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German Foreign Policy and the War on Iraq: Anti-Americanism, Pacifism or Emancipation?

TUOMAS FORSBERG*

Department of Political Science, University of Helsinki, Finland

The clash between Berlin and Washington over the war on Iraq in 2002–03 came as a surprise to the community of scholars and analysts watching German foreign policy and transatlantic relations. Attempts to explain German behaviour have mostly focused on either the anti-American or the pacifist nature of German society. There is some relevance in these explanations, but they poorly explain the timing of the change, its sudden emergence and its focus on the Iraq issue. This article argues that the most important driving force behind the change was neither anti-Americanism nor pacifism, but rather Germany's political emancipation. The Germans had been gradually growing into their role as a leading power in Europe that is willing to take on greater international responsibility. When Berlin felt that it was not consulted in the decisionmaking process, it reacted strongly. The question at stake was the nature of the world order and the relations of the USA to its allies, and no longer the single issue of Iraq.

Keywords Germany • foreign policy • security • transatlantic relations • use of force • the United States

Are the Germans Anti-American, Anti-War or Just German?

GERMANY'S DECISION NOT TO SUPPORT the US-led war on Iraq in 2003 (Operation Iraqi Freedom) and to join the 'axis of unwilling' with France and Russia was typically depicted both as a re-emergence of the country's deep-rooted anti-Americanism and as a continuation of its postwar pacifist tradition. Although these two views cannot be dismissed entirely, the picture that they transmit is too simple and contradictory if it is not sufficiently qualified. Instead, I will claim that Germany opposed the war in Iraq as strongly as it did mainly because it was not



convinced that the war would be the right solution to deal with the Iraq problem and because it felt Germany was ignored by the United States.

Germany's decision to stay out of the war on Iraq was eased by the deep public mistrust of US foreign policy within the country, but it reflected more a dislike of the Bush administration and was directed towards a particular aspect of its policies rather than being a wholesale rejection of a partnership with the United States. Pacifism certainly still shapes German foreign policy discourse and has ideological currency in particular in the ranks of the governing Social Democrats and the Greens, but it did not prevent Germany from actively supporting Operation Allied Harmony in Kosovo or Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Antiwar sentiment re-emerged before the war on Iraq because the case against the war was easier to make in the absence of proof of the existence of weapons of mass destruction, or of links to Al-Qaeda and the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Indeed, in the post-Cold War era, Germany had not become more anti-American as such, nor more pacifist, but more self-conscious about its role in international politics in general. This process of emancipation did not mean that Germany's commitment to multilateralism or international institutions – such as the UN, NATO or the EU – had eroded. On the contrary, Germany was willing to both cause and accommodate political conflicts to preserve the strength of those institutions.

If the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the Global War on Terror opened a new era in world politics, then Germany's reaction to these events can certainly be seen as the first real test of its post-unification foreign policy, in particular because Chancellor Helmut Kohl had guaranteed a degree of continuity in Germany's foreign policy until the end of the 1990s. It was only then that the 'Bonner Republic' became a 'Berliner Republic' in 1998, as symbolized by the move of the capital and underlined by the shift of political leadership to a new postwar generation led by Gerhard Schröder and Joschka Fischer. Therefore, I will start this article by reviewing the 1990s literature on German foreign policy change and expectations thereof. Germany's policy was often described as reflecting a 'new assertiveness', 'emancipation' or 'normalization', but there was no clear picture of what these concepts could entail in practice.

The article will then reconstruct the diplomatic split between Berlin and Washington that occurred in 2002–03, and further clarify why Germany chose to oppose the war on Iraq (Hacke, 2003; Harnisch, 2004; Buras & Longhurst, 2004; Szabo, 2004). I will argue that Germany's foreign policy in the context of the war on Iraq can be seen as a manifestation of its 'emancipation' – a new sense of self-esteem and independence. Yet, this emancipation from the restrictions of the Cold War does not mean the triumph of anti-Americanism leading to the end of the *Westbindung* (integration with the West); rather, the new German assertiveness is better understood as a desire to not only be part of the West but also to define what

'the West' is. In questions of war and peace, it means neither a consolidation of pacifism nor a new militarization, but rather the ability to pick and choose those wars that it regards as necessary and justified in a manner that is compatible with the notion of a 'civilian power'.

