

Explaining the “Axis of Opposition”: Franco-German Coalition during the Iraq War

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<Abstract>

This paper explores the underlying causes of the French and German objection to the Iraq War and evaluates the status of the Franco-German coalition. The finding of qualitative examination shows that the French and German opposition to the Iraq War had different underlying causes and interests even though they seemed to have constituted a solid “Axis of Opposition.” Foreign policy choice in the Iraq War reflected a far more sophisticated function of domestic politics and external factors of transatlantic relations, bilateral relations with Iraq and the Middle East, foreign policy tradition and European concerns. The “Axis of Opposition” was not based on a firm and long-built consensus of idea or interest and it was rather an ad-hoc coalition reflecting particular sets of interests. This paper shows that a simple dichotomy of pro- and anti- American perspective does not provide a comprehensive explanation on the foreign policy choice of the EU member countries during the Iraq War.

Keywords: France, Germany, Iraq War, Foreign Policy, US, UN, CFSP, ESDP

I. Introduction

1. Divided Europe and the Franco-German Axis of Opposition

The Iraq War revealed the division of Europe regarding the issue of engagement. The EU member countries supporting the US position signed the “Letter of Eight” on 30 January 2003.¹ Other seven EU members showed either a strong objection to the US or timid and neutral positions. Among them, France and Germany were the most ardent opponent countries constituting the “Axis of Opposition” to the Iraq War in Europe.

The EU was neither entirely supportive nor opponent to the US position. The EU was deeply concerned about the Iraqi crisis but common position based on Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) was largely absent. European cohesion on the second pillar was proved to be immature and vulnerable (Patten, 2003). A process of choosing a common position to be with or against the US-led military measures showed a difficulty in dealing with the challenge to the CFSP. The division of Europe in front of the Iraq War had “unmasked ten years of talking about an alleged communal foreign and security policy as a years-long babble without real content.” (Wood, 2003: 15).

Major decisions were made by the member states and their alliances while the EU was cautious not to break still a fragile consensus on the principle of CFSP and ESDP.² Political will of the member countries was, therefore, crucial elements in foreign policy choice, which surpassed the supranational institutional norms and commitment (Howorth, 2003-04). The foreign policy choice regarding the Iraq War reflected domestic politics at the national level as well as the relations with the US, UN and other EU member states (*Ibid.*).

This study is a comparative analysis of foreign policy choices in France and Germany regarding the engagement in the Iraq War. France has been one of the most ardent opposition countries in Europe against the US before and during the Iraq War. It has been a common perception that France had a long-time discrepancy with the US in dealing with world affairs and the French disagreement on the Iraq War was the result of different worldviews prevailed within the two countries. The US negligence of the

¹ The group of eight includes United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Denmark, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. The letter of eight was followed by the Vilnius letter (6 February 2003), signed by Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Albania, Republic of Macedonia, Romania, and Bulgaria.

² For the CFSP and ESDP regarding the Iraq War, see Crowe (2003); Hill (2004); Yakemtchouk (2005).

UN and international consensus was another reason for the French objection (Lee, 2006). Compared to France who often insisted its “exceptionalism,” Germany has been known as a more pro-American European partner. However, Germany was adamant in demanding a further employment of UN-based measures and opposed the US-led war in Iraq. Both France and German governments were aligned with majority opinion of non-participation.

Then, what had pushed France and Germany to oppose the war? What kind of similarities and differences could be found in the two countries behind the slogan of anti-Iraq War? There has been numbers of literatures explaining the divergence of transatlantic relations both from the US and Europe.³ These studies usually emphasized the differing perception on the Iraqi situation or the war itself as well as the discrepancies between “old Europe” and “new Europe.” However, these studies did not pay sufficient emphasis on the underlying causes of opposition in France and German as well as the nature of Franco-German coalition regarding the Iraq War.

This paper argues that the French and German opposition to the Iraq War had different underlying causes and interests even though they seemed to have constituted a solid “Axis of Opposition.” Decision making on the Iraq War reflected a varying degree of domestic political situation, leader’s perception, foreign policy tradition and a desire to increase its visibility in Europe as well as in the global setting. Franco-German coalition in the Iraq War was not a pre-set security framework. French position was not always supportive to the German policy throughout the history but France and Germany could have played an anchor role in pursuing further economic and political integration in the name of Europe during past few decades. However, EU was divided on the Iraq War and the leadership of Franco-German coalition could not successfully mobilize other EU member countries against the unilateral stance of the US.

