

## National (hi)stories of war—German and French discourses in the Kosovo war and the Iraq crisis

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**Abstract:** When democracies go to war, decision makers are expected to use good arguments in order to make their publics follow. It is assumed here that historical arguments play a pivotal role in such an endeavour. This assumption is challenged by comparing the corresponding discourse among the French and German political elite. The case studies comprise two cases in which the countries behaved similarly: In the Kosovo conflict in 1999, both actively undertook military action, whereas in the Iraq crisis in 2003, both refused to join the US-led coalition to attack Iraq. With regard to identity theory, two hypotheses can be drawn: First, justifications in France and Germany will differ significantly due to different national identities. Second, historical arguments will be more salient when a country goes to war (Kosovo) in comparison to a non-war case (Iraq).

On the whole, the empirical findings support these hypotheses. Yet, it must be conceded that historical arguments were predominant only in the German debate over Kosovo. When German decision makers defended their decision not to participate in the Iraq war, they presented mainly static, interest-based reasons. Moreover, in both debates, the French discourse participants used very few historical arguments. When they did, these were mainly intended to back up “realist” arguments emphasising France’s aspirations to be a great power, its multipolar worldview, and its balance-of-power thinking.

**Keywords:** France’s and Germany’s foreign policy · Military out-of-area engagement · Kosovo war · Iraq crisis · Role of history in discourses · Discourse analysis

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## Nationale Geschichte(n) für den Krieg – der deutsche und französische Diskurs im Kosovo-Krieg und in der Irak-Krise

**Zusammenfassung:** Das militärische Auslandsengagement von Demokratien bedarf der Begründung. Zentraler Baustein solcher Begründungen – so die Ausgangsvermutung – sind historisch motivierte Argumentationsmuster. Diese Vermutung wird anhand eines Vergleichs von zwei großen EU-Staaten (Deutschland und Frankreich) überprüft. Dazu werden zwei Fallstudien gewählt, in denen sich das außenpolitische Verhalten beider Staaten ähnelte: der Kosovo-Krieg 1999 (beidseitig großes Engagement) und die Irak-Krise 2002/2003 (keine Kriegsteilnahme). Aus der Identitätstheorie werden zwei Hypothesen abgeleitet: Erstens wird angenommen, dass sich die Begründungen für Außenpolitik von Land zu Land sehr unterscheiden. Zweitens ist zu erwarten, dass der Gebrauch von Geschichte im Falle der Kriegsteilnahme (Kosovo) ausgiebiger ausfallen wird als in der Irak-Krise. Angesiedelt auf der Schnittmenge zwischen Geschichtspolitik und Außenpolitikanalyse bedient sich die Studie des methodischen Rüstzeugs der Diskursanalyse. Im Ergebnis können die beiden Hypothesen – mit Einschränkungen – bestätigt werden. Allerdings ist festzuhalten, dass nur im deutschen Kosovo-Diskurs historische Argumente zentral waren. Im Irak-Diskurs überwogen statische, interessenbasierte Argumentationen, während für Frankreich in beiden Fällen „realistische“ Begründungen charakteristisch waren.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Außenpolitik Deutschlands und Frankreichs · Militärisches Auslandsengagement · Kosovo-Krieg · Irak-Krise · Rolle von Geschichte in Diskursen · Diskursanalyse

### 1 Introduction

When democracies go to war they better have good reasons. Democratically elected decision-makers require broad public support in order to justify anticipated sacrifices in the event of war with respect to security, prosperity, and freedom, and to avoid putting their reelection in jeopardy. Historical arguments are particularly useful to generate the greatest possible public support since the reference to national ‘master-narratives’ allows the current decision to appear to continue previous decisions and to abide by their inherent logic. By making use of historical arguments, decision-makers actively take part in the interpretation of their own past; thus, they engage in politics of history (*Geschichtspolitik*).

Foreign policy and politics of history—according to the present thesis—have a common intersection that is worthwhile examining. At the same time, it is to be noted that this field of research has been left almost untouched so far, even though many individual fields of research are touch upon the topic. For pragmatic reasons, I will not review the vast amount of literature on foreign policy analysis, politics of history, comparative politics, discourse analysis, French and German foreign policy, and the conflict in Iraq and Kosovo.<sup>1</sup> Instead, this paper—which is based on more extensive studies<sup>2</sup>—will focus on a

1 See among others: Harnisch 2003 (foreign policy analysis), Fröhlich and Heinrich 2004 (politics of history), Kriesi 2007 (comparative politics), Keller 2004 (discourse analysis), Hellmann 2006 (German foreign policy), Charillon 2002 (French foreign policy), Reuter and Clewing 2000 (Kosovo conflict) and Gordon and Shapiro 2004 (Iraq crisis).

