Freedom Fries: The French-American Rift Over Iraq May 22, 2003 Columbia University

Conference Transcript

Robert Paxton, moderator:

I would like to welcome you to Columbia University and to "Freedom Fries: A Conference on the French-American Rift over Iraq."

On February 14, 2003, the French foreign minister, Dominique de Villepin, made a speech to the United Nations Security Council, following a report from the UN inspectors in Iraq, in which he said that considerable progress was being made in the disarmament of Iraq through the UN inspection process. Believing progress was being made, Villepin said that more time was needed for this process to work itself out—it was too early to begin military action. But France was ready to consider it if the Iraqi government drew back and progress under the inspection process stopped. Villepin later explained, and other French government spokesmen ultimately confirmed, that France at that time was unwilling to support the second UN resolution, proposed by the United States and Great Britain, enabling military action to start in Iraq.

A few days later, in Beaufort, North Carolina, Cubbie's restaurant changed its menu, and "French fries" became "freedom fries." A Republican congressman from the region, Walter Jones, brought this to the attention of the U.S. House of Representatives. Bob Ney, a Republican congressman from Ohio and Chair of the Committee on House Administration, ordered that the restaurant in the House of Representatives should henceforth change its menus in the same direction. "French fries" thereby became "freedom fries" on Capitol Hill. This action was not met with unanimous approval or disapproval: sentiments were mixed. If you perform a search for "freedom fries" on the Internet, you find an enormous variety of things. On the one hand, a healthy amount of irony exists in the form of the following questions posed: What about "freedom horn," "freedom doors," "freedom dressing," and so on? There were even actions in the other direction. Another town in North Carolina, Carrboro, declared April "French trade month."

On the other hand, there was some rather startling invective, some of it downright scatological. Reading it, I began to think that maybe the conference organizers needed a psychiatrist on this panel in addition to historians, political scientists, and journalists. An astonishing degree of anger—of visceral anger—lapped over beyond the political class into the general public, among people who hardly ever think about Europe or France. But this is not the first time there has been deep popular anger in France aimed at the United States, or in the United States against France.

I brought something to show you. [Laughter.] This is a dartboard of General De Gaulle at his most peremptory. My students at the University of California gave it to me in 1966. This was another time when anger at France in the United States spilled over beyond the political class into the general public, among people who hardly ever thought about France. But there have been times when we Americans remember, somewhat less well, when the shoe was on the other foot, when there was deep popular feeling in France that we were deliberately trying to reduce French influence in the world and were deliberately setting up obstacles to things the French considered vital to their national interest. One case is the Suez Crisis in 1956, when Israel, Britain, and France responded to Egyptian President Gamal Abdal Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal with a military operation. On that occasion, the roles were reversed. It was U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles—in person—who submitted a resolution in the General Assembly, proposing to use the UN to condemn this military operation and demanding a ceasefire and withdrawal of troops. Secretary Dulles was deeply concerned about Muslim public opinion in the Middle East. He used measures other than the UN, particularly financial and economic pressures on the British Pound, to end the military operation. Three weeks later the United States voted in the General Assembly for a resolution condemning Britain, France, and Israel, whose military withdrawal was slower than Dulles had hoped.

As a result, there was strong feeling in France that the U.S. was trying to prevent France from realizing its national objectives. At that time, French Prime Minister Guy Mollet was negotiating with West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. After listening to Guy Mollet's tale of woe, Adenauer said to him, "Europe will be your revenge." A lot of things in America's relationship with Europe came out of that moment, such as decisions made about the French nuclear project. This is not the first time that feelings have been strong on both sides of the Atlantic. But it is certainly one of the major occasions when large numbers of Americans have been more emotionally engaged than most of us can remember at any time since 1966.

Some of us thought it would be useful to bring together a group of journalists, opinion-shapers, and others with knowledge of the issues to discuss and de-dramatize

them. By going beyond the emotions, we can discern some of the real issues involved. These issues include, first of all, why there is so much more emotion involved when we have a division with the French than there is when we have a quarrel with the Russians, the Germans, the Chinese, or the Turks, all of whom took very much the same position. The Russians took the same strategic position as the French—to use their veto power to block military action in Iraq. The Turks went much further, requiring the U.S. to modify its military plans. As far as I know, no one is boycotting baklava. In other words, there is something special about the French-American relationship; it is infused with more electricity. Informed by tensions coming out of an ancient rivalry, France and the United States feel they have a world mission, conflicts of interest, and conflicts over the stereotypes each has about each other. That is one of the issues we might explore further.

Beyond that, we might examine what the "real" issues are beyond the emotional ones. If you can strip away the stereotypes on both sides, what are the real issues? Even as there are things that divide France and the United States—even at this very moment—there are also common interests that unite them. In areas other than U.S. policy in Iraq, France and the United States today and every day cooperate quite closely in the intelligence and police fields. That is something we need to discuss.

The third issue is one of the long term: What are the long-term effects of the French-American rift over Iraq? Replacing "French fries" with "freedom fries" is of course ridiculous and superficial. In 1914 German sauerkraut became "liberty cabbage," and that did not last. But "frankfurter" became "hot dog," and that did last. So maybe this will last; I bet it does not. But the name change is superficial. What is really at stake are the deeper issues that this spasm of public anger represent. The deeper questions, such as: Is there something different about today which is not like the situation in1966? In 1966, during the Cold War, both France and the United States needed each other badly. Is that no longer true? Has the basic relationship changed because France and the United States no longer have quite the same sense of the importance of the other for the implementation of their foreign policy? These are three issues that may be explored this morning and then over lunch. And there are others as well.

As moderator, I reserve the right to say more about various items as the occasion arises. But I mainly want to get on first to our panel. Before I do that, however, I want to thank a number of people who made this meeting possible. There are, first of all, the sponsoring organizations—the French-American Foundation, whose president Tony Smith is here and his associate, Shanny Peer, who had a great deal to do with mounting this conference. At Columbia University, the Institute for the Study of Europe, whose director, Volker Berghahn, is here and his associates, John Micgiel and Kevin Hallinan, performed a great deal of work. From Columbia University Press, Kate Wittenberg, who is also the director of EPIC (the Electronic Publishing Initiative at Columbia), is here. One of her editors, Harriet Jackson, worked every day on this conference for weeks and weeks, and made an enormous difference to getting it underway. Finally, the sources of our funding are the Sterling Currier Fund of Columbia University and the Richard C. Weldon Foundation.

Now let me explain a few of the ground rules. First of all, we have a panel of three, and each one of them is going to speak briefly. After hearing from the panel, we will open the floor to the group, which consists of people who are very well informed. I am sure they will have things to say on all sides of the question. We'll probably be able to begin the question period before lunch. At 12:30 p.m. we will break for a relatively brief lunch, which will be served in place. After lunch we will resume the questions. At around 2:00 p.m. I will give the floor back to the panelists. All four of us may have some final thoughts or parting shots. We will definitely get out of here no later than 2:30 p.m. There are people who have planes to catch, people who have jobs, and I will make sure that we adhere to that schedule.

Now I will pass things along to the panel and introduce them as they appear on the program. The first panelist is Stanley Hoffmann, who is the Buttenwieser University Professor at Harvard University. For many years (1969–95), he was the Chair of the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, and he is the author of many works: the Columbia online catalog lists thirty-four of his titles, concerning France, international relations, and U.S. foreign policy.

Stanley Hoffmann:

We are dealing with so many questions that one has to make a choice or decide not to make a choice, which is pretty much what I have decided. I would like to talk briefly about some of the substantive aspects of this particular Franco-American crisis, but also about what has become a very serious gripe on my part. To put it gently, I do not believe that, on the whole, the American media came out very well in this business. I have been living in the United States now for forty-eight years. I am in an interesting situation, being both a French and an American citizen. I must say there are a number of aspects of the whole Iraq crisis which have very deeply distressed the American citizen in me. I have to remember from time to time that Alexis de Tocqueville—a really long time ago—spoke about the American passion for unanimity and rallying around the flag that affect this supposedly pluralistic country when a war goes on. This is probably what happened, and is one more reason why one can regret—as the English historian, Michael Howard, had understood immediately in September 2001—that the struggle against terrorism was called a war. Because a war can go on forever, with all the reflexes that accompany a war.

Let me begin with a few remarks about the issues themselves. If I start with them, it is precisely because I think they have barely been touched upon in much of what we have heard or read. Perhaps the most serious issue concerns how one manages allies. The Iraqi war, whether one was for or against it, was pretty much surrounded by an enormous amount of secrecy during its preparation. President Bush kept saying—until very late in the game—that he had not yet made up his mind. But it became clear a little later that his mind had been made up quite early. I do not know what went on between the United States and the U.K. But in the case of France, which is after all an ally, and which had participated in a number of previous American wars, including Afghanistan and Gulf War Number One (so the French were not always "surrender monkeys"), the French were not told anything about any of the U.S. preparations. Therefore, many of you remember that there was a fairly sharp stiffening of the French position in the middle of January. That stiffening was due to the fact that the French delegation at the UN was finally told by their American counterpart that the Iraqi war had been decided on. One rarely accuses the French of naiveté, because it does not happen often. But it seems that they thought—for much longer than many other people did—that the war was still an open question.