Explaining the Unexpected in German Foreign Policy

German unification and the end of the Cold War sparked a multifaceted debate over the future course of German foreign policy. At the one end of the spectrum were those who predicted – and usually feared – the re-emergence of a 'Fourth Reich', an economically strong, culturally nationalist, politically assertive and militarily geared Germany. At the other end were those who predicted that changes in Germany's status and the international environment would not bring about any major transformation of Germany's foreign policy. Germany would stick to its multilateral, institution-loyal, war-averse ideology of *Einbindung* (binding), and would be more occupied with domestic problems than with projecting its power abroad.

Theoretically, the first view regarding the new German assertiveness was backed by structuralist neorealist accounts of the need for national self-help in an anarchical environment and geopolitical analyses of Germany's position in the middle of Europe (Mearsheimer, 1990; Zimmer, 1997; Baumann, Rittberger & Wagner, 1999), or alternatively – although seldom explicitly in scientific forums – by deep-structuralist cultural or even genetic views about the German national character (Saña, 1990). The second view rested both on institutional theory, underlining the binding and transformative force of international society and its norms, and on constructivist theory, emphasizing the role of the lessons of history in shaping German strategic culture (Berger, 1997; Banchoff, 1999; Duffield, 1999).

In Germany, discussion of German foreign policy focused on the notions of 'normalization' and 'civilian power'. 'Normalization' meant that Germany would emancipate itself from the postwar restrictions on its international behaviour and be like the other large Western powers. It would act more often out of self-interest, but it would not return to its historical *Sonderweg* (special path) and become once again an international 'trouble-maker' (McAdams, 1997; Forsberg, 2000). The concept of 'civilian power' was applied to Germany to explain its nature as a strong international power that was willing to respect international law and understood the necessity of cooperation (Maull, 1990–91; Tewes, 1997). Civilian power, however, did not stand in a direct opposition to military power. Not only could civilian powers resort to military self-defence, they could also foster common aims through military means. The distinctive factor, however, was that a civilian

power did not look for unilateral military options. Even if it was believed that international politics was undergoing a radical change after the end of the Cold War with the declining use of military force and the ascendancy of shared democratic values and norms, the two notions of 'normalization' and 'civilian power' were not necessarily mutually exclusive.

In retrospect, it is possible to postulate the inevitability of a conflict between Germany and the United States from both 'normalization' and 'civilian power' perspectives. Normalization could have implied a renewed conflict over power, whereas civilian power could have led into a conflict with the United States over values. Yet the academic literature on German foreign policy failed to foresee the deterioration of German-US relations.

On the contrary, most analyses of German foreign policy conducted since the early 1990s supported the view that continuity would prevail. Volker Rittberger & Wolfgang Wagner (2001), for example, concluded in their major systematic study of German foreign policy that it was marked by considerable continuity and that a new kind of assertiveness was more visible in the economic area than in security policy. Statements about trends within future German policy were almost unanimous in their understanding that German foreign policy would be more of the same, particularly with regard to Germany's relations with the United States. Gunther Hellmann (1996), for example, saw the 'normalization nationalists' as the most challenging although relatively marginal school of thought in the German foreign policy discourse. Moreover, despite their explicit wish to normalize German foreign policy and resist deeper European integration, Hellmann (1996: 19) argued that 'there seems to be an agreement among normalization-nationalists about the importance of the good relations with the United States'. Henning Tewes (2002: 50), who regarded Germany as a 'civilian power', contended that 'the role of the Atlanticist would continue to predominate over that of the Gaullists'. Indeed, literature analysing or predicting change, the crisis in transatlantic relations or rising anti-Americanism in German foreign policy emerged only after the conflict between the two states (Murphy & Johnson, 2004; Maull, 2004; Risse, 2004).

