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The German Perception of the United States since September 11 and the European Context

When George W. Bush visited Berlin in May 2002, he attracted large and hostile demonstrations. The recent war in Afghanistan had been very unpopular in Germany and elsewhere in Western Europe, amplifying a diffuse anti-Americanism associated with various policy decisions: the U.S. rejection of the Kyoto Treaty, the opposition to the International Criminal Court, and other aspects of U.S. foreign policy, especially support for Israel. Yet when Bush visited several formerly Communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe during the subsequent fall, his visit elicited friendly, pro-American crowds, especially in Vilnius and Bucharest.

It would be difficult to argue that American policies had changed in the interim between the two visits in a way that could explain a shift in the foreign perception of the United States. On the contrary, what is clearly at stake is the phenomenon of how the United States is viewed differently in different countries. In other words, the perception of the United States is not, or not only, a function of the external factor of the character of American policy. Rather, the perception of the United States in a particular country is very much framed by internal factors, sets of local circumstances, cultural legacies, and political habits.

It is therefore plausible to surmise that the warm reception accorded Bush in the formerly Communist capitals reflected the local memories of the indispensable leadership role the United States had played in opposing Russian domination during the cold war, leading up to the turning point of 1989. In this chapter, however, the other side of the comparison is at stake: the internal factors that determine the German perception of the United States, especially the attitudes toward America since September 11. How have factors specific to German culture and history influenced the perception of the United States? And how does the German view of the United States fit into the larger European context?

The Question of Perceptions

Before proceeding to German public opinion data, however, it is important to consider why Americans have become so pointedly concerned with foreign perceptions of the United States. Various developments have contributed to a heightened attention among Americans to their image abroad. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the United States as the sole superpower—a tendency under way long before 1989 but only fully apparent afterward—imply a changed position of the United States in the world and hence an interest in understanding the image of the United States abroad. If it is the case that the single superpower cannot, ultimately, avoid global responsibilities—otherwise it ceases to be a superpower, after all—then it is in the rational interest of the superpower to understand how it is viewed around the world.

In addition to this pragmatic approach to the question of perception, one can identify a cultural-critical approach as well: contemporary culture is often defined by a so-called mass cul-

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ture that tends to place greater weight on questions of image, and therefore perception, than on matters of substance. It follows that increasing concern is directed to the response to policy, how it appears, or what “spin” it is given, rather than what the policy achieves directly. This cultural problem is related to the extensive impact of the media and the culture industry.

A third context surrounding the interest in the perception of the United States, of course, is a direct effect of September 11. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon are widely understood as attacks on the United States as a whole (i.e., on the American way of life) symbolized by the two buildings. The growing curiosity about the perception of the United States overseas represents an effort to explore the roots of this animosity as a way to explain the terrorist attacks. Without discounting possible benefits of this approach, it should be noted, of course, that this line of thinking does tend to impute a legitimizing motivation to the September 11 attackers. Rather than seeing the terrorists as isolated extremists, driven by idiosyncratic fanaticism, this approach implicitly links them to much larger cultural perceptions. The policy consequence of this assumption is that, in order to prevent further terrorist attacks, the United States should change its image abroad by changing its ways—its policies and its “way of life”—rather than by pursuing the suppression and eradication of specific terrorist networks.

This policy implication indicates how deeply politicized the debate over perception has become. It is useful to recall that there have been other periods during which the United States faced considerable opposition or anti-Americanism overseas, most notably in the context of the cold war in the 1950s and early 1960s. Yet despite the cliché of the ugly American, the foreign perception of the United States did not expand into a

major concern in domestic debates, for several reasons. At that time, the United States was not the single superpower but faced, on the contrary, the Soviet Union with its very real aspirations for global power. This in turn implied that expressions of anti-Americanism could be attributed, properly or not, to a real-world power conflict rather than to an elusive matter of image management. Moreover, the American culture of the 1950s and 1960s was certainly less image-obsessed than we are a half century later. In addition, the United States had not suffered any blow to its sense of security on the level of the September 11 attacks. Perhaps a comparison might be drawn to the Soviet acquisition of the nuclear bomb; suddenly the American sense of security associated with being the sole nuclear power disappeared. In that cultural context, however, the political response was to ask about real espionage: how they spy on us. In today's image-obsessed culture, by way of contrast, we are concerned with appearance: how they view us, and why they do not like us.

One further context explains the current interest in foreign perceptions of the United States. Until the debates over the Vietnam War, an extensive bipartisan foreign policy consensus prevailed. Anti-Americanism overseas could not be transformed into political capital for domestic use. In contrast, today that foreign policy consensus has broken down, in part due to the end of the cold war, the single superpower status, and the lack of clear unanimity regarding an appropriate strategy, evidenced in the debates over unilateralism and multilateralism. United States politics in general have become more divisive, ideological, and acrimonious. To some extent this changing character of domestic political style can be explained by party realignments, to some extent by deeper cultural changes. In any case, in the context of a missing foreign policy consensus and an increas-

ingly agonistic public debate, anti-Americanism abroad, interpreted as opposition to specific American policies, gains much greater resonance within American politics as part of the domestic partisan competition, in a way, for example, that anti-American demonstrators in Europe or Latin America in the 1950s could never achieve.