The management of an alliance, I think, requires from time to time that one does not treat allies, even when the difference in power is very great, as if their main role is to be yes-men. Yet there have been a very large number of statements about how this country or that one (in other words, France and Germany) has betrayed the United States by disagreeing. This is no way to handle allies. It is counterproductive. In the long run, it is a bad mistake, because even the United States cannot handle all world affairs by itself. After the war, we heard this whole business about punishing allies who have not been docile. That is no way to handle allies. The same, by the way, applies to French President Jacques Chirac's statement about the East Europeans [as pas très bien élevés], but at least Chirac recently had the good grace to apologize for it. I have not heard any apology from the American side. Allies, especially allies as old as France has been, are not kids to be punished when they disobey the master. Yet this is certainly the impression conveyed by the language of the U.S. administration. This has continued since the war, and I am surprised that it has not been noticed more. The key phrase now is "I expect," whether one listens to U.S. Secretary of State Powell or to the president or to the ineffable U.S. Secretary of Defense, Mr. Rumsfeld. (I don't know what we would do without Mr. Rumsfeld's wit and wisdom.) When they talk about another country, they say, "I expect." Well, it is very nice to deal with potential adversaries this way, but one does not deal with allies by telling them what "I expect."

In this business about the management of alliances, the United States—certainly for the second time in the last forty years—has taken good advice given by an ally who disagreed with a policy as if indeed it was a betrayal. Those of you who know the large number of books published recently about the Vietnam War may remember the episode in which French President De Gaulle essentially warned the United States—after the completely awful French experience in Vietnam—what might happen to the U.S. in Vietnam. In the U.S., this warning was seen as one more proof of the innate hostility of De Gaulle toward the United States, even though everything he predicted became true.

Similarly, this time in Iraq, when the French tried to suggest that waiting a little bit longer with the UN inspection process was not such a bad idea (since nobody dared openly talk about the reasons for the war), this was again seen in the U.S. as a sign of malign French intentions. That is one set of issues at which we have to look seriously. All of the issues we are currently confronting in Iraq require allies and international institutions. The denigration of these individuals and institutions has been very shortsighted.

Another set of issues that have been raised and that we will find again and again is the issue of how to handle weapons of mass destruction, or how to handle the countries that want to have them. This is again not something the United States can handle alone. It is also not something in which French diplomatic behavior, over the years, has always been very smart. But it is an issue requiring a common position, and not just one dictated by the United States. The issue will arise very soon in the case of North Korea. It will arise again in the case of Iran. It cannot be handled just by the U.S., despite all of its power.

The other major issue is that of regime change. As you well know, this was not the official reason given by the U.S. administration in the beginning for the war against Iraq. It was the failure of Saddam Hussein to obey a huge number of UN resolutions and the suspicions—which were presented by Colin Powell to the Security Council and in even greater detail by Tony Blair to the British Parliament— about the stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction, which Iraq was alleged to have. When it became clear after the war in Iraq started that the issue of liberating Iraq from what was indeed an abominable regime was seen as a more persuasive argument with the public (which was rather hesitant about the official reasons given for the war), it was only then that the U.S.

The danger of this shift is a double one. First, there are many bad regimes in the world. What is the threshold of badness above which one can go into a country, violating international law—which is the least of many people's concerns, including, increasingly, American professors of international law—and when can one do that? How bad does a regime have to be? A second related issue is that of who has to make this decision. If the U.S. can unilaterally make this decision, then any other country could invade a neighbor it does not like. It is difficult to consider this model to be a part of the world order. These are issues that require serious discussion. When Chirac in several interviews was asked about the regime change argument, he replied that it is opening the door, if it is done unilaterally, to chaos. Precisely because regime change is very difficult, it is unlikely that

the Security Council would ever vote in support of regime change. There are too many regimes with a vote in the Security Council that fear being changed. That is something which the allies, including the French and many other countries, need to discuss with the United States.

An issue which was very important in shaping the French position and which was not taken seriously enough in Washington concerns the government. I am not now referring to the media. One of the key motives, behind trying to prevent the outbreak of war in Iraq, that Chirac and Villepin mentioned a number of times, was avoiding a clash of civilizations. My colleague, whom I greatly admire and rarely agree with, Sam Huntington—who was against the war—has argued that we are currently in the middle of a clash of civilizations. Huntington's book was even more successful in Europe, and in France in particular, than it was in this country. One of the French motives was to avoid a clash of civilizations, certainly in large part because France has a population of five to six million Muslims. Germany has its share of Muslims, too. Whereas the official line disseminated by some in Washington was an optimistic one about democracy spreading like wildfire from Iraq into the rest of the Muslim world, the fear in France and Germany was that having the most powerful country in the world occupy an Arab state would lead to only more terrorism and not at all to democracy. That is a serious argument. You may not want to accept it, but that was very much at the heart of the French desire to postpone the war as long as it seemed to make any kind of sense.

Now let me express some of my gripes about how the French position has been presented or reported. In the beginning of the debates—certainly during the first debate in the Security Council concerning Resolution 1441 [on Iraq's compliance with U. N. inspections teams, passed on November 8, 2002]—the French position was reported fairly correctly. I mean that people reading American newspapers or listening to television—perhaps not Fox, but I don't listen to Fox—could find out what Monsieur de Villepin had said. After that, it became impossible. A few months later, when Villepin spoke for the second time to the Security Council, I opened my *New York Times*. Although it had reported quite accurately on the first speech, its report on the second was reduced to three or five lines, none of which contained the main suggestions or proposals Villepin had made. They didn't mention a series of benchmarks Villepin wanted the inspectors to follow—which, incidentally, were not very different from those the British were suggesting. The *New York Times* did not mention Villepin's suggestion for a meeting among the heads of government of the Big Five. Villepin had already been cast aside, it seems to me, in the category of the hopeless. That was a mistake.

The other thing that was a bit annoying—to somebody who has at least a French passport—was the attribution of entirely bad motives to the French all the time. One heard, "It [French opposition] must be because of French economic interests in Iraq." Well, Iraq represents around .02 percent of French foreign trade, including oil imports. It certainly was not because of the Iraqi debt to the French, because the French never expected to get a penny back. It certainly was not because of enthusiasm on the part of Chirac for Saddam Hussein. Although there was a moment in recent French history when the French flirted with Saddam Hussein, they became rather disillusioned. As far as I know from reading the newspapers, there was also a moment when Mr. Rumsfeld was said to be nice to Saddam Hussein. "We" were rather nice, "we" being this time the Americans, during the Iraq-Iran war. Everybody has something to apologize for a little. The motives attributed to the French in the American media were almost always presented as either duplicitous, or, to use the favorite expression of my friend Tom Friedman—with whom I taught a very enjoyable course at Harvard three years ago—to refer to French diplomacy, it was "futile" or "lightweight," terms Tom used to describe Villepin. Well, Villepin may be many things, but lightweight he is not.

Another thing which was rather annoying was the non-reporting of some facts which would not have taken a great deal of investigative work to uncover. In December, for example, the French provided the United States government with a list of French military units to be put under joint command if the Iraq situation came to war. The French did not want to send those forces into Kuwait immediately, for reasons that one may retrospectively deplore: the French were afraid of getting caught in something they could not get out of. Villepin himself recognized the importance of the presence of U.S. and U.K. forces for moving the inspections forward. The French were not, as so many reported, absolutely hostile to a war *under any circumstances*. Villepin repeated this after his second speech. In early January, Chirac himself went to the *École Militaire* to tell the military to prepare for eventual war. It was not (as was said later) that *under no circumstances* would France have gone to war. Many people, however, exploited another one of those unfortunate sentences of Chirac, when he did say that *under no* circumstances would France vote for war. If one read the context, meaning "the text," it was absolutely clear that Chirac referred only to the second UN resolution. That was it. The French had no reason for loyalty to Saddam Hussein. But it had some good reasons to be absolutely clear that, if war came, it had to come with international sanction.

This was not reported until very recently, and the "recently" is an allusion to an op-ed published by a former colleague of mine, Ann-Marie Slaughter, professor of international law and head of the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton. She was the first to report that the French had indeed made a suggestion to the U.S. government: if the United States was absolutely determined to go to war, it should do so under Resolution 1441, and the French would agree to disagree. Indeed, the resolution was ambiguous enough to allow dozens of international lawyers to have forty-eight opinions about what it meant. But the idea was that if one did not force the French and other opponents of the war to be counted in a vote against the United States, one could use a sort of variant of the Kosovo scenario, and the French would agree to disagree with the U.S., without a veto and without a formal vote. That suggestion, however, was not accepted. I have no source in the White House, but I imagine it was largely because of the British insistence on having a second resolution. But just think for a minute of what would have happened if the French suggestion had been accepted. There would have been no shootout at the O.K. Corral among allies. The second resolution, as you well know, did not pass in any way. In the end, it was not even submitted. One would have spared oneself a great deal of polemics, grief, insults and French fries. That was also not suggested.

These are a few examples of the way in which the French position was either misrepresented or distorted. Let me add that when French officials in the United States sent letters of protest indicating that these statements were false to some of our [American] leading newspapers, these letters were neither acknowledged nor published. That is rather extraordinary. That the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* would reject op-eds by academics is fine. But when officials, who may have some role in the events that are unfolding, cannot even get through to the American media, that I think raises very serious questions, not just about government-to-government relations but also about whether the extent of the media's embeddedness in officialdom has not gone a little too far. I think I have said enough for the time being [laughter], and I might continue later. Thank you. [Applause.]