Because of both Schröder's and Fischer's backgrounds in the 1968 radical student movement and the general leaning of the cadres of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Greens towards pacifism, some doubts were expressed in the media immediately after the government was formed that the new coalition would be more critical of the United States than its predecessor and weaken Germany's commitment to NATO. These fears, however, did not materialize. Fischer avoided open diplomatic conflict and stepped back from the earlier 'pacifist' demands of the traditional Green platform (*Die Welt*, 1999). The first real test of the new government's foreign and security policy orientation was the Kosovo war, which seemed to dispel all doubts about Germany's disloyalty to NATO. With the Clinton administra-

tion, there were disagreements over a few issues (such as US plans for missile defence), but any talk of a crisis seemed exaggerated (Holbrook, 2000; Chrobog, 2000). On the contrary, Max Otte (2000: 218) concluded that 'under Schröder, Germany was even more ready to demonstrate solidarity with the United States than under Kohl'.

Despite his radical past, Foreign Minister Fischer was depicted as 'Adenauer's grandson' because he advocated a strong commitment to old doctrines. For Fischer (1994, 1998), the continuity of 'Atlanticism' was one of the basic pillars of Germany's foreign policy. He argued that a close relationship with the United States was needed not only for security reasons but also to legitimate German democracy. Chancellor Schröder (1999: 70) was more outspoken in articulating Germany's emancipation from the past and was soon after his inauguration to declare that German foreign policy was to follow 'enlightened self-interest'. However, during the first four-year term of the Red-Green coalition, there was little in German foreign policy that could be seen as either 'red' or 'green' (Wood, 2002; Meiers, 2002; Marsh, 2002).

Although many people expected change in German foreign policy after unification, the continuity thesis became the dominant approach. Constructivist perspectives could easily explain continuity in German foreign policy on the basis of postwar cultural structures. Yet, the constructivist literature now faces another test. Do cultural factors also explain the change in German policy towards the United States? If the cultural structures were so persistent that they survived the end of the Cold War, why did they suddenly cause change ten years after unification?

The War on Iraq and German Foreign Policy

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 first seemed to confirm Germany's position as a major partner and loyal ally of the United States. Immediately after the attacks, Schröder (2001c) promised 'unlimited solidarity' in all necessary measures. A week later, though, he qualified this promise by declaring that Germany was willing to accept risks – including military risks – but not adventures (Schröder, 2001d). He also reminded the USA of the importance of information and consultation within the obligations of alliance. These reservations, however, did not seem particularly significant, as Schröder was willing to support the US-led war on terror and to participate in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Indeed, when the chancellor declared that Germany had entered a new phase in its history and was willing and able to use military force abroad in defence of freedom and human rights, it seemed that Germany's culture of pacifism and its self-imposed constraints on engaging in foreign military operations were being eroded further. A

number of Social Democrats and Greens opposed what they saw as further militarization of German foreign policy and demanded a pause in the bombing campaign in Afghanistan for humanitarian reasons, but Schröder pushed his line through and was able to reinforce his position as the leader of foreign policy (Erlanger, 2001).

The war on Iraq began to emerge onto the political agenda in the course of 2002, particularly after US President George W. Bush's 'State of the Union' address, in which he declared Iraq to be part of an 'axis of evil'. Germans, like most other Europeans, found the concept of three different states forming an axis unfortunate and were critical of the idea of invading Iraq. They were also increasingly concerned that the views of allies were being dismissed in Washington. Fischer (2002a) warned the US administration that European allies did not want to be treated like satellite states. Even the Christian Democrats warned that 'it cannot be that you act on your own and we trot along afterwards' (Erlanger, 2002). At this point, however, Schröder remained accommodative and argued that 'we should not slip back into the old mistrust of the superpower and the Bush administration' (Ford, 2002). Karsten Voigt (2002), coordinator of German-US relations at the foreign ministry, argued that Bush was no cowboy and that Washington would take the views of the Europeans into account. Indeed, when Bush visited Germany in May 2002, he made his case against Iraq but gave reassurances that he would not act without consultation with allies. Moreover, it was agreed that Bush would not start preparations for war before the German elections, and Schröder would not ride on the antiwar issue during his election campaign (Gordon & Shapiro, 2004: 109).

