries. The USA were considered the only country the French and German public 'would trust as an ally in case of war', probably because they were seen as the only country really able to defend their own country. Deutsch registered also a marked decline in the perception of military threats and of a danger of nuclear war between 1953 and 1963. The Soviet Union was perceived as a threat by both the Germans and the French, but the German public had a more favourable image of the Western alliance and more unfavourable image of the Soviet Union than the French public, the latter being markedly less pro-American and more pro-Soviet. Similar differences between Germany (with Britain) and France were found by Gorden and Lerner (1965, 1969). From interviews with a panel of elites in France, Germany and Great Britain in 1961, Gorden and Lerner found 'fundamental and profound differences . . . as to the favoured area of cooperation' (Gorden and Lerner, 1965: 429): British and German elites favoured Atlantic cooperation, whereas French elites rather preferred European cooperation. In line with the prevalent image of the France as a maverick ally and Germany and Britain as faithful partners, these divergences reflected themselves in the meaning each country's elite attached to the European choice. Asked whether Europe would produce a political counterpoise to the USSR, 82% of the German elite, 69% of the French, and 43% of the British answered yes; while only 23% of the Germans and 38% of the British felt that the European Union was a counterpoise to the USA, as opposed to 60% of the French elites (Gorden and Lerner, 1965: 429–430). These differences at the elite level, however, did not reflect deeper cleavages at the mass level, but were rather the reflex of domestic discussions on the proper role each country should have in the world and European arena.

A second wave of attention around the state of Euro-American relationships arose in connection with the NATO crisis of the late seventies and early eighties on the Euromissile issue, with studies by Eichenberg (1989), Flynn and Rattinger (eds) (1985), and Szabo (1983). Their major focus was the state of relations among NATO members and existing differences on the best strategies for dealing with the Soviet Union. Under the pressure of increasing criticism of *détente* in the USA, a more aggressive nuclear policy in Europe by the Reagan administration and the intervention of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and Poland, Western Europeans and the American government were perceived as set on a diverging track on the question how best to deal with these

challenges. Fissures at the elite level were, however, only imperfectly reflected at the mass level. The available data (reviewed by Eichenberg (1989) and Flynn and Rattinger (eds) (1985) revealed both change and continuity in foreign policy attitudes. Among the former, there was a decline in the perception of the saliency of the Soviet threat in both Europe and the USA, a change in attitudes toward military force, with the use of military force not seen as the primary instrument with which to cope with the Soviet Union any more, and a growing sense of uneasiness with the way the American government was handling foreign policy. However, the analyses at that time also stressed important continuities with the past: an overall and stable support for the Western defence principles and alliance (Eichenberg, 1989), a fundamental scepticism toward and basic fear of nuclear weapons together with a strong opposition to their first use (Russett, 1989); the ambivalent desire of having both peace and security through strength (Schneider, 1980).

The fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union brought with it a third wave of research, aimed at assessing the consequences for the Euro-Atlantic community of the fundamental changes of the international system (Everts, 1995; Nacos, Shapiro and Isernia, 2000, and Everts and Isernia 2001, Russett, 1990). These studies add an explicitly transatlantic comparative twist to a debate so far focused exclusively either on the American (for a summary of the evolution in the US scientific debate see Holsti, 1996) or the European side (e.g. Eichenberg 1989; Capitanchik and Eichenberg, 1980).

Examining this set of studies, one can distinguish three major sets of problems that have attracted the attention of scholars. The first problem is the perception of threats arising from the international system. It was part of the cold-war consensus, in the USA as well as in Western Europe, that the Soviet Union was the main source of threat. We have seen that, over time, this perception has been changing, and in parallel ways, in both the USA and Europe. During the seventies and the eighties not only was the Soviet threat seen as a less urgent threat than in the past, but a growing section of the public was also prepared to see other threats, such as Third World hunger and the global environment, as worthy of more attention (Mandelbaum and Schneider, 1979). What impact did the radical changes in the structure of the international system have on the perception of threats among the mass public in Europe and America? With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the major 'focal point', to use a concept coined by Th. Schelling, of Euro-American attention has dissolved. The Soviet threat had already diminished its grip on shaping foreign policy attitudes in the eighties, causing Flynn and Rattinger (1985: 370) to conclude that the Soviet Union was not a major determinant of support for foreign policy anymore. What international threats do dominate public perception nowadays? And how different are American and European perceptions in this respect?

A second area of interest is related to the images of the allies, the friends and the foes. During the Cold War, the East–West divide dominated the images of friends and foes. The public, both in Europe and the USA, tended to view the world as consisting of at least three concentric circles. At the centre there was the core set of Western allies united in NATO. The most external circle was made up of the Soviet bloc and its

allies. In the middle, there was a vast area of countries whose amity was appreciated to the extent to which they were friendly toward the countries of the inner core. This does not mean that the feelings of friendship, among the Western countries, could not oscillate. We have already seen that the prevalently positive image of the USA among the Western European public has suffered from occasional drops in support, mostly related to specific policy decisions or administrations. A similar level of sympathy for the (main) Western European states can be discerned among the Americans as well. Is this 'sense of community' still here, after the end of the common enemy, or it is slowly dissipating under the pressure of a growing set of conflicts over environmental, security and trade issues among the Europeans and the Americans?

A third area of interest in this literature has to do with public support for specific Western foreign policies and decisions. Here, attention has been devoted particularly to attitudes on the use of military force. The issue of the use of force is topical not only for its obvious relevance *per se* but also because several commentators have singled it out as the source of a crucial difference in attitudes among Europeans and Americans. Is it true that such a gap does exist among Europeans and Americans?

In our paper, we intend to compare how Americans and Europeans stand on these three major dimensions that help to structure the public's image of the international system, in order to shed some more systematic light on the extent to which there exist similarities or divergences among Western European countries and the USA.

### Perceptions of threats

Perception of threats is often considered to be one of the litmus tests of the differing European and American worldviews. As Kagan writes: 'One of the biggest transatlantic disagreements since the end of the Cold War has been over which "new" threats merit the most attention' (Kagan, 2003: 29–30). Table 1 offers a rough picture of the similarities and differences in the perception of threats on both sides of the Atlantic as of June 2002. The question asked respondents to evaluate many possible threats to their country's vital interest over the next ten years.[2] The results supply ammunition both to those who claim a gap does actually exist and to those who, on the contrary, tend to minimize its significance.

On the one hand, as Kagan (2003: 34–35) pointedly stresses, in 2002 there was indeed a wide and significant gap between Europeans and Americans in the percentage of people expressing concern for a set of threats. A far greater percentage of Americans than of Europeans considered international terrorism, Iraq developing weapons of mass destruction, a military conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbours, China becoming a great power, Islamic fundamentalism and an in-flood of immigrants and refugees to constitute 'critical' threats to their own country. Ninety one percent of

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[2]  The questions were worded differently in Europe and US. The Europeans were asked to rate the threats as 'extremely important', 'important', or 'not important', while Americans rated them as 'critical', 'important but not critical', or 'not important at all'.

**Table 1.** *Europeans and Americans threat perceptions (in %)*

| | | | | Ranking | |
| Threats | US | Europe | Difference | US | Europe |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| International terrorism | 91 | 65 | + 26 | 1 | 1 |
| Iraq developing WMD | 86 | 58 | + 28 | 2 | 2 |
| Israel and Arab conflict | 67 | 43 | + 24 | 3 | 5 |
| Islamic fundamentalism | 61 | 49 | + 12 | 4 | 4 |
| Immigration | 60 | 38 | + 22 | 5 | 6 |
| China as world power | 56 | 19 | + 37 | 6 | 9 |
| India and Pakistan | 54 | 32 | + 22 | 7 | 7 |
| Global warming | 46 | 50 | − 4 | 8 | 3 |
| Globalization | 29 | 22 | + 7 | 9 | 8 |
| Political Turmoil in Russia | 27 | 15 | + 12 | 10 | 11 |
| Economic Competition | 13 | 18 | − 5 | 11 | 10 |

*Notes*: Wald-Wolfowitz Runs Test = 11 > 7. No significant differences between Europe and US.
*Source*: CCFR-GMFUS Worldviews 2002. Reported are the percentages mentioning threat as 'critical' in US and 'extremely important' in Europe.

