The War on Terror and Contemporary U.S.-European Relations

James M. McCormick
Iowa State University, jmmcc@iastate.edu

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Abstract
The Bush Administration's "WAR ON TERROR" and its implications for U.S.European relations often evoke contradictory views among Americans. On the one hand, they can generate considerable apprehension since European views toward Americans generally-and President Bush in particularhas been caricatured in a number of unflattering ways. Recall, for example, the headline in the British tabloid, the Daily Mirror, immediately after the November 2004 presidential election: "How can 59,054,087 people be so DUMB?" On the other hand, those topics can evoke the considerable affection that Europeans have for the American people, if not always for their government, in the aftermath of 9/11. Furthermore, the generally warm receptions that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and President Bush received in early 2005 on their "charm offensive" to Europe and the cooperative efforts over Iran more recently reflect the reservoir of goodwill across the Atlantic.

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James M. McCormick

The Bush administration's "war on terror" and its implications for U.S.-European relations often evoke contradictory views among Americans. On the one hand, they can generate considerable apprehension since European views toward Americans generally—and President Bush in particular—has been caricatured in a number of unflattering ways. Recall, for example, the headline in the British tabloid, the Daily Mirror, immediately after the November 2004 presidential election: "How can 59,054,087 people be so DUMB?" On the other hand, those topics can evoke the considerable affection that Europeans have for the American people, if not always for their government, in the aftermath of 9/11. Furthermore, the generally warm receptions that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and President Bush received in early 2005 on their "charm offensive" to Europe and the cooperative efforts over Iran more recently reflect the reservoir of goodwill across the Atlantic.

This chapter discusses the evolution of the Bush administration's foreign policy through its first term and the first three years of its second. It then assesses how this evolution has impacted upon European-American relations in the recent past and how it may affect the road ahead. Before proceeding, however, it is appropriate to discuss the meaning of the term "Europe" as used throughout this analysis. Generally, the chapter will refer to "Europe" as the countries of the European Union (largely prior to its recent expansion to twenty-seven nations) and not to the expanded Europe that formed after the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Of course, there are dangers in grouping all the EU countries together; therefore, where appropriate, reference will be made to specific European states (e.g., France and Germany) when making particular
arguments. Overall, the intent is to focus on the set of European states that have traditionally been allies of the United States over the past half-century or more but have nevertheless been troubled by American policies in recent years.

The organizing themes for this analysis are the twin notions of a conceptual gap and an action gap between America and Europe over U.S. foreign policy. The former refers to the gap between Europe and America over the assumptions that inform U.S. foreign policy; the latter refers to the gap in the policy implementation of these parties. The so-called war on terror and how it has been pursued has been the focal point in dividing America and Europe since Bush’s inauguration in 2001. It will be the principal reference point in discussing these gaps.

The ultimate conclusion will be optimistic. While a conceptual gap will likely remain between the foreign policies of western Europe (and much of the European Union) and America, owing to their different histories and experiences, the gap is narrowing slightly. The action gap between the two sides has already narrowed, and is likely to continue to do so. From the American perspective, both the conceptual and action gap will narrow because, due to increasing constraints at home and abroad, the Bush administration’s foreign policy options have been reduced. From the European perspective, the action gap will likely close more than the conceptual gap, since Europe remains constrained by the realities of America’s presence and power in global affairs.

To discuss these gaps and their future, the analysis is organized in four sections. First, the evolving conceptual maps of the Bush administration’s foreign policy from 2001 to the present will be outlined, including how those conceptual maps were manifested in actions, principally over the war on terrorism. Second, interspersed in that discussion will be an analysis of how the Bush administration’s views and actions largely parted ways with the modal views of the EU countries (and particularly France and Germany) over conducting foreign policy, most particularly over the “war on terrorism.” Third, the chapter will identify and discuss several constraints that both Europe and America face and that may narrow both the conceptual and action gaps over the next decade or so. Finally, the future of U.S.-European relations will be considered together with some practical steps that should be pursued by both sides.

Differing Conceptual Approaches to Foreign Policy

Snyder (2004) nicely summarizes the three most prominent theoretical approaches to understanding international politics and foreign policy today: realism, liberalism, and constructivism (or idealism, as he labeled it). He also
identified the "founders" of these approaches, outlined the philosophical assumptions of the "thinkers" associated with them, and discussed some foreign policy makers or "doers" who recently exemplified each approach. Interestingly, neither the Bush administration nor the European Union (nor any European government) was utilized exclusively in any of Snyder's schemas to illustrate these three different approaches. Yet they could have been, since both global actors generally represent considerably different conceptual approaches toward the conduct of foreign policy. Certainly, no nation—either over a long period or even in the course of an administration—is likely to rely solely on one of these approaches in formulating its foreign policy, a point illustrated by Snyder's analysis. The central tendency of a nation's conceptual map and its actions, though, often draw more from one approach than the other two. In this sense, we can immediately appreciate some differences between the United States and the European Union by comparing their modal foreign policy approaches.

The central tendency of the Bush administration is usually depicted as influenced by realism, and the central tendency of the countries of the European Union appears more influenced by liberalism and/or constructivism. As such, a fundamental conceptual gap between the two has fueled an action gap over what policies should be pursued for some time. This gap has widened since Bush's inauguration, especially in policies and actions related to the war on terrorism in general, and the war with Iraq in particular.