Robert Paxton, moderator:

The next speaker is David Calleo, the Dean Acheson Professor and director of the European Studies Program at Johns Hopkins University. David Calleo is the author of numerous books about Europe and international relations, the latest being *Rethinking Europe's Future* (2001). I give the floor to David Calleo.

David Calleo, panelist:

I am very happy to be here in this distinguished company. I should not—and, following Stanley [Hoffmann]—I will not presume to defend the interests of the French. I began writing about transatlantic relations in the 1960s, and as Bob [Paxton] pointed out, this was a decade when transatlantic relations seemed dominated by De Gaulle and the seemingly apoplectic outrage that De Gaulle regularly inspired among his allies. From that experience, I learned two lessons. The first is that the French are remarkably capable of looking after their own interests. The second is that what begins as venomous resentment often in time grows into grudging appreciation. This has certainly happened in our [Americans'] views of De Gaulle. I will try to leave the French to their own devices. They are a cantankerous but noble race; they have been around a long time, and surely the world is a far better place with them than without them. I would like to focus instead on us, on the Americans. What does this *contretemps* tell us about ourselves, about where we are heading as the world's most powerful nation and how we see the world? What kind of world are we trying to create?

The question to ask at the outset is, Why are we so angry at the French? To some extent, this raises some of the same issues that Stanley covered, but maybe leading to a different point. The most obvious and most flattering answer for us is that we believe that the French behaved in bad faith. They played a considerable part in getting us to seek the Security Council's blessing for our invasion of Iraq. As Stanley pointed out, they [the Security Council] actually did not [grant their blessing]. Having lured us there to the Security Council, the argument is, the French not only refused to support us, but instead took the lead in organizing our defeat. The French would reply that, all things considered, given the short- and long-term dangers that would result from a military invasion, it was wiser to give more time to a rejuvenated inspection process. That process, beefed up by more resources, not to mention the military forces ringing Iraq, had a reasonable chance of depriving Iraq of whatever weapons of mass destruction it had or was planning to get. (The danger was not imminent.) And the French would add that, if the inspection process proved inadequate, there was plenty of time for military action. That action would be all the more effective because we [the allies] had gone the last mile to avoid it. Our allies would support us in the Security Council and join in the military operations. The French were prepared to do all of this.

Our answer to this French explanation, however, is that the French were arguing in bad faith and that they would in fact never consent to the use of force. It is believed that they were, for one reason or another, determined to preserve the regime of Saddam Hussein. In short, they were simply stringing us along. The French, in turn, accused us of bad faith. We were from the start, they say, interested not really in finding and destroying weapons of mass destruction but in changing the Iraqi regime. The Security Council discussion was merely a smoke screen behind which the U.S. and Britain went on inexorably preparing the invasion.

Which view is right? Well, possibly both. But certainly it is true that from the year 2003, the U.S. government was firmly dedicated to regime change. Would the French have joined us had the rejuvenated inspection process proved a failure? We do not know. We do know, however, that we were not prepared to give it a chance. The argument made popular by Mr. Robert Kagan¹—that Europe, under the sway of Venus, was never prepared to use force—does not seem to fit the French very well. They have a strong military. Like the British, they do not seem to mind using it. Indeed, they enjoy it, rather like the British.

There is a second reason for our anger. When we made it clear that we were determined to go ahead with our invasion, the French refused to roll over to accommodate us. They refused to admit they had lost the argument. Instead, they continued to oppose us. Indeed, the French used their influence to build a coalition against us in the Security Council. As it turned out, it was an overwhelming coalition, including Russia, China, Germany, and a large majority among lesser states, to the acute embarrassment of our staunch ally, the British, and particularly to Prime Minister Blair.

¹ Robert Kagan wrote, "That is why on major strategic and international questions today, Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus: They agree on little and understand one another less and less. And this state of affairs is not transitory—the product of one American election or one catastrophic event. The reasons for the transatlantic divide are deep, long in development, and likely to endure." See "Power and Weakness," *Policy Review Online* (June 2002), at http://www.policyreview.org/JUN02/kagan.html

This point of view is quite flattering to the French. The belief that they have such power to sway other people in the world is of course a very flattering idea. We can attribute this to their habitual sneaky diplomacy. But, again, if we are honest with ourselves, we did our share of cajoling, bribing, and bullying. Certainly the resources we had available were greater than those available to the French. We lost in the Security Council not because the French had more power than we but because the overwhelming majority of states thought they had the better argument. We lost the argument, but we won the battle. We have changed the regime. Saddam Hussein is gone, and now we are determined to punish the French. Some part of our own government at least seemed determined to sow dissension in the European Union, and in particular to break up the Franco-German axis. This is something that—despite the many quarrels of the Cold War—we have never resolutely tried to do in the past. We believed our larger interests lay with a strong and cohesive Europe, no matter how inconvenient it might be to have allies with a mind of their own.

What does this shift tell us about ourselves? Or about the world in general? It reflects a new geopolitical reality since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the bad old days of De Gaulle, we thought the world was bipolar. In reality, you could say the world was tripolar. The Western Europeans were free-riders, not only on the American forces that contained the Soviets, but also on the Soviet forces that balanced the Americans. The Soviet threat made Europe a great prize, and the United States was in no position to seriously alienate European governments or publics. Now, with the Soviet Union gone, we live (we think) in a unipolar world. Nothing restrains us except our own timidity.

as well if we take our distance from them. The way is open for us to become the world's only superpower, the world's hegemon. If our new military doctrines are to be taken seriously, we intend to use our present power to keep that power indefinitely and to oppose any rising new powers that might some day be in a position to challenge us. That group could include not only China or a rejuvenated Russia, but indeed Europe itself, a Europe built around the old Franco-German axis.

My question at the outset was, What does all this tell us about ourselves? American behavior reflects this unipolar view of things, this unipolar mindset. Since the early 1990s, it has gradually taken hold among our political elites and it is now spreading to public opinion generally. Arguably the Clinton administration had just as unipolar a view of things, but under that administration we were inclined to define our hegemony in economic or globalist terms. We were the world's super-economy, leading the rest of the world in technology, sucking in capital from the rest of the world to finance our voracious appetite for consumption and also our very rapid growth. In this vision of the world, it was the role of Europe and Japan to save and the role of America to spend. This particular unipolar fantasy has now come to a troubled end, an end that suggests that we are now more dependant than ever on the goodwill of our allies, and that we are much more vulnerable than we had thought.

But we have another unipolar fantasy, one which is built around our military power. Indeed, we are now inclined to see ourselves as omnipotent. This is a view that imposes some rather heavy obligations. We are in the position of an all-powerful God. If there is evil in the world, it is our fault, and hence our responsibility to use our power to remove it. This unipolar view of things, combined with the strategic doctrine on the lookout for rivals, promises a hyperactive future.

Let me finish by suggesting a couple more questions. Is this petulant and wary superpower the kind of America we want? Is this Roman future where our history and democracy have been heading all along? I don't think so. Our republic was founded on checks and balances, not on imperial overstretch. I have been studying America's twentieth-century role in the world for the better part of my life. I have always found a great deal to be proud of. But if the unipolar vision is to define our world role in this new century, there will be much less cause for self-satisfaction. The unipolar vision not only encourages a view unworthy of America, but it is a mistaken view of how the world is actually evolving or what America's historic mission should be. The United States is clearly the world's leading state. But as the rapid rise of the Euro, for example, might suggest, today's world is not really unipolar, and it is likely to be less and less so in the decades to come. America's role is not to set itself against the rise of everybody else, but to use our predominance to coax others into a genuine concert of reasonable powers, to manage together the tremendous problems that this new century will face. This is, you could say, what America did so well in the twentieth century. Among our greatest accomplishments, of course, was the European Union, in the creation of which our encouragement was certainly a major element.

Let me finish with a few words about that. It has grown fashionable, particularly among conservative American analysts, to view the European Union as a product of the Enlightenment, a sort of Kantian construction, where pacifist democracies renounce power in order to produce perpetual peace. To see Europe in this way makes it easy to underestimate its vitality. Kant's abstract and denatured view of politics is inadequate to explain the richly complex process through which Europe's nation-states have been forming a continental commonwealth. Their union is rooted in older and richer ideas than Kantian peace theory, ideas that stretch deep into medieval Europe. This emerging Europe is "old Europe"—it is the Europe of Dante and Aquinas, Montaigne, Montesquieu, Machiavelli, Talleyrand, Burke, Hegel, and Liszt. Like any dynamic constitutional system, it juxtaposes opposite but complementary principles: unity and diversity, common interests and special interests, community and individuality, common action and a balance of power. Just as it is unwise, it seems to me, to underestimate the vitality of this new Europe, it is wrong to believe it is unconcerned with power. On the contrary, thanks to its own tragic history, today's Europe is very much aware of power. Above all, it is aware of the terrible temptations and dangers of unbalanced power. Its natural bent is toward building a balanced concert of states in order to control power. When faced with conflict, internal or external, Europe's instinct is toward conciliation, toward finding common ground. It has grown skilled at focusing soft power, to nudge contending parties into some kind of consensus. We—especially our neoconservatives, who are determined to avoid appeasement at all costs—we detest and fear, it seems to me, these conciliatory European proclivities. And where promiscuous Europe sees a world where everyone is a potential friend, martial America lives in a world where every independent power is a potential enemy. Given the seemingly inevitable rise of Asian great powers, not to mention Russia and Europe itself, and given the enormous differences in wealth between old and new great powers, America's martial approach to world order seems unpromising. Meanwhile, the insistent denigration of Europe in

American public discourse, notably of France, is seriously disturbing. A real estrangement between the United States and old continental Europe would serve the interests of neither side. What we presumably all need is a global concert able to manage the world's accumulating problems—above all, to accommodate the peaceful rising of the great powers of Asia. Americans and Europeans need each other's strength and wisdom.