Americans consider international terrorism to be a 'critical' threat, while 64% of the Europeans said it is 'extremely important',[3] a difference of 26 points. The gap runs high also on China (35 points percentage difference), Iraq developing weapons of mass destruction (28 points percentage difference) and the Arab–Israeli conflict (24 points difference).

On the other hand, the ranking order of concerns is strikingly similar across the Atlantic.[4] Both in Europe and the US, international terrorism and Iraq were the top priorities, while economic competition and political turmoil in Russia were at the bottom of the list. More Europeans and Americans saw international terrorism as an extremely important threat than any other item about which they were questioned. Iraq developing weapons of mass destruction is close behind for both European and Americans, and Islamic fundamentalism was also of strong concern to both.

Only two issues stand out of this common ranking order, and in opposite directions: China and global warming. China, presumably as a genuine reflection of the different content of political discourse in Europe and US, was not only perceived as a 'critical' threat by a majority of Americans but also occupied a different position in the listing of threats. In the USA, 56% of the respondents thought of China as a world power as a 'critical threat', making it the sixth on the list of worries, between immigration and the Indo-Pakistan conflict. In Europe, only a fifth of the sample said it is a 'very

[3]  Throughout the paper, the figures given for Europe as a whole are weighted on the basis of adult population in each of the six countries surveyed (Great Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, and Poland). The American sample is not weighted.
[4]  With 11 runs on the Wald-Wolfowitz Runs non parametric test the two groups have no significant difference.

important' threat, placing it at the ninth place of the list. On the global warming issue, the percentage of Europeans very much concerned was almost the same as that of Americans (49% vs. 46%), but its ranking on the list is quite different on the two sides of the Atlantic. In Europe global warming was third on the list of concerns, while in the USA it is eighth.

To explore in more detail the way Europeans and Americans see these threats as related, we performed a principal component analysis of the items common to both Europe and USA on the 2002 data.[5] Our interest is to ascertain whether, in perceiving the threats from the international environment, there is any coherence in the mass public's perceptions. Given the genuine exploratory purpose of our analysis, we used a principal component analysis of the 11 threat items separately for USA and for the six European countries together (weighted for their relative population size) to examine if there is any set of underlying dimensions that can account for the observed covariation among the items (Kim and Mueller, 1978). We performed two kinds of analysis on our data. We first set a simple analysis of all items. The results of the rotated matrix (using varimax rotation) are reported on the left side of Table 2.[6]

What emerges from the comparison of the European and American results is their different clarity. The structure of threats of the US public is much less clear than that of the Europeans. First, a smaller number of components capture the variation in Europe compared to the USA. We have three factors with *eigenvalues* greater than 1 in Europe and four in the USA. Second, the combination of variables is much more easily interpretable in the European than in the American case. In Europe, the first dimension captures traditional and less traditional sources of conflicts related to both domestic and international political issues, such as the Arab–Israeli conflict and immigration. The second and third components capture less traditional political threats, such as globalisation, global warming and Euro-American trade issues. The interpretation of the components of the American public is much less obvious. The first component seems to be analogous to the first of the European side: political issues, including terrorism. But political conflicts load also on the third factor and EU–US economic competition has an impact on two factors, the first and the third. Post-modern issues, such as globalisation and global warming are on different components again, together with more traditional items. Part of the problem is related, especially but not exclusively in the American case, to the item of terrorism. Being chosen as a critical threat by an overwhelming majority of Americans, it tends to load on all factors. Terrorism weighs on three of the four factors in the US sample and on two of the three in Europe. A

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[5] We should not forget in this connection that the answer categories were not totally identical in Europe and US. In Europe, the question referred to 'an extremely important threat, an important threat, or not an important threat at all'. In USA, the question asked whether the threat was 'critical', 'important but not critical' or 'not an important threat at all'.

[6] We report here all factor components with an eigenvalue greater than 1, even though both the eigenvalues and a screen plot diagram reveal that the first factor is the most relevant.

**Table 2.** *Principal component analysis of threat in US and Europe*

| | USA (All items included) | | | | USA (Excluding Terrorism and WMD) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Israeli–Arab conflict | 0.765 | | | | 0.793 | | |
| Political turmoil in Russia | 0.702 | | | | 0.753 | | |
| Economic competition US/Europe | 0.410 | | 0.438 | | 0.422 | | 0.413 |
| Immigrants | | 0.729 | | | | 0.617 | |
| Global warming | | 0.656 | | | | 0.731 | |
| Globalization | | | 0.711 | | | | 0.707 |
| Tension India-Pakistan | | | 0.688 | | | | 0.748 |
| China as world power | | | | 0.761 | | 0.388 | 0.337 |
| Islamic Fundamentalism | | | | 0.704 | 0.300 | 0.526 | |
| International terrorism | 0.313 | 0.384 | | 0.461 | | | |
| Iraq WMD | | 0.686 | | | | | |
| Eigenvalues | 2.63 | 1.28 | 1.18 | 1.04 | 2.15 | 1.16 | 1.10 |
| % Variance explained | 23.93 | 11.63 | 10.70 | 9.50 | 23.93 | 12.90 | 12.25 |

| | Europe (All items included) | | | Europe (Excluding Terrorism and WMD) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Israeli–Arab conflict | 0.593 | | | | 0.624 |
| Political turmoil in Russia | 0.622 | | | | 0.673 |
| Immigrants | 0.536 | | | | 0.538 |
| Tension India-Pakistan | 0.630 | | | | 0.673 |
| Global warming | | 0.640 | | 0.644 | |
| Islamic Fundamentalism | | 0.691 | | 0.638 | |
| Globalization | | | 0.665 | 0.533 | |
| China as world power | | | 0.664 | 0.578 | |
| Economic competition US/Europe | | | 0.570 | 0.438 | |
| International terrorism | 0.369 | 0.644 | | | |
| Iraq WMD | 0.567 | | | | |
| Eigenvalues | 2.81 | 1.13 | 1.05 | 2.31 | 1.10 |
| % Variance explained | 25.51 | 10.31 | 9.55 | 25.67 | 12.23 |

*Notes*: Principal Component Analysis, Varimax Rotation with Kaiser Normalization. Only factor loadings ≥ 0.3 are reported.

similar problem seems to affect the item on 'Iraq and WMD', an issue chosen as 'critical' by 86% of the Americans.

Given the weak discriminatory power of these two items, we performed a second principal component analysis dropping both the terrorism and the Iraq items. The results are shown in the right-hand part of Table 2. Dropping these two variables radically improves the clarity of results in Europe. Here, once rotated, we find two clear-cut dimensions: one dimension related to more traditional, political–strategic threats and another related to economic–cultural, post-modern issues. It is also interesting that the economic–cultural dimension scores first in the analysis. For the Europeans, these threats are much more clearly bundled together and constitute a priority relative to more traditional political issues. On the opposite side, not much clarity is created in the US sample by dropping the two items. The number of components is reduced to three. However, the items in each of them are hard to interpret and three of them have loadings greater than or equal to 0.3 on two factors. We want also to add the fact that this lack of clarity of the structure of threats among the American public seems not to be affected by the level of political awareness of the respondents. We performed separate analyses, both for the US and the European samples, across levels of education and political knowledge and no appreciable differences in either variance explained by the factors or clarity of the structure of the items was found.