Yet a fuller assessment of the Bush administration's foreign policy would reveal that the administration actually combined several different conceptual approaches, and the European-American conceptual gap tended to ebb and flow. Initially, for example, the Bush administration embraced a stark form of realism in dealing with foreign policy and, notably, did not place an emphasis on terrorism. Immediately after 9/11, though, the administration adopted defensive realism (see Zakaria 1998 on this concept) and some elements of liberalism, and focused rather singularly on terrorism. As the Afghanistan response faded and Iraq was pushed strongly into focus, the Bush administration tilted back to realism, and particularly unilateralism. By the start of its second term, the administration appears to have embraced elements of a liberal-constructivist view with its emphasis on the promotion of freedom and democracy. Might this kind of constructivist emphasis be closer to the modal European view? Is there some prospect of a real closure in the conceptual gap on foreign policy between America and Europe as a result? Before attempting to answer these questions, let me expand upon these differing conceptual approaches of the Bush administration, assess how much has changed, and examine how wide the conceptual and action gaps remain between Europe and America.
Prior to 9/11

In the period prior to September 11, 2001, the Bush administration adopted a stark version of classical realism. Although George W. Bush did not enter the White House with much foreign policy experience, he selected a set of advisors who were largely classical realists in their approach to American foreign policy. Adherents to this approach make some important simplifying assumptions about states and foreign policy behavior. They believe that nations are the principal actors in foreign policy; actions between states should trump any efforts to change behaviors within states. Great powers are more important than other powers in managing foreign policy, and states pursue their interests, defined by their capabilities, but they should do so prudently and cautiously. By the principles of classical realism, the United States would and should aid global stability from its position of strength, but—importantly—this would occur in a highly prudent and selective manner. To be sure, there was a slight hint of a transformational kind of foreign policy that we would soon see.

From this conceptual perspective, Bush's agenda for action was to be much more narrow and unilateralist in focus than even the last years of the Clinton administration. That is, Bush would adopt a narrower definition of America's interests abroad, emphasize refurbishing America's alliance structure, and deal with Russia and China more skeptically than the previous administration. The United States also would oppose—or at least not pursue—some actions: (1) it would not be involved in trying to change other states internally or create political democracy within other countries; (2) it would oppose American humanitarian interventions without a clear strategic rationale; (3) it would eschew involvement with international institutions; and (4) it would not be constrained by international agreements. Importantly, as with past U.S. administrations, the Bush administration would not be inclined to afford much influence to the Congress or to allies in the conduct of American foreign policy. While the issue of terrorism was on the agenda, the actions of key states, and particularly great powers, were the real focus of foreign policy attention in the administration's early days. With that in mind, the issue of terrorist activity was given a relatively low priority.

The specific policy actions emanating from this conceptual approach are familiar. In its early months, the Bush administration rejected the Kyoto Protocol, withdrew from the International Criminal Court (ICC), pulled back from the Middle East, and initially halted discussions with North Korea. Toward Russia, the administration moved to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and pursued national missile defense. Toward China, it had a standoff
for a time over a downed American plane. As Richard Clarke, the counterterrorism expert on the National Security Council, has noted in several media interviews, terrorism seemingly was not a top-drawer issue for the Bush administration during these early months (see, e.g., CBS News 2004).

Such an agenda was at a considerable distance from what had become the European Union’s modal approach with its emphasis on utilizing international institutions and seeking to pursue a rule-based international order (see, e.g., Daalder 2005: 44–46; Kagan 2003; Lindberg 2005: 5–6). Furthermore, the ICC, Kyoto, and arms control were crucial foreign policy issues for Europe. The resulting conceptual and action distance between the initial Bush approach and the European model was accentuated in yet another way: the Bush administration’s style of interaction (including that of President Bush himself) was not always tactful and instead displayed what some would call “American arrogance” in its foreign policy pronouncements. For example, the Bush administration’s blunt rejections of the Kyoto Protocol, ICC, and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty—all issues that had broad support in Europe—during its first months in office highlighted this stylistic approach; indeed, some of these rejections even occurred on European soil and were too often done without advancing U.S. alternatives in these policy areas (see Haas 2005). In short, the Bush administration’s foreign policy style further deepened the conceptual and action gaps already in place.

From 9/11 to the First Bush Doctrine

The events of 9/11 had a profound effect on the American public, the Congress, and the Bush administration. The impact was probably more profound on America than many at home or abroad have fully recognized. The atrocities deeply affected the collective American psyche and changed the direction of the Bush administration’s foreign policy. This view contrasts with some analyses (Daalder and Lindsay 2003: 78–80) that suggest that 9/11 enabled the president to actualize foreign policy views that he or his advisors had long held.

Instead, 9/11 ushered in a different conceptual map within the White House. In several ways, of course, the events of 9/11 confirmed some of the administration’s initial assumptions about the world and its approach; for example, the importance of “hard” or military power over “soft” or diplomatic power (Nye 2004) and the need for enhanced military preparedness. Yet, they also underlined the limitation of Bush’s commitment to classical realism (e.g., not only states were important actors in foreign policy, and the internal composition of states could also be crucial in affecting foreign policy). Thus, the events of 9/11 had the twin effects of compelling the administration to pursue a broader internationalist policy than the Bush administration originally
envisioned, and of demonstrating that America needed the assistance of other states and other international actors in achieving its foreign policy objectives. While the president and his administration did not adopt a *volte-face* in his policy approach, they moved from classical realism to defensive realism and from rejecting Wilsonian liberalism to incorporating some of its elements. The role of the neoconservatives, or what Walter Russell Mead (2005: 88–90) calls the “Revival Wilsonians,” now became more pronounced in the policy-making process. These advisors, including Vice President Cheney, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and others, pressed to advance American democratic values abroad, even as they eschewed the use of or reliance upon international institutions. Still, and importantly, the commitment to classical realism was never far away, even though conceptual changes were clearly discernible.