By analyzing the status of Franco-German coalition in the Iraq War, this paper tries to explain the alliance cohesion between France and Germany as well as the efficacy Franco-German leadership in CFSP and ESDP. It further examines the effectiveness of CFSP and ESDP and implications for the EU’s future role in conflict resolution outside Europe including the Korean Peninsula.

2. Methodology and Plan of Study

This study applies the variables for qualitative analysis of the foreign policy

³ For a general overview of transatlantic relations regarding the Iraq War, see Gordon and Shapiro (2004); Levy, Pensky and Torpey (2005); Mowle (2004); De Montbrial (2004); Gueldry (2005).

toward the Iraq War in France and Germany. The elements of foreign policy making reflect both internal and external factors. Internal factors include domestic politics, leader's perception, public opinion and moral values in the society. External factors include transatlantic relations and obligation and commitment to multilateral institutions such as the UN and NATO as the most visible elements. It also reflects foreign policy tradition toward Europe and the Middle East. National ambition to gain political visibility at the European and the global level will also be given a focus. <Figure 1> summarizes these variables for analysis in this study.

<Figure 1> Elements of Decision-Making toward the Iraq War



Part II of this paper examines the foreign policy choice of France and Germany from the 9.11 terrorist attacks to the Iraq War. Part III compares the causes of opposition to the Iraq War in the two countries with internal and external categories. Part IV evaluates the nature of Franco-German coalition based on the analysis in the Part III. Part V concludes the discussion by drawing the implications of Franco-German coalition to the broader discussion of CFSP and ESDP.

II. France, Germany and the Iraq War

1. France Foreign Policy regarding the Iraq War

The 9.11 terrorist attacks brought France ever closer to the US side. France instantly expressed a deep sympathy and solidarity to the US after the 9.11 with the headline of "We are all Americans."(Le Monde, 2001.9.13). France supported the invocation of the NATO's Article IV of mutual defense and UN Security Council

Resolution 1368, 1373 which described a terrorist attack as a threat to international peace and security.

Based on these measures, France joined in the war against terrorism and provided the US with international political legitimacy to retaliate against Al Qaeda and the Taliban regime (Shaun, 2003:124-147). The French decision to participate in a possible military retaliation against Bin-Laden received a support from the majority of French People.⁴ France had deployed nearly 5,000 military personnel to the Afghanistan War and made an contribution to the war in various forms.⁵

However, discrepancies between France and the US began to grow in the aftermath of the Afghanistan War.⁶ The sympathy toward the victim of the 9.11 began to dissipate in front of a more unilateral stance of the US to apply a new policy paradigm in the Middle East. French criticism of U.S. foreign strategy has markedly increased since President Bush's "axis of evil" speech in January 2002.⁷

The French position on the Iraq War evolved over the fall and winter of 2002-03. France began to oppose categorically to pre-emptive military action in Iraq. France maintained that military intervention in Iraq would be a "material breach" of UN Security Council resolutions and rejected the US assertion of direct linkage between Iraq's WMD program and military attacks. The use of force in Iraq could be legitimized only after more comprehensive arms inspections. Chirac warned that the war in Iraq would be an "admission of failure." (Davis, 2003: 163). At the onset of the Iraq War, France became one of the hardest opponents to the US policy.

2. German Foreign Policy regarding the Iraq War

After the 9.11, Germany also showed a deep sympathy and took the side with the US. Germany joined with its allies to invoke Article V of the NATO treaty, agreeing that terrorism threatened all alliance members together (Livingston, 2002: 44-45). Germany speedily approved sending 3,900 soldiers to join the war in Afghanistan.⁸ Backed by the NATO and UN Security Council Resolutions, the German support for the war against terrorism was regarded as a continuation of the efforts to expand Germany's

⁴ 73% of the French people were supportive to this military action. Gordon and Benedicte (2002).

⁵ The French participation was comprehensive ranging from air-strike operations to intelligence activities.

⁶ The French were also disappointed with the impression that their contribution was sidelined as the Afghanistan War moved toward the end.

⁷ Former French foreign minister Hubert Védrine described this stance as demonstrating a "simplistic" understanding of international affairs. (Shapiro, 2002).

⁸ According to the view of Karl Feldmeyer, this amounts to "a revolution in German security policy." (Livingston, 2002: 45)

contribution to global peace-building.

However, the victory of Afghanistan war did not narrow down the scope of war on terrorism for the US. Its motivation for unilateral approach had increased and the US widened its perception of terror to specific targets including Iraq. The proposal of further UN inspectors in Iraq's WMD program, which Germany and France consistently insisted, had been rejected by the US. Soon after, Germany joined France and Russia in calling for a quick transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqi people (Landler, 2003).