These results help to clarify the similarities and differences among Europeans and Americans. The available data discussed here show that, in terms of priorities, Europeans and Americans have more in common than the proponents of the transatlantic gap claim. This is particularly true for the 2003 data. But they are not so much off the mark either in arguing that there are different perceptions of threats on the two sides of the Atlantic. The sources of the differences are not, however, where they are alleged to be, i.e. in the disparity of power between USA and Europe. Something more complex is going on here. On the one hand, the Europeans have a clearer-cut perception of threats, well structured around two clusters: traditional, nation-to-nation kind of threats and less-than-traditional, global threats. These global threats are also, for the Europeans, more important. On the other hand, we have the Americans, which in 2002 appeared simply to be too confused to have made up their mind on the exact nature and scope of threats. In this context, the terrorist threat is emblematic of the American situation. On both sides of the Atlantic, terrorism was, and understandably so in 2002, an overarching threat, cutting across all other threats. But, in so doing, it is also a source of perceptual confusion. Once removed, however, Americans rest still baffled in their perception of threats. There is probably a sober message in these data. Contrary to what we should expect, terrorism (and Iraq) had not yet structured the perception of threats of the Americans in a similar way as for example the Soviet Union did during the Cold war. What we registered less than one year after the 9/11 events, was a country, the USA, deeply uncertain about the threats it has to cope with and in a state of existential *angst*.

**Table 3.** *Feelings toward other countries*

| Country | Europe (a) | United States (b) | Difference (a-b) |
|---|---|---|---|
| European Union | 70 | 53 | 17 |
| Germany | 65 | 61 | 4 |
| Great Britain | 65 | 76 | −11 |
| United States | 64 | n.a. | − |
| France | 62 | 55 | 7 |
| Russia | 47 | 55 | −8 |
| Israel | 38 | 55 | −17 |
| Iraq | 25 | 23 | 2 |
| Italy | n.a. | 65 | − |
| Poland | n.a. | 50 | − |

*Notes*: Scores are mean temperature for each country. Warm feelings $> 50°$, cool feelings $< 50°$.

Before looking at the possible consequences of this state of mind for support for different policies, let us see whether a similar confusion also exists with respect to other fundamental aspects, such as the definition of friends and foes.

### Feelings toward other countries

Despite reports of rising anti-Americanism in Europe, Europeans appeared in June 2002 to like Americans as much as if not even more than they like each other (see Table 3). When asked to rate their feelings toward various countries on a 'thermometer' scale from 0 to 100 – with 100 meaning very warm, 50 neutral, and 0 very cold – public opinion in the six European countries and in the USA shows remarkable similarity.[7] In the six European countries surveyed in June 2002, feelings toward the USA are warm and they rate similarly to those for France, Germany and Great Britain. Americans, on their side, largely reciprocate these warm feelings for the European countries. Americans show a more neutral feeling toward the EU as an institution, which they gave a 53 degree rating in 2002, than the Europeans, who give to the EU an average rating of 70 degrees.[8] The Italians and the French show the warmest feelings toward the EU, with an average degree of 84 and 75 respectively, whereas the British only gave the EU an average 59 degrees, the closest rating to the US. In some countries, feelings toward the USA are warmer than toward any of the European countries asked about. In 2002, the British, Poles, Italians, and Germans gave the USA ratings of 68, 65, 68, and 63 degrees, respectively. Even the French, despite their perceived traditional anti-Americanism, gave the USA a relatively warm 60 degrees, while the Dutch gave it 59 degrees, in both cases one of their warmest ratings.

[7] One should note that the rating used is a general one and does not make a distinction between a country's people, its leaders, or its policies.

[8] This is somewhat surprising given the criticism of European integration and the EU that has become evident in recent years in consecutive Eurobarometer surveys.

**Table 4.** *Principal component analysis of feelings toward countries*

|  | Europe | | US | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| United States | 0.631 | – | n.a. | n.a. |
| EU | 0.623 | – | 0.620 | |
| Germany | 0.711 | – | 0.790 | – |
| Great Britain | 0.564 | – | 0.797 | – |
| France | 0.584 | – | n.a. | n.a. |
| Russia | – | 0.626 | 0.686 | – |
| Israel | – | 0.751 | | 0.632 |
| Iraq | – | 0.840 | – | 0.850 |
| Eigenvalues | 2.759 | 1.255 | 2.246 | 1.179 |
| % total variance | 34.49 | 15.69 | 37.44 | 19.64 |

n.a. = not asked.

Among Americans, Great Britain, at 76 degrees, followed by Italy remained especially popular. In Europe, for countries like France, Germany, Great Britain and Italy, for which we have long time-series of questions on feelings toward US, there was no sign of increasing anti-Americanism either.[9]

Europe and Americans continue to share antipathies as well. Iraq got the coolest rating in 2002 in both Europe and the USA (respectively at 25 and 23 degrees), with the highest rating at 33 degrees in France and the lowest at 16 degrees in Germany. The exception to this common transatlantic pattern of feelings is Israel. In June 2002, Israel got an average rating of 55 degrees (identical to France and Russia) in the USA, but only 38 degrees in Europe, below Russia (with 47 degrees) but still above Iraq. Israel received a lower rating than Russia in all the six European countries surveyed, except the Netherlands (where it got the highest rating, 46 degrees). This is, in all probability, linked to the harsher judgment on Israeli responsibility for the Arab–Israeli situation and to the greater sympathy for the Palestinian cause in Europe.

To get a better sense of how close people see these countries to one another, we used a method that was technically similar to the one conducted for perception of threats, to examine what structure, if any, exists among the general public in their feelings toward countries. Table 4, based on the 2002 data reports the results for USA and Europe separately. One conclusion stands out: Americans as well as Europeans have quite structured feelings, and these are very similar. For both US and European public opinion, there are apparently two fundamental groups: the West and the rest. The Western world includes both the Europeans and the Americans, while the rest includes an assorted group of countries, such as Iraq and Israel. These

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[9] These 2002 data, to recall once again, were collected in June 2002, before the acrimonious debate on what to do about Iraq sparked off.

results seem to contradict a 'clash of civilization' argument. The major divide is not between Arab countries on one side and Western states on the other, but rather between the traditional Western European allies and the rest of the world. Russia's position in the eyes of the US and European public is also interesting. It is the only country that is perceived differently by the Europeans and the Americans. It is closer to Europe for the Americans and closer to the non-Western world for the Europeans.

### The use of force in international affairs

Pundits of assorted beliefs claim that the 'smoking gun' evidence of a widening Transatlantic drift is to be found in the differential willingness to use force. The Americans, should the need arise, are ready to turn to the threat and use of force, while the Europeans are wary of even contemplating it. Remarkably, until a few years ago the opposite rather seemed true when the Americans, still suffering from the 'Vietnam syndrome', were seen as shy when it came to actually employing their military power compared to the Europeans (see e.g. Luttwak, 1994, Everts, 2002: 158–181). Whatever the case, the September 11, 2001 attack surely seems to have awakened US public to the (military) requirements of world power. Europeans are now said, on the contrary, to still indulge in a Kantian view of the world around them.

Our data indeed do confirm that, while Europeans and Americans think similarly about the main international threats to their security and well-being, they sometimes do differ about the question of what to do about them, either in general or in specific cases.[10] Americans are more likely to believe in the effectiveness of military force to deal with security threats in general; Europeans are not averse in principle to the use of force, but much less prone to see the appropriate conditions for using it in the present international circumstances. In general, Europeans are quite willing to use force in a broad range of circumstances, but Europeans give higher priority to soft tools. Where the promotion of international law, humanitarian concerns and justice are at stake, Europeans even surpass Americans in their support for the use of force. Whether this difference springs from fundamentally different worldviews or rather from a different cost–benefit calculation of the appropriateness of different instruments is hard to settle definitively with the available data, even though the evidence marshalled in the previous section brings us to tilt toward the second interpretation.