Because anti-Americanism in the past could be attributed to Communist activism, it had little partisan value in the centrist American political scene. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, anti-Americanism could paradoxically take on an appearance of legitimacy, to the extent that it could no longer be dismissed as a Communist artifice and, on the contrary, could now be accepted as a reasonable response to particular United States policies, especially when those policies are themselves already contested in the increasingly partisan domestic debates. Therefore the putative reasonableness and policy specificity of anti-Americanism become key assumptions for domestic political debate. These assumptions are, however, simultaneously subject to critical skepticism, in the sense that expressions of sentiments hostile to the United States can be questioned: are they really driven by U.S. policy or are there other motivations? This is precisely why questions regarding the origins of anti-Americanism are raised: do negative images of the United States in general, or anti-American demonstrations in particular, represent reasoned objections to U.S. government actions (in the sense that changing a policy would establish goodwill), or are they primarily expressions of local circumstances (which are likely to generate hostility regardless of U.S. policy shifts)? Should hostile expressions in Germany be treated as cogent objections to misguided policies emanating from Washington, or are they symptomatic of aspects of German national history and, therefore, not directly pertinent to formulation of policy in

the United States (except perhaps to the extent that such policy refers specifically to Germany)? To sort out answers to these questions, it becomes necessary to inquire into the specific local circumstances in which particular images of the United States develop. The contrast between the hostile demonstrations in Berlin and the friendly demonstrations in Vilnius and Bucharest is a case in point. In such cases, the image of the United States obviously involves the acting out of local issues, rather than a considered deliberation of particular policies.

Cultural Contexts

Germany is a rich and complex case with regard to the formulation of perspectives on the United States. Few countries have had such intense and extended interactions as have Germany and the United States. Germany and the United States were opponents in the two world wars, and whereas West Germany drew close to the United States, East Germany was a key member of the Soviet bloc, with its own set of anti-American attitudes. In other words, the twentieth-century legacy of German-American history involves considerable grounds for negative predispositions. Although elsewhere in the formerly Communist states of Eastern Europe, the anti-Communist foreign policy of the cold war United States translates into pro-American sympathies today, a comparable post-Communist bonus does not appear to apply in the new states of unified Germany (i.e., the territories that formerly composed the German Democratic Republic). Although the former East Germans are surely better off than the populations of any of the other new democracies, they do not participate in the same positive estimation of the United States. On the contrary, there is a specifically German continuity from pre-1989 Communist anti-

Americanism to post-Communist anti-Americanism, which has been particularly relevant, given the role of the former Communist Party—the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS)—and its ability to influence the larger German political landscape.

The twentieth-century legacy of German-American relations therefore includes grounds for suspicion but also a strong history of affection and idealization. The post-Second World War experience of Americans by West Germans was crucial and transformative. Although Americans were not genuinely welcomed as liberators in 1945, the protection afforded by the United States against an expansionist Soviet empire generated much affection among West Germans. From the Berlin airlift of 1948 through the enormously resonant speech by President Kennedy in West Berlin, with his assertion “Ich bin ein Berliner,” to President Reagan’s call to “tear down” the Berlin wall, the relationship between the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany grew strong and stable and with it so did connections between American and West German society. American popular culture and American scholarship both had profound influence on postwar German culture. Indeed, even the West German student movement of the 1960s, which articulated deep criticisms of aspects of American foreign policy, was itself formatively influenced by the character of the youth culture and the student movement that had developed in the United States.

Thus German perspectives on the United States developed against a background of a mixture of negative and positive attitudes. Although these biases derive from the twentieth-century historical experience of encounters with the United States, they also build on much deeper cultural-historical stances: the eighteenth-century German enlightenment idealization of the experiment of the American republic and the nineteenth-century

German romantic suspicion of capitalism and democracy.¹ Yet, for the matter at hand—German perceptions of the United States after September 11—the specific history of German attitudes to the United States is arguably less important than German views of their own past. Contemporary, unified Germany maintains a largely critical attitude to the militarism of its own national history and tends to draw de facto pacifist lessons: war is regarded as the absolute evil, military solutions to international problems are shunned at all costs, and therefore any current war—such as the United States’ war in Afghanistan or Iraq—is typically viewed through the lens of the German experience in the world wars. This leads to the projection of German metaphors onto American policy: in the extreme, George W. Bush is equated with Adolf Hitler (as in the grotesque remark of the former German minister of justice Herta Däubler-Gmelin). Variants of this equation are common (e.g., the suggestion that the attacks of September 11 were planned or facilitated by the Americans and were intended to play the same role that the burning of the Reichstag did for the consolidation of Nazi power). In these cases, the genuine psychic burden of the guilty German past is presumably temporarily lifted through the accusation that the Americans of today are, ultimately, no better than the Germans of the Nazi era. This is as much a case of judging the present through the lens of the national past as is—with alternative results—the East European, pro-American willingness to see current U.S. policy in light of the U.S. foreign policy of the cold war era. The German projection of its national history onto current events can even be taken one step further: not only by identifying today’s Americans with Hitler-era Germans

1. Cf. Dan Diner, *America in the Eyes of the Germans: An Essay on Anti-Americanism*, trans. Allison Brown (Princeton: Markus Wiener, 1996).