Taking opposition stance in the Iraq war brought a huge rift in the relation between Germany and the US. The Iraq War had changed the major pillar of German foreign policy based on NATO and transatlantic relations.⁹ With the German opposition to the Iraq War, transatlantic relations began to move toward a new equilibrium.

III. The Causes of Opposition: France & Germany

1. Internal Factors: France

Criticism of US anti-terrorism policies has increased markedly in France in the aftermath of the Afghanistan War. The positive French position toward the war against terrorism turned into a strong objection to the US-led military operation in Iraq. President Chirac announced on 10 March, 2002: "My position is that regardless of the circumstances, France will vote no because it considers ... that there are no grounds for waging war in order to... disarm Iraq." (Sharp, 2004: 66).

The US tendency of unilateral actions in Iraq has provoked a growing anti-American sentiment among French citizens. This sentiment was widely shared by the media and the press. A poll conducted in early April showed 78% of the French public disapproved of the "American war" and 74% approved of Chirac's opposition to Bush. A strong majority (65%) responded that the conflict was mainly caused by the US (Le Monde, 2003.4.1.; Wood, 2003: 6-7).

The French decision-making showed a strong anti-war unity among different political actors. A majority of political executives and major political parties showed a strong opposition to the French participation in the Iraq War. President Chirac could assert without much dispute that his opposition to the war was reflecting the national interest (Wood, 2003: 6-7). The French politics had bestowed a huge leverage to

⁹ Having succeeded in cases where the United States wanted German support, Schroder might have expected some more latitude from Washington when he felt the cause was dubious. (Walker, 2002-03:38)

President in deciding a foreign policy, which had traditionally been a reserved domain. In fact, an actual decision regarding Iraq was made among selected few policy actors.¹⁰ Once anti-Iraq war and anti-US sentiments had prevailed, the strategy of major political actors was to follow the public opinion and to present France as leader of the anti-Iraq War coalition.

Reflecting the attitude of the French public, French leaders have warned against turning a war on terrorism into a war on Islam and emphasized a solution based on diplomacy and international cooperation.¹¹ France was also skeptical about the American vision of post-Saddam Iraq (Shawcross, 2004) and expressed a concern that a military intervention would deteriorate an already fragile regional balance in the Middle East (Beltran, 2002).¹²

2. Internal Factors: Germany

The 9.11 terrorist attacks brought Germany's position closer to the US side, too. Chancellor Schröder's *Reichstag* speech on October 11, 2001, expressed Germany's "unrestricted solidarity" with the US (Katzenstein, 2002: 429). Public opinion on the engagement in the war against terrorism was much more supportive than the previous international conflicts. In September 2001, 58% of the German public favored Germany's military participation in the war against terrorism (Afghanistan War).¹³ In spite of modest domestic opposition,¹⁴ Germany deployed 3900 soldiers to Afghanistan.

However, The change of German position began to be witnessed when the international maneuvering on Iraqi issues coincided with a national election campaign in Germany in 2002. The ruling SPD-Green coalition was behind the campaign and seemed to lose the election. Faced with possible electoral defeat, Chancellor Schröder and SPD saw their last hope in mobilizing antiwar and anti-American sentiments. During the election campaign, Schröder emphasized that Germany would not participate in a war against Iraq led by the US and announced that it would be a mistake to

¹⁰The French politics has traditionally allowed a huge leverage to President in deciding a foreign policy, which was a reserved domain for political executives. Interview with Dr. Dominique David and Etienne de Durand, IFRI, February 06, 2006.

¹¹ This emphasis on the non-military measures explains French leaders' initial reluctance to use the word "war" to describe the anti-terrorism campaign (Gordon and Benedicte, 2002).

¹² For the French stance toward the use of force and legitimacy of military action, see Andréani and Hassner (2005); Hassner (2005); Hoffmann (2005).

¹³ Support for the Gulf War was 17% (March 1991) and the Kosovo War was 19% (March 1999) (Katzenstein, 2002: 429).

¹⁴ The small group in the SPD and the Green Party opposed the deployment and threatened to break the ruling coalition. The government could win the non-confidence vote by only 10 votes (Katzenstein, 2002: 429).

intervene militarily in Iraq. Schröder's critique on the Iraq War proved to be a contributing factor in his narrow electoral victory. Non-engagement in Iraq was also accepted favorably when the German economy was in a recession.¹⁵

A declining number of Germans view the US as the guarantor of global peace and security¹⁶ and the Iraq War sharpened these attitudes (Rudolf, 2004: 139). Many Germans regarded the Iraq war as insufficiently justified and as potentially counterproductive. Iraq was not seen to be an imminent threat to the Western world in the German's eyes. The German media became more critical on the military action and prevalent anti-Bush sentiments were often converted to anti-American sentiments. Once favorable public opinion regarding the war against terrorism had dropped rapidly to 35% by November 2001 (Katzenstein, 2002: 429).