A final point: we also need each other to balance our own respective continental systems. It is true that France and Germany's ability to cooperate, to build a European Union, has depended greatly on America's presence in Europe. It is no less true, I would like to suggest, that a strong European presence in American policy-making has become essential to constraining our own huge military power, and therefore to preserving our own Constitution. A good polity always needs to balance power, wisdom, and virtue. Today, triumphal America has too much power and thinks too highly of its virtue. Thank you. [Applause.]

Robert Paxton, moderator:

The final panelist is Christopher Caldwell, who is a senior editor of *The Weekly Standard.* ... Christopher Caldwell also writes a weekly column in the *Financial Times* and regular essays on books and culture for *Slate*. He writes frequently in the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Post*. I give the floor to Christopher Caldwell.

Christopher Caldwell:

Hello. I would like to thank everyone for inviting me here: Tony Smith, Professors Robert Paxton and Volker Berghahn, as well as everyone involved in the conference. When I was asked to participate in this event, it was explained that the panelists would be an academic bunch of people and "we want you to come and give the anti-French side." That is not the side I am on. I have what sounds like a sissy position on this: I think there was good faith on both sides concerning the rift over Iraq. Both the United States and France were acting according to their national interests, as they passionately felt them. Where I differ with many of the people in the room, and certainly with most at the front of the room [the panelists], is that I think there were legitimate reasons for the United States to go to war in Iraq. I tended to support it myself. What makes me think that both sides were acting in good faith is the symmetry of the accusations launched in both directions. In France, just as in the United States, you heard that it was economic interests that were driving the other side to behave as it did. The unanimity of opinion that some of the panelists have mentioned in the case of America was equally pronounced in France. According to one poll I saw-I think it was an IFOP [Institut francais d'opinion public] poll—in April, French public opinion was 87% to 12% against the war in Iraq. What drove passions to such polarity is a turning point in the world order that was marked by the Al Qaeda attacks in September 2001. As a result, we have a very different idea of the world order than we used to. We have always had this sense that there is an inchoate re-ordering of the world, that multinational organizations are becoming more important, that markets in a time of free trade are leaching power away from governments.

The United States, however, tended not to share this idea that political power was going to have to shift in such a way as to bring the world under some kind of control. I want to be very careful that no one here thinks that I am saying I think the United States wants to take over the world. But there is a particular problem that comes up with regard to weapons of mass destruction in a time of what Thomas Friedman calls "the superempowered individual." It is against that backdrop that the changing American idea of world order really has to be understood.

Going into this crisis, it seems there were two competing visions about potential world orders. One was American hegemony—and let us be precise about what we mean by hegemony. It is not imperial control, but rather a leading role in many aspects of life, including cultural, financial, and other areas, where example is as often the way a country rules as is coercion. The other model for a world order was the UN. This too was an inchoate order. U.S. hegemony and the UN "government of the world," largely because they were incomplete [models], tended to complement each other nicely. There had not been horrific clashes between the U.S. and the UN of this sort. What I think happened to create the American antipathy to France is that Americans got the impression that France was trying to lead Europe to switch sides from the U.S. to the UN.

Throughout the Cold War, Europe repressed its nationalistic and national desires for the sake of a common defense against the Soviet Union. With that threat gone, its options are open, and now it can remain in the American orbit or it can try and strike out on its own. France made the judgment that the UN model offered Europe more scope for its "national" ambitions, however we understand national ambitions—whether we understand them as the individual ambitions of the twenty-five countries that now make up Europe or as a new pan-European ambition.

I was struck by a thumbnail model of European ambitions that I saw in *Le Monde* the other day. Everyone knows there are two dominant ways that Europeans think about European Union, On the one hand, there are those who view it as basically a trading bloc, and say that for defense Europe will have to rely on NATO. On the other hand, there are those who view Europe as moving towards a federal state, and say that Europe will have to build itself an army. But *Le Monde* mentioned a third group, one that occupies a middle ground. These are the people who believe that Europe is going to move towards its own defense policy. But that it will be a "Europe of the nations" that does this.

It was the way in which these European nations represented their ideas of what would constitute a reasonable security order in the West that created opportunities for friction with the United States. In Europe, as it is presently constituted, only France and Britain retain enough of an idea of nationhood to act in a forceful "American-style" way. They are the only two nations that can lead Europe. But they went in opposite directions. That is because the European project has quite consciously reacted against nationalism. They have consciously thrown out the baby of the nation with the bath water of nationalism. It was to serve this end that France committed what Americans see as its worst trespasses.

Among the sources of friction, the two worst were the Chirac remark about the Eastern European nations being "badly brought up" [like children] and the Villepin lobbying trip through Africa to turn nations on the Security Council against the United States. I would make only two observations about these particular incidents. One, they show that, as much as the word "Gaullist" is thrown around in the press to describe anything the French do that tends to annoy public opinion, this is not Gaullist. This is something very modern, very multilateral. Villepin's opposition to the United States sought to place France's position within the cadre of the United Nations. And this was a very interesting development. I think it probably took a lot of swallowing of pride for France to do this.

But given the forthrightness of these bold French actions, you can see why France is blamed in the United States in a way that Russia, Turkey, and Germany have not been. France is not simply taking up a position in opposition to the United States—it has ambitions for the world order itself. That is important for understanding the reaction of the United States.

I don't think we have come out of this crisis at all. I think it is in a quieter phase, but I think the clash of interests remains. The United States must punish France if it does not want to allow other nations a free pass to muck with the world order. One could say that the problem the United States has had with France is the result of the United States' failure to act decisively after the Schroeder campaign in Germany last September. I am not saying I fully endorse this, but it is an opinion. Europe must have an independent foreign policy. Whether you examine government or public opinion, it is clear that Europe does not respect the American dispensation in foreign policy now. And if you doubt that, watch what happens to Jose Maria Aznar's Popular Party in the elections in Spain this weekend. Unless Europe gets very scared (which is not to be ruled out in an era of weapons of mass destruction), its movement will be toward independence from the United States.

One of the reasons that we tend to perceive the United States as acting arrogantly now is that the United States has the wherewithal to pursue its disciplining of Europe. I think, however, that the U.S. is proceeding in a very measured way. While the United States is able to pursue its interests, Europe is not. For the time being, this is largely due to the economic situation, and primarily the economic situation in export-driven Germany at a time of deflation and negative growth in the first quarter of this year. A German economy would have to drive a European defense force, and right now that cannot happen. When you have this "chocolate summit," as you did a month ago in Brussels, the Europeans wind up looking ridiculous. But small as that group is, and ridiculous as the first efforts are, they did not look so ridiculous at the St. Malo summit three or four years ago, when a European strike force was being seriously talked about between Hubert Védrine and Tony Blair. Though these efforts look ridiculous now, there is going to be more effort in that direction. Americans will be more attentive to the European alliance to make sure it does not get too unruly. I am afraid that this may be the worst episode, but it is not the last. Thank you. [Applause.]

Question and Answer Period

Robert Paxton, moderator:

The panel has had its say. Now we are going to be able to argue and debate. This is a distinguished group, with strong opinions. Let me just say one or two preliminary things. We have tried to represent a number of opinions at the conference. We have not thought of this as a Franco-American dialogue but as an American-American dialogue. We are Americans talking amongst ourselves about our response to Europe, to France, to the world situation. There are a number of French people here: the French Consul General and several French journalists. We are delighted to have you speak. Everyone who wants to speak should. I further observe to you—as is obvious—that we are being filmed. A video-tape is being made, and that tape will be accessible. I mentioned earlier EPIC, the Electronic Publishing Initiative at Columbia—one of its publications, CIAO, Columbia International Affairs Online, will publish the conference transcript. For that reason, you have been asked to sign a release form. If you do not want your comments to appear there, then you have a chance to not sign the release.

I see a number of hands: Charles Cogan first, and Craig Whitney second. Will you please identify yourself for the purpose of the tape, and will you go the microphone to be recorded?