Although defensive realism makes many of the same assumptions as classical realism, it differs in one important respect: the importance of “insecurity” as the motivating force for state actions. Under classical realism, “states expand because they can” but under defensive realism “states expand because they must” (Zakaria 1998: 8–9). Yet the incorporation of liberalism into this conservative president’s foreign policy went further than defensive realism and included components that were largely familiar to many Americans from the days of the Cold War. That is, foreign policy moved beyond state-to-state relations among the strong to include other international actors, but it also sought to advance some universal Wilsonian values (e.g., global freedom). In addition, the target of American policy now had a clearer focus, much like the Cold War years. The new challenge of international terrorism resurrected moral principle as a guide to policy, a rationale readily familiar from America’s past (see, e.g., McCormick 2005: 21–28; Osgood 1953; Perkins 1962; Spanier 1982). Essentially, the administration’s new conceptual map focused on the actions of all states and groups, became increasingly interested in the internal composition of some states (especially as related to terrorism), and incorporated a clear moral imperative to guide its action agenda.

The policy actions emanating from this conceptual map quickly took a different tack from its first approach. The actions toward the internal situation in Afghanistan were, of course, the centerpiece, but American military and military advisory units were rapidly sent to several countries (the Philippines, Yemen, and Georgia, for instance) to address ethnic and communal conflicts. A new interest in regional conflicts (Indian–Pakistani, Israeli–Palestinian, and even North and South Korean) developed, and some incipient efforts were undertaken to address them. Importantly, differences with major powers (i.e., Russia and China) were put to the side as anti-terrorism became the driving force for calculating foreign policy action.
While the altered Bush conceptual approach in the immediate post-9/11 period was hardly akin to the modal EU conception of foreign policy, the use of international institutions and the reliance on elements of multilateralism appeared to resonate strongly with European nations, especially given the tragic circumstances of 9/11. Further, the Bush administration’s recognition that the United States needed to recruit other nations to its cause, the turn to international institutions, and the recognition of multiple actors in global affairs undoubtedly struck a responsive chord among European states. Even the new American concern with the internal dynamics in some countries met with some receptivity. States that adopted a more expansive view of the construction of a nation’s foreign policy welcomed the Bush administration’s considerations regarding how domestic politics and domestic development may affect foreign policy, whether that development was in the Middle East or South Asia.

Ultimately, the action agenda between Europe and America narrowed. Article V of the NATO pact, “the attack upon one is an attack upon all,” was invoked for the first time in history. Virtually all European states pledged their assistance to the United States, and Europe was largely as one in assisting in Afghanistan, although there was considerable variation both in size of commitment and the conditions under which European states would allow their militaries to operate in that country. The “rally effect” of public opinion after 9/11 was not just confined to America, but spread across much of Europe as well. Even Le Monde weighed in with its now often-quoted assertion that “[w]e are all Americans.” In short, if the conceptual foreign policy gap between America and Europe remained in the immediate days after 9/11, it surely became less pronounced. More significantly, the action gap between Europe and America closed with a unified effort to respond to the events of 9/11.

However, this conceptual closure was short-lived. It probably lasted only through President Bush’s 2002 State of the Union address in which the president identified the “axis of evil” nations and the American intention to deal with them. The speech immediately inspired sharp reactions from European leaders, who had a different protocol for dealing with the world and international terrorism. Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine of France noted, “[w]e are currently threatened by a simplified approach which reduces all problems of the world to the mere struggle against terrorism.” Javier Solana Madariaga, the European Union’s first minister for foreign affairs, warned about “the dangers of global unilateralism” and the German foreign minister Joschka Fischer called the “axis of evil” notion a concept “not in accordance with our political ethos” (Schwarz 2002).

The conceptual gap deepened as American discussion turned to war with Iraq during the summer and into the fall of 2002. The Bush administration’s
publication of its National Security Strategy statement (or what might be called the first Bush Doctrine) in September 2002 further widened the differences (White House 2002). In truth, the statement was a little broader and more nuanced than has been popularly perceived—its underlying commitment to human dignity and oft-overlooked discussions of trade and development, for instance, illustrate its varied areas of consideration—but nevertheless most analysts (e.g., Gaddis 2002; c.f. Daalder, Lindsay, and Steinberg 2002) focused on the commitment to fighting “terrorists and tyrants” through a variety of means and the potential incendiary danger should these states/groups gain access to weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Equally significant were the invocation of “the option of preemptive actions to counter a sufficient threat to our national security” and the commitment of the Bush administration to act unilaterally, if necessary. As the report noted near the end, “[i]n exercising our leadership, we will respect the values, judgment, and interests of our friends and partners. Still, we will be prepared to act apart when our interests and unique responsibilities require” (White House 2002). Clearly, the second part of that statement became the operative one in the run-up to the Iraq war, and it widened both the conceptual and action rifts between America and Europe over fighting terrorism.

The widening conceptual gap between the two continents was evident in the public challenges made by Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder during the 2002 German elections and in the frequent statements in late 2002 and early 2003 of President Jacques Chirac of France. However, the gap was especially apparent in the UN Security Council debates in early 2003 over whether WMD existed in Iraq and the nature of the Iraqi threat. The United States, Britain, and Spain in fact circulated a draft UN resolution that found Iraq in “material breach” of its obligations under previous UN resolutions and thereby implicitly sanctioned approval of military action to enforce UN Resolution 1441 passed in November 2002. That draft resolution never reached a vote. Several Security Council members, led principally by France, which threatened to use its veto, indicated that they would not support it. Indeed, France indicated that it would not support any Security Council resolution that would lead to war, since the international inspection regime had not been exhausted.