2 See Swoboda 2005, Stahl 2006a, 2006b, 2008.

discourse analysis by means of primary sources.<sup>3</sup> The few analytical terms from discourse theory needed for the methodological implementation will be introduced in the general part of the paper.

Comparing French and German foreign policy rhetoric from the perspective of politics of history seems worthwhile in several respects. The two states pursue differing foreign policies on similar terrains. Their foreign policies are generally considered to be historically motivated, and the complementarity of their policies presents a necessary condition both for the development of European integration as well as the solution of international problems (climate change, terrorism, proliferation of WMD etc.). The Kosovo war and the Iraq crisis in 2002/2003 represent two cases where the two states acted similarly (*most similar cases design*): During the Kosovo war, both states actively participated in the aerial warfare alongside the US. Furthermore, both states particularly championed a diplomatic solution of the conflict.<sup>4</sup> In the Iraq crisis, both states resisted the pressure of the US to attack Iraq and to clearly legitimize the attack by means of international law.

Therefore, it suggests itself to ask whether this similar behaviour was also similarly justified. By choosing an event of war (Kosovo) and a 'refusal of war' (Iraq), it is possible to complement this horizontal, comparative question with a dynamic one: How is the role of history in one and the same country to be assessed with respect to the different foreign policy situations? These questions will be more clearly defined by formulating two working hypotheses. In the conclusion, I will try to evaluate the usage of history by summarizing the findings.

## 2 '(Hi)stories' in foreign policy discourses

At first glance, foreign politics and politics of history seem to be two entirely separate fields of study. The former deals with the state's set of tools which it has at its disposal to influence other external actors in the international system. The latter is supposed to have an effect on the inside into society: political actors dispute over the interpretation of the past (Wolfrum 1999, pp. 25–32). However, both subfields reach into one another: For example, on the one hand, comparative literature on politics of history concedes that an insufficient coping with the past is able to limit the available choices of foreign policy. Despite its superior economic resources compared to Germany, Japan, for example, does not have as much power to shape foreign policy as Germany due to its problematic politics of history, from an international point of view (Yakasuni shrine, "comfort women", Nang King massacre; Hielscher 2001). On the other hand, historical lines of arguments have benefited from the emergence of social constructivist approaches—world views, norms, identities and ideas—in International Relations. Among them, identity theories figure as

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3 In the main text, longer citations are in German and French in order to leave the original message untouched. Translations to English (by the author) can be found in the footnotes.

4 This applies to France for the time before the air raids (Rambouillet). Concerning Germany, this rather applies to the aftermath (Stability pact for South Eastern Europe).

the most popular concepts (Wæver 2005, p. 34). Thus, ‘national identity’<sup>5</sup> defines the spectrum of the socially possible in foreign policy, and thereby reflects in what manner and in how far a democratic European state is in itself ready to participate in processes like globalisation or overseas military deployment (Nadoll 2003, p. 167 et seq.). This denotes the analytical overlap between foreign politics and politics of history: if ‘we’ and ‘the others’ are historicized, politics of history becomes identity politics to a large extent. From this perspective, foreign policy baselines, objectives, and tools do not appear out of nowhere, rather, they are the result of contingent historical processes. Accordingly, the reason why France considers the possession of a nuclear bomb an indispensable tool of her foreign policy whereas Germany rejects the very same thing cannot primarily be explained with the pressure of the international system but instead with its (discursive) national processing. This processing of international challenges and crises varies because European discursive spheres regarding foreign policy are still largely separated (Larsen 1997, p. 199; White 2001, p. 177). The specific national histories provide vastly different legitimization resources which corresponds to the ‘national special paths’ (*Sonderwege*) in Europe. This becomes evident when considering the reception of military victories and catastrophes, which may lead to collective hubris on the one hand, and collective traumas on the other hand (Schivelbusch 2003). Identity studies show that states can derive completely different national learning processes from the same historical event. Thus, for France, the foreign policy disaster of the Suez-crisis indicated that it would define its foreign policy as ‘independent’ and dissociated from the US, while the UK maintained a *special relationship* with the US from then on (Prizel 1998, p. 34 et seq.).