Charles Cogan, Senior Research Associate, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University:

I agree with Christopher Caldwell that this is the worst crisis in French-American relations because this time there is blood involved. Two of the major countries in the Western alliance went to war; the other two major countries did not. This is going to have a long-term effect. I ask myself, "Why did this have to happen?" At Harvard, about two weeks ago, U.K. Ambassador to the UN, Jeremy Greenstalk, visited and I asked him, "Why couldn't France simply have abstained in this resolution as it did when resolution 1284 was put forward, creating UN MOVIC?" Ambassador Greenstalk replied that he believed Jacques Chirac had taken it upon himself to uphold the principle that the UN must not be used to rubber-stamp an American decision. I conclude that Chirac thought that if France abstained, after all this *Sturm und Drang* in January and February, Chirac would have acted as a rubber stamp. It is unfortunate because, in the aftermath, there has been a lot of backtracking in France, a lot of second thoughts. This reminds me of the dictum of [French political philosopher] Raymond Aron: "The French are continually surprised by what they have just done."

Craig Whitney, Assistant Managing Editor, New York Times:

Thank you. I have to leave soon, which is why I am glad you asked me to speak. I would like to say that the work of a group like this is most constructive if it looks forward to how to solve the problems that have become evident through this crisis, for which the *New York Times*—I'm sorry—is not going to take the blame. There were op-ed pieces by the French ambassador in the *New York Times*. We did our best to cover the story as it went along. I will admit we did not do everything perfectly, but that is not the problem. The problem is that you have a superpower, the likes of which the world has never seen, which does not need allies anymore to do the military things it wants to do. It did not need allies in Iraq. It does, however, need allies in Iraq to make the peace work. The problem before us all is, How to persuade the U.S. administration that is now in power and future ones to come that the United States still needs allies in this and other contexts? How can allies seem to be more effective in helping make the peace? We depend on our allies in Europe and in Asia, our trading partners, for a large part of our livelihood. But most Americans do not know or realize it.

One last observation: I think the United States as a "hyper-power," as Hubert de Védrine coined the phrase, may seem to have the power of God, but it is not acting like God. The problem with God that was expressed was "Why does God allow evil to exist in the world?" And we seem to be bent on extirpating it. So I just offer those thoughts. Thank you.

Robert Paxton, moderator:

Yes, sir you are next, and then Andrew Pierre, and then we're probably going to have to break for lunch.

George Schwab, President, National Committee on American Foreign Policy:

Thank you. We are talking about our attitude towards France, what the media reports, and so on and so forth. I am a frequent visitor to France, and I do read the French press. What I see in the French press is a tremendous amount of anti-Americanism. Last July, I attended a meeting in Riga, Latvia, where the aspiring NATO member nations were meeting. There was a big French delegation, and we [the U.S.] came in for a terrible bashing from the French. I spoke to our French colleagues and friends and said that this anti-Americanism is eventually going to backfire, but I was just dismissed—you know, maybe as being from Venus

rather than from Mars. Would you care to make some comments about the French media and their anti-Americanism, which dates back to when I was a student there, in the late 1950s?

Stanley Hoffmann, panelist:

I would like to respond. There has been indeed a great deal of anti-Americanism in the [French] press. France happens to be a country in which—for better or worse—the press has much less influence on foreign policy than in some other countries. If one looks at the public, well, the public has a number of specific grievances about American actions in the world. But I do not detect in the French public even now the sort of anti-Americanism that is similar to the deluge of anti-French jokes and contemptuous remarks you find in the U.S. At the present time, most people in France, including the French press, make a fairly sharp distinction about the United States, distinguishing the American political system and its values—which are not that different, God knows, from those of France—from the U.S. administration.

This explains why the reaction in France to some of the punishments the United States is so keen about imposing on France—including depriving poor Monsieur Chirac of a visit to Texas—is often a simple Gallic shrug, implying, "This too will pass." One has to distinguish between objections in France to specific U.S. policies and to prejudices about Americans, which are harbored on both sides of the political spectrum. A large number of traditional clichés about America have not gone away. In the U.S. there is an almost quasi-racist opposition to the other country, which I do not think exists in France. The French continue to like Americans, believe it or not. They may not like Mr. Rumsfeld; they certainly do not approve of the policies of the Bush Administration. If I were a French official, I would not like them either.

That brings me to a point which was raised earlier that we should explore a little bit deeper. It was suggested—quite rightly—that the U.S. can win wars alone, but it cannot win the peace alone. But then we return to the problem indirectly raised by Robert Kagan's [Mars vs. Venus] theory. Is it the role of the United States to "break the dishes" by war, and then the mission of the Europeans to glue them together? That cannot be. If the United States wants allies because it needs them in tasks of reconstruction and assistance, it needs to include the allies—or at least consult them—in the decision-making process. In this particular instance, this was not really done.

Andrew Pierre, Senior Associate, Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Georgetown University:

Professor Paxton in his opening remarks suggested that this discussion is an American-American dialogue. I would like to make a point in that regard. It is truly not intended to be a partisan point, but I think it is an important part of the picture we are examining. If the chads in Florida had fallen on the floor in another direction, or if the U.S. Supreme Court had a 5–4 composition that was the reverse of the current ideological position, I very much doubt that we would be holding this conference today. The Gore Administration would have considered Iraq a serious problem. President Gore might well have ended up in a war in Iraq in time. But I think the modalities of that—I am sorry to use that diplomatic word—the way this was orchestrated within the international community would have been very different.

It is important to recall that Bob Woodward and others tell us that President Bush, against the advice of Vice President Cheney and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, went to the UN in some ways against his personal inclinations. He went to the UN in a very peculiar way. In a very forceful and well-received speech, Bush spelled out the American view. But he also said that if the Security Council does not support us, we will go alone. Now, that to me is a serious and major demonstration of not only a shift away from the traditional internationalist policy of the United States since World War Two, but really a misreading of the United State's role in the world, and, in particular, the role of the United Nations in the international system.

Mr. Campbell made a remark this morning that I very much appreciated (I don't have it in my notes at hand), something to the effect that France had moved from a position of supporting the United States to one supporting the United Nations. That was revelatory to me because I did not know that the United States was not supportive of the UN. That mind frame, which is very broadly shared in Washington, D.C., where I live, seems to misrepresent the way the world is. The country that has changed is not France—it is the United States.

The remarks made by Stanley Hoffmann and David Calleo this morning—that the world did not support the U.S.-led invasion when it took place—are not yet totally accepted or understood in the United States. As Stanley Hoffmann pointed out, France asked for a 120-day extension (then 60 days, and then 30 days) of the time required for a tripling of the inspectors. Now we are talking about raising the total number of inspectors, U.S. and UN, to 2000. I won't go into the whole history of the issue of weapons of mass destruction, which have not been fully found yet. There is an attitudinal change towards the UN.

I also think—and again, please accept this not as a partisan remark—there is something about the mentality of the United States' president today. He needs a grudge, an enemy, in part to make his positions plain. Nobody is happier today than German officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Berlin, who have been able to get off the hook somehow, now that France is on the hook. For the American public, France is a much better meat hook than Germany could ever be.

My final point is that as important and interesting as this discussion is today, I think we are only at the halfway point in the discussion about the impact of the war in Iraq upon France, the United Nations, and the international system. As we meet right now, France, Germany, and other countries participating in the debates going on at the UN are shifting towards a position of greater support for the United States. And the U.S. is moving toward a position of greater acceptance of the role of the UN in nation-building in Iraq, as the U.S. demonstrated yesterday [May 21, 2003]. From my perspective, there are elements working in the right direction.

In addition, I think serious damage has been done to the European-American relationship, not because of the Venus and Mars argument, but because the United States was perceived as really willing, not only militarily but diplomatically, to push its military advantage to the full and to not listen well to the international community. That is something that is going to be part of the international debate for years to come. In time, however, this will be considered just another Franco-American or European-American crisis, like some of the others. Although it is a profound crisis, it will perhaps not have as lasting consequences as we fear today. Forgive me, Professor Paxton, for making a remark rather than asking a question.

Robert Paxton, moderator:

That is fine. Remarks are entirely in order. This is a distinguished panel, and you have things to say. Richard Bulliet is next, and then I'll call on you, and then Rick MacArthur.

Richard Bulliet, Professor of History, the Middle East and Islam, Columbia University:

Being a Middle East specialist, my remarks will be somewhat parochial. Several months ago, during a conversation with a French diplomat, he said that he thought that the worst decision the French had made in recent decades was the decision to support the Algerian coup of 1992. I was struck when Professor Hoffmann mentioned De Gaulle's warning to the Americans about Vietnam. Part of the French attitude toward the idea of a preemptive move against Iraq came from a very sobering and tragic experience. The French had essentially supported a preemptive regime change in Algeria, with important consequences: an enormous tragedy for the Algerians and a tremendous security problem for the French. The aftermath of the Algerian coup of '92 has fueled all sorts of security problems in France and also in Britain. Everyone arrested in Britain so far on terrorist charges has been Algerian, coming from France. I am wondering whether part of the French reluctance to be associated at all with an attack on Iraq came from an interest in protecting French citizens from the possible backlash of already unhappy people in France. I also wonder if, in a year's time, the Americans will have made such an incredible mess of Iraq that we will change our attitude toward the French and see what they can teach us from their previous disasters in an attempt to help us attenuate the negative effects of our disaster in Iraq.

Robert Paxton, moderator:

Thank you. Stanley Hoffmann mentioned the six million Muslims living in France, and I thought you [Stanley Hoffmann] could give us more depth about that. Next.