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but also by drawing a connection between the Anglo-American air war in the Second World War and the bombing of Afghanistan and Iraq. Needless to say, the equation entails a massive minimization of what took place during the Second World War, and it ignores the precise targeting capabilities of new missile technologies. The key point, however, is the remarkable degree to which Germans see current events as repetitions of their own national past, even identifying with the victim status of the targets of American foreign policy.

There is one further dimension of the German situation that intrudes on current perceptions of the United States: the process of European unification. An aspiration to develop a unified continental political system has deep historical roots. In its current form, it commenced after the Second World War as a project for a common economic market in Western Europe. European institutions have gradually grown more political (i.e., not solely economic) and more regulatory. Some political powers of national governments have been transferred to European institutions, including the maintenance of a currency: the euro is now the coin of the realm through much of Europe, and monetary policy has thereby ceased to be a national prerogative. In addition, Europe has expanded its membership, largely due to the fall of the iron curtain and the opportunity to integrate Central and Eastern European states. Although the United States generally has supported the process of European unification, a subtle shift has taken place, particularly since 1989. Although European unification once represented part of the bulwark that the West presented against Soviet expansionism, after the collapse of Russian hegemony the European Union began to define itself in relation to the United States (i.e., as an alternative to the United States in a hypothetically multipolar world). Anti-American sen-

timent has become the vehicle for the expression of this new European identity.

Meanwhile, the European Union suffers from a so-called democracy deficit: political powers have been shifted to a bureaucracy largely shielded from public scrutiny and electoral control. This bureaucratization of Europe means that the process of unification has little capacity to appeal to the ideals or loyalty of a pan-European citizenry; so far, individuals in much of Europe typically remain loyal to their respective nation-states rather than to the abstract superstate. Germans, however, given their troubled national past, have been among the strongest supporters of the European unification process: becoming more European is a way to become less German. The central lesson on which this unification process has been based involves the presumed urgency to overcome the egoism of individual nations and replace it with multilateral cooperation. This multilateralism entails a renunciation of elements of national sovereignty in the name of greater cooperation among nation-states. Although many continental European states are prepared to take this step, some are reluctant to do so (especially the United Kingdom), and, in any case, the United States has shown little interest in subjecting itself to international governance structures: hence the debate over multilateralism and unilateralism that erupted in the context of the Iraq war. This material frequently colors German views of the United States. The United States and West Germany maintained a deep alliance through the cold war decades, and unified Germany has inherited its role in this partnership. However, unified Germany has also inherited another aspect of the older West German political culture: a willingness to subordinate its specific national interests to larger international, especially European, processes. Because of its role in the two world wars, Germany today is predisposed to renounce ele-

ments of its national sovereignty in order to become a good European. Public opinion in Germany is therefore particularly suspicious of the American reluctance to cede power to international governance structures. In this case, it is not, strictly speaking, an internal German factor that shapes the perception of the United States, but a regional process: the relationship of Europe, of which Germany is a key component, to the United States.

Representation of the United States in German Print Media

Several surveys of representations of the United States and of public opinion regarding foreign policy can help shed light on these matters. The study *America's Image Abroad*, conducted at Michigan State University, provides data concerning the representation of the September 11 attacks and related issues during the autumn of 2001.² To be sure, one should be cautious not to overstate the significance of these data. Although the study surveys several key organs of the German print media, both daily newspapers and weekly news magazines, it does not include electronic media, through which large sectors of the public receive their news information. Moreover, the data are not corrected for circulation size. References to the United States in newspapers with only local or regional readership (e.g., *Augsburger Allgemeine*, *Südwest Presse*) are put on the same level as references in the large-circulation de facto national newspapers (e.g., *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*) and in the influential weekly publications (*Der Spiegel*, *Die Zeit*). In order to extrapolate from representations in the various press organs to

2. Vladimir Shlapentokh and Joshua Woods, *America's Image Abroad* (forthcoming).

public opinion in general, one would have to factor in these various circulation profiles and their implications for readership influence. Germany has a variegated media environment, and it is not uncommon for readers, at least those in the educated strata, to draw on combinations of these publications. At the other end of the literacy spectrum, however, significant strata of the public only read the mass-distribution boulevard press, such as *Die Bildzeitung*.

Although the data collected cannot be directly mapped onto public opinion, they do at least present an initial rough cut of the representation of the United States under the impact of September 11 and as such provide some important insights into German political culture. Particularly dramatic are the data collected regarding the question, "How should America respond to the September 11 events?" The aggregate findings display a profile polarized around diametrically opposed positions, with 23 percent of the press comments attributed to the negative "Do not use military tactics or force. Do not declare a war against terrorism or those deemed responsible for it," whereas 37.3 percent are counted for "Use military force or bombings against the governments, states, or groups that harbor or support those responsible for September 11. Make no compromises with these governments." The policy at stake, obviously, involved the pursuit of a war against terrorism in the form of the campaign against the Taliban regime of Afghanistan. German press representations appear, on first glance, to tilt toward the promilitary and, in this historical context, pro-American option.