German and French societies are strongly linked with their pasts, which, still today, continue to derive their role in the world to a large degree from their past. France—generally speaking—considers itself to be a civilisation and major power; Germany is largely influenced by the experience of the Second World War. Thus, it seems plausible to formulate a first, horizontal comparative hypothesis for the analysis: *Regarding the contents of the usage of history, the two countries will differ strongly due to the fact that the referents of their national identities differ* (difference hypothesis).

What can be expected from a dynamic comparison of the usage of history? First, we remind of the commonplace that a war claims victims—of all parts of a society. Bearing this in mind, a democratically elected government usually feels compelled to look for a strong identity-based backing to assure the highest possible public consent for going to war. According to the so-called resonance hypothesis of identity theory, an argument operates the more convincingly, the more it corresponds to the experiences of the audience and to previously accepted norms and principles (Risse 2003, p. 115). Lines of argument that solely serve particular interests are not suitable because they do not resonate well within large parts of society. Arguments with a historical link, however, can be expected to produce a comparatively strong resonance in the event of war, simply because they connect with wide-ranging personal experiences of the citizens. At the same time, wars

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5 For examples, see the Copenhagen School (Hansen and Wæver 2002), Thomas Risse and his team (Marcussen et al. 1999; Risse 2001) as well as the research project on comparative foreign politics (PAFE) at the University of Trier (Joerßen and Stahl 2003; Stahl et al. 2004; Stahl and Harnisch 2009).

shape “cultures of memory” in a special manner (Cornelißen et al. 2004) and affect society’s “collective memory” (Halbwachs 1985). When politicians use historical arguments they relate to the individual as well as with the collective memory. Moreover, the usage of history appears appealing since it reduces complexity and suggests that lessons have been learned from history (Buffet and Heuser 1998, p. 266). Thanks to historico-political research, we have gained another insight concerning this matter. If sacrifices have to be made in the present, it is worthwhile to broaden the horizon. This is clarified by Assmann (2006, p. 42) who, based on Ernest Renan, reminds us that:

The mytho-motoric potential of the shared national memory of history (..) provides sense by interpreting the present as an intermediate stage of a motivating narrative that spans the past and the future. [author’s translation]

An augmented resonance, a relation to cultural memory, and an overarching narrative are indicative of an increased usage of historical arguments for the legitimisation of war. Thus, a second dynamic comparative hypothesis can be formulated: *History becomes more important if one chooses to go to war than if one refuses to do so* (war hypothesis).

What, then, can discourse analysis contribute to the disclosure of historical arguments?<sup>6</sup> Two aspects deserve attention: the achievement of discursive dominance (‘discursive hegemony’) and the objective of a discourse analysis. First, let us remind ourselves of the function of political discourses in democratic societies (March and Olsen 1995, p. 45, 66): They

- explain political events
- justify political acts
- (re-)interpret historical memories and
- (re-)construct identity.

Within a discourse, political actors try to establish their arguments as the dominant ones—discourses therefore are always struggles for power (Torring 2005, p. 15, 23). In doing so, actors can be alleged to have an instrumental understanding of a discourse, but discourses are deceptive in this regard—they do not reveal anything about the motives of the discourse participants (Wæver 2002, p. 27). If a group of political actors succeeds in asserting their pattern of argumentation they have achieved discourse hegemony (Nadoll 2003, p. 176). The dominant discourse that has originated corresponds the most with general experiences and other indicators of ‘truth’. It is therefore surrounded by a ‘veil of normality’ (Bach 1999, p. 50). Discourse hegemony, then, not only implies the power to interpret future events but also to construe the past. Hence, discourse hegemony enables leading members of society to conduct politics of history (Winkler 2004). Discourse hegemony represents the currently valid common sense; the basic understanding of foreign policy that is shared by large parts of the population. Thereby, discourses limit a possible opposition of society against a specific foreign policy on the one hand, and restrict the actions of the state itself on the other hand.

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6 At this point, it is not possible to acknowledge the vast amount of research. See Keller 2004; Hansen 2006; Schwab-Trapp 2001; Howarth et al. 2000 as well as the rapidly expanding literature on critical discourse analysis: Fairclough 2003; Jäger 1999; Wodak and Meyer 2002.