The Iraq War brought a fierce political debate in Germany. As the German election campaign took shape, the SPD found itself circumscribed by the pacifism of its coalition partners—the Green Party and the Party of German Socialism (PDS).¹⁷ Anti-war statements of the SPD-Green coalition resonated with a pacifist electorate. On the other side, Schröder was facing pro-American, conservative opponents. The leader of the main German opposition party, Angela Merkel (CDU), took a pro-American position on Iraq. Friedbert Pflüger (CDU) also supported the US-UK coalition out of alliance loyalty and a belief that Saddam had to be deposed by force if necessary.¹⁸ Edmund Stoiber, chief of the CSU, asserted a solidarity with the US and warned his party against anti-Americanism (Livingston, 2002: 45).¹⁹ The parliamentary opposition, Centre-right Christian Democrats (CDS) and Free Democrats (FDP) stressed common values, interests and a common transatlantic destiny.

However, most political actors saw themselves caught in the middle with the Iraq war. CDU and FDP were also aware of the broad pacifist convictions among the German people and reluctant to become spokespersons for a German role in the war (Haftendorn and Kolkmann, 2004: 474). German choice of non-engagement in the Iraq War reflected these complicated electoral and domestic political concerns. Schröder emphasized a pragmatic and less sentimental focus on common interests.²⁰

¹⁵ The unfavorable economic and financial situation of the country put a premium on this value-oriented policies (Stuermer, 2004: 145).

¹⁶ 48% in 2002, 62% in 1993. Rudolf, 2004: 139

¹⁷ The PDS kept a strong hold on voters' hearts and minds in the eastern part of the country—in part by promising the anti-American peace platform that the East German leaders had always talked about but never delivered (Abreheim, 2003: 71).

¹⁸ Foreign-policy guidelines passed by the CDU *Vorstand* (Party committee) on 28 April 2003 (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 2003.5.6.).

¹⁹ However, Stoiber's position reflected his "calculating politics" (Wood, 2003: 9).

²⁰ Rudolf pointed out that Schröder's proclamation of a "German Way" signified a threefold breach with

Domestic discussion on the participation in the Iraq War also accompanied the debate on the German Constitution and its foreign policy identity.²¹ The principle of engagement has gone through several modification since the 1964.²² A changing strategic environment of the 1990s provided an opportunity for Germany to move forward on the issue of German forces abroad (Becher, 2004: 399). In July 1994, the German Constitutional court ruled that Germany was free to use its armed forces in operations that took place within the framework and under the rules of the systems of mutual collective security of which Germany is part, including the UN and NATO. (Becher, 2004: 401). Having deployed its troop in Kosovo in 1999, Germany has resolved the issue of the use of force “in a multilateral operation with the precise balance of United Nations, NATO, and European support to be decided on an ad hoc basis.” (Katzenstein, 2002: 429). Later, the cabinet agreed on fundamental aspects of German response to events of September 11, 2001, including a substantial deployment of troops to Afghanistan. The justification of the Iraq War in a multilateral setting, therefore, should be a prerequisite for a legitimate deployment of the German troops.

3. External Factors: France

1) Transatlantic Relations & Multilateralism

Most of all, the French opposition to the Iraq War mirrored the discrepancies in transatlantic relations with the US. Franco-American relations were central to the transatlantic debate.²³ Regarding the method of dealing with the Iraqi case, France and the US also showed discrepancies. While the US insisted that military means were appropriate, (Hoffman and Bozo, 2004; Mason, 2003-04) France took a legalistic approach to the Iraqi problems, which was preventative in essence, (El Khatib, 2002) and believed that UN weapons inspection would be an effective guarantee against the

German Tradition: “First, domestic considerations took precedence over international ones. Second, denying the United Nations authority for peacekeeping was a break with Germany’s traditional principle of multilateralism. Thirdly, Berlin risked an open conflict with the US.” (Rudolf, 2005: 137).

²¹ Federal Republic’s constitution did not permit the use of German armed forces for any purpose but the defense of German territory and potentially that of other NATO allies. The Basic Law banned the waging of a war of aggression and made collective security through the United Nations, the highest goal of statecraft. (Abreheim, 2003:73).

²² This seminal 1964 position paper by the German defense ministry made it clear that there were no specific legal barriers to an active German military role and also acknowledged that a country of the relative weight of Germany could not endlessly abstain from making its power available. It articulated that not only participation outside NATO territory but also any “highly dangerous” involvement was avoided. (Becher, 2004: 399).