To explore this issue in more detail, we will proceed in three steps. We will first examine attitudes toward the use of force in very general terms, using a set of questions asked in the Worldviews 2002 survey. We will then examine, in a few hypothetical situations, under which conditions public opinion is or is not willing to support the use of military force and then, third, availing ourselves of the actual developments

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[10] One shortcoming of the questionnaire used for this survey may be that it did not make a distinction between the seriousness of a threat and the likelihood of its manifestation. The difference between Europeans and Americans may be caused particularly by differences in the latter respect.

that occurred since June 2002 in Iraq, we will examine how Europeans and Americans reacted to the development of the crisis in Iraq, before, during and after the war. We can thus compare attitudes toward hypothetical questions related to war with attitudes toward actual historical occurrences of the use of force.

### Public opinion and the use of force

Measuring support for or opposition to the international use of force is not an easy matter. As earlier research (Mueller, 1973; Everts and Isernia, 2001) has shown, people are particularly sensitive to the circumstances under and purposes for which the use of force is either envisaged or actually taking place. The goals and values that are at stake, the success of the action as well as its perceived legitimacy and political leadership all appear to be important conditions in this connection shaping the level of support. Hypothetical cases as well as questions about the use of force before a decision to use this instrument has actually been taken may be misleading, with respect to what can be expected in a concrete and specific historical case. The 'rally around the flag' effect, or the tendency of people to support the use of military force, despite hesitations, once their government has taken a decision to do so, is a well-known phenomenon that deserves to be mentioned in this connection (Mueller, 1973). Results of public opinion polls that intend to measure support for the use of force should therefore be treated with some caution. They usually produce much less reliable (but politically relevant) indicators of absolute levels of support than measures of relative support that do allow us to make comparisons across time or situations or different conditions.

All of this is even more important when the role of casualties is addressed. In this connection the so-called 'bodybags hypothesis' has been developed, which states that people in modern, Western societies have become unwilling to accept the casualties that are a likely consequence of military action. If wars are yet unavoidable, they should preferably be 'wars without bloodshed', irrespective of whether one is looking at military or civilian casualties. Various theories have been offered to explain the alleged unwillingness to accept the consequences of modern war, which we cannot review here. The hypothesis was originally developed to analyse American attitudes and tested in specific American wars, Korea and Vietnam in particular. After initial studies that appeared to confirm the hypothesis, more recent research has found the evidence to be less than convincing (Everts, 2002). Nevertheless, the bodybag hypothesis has remained a popular argument that is being used nowadays in particular in the context of the Transatlantic debate by those who decry the alleged weak knees of the Europeans and their unwillingness to fight side by side with the Americans. It remains therefore both theoretically and politically relevant to further explore this question and to examine which factors shape the willingness to use military force.

To give an idea of the extent to which Europeans and Americans differ on this point, to the question 'Which of the following do you think is more important in determining a country's overall power and influence in the world – a country's economic strength, or its military strength?', 66% of the Americans and 84% of the Europeans

**Table 5.** *Attitudes toward the use of force in various circumstances*

|  | Europe (a) | United States (b) | Difference (a-b) |
|---|---|---|---|
| To assist a population struck by famine | 88 | 81 | 7 |
| To uphold international law | 80 | 76 | 4 |
| To liberate hostages | 78 | 77 | 1 |
| To destroy a terrorist camp | 75 | 92 | −17 |
| To bring peace to a region where there is a civil war | 72 | 48 | 24 |
| To ensure the supply of oil | 49 | 65 | −16 |

*Note*: Percentage who approve of the use of troops in the circumstances listed above.

mention 'economic strength'. Again, Europeans and Americans tend to agree on the fundamental issue of the relative importance of economic versus military strength, with a larger minority of Americans clinching towards the notion that military power is more important. Despite America's reputation for relying heavily on military power, a majority of Americans, just like their European counterparts, believe that economic strength is more important than military might in determining a country's overall power and influence in the world. On the other hand, the percentage of Americans that think that military might is 'more important' is more than double the European figure.

These differences emerge also from a set of questions aimed at tapping attitudes toward the use of military force in general and with specific reference to the struggle against terrorism and Iraq. A first, very general, question aimed at assessing under which conditions the use of force was seen as appropriate, asked: 'For each of the following reasons, would you approve or disapprove of the use of [own country] military troops?' The reasons listed were: to ensure the supply of oil, to destroy a terrorist camp, to help bring peace in a region where there is civil war, to liberate hostages, to assist a population struck by famine and to uphold international law. The survey shows that majorities on both sides of the Atlantic are ready to use military force for a broad range of purposes (Table 5). Overall, Americans and Europeans strongly support the use of troops in four of the six situations listed: to destroy a terrorist camp, to liberate hostages, to assist a population struck by famine, and to uphold international law. The difference comes only in the emphasis on using force to combat terrorism, with 92% of the Americans and 'merely' 75% of the Europeans willing to use it in order to destroy a terrorist camp, a difference consistent with the much stronger concern among Americans about the threat posed by international terrorism. A reversal of majorities between Europeans and Americans occurs only on two issues: bringing peace to a region engulfed in a civil war and the free supply of oil. In the first of these latter two cases a large majority in Europe (72%) was willing to use force for this purpose, a likely consequence of the painful experience with the former Yugoslavia, while only 48% (a plurality) of Americans would do so (and 43% would disapprove). Americans, on the other hand, show more readiness to use force to ensure the supply of oil than Europeans. Sixty five
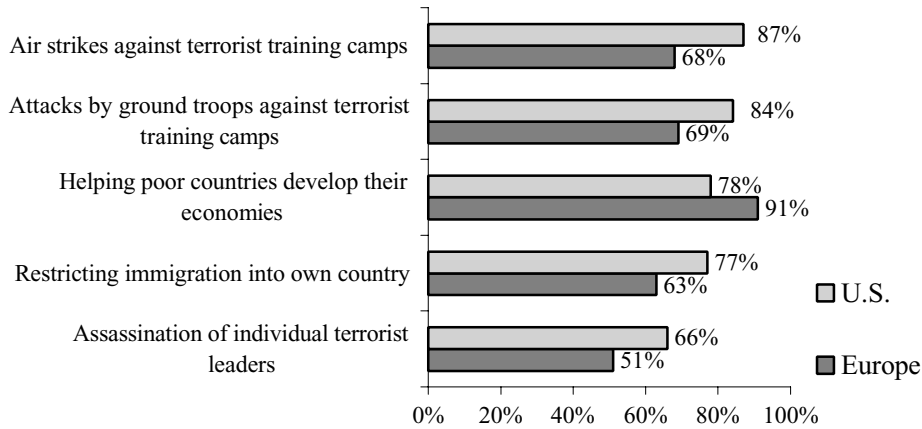
**Figure 1** Support for measures to fight terrorism

percent of Americans agreed to the use of force for this purpose, while just pluralities of 49% of Europeans felt that way.[11]

A second question was specifically aimed at evaluating attitudes toward a set of possible strategies to fight terrorism.[12] Large majorities of Americans and Europeans supported a variety of means to address this threat, though, as hypothesized, stronger majorities of Americans advocated the use of military measures (see Figure 1). While 87% of Americans favoured the use of air strikes against terrorist training camps and 84% supported the use of ground troops against such camps, among Europeans these percentages went down to 68% and 69% respectively. There is, however, a certain variation among the public in the six European countries surveyed. Germans and Italians are much more reluctant to use force against terrorism – either air strikes or ground troops – than the French and British. On the contrary, when it comes to 'soft tools', such as 'helping poor countries to develop their economies', Europeans are more likely to support such measures than are Americans. An overwhelming 91% of the Europeans were ready to support aid for such a purpose, while only 74% of the Americans wanted to do so.