Discourse analysis explains how a society structures and limits political options in a way that decision-makers only consider very specific options to be acceptable or to present them as acceptable (Westlind 1996, p. 116). Discourse analysis does not claim to explain foreign policy decisions in a causal way. Rather, it depicts social conflicts and public controversies and discloses “discursive fault lines” (Hansen 2006, p. 53; Schwab-Trapp 2001, p. 264). Consequently, this article does not seek to infer different motives for the war in Kosovo, for example, from politicians’ rhetoric. Instead, by means of comparison, it will be shown which legitimisations established themselves in the discourse, in how far they were challenged, and which role historical arguments played in the process. This allows us to draw conclusions about the consistency of legitimisations for war and basic foreign policy orientations.

In this paper, those arguments and patterns of argumentation will be extracted which reflect historical aspects, be it in terms of metaphors, analogies, allusions, comparisons or examples. Which texts, whose statements will be examined? It has to be determined who can be considered a “privileged storyteller” (Milliken 1999, p. 236) in the respective society, in which forums foreign-political debates typically take place, and, consequently, how the text corpus should be selected. The position of a society’s privileged storyteller is, above all, determined by the common formal path of a foreign policy discourse in a society. In democratic states this is determined by constitutional theory and practise; additional aspects are the roles of parties and the media. These “discursive paths”<sup>7</sup> differ in France and Germany: While foreign policy debates in Germany continue to take place predominantly in parliament (despite an increasing uptake by the media), in France such debates are—to a considerable degree—located outside of parliament, due to the “*parliamentarisme rationalisé*”, the dominant role of the president as well as the active intellectual scene (Stahl 2006a, p. 110 et seq.).

Within the sample periods (January 1998–August 1999 and September 2002–April 2003), speeches and interviews by the president of the state, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Prime Minister as well as the speakers of the factions in the *Assemblée nationale* will be analysed for the case of France. Furthermore, I have taken into account columns by intellectuals and heads of smaller parties from *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, *Libération*, *L’Humanité*, *Le Monde diplomatique* and *L’Express* in a non-systematic manner. With regard to Germany, speeches and interviews by the chancellor, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Defence Secretary as well as the heads of parties and factions are examined. Again, I have also consulted interviews and articles by politicians from *FAZ*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, *Financial Times Deutschland* and *Die ZEIT* in a random manner.

The sample periods were determined by the escalation of the conflicts and their ‘solutions’. In the case of Kosovo, reports about the initial systematic displacements and homicides in February 1998 in the Drenica valley mark the beginning (Giersch 2000, p. 447). In June 1999, NATO ceased its bomb strikes on Serbia and subsequently, an interim arrangement administered by the United Nations was established in Kosovo. In August

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7 Discourse theory refers to the term “dispositive” can be found, which is broader, however. A dispositive is the “*material and ideal infrastructure (...) through which a discourse is (re-)produced and causes effects*” (Keller 2004, p. 64; author’s translation).

and September 2002, the Iraq crisis was aggravated due to speeches by the US president as well as the vice president, who both set the focus of US-American foreign policy on Iraq (Gordon and Shapiro 2004, p. 96 et seq.). At the same time, military preparation for an attack on Iraq commenced. By the end of March 2003, discussions about legitimising the attack according to international law came to an end when the invasion of Iraq began.

### 3 Empirical studies: the Kosovo war and the Iraq crisis

In the following four case studies, I will proceed as follows. After having briefly summarised the context of each debate, I will present the successful (discursive hegemonic) argumentation and its main lines of argument. Subsequently, I will point out the historical arguments. The same method will be applied to the inferior challenging arguments. Finally, I will focus on the weight of the historical arguments and relate the result to my starting hypotheses.

#### 3.1 Germany in the Kosovo war: humanitarian disaster and Fascism

The escalation of the Kosovo crisis in 1998 hit Germany in a volatile situation on the domestic front. The Kohl administration, which had already been voted out of office, was formally still in office, and the newly elected red-green coalition had not yet been constituted. Therefore, the first of the two main debates on Kosovo (16 October 1998) was conducted by the ‘original team’ in parliament (the second debate took place on 15 February 1999). In both debates, there was a consensus between the old and the new government: Germany would participate in the NATO-led air raid on Yugoslavia even without a UN-Security Council mandate. The lines of argument remained mostly consistent over the period of the bombings—unlike in France. However, criticism became harsher after the air raids commenced. It was brought forward above all by representatives of a traditionally reluctant standpoint with regard to overseas military engagements (ex-communist PDS, leftists among the social democrats, leftist members of the Green party, leftist liberals [FDP]).