Margaret Hawthorne, Senior French Desk Officer at the State Department:

As an administration official, I would like to make a couple of comments since we have not really heard from the administration today. Referring to the discussion of the disagreement the U.S. and France had, I think we certainly understand that allies can disagree, and do disagree. We expect that. The sense was that we [the U.S. administration] were disappointed that, on an issue which we considered a national security interest—and we do have to remember that after September 11, the sense of national security has indeed changed—France actively worked against us. It was not just a matter of the French saying they would not
support the second resolution on Iraq. It was that the French said they would actually veto any such resolution that authorized the use of force. It also seemed that France turned the questions and the debate over the policy on Iraq into a debate over the use of American power.

I would also note that there has been some discussion about punishing France. It is not our intention to punish France. That is not our goal. In fact, Secretary Powell is in Paris today for the meeting of the G8 ministers. As he has said, we want to put this behind us—this is all past. We need to move forward because in fact we do, as was commented earlier, work very very closely with France on a great number of issues, issues that are very important to both the security of the United States and the security of France, acknowledging the security of the world and the fight against terrorism as being really the most important. Both countries have indicated this is their number one priority. We will continue to work with France and with the other countries on these issues. France is an ally and friend, and has been for 225 years. That is not going to change.

We are all very pleased by the statement made last night by French Foreign Minister Villepin and the German and Russian ministers that they would support the resolution in the Security Council today. I don't know if the vote actually happened today; I assume it probably has. That was definitely a very good step forward. There was clearly a willingness to work together to try to make this happen.

In addition, there is also the agreement made yesterday at NATO to allow the NATO military authorities to begin planning in order to provide support to Poland in Iraq should Poland request that. This was an issue that was fairly seriously debated, but again we have reached an agreement on this. The goal is that that we want to move forward on these issues ... that matter a great deal to all of us, and put this behind us in an effort to work together to address the challenges that we face.

Robert Paxton, moderator:

Thank you, Margaret Hawthorne. That was illuminating. Thank you very much. Rick MacArthur.

Rick MacArthur, Publisher, Harper's Magazine:

Before I ask my question, I just want to second what Professor Hoffmann said about the dangers of media embedding. He is right, but he does not realize how bad it was. It is much worse than he thinks. From a scholarly point of view, the period to examine is the period from September 7 to October 10, when the resolution was passed in Congress. That is when the real disinformation campaign went down; that is when the *New York Times, Washington Post, PBS* were at their worst.

But I wanted to ask a question about culture as opposed to politics. I had a chance in Paris last month to chat with someone I have to call a senior foreign ministry official, who went on, not surprisingly, about the ignorance of his American counterparts. He specifically singled out Condoleeza Rice's "utter historical ignorance," as he described it. I wondered whether—at this crucial moment that everyone talks about, when supposedly Villepin and Powell misunderstood each other, each claiming the other had betrayed the cause that they said they were working for in common—there wasn't literally a clash of civilizations. We are now living in a post-Enlightenment era in the United States, where the sort of subtle, rational discourse, the self-mockery that we associate with French culture, just doesn't translate into American politics, and as a result, the Franco-American misunderstanding is literally a cultural misunderstanding. Powell literally could not understand what Villepin was doing; he didn't understand the signals.

I will give you an example, unfortunately, since I don't have any inside information on the political struggle. In the media, you could see it most obviously on a program where Charlie Rose, in typical fashion, was not interviewing somebody who knew something. He was interviewing a *New York Times* reporter, Patrick Tyler. Rose kept asking Tyler, "Can't the French understand that we must get rid of Saddam Hussein? That he's an evil tyrant, etc., etc., that he has weapons of mass destruction and so on and so forth?" And Rose went back and forth with Tyler, as you suggested, ascribing every French position to cynicism and self interest. But not once could either of them conceive of the possibility that France simply disagreed with our position. He could not say it: He couldn't just say a simple declaratory sentence: "Well, the French disagree with us. They think X and we think Y."

So I wondered if we could approach that subject at some point.

Robert Paxton, moderator:

Anyone wish to comment?

[...]

David Calleo, panelist:

Just a very brief point. It seems to me, from what I know of Secretary Powell, that he is perfectly capable of understanding eighteenth-century subtleties. The problem is that the Pentagon does not understand Powell. That seems to me where the cultural divide is and not between Powell and Villepin.

Robert Paxton, moderator:

Yes sir.

Lionel Barber, U.S. Managing Editor, the Financial Times:

I work for the *Financial Times* here in New York, a paper which is probably equidistant between Mars and Venus. I would like to offer just two observations on the breakdown of diplomacy and the current crisis in the alliance. It is not a crisis just between France and the United States; it is a crisis between the United States and Europe. The first point is that there has not been enough attention given to the fact that both sides, beginning in September after President Bush's speech, misunderstood each other and each other's motives. What I mean by that is that, on the French side, and including on the British side, there was probably a lot of wishful thinking about the strength or weakness of the war camp in Washington. There was a desire to take President Bush at his word and try to seek consensus in the United Nations Security Council. At the same time, there was a view that once the UN process got underway, this would impose constraints on American action. By contrast, senior people in the administration saw nothing but disadvantages in going the UN route, and saw only the threat of being immobilized by the UN. That was clearly flagged by Vice President Cheney's speech in August. If you then lay on top of that all the deficiencies of Resolution 1441, such as no timetable for inspections, no clear roadmap, no cut-off—all open-ended—you can see why there was going to be a train wreck sometime in January.

My second observation is that one should really distinguish between the division in January—which was certainly caused in Paris, and to a degree in London, by the realization that war was indeed imminent and the view that this was a matter of principle, (between acting outside the UN or dealing with a dictator, however you wish, it was regarded as a matter of high principle)—and what happened in February and March, which was a true diplomatic disaster. You had a completely untenable situation in the alliance, where one partner was trying to muster a coalition in the world against the other [and vice versa] to thwart each other's motives. So the months before January I would say were partly a problem of mutual misunderstanding, but the months after January were indeed a crisis born of conspiracies on both sides to muster coalitions to thwart each other's actions. Thank you.

Robert Paxton, moderator:

Thank you very much. Tony Smith.

Tony Smith, President, French-American Foundation:

There are a couple of fundamental and very interesting questions that have been raised, first by the excellent panel presentations and then by the questions that followed. They both spring from the unipolarity thesis that David Calleo discussed at some length. I would disagree a little bit with my good friend Andrew Pierre that this is simply a product of a particular administration. One could make a strong case that September 11 and its aftermath created a much broader consensus on the value—rightly or wrongly—of the United States operating as the hegemonic power in a unipolar world.

My first question for the panel, which I would like very much for them to pronounce themselves on, is: Is this just a phenomenon that will pass with this administration, with its neocons and Don Rumsfeld, etc., or is this a more deeply felt, a paradigm shift, to use that awful word, in American politics?

The second question also relates to the same issue of the unipolar world that we are now living in. In Stanley Hoffmann's explanation of the crisis, there was not much mentioned . . . simply that France and its European allies are unwilling to accept this unipolar world and that what we are seeing really is a challenge to that. Margaret Hawthorne alluded to this, and, therefore, this is simply not another bump along the rocky long road of French-American relations. But this is perhaps the first skirmish in what will be a long contest to decide how the world is going to be organized.

I would be very grateful if the panel could address both questions.

Christopher Caldwell, panelist :

I agree. While I hope it is not the first skirmish, there is a type of politics we have in the United States that Europeans find unfamiliar. It's the kind of politics that results when the size and reach of the central government is open to negotiation and you have populist desires to bid it down to the lowest level, like the question "What business does Washington have telling me this?"

The last twenty years have been full of this sort of politics, and it is a constant strain in American life. As the global order becomes more multinational—as it runs on new types of sovereignty, multilateral agreements, NGOs—this type of politics will keep getting played out more. And I think that that is what is happening in Europe.

Again, to analogize from the United States, anyone who grew up in a small town in America looks up and thinks the town looked better before all the nice little fishermen's shacks were torn down and replaced with McDonald's. This is happening in Europe *a fortiori*. At the root of all the stuff we are talking about is the cultural. –Behind this sense that European anti-Americanism may be a prejudice—and it may be an indefensible prejudice—they may be just placing an American face on what is actually globalization. There's no question that when they see a small town emptied out by the *hypermarché*, they think about us [Americans]. It is only a matter of time before they get really fed up with this.

The Iraq war did demonstrate the American hyperpower, but it presented the weakest, least palatable side of it. It might have seemed to Chirac and Villepin and

to other patriotic Europeans that, "Okay now is the time that, if we put our foot down, we might have a chance of making ourselves heard." That is a bit of thinking aloud, but those are my thoughts on unipolarity.

Stanley Hoffmann, panelist:

I would like to remind all of you that the French have been fighting against unipolarity since De Gaulle came to power; it is not Villepin who invented that. I don't think it's a new *accident de parcours*. I would say it is a little bit like the kind of anti-Americanism one finds often in the French press—it is there as background noise. The degree to which it actually inspires policy varies from case to case. In a sense, the U.S. administration is partly responsible for reviving it as an actual political issue through its strategic doctrine of last year. One has to be blind not to realize that countries want to play a role in this world, and not only France. Britain has some of the same problems; it has not resolved them any better than the French have.