The limitation of this set of questions is that they explore the support for the use of military force, so to say, 'on the cheap', in a very abstract and hypothetical situation. It is therefore hard to predict whether this 'permissive consensus' would remain or rather

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[11]  It is interesting to note that of the six European countries surveyed, the Germans were the least willing to engage militarily. Although in five of the six cases majorities of Germans favored using troops, the percentages were generally at least 10 percentage points lower than in other European countries, sometimes even more. In particular, only 40% of Germans were ready to use force to ensure the supply of oil, the lowest level among Europeans in this or any other case for using troops.

[12]  Text of the question: 'In order to combat international terrorism, please say whether you favor or oppose each of the following measures . . . etc'.

**Table 6.** *Preferences on using U.S. troops to invade Iraq in US and Europe (in %)*

| The US should... | Great Britain | France | Germany | Nether-lands | Italy | Poland | Europe | US |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| not invade Iraq | 20 | 27 | 28 | 18 | 33 | 26 | 26 | 13 |
| only invade with UN approval and support of allies | 69 | 63 | 56 | 70 | 54 | 53 | 60 | 65 |
| invade Iraq even if they/we have to do it alone | 10 | 6 | 12 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 20 |
| DK | 1 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 11 | 4 | 2 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Source*: CCFR-GMF Worldviews 2002 survey.

collapse under the pressure of a concrete event. However, the Worldviews 2002 survey had some more questions that moved from hypothetical situations to more concrete ones. In particular, the Worldviews 2002 survey probed public attitudes toward the use of force against Iraq, an issue that in June 2002 was starting to gain attention in the public media. Here, some remarkable similarities between Europe and the USA emerged. On both sides of the Atlantic, respondents were asked whether the USA should 'never go to war against Iraq to remove the regime of Saddam Hussein', or should 'go to war only with a UN mandate and the support of its allies', or should 'go it alone if necessary' (Table 6). On both sides of the Atlantic support for the use of force was contingent upon the same condition: multilateral approval. Given these three choices, only 26% of Europeans and 13% of Americans said that the USA should not invade Iraq, and only 20% of Americans and 10% of Europeans said the USA should invade Iraq, even if they had to go it alone. Europeans and Americans were by far more likely (60% and 65%, respectively) to say that the USA should only invade Iraq with UN approval and the support of its allies. What is most striking about these findings is that only 26% of Europeans ruled out completely a strike against Iraq, and only 20% of Americans felt so strongly about an attack on Iraq that they would be willing for the USA to do so alone. These results are widely consistent with survey data from other sources discussed below.

A similar if not sharper piece of evidence in support of the idea that Europeans were, at least hypothetically, more willing to support a military action against Iraq if the operation had UN approval emerges from another series of questions, asked unfortunately only in the six European countries. Each European respondent was presented with one of eight scenarios in which their countries might be called on to participate in an attack. To create these eight scenarios, each of three variables was rotated at random – the reason given for attacking, the presence or absence of the UN approval, and the expected number of Western casualties. The question as a whole

**Table 7.** *Percentage of respondents who support their own country to take part in the war, by situational factors (US and Europe)*

|  | WMD | Bin Laden | Total | Chi-square | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nature of threat | 49.1 | 44.4 | 46.9 | 12.52 | p < 0.001 |
|  | (1454) | (1193) | (2647) |  |  |
|  | Yes | No | Total |  |  |
| UN Approval | 56.3 | 36.6 | 46.9 | 219.51 | p < 0.001 |
|  | (1665) | (983) | (2648) |  |  |
|  | Many | Few | Total |  |  |
| Casualties | 46.5 | 47.3 | 46.9 | 0.354 | p = 0.552 |
|  | (1360) | (1288) | (2648) |  |  |

Table entries report the percentage of respondents who want their country to 'take part' in the war. Ns are reported in parentheses. Chi-square statistics reflect comparisons of the distribution of respondents who want their own country to take part or stay out of the war across the different situational conditions. Cases are weighted according to the population.

reads as follows:

> Imagine now that Iraq is found to [be acquiring weapons of mass destruction/ have helped the terrorist group of Osama bin Laden]. The U.S. is considering attacking Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein [with/without] the approval of the United Nations. The war is expected to entail [many/few] Western casualties. Should (country) government take part in this military action or should we stay out of it?'

Table 7 reports the relative impacts of casualties, UN legitimacy, and the nature of the Iraqi threat on support for the military action.

In all scenarios in which there was UN approval, a modest majority of Europeans, ranging from 51% to 56%, said they would support their country taking part, and in no scenario without UN approval did a majority of respondents in any country favour that their country should take part in the military operation. Only the Germans consistently opposed participation, either with or without UN support. Polish and Italian support varied significantly, depending upon the contingency, while the British, French, and Dutch consistently supported taking action, provided there would be UN approval.

Let us now see in more detail how these three factors affect support for the use of force against Iraq and look at possible interactions among them. The results are striking.

UN approval seems to exert the strongest impact, followed by the nature of the threat, while casualties have no impact on support for the use of force. In Europe, on average, 56% of the respondents support their own country's participation in case where the UN seals the decisions with their approval, while only 37% do so in the case where this approval is lacking.

The two stated reasons for attacking – either because Iraq was acquiring weapons of mass destruction or because it was helping the terrorist group of Osama bin
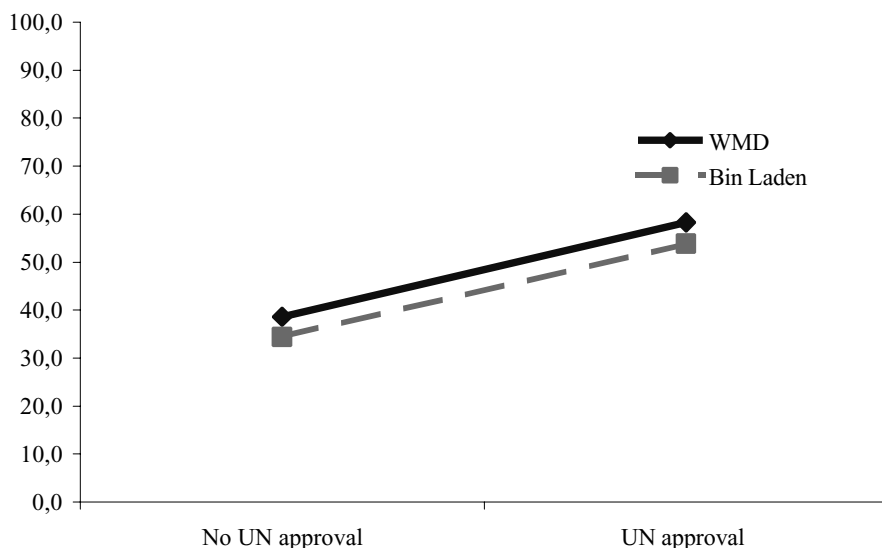
**Figure 2** Support for use of force by UN approval and nature of threat

Laden – elicited very similar levels of support. The presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq only slightly increases the percentage of those supporting the use of force *vis-à-vis* the proven connection with the Bin Laden group (49% versus 44%).

Surprisingly, because contrary to the often alleged unwillingness of the public to suffer casualties, the number of casualties had little effect on respondents' willingness to have their country take part. Of the three dimensions examined – the nature of the Iraqi threat, the casualties and the UN legitimacy – the third seems to be the really important one in shaping support in all European countries, with some national differences, namely Germany and Poland scoring lower than average (in percentage 'take part') on all eight measures.