While the government-to-government gap between the United States and virtually all European states over Iraq and its relationship to the war on terrorism were widespread, the views of European publics toward the United States were now universally as low—or even lower—than at any time since the end of World War II. In March 2003, for instance, the percentage of respondents expressing a favorable view of the United States had fallen to 48 percent for Britain, 34 percent for Italy, 25 percent for Germany, 31 percent for France, and to a remarkably low 14 percent for Spain. By comparison the percentage
of respondents expressing a favorable view of the United States in the summer of 2002 was 75 percent for Britain, 70 percent for Italy, 61 percent for Germany, and 61 percent for France. A comparable percent for Spain was 50 percent from a 1999–2000 survey. (See Pew Global Project Attitudes 2003: 19 for these data.) Such extraordinarily feeble levels of public support for America would hardly motivate European elites and government leaders to pursue a common policy with the United States.

Of course, the conceptual gap in the lead-up to the Iraq war was matched by an expanding action gap. The “coalition of the willing” constructed to attack Iraq did not include some key European allies, notably France and Germany, although a number of NATO members did contribute in some limited way, including the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Turkey. Further, even after Bush declared the cessation of major combat in May 2003, several key European states, again including France and Germany, refused to participate in the reconstruction efforts in Iraq with “boots on the ground.” Only in late 2003 and early 2004 was there any evidence of closing this action gap. By fall 2003, the Europeans and Americans were cooperating on new UN resolutions to address the reconstruction in Iraq. UN Security Council Resolution 1483 lifted sanctions against Iraq, encouraged other nations to help with reconstruction, and approved a special UN representative for Iraq. UN Security Council Resolution 1511 called for a multinational force in Iraq and for the development of a timetable to move toward democracy. Still, there were limitations on the extent of cooperation, even outright opposition from some allied countries to sending any forces to Iraq and withdrawal of forces by those who did assist the United States. In sum, the action gap may have narrowed a little in the post-war Iraq period, but the fissure between many key European states and America remained and perhaps, in some instances, deepened.

After November 2: The Second Bush Doctrine

After the November 2004 election, the Bush administration yet again sought to alter its conceptual map for American foreign policy and for addressing the war on terrorism. It is a second Bush Doctrine, if you will. The first hint of a change came in a post-election meeting with British Prime Minister Tony Blair in which President Bush declared that “[in] my second term, I will work to deepen our trans-Atlantic [sic] ties to nations of Europe.” He also noted that stronger ties between Europe and America were vital to the “promotion of worldwide democracy” (Stout 2004: 1, 4).

The altered conceptual map for America’s foreign policy was set out more fully in Bush’s second inaugural address and in his 2005 State of the Union address, but his new secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, also discussed it during
her Senate confirmation hearings (U.S. Congress 2005) and during her address soon thereafter in Paris (Rice 2005). In President Bush’s (2005a) inaugural address, he directly linked America’s well being with the expansion of freedom and liberty around the world. Only by reconstructing the international system with these powerful ideas could America and the world be secure. “The survival of liberty in our land,” he declared, “increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in the world.” Later in his speech, he added, “it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in the world.” This statement was followed by his State of the Union address (2005b) where he also linked America’s well being at home with conditions abroad. A principal goal for his administration would be “to pass along to our children all the freedoms we enjoy—and chief among them is freedom from fear.” Part of the speech is worth quoting at length.

Pursuing our enemies is a vital commitment of the war on terror . . . [but] in the long term, the peace we seek will only be achieved by eliminating the conditions that feed radicalism and ideologies of murder. If whole regions of the world remain in despair and grow in hatred, they will be recruiting grounds for terror, and that terror will stalk America and other free nations for decades. The only force powerful enough to stop the rise of tyranny and terror, and replace hatred with hope, is the force of human freedom (Bush 2005b).

Furthermore, the Bush administration emphasized that this transformational foreign policy—or really a constructivist approach to foreign policy—would not be conducted by military means or by imposition from abroad. Instead, it would need to be evoked, or encouraged, by the global community. Indeed, Condoleezza Rice at her Senate confirmation hearings was quick to outline some new central themes of the administration: to unite, strengthen, and spread democracies around the world and to do so through diplomacy. In her words, “[w]e must use American diplomacy to help create a balance of power in the world that favors freedom. And the time for diplomacy is now” (U.S. Congress 2005). To be sure, this theme is not entirely new, even for the Bush administration. The notion of creating a balance of power favoring freedom is straight out of the 2002 National Security Strategy statement and the discussion of democracy promotion was a theme that President Bush enunciated in his visit to Britain in November 2003 in which he called for “the global expansion of democracy” as a key pillar of American security (Bush 2003).

At one level, of course, the American commitment to freedom, democracy, and diplomacy should have been attractive to Europeans, since it seemingly connotes a differing emphasis and a different approach by the Bush adminis-
tation. That is, a focus on individual freedoms and democracy ought to fall on receptive ears among all western states and cultures. Yet European endorsements have hardly been deafening. Indeed, there has been some reluctance on the part of European states and peoples to embrace it wholeheartedly. The reason is not because of the underlying values that the approach represents, but because of the future U.S. policies it might entail. That is, how would the emphasis on freedom and democracy be implemented? Is it likely to lead to moralizing by the United States and thus an approach that the Europeans do not like? Will it produce a messianic mission? Will it produce hypocrisy when democratic ideals clash with strategic interests, for example, over Saudi Arabia or Egypt? Will it be done collectively, or will the Bush administration be too quick to seek to implement this vision through military means? Undoubtedly, uncertainty over these questions will serve as important constraints on many European countries embracing the new set of American values. In this sense, the conceptual gap is less likely to close until the action gap on this democracy agenda is bridged.