The issue of the war on Iraq bounced back onto the agenda when US newspapers began to circulate stories about war plans for Iraq: already at the beginning of June 2002, Bush (2002) had declared in his West Point speech that 'we must take the battle to the enemy' and 'be ready for preemptive action'. This speculation was immediately picked up by Schröder's campaign team, as the issue of war with Iraq was identified as a potential vehicle with which the chancellor could still win the elections against the odds of projected results. Public opinion polls showed that an overwhelming majority of Germans opposed the war. This mattered especially in former East Germany, where the SPD had to compete with the PDS, the former socialist party of the German Democratic Republic. When US Vice-President Dick Cheney delivered a strong appeal for a preemptive regime change in August, the Iraq war became the dominant theme of the Bundestag elections (Chandler, 2003).

Immediately after the start of the German election campaign in August 2002, Schröder stated explicitly that he was not going to support a war on Iraq. He argued that it was a mistake to think about military intervention and – returning to the message of his September 2001 warnings – declared that

Germany was not willing to play with war and to participate in military adventures (*tageszeitung*, 2002). In an unusually patriotic declaration of his vision of Germany, Schröder (2002a) announced his faith in German society and advocated a 'German way' that reminded many of the old German *Sonderweg* between East and West. Fischer was also critical of the war on Iraq, describing it as a risky decision (though he was careful to formulate his positions diplomatically).

Schröder's political stance against the war on Iraq – as well as his rhetoric – put Washington on the alert, but the real uproar was caused by Justice Minister Hertha Däubler-Gmelin's gaffe in a small local campaign event that was subsequently reported worldwide. Däubler-Gmelin suggested that Bush's preparation for war was comparable to Hitler's policy of shifting attention from domestic problems to international ones. The insult was simply too much for Washington: the White House announced that German-US relations were poisoned. Schröder wrote to Bush, explaining that he believed the words of his minister had been wrongly reported, but he did not apologize. Bush was offended: he did not congratulate Schröder on the latter's election victory and refused to talk to him at international meetings.

While the German government refrained from aggravating the issue, it was not prepared to make any U-turns in its assessment of the Iraq war. In December, Fischer (2002c) continued to keep open the possibility that Germany might eventually lend political support to the war, and he stated that nobody could know how Germany would vote in the Security Council. But in January, a few weeks later, Schröder declared at a regional election rally in Goslar that Germany would not support a UN resolution legitimizing the war on Iraq (*Die Welt*, 2003a). Schröder's statement seemed to come as a surprise to Fischer, who disagreed with any categorical 'no' to the war.

Schröder's statement triggered a further episode in the transatlantic drama, when US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld lumped Germany together with France as 'a problem', arguing that they did not represent the whole of Europe but belonged to the 'old Europe'. Rumsfeld also grouped Germany together with Libya and Cuba, describing all three as countries that were not willing to help the USA, thereby failing to acknowledge Germany's solid commitment to the Global War on Terrorism in Afghanistan and Kuwait, as well as the continuous support given to US bases in Germany. Rumsfeld's comments were dismissed by the German government, and they also created irritation among traditionally US-friendly circles (Ford, 2002).

Fischer (2003) defended the German stance against the war in an emotional speech delivered at the annual Munich security conference. In the presence of Donald Rumsfeld, he declared that he was not convinced of the case for the war on Iraq: 'Why now?' In Fischer's view, the more important task in the Middle East was to promote reconciliation between the Israelis and the Palestinians. With regard to the war on Iraq, he reiterated that diplomatic

means had not been exhausted and argued that there should be no automatism leading to the use of military force. At the same time, Schröder (2003a) seemed to raise the stakes, defining the issue of Iraq as the issue of the fate of the future world order: will decisions be made multilaterally or not?

To make matters worse, Germany – together with France and Belgium – blocked a request for the delivery of NATO assistance to Turkey, seeking to avoid giving the impression that preparations were being made for war. In addition, Germany took part in a summit meeting with France, Belgium and Luxembourg in April 2003, making proposals for further development of an autonomous European defence. Although Germany promised to support Turkey bilaterally and was eventually willing to end the week-long standoff within NATO, Germany's attitude was widely seen as a further sign of its estrangement from the United States. Similarly, the four nations' summit was criticized by the United States, in particular because it seemed to represent an anti-US declaration. Finally, Schröder lined up with French President Jacques Chirac and Russian President Vladimir Putin to issue a common statement on the eve of the war pleading for the continuation of the UN inspections.