²³ For France-US relations, see Baran (2003); Colombani and Wells (2004); Gordon (2002); Tardy (2004).

resurgence of an Iraqi WMD program (Beltran, 2002). French policy regarding the Iraq War was also motivated by a reservoir of resentment at the American superpower, which was shared by both the policy-makers and the public.²⁴

Different perceptions and worldviews between the two countries had prevailed before the Iraq War (Hoffmann, 2005; Colombani and Wells, 2004; Kagan, 2003). France has insisted a certain degree of autonomy in its international relations and often defied the US leadership since the Cold War era. France had a long tradition of providing an alternative policy vision to that of the US or UK (Styan, 2004: 375). The French worldview represented the goal of a strong Europe steered by France, and the desire for a “multi-polar world.” (Wood, 2003: 6; Le Debat, 2003). Former foreign minister Dominique de Villepin emphasized that stability would be achieved not by partnership with Washington but by the development of “a number of regional poles.”(Gaffney, 2004: 248; Villepin, 2004; Dunne, 2004: 898). In this multipolar world, France could increase its voice *vis-à-vis* the US superpower (Lee, 2006). These different worldviews had ultimately led to different policy responses to the Iraq War.

The core of French foreign policy has been its emphasis on the multilateral approach in dealing with conflict prevention and crisis management. France believed that the terrorist threat was a global one and must be met by multilateral tools and stressed that the legitimacy of the Iraq War should be guaranteed by the UN (Bruguière, 2003: 4). The UN, therefore, has emerged as the most important institutional framework for dealing with the US.

In fact, the Security Council has bestowed France with a veto power that became the only virtual way for France to constrain the US (Casanova, 2005:4). France emphasized the primacy of the resolution to strengthen the UN inspection regime even though President Bush doubted its efficacy after the passage of Resolution 1441. Chirac announced:

One sees rising the temptation to legitimize the unilateral and preventive use of force... It is contrary to France's vision of collective security, a vision that depends on the cooperation of states, the respect for law and the authority of Security Council. We will reiterate these rules each time that it is necessary and, particularly, in relation to Iraq. If Baghdad persists in refusing to allow the return of inspectors without conditions, it is for the Security Council and the Security Council alone to decide the measures to take.²⁵

²⁴ For discussions on the French anti-Americanism, see (De Montbrial, 2002-03; Roger, 2002), Jean-François Revel took a more cautious position that much of anti-Americanism in France was exaggerated. (Revel, 2002).

²⁵ Jacques Chirac, Speech to the 10th Ambassadors' Conference, August 29, 2002 (Beltran, 2002: 6).

2) Bilateral Relations with Iraq & Middle East

The French position to the Iraq War reflected its previous bilateral relationship with Iraq, both at the economic and political level. Total,²⁶ the leading French energy company, had been a primary negotiator in major Iraqi oil fields such as *Majnoon* and *Bin Umar*, which could contain as much as 25 percent of the country's reserves. The French economic tie with Iraq has been maintained since 1975 (Styan, 2006) and it was reinforced by the participation of a number of French companies in the Iraqi industrialization projects. France also sold an estimated \$20 billion worth of weapons to Iraq. In the 1990s, France has been active in altering the sanctions against Iraq by proposing the "Oil for Food Program."²⁷ Bilateral Franco-Iraqi trade rose steadily, from €85 million in 1997 to €1.6 billion in 2001. Economic relation with Iraq also had significances in the relations with the Arab world in commercial and energy domains. Baghdad could serve as the centre of a regional strategy for France. The participation in the Iraq War led by the US could risk these pre-existing French interests in Iraq.²⁸

Another important source of French opposition to military action against Iraq came from France's traditional pro-Arab foreign policy. Opposition to war was linked to deeper concerns about the impact of a conflict on the region and on Arab attitudes. Iraq was a pivotal power that served to the political interest of France in the Middle East. The relation with the Islam world was considered seriously in this aspect.

The impact of French Muslim was another important concern for the French government (Wieviorka, 2003). France has the largest Muslim population in Europe of nearly five million and their agitation could result in more anti-Semitic attacks involving terrorism. Given the sensitivity of the Muslim population in France, any military action against Iraq could have been interpreted as another move against the Arab world.

4. External Factors: Germany

1) Transatlantic Relations & Multilateralism

The German refusal to the Iraq War was motivated by a variety of external

²⁶ Previously TotalFinaElf.

²⁷ This program was adopted as the UN Resolution 986.