At the same time, it is important to emphasize Thomas Friedman's point (2004): the war on terrorism is ultimately a war of ideas. The ideas of promoting freedom and democracy are attractive and compelling ones for Americans and Europeans. In this sense, both sides of the Atlantic might be expected to embrace this approach. If they did, their actions would serve to narrow the conceptual difference between the two continents (Dumbrell 2008).

But there is also another difficulty with this new American approach that must be acknowledged. Put bluntly, the message is less the problem than the messenger. President Bush and his Texas swagger—and the cowboy imagery often used to caricature him—appear at times to overwhelm the transformational message of freedom and democracy. The sense of trust in the motivation of America and its leader still needs some work. In this sense, multiple emissaries (such as Secretary Rice) with more benign personas are also necessary for the conceptual gap to be narrowed. Almost three years on with this democracy initiative, the results are underwhelming.

Constraints and Incentives for Closing the Conceptual and Action Gaps

Even if the conceptual gap was to narrow only slightly over U.S. foreign policy generally and terrorism particularly, powerful international and domestic constraints remain, which may motivate both the United States and Europe to close the action gap. In other words, certain existing constraints may serve as incentives to close the action gap between these two global actors in the near term. Some of these constraints result from the common ties that already exist, but others are unique to the United States and Europe.
First, of course, the United States and Europe are still bound together by a set of underlying common values and beliefs that brought them together during the Cold War, albeit no longer now with the Soviet Union as the lode star guiding policy formulation. These common values and beliefs are hardly empty notions to the vast majority of Europeans and Americans, particularly not to the new European states that have escaped communist rule since the fall of the Berlin Wall. How these values should be advanced remain as a source of disagreement both within and between Europe and America, but these values will undoubtedly continue to serve as incentives for all parties to seek some policy accommodations. Second, Europe and America are fundamentally tied by the significant economic links that serve as the "sticky power" (Mead 2004: 46–53; Mead 2005: 29–36) between them. Indeed, economic ties remain very strong, despite political differences and lingering disputes over access to both participants' markets (Drozdiak 2005). Third, the often unspoken levels of cooperation on terrorism—for example, in the areas of law enforcement, intelligence matters, or the tracking of financial matters—remain in place, even in the face of more visible political differences over Iraq and the wider war on terrorism. Moreover, the events of March 11, 2004, in Madrid and July 7, 2005, in London continue to provide very powerful incentives for this kind of transatlantic cooperation, as does the cooperation evidenced in arresting several individuals accused of planning transatlantic plane bombings in August 2006 (see Van Natta, Sciolino, and Grey 2006). Furthermore, a European Union report argued that, despite denials and diversionary explanations, some European countries and the United States have cooperated quite extensively on the use of "extraordinary rendition" of captured terrorist suspects (European Parliament 2007). In this sense, these different kinds of "ties that bind"—and continue to bind—should be recognized as important contributory factors in evaluating common ground between America and Europe. Although some have questioned whether the war on terrorism and the Bush administration's policies have diminished the importance of the transatlantic ties (Daalder 2005), these continuing realities speak for themselves and suggest another conclusion: transatlantic linkages remain crucial building blocks for sustained cooperation.

Constraints on the United States

Both the United States and Europe have additional international and domestic incentives to close the conceptual and action gaps in their relationships. From the American perspective, the constraints on international relations are quite formidable and have already served as impetuses to try to restore credibility and support from its European allies. The most compelling
international constraint on the Bush administration may be summarized using Nye's (2004) "soft power" concept. The "soft power" quotient of America and Bush is astonishingly low across the world, particularly in Europe. It is extraordinarily difficult to conduct a successful foreign policy whilst being viewed with suspicion by so many states; this difficulty is felt acutely in relation to a war on terrorism that is ultimately predicated on global cooperation.

Consider the results of the BBC World Service's (2005) post-election poll of twenty-two countries (including six from Europe), which surveyed attitudes to George Bush's reelection, toward the United States, and toward the American people. Only a majority in two countries, India and the Philippines, and a plurality in a third, Poland, viewed Bush's reelection as positive. By wide margins, the rest of the nations viewed the president's reelection as "negative for peace and security for the world." Similar results were reported for these nations' view of the American public, with only a majority in India and the Philippines "feeling better toward the American people" after the election. Most nations felt less warmly to the American people in the face of Bush's reelection. To be sure, the negative feeling toward the American people was less intense than those expressed toward Bush personally, but it was no less evident (BBC World Service Poll 2005). The Pew Global Attitudes data results from March 2004 point to the crux of the issue. For instance, on the question of how much the interests of other nations are taken into account when America decides its policy actions, only 36 percent of British citizens reported believing that America considers the interests of others "a great deal" or a "fair amount" in its foreign policy actions. Results from Germany and France were even lower, at 29 percent and 14 percent, respectively (Pew Research Center 2005). Based on these kinds of evaluations of the Bush administration, leaders in these countries and in other European states have little incentive to close the action gap since, as Prime Minister Blair discovered in the 2005 British elections, such actions may prove costly at home (Dumbrell 2008).

More recent poll results among European publics have not held more encouraging news for America. By April 2006, the percentage of Europeans with a favorable view had improved only modestly, a full three years after the start of the Iraq war. At that juncture, for example, 56 percent of Britons, 39 percent of the French, 37 percent of the Germans, and 23 percent of the Spanish expressed favorable opinions of the United States (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2006). In a BBC World Service poll reported in March 2007, the worldviews of America continued to be largely negative in a survey of twenty-six countries (excluding the United States). Among the nine European countries surveyed, the percentage of the public with a "mainly positive" view of the United States' influence ranged from 12 percent in Greece to 38 percent in Poland, with Germany (at 16), Russia (at 19), France (at 24), Portugal (at 29),
Great Britain (at 33), Hungary (at 29), and Italy (at 35) between those two (BBC World Service Poll 2007). Significantly, too, the German Marshall Fund’s “transatlantic trends” survey in 2007 reports that European support across a broad array of countries for American leadership had dropped to an average of 36 percent, a dramatic decline from a 64 percent level in 2002 (Reported in Applebaum 2007).

