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Allies at War: America, Europe, and the Crisis over Iraq

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BOOK REVIEWS

EURO-BASHING AS GOOD SPORT

Gordon, Philip H., and Jeremy Shapiro. *Allies at War: America, Europe, and the Crisis over Iraq*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004, 266pp. \$19.95

Is the alliance between the United States and the European community of nations broken beyond repair? Brookings Institution scholars Philip H. Gordon and Jeremy Shapiro definitively address the most fundamental and perplexing question continuing to face transatlantic relations. The authors, both products of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and presently in residence at Brookings in the Foreign Policy Studies Program, undertake a disciplined, critical analysis of whether the special relationship between nations is worth preserving. The book, in essence, represents a magnum opus regarding the ongoing question of shared values and solidarity in the U.S.-European alliance. Gordon and Shapiro effectively present valuable counterpoints to prominent neoconservative viewpoints marginalizing the influence and utility of Europe—particularly “Old Europe.” This volume argues that the differences between the European and American viewpoints on security, particularly handling the rise of radical Islam, are more complex than Robert Kagan’s “Americans are from Mars,

Europeans are from Venus” analogy. Gordon and Shapiro’s ultimate conclusion is that strategic partners who share so much cultural identity with the United States, and who have had the courage to invoke for the first time in the alliance’s fifty-two-year history their mutual defense clause in the wake of the 11 September attacks, should not be cast aside in the interest of short-term political expediency and of pandering to demographic elements who regard Euro-bashing as good sport. Despite the posturing, tough talk, and emotionalism swirling around the continued debate on the viability of the most successful and functional international alliance in history, America needs its European allies and NATO as much as they need America.

Although Gordon and Shapiro scrutinize the historic alliance of NATO and its relevance in light of the diminished threat from the East, they are also talking about something larger than NATO and its internal imperfections and inefficiencies and the synergy of its membership. They explore the real, substantial fissures in the transatlantic

alliance generally and the ascendancy of a new paradigm of political equality between the world's only remaining superpower and the interstate economic and political entity of Europe. Disagreement between the United States and the European powers is nothing new. As examples, the authors cite the 1956 Suez crisis, disharmony over U.S. policy in Vietnam (as the United States arguably attempted to finish what the French started in Indochina), substantive debates over the placement of Minuteman nuclear missiles in Germany during the height of the Cold War, and internal rifts over policy in the Balkans. They also observe that French leadership of the international intransigence toward U.S. policy on Iraq led some in the U.S. government and American society in general to exaggerate (and oversimplify) perceived French ingratitude for American contributions to their own preservation of sovereignty—twice in the same century—and German ungratefulness for the substantial postwar reconstruction that brought West Germany quickly back into the community of nations. The authors rightly observe that the U.S.-European rift demonstrates less about European courage and willingness to take a hard line against Iraq than about the European community's demand to at long last be truly equal partners in the alliance.

Gordon and Shapiro note that the familiar refrain, "the mission should determine the coalition," is far more controversial than it sounds: while a nation such as the United States should, of course, put its own national security interests first, is there a long view on cooperative strategy that trumps short-term coalition building? *Allies at War* represents a road map for "how to get

there from here." The authors hypothesize that given more time for diplomacy and a meaningful chance for Iraq to avoid war, France would have eventually voted for war. Germany, emboldened by the French example of standing down the Americans, would have probably followed suit, lessening Russian and Chinese resolve to block the war in the UN Security Council. The American diplomatic strategy, born perhaps of arrogance, intemperance, or a lack of understanding of the value of international approval or acquiescence to the principle of regime change in Iraq, placed the rest of the world on the American time line, which reflected eagerness to gain approval before the onset of summer temperatures in Iraq, which in turn diminish combat effectiveness. The diplomatic effort was driven by a single factor—because the United States had moved a hundred thousand troops and tens of thousands of tons of gear and materiel halfway around the world, war had to happen in March and could not wait until October. For many Europeans, America's "enough is enough" policy represented a *fait accompli*. The U.S. challenge was to legitimize a decision that had been made long before—to invade Iraq and topple the Baathist government.

The detailed authoritative account of the diplomatic effort is alone worth the investment in this book. The effort was a crusade that ultimately failed to achieve its prewar goal to unite Europe and add support, if not membership, to the ad hoc coalition. Concerning the run-up to war, and in its aftermath, the question lingers—did the war irreparably harm the relationship between NATO, the United States and Europe? Is the alienation permanent? If not,

what can and should be done to repair the damage? Should we care?