²⁸ In December 1999, the Iraqi newspaper Babel, edited by Saddam's elder son, Uday, warned France that its support for a U.S.-backed U.N. resolution toughening the existing trade sanctions could directly hurt French interests in Iraq (Washington Times, February 20, 2003).

factors that reach beyond mere political tactics (Becher, 2004: 404). The German decision to oppose the Iraq War reflected transatlantic relations and foreign policy orientation in the UN and multilateralism. Since the establishment of the Federal Republic in the aftermath of the WWII, Germany's security has depended on NATO as well as a close tie with the US and EU (Wolfram, 1989: 29). Transatlantic partnership has been the most important pillar of German foreign policy. However, the German foreign policy in the Iraq War reflected its new security identity by changing the security balance with the US.²⁹ Franz Münterfering, the SPD General Secretary, emphasized that Germany should go its own way. "Independently, of what the UN decides, there must be a German way, that we must decide for ourselves what is to be done. That decision for us means no involvement in any... conflict or war in Iraq." Chancellor Schröder announced:

"We didn't shy away from offering international solidarity in the fight against international terrorism. We did it because we were, and are, convinced that it is necessary; because we knew that the security of our partners is also our security. But we say this with equal self-confidence: we're not available for adventures, and the time of cheque book diplomacy is over once and for all." (Guardian, Aug 06, 2002).

The Iraq War revealed growing value gaps in US-German Relations regarding multilateralism and the use of force. The difference in the perception of security threats,³⁰ the measures of response to them and diverging perspectives on world order have led to conflicts over the role of international institutions (Gordon and Shapiro, 2004). Germany preferred the containment policy to prevent Saddam from using the WMD. Many Germans felt the US was breaching international law with its preemptive strike on Iraq. In this perspective, Washington's downplay of the UN and the EU has upset the Germans and their multilateral approaches.

The tension between Germany and the U.S. was also exacerbated by an underlying incomprehension of each other's political culture, political values, and threat perception. Post-war Germany was characterized by strong antinationalist and antipatriotic sentiments. Therefore, Germans tended to view the international politics more with a moralistic view rather than Anglo-American realist and power political terms. Henry Kissinger accused that Schröder's Germany "sought its security in an abstract moralism veering towards use of the issue as harbinger of a profound change in

²⁹ Wood argues that "the foreign policy identity of Germany [was] presently going through a profound process of change" (Wood, 2003: 9-10).

³⁰ The Bush administration defines the security almost exclusively in military terms, while Germany insists that security has several dimensions (Livington, 2002: 46).

German foreign policy (Rudolf, 2005: 133). “German way” was, according to Kissinger, a challenge not only to the US but also to Europe (*Ibid.*).

The orientation of German foreign policy has been symbolized by “multilateralism,”³¹ that stemmed from the cold war era and Germany’s adherence to NATO. Most Germans regarded the Iraq War as insufficiently justified and counterproductive. Multilateral decision–making process to achieve legitimacy for the use force in Germany was largely ignored and it disappointed many Germans.

However, the reasons for the German reluctance were much more strategic in nature (Becher, 2004: 399). German policy towards the US can also be interpreted as a logical adjustment to fundamental changes in American grand strategy (Rudolf, 2004: 134). The strategic change in US foreign policy toward unilateralism and *ad-hoc* coalitions were choking off one of the main avenues of German multilateralism. NATO has lost its salience in American foreign policy at least temporarily (Rudolf, 2004: 135). As a consequence of all these changes, Germany gave up its long-time policy of avoiding a choice between Washington and Paris (Rudolf, 2004: 135).

2) Iraq and Middle East Relations

Germany’s bilateral economic relations with Iraq date back to the 1970s. German firms were active in striking deals with Iraq and some of them have emerged as the market leaders in supplying sensitive dual-use technology to Iraq before the Gulf war in 1991. Khidir Hamza, who once headed Saddam's nuclear weapons program, recently called Germany "the hub of Iraq's military purchases in the 1980s." (Washington Times, Feb 20, 2003). Since the beginning of the economic cooperation based on MOU in connection with Oil for Food program in 1996, the volume of trade has increased, reaching 661 Million US dollar.³²

The Iraqi Minister of Trade Mohamed Mahdi Salih announced in November 2002 that Iraq has decided to give considerable priority to the economic cooperation with Germany as a reward for "the firm positive stand of Germany in rejecting the launching of a military attack against Iraq by the U.S." Even before the escalation of tensions, UN weapons inspectors had filed numerous reports of German firms complicit in aiding Iraq's covert WMD programs. Regarding to the relation with the Iraq, the prior issue for the German government was how to preserve its own interests in the region, which it saw threatened by the American aggression.