The implication of these results in the present global environment is (and has been) that the Bush administration will not be able to gain much traction or support for its policy without making some adjustments. If it does not, it will become increasingly isolated, unilateralist, and ineffective. Virtually by definition, as noted above, an anti-terrorism policy, reliant as it is on international cooperation at various levels, cannot be sustained without the attractiveness of America’s soft power and without the continued support of others. This kind of isolation is particularly problematic when a U.S. administration seeks to construct a new regional or global environment, let alone win Friedman’s war of ideas. Improving America’s soft power, especially among America’s principal allies, therefore, seems vital if these foreign policy gaps are to be addressed. A reduction in the degree of negative sentiment toward the United States generally and toward Bush personally must be sought. The more conciliatory U.S. policy messages—conveyed in 2007 by multiple messengers and some recent actions such as talks with Syria and Iran and a successful U.S.-EU summit—are a start in addressing this issue. And an undersecretary of state for public diplomacy represents a move in the direction. Yet, such actions will need to be sustained and amplified to produce any attitudinal change among European publics and beyond. Ultimately, though, policy change will be needed as well.

At home, the Bush administration also faces real constraints in several different, but often complementary, ways. Tangible structural constraints exist that preclude the use of the American military in other places at the present time. As the events of 9/11 and the results of the November 2004 presidential reelection have receded into the background, and as the full implications of the Democrats’ regaining control of the Congress in the 2006 elections sink in, congressional constraints on future military interventions by the Bush administration seem more likely. Looming over structural and institutional constraints faced by the Bush administration, and actually amplifying them, is the continuing situation in Iraq. Furthermore, public opinion is a stronger constraint than ever. Its effect is evidenced by the 47.4 average job approval rating for President Bush in his eighteenth quarter in office (April–July 2005), one of the lowest job approval ratings for recent presidents in comparable quarters (Jones 2005a) and it has dropped since then. By late 2005, for instance, Bush’s public approval rating fell below 40 percent briefly and re-
remained in the low 40 percent range at the end of the year (Moore 2005). In 2006, the president's approval stayed in the high 30 percent range during much of the year. In the second half of 2007, it hovered in the mid- to low 30 percent range (The Gallup Poll 2007).

Several policy implications emerge from these constraints for United States foreign policy. First, in the post-Iraq context, the hard power option is simply less available to the Bush administration due to existing structural constraints at home. At present, the American military has been thinly stretched to meet its current commitments. With 180,000 troops in Iraq and Afghanistan (and the prospect uncertain for a significant drawdown any time soon), with 500,000 military needed for training and infrastructure in the United States, with the reserves and national guard units spread out as well, and with more than 150,000 extra American troops scattered across the globe, the prospects of intervening in another state appear remote (Luttwak 2004). Most American military officials will privately acknowledge this point as well. In this sense, serious military actions against North Korea or Iran over their nuclear ambitions are not viable. To be sure, American air power might be utilized against Iran, but, as Hersh has reported (2008), this option does not meet with much enthusiasm with officials at the Pentagon (expect for the Air Force) or those in intelligence. Second, the American defense budget (total defense and veteran outlays) at about $600 billion for FY2007 also serves as a structural constraint on actions abroad. It is doubtful that there is congressional or public support for widening the American budget deficit to support increased defense spending. This is particularly so in view of competing and insistent demands for expenditure on health care, education, and reconstruction in the wake of hurricane Katrina and with the continuing opposition to U.S. military involvement in Iraq. While there may be resources for continuing Iraq funding as long as U.S. forces are there, there is unlikely to be strong congressional support for funding other military interventions.

Third, and relatedly, both Democratic and Republican members of Congress are likely to serve as a brake on new unilateralism and provide another incentive to seek to repair transatlantic divisions. Even prior to the Democrats gaining control of both chambers of Congress in the November 2006 elections, there were clear signs of congressional assertiveness on U.S.-European relations. While Republican members of the House of Representatives may have continued to support a more assertive and unilateral role for the United States in global affairs than the Senate prior to 2006, both chambers were skeptical of any attempt by the Bush administration to widen its agenda. It was the Senate, though, that was the most doubtful. In particular, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has (and continues) to express concerns about the administration's overall policy direction. Senator Richard Lugar (R. IN),
the Republican committee chair at the time (and now ranking minority member) was a persistent critic of the Bush administration's unilateralism and regularly called upon the administration to be more open with its plans and to pursue greater multilateral effort on Iraq and elsewhere. During Condoleezza Rice's confirmation hearing, Lugar pointedly called for "repairing alliances with longstanding friends in Europe" (U.S. Congress 2005). The ranking Democrat (at the time), Senator Joe Biden (D. DE), was equally blunt. He told Rice that "relations with many of our oldest friends are quite frankly scraping the bottom right now" (U.S. Congress 2005). These sentiments were echoed by other prominent Republican senators, Senator Chuck Hagel (R. NE) and Senator John McCain (R. AZ), and the leaders of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Senators Pat Roberts (R. KS) and Jay Rockefeller (D. WV).