What is left for us [the French] if the objectives of the U.S. government in the world are those you find in the doctrine, "Prevent anybody else from becoming a rival, maintain a military budget equal to all the other military budgets in the world, claim the right to preempt when the United States sees fit"? This is no longer just a French problem ... or a German shift. God knows the Germans were good Atlanticists—far too much so in Gaullist eyes. It was impossible not to pick that issue up. As you suggested, this opposition to unipolar U.S. power might become even more likely in the future. But it did not start with Villepin and Chirac. In fact, Chirac is probably the most pro-American French president, one who almost succeeded in negotiating the re-integration of France into NATO. To put it a bit bluntly, it collapsed not because of State Department opposition but because of Pentagon opposition. So that too has to be taken into account.

Robert Paxton, moderator:

Absolutely so. Isn't he the only French president who ever worked flipping hamburgers?

Stanley Hoffmann, panelist:

He [Chirac] liked it.

Steven Erlanger, Culture Editor and former bureau chief, Berlin, and European diplomatic correspondent *New York Times*:

About five months ago, I was the correspondent in Berlin and covered the Schroeder election. I wanted to get the panel's thoughts on something else. It seems to me that what happened at the UN was eminently preventable and resulted from severe mistakes on both sides. The Bush Administration's gratuitous unilateralism, for more than one year, on all kinds of issues, produced a kind of popular reaction in Western Europe that Western European leaders responded to. Whoever said France had not changed—only America had—obviously was not looking at the election results. France has a right-wing government top to bottom. The socialist party was roundly defeated; France did change and its politics changed.

The Bush people could have had their war and the UN, too, had the U.S. played things differently. One of the reasons it did not—and this is what I'm curious to ask people about—is due to intra-European politics, which we have not discussed. To some degree the French acted the way they did because they were concerned about reform of the common agricultural policy, and they wanted to pull Schroeder along toward a kind of new European center. The French were concerned about European enlargement, about the Trojan horse of the new members of the EU, creating a pro-American bloc. Just look at Poland. It might be interesting to hear your thoughts on Chirac's own mistakes. By behaving as badly as he did to those new members, Chirac created exactly the problem he hoped to forestall. By struggling so clearly with Blair on this important policy, they have made the possibility of a common European defense and security policy seem farther away than ever. They humiliated Javier Solana. They undermined efforts toward a European defense policy and created fissures inside a Europe that is enlarging and has enough fissures to begin with. ... I would be curious what the panel thinks, looking forward, about French policy and its impact on Europe. Thank you.

Robert Paxton, moderator:

Does anyone on the panel wish to respond?

Stanley Hoffmann, panelist:

I do not want to answer too many questions. But on that one, it seems to me, if you put yourself in the French position, since St. Malo (since the end of '98),

there was a beginning of a U.K.-French leadership toward a common security policy. And the Iraq issue made the British do a 180-degree turn, leaving the French stranded. It is, therefore, not entirely astonishing that the French reacted with a certain degree of amazement, because they knew perfectly well that in the present condition of the various European economies, only France and England are willing to increase their military budgets and start thinking about a common security policy.

Should this have pushed the French into the arms of the U.S. and the U.K.? Here we face another perennial problem of France after World War Two, which is the envied position of playing Athens to America's Rome. That position has been taken once and for all by the British. There's no room for the French, except to be treated as number three, as they were in the immediate postwar period. Chuck Cogan has shown that very well in his books. It is not a position that any French government relishes, because the French consider themselves—for better or worse—as not having done any worse in the postwar world than England has. So there we go again, back into the layers of the past.

As for the future, who knows? If I had to make a bet (I usually lose my bets), I would say that once all of those "old/new" Europe countries are within the EU, they will gradually discover that they have common interests. One could say, regarding cases in international affairs, that a smaller power or a middle-sized power prefers to be attached to a great power which is far away, like Poland and the U.S., especially since France and Germany are very close to Poland and appear a bit domineering. If the United States continues in the long run to treat its allies the way it has, I think the Poles will even forgive Monsieur Chirac. He can do far less harm to them than can bad policies coming from the United States. And I think the Poles will have an incentive in order to increase their own power, and I think they are very sensitive to that. In that respect they are very much like France, England, and Germany; they would like to use Europe as a forum for increasing their own influence.

I think it is going to be easier (which does not mean easy) to repair the rifts *within* the EU—perhaps not on agriculture, but that's insoluble anyhow—than it will be to repair the rift between the French version of the EU, if you like, which the Germans seem at this point still to hold onto, and the U.S. I think that is going to be much more difficult as long as the present team is in power in Washington.

David Calleo, panelist:

Just a couple of quick points. I think it is worth remembering that, in a sense, it is Schroeder who trapped Chirac and not Chirac who led Schroeder astray. The French were presented with a kind of *fait accompli*: either they abandoned their German allies in a rather exposed position or they supported them, and it may well be that internal European politics played a large role in the French decision. It is not a very subtle point.

On the question of a common foreign, defense, and security policy and so on, it is a mistake to make these things too mechanical. I mean that it has consisted so far of Britain and France. It got off the ground because the British suddenly began showing interest in it, as part of some larger strategy of Blair's toward Europe, no doubt. It is dead at the moment for obvious reasons, although there seem to be some efforts to rejuvenate it, which may mean that the English themselves are rethinking their policies. It certainly will require such a step. Barring something like that, the only thing that will resurrect common defense is the Germans, and it seems to me you can find signs of this, if you believe that the Germans have decided that it is time to do something serious. But as Stanley [Hoffmann] points out, they [Germany] are in the middle of all these economic difficulties. Although that will not really stop them, it seems to me the problems are essentially political—of moving the Social Democrats to accept this (not to mention the Greens). But I think they have moved.

The question of the new members raises a different question, which is whether the EU has not reached the limits of its usefulness to Europe's main powers. This is not a very happy subject in a way because the structure of the EU, like the structure of the UN, is seen as a way to tame excessive power, to somehow let small countries feel more secure and give them some real reason for feeling secure. But if you get a structure with twenty-five countries in it, and the new members are obstreperous in terms of what were thought to be the general interests of the major powers, then it becomes quite unworkable. The real question is, what replaces it?

You could argue that you begin to get a kind of concert, comprising the French, Germans, Russians, Chinese, whatever. This is a really formidablesounding geopolitical bloc, and it may mean that European politics will turn away from the EU back to a more traditional kind of concert politics. This must be a serious issue for the main players in all of this because they all understand, I think, how important this structure of the European Union really is and yet how fragile it is in some respects. That is why, it seems to me, a U.S. policy which deliberately tries to break up or weaken the EU is a very short-sighted policy in terms of our own interests.

Christopher Caldwell, panelist:

What I think is interesting in terms of their common interests is Rumsfeld's remark about "Old" Europe. Here again I am totally speculating, but it may have been that Rumsfeld was just making a remark about the changing constitution of the European Union. I do not mean to act as his lawyer here, but what he might have meant was that there would have been a sufficient or serious obstacle in a Europe of Six, but now France and Germany are just two among twenty-five voices.

Richard Duqué, the French General Consul in New York:

Professor Paxton said that this is not a French-American debate. But, if I may, I would like to say a few words. I have been very interested in hearing various views about French-American relations coming from our American friends. I think we should not have too pessimistic a view of the current situation between our two countries. We have had a strong difference over Iraq. You mentioned that, in the past, we have had very serious differences—NATO, Suez, Vietnam—but we have always managed to overcome them. I trust that this will be the case this time again. I think the current situation is transitory. Why? Iraq is extremely important as an issue, but we are engaged in other very important endeavors as well. We are with the Americans in Afghanistan. We are with you in the Balkans. We have a very close cooperation in the struggle against terrorism. This should not be neglected. And also I think that the Americans, with all their might and power, know that they cannot solve every problem in the world alone, and we are saying this about Iraq today—somebody mentioned the Security Council debate. We will see this again in the future. In Evian, in ten days, we will be together and we will discuss the great issues on the world's agenda. I am confident that the path to cooperation will be taken.

By the way, Professor Paxton, we do not say in French *frites françaises*. We say *pommes frites* or more simply *frites*. [Laughter.] I guess that "French fries" is an American expression. Maybe it is a courtesy to the French culinary tradition, whereas, in fact, the credit should go to the Belgians.

Robert Paxton, moderator:

The "freedom fries" website observes, among other things, that it seems to have been invented in Belgium. Then the British weigh in, trying to claim English origin, saying, "You're all wrong, it's 'chips.""

I think we have time for one more question, or we can go to the panel for closing remarks. That's what we'll do. Each panelist has a chance to recant or persist or have any final thoughts he wishes. So who's going first? Should we go in reverse order?

Christopher Caldwell, panelist:

Well, all I can say is, thank goodness—this discussion has taken a great weight off my mind. I was totally wrong that there was anything wrong with the relationship [laughter], and on we go. This is interesting—I have been very curious to know how deep certain of these things go. I agree with our friend from the French diplomatic mission that our two countries share similar values, that we have many things in common, and many programs on which we can work together.

I persist in being worried, however, that common values may not save us from a clash of interests. I think all the countries in Europe feel a bit of a sovereignty deficit now, and that, because France is the most patriotic country in Europe, it is the country whose citizens' feelings for their country most resemble that of citizens in the United States. I think France feels that sovereignty gap more keenly. France also happens to be the natural leader of Europe, so I do expect these problems to recur.