One of the initial, rather interest based lines of arguments of the proponents of the air raids ran in accordance with a line of argumentation established in the beginning of the 1990s (the so-called “Out-of-area debate”) which proposed an incremental expansion of military interventions abroad. Thus, the outgoing Minister of Defence Rühle as well as the head of the CDU/CSU faction, Wolfgang Schäuble, emphasised Germany’s ability to act within the bounds of its treaty obligations (*Bündnisverpflichtung*). Furthermore, they cautioned against a German special path (*Sonderweg*), that is, Germany’s refusal to act responsibly with respect to its policy.<sup>8</sup> Whereas this “normalist” argumentation dominated the Out-of-area debate in the 1990s, this time, the mainstream was different. Rather, the debate started out from idealistic threads of argumentation which were summarized by the Foreign Minister-elect, Joschka Fischer (Green Party) as follows:

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<sup>8</sup> Rühle (16 October 1998) 23134, FAZ (19 September 1998), Schäuble (16 October 1998) 23140.

Europa ist gegenwärtig zweigeteilt. Wenn wir auf den Balkan blicken, sehen wir das Europa der Vergangenheit, wenn wir nach Brüssel schauen, sehen wir das Europa der Integration, das Europa der Zukunft; einerseits das Europa der Vergangenheit, der Kriege und der ethnischen Säuberungen, andererseits das Europa der Zukunft, der Integration und, Gott sei Dank, des Verschwindens des Krieges als Mittel der Politik, das Europa der engen Kooperation, das Überwinden und Auflösen von Grenzen. Wir werden den südlichen Balkan hin zum Europa der Integration entwickeln müssen.<sup>9</sup>

Fischer (25 February 1999) 1705

The perception of the Serbian leader in Belgrade was largely similar at the time. Outgoing foreign minister Kinkel (FDP) joined president Clinton's statement stressing

dass die Friedhöfe des Balkans [...] voll mit gebrochenen Versprechen und Zusagen von Herrn Milošević [sind]. Ihm darf nicht erlaubt werden, sein zynisches Katz-und-Maus-Spiel, das er jahrelang auch in Bosnien gespielt hat, fortzusetzen.<sup>10</sup>

Kinkel (BT, 16 October 1998) 23128

The lessons from the Bosnian conflict as well as German history were substantial for Kinkel's argumentation concerning the legitimisation of the German participation:

‘Wer das Böse nicht stoppt, wird schuld am Bösen’ [ist] die Lehre aus Bosnien, aber es ist auch die Lehre [...] aus unserer eigenen deutschen Geschichte. Sie gilt auch für den Kosovo. Dort dürfen wir nicht nur sagen, daß es kein zweites Bosnien geben darf, sondern wir müssen dafür sorgen, daß es kein zweites Bosnien gibt.<sup>11</sup>

Kinkel (BT, 16 October 1998) 23131

These quotes illustrate that the German discourse participants combined an unequivocal accusation (Milošević) with the failure of the West in Bosnia and finally with Germany's history in World War II thanks to their primarily idealistic line of argument. With regard to the widespread rejection of military force in parliament as well as in society Kinkel even recalled

9 “*Europe is presently divided. If we look towards the Balkans, we look at the Europe of the past. If we look towards Brussels, we look at the Europe of integration, the Europe of the future. On the one hand, the Europe of the past, of wars and ethnic cleansing, on the other hand the Europe of the future, of integration, and, thank God, the disappearance of war as a means of politics, the Europe of a close cooperation, the overcoming and dissolution of borders. We will have to develop the Southern Balkans towards the Europe of integration.*”

10 “*(...) that the graveyards of the Balkans [...] [are] filled with Milošević's broken promises and assurances. He must not be permitted to continue his sarcastic cat-and-mouse game, which he played in Bosnia for years.*”

11 “*Those who do not stop the evil will take the blame for it; the lesson of Bosnia is also the lesson [...] of our own German past. It also applies to the Kosovo. We must not simply say that there should not be a second Bosnia, but we must ensure that there will not be a second Bosnia.*”



daß auch wir in Deutschland nicht selbst in der Lage waren, uns vom Tyrannen zu befreien, sondern durch Gewalt anderer vom Tyrannen befreit worden sind.<sup>12</sup>