³¹ Germany did not aim for multi-polar international order but rather focused on multilateral order.

³² Direct bilateral trade between Germany and Iraq amounted to about \$350 million annually, while another \$1 billion was sold via third countries.

In political relations with Iraq and the Middle East, Schröder and Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, intensified relations with the leading Muslim nations and expressed their intention to forestall a "clash of civilizations" between the West and Islam, gradually constituting themselves as bridge-builders. Both politicians could count on a lot of goodwill in the Arab world because of their resistance to America's attack on Iraq.

Germany also had a huge number of Islam population in its territory. Schröder and other politicians could not ignore the political significance of this strong minority in their society. The Iraq War could have stirred the religious sentiment of Islam community. However, strong affinity and ambition to get involved in the Middle Eastern politics, which has been the French position, were not so evident in Germany.

IV. Rethinking the Axis of Opposition

1. Foundation of the Franco-German Coalition

France and Germany constituted the Axis of Opposition to the US-led Iraq War. The negligence of the UN and international consensus by the US was one of the common reasons for their objection. Both France and Germany wanted to follow their political and economic interests, which were symbolized in terms of "national interests." However, the comparison of the two cases shows a subtle difference between themselves.

The biggest rationale of France and Germany against the Iraq War was the preference for the UN and multilateralism. Germany has pursued the multilateral approaches in international conflict since the end of the WWII. France also had preferred the multilateralism which could differentiate itself from the bipolar pillars of the Cold War but the French emphasis on multilateralism contained a stronger preference toward a "multipolar" international system than that of Germany.

The opposition to the war mirrored different worldviews and strategies with the US. The opposition stance resulted from the disappointment toward the unilateralist approach of Bush administration and its attempts to establish new geopolitical structure in the Middle East. However, the nature of anti-American position was not identical between France and Germany. For Germany, it was an assertive opportunity to move toward to an independent policy from the US that had not been thought carefully before the Iraq War. For France, it was a burst of discontent that had long been embedded within policymakers and public. Regarding transatlantic relations and foreign policy

tradition, Germany accompanied a change its security identity whereas France has maintained a long tradition of challenging the US global strategy.³³

How to defend national interests through military intervention differed widely according to internal problems. Domestic political and economic factors also showed the subtle differences of the French and German response to the Iraq War even though they were in a same side. In Germany, the participation in the Iraq War was one of the core issues in the general election and Chancellor Schröder relied heavily on the anti-American and anti-war agenda. Taking opposition stance of the Iraq War affected strongly of waging the public opinion to vote for Schröder which enabled his victory in the election. In addition, the poor economic status that Germany was going through also added a weight to the anti-war campaign which appealed to the public. The political liability, therefore, was much higher in Germany. In France, there was almost unanimous support for the opposition to the Iraq War and, consequently, political cost of non-participation was much lower than that of Germany. President Chirac was relatively free to rely on the anti-American and anti-war sentiments.

Both France and Germany had interests in trade and other economic relations with Iraq and the Middle East. However, France had a more active economic engagement in the region. The French economic stake regarding the Iraq War was much more acute, especially in case of oil, while German economic interests were modest.³⁴ France also had a closer political relation with Iraq and the Middle East. France wanted to maintain the traditional role of political moderator in the Middle Eastern affairs and the impact of Iraq War was beyond the conflict within the Iraqi territory. Germany also had political interest in Iraq and the Middle East but its interests were more modest. The issue of Muslim population was highly sensible for both France and Germany. Both countries had substantial Muslim populations and the governments of the two countries were anxious not to agitate the Muslim communities in their territories. They also had to consider its own Muslim problem in order to prevent any kinds of terrorism related with the Islam issues.

To sum up, the French opposition to the Iraq War was a mixture of an effort to defend its national interest, underlying anti-Americanism and the emphasis on multilateral solution which would enable France to play a role in a “multipolar” war. Most of these factors were also found in Germany but the intensity of each factors showed a qualitative difference. Germany did not have such delicate economic and

³³ For example, Germany was favorable to NATO whereas France had taken a lukewarm stance toward it.

³⁴ However, a direct linkage between the French oil interest and the participation in the Iraq War was quite dubious. Bilateral economic relations of France and Iraq were multidimensional and covered a great deal more than oil contracts. (Lee, 2006; Marcel, 2003: 4-5)

political relationship with Iraq and the Middle East even though its presence was not negligible. Anti-American stance was not so deeply embedded in the public and policy makers and the multilateral orientation of foreign policy was not necessarily accompanied by the strong pursuit of “multipolarism.” The Iraq War was handled in a much more sophisticated domestic political context in Germany. The Iraqi issues were located at the center of political debate in the general election and other party coalitions, too. Compare to the French decision, Germany’s choice was based on much denser and complicated circumstances coming from the inside. It was more of a combination of weak leadership and demagogic temptation (Stuermer, 2004: 137).