The active phase of the Iraqi war was over by late April 2003, when US forces entered Baghdad and occupied the capital city. Germany did not congratulate the USA and the coalition on its victory, but stated that it favoured the defeat of Saddam Hussein's regime. Germany was still concerned about the reactions of the Arab world and the difficulty of managing an occupation, but it toned down its criticism and announced that it was willing to participate in the reconstruction of Iraq (*Die Welt*, 2003c). In May, Schröder stressed the importance of good transatlantic relations and the existence of common values and interests despite the disagreements over Iraq (*Handelsblatt*, 2003). Germany wished for a greater UN role in postwar Iraq and a clear timetable for restoring Iraqi sovereignty, but was ready to support Bush's and Blair's plan to lift sanctions against Iraq in the UN Security Council.

Tensions between Berlin and Washington seemed to ease quickly and, after a year of frozen personal relations, Bush and Schröder met in September 2003 in New York. Both parties stated that they had put their mutual disagreements behind them (*Die Welt*, 2003c). In a conciliatory spirit, Bush commented that he now understood that the German chancellor had been in the midst of an election campaign prior to the war and that the Germans are pacifists at the core (*Die Welt*, 2003d).

In the aftermath of the Iraq war, Germany was ready to restore relations with Washington, but it was not willing to admit that it should have supported the war from the beginning. In February 2004, Fischer (2004) argued at the Munich Security Conference that he was still not convinced of the validity of the reasons for the war, but suggested that the debate had been

over tactics, not goals. He emphasized reconciliation of differences, believing that there was a need to focus on future cooperation rather than on past problems. Thus, although tensions were mitigated, fundamental policy dilemmas remained. These surfaced, for example, at the NATO summit in Istanbul in June 2004, where Germany was unwilling to support an expansion of NATO's role in Iraq as the United States had hoped. It was possible to talk about normalization of German-US relations, but 'normality' was no longer what it used to be before the war (Bernstein, 2004).

Anti-Americanism, Pacifism and Emancipation

Let me now return to the theme of what explains Germany's behaviour in relation to the war on Iraq, keeping in mind the premise that we should take into account the role of cultural and psychological factors in explaining the transatlantic conflict (Kalberg, 2003). Although it is possible to explain German foreign policy using realist and liberal approaches, constructivist explanations seem particularly relevant since European countries were so divided in their response to the war (Rittberger, 2003). But what are the cultural factors that could explain Germany's reactions to the war on Iraq and the deterioration of German-US relations? Three cultural explanations can be given for Germany's behaviour. Some emphasize the anti-Americanism of Germans, others their pacifism, and a third group their growing emancipation and self-assurance. I will look at each of these in turn, but conclude that the third factor seems to have the strongest explanatory power, at least in this specific case.

Many political commentators and analysts have argued that Germany's unwillingness to support the war on Iraq was based on strong anti-American sentiment (Berman, 2004; Berendse, 2003; Markovits, 2004). 'Anti-Americanism', of course, is a contested and politically loaded concept, insofar as it is defined as a prejudice that is based on ignorance, not justified criticism. What is indisputable is that the image of the USA deteriorated radically after 9/11 in Germany. While nearly 80% of Germans had a positive opinion of the United States in 1999, by summer 2002 the figure was down to 61%, and in spring 2003 only 23% of Germans subscribed to a favourable view of the USA. The image of the United States had somewhat improved by spring 2004, but still remained more negative than positive. At the same time, a majority of Germans supported the US-led war on terrorism, but the level of support had decreased from 70% in 2002 to 55% in 2004 (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2004).