The ratio of 37:23, however, is to some extent an arbitrary result of the structure of the content analysis. If one takes into account the numerous other responses, none of which on its own gets above 8 percent, and allocates them reasonably between the two camps, the overall polarization becomes

starker. Thus one can attribute proposals to alleviate poverty, change foreign policy, “pause and reflect soberly,” and work with the United Nations, to the antimilitary camp. Alternatively, calls to improve intelligence, gather credible evidence, work with the entire world, and attack (only) terrorist camps might be counted on the military side of the ledger (arguably, some of these items belong to the antimilitary camp, but that attribution would only amplify the results of this exercise). Making these assumptions, one finds a split of 45.3 percent against the use of force and 48.8 percent supporting it.

This structural polarization is corroborated by an accompanying tendency. The data display an increased polarization in October 2001, as measured against September 2001. In other words, after the initial shock of September 11, and as public debate unfolded, positions tended to harden into two opposing camps. Thus (looking now only at the major categories and bracketing the smaller, peripheral ones), expressions of opposition to American use of military force rose from 18.6 percent of press comments in September 2001 to 30.1 percent in October 2001 while support for military force grew from 26.3 percent to 46.9 percent. In fact, support grew to 75 percent in December 2001, although this number is based on a much smaller evidence pool, and in any case, the Afghanistan campaign had largely ended at this point. (It therefore made little sense to oppose the use of force any longer, so that a reasonable comparison with the data from previous months becomes difficult.)

These data suggest a complex representational process in the German print media. In the aftermath of September 11, it is clear that there was much support for American use of force as a proper response, and not limited specifically to terrorist camps. Nonetheless, there is also evidence of dispute and polarization. The treatment of the issue in the press was split nearly equally.

Even in the context of the war against the Taliban—where the case for a connection to September 11 was always much stronger and clearer than it was later with the highly contested war policy in Iraq—nearly half the press treatment opposed the unlimited military solution. To be sure, there was evidence of a concurrent pro-American predisposition, and the antiwar opposition represented a (slight) minority of items in the content analyses. Still this minority indicated a nontrivial antiwar potential: precisely the potential that turned into the crowds at the anti-Bush demonstrations in the subsequent May and on which German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder made his electoral calculation a year later, when he chose to oppose the intervention in Iraq.

The findings for other aspects of the content analysis add interesting detail to this hypothesis of a German press prepared to tilt toward the United States in a post–September 11 solidarity effect but already displaying signs of reluctance or even resistance. Thus with regard to the question of how Germany should respond to September 11, a clear majority of 51.4 percent of the press comments indicate support for working with the United States, even in military responses. There is, curiously perhaps, more support for Germany to cooperate with the United States, even in military steps, than there is for the United States to pursue such military steps. One can surmise that for the German public sphere, the need for identification with the United States was even stronger than a judgment on the particular political means (i.e., some of the reluctance to support military initiatives could be set aside in order to maintain loyalty to the United States). This too points to a post–September 11 solidarity effect. If one also counts calls for cooperation with the United States in restricted military responses (terrorist camps only) or nonmilitary responses, then the hypothetically pro-American evidence

count comes to 83.9 percent. However, it is perhaps more reasonable to assume that these variants—restricted military and nonmilitary responses—in the context of the German debate on the Afghanistan war in effect represented positions defined as opposed to U.S. government policy. If one combines these data (9.9 percent and 7.7 percent) with a marginal call for an independent German strategy (0.6 percent) and other opposition to support for the United States in general (1.1 percent), one discovers a rejectionist field of a not insignificant 19.3 percent. This, it would seem, suggests that the notion of universal solidarity with the United States in the immediate aftermath of September 11 is not tenable. From the very start, there was a vocal minority position in precise and explicit opposition to the policy pursued by the American government (i.e., the attack on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan). It is fair to speculate that if nearly one-fifth of the German press representation of the issue in the context of the Afghanistan War (where the case was both clearest and temporally closest to the September 11 attacks) implied an adversarial attitude toward the United States, then it was plausible to predict that a much greater hesitation would emerge regarding American-led military solutions in the less obvious case of Iraq.

Other aspects of German public culture are apparent in the data. The significance of moderate centrist views is evident in the fact that 87.4 percent of the press reports designate Osama bin Laden or Islamic fundamentalists as the perpetrators of September 11. This is proof of the reasonable and democratic predisposition of German public life. Nonetheless, the fringe position that attributes the September 11 attacks to Israeli special forces is represented minimally but noticeably, and equally on the Left (*Die Tageszeitung*) and the Right (*Die Bildzeitung*). The convergence of left anti-Zionism and traditional right antisemi-

tism is certainly not a solely German phenomenon, but it takes place closer to the center of public debate in Germany than it does elsewhere. Although these two newspapers can be taken to represent the respective ends of the political spectrum under discussion, they are surely not in any sense part of extremist subcultures.