Under Democratic control after the 2006 elections, congressional criticism of the Bush administration's policies has been amplified in both chambers, whether over relations with Europe or with other parts of the world. The initiatives launched by the House and Senate Democratic leaderships—setting a deadline for American involvement in Iraq, seeking action on global warming, and utilizing international institutions and allies more fully—comport well with European views and to some extent have constrained the decision latitude of the Bush administration. The Bush administration has largely resisted these efforts and has now wielded the veto pen on an Iraq funding bill, but congressional stances (including seeking to limit funding levels for Iraq or elsewhere) will continue to constrict the range of presidential actions.

Fourth, American public opinion on foreign policy is likely to constrain the Bush administration and encourage more policy cooperation with Europe (and elsewhere). Although President Bush successfully utilized anti-terrorism as the principal theme of his reelection campaign in November 2004, the American public remains skeptical of Bush's unilateralist foreign policy approach, especially in light of the difficulties in Iraq. Significantly, too, the public largely rejected the anti-terrorism approach in the 2006 congressional elections, instead voting against the Iraq war in large numbers. The result was Democratic control of each chamber of Congress. Furthermore, the public continues to support multilateralism and international institutions to address global problems.

To be sure, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the rallying of the American public behind the president gave the administration wide latitude on both multilateral and unilateral options dealing with terrorism. Both of those effects have now largely evaporated. The public's support for multilateral efforts has been repeatedly emphasized (Global Views 2004; Page with Bouton 2006) and Bush's approval rating continued to decline. By July 2005, only a third of the American public believed that the United States is "winning the war
against terrorism" (Carlson 2005), and by October and November 2005, 54 percent of the American people agreed that it was "a mistake . . . sending troops to Iraq" (Jones 2005b). By late May 2007, 76 percent of Americans saw things as going very badly in Iraq, and 61 percent of the public judged that the United States should not have pursued military action against Iraq (Sussman 2007). In such a difficult domestic political environment, the Bush administration has little room for maneuver on foreign policy, and the administration thus increasingly needs to reach out to its allies and friends with new initiatives that invite collaboration and, in turn, close the action gap with Europe.

Constraints on Europe

Similarly, Europe faces some domestic and international constraints likely to encourage narrowing the action or policy gap with the United States. On the domestic level writ large within Europe, whether the European Union can formulate a meaningful common foreign and security policy remains a vexed question. While the attempt to ratify a new European constitution has apparently been abandoned, a common EU foreign policy front to counterbalance that of the United States cannot be completely dismissed. Given the uncertainties currently over the direction of European integration, the European states and the European Union will more likely be compelled to face the reality of American global power and presence. In doing so, they will likely need to accommodate some American policies, even as they may seek to modify them. Senator Biden made the same point colorfully and bluntly after visiting Europe in January 2005. At Condoleezza Rice’s confirmation hearings, the senior committee Democrats shouted out for the benefit of Europeans, “[g]et over it. Get over it. President Bush is our president for the next four years. So get over it and start to act in your interest, Europe” (U.S. Congress 2005).

The need for accommodation was given some impetus with the incipient success of the administration’s democracy initiative in the Middle East and beyond at the beginning of its second term. While a fully functioning democracy in Iraq continues to be a substantial uncertainty, the fact that the post-Saddam state and civil society showed some progress toward democracy, however slight, probably serves as a prod to many European states. Being part of that initiative allows Europe to exercise some influence. After all, reasonably democratic elections have been held in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Palestinian Authority. Some movement has occurred with the removal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, and other democratic actions may be forthcoming in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. And European states played a part in these initiatives. The existence of nascent policy progress should be an incentive for Europe and America to work more closely together to close the action gap and to begin to
promote abroad those political values more compatible with their collective views.

Cooperation between Europe and America over Iran and its nuclear efforts reflects the kind of closure of the action gap that is needed. Ironically, the more President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran continues to pursue the nuclear issue and make inflammatory statements about Israel and the Holocaust, the more he assists in narrowing the conceptual and action gap between Europe and America on this issue, and the easier it will be for the United States and its European partners, particularly Britain, Germany, and France, to persuade the UN Security Council to act if diplomacy fails. By the end of 2005, leaders from Britain, France, Germany, and the European Union condemned these Iranian statements and moved toward a tougher stance toward Iran (Parillo 2006). While concerted UN actions remain rather uncertain two years later, U.S.-European cooperation continues on the Iranian question, as more sanctions were imposed by March 2007 and still more may be in the works. In September 2007, several countries (the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France, and Germany), with the support of the European Union agreed to delay further sanctions against Iran until November 2007. At the same time, Javier Solana warned that “we can’t wait forever” to see progress in international negotiations over Iran’s nuclear program. Otherwise, he continued, there is “a real risk” of additional sanctions (Brand 2007). In all, intra-alliance negotiations and policy cooperation appear to have become much easier and more continuous and represent mechanisms for closing conceptual and policy gaps between Europe and America.

Another incentive for European accommodation with the United States in the current environment is the need to serve as a limiting or moderating influence to U.S. power. This mediating role toward American power has long been familiar to Britain, if not to the rest of Europe. Beginning at the end of World War II, Britain sought both to temper American power and policy and to serve as an intermediary between the Soviet Union and the United States. While not always successful in doing so, it did introduce an important constraint for the United States to consider in its policy pursuits. In a sense, this kind of incentive goes to the heart of two important—and linked—questions for Europe: what is the best tactic for influencing America, and should Europe still seek to tie its political fortunes to the United States? Put differently, is it better to challenge a state or its policy (albeit partially) as a way to exercise influence? With the hard power differential favoring the United States and the soft power differential favoring Europe in the global arena presently, this is a genuine dilemma. On balance, it seems likely that Europe will want to remain tied to the United States in an effort to influence some of its key policies by embracing rather than continuing to confront them.
A European decision to remain tethered to the United States may have gotten a little easier with the change in leadership in several key European states within the last two years. With the election of Angela Merkel as German chancellor, Nicolas Sarkozy as the French president, and Gordon Brown replacing Tony Blair as British prime minister, the “pragmatists” have replaced “visionaries” in Europe, as one assessment put it (Schöfield 2007). Analysts view these new leaders as more interested in solving problems and less interested in engaging in confrontations with the United States. Their presence in leadership positions may give us a good measure of how much past differences in the transatlantic relationship turned on personalities and how much on policy differences. Furthermore, as a new president takes over in January 2009, these new European leaders will have a new administration fully prepared to start anew in addressing transatlantic ties.