Kinkel (BT, 16 October 1998) 23129

The Kohl administration's verdict in the early 1990s, that no German soldier shall be deployed to regions where soldiers of the Wehrmacht fought during World War II was rejected by Chancellor-elect Schröder:

Ich habe großen Respekt vor denjenigen, die fragen: Ist es angesichts der Geschichte des Zweiten Weltkrieges vernünftig, daß die Deutschen dabei sind? Die Frage, ob die Deutschen dabei sein sollen, kann man stellen, und es ist keine zynische Frage. Aber für mich gilt, dass man diesen Satz auch umkehren kann: Gerade wenn es historische Schuld in dieser Region gibt, kann man sie auch dadurch abtragen, daß man weiteres Morden verhindern hilft.<sup>13</sup>

Schröder (BT, 24 February 1999) 1526

This clearly indicates the argumentative re-framing of Germany's past. This re-interpretation, however, was not entirely new. It had been introduced by Fischer and others a few years before. In the face of the horrors of the Bosnian war, he had tried hard to change the formerly pacifist position of his party in the course of the *out-of-area debate* (Philippi 1997). Due to the Kosovo crisis, this attitude change within the party became relevant to practical politics in Germany. In his speech at the party convention of the Greens in Bielefeld (13 May 1999), which had been specially summoned, Fischer got to the heart of the matter when he drew the lessons from his life and the German past. He recalled Srebrenica and Auschwitz, and arson attacks on a home for asylum-seekers in Solingen to conclude his argumentation with the statement that "*no more war, no more Auschwitz, no more genocide, no more fascism*" continue to belong together. However, many adherents of an absolute restraint of military force did not share his re-interpretation. To them, air raids resembled the traditionally aggressive and militaristic foreign policy. Therefore, Christian Ströbele (Greens) avowed:

Ich schäme mich für mein Land, das jetzt wieder im Kosovo Krieg führt und das wieder Bomben auf Belgrad wirft.<sup>14</sup>

Ströbele (BT, 25 March 1999)

12 "(...) that we here in Germany were not able to free ourselves from the tyrant either, but were freed from the tyrant by means of violence of others."

13 "I have a lot of respect for those who ask: Is it sensible for Germans to take part in view of World War II? The question whether Germans should participate can be asked; and it is not a cynical question. However, I believe that one can reverse the sentence: Especially if there is historical guilt with respect to this region one can also redeem it by helping to prevent further killing."

14 "I am ashamed of my country, which is waging war in Kosovo again and which is throwing bombs on Belgrad again."

In a similar vein, the chairman of the parliamentary group of the PDS Gregor Gysi added:

Deutschland hat in diesem Jahrhundert überhaupt kein Recht mehr, Bomben auf Belgrad zu werfen.<sup>15</sup>

Gysi (BT March 26th 1999)

However, the reinterpretation of history was mainly criticized for the missing mandate according to international law. In addition, arguments with respect to the ‘questionable’ motivation on part of the US were also put forward. The secretary of state-elect for foreign affairs, Ludger Volmer (Greens) described the dilemma of the German parliament the best. In his words, it was characterized by the “(...) *contradiction between (...) legitimacy and (...) legality of a military operations*” (Volmer BT, 16 October 1998). One of the main arguments of those opposed to the military operation was that the Kosovo operation would create a precedent pertaining to international law:

Machen wir uns nichts vor: Die Argumentationen, es handle sich um eine Ausnahme und nicht um einen Präzedenzfall, ist Augenwischerei. Jede beliebige Regionalmacht, die in Zukunft in ihrer Nachbarschaft Ordnung schaffen will und nur eine halbwegs zutreffende UN-Resolution anführen kann, wird auf das Beispiel verweisen. Der Selbstmandatierung von Militärbündnissen ist Tür und Tor geöffnet; ein Sicherheitsrat, der immer dann umgangen wird, wenn ein Veto droht, ist als Garant des UNO-Gewaltmonopols außer Kraft gesetzt.<sup>16</sup>