Moreover, as Figure 2 shows, there are no appreciable interaction effects between the two most important variables, nature of threat and UN legitimacy.

This is confirmed by an ANOVA analysis in which we included all the three situational factors and added another nominal variable, the country of the respondent, together with all the second-order interaction terms (Iversen and Norpoth, 1987). No third-order interaction terms are statistically significant, so we decided to exclude them. In fact, apart from the UN legitimacy and threat, the country is the only other important predictor of support. However, the country of the respondent interacts significantly with both casualties and UN legitimacy in explaining the differences in support for the use of force. As to legitimacy, it is more relevant in some countries than in others. More precisely, it seems to have a stronger effect in those countries in which support is higher. In Germany, the country in which support for taking part in the Iraqi war is the lowest, the UN legitimacy has a much lower impact than in Great Britain, where, on the contrary, support for the Iraqi war is the highest among the European countries.

**Table 8.** *Anova Analysis of support for war by situational factors and country (US and Europe)*

|  | Sum of Squares | df | Mean square | F-ratio | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model | 107.476 | 26 | 4.134 | 17.89 | $p < 0.001$ |
| Casualties | 0.119 | 1 | 0.119 | 0.51 | $p = 0.473$ |
| Threat | 1.741 | 1 | 1.742 | 7.54 | $p = 0.006$ |
| UN Legitimacy | 43.403 | 1 | 43.403 | 187.81 | $p < 0.001$ |
| Country | 34.159 | 5 | 6.832 | 29.56 | $p < 0.001$ |
| Casualties x UN Legitimacy | 0.377 | 1 | 0.377 | 1.63 | $p = 0.202$ |
| Casualties x Threat | 0.006 | 1 | 0.006 | 0.02 | $p = 0.876$ |
| UN Legitimacy x threat | 0.0003 | 1 | 0.0003 | 0.00 | $p = 0.969$ |
| Country x UN legitimacy | 9.007 | 5 | 1.815 | 7.86 | $p < 0.001$ |
| Country x Threat | 1.237 | 5 | 0.247 | 1.07 | $p = 0.374$ |
| Country x Casualties | 4.407 | 5 | 0.881 | 3.81 | $p < 0.002$ |
| Residual | 1298.107 | 5617 | 0.231 |  |  |
| Total | 1405.582 | 5643 | 0.249 |  |  |
| Adj. $R^2$ | 0.072 |  |  |  |  |

The impact on support of the interaction between casualties and countries on support is mixed. Apparently, in some countries, such as Italy and the Netherlands, casualties have no effect at all on support. For others, such as France and Great Britain, the effect is the opposite of that predicted: as casualties increase, support also increases; whereas for Poland and Germany casualties have the expected effect: they depress the level of support for the use of force. The different national impacts cancel each other out, and this then depresses the average overall impact of casualties on support, making the bivariate impact of casualties on support statistically insignificant.

The results emerging from the analysis of these two questions show that in June 2002 it was already possible to predict that in the case where the USA would invade Iraq militarily without the support of the UN or/and allies, such a decision would meet with strong resistance among the public in the USA as well as in Europe. Support for the use of force in Iraq was crucially dependent on the legitimacy of the cause. The role of the UN was paramount in the eyes of both Americans and Europeans. Moreover, and this is the second surprising result of the Iraqi experience, casualties, or the prospect of them, are much less relevant in explaining support than usually expected. Incidentally, this confirms the outcome of earlier studies (Everts and Isernia (eds.), 2001; Everts, 2002).

In Europe, on average, no more than 10% would have supported a unilateral military attack by the US. In this respect Britain, the Americans' closest ally, was not different from the rest of Europe. In fact, as the data from the GMFUS of June 2002 demonstrate, the legitimacy conferred by a UN mandate had an even greater importance for the British public than for the French or German respondents (see Figure 3). Strong majorities in all European countries were in agreement that, if it were to come to an invasion of Iraq, the USA should only do this with the approval of the UN and the
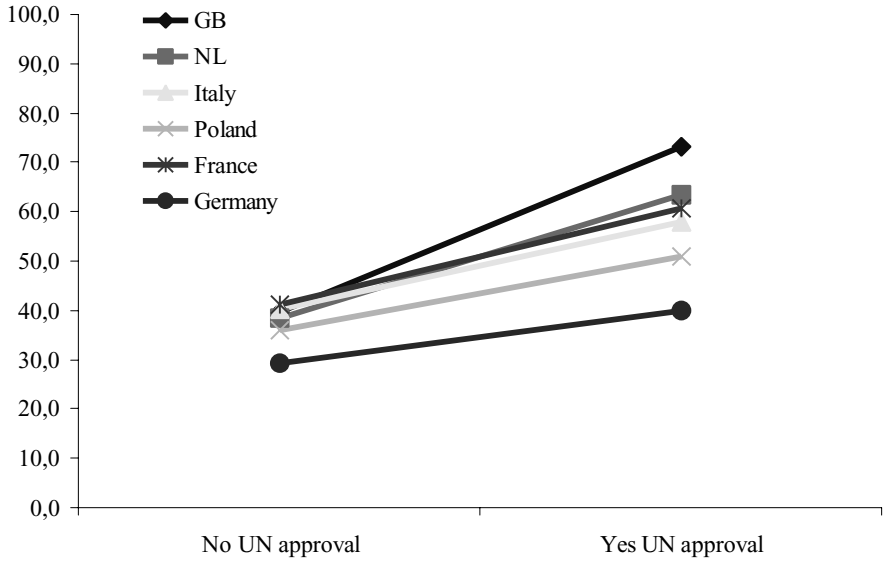
**Figure 3** Support for use of force by country

consent of their allies. But the idea of acting unilaterally would also have met with strong resistance in the USA itself. That these results are not an oddity of the wording of the question is confirmed by other available survey data from both the USA and Europe.

As to Europe, in an EOS Gallup January 2003 survey carried out in 15 European countries, to a question (Table 10) asking whether the respondent was in favour or against military action against Iraq, an average of 49% of the Europeans preferred military intervention 'under no circumstance'; 36% would support military action if the UN sanctioned it; and only 7% would be ready to support military action if the USA were to act unilaterally. Even fewer people thought that 'if military action goes ahead against Iraq', her/his own country should support it. On average, only 27% were ready to do so, while 64% felt that their own country should not be involved. Of course, there was some variation among the European countries. Danish and British people were slightly more likely to support a unilateral military action by USA and its allies and readier to support their own country's participation than French or Germans. In none of these countries, however, could one find support for the war in the range of 70% as was the case in US.

As for the USA, in Table 9 we summarize the results of all questions we were able to locate until December 2002 in which the respondents were called upon to reflect on the use of force with or without UN legitimacy. Irrespective of the different wordings of the questions, UN legitimacy appears to have been an important consideration up to the very last minute before the outbreak of the war. Across different questions and surveys, support for a military action against Iraq always decreased systematically from about two thirds to one third of the sample in case of a unilateral military action by
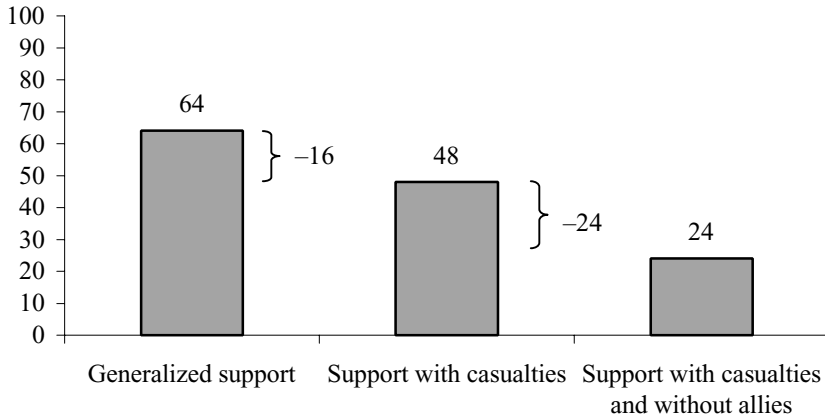
**Figure 4** Impact in the USA of casualties and support of allies on support for the military operation against Iraq (September 2002) (in %)