A final incentive to close the policy gap with America is Europe’s general commitment to multilateralism to solve global problems, and particularly over the issue of terrorism. Not only does the modal view of the European Union embrace multilateralism as a standard for foreign policy action and as a means of gaining strength through numbers, this approach may also be the only viable means for creating a rule-based international order. While the Bush administration may well be a reluctant partner in such multilateral efforts, Europe as a whole has a collective incentive for pursuing just such an outcome. Furthermore, with the missteps by the Bush administration within global institutions over the past several years, the acrimony that it generated with its traditional friends, and the constraints on its foreign policy options at home and abroad, the administration may now be willing to follow the European lead in a way that it would not have done at the onset of the Iraqi invasion. The recommendations by The Iraq Study Group Report (2006) on a diplomatic initiative as “the way forward” to address the Iraq question would be exactly the kind of effort that would be a way to bridge United States and European differences on multilateralism.

The Road Ahead: Some Practical Steps

Let me conclude by both recognizing some lingering conceptual gaps between Europe and America and by discussing some practical steps to close the action gap between these global actors.

Neither the United States nor Europe is likely to abandon its fundamental tenets on foreign policy. It is unlikely that the United States under Bush will forego the unilateral option or even its preemptive option (Gaddis 2005), and it is equally unlikely that all European states will abandon their commitment
to international institutions or the pursuit of a more rule-based international order. Even so, the road ahead in European-American relations does not appear as rocky as it did a few years previously. Nevertheless, there are some practical steps that each side might undertake that may improve cooperation in the years ahead. Some are already underway, but more could be done.

As an example, John Lewis Gaddis (2005) has captured the essential imperative for the Bush administration to exercise greater tact in its dealings with other countries. Gaddis is surely right in offering this advice. The administration needs to reduce its swagger, both in its step and in its rhetoric in discussing terrorism ("either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists," for example). While this prescription is easy to make, it is much harder to implement for an administration that views any concession as a sign of weakness. Arguably, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has had more success than Secretary of State Colin Powell in offering a new diplomatic approach. The resignation of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his replacement by the noticeably less abrasive Robert Gates also appears to be a positive step, as does the abandonment of the rhetorical affronts of a few years ago ("freedom fries" rather than "French fries" and the demarcation of Europe into "Old Europe" and "New Europe"). Equally important, the Bush administration might seek to evoke, not impose, its policy on its allies, much in the way that it seeks to evoke democracy abroad. At the very least, it might move toward policies that would invite the Europeans to join the United States in policy pursuits, rather than issuing policy dicta that can only foster resentment. In following this approach, the Bush administration will have a better chance of closing the foreign policy action gap, if not the conceptual gap, with its European friends.

European policymakers might follow Gaddis's prescription as well. As satisfying as it may be in the short run, some of the anti-Bush rhetoric is excessive and ultimately redundant in terms of addressing the very serious issue of international terrorism. Such rhetoric does not connote an appropriate level of tact among friends (or even adversaries), and it, too, sours the relationship, in much the same way as Bush's Texas swagger. Similarly, the European states must be equally willing to embrace some compromises on policy. While European policymakers need not yield on principle, adopting more nuanced policy options might be more practical. With respect to U.S. policymaking toward Europe (and elsewhere), President Bush might follow candidate Bush when, in his debate with Vice President Al Gore in 2000, he called for an American foreign policy with more "humility." And European policymakers may do the same in turn.

In addition, both Europe and the United States might profit from recognizing mutually beneficial interdependence. Drozdiak (2007) reminds us of
the ample goodwill and interdependence that still exist between Europe and America in several key areas. These connections could and should be given more substantial recognition and utilized to bolster and stabilize future U.S.-European ties. Drozdiak notes that while some anti-American sentiment exists in Europe, such sentiments have not achieved mainstream acceptability. Candidates favorable to the United States have won elections in key nations, as noted earlier. In addition, Europeans continue to seek job and career opportunities in the United States (and vice versa), and America continues to be admired by many Europeans. Equally, without dismissing India and China as emerging economic powers, Europe and America remain "the twin turbines of the global economy," with as much as 60 percent of trade and investment worldwide, despite the press of globalization. This tie cements transatlantic interdependence. Third, America's next president, whether Democrat or Republican, has a real opportunity to mend the relationship and build for the future, if, as Drozdiak concludes, "he or she can infuse a new sense of purpose and destiny" into the transatlantic relationship.

Tensions between America and European states are, of course, not new. Recall Henry Kissinger's book, A Troubled Partnership (1965). The issue that he dealt with over forty years ago is the same that confronts us presently. Then, as now, the Atlantic relationship had its troubles, but both parties found a way to make the relationship work. It can again.

Notes

1. To be sure, Snyder uses the United States and some European states to illustrate these different theoretical approaches, but he does not place either of the countries (or set of countries) solely in one theoretical location.

2. Once again, I reiterate the risks and dangers of grouping all of Europe or even the European Union together. My assessment nevertheless generally depicts the modal view of these countries.


References


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