The data on understandings of the root causes of September 11 attribute 12.4 percent to religious fanaticism and 18.0 percent to Islamic fundamentalism, making a total of 30.4 percent. Moreover this attribution increases from September 2001 to October 2001, presumably an effect of the case against the Taliban being made with increasing cogency. Nonetheless, in September 2001 nearly 30 percent of the references to the September 11 attacks blamed them on U.S. policies, be it a matter of the support for Israel or the earlier support for the Mujahideen against the Soviets in Afghanistan. In other words, the significant support for the United States in the German public sphere was again accompanied by varying degrees of reluctance, rejection, or opposition even immediately after September 11. Despite the 58.0 percent describing September 11 as “an attack against freedom, democracy, humanity, or the civilized world,” there is remarkable balance between the assertions of a conflict of civilizations (10.2 percent) and denials of this conflict (11.4 percent). That is to say, underneath a presumably pro-American consensus, there is evidence of an unstable and unsettled public opinion. In the same vein, one can contrast the strong 61.3 percent that attributes the U.S. motivation to a goal of stopping terrorism (rather than some less-than-ideal ulterior motive) with the 43.5 percent that negatively assess the American war in Afghanistan, describing U.S. humanitarian aid as “useless, hypocritical or insincere.” In sum, the German press accounts of America in the context of September 11 reflect a slight predis-

position to support the American initiative in the war against terrorism while also revealing considerable hesitation just below the surface.

The final pertinent data from this study involve descriptions of the United States. Initially the findings seem unexciting: the only term that gets a significant percentage of hits is the obvious designation of the United States as “the only superpower” at 20.1 percent. Nearly all the many other terms get low ratings. Nonetheless, explicitly negative characterizations total 13.4 percent, which is hardly insignificant. These terms include designations such as indifferent, stupid, exploitable, naïve, money-hungry, “capitalism in a negative sense,” warlike, and terrorists. These data also corroborate the overall profile presented by the content analysis data. The hypothesis of universal solidarity with the United States in the months immediately following the September 11 attack is not borne out by the evidence. Although German press representations of the United States in this period are somewhat positive or pro-American, there are indications of instability in the structure of public opinion and, depending on the particular question, considerable hostility as well. This negative potential, recorded here in the contents of the print media, could come to play a larger role during the following eighteen months, as the German political leadership positioned itself against the United States, and the United States proceeded from the war on terrorism in Afghanistan to the less obvious and more consequential case of regime change in Iraq.

Worldviews 2002

The textured account of the German press representations of the United States in the fall of 2001 is corroborated in various ways by the findings of the public opinion survey sponsored

by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations and the German Marshall Fund in June of 2002.³ A pro-American predisposition and sets of shared values coexist with hesitation, opposition, and elements of anti-Americanism.

It is certainly true that with regard to many issues, public opinion in Germany and the United States is similar. This is hardly surprising: both countries are advanced industrial societies with stable democratic regimes, similarities that only amplify long histories of cultural interaction, from extensive German emigration to the United States in the nineteenth century to the American occupation in West Germany after the Second World War. Despite the hostile world-war experiences themselves, extensive exchange and positive interaction have also characterized the German-American relationship. Indeed, in the early 1990s it seemed possible that Germany might even become the primary anchor of the trans-Atlantic relationship, perhaps even displacing the special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom. Of course, against this not-so-distant past of exceptionally strong German-American relations, the precipitous deterioration of German-American relations since September 11 is all the more remarkable.

The proof of shared values in Germany and the United States—like the evidence of extensive support for the United States in the German press after September 11—is pronounced. Seventy-three percent of Germans and 75 percent of Americans support expanded education spending. Similarly, 67 percent of Germans support greater programs to combat violence and crime, as compared with 70 percent of Americans. In both cases,

3. Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, *Worldviews 2002: Comparing American and European Public Opinion on Foreign Policy* (Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, 2002). <http://www.worldviews.org>.

the differences are negligible; public values are similar in the two countries. There is also considerable overlap in the estimation of world problems. Fifty-five percent of Germans see Islamic fundamentalism as a possible threat to their vital national interests, as compared with 61 percent of Americans. Forty-seven percent of Germans view global warming as extremely important, effectively identical with 46 percent of Americans.

This sort of evidence can be cited to show the continuing vitality of a community of values, the shared perspectives in Germany and the United States, which can then be taken as demonstrating the fundamentally solid relationship between the two countries. Yet this reassuring conclusion would not only ignore the real character of German-American relations between September 11 and the Iraq war. It would also ignore the public opinion data that demonstrate the basis for tension. As will be discussed later, there are plenty of policy points where Germans and Americans do not see eye to eye. In other words, the political conflict between Germany and the United States cannot be attributed only to diplomatic failures or deleterious personal interactions between the respective political leaders. Rather the *Worldviews 2002* survey, examined closely, yields evidence of an anti-American potential in German public opinion, which was foreshadowed in the content analysis of German print media after September 11.