Question wording:
Generalized support: Would you favor or oppose taking military action in Iraq to end Saddam Hussein's rule?
Support with casualties: Would you favor or oppose taking military action in Iraq to end Saddam Hussein's rule, even if it meant that US forces might suffer thousands of casualties?
Support with casualties and w/o allies: [asked only to those in favor of military action to the previous question]: Should we attack Iraq only if our major allies agree to join us, or attack Iraq even if allies do not want to join us?
*Source*: Princeton Survey Research Associates/Pew Research Center, 12–16 September 2002 ($N = 1, 150$).

the US government. Conversely, explicit references to the 'opposition' by the United Nations (Gallup, Gallup/CNN) apparently do increase the percentage of 'unilateralists', but the multilateralists still remain in the majority. The few available trend questions (e.g. CBS, PIPA) seem to point to a slight increase in the percentage of those willing to support a unilateral American military action as time goes by. However, opposition to a unilateral military action still remained the majoritarian view until the very last days before the conflict broke out.

The relatively greater importance of the UN legitimacy compared to the impact of casualties can be found in the American case as well. Unlike the European situation (Table 6), no clear experimental evidence is available for the US, but for example a survey by the Princeton Survey Research Associates for the Pew Research Center on 12–16 September, 2002 ($N = 1,150$) allows us to shed some further light on this point (Figure 4). Respondents were asked first whether they were in favour of the use of force against Saddam Hussein. Sixty four percent of the respondents were in favour of using force against Saddam. However, to a follow-up question asking whether they were in favour if this would lead to 'thousands of US casualties,' support dropped to 48%, a decrease of 16 points. Those who supported the use of force in case of casualties were further asked whether the USA should attack with or without allies' support. Support

**Table 9.** *Support for military intervention in Iraq under different conditions (January 2003, % in agreement)*

|  | Support for US unilateral intervention[1] | Support for own country military intervention under different conditions[2] | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | No Iraqi cooperation | UN inspectors find WMD | Iraq threatens neighbors | UN approval | No UN approval |
| *Belgium* | 20 | 40 | 57 | 59 | 56 | 13 |
| *Denmark* | 18 | 53 | 70 | 58 | 71 | 13 |
| *Germany* | 13 | 32 | 51 | 61 | 45 | 10 |
| *Greece* | 11 | 22 | 31 | 33 | 25 | 9 |
| *Spain* | 15 | 31 | 48 | 45 | 45 | 12 |
| *Ireland* | 18 | 33 | 45 | 45 | 51 | 13 |
| *Italy* | 20 | 49 | 62 | 52 | 66 | 18 |
| *Luxembourg* | 17 | 38 | 59 | 57 | 63 | 13 |
| *Netherlands* | 18 | 48 | 65 | 67 | 68 | 13 |
| *Austria* | 8 | 14 | 19 | 19 | 19 | 8 |
| *Portugal* | 22 | 37 | 49 | 54 | 56 | 16 |
| *Finland* | 18 | 17 | 26 | 28 | 31 | 7 |
| *France* | 12 | 41 | 70 | 72 | 67 | 13 |
| *Sweden* | 11 | 28 | 38 | 34 | 39 | 9 |
| *UK* | 29 | 61 | 81 | 77 | 79 | 27 |

Question wording:

[1] For each of the following propositions. tell me if you agree or not?

- The United States should intervene militarily in Iraq even if the United Nations does not give its formal agreement.

[2] Do you consider that it would be justified or not that our country participates in a military intervention in Iraq?

- If the Iraqi regime does not cooperate with United Nations inspectors.
- If the United Nations inspectors discover weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.
- If Iraq threatens other countries in the region.
- If the United Nations Security Council decides on a military intervention in Iraq.

*Source*: EOS Gallup January 2003.

was now reduced to 24% of the entire sample, a further drop of 24%. This admittedly gross analysis of the data seems to show that the lack of allies' support has a more depressing effect on support than casualties as such. In other words, before the war, for the publics in Europe as well as in the USA, the support of allies was indeed deemed crucial in shaping the support for the use of military force against Saddam Hussein and his regime.

A few words of comment are appropriate here with respect to the remarkable impact of this factor of international legitimacy or UN consent in shaping people's attitudes on the justification of using military force, in this case against Iraq. The phenomenon is general, if not universal, because the strength of this factor is felt across countries, on both sides of the Atlantic, and probably equally elsewhere. It is in line

with earlier findings on the relative popularity of the United Nations and the belief that it is doing a good job.[13] However, it contradicts another finding, i.e. that to many people vital national interests justify bypassing the United Nations if need be.[14] The fact that in the Summer of 2002 the presence or absence of a UN mandate was such an important consideration with respect to the acceptability of a war with Iraq, is the more remarkable, since it was measured *before* the major international debates on this issue in the Fall and Winter of 2002–2003 took place, both within the United Nations and elsewhere. Apparently, even then people already felt increasingly that, while war may be sometimes an acceptable and even necessary way of solving problems, it should not be decided upon by individual states, but should preferably be undertaken only with the support of one's allies (another outcome of many polls) and rather only in settings that may claim to be some representation of 'the international community'. We can only speculate here about the reasons why this might be so, but a few hypotheses can be offered. One is that we are simply dealing with an artefact of question wording. Any mention of an institution or authority tends to increase support for a particular policy or decision. A more substantive explanation could be that over the years people have internalised, as it were, the rules of international law, which specify that there are but two exceptions to the international prohibition of force, one being force authorized by the UN Security Council and the other being self-defence as long as the Security Council has not taken appropriate action. A third reason could be that the noted normative constraints on the use of force at work in the democracies reflect the effect of the domestic analogy, where important decisions also need to meet the democratic criteria of deliberation and majority consent (Russett, 1990). Finally, the inclination to support multilateral deliberations may also amount to what in group dynamics is called a certain 'diffusion of responsibility', which may be desirable when important controversial and risky issues are involved.

### Some conclusions

The results presented here are in many ways surprising and worth looking at more closely. In some ways they contradict what some observers would expect to find given the present political debates and arguments exchanged on both sides of the Atlantic. The Worldviews 2002 survey, taken before the war, shows that one year after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, European publics looked at the world in a way that is rather similar to that of many ordinary Americans, including harbouring deep reservations about the conduct of certain aspects of US foreign policy. Both share fundamental worldviews. Europeans and Americans have comparable perceptions of threats, domestic priorities and comparable perceptions of friends and allies and a strong affinity for each other, They agree upon the relative distribution of power in the world and on the relative importance of economic versus military strength.

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[13]   See Everts 1995 and e.g. studies by PIPA, CCFR and Gallup in the US.
[14]   See *Transatlantic Trends 2003*, a survey by the German Marshall Fund of the USA in the USA and seven European countries.