However, public opinion ratings as such prove nothing about cause and consequence. On the contrary, it seems that the US decision to go to war with

Iraq explains the increase of negative feelings towards the USA, rather than anti-Americanism explaining opposition to the war in Germany (Noelle, 2003). The swing in public opinion reflected dissatisfaction with the Bush administration and its policies, not anti-Americanism as such. Indeed, public opinion polls showed that Americans were not hated as a nation or people (Mertes, 2004). Moreover, as Elizabeth Pond (2004), a long-time journalist based in Germany, witnessed, 'to an American who lived in Germany during the massive antimissile demonstrations in the 1980s what was new about the brief German antiwar marches of 2003 was precisely the effort of protesters to differentiate between their opposition to the Iraq war and their affection for the United States'. In Pond's view, Schröder's opposition to the war set off no wave of popular anti-Americanism in Germany. On the contrary, the chancellor's policy was widely criticized for isolating Germany.

There are many who think that anti-Americanism is a persistent part of German culture. Dan Diner (2002), for example, has argued that German anti-Americanism has deep historical roots and is a reflection of German anti-Semitism. However, Diner's evidence for contemporary anti-Americanism in Germany remains fragmented. Moreover, the fact that parts of the cultural elite in Germany were vocally 'anti-American' does not explain the policy change that took place, because such sentiments were expressed frequently by the same groups long before the war on Iraq. Furthermore, ignorant and offensive anti-Americanism – such as advocacy of the conspiracy theories about 9/11 that were supported by a considerable number of Germans – was firmly resisted by those opinion leaders that were otherwise critical of Bush and the war on Iraq (*Der Spiegel*, 2003).

It is true that the political elite adopted a more critical stance towards the USA than previously, and 2002 was therefore different from earlier transatlantic clashes. The primary example of this critical approach was the Hitler–Bush comparison made by Däubler-Gmelin. Yet, the overall negative response to Däubler-Gmelin's utterance reveals far more about the attitudes of the political elite than the original remarks themselves. Of course, in relation to this incident, Schröder's sin was that he did not fire his minister immediately but tried to argue that the reported statement was a misunderstanding. Indeed, Schröder (2001a) has occasionally adopted what can be seen as anti-American rhetoric himself, declaring for example that he disliked 'American conditions' in the labour market. Fischer, for his part, was never caught using anti-American rhetoric before and during the war on Iraq. In one interview (Fischer, 2002b), he noted that his image of America remained contradictory but insisted that the positive sides were clearly dominant.

It is equally difficult to read the German participation in the strengthening of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) as a sign of its anti-

American orientation. Plans for the ESDP dated back long before the Bush administration and its war on Iraq, and the timing for the meeting in April 2003 was more an unfortunate coincidence than a deliberate protest. Schröder gave assurances that the plan was not directed against NATO, and both he and Fischer repeatedly claimed that the problem was not that they had 'too much of America, but too little of Europe in NATO' (*Financial Times Deutschland*, 2003). Indeed, most vocal critics of the USA have not sought a strong profile as supporters of the ESDP. In contrast, attempts to back up the ESDP through 'enhanced cooperation' were championed by the Christian Democratic Union's Wolfgang Schäuble (2003), for example, who supported the war in Iraq and has continuously stressed the importance of the transatlantic relationship: in Schäuble's view, every attempt to unify Europe against the United States will fail.

German behaviour over the war on Iraq has also been explained through reference to a second aspect of German political culture, namely pacifism or a general reluctance to use force and support offensive warfare. As Risse (2004) has suggested, the disagreement with the United States can be explained by Germany's commitment to being a civilian power. Public opinion in Germany remained war averse: only two out of five Germans agreed with the statement that war is sometimes necessary to obtain justice, whereas more than four out of five agreed with the statement in the United States (*Transatlantic Trends*, 2003). It is undeniable that German public opinion strongly supported Schröder's decision not to be involved in the war, but the main point was the issue of legality: Four out of five Germans thought that UN approval should be secured before the use of military force to deal with an international threat (*Pew Global Attitudes Project*, 2004). This is exemplified in the fact that there was little support within public opinion for a unilateral 'no' to the war regardless of the decision of the UN, because it was feared that such a stance would weaken the UN and isolate Germany.