A crucial issue involves attitudes toward future defense spending. In both Germany and the United States 38 percent of those surveyed believe that defense spending should not change, but that is as far as the similarity goes on this point. Otherwise the data are diametrically opposed. In the United States, 44 percent support expanded defense spending, and 15 percent call for cutbacks; in Germany, 45 percent urge cutbacks,

and only 14 percent argue for expanding the defense budget. The distinctiveness of the German position can be better understood if it is compared with the aggregate European findings as well as with those of other individual European countries. For Europe in general, there is 22 percent support for expanded defense spending and 33 percent support for less (i.e., Germans are not only less supportive of defense spending than are Americans, but they are less supportive of defense spending than is Europe as a whole). Only the Netherlands (6 percent) and Italy (12 percent) have lower rates for supporting increased defense spending.

The pronounced antimilitary sentiment in Germany is an effect of German national history, the defeat in two world wars, the extraordinary devastation—physical and moral—associated with the Second World War, and the habit acquired during the cold war of relying on American military protection. That national history structures public opinion on this point is confirmed by the findings for other European countries. The German ratio for expanding and cutting back defense spending, 14:45 (percentages of the polled public supporting expansion and reduction), is closest to the Italian results of 12:52. (The results for the Netherlands are anomalous because of a curiously high rate for making no change and keeping defense spending at the same level.) In contrast, the two primary American allies in the world wars display slight majorities for increased spending: in the United Kingdom 24 percent for expanded spending and 21 percent for cutbacks, and in France 28 percent for expansion and 23 percent for cutbacks. Whether a country was on the winning or the losing side in the Second World War evidently has a significant effect on attitudes toward defense spending.

The findings for Poland are particularly noteworthy with

percentages nearly identical to the findings for the United States: 45 percent for expanded spending and 14 percent for cutting back (indeed, if only by a 1 percent difference, Polish public opinion supports increased defense spending more adamantly than does American). It is worthwhile to note that these findings predate the “old Europe versus new Europe” controversy, but they lend considerable credence to the hypothesis. The German public views defense spending in the light of a catastrophic militaristic history; Polish public opinion addresses the question in the light of a long history of threatened independence and a need to be able to defend its territorial integrity and sovereignty.

When asked to comment on whether the United States should exert strong leadership in world affairs, the aggregate findings for Europe show 31 percent viewing such an outcome as undesirable (22 percent as somewhat undesirable and 9 percent as very undesirable). The German total is 27 percent (i.e., a somewhat less negative view of American leadership than in Europe as a whole, although considerably above the American response at 14 percent). The combined negative results for France total 48 percent. With regard to hostility to American leadership in world affairs, there is therefore a significant anti-American minority in Germany, but it is less significant in scope than in Europe as a whole and considerably smaller than in France.

German attitudes to the United States, however, are not only the function of direct estimations of U.S. policy, past or future. They are also consequences of how Germans evaluate the European Union (EU) and their own role in world affairs. Question 7 of the *Worldviews 2002* survey asks whether it is desirable for the EU to exert strong leadership. Twenty-seven percent of Germans saw a leadership role for the EU as very desirable. Inter-

estingly, this is the lowest rate for any European country (except Poland, at 16 percent, which at that time was not in the EU). Even in the United States, more Americans saw a leadership role for the EU as desirable (31 percent) than did Germans. The findings were 32 percent in the United Kingdom, 40 percent in France, 42 percent in the Netherlands, and 53 percent in Italy. The Germans appear to be the least supportive of EU leadership. Yet Question 9, asking whether one's own country should play an active role in world affairs, again found Germans least willing to be engaged. Although it is true that a majority of 65 percent stated that Germany should be active in world matters, that rate is far below the aggregate European findings of 78 percent and positively overshadowed by 82 percent in the United Kingdom, 86 percent in France, and even 90 percent in Italy. In both cases, the German findings indicate a greater hesitation, on the European and the national level, to take on prominent responsibilities in world affairs. It is plausible to argue that, as with defense spending, the German national past restrains the German public from articulating an aspiration for leadership in international matters.

This result is confirmed by another German anomaly. Sixty-five percent of Europeans support the notion that the EU should become a superpower like the United States. In Italy the rate soars to 76 percent and in France to 91 percent. The finding for Germany is a humble 48 percent, the only finding below 50 percent for any European country. As in the above examples, Germans display a cautious predisposition to avoid exposure in world affairs. Yet among those Europeans who do support superpower status for the EU, there is considerable variation in their vision for a future relationship with the United States. Although most respondents in all countries favor cooperation with the United States over competition, the findings for Ger-

many indicate a significantly more competitive, and therefore less cooperative, relationship with the United States than is expressed by the public elsewhere in Europe. Eleven percent of Europeans favor a competitive relationship with the United States: the figure for Germany is 22 percent, as compared with France at 9 percent, the United Kingdom at 7 percent, and Italy at 5 percent. Meanwhile cooperation is favored by 84 percent of Europeans in general, 87 percent of the French, 89 percent of the British, 92 percent of the Italians, but only 70 percent of the Germans. Clearly, even in Germany, the proponents of cooperation are more numerous than are the proponents of competition. Nonetheless, Germany tilts toward a more adversarial posture to the United States in a way that distinguishes it from its European neighbors. This finding confirms the observation in the print media content analyses of a significant minority predisposition toward anti-American positions.