There is an interesting symmetry. In terms of geostrategic relations we seem to have two problems. The American military preponderance leaves us with two undesirable solutions. At the beginning of this crisis, Europeans were saying, "Well, this is great. You've got this big army, a terrific democracy, and human rights. We'll grant you that, with some exceptions. But that doesn't mean that you get to decide where all the wars are, where we have to send our kids to go and die." But the only alternative the Europeans have presented so far is to take the problem to the United Nations—you can let that collection of despots tell you where to send your kids to go and die. I think there is something really out of balance. There is not an obvious way out of this problem of America's military imbalance. But I thank you for inviting me here to help look for one. Thank you.

David Calleo, panelist:

Well, just a couple of comments. First of all, about some things that Andrew Pierre and Tony Smith raised. It does seem to me that unipolarity, as I have tried to suggest in my talk, is the reason for all of these differences in policies. It is a way of looking at the world. It has dominated American policy since the beginning of the 1990s, since the collapse of the Soviet Union. It took a different form under Clinton, although there were, as people pointed out, some [manifestations] on the military side. There are antecedents in the Clinton administration, but as I've tried to say, it was mostly in the economic sphere. Europe and the United States have been on a different geopolitical wavelength since that time. The current situation is really the consequence of that, the explosion of that.

Europe at Maastricht dedicated itself to an agenda, which essentially is that of an independent, autonomous, self-sufficient Europe. This does not mean a Europe that hates the United States. or which is not closely allied with the United States. It means that Europe is a master in its own house. That ambition—which is embodied in the Euro, in the common foreign and security policy, in all these other things which are connected with Maastricht—implies not only a Europe which has a mind of its own, but also a plural world. It is not possible to have this kind of Europe and still talk about a unipolar world. As a result, there is a natural affinity between this kind of Europe (among the states that are trying to create this kind of Europe, of which France is certainly the first) and interest in a larger kind of Eurasian concert.

There is a basic difference. The question I tried to raise was, which is a wiser view of the future? That which sees unipolarity as a kind of permanent state of affairs (and, with a little help, we're going to work hard to preserve it)? Or a view which says, Of course the world is plural—it will become more so. Russia will not stay in this condition indefinitely; China of course grows rapidly—for all of its problems, it will be an increasingly major force in the world. We cannot anticipate a permanently unipolar world. Therefore, an American policy which fights this, rather than tries to steer it, is a policy headed, well, toward problems.

On the one hand, Europe is terribly self-preoccupied with trying to do all these things. Having another ten countries come into the European Union is a tremendous absorber of energy and makes the whole construction very fragile, for reasons we were just discussing. On the other hand, Europe really cannot ignore what the United States is doing. It is slightly odd to find the U.S. talking about how the Middle East is particularly important to us, "so Europe should stay out of it." I know that in the State Department there are some maps, but you know, the Middle East is next to Europe. And a good deal of the Middle East has moved to Europe, as we were talking about earlier. The case is similar with Russia, which is, after all, Europe's neighbor. It is probably fair to say that if Europeans had been making post-Cold War policy toward Russia it would have been rather different from the policy the United States has made with NATO enlargement and all the rest of it. The fact is, Europe cannot ignore these things because Europe's own interests are too intimately involved.

A final point: we perhaps have not emphasized sufficiently the dynamism of American policy. We have sort of fallen into the view, which I hope is true, that there was this terrible *contretemps*, but, you know, we have had these things before. This comes from these people in the Pentagon, but they have been tamed. Somehow they have gotten their hands full. The State Department has been called in, and reason will once more prevail. Maybe that is true. But there is a kind of dynamism in the State Department, in the Pentagon's policies, and in the kind of neoconservative rationale of those policies which is by no means finished. The sort of comments which have come from some people in recent weeks about, "Well, you know, Syria's a danger," and more particularly, "Iran is a danger," not to mention what is obviously a real danger in North Korea—none of these situations suggests a world which is somehow taking another vacation from history.

Stanley Hoffmann, panelist:

A few remarks on this unipolarity problem: it seems to me that it is s a fact. This world *is* unipolar, and in all likelihood—here I am less hopeful that David—it will remain so for a long time. But that does not put an end to the issue. This issue has two dimensions. The first one is that, within this arsenal of American power, this administration has given an enormous priority to the area in which American superiority is greatest. This is the use of force, the military. That makes it much more difficult for the allies than in the period of the Clinton Administration. I am thinking of Clinton, from time-to-time (everything with Clinton was from time-totime) the emphasis was put more on the economic dimensions of international relations and thought. This has not been the case with this new doctrine, with the—I'm looking for an American word—the equivalent of *rodomontade*, for the sort of self-satisfaction of the neocons.

The Americans have underlined how far superior they are in force to everybody else. In the long run, this is not good. It is precisely because the United States is so strong in all the dimensions of power that it should put a little less emphasis on early resort to military force.

The other dimension is, what kind of unipolarity? The U.S. in recent years (after all, the world has been unipolar since 1990) has practiced—and here I cannot help it, but I would contrast Bush I and Bush II—the doctrine that you can have a sort of *de facto* unipolarity and still treat others as if they existed. I am reminded of those Franco-American discussions. I was saying it yesterday to the president of Harvard, who is now going to co-preside, with Henry Kissinger, on a task force on European-American relations. What Europeans ask (not just the French) is, as one character in a French play said, "Je demande qu'on me respecte." Translated: "I would like to be respected." It is too fine a point for mathematicians of the "balance of power" theory, but it is an important one, one which may be incapable of reaching the doors of the Pentagon. That I don't know. But it is an important one. I do not think the U.S. would lose anything in the long run by going back to a policy which had served its interests beautifully since 1945, which is to surround its power

with a network of international institutions which provide rules and restraints. Otherwise, we will all suffer from it.

That brings me to the issue of the UN. The UN, by itself, cannot decide where American soldiers will fight for the simple reason that the U.S. has a veto in the UN. That is really a fantasy. But what I was always struck by—and, again, it seems to me that it should have been underlined more in the press—is that the U.S. president, even when he came to the UN in September, has always talked about "the U.S." and "the UN" as if the UN were a different body, leaning toward the hostile and moving toward the irrelevant, and the U.S. were not a part of it. No American president had talked that way. The U.S. has acted in the UN, and sometimes manipulated it, as all powers do. But this new distinction—"We the powerful are here, and the talk show is there—I think, is a very bad indication of how many people in the U.S. administration think.

One more word about this—there will be only two more words, I think—about the accusation that the French, after January, led a conspiracy, a coalition against the U.S. Now wait a minute. The U.S. insists on presenting a resolution. It notices that it does not have the votes for it and starts (to put it gently) bribing, bullying, and coaxing other countries to vote for it. Why should not the French go to the same places and essentially tell them, "Make up your own minds"? I do not think the French offered \$32 billion to anybody, the way we [the U.S.] did Turkey. I do not see this as a conspiracy. When you are in a vote-getting battle, each side tries to get the maximum votes. I understand that even happens even in the U.S. Senate. So why be so shocked? A final remark. I was glad that Steven Erlanger pointed out the importance of what is going on in Europe, and here I would like to end with a last gripe about the media. What is going on in Europe these days is, among other things, this famous—but not here—convention. It is essentially a constitution-drafting body, headed by former French President Valéry Giscard D'Estaing, in which many decisions will have to be taken about the relative power of the big states and the smaller states. It has been proceeding, so far, by consensus, which is not a bad idea. If one does not follow this in the media, or treats it as fluff, one misses a great deal of what is going on. For the first time, Europeans are trying to adapt their institutions to: (a) enlargement, and (b) the awareness that in the future Europe will have to play a role in high politics, in defense, and in diplomacy. Very little attention has been paid to this, which, in the country of the original Constitutional Convention, is a bit regrettable, because that is what is going on. Thank you.

Robert Paxton, moderator:

Before we go, I would like to mention just one or two things that have not been mentioned. One is a matter that has not come up because this is a very sophisticated audience. But go outside, cross the street, and the average American will tell you, "The French owe it to us because we saved them twice." Everybody sees it in those 9000 graves at Colville-sur-Mer, on the hill over looking Omaha Beach. It is constantly mentioned. I, as a historian of France, think that any serious look at the history will tell you that the French do not owe us anything. We helped them when it was in our interests to do so, and usually three or four years late. They helped us as at Yorktown and Saratoga, when it was in their interests to do so, and perhaps a few years late as well. When it was not in our interests to help them, we did them many a bad turn—several have been mentioned. In Indochina, we gave them a little help. In Algeria, we gave them absolutely none. We abstained in the UN every time a hostile measure was raised about France and Algeria. Every American seems to think the French "owe it to us," but they are all wrong.

One more point about unipolarity. The constant cooperation between France and the United States that has happened during this entire mess over Iraq has been mentioned several times. The constant cooperation in security and police matters deserves to be underlined. I remind you that the one person who has been indicted for September 11th, Monsieur Zacarias Moussaoui, was identified by the French intelligence service, which informed the U.S. We do not seem to have done much about it.

If we really want to be unipolar, it is very simple. All we have to do is roll back the tax cuts, double our tax rates and restore the draft, and we can do it by ourselves.

Thank you very much.

[Applause.]