**Table 10.** *Attitudes toward the use of force in Iraq with or without UN support in USA (in %)*

|  | Invasion without UN/Allies support | Invasion with UN/Allies support | Never invade |
|---|---|---|---|
| *CBS News/NewYork Times* |  |  |  |
| February 24–26, 2002* | 22 | 72 | 1 |
| August 6–7, 2002 | 24 | 68 | 0 |
| September 2–5, 2002 | 27 | 67 | 0 |
| September 22–23, 2002 | 31 | 61 | 0 |
| October 3–5, 2002 | 29 | 65 | 0 |
| October 27–31, 2002 | 28 | 63 | 1 |
| February 5–6, 2003 | 31 | 63 | 0 |
| February 10–12, 2003 | 38 | 56 | 1 |
| February 24–25, 2003 | 31 | 64 | 0 |
| March 4–5, 2003 | 36 | 59 | 0 |
| *Gallup* |  |  |  |
| September 13–16, 2002 | 37 | 46 | 14 |
| *Gallup/CNN/USA Today* |  |  |  |
| November 8–10, 2002 | 31 | 40 | 24 |
| *HARRIS/CCFR* |  |  |  |
| June 1–30, 2002 | 20 | 65 | 13 |
| *Harris Interactive/CNN/Time* |  |  |  |
| November 13–14, 2002 | 28 | 47 | 18 |
| *Hart and Teeter/NBC News/Wall Street Journal* |  |  |  |
| December 7–9, 2002 | 35 | 55 | 1 |
| January 19–21, 2003 | 29 | 63 | 3 |
| February 5, 2003 | 37 | 51 | 4 |
| *Opinion Dynamics/Fox News* |  |  |  |
| February 12–13, 2002 | 35 | 42 | 10 |
| *PIPA/Knowledge Networks* |  |  |  |
| September 26–30, 2002 | 20 | 65 | 13 |
| November 19–December 1, 2002 | 28 | 55 | 13 |
| January 23–26, 2003 | 28 | 55 | 14 |

CBS News/*NewYork Times*: Which statement do you agree with more? Iraq presents such a clear danger to American interests that the United States needs to act now, even without the support of its allies. OR, the US needs to wait for its allies before taking any action against Iraq. (US shouldn't act volunteer)

* '... OR The US needs to get the support of its allies before...'

Gallup: Which comes closest to your point of view about sending US ground troops to Iraq: the United States should send ground troops to Iraq only if the United Nations supports that action, the United States should send ground troops to Iraq even if the United Nations opposes that action, or the United States should not send ground troops to Iraq at all?

Gallup/CNN/*USA Today*: Suppose Saddam Hussein does not comply with the United Nations resolutions passed [today/on Friday]. Do you think the United States should invade Iraq with ground troops: only if the UN votes to authorize the use of US ground troops, even if the UN does not vote to authorize the use of US ground troops], or do you think the United States should not send ground troops to Iraq at all?

In general, while Europeans and Americans are in broad agreement when it comes to the importance of the war on terrorism and the nature of the Iraqi threat, and Europeans are as willing as Americans in principle to use force in a broad range of circumstances, Europeans continue to give higher priority to soft tools than do Americans. For Europeans, the use of force is a truly *ultima ratio* to be utilized only when all other sources of power have failed. The Americans, on the other hand, while far from being trigger-happy, are much less shy of using force if circumstances seem appropriate. This is what the adherents of the 'gap thesis' would expect. On Iraq, Europeans and Americans agreed in some respects (such as the necessary role of the UN) but disagreed on others. With the exception of Great Britain and minorities elsewhere, Europeans did not change their views when the war finally took place, whereas most Americans dropped their reservations, at least initially.

The main conclusion emerging from our analysis is that in many respects, at the mass level, the differences across the Atlantic are more complex and multifaceted than the simple 'gap' thesis assumes. To a large degree they seem to result from disaffection with the present administration rather than with US policies in general. Moreover, the alleged European 'anti-Americanism' is a misnomer, which hides the considerable sympathies and warm feelings towards America, and the perceived common interests and values.[15] The real gap lies elsewhere. It separates the Bush administration from the

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[15]   See for a survey of worldwide reactions to the terrorist attacks and the (American) 'war on terrorism at the level of public opinion Everts and Isernia (2002).

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HARRIS/Chicago Council on Foreign Relations: There has been some discussion about whether the US should use its troops to invade Iraq and overthrow the government of Saddam Hussein. Which of the following positions is closest to your own? The US should not invade Iraq, The US should only invade Iraq with UN approval and the support of its allies, The US invade Iraq even if we have to go it alone.

Harris Interactive/CNN/*Time*: If Saddam Hussein does not comply with UN resolutions passed last week that require Iraq to allow UN inspectors into its country to search for weapons of mass destruction, do you think the US should invade Iraq with ground troops without UN authorization, invade Iraq with ground troops but only with UN authorization, or not invade Iraq with ground troops at all?

Hart and Teeter/NBC News/Wall Street Journal: Do you think that the United States should take military action against Iraq only with the support of the United Nations, or should the United States take military action against Iraq even if the United Nations does not support such action? (Never Take Military Action volunteer).

Opinion Dynamics/Fox News: Russian President (Vladimir) Putin has said that the United Nations should approve any attack on Iraq's Saddam Hussein. Do you think the US (United States) should only attack Hussein after getting UN approve, go it alone if the UN won't approve the attack, or not attack Hussein under any circumstances?

PIPA/Knowledge Networks: There has been some discussion about whether the US should use its troops to invade Iraq and overthrow the government of Saddam Hussein. Which of the following positions is closest to yours?

rest of the world. Not only in Europe (and probably elsewhere) but in the USA too, the central foreign policy views of the Bush administration, as well as many of its policies, are looked at very critically if they are not rejected outright by a majority of people. Of course, as we already alluded to in the introduction, those observers, like Kagan, who see a growing tension among Europeans and Americans, might still be right in their argument, if one looks only at the elite level, where political discourse is defined. While it is true that foreign policy is an eminently elitist game – even though there is a long list of commentators and practitioners either lamenting or applauding the fact that this apparently no more the case – it is still plausible to expect that, if differences run so deep and wide, they should also be found at the mass level. Moreover, if democracies are responsive to public opinion in foreign policy, there is further merit in exploring what public attitudes are on this issue. Of course, we well know that on foreign policy issues, even more than on domestic issues, mass attitudes are often ill-structured and ephemeral, as well as grounded on very scant empirical information (even though the 'revisionist school' on public opinion and foreign policy stresses that this state of affair is less disruptive than initially thought) (see Everts, 2002; Holsti, 1996), but we might also expect (an empirical claim, by the way) less noise and 'non-attitudes' on matters of perceptions and feelings than on the nuts and bolts of hard foreign policy choices.

It is not certain whether the Transatlantic gap to the extent that it exists, will remain. Much will depend on what happens in the USA. The great strength of the American system has always been its capacity to correct earlier deviations and to restore the foreign policy consensus needed to create abroad not only fear but also confidence in the justice of American leadership. This consensus has now been fundamentally eroded and an active public may have a vital role to play in its reconstruction.

Unfortunately, European governments for their part have regrettably little reason to boast about their own consensus and effective leadership in this connection. They have little reason too to be complacent about the results of the polls discussed here. As far as 'Europe' is concerned, the respondents are fairly unanimous. Whether they want 'Europe-as-a-superpower' or not, they want a more active, more united and more effective 'Europe' that plays a larger international role. They are probably also be willing to pay for this and, for instance, to increase their military efforts, not today perhaps, but when the necessity and use of this would be convincingly explained to them.

It is true that this may increase rather than diminish conflicts with the USA, at least initially. As expected, the French are most insistent on a 'European role', and least mindful of possible conflict, but the polls show that even in the pro-American United Kingdom a majority recognizes that in case of conflict the country's true interests on the whole lie with Europe. In the end, to work for a more balanced trans-Atlantic relationship is not only desired by Europe's citizens and politically sound, but it is probably also beneficial for the rest of the world.

In this connection, the absence of European unity on the problem of Iraq, the lack of convincing arguments for an alternative policy and the gradual gravitation of some countries towards the position of the Bush administration, were singularly

unhelpful with respect to achieving such a better balance. A European insistence on core issues of international law and order would not have antagonized, but rather created understanding and sympathy among very large numbers in the American public.

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