Still, the data leave us with a seemingly paradoxical finding: a German public opinion that, in response to several questions, displayed a greater hesitation toward world affairs than was characteristic of other European nations, yet at the same time evidence of a possibly greater adversarial stance toward the United States than displayed elsewhere in Europe. Both attitudes can, of course, be explained by the internal factors of German national history: the scars of earlier German international ambitions on the one hand, and on the other, resentment against the United States, the erstwhile opponent. This profile also maps onto the cultural-historical model of a romantic “German interiority”: an inward-turning rejection of the world, coupled with an imperious external projection. As tempting as the thesis might be, however, the data at hand are insufficient to prove it. The two positions at stake—international hesitation and competition with the United States—are not conclusively linked

(i.e., the findings may well derive from separate sectors of the public). One can conjecture, for example, that the greater reluctance to engage in international matters, reflecting the German past, might be associated with older generations, and the adversarial relationship to the United States might plausibly derive from the ideological background of the population in the new states (i.e. the formerly Communist East Germany). More differentiated data would be needed to explore these hypotheses.

Views of a Changing World, June 2003

While a “German interiority” hypothesis is not conclusively supported by the data, nothing disproves it either. Greater demographic differentiation of the data would be helpful, for example, in order to distinguish among the attitudes of various population sectors. Nonetheless certain conclusions are possible. The content analysis identified a preponderance of pro-American descriptors in the immediate aftermath of September 11; part of that support may represent a September 11 solidarity effect, but surely some indicates older pro-American sympathies in parts of the German public. Yet any solidarity effect related to the September 11 attacks was, as we have seen, clearly not universal. Therefore, it appears that the later deterioration of German-American relations cannot be attributed to some failure to make the American case in the German press. On the contrary, that case was being made from September 2001 on. The point is rather that support for the United States was never universal; other political positions were also present in the public debate, and this debate reflected deep fissures in German attitudes regarding world affairs. In other words, internal factors—German history, cultural values, and the structure of public debate—have evidently played crucial roles in formulating Ger-

man attitudes toward the United States, including anti-American sentiments.

The Pew Global Attitudes Project survey, *Views of a Changing World, June 2003*, provides insights that allow us to trace the problem of Germany and the United States out another year. The image of the United States throughout Europe dipped in the course of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, but by June of 2003 it rebounded, although not to the levels of 1999/2000. Nowhere has this trajectory been as precipitous as in Germany: from a 78 percent favorable image of the United States in 1999/2000 to 61 percent in the summer of 2002 (Schroeder election campaign) to 25 percent in March of 2003 (Iraq war) and then to 45 percent in June 2003. The difference between the extensive support for the United States at the outset to the June 2003 standing of 45 percent—in other words, less than half of Germans having a positive image of the United States—is a measure of the dramatic decline in German-American relations. These data also shed light on the question of the internal-external formulation of attitudes toward the United States. The fact that similarly curved trajectories are observable in other European countries indicates that any adequate explanation cannot be restricted to endogenous German circumstances alone. External factors are clearly at stake (i.e., the character of United States policy and the European, rather than merely German, perspective). Yet the fact that the German curve is so extreme is a result of internal German cultural factors: the pro-American legacy of cold war era relations on the one hand, and on the other, the devastating judgment on the American wars viewed through the historically over-determined lens of German pacifism. The positive approval rate for the United States in Germany has dropped by a remarkable 33 percentage points, more than it has dropped anywhere else. (The rate in France has gone from 62

percent to 43 percent, a loss of only 19 points; in Italy, from 76 percent to 60 percent, a loss of 16 points; and in Russia, from 37 percent to 36 percent, a loss of just 1 point.)⁴

It is not unreasonable to assume that estimations of another country are based partly on perceptions of value systems: shared values may support a positive estimation, whereas conflicting values may lead to negative judgments. In this case, it is worthwhile to differentiate among various constellations: German congruence with American values because of a shared “western” paradigm; differences between America and Europe, including Germany; differences within Europe; and so forth. The Pew study provides examples of some of the possible permutations. Evaluating the statement “Most people are better off in a free market economy, even though some people are rich and some are poor,” 72 percent of Americans said they would completely agree or mostly agree. The finding for Germany is 69 percent, although in West Germany the finding is identical with that of the United States, at 72 percent. Findings in other Western European countries vary minimally: United Kingdom, 66 percent; France, 61 percent; Italy, 71 percent. Interestingly, the free market finds considerably less approval in Eastern Europe: Poland at 44 percent; Russia at 45 percent; and Bulgaria at 31 percent. (The most westernized part of Eastern Europe, the Czech Republic, however, shows 62 percent support for the free market, higher than in France.) In general, then, Western Europe appears closer to the United States on the question of the free market than does Eastern Europe, and Germany is the country most like the United States.⁵

4. Pew Global Attitudes Project, *Views of a Changing World, June 2003* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center for the People and the Press), 19.