2. European Leadership and the Franco-German Partnership

Regarding the European issues, both France and Germany were active toward the CFSP and ESDP but no specific leadership has been performed visibly regarding the Iraq War. During the war, France and Germany could not persuade “new Europe” to join the Axis of Opposition. To a certain extent, CFSP and ESDP were more of a “community” issues. In a situation where the CFSP and ESDP were weak to make common European voice and where “Old Europe” was countered by “New Europe,” the room of maneuver for the Franco-German coalition was not large. As being the leading roles of the EU, Germany and France had to prevent this from happening.

The enlargement of Europe was another challenge for France and Germany. More diverse interests and stances began to emerge among the member countries, which made the common voice of Europe more difficult. Discrepancies were found not only between France, Germany and the US but among the EU member countries themselves. Europe seemed to be divided in terms of the degree of alliance with the US. The US was trusted more in many other European countries than the Franco-German axis (Davis, 2003: 152).

France and Germany had dual objectives regarding its European policy. First, they sought to increase European political voice to counterbalance the US and other contending superpowers. At the same time, they wanted to take the leadership role in Europe. However, France and Germany faced an increasingly unfavorable international environment to realize these objectives in the post Cold-War era.³⁵ Regarding the Iraq War, France and Germany wanted to uphold the voice of Europe which was different from that of the US while maintaining the fragile balance of the CFSP and ESDP in which new member countries began to put their stakes (Lefebvre, 2004). Giving a green

³⁵ Interview with Professor Jean Klein (Paris I) at IFRI (February 08, 2006).

light to the US military action could shrink the uniqueness of European voice and would also weaken the visibility of traditional Franco-German leadership. In this context, the initial negative stance toward the Iraq War had to be maintained and reinforced to meet the concern of France and Germany on the European leadership. French and German military concepts and doctrines have evolved in a converging manner in recent years and they have agreed more than ever on security and defense (Heisbourg, 2004: 62-63). However, neither France nor Germany could exercise decisive influence on other European countries. “New European” states refused to accept what they saw as the excessive power of the Franco-German couple (Heisbourg, 2004: 63). If France and Germany could not present a common front, this “privileged axis” would suffer more credibility loss (Lee, 2006; Wood, 2003:7).

V. Conclusion

This study showed that the causes of opposition to the Iraq War were not identical even among the countries in the same side. France and Germany were the core of the “Axis of Opposition” but they had different bases of economic and political ideas, environment and interests. This paper argued that a simple dichotomy of pro- and anti-American perspective does not provide a comprehensive explanation on the foreign policy choice of the EU member countries. Foreign policy choice in the Iraq War reflected a far more sophisticated function of domestic politics and external factors of transatlantic relations, bilateral relations with Iraq and the Middle East, foreign policy tradition and European concerns. The foreign policies of France and Germany were determined also by the considerations on national interests. Obligation to the EU was fundamentally weak during the Iraq War. Where Brussels kept a silence, domestic politics of member states revealed conflicting national interest which, in turn, led to the division of Europe in front of the Iraq War.

In sum, the “Axis of Opposition” was not based on a firm and long-built consensus of idea or interest. It was rather an ad-hoc coalition reflecting particular sets of interests. In front of pro-US coalition led by the UK and “new Europe,” France and Germany, two traditional leaders, had felt the necessity to maintain a closer partnership regarding the Iraq War.

By examining the underlying causes of the French and German objection to the Iraq War, this paper contributes to the discussion on the efficacy of CFSP and ESDP as well as the nature of transatlantic relationship. The Franco-German case implies that European countries will decide their foreign policy not just in terms of static position

vis-à-vis the US or the UN but also with a careful consideration of their pending political and economic interests. The European response to similar cases in the future, therefore, does not render a unique path of pro- or anti- transatlantic relations (Lee, 2006).

The Iraq War would be an invaluable learning for the CFSP and ESDP. The inability of EU during the crisis of Kosovo was a painful lesson for the EU to strengthen its security pillar. The Iraq war also showed a weak security cohesion among the member countries which has led to a reconsideration of the effectiveness of CFSP and ESDP. The EU, however, began to show a series of efforts to resolve the gap between the member countries as well as between Europe and the US. “European security strategy” was released in November 2003 as the first security doctrine of the EU. In this sense, the Iraq War was another important learning process for the EU.

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