Allies at War highlights convincingly that the egotistical, black-and-white, good vs. “axis of evil” juxtaposition of parties in the conflict seemingly made it easy, even necessary, for Americans to demand that the Europeans choose sides: “You’re either with us or against us.” The Europeans, by contrast, found room for a third position. They would be willing to hold Iraq accountable, through military action if necessary, but only after diplomacy had been *exhausted*, not merely *attempted*. Perhaps, in light of the conflict that followed, the French and German position was not unreasonable—that the fact that Iraq had been in technical noncompliance with a litany of UN Security Council resolutions for a decade or more paled in comparison to their interest in demanding equal partnership and real, meaningful consultation between the United States and European powers.

The authors identify three key factors underlying French leadership of the European revolution: that removing Saddam Hussein from power could prove to be a strategic mistake; the desire to deny the United States a “blank check” for the use of force in pursuit of narrow national interests; and the establishment of French and German leadership of the European Union (EU). Yet at least one other factor does not obtain sufficient treatment in this book—the effect that French, German, and other European national economic considerations had upon the decision to oppose U.S. military intervention in Iraq. Indeed, eighteen months after the initiation of hostilities, Germany, France, and Russia were finally convinced by U.S. diplomats to forgo up to 80

percent of Iraq’s multibillion dollar debt to the nineteen-nation “Paris club” to promote Iraqi reconstruction efforts. Moreover, a recent report by CIA investigator Charles Duelfer revealed substantial economic interests personally held by influential French businessmen and politicians—interests tied to the UN oil-for-food program.

Whether economic considerations materially affected the Franco-German position remains to be seen; ultimately, however, the underlying nature of French and German prewar obstinacy would not change Gordon and Shapiro’s ultimate conclusions that the U.S.-European alliance should be here to stay and that U.S. investment in repairing continental relations would be beneficial to both sides of the ocean. Current “damn the torpedoes” groupthink is not sustainable in the interest of long-term security, and the benefit of gaining European and international legitimacy and resources is worth the cost in efficiency and self-determination. The security of liberal democracies from the common threat of radical Islamic terrorism demands solidarity, consultation, and compromise, not more brinksmanship and alienation. The war on terror could last forty-eight years, not forty-eight months, and even the military behemoth United States cannot go it alone in a fight this long, extensive, and wide-ranging.

Overall, Gordon and Shapiro’s argument that the alliance is worth protecting and preserving is sound. This is a book for security professionals serious about examining the future of U.S. relations with the group of well resourced and well respected nations that have been longest our steadfast friends,

rather than indulging in oversimplified truisms regarding French and German national courage and gratitude for American participation in the world wars, the Marshall Plan, and the Cold War.

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Klare, Michael T. *Blood and Oil: The Dangers and Consequences of America's Growing Dependency on Imported Petroleum*. New York: Henry Holt, 2004. 265 pp. \$25

In *Blood and Oil*, Professor Michael Klare of Hampshire College offers an important critique of U.S. national security policy, one that should be read by American security professionals. In brief, he argues that U.S. foreign and military policy has been increasingly driven by the need to ensure reliable access to foreign oil, especially in the Middle East, and that as American foreign oil dependence continues to grow, U.S. forces will increasingly find themselves fighting to defend oil-producing regions and supply routes.

An engaging writer, Klare develops his thesis as follows. After documenting the substantial and growing U.S. dependence on foreign oil and the problems it has created, Klare describes the increasing involvement of the United States in the Middle East since World War II, particularly its close ties with Saudi Arabia, and the negative consequences of this involvement for American security. The next two chapters detail the latest phase of this unfolding story; they analyze the energy strategy adopted by the Bush administration in 2001,

pointing out how it has only reinforced U.S. dependence on foreign oil, especially from the Persian Gulf, and they describe the administration's policies toward the region. A fifth chapter discusses the prospects for diversifying foreign oil supplies, concluding that this approach offers little hope of reducing U.S. reliance on the Gulf even though it would increase the chances of American entanglement in conflicts elsewhere, while a sixth describes how U.S. oil dependence may increasingly bring this country into conflict with Russia and China. The final chapter summarizes the costs of oil dependence. It all too briefly sets forth an alternative national energy strategy of "autonomy and integrity," which emphasizes detaching our pursuit of energy from security commitments to foreign governments, reducing oil consumption, and hastening the development of alternative energy sources.

Overall, Klare performs a valuable public service by shining a spotlight on the national security consequences of U.S. foreign oil dependence, consequences that have often gone underappreciated. A central theme is how American leaders have chosen to "securitize" oil—that is, "to cast its continued availability as a matter of 'national security,' and thus something that can be safeguarded through the use of military force." The book is very well documented, with forty-five pages of notes, including references to a number of primary sources.

Some of Klare's claims may seem shrill or speculative, in part because they are so rarely voiced, but they nevertheless bear careful consideration. Perhaps most controversial will be his description of the current U.S. policy toward the Gulf. "In the months before and