An antiwar platform thus helped Schröder to win the elections in September 2002, but did pacifism guide Schröder's decisionmaking afterwards? In the Bundestag before the war, Schröder (2003a) defended his policy on Iraq by arguing that 'no realpolitik and no security doctrine could lead surreptitiously to our coming to regard war as a normal instrument of politics'. But, at the same time, Schröder (2003b) explained in an interview with *Stern* that German participation in the war was not a legal or moral question, but rather a political question: he simply believed that the threat constituted by Iraq was not great enough to provide a reason for a military intervention. In March, he further declared that the extent of the threat posed by Iraq did not justify a war in which thousands of innocent people would die (*Die Welt*, 2003b). The government did not adopt a clear stance on whether the war was legal or not.

Indeed, Germany's 'pacifism' was not absolute, but was strongly related to

the war on Iraq. In Afghanistan, Germany bolstered its role and assumed joint command of the ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) operation in February 2003. It also decided to support (although with a very small military input) the ESDP Operation Artemis in Congo in July. Indeed, Germany was engaged in a number of military operations abroad, deploying almost 10,000 men in total (Becher, 2004). Therefore, it is difficult to believe that 'pacifism' or antiwar sentiment as such would have led to strong opposition by the German government to the war on Iraq, though there were a number of different perceptions regarding the utility of the war.

For this reason, alternative explanations for Germany's behaviour are in order. The argument of this article is that Germany's actions can best be understood in terms of the country's political emancipation, its growing self-image as a great power and its resistance to the US vision of a unipolar world. The underlying factor was not so much dislike of the USA and its values, but a defensive reaction to the USA's neglect of its allies. The main issue at stake was not whether or not to attack Iraq, but whether Washington would pay attention to what Berlin said. The growing emancipation of German foreign policy manifested itself in the German chancellor's conviction that he could not follow the USA unconditionally. Schröder certainly did not view Bush as a unilateral policymaker from the beginning. In early 2001, he regarded the new administration as self-confident but open to dialogue (Schröder, 2001a). This was, of course, more a political message to Washington than a statement of fact, but before his inauguration Bush himself had also described his foreign policy as 'humble' (Sanger, 2000).

Schröder changed his opinion about the USA and its willingness to listen to its allies in the summer of 2002. Indeed, it became a key slogan for Schröder that the Europeans should be able to stand eye to eye – '*gleiche Augenhöhe*' – as the Americans (Blome, 2003). This expression did not mean achieving parity or a balance with the USA, but rather referred to a need to be recognized, consulted, respected and taken seriously as partners. Referring to the August 2002 speech by Dick Cheney that strongly advocated regime change in Iraq, Schröder (2002c) complained that 'that is why it is just not good enough if I learn from the American press about a speech which clearly states: We are going to do it, no matter what the world or our allies think. That is no way to treat others.' He argued that 'the duty of friends is not just to agree with everything, but to say: "We disagree on this point"'. Other criticism of the United States that was usually seen as indicative of anti-Americanism – such as SPD politician Ludwig Stiegler's remark that US Ambassador Daniel Coats behaved like the Soviet ambassador to the former GDR – often focused on this aspect of arrogance in US foreign policy. Even former chancellor Kohl (2003), who criticized Schröder and Fischer for their anti-Americanism, shared the view that Washington had paid too little attention to European sensibilities and had acted like a 'new Rome'.

All the same, when Schröder began to articulate his position against the war, he did not expect that it would cause a major rift in German–US relations, believing rather that good friends could disagree on occasion. His promise of ‘unrestrained solidarity’ after 9/11 did not mean *carte blanche* for Washington. Having secured Germany’s support for the wars in Kosovo and Afghanistan, thereby risking the popularity of his government, Schröder (2002b) believed that he could afford to differ from Washington on the question of Iraq. Perhaps the issue became even more important exactly because he would lose credibility if he were to always support the USA in its foreign wars. In a major speech at the Bundestag during the election campaign, Schröder (2002d) declared that ‘the existential questions for the nation would be decided in Berlin and nowhere else’. It is not clear whether Schröder or his speechwriters were familiar with the work of German anti-liberal political scientist Carl Schmitt, but this position was exactly what Schmitt (1996: 60) had said about the state: ‘if it no longer has the ability or the will to separate between friends and foes, it ceases to exist politically’. The more the United States tried to undermine this freedom, the more important was it for Schröder to keep his head. However, he wanted to avoid personalization of the dispute, as well as its spilling over to other issues. In Christopher Bertram’s (2003) view, he would remain a ‘correct ally’, but no more than that.