5. *Ibid.*, T-6.

Yet when the statement is replaced with one regarding individual freedom and the force of social conditions, the findings change significantly. Evaluating the statement "Success in life is pretty much determined by forces outside our control," 32 percent of Americans completely or mostly agreed. The German finding is quite different, with 68 percent asserting the power of uncontrollable social forces (i.e., the opposite of individual initiative). This finding is at the high end of comparable Western European findings: the United Kingdom at 58 percent, France at 54 percent, Italy at 66 percent. Several of the Eastern European findings are surprisingly lower than those from Western Europe, that is, closer to the American data, although still much higher: Bulgaria at 52 percent, the Czech Republic at 47 percent, the Slovak Republic at 49 percent, but Poland at 63 percent (higher than many Western European countries but still lower than Germany). To the extent that, in the aggregate, the Eastern European findings are closer to the American, one finds a corroboration of an aspect of the "new Europe" thesis: the formerly Communist countries discovering an affinity with the United States that divides them, even in values orientation, from parts of Western Europe.⁶ In any case, Germany is least like the United States on this point: where Americans trust individual initiative, Germans look to the power of larger social forces.

One final variant on the same subject matter shuffles the deck again. Asked to choose between two desiderata, 58 percent of Americans chose to be "free to pursue goals without interference from the state" as opposed to 34 percent who opted for a "state guarantee that nobody is in need." No other advanced industrial country displays as stark a profile. Comparing only the "state guarantee," which received 34 percent in the

6. Ibid., T-7.

United States, the United Kingdom measures 62 percent, France 62 percent, Italy 71 percent, and Germany 57 percent.⁷ If one looks only at West Germany (in other words, if one excludes the post-Communist effect from East Germany), the finding is lower, at 52 percent. Interestingly, the Germans are in a liminal position: very much within the European range on this question, with a preference for state intervention, but at the American, more individualistic, end of the spectrum. Arguably, the severe decline of the positive American image in Germany is a result of this particular values structure: Germans are, in some ways, most like Americans, at least within the Western European group, and therefore they are most susceptible not only to identification but also to disappointment. Although they are the Europeans closest to the American apprehension regarding an intrusive state, they are also furthest from Americans in their deterministic estimation of the power of social conditions over individual initiative. Skepticism of a strong state (presumably a legacy of the Nazi experience) coexists, counterintuitively, with much less of an individualistic ethos. The combination suggests a characteristically German orientation toward conservative stability, implying potential discomfort with the dynamic changes sometimes associated with the United States and American society.

Conclusions

The various data suggest a complex German perception of the United States, resulting from a long and intricate history. As soon as one concedes that different nations may respond to the United States differently, one has to recognize the role of local cultures and therefore of internal factors. It is hardly surprising

7. Ibid., T-42.

that fragments of the long German-American history resurface to shape the cultural context within which contemporary American policy and actions are judged.

The complexity of German-American relations explains the fragmented findings in the print media data survey: the strong clustering of support for and opposition to U.S. initiatives. This bipolarity explains a curious aspect of the debate about German attitudes to the United States: assertions of anti-Americanism typically elicit denials and demonstrations of extensive appreciation for the United States. The distinctiveness of the German case is that anti-Americanism and philo-Americanism exist side by side. As much as Germany as a whole shares many American values, it could also nurture the antiwestern and anti-American subculture where the September 11 conspiracy germinated.

The data unfortunately lack the demographic precision that would allow more specific attribution of anti-American attitudes (e.g., on the basis of age, gender, income, education, or region). Nonetheless, the negative characterizations in the print media and some of the value conflicts allow a tentative inventory of the types of anti-Americanism. The association of Americans with "capitalism in a negative sense" in the context of the hesitations regarding individualism indicates that an older, culturally conservative set of anxieties regarding the dynamism of capitalism and democracy may be lingering as part of Germany's cultural heritage. This predemocratic anti-Americanism finds expression in contempt for aspects of American mass culture. In contrast, there is surely a separate Communist anti-Americanism, inherited from the ideological inculcations of East Germany: hence the attacks on American imperialism and the predisposition to denounce the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq simply as continuities of the U.S. history of interventions in the third world during the cold war: Iraq as Vietnam, and so forth. Finally, a postde-

mocratic anti-Americanism has emerged (i.e., an anti-Americanism driven by the resentment that the United States has been unwilling to cede sovereignty to the structures of international governance, as European states have done in the process of European unification). This difference has grown into an enormous conflict between the United States and the European Union. Considerable hostility to the United States is in fact fueled by the tenacity with which the American government has resisted such internationalization and insisted on the priority of national democratic processes. That this “unilateralism” is so irksome to Germany only reflects the passion with which German politicians have been eager to pursue a postnational form of government. To the extent, however, that democratic legitimation still takes place largely on national (if not regional and local) levels, resentment develops in response to this loss of sovereignty. American resistance to this tendency fans the flames all the more. Whether, and in what ways, these three hypothetical models map onto aspects of public opinion remains to be studied. How they inform the ideological life of anti-Americanism is discussed in the next chapter.