Public opinion clearly supported a more assertive role for Germany in fostering its interests and wanted Germany to play a more active role in international affairs, particularly within a European framework (Hellmann & Enskat, 2004). The public rejected US claims to a unipolar world order and believed that the United States did not take into account the interests of Germany when making international policy decisions – whereas before the war a majority of Germans believed it did (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2004). Such tendencies indicate a strong psychological element of emancipation, which became visible during the crisis over Iraq.

Conclusions: Enhanced German Self-Consciousness

The clash between Berlin and Washington over the war in Iraq in 2002–03 came as a surprise to the community of scholars and analysts watching German foreign policy and transatlantic relations. Following unification and the end of the Cold War, German foreign policy seemed to be characterized by considerable continuity, despite the dramatic changes in power relations, the subsequent move of the capital to Berlin and the change of government into the Red–Green coalition run by the postwar generation. Most attempts to explain German behaviour in the war on Iraq have focused on either the anti-American or the pacifist nature of German society. However, while such

explanations have some relevance, they fail to explain sufficiently well the timing of the change, its sudden emergence and its focus on the Iraq issue.

In this article, I have argued that the most important driving force behind the change in German–US relations was neither anti-Americanism nor pacifism, but rather Germany's political emancipation. The Germans had been gradually growing into their role as a leading power in Europe that was willing to take on greater international responsibility. Germany also expected that others – most importantly, the United States – would listen to its concerns when making crucial decisions about peace and war. When Berlin felt that it was not being consulted in the decisionmaking process, it reacted strongly. Germany could not simply follow the US position when it felt that it had had no opportunity to shape it. The question at stake was the nature of the world order and the USA's relation to its allies, no longer the single issue of Iraq.

The German position on the war on Iraq emerged in an ad hoc fashion, rather than as a result of conscious strategic rethinking. An important accidental factor was the timing of the Bundestag elections. Without the election campaign, Schröder might have tried to steer a course much closer to the United States – or he might at least have refrained from strong criticism and rigid positions. Once the disagreements started, however, they escalated owing to the dynamics of mutual distrust, frustration and misunderstanding. Yet, it would be wrong to conclude that the dispute over Iraq was purely accidental. Elements of a rift in transatlantic relations were growing already before the war, and while the terrorist attacks of 9/11 slowed this development, they could not stop it completely. Therefore, it was only a matter of time when, over what issue and how strongly a dispute between Berlin and Washington would emerge.

Germany's willingness to adopt a more accommodating position and to repair its relationship with the USA shows that its foreign policy was not driven by any fundamental anti-Americanism. Germans have become more sceptical of the United States and its leadership, but it would be wrong to conclude that Germans opposed the war because they did not like the United States. While Germany still places considerable emphasis on legal and practical restrictions on the use of force in international politics, and the transformation of the Bundeswehr has been a slow process, these obstacles have not prevented Germany from supporting various foreign interventions – both politically and militarily.

The origins of the transatlantic clash between Germany and the USA lie in the different expectations the two countries had of each other. After 9/11, Washington made increasing demands for loyalty and support, whereas the new 'Berliner Republic' required more recognition and consultations in return for its support than had previously been the case. The gap between these expectations was narrowed through diplomatic efforts to restore

relations and the situation subsequently improved. Germany has not ceased to uphold the importance of close transatlantic bonds, but now sets more conditions for a functioning relationship than before. The clash over Iraq between Berlin and Washington may already have become part of history, but its legacy will remain an enhanced German self-consciousness in international affairs.

* Dr Tuomas Forsberg is currently Acting Professor of World Politics at the University of Helsinki. Previously, he held the position of Professor of Western European Security Studies at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Between 1998 and 2002 he worked as Acting Director and Senior Researcher at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs. He received his PhD from the University of Wales, Aberystwyth in 1998. E-mail: tuomas.forsberg@helsinki.fi.

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