However, in the face of Russia’s blocking of the Security Council and the persistent violence in Kosovo the insistence on the formal legitimisation according to international law was not convincing by itself. Especially after the beginning of the air raid different speculations about Washington’s “real” motives appeared which revolved around the Lewinsky scandal, Washington’s *Drang nach Osten*<sup>17</sup>, or the professed test of new arms.<sup>18</sup> Vehement criticism was uttered with regard to the Foreign Minister and particularly with respect to the Defence Ministers’ statements that drew parallels between National Socialism and the Kosovo conflict, since these ran the risk of blurring the uniqueness of the Nazi crimes (Jötze 2001, p. 136). Minister of Defense Scharping admitted that “*comparisons to the Nazis (...) [might] be inaccurate here and there*”, yet

15 “*In this century, Germany no longer has any right at all to throw bombs on Belgrad.*”

16 “*We should not deceive ourselves: It is window-dressing to argue that this is an exception and not a precedent. In the future, any regional power that wants to create order in its neighbourhood, which can come up with a halfway decent UN resolution will refer to this example. This will open the floodgates to the self-mandate of military alliances. A Security Council that is always circumvented in case of a veto threat is disempowered as a guarantor of the UN’s monopoly on the use of force.*” Volmer (BT, 16 October 1998); similarly: Hirsch and Gysi in the same debate.

17 The “drive to the east” was a historical term used to denote the German Reich’s foreign policy preference for the East. Here, it was assigned to the US.

18 Jahn 1999; Meier-Walser (1999, p. 91); FAZ (28 May 1999).

[w]er mit der selben fanatischen Überzeugung Menschen systematisch mordet, vertreibt, vergewaltigt und ihrer elementaren Rechte beraubt, dem muss mit aller Macht in den Arm gefallen werden.<sup>19</sup>

He retained his opposing view and declared:

Was jedenfalls Milošević treibt, birgt einen faschistischen Kern: den Menschen mis-sachten, ihn seiner Würde, Kultur und Identität berauben aus diesem einen Grunde: Weil er anders ist.<sup>20</sup>

Evidently, this argumentation was convincing since neither mass demonstrations nor heated debates about its legitimisation took place—unlike in the case of the Gulf War 1990/1991 (Schwelling 2007, p. 105). In April 1999, 63% supported Germany's participation in the NATO campaign, whereas 34% opposed it (Ramet and Lyon 2001, p. 92). This is remarkable considering the fact that the Kosovo war represented the first active participation of German military after World War II, and, more importantly, without a UN mandate.

### 3.2 France in the Kosovo war: balance of power in Europe and the honour of the nation

Within the EU, France was the first to recognize Yugoslavia diplomatically in 1996, and until the beginning of 1999, Paris had largely shown sympathy for Serbia's arguments concerning the Kosovo. Thus, French Foreign Minister Védérine (3 March 1998) shared the Serbian view on Kosovo as being the "*cradle of their country, the cradle of their history*". The French government organised conferences in Rambouillet and in Paris in February 1999, and hoped for a diplomatic solution. Yugoslavia's uncooperative behaviour, however, soon rendered a neutral intermediary role favoured by France impossible. After the failure of the conferences and in view of unceasing reports of further horrors in Kosovo, the US, the Great Britain and Germany were increasingly willing to take severe actions against Milošević. To top it all, Russia blocked the Security Council and the contact group—institutions favoured by France. Due to France's limited resources a unilateral policy was out of question and would have left Paris marginalized without any influence. The continuity of its foreign policy as exemplified rhetorically by Foreign Minister Védérine began to waver after the beginning of the war. The President and the government decided in favour of a military intervention under the guidance of the US, as in the case in the Second Gulf war and in Bosnia in 1995. Paris swung round to join a NATO-led military action and actively participated in the air raids (Fortmann and Viau 2000, p. 98).

19 "*Those who systematically kill, displace, and rape people and deny them their fundamental rights based on the same fanatical convictions have to be stopped by all means.*" R. Scharping: "Der Stein auf unserer Seele" ("The Stone on our Souls", author's translation), FAZ (3 May 1999).

20 "*There is a fascist core to what Milošević is doing: to disregard humanity, to deprive people of their dignity, culture, and identity, for one single reason: because they are different.*" Ibid.

The government justified it by relating the Kosovo events with its own security interests: A further escalation of violence in Kosovo would have further aggravated the refugee problem and would have evoked the threat of a creation of a Greater Albania. This would have destabilized the region entirely:

(..) notre détermination militaire et notre engagement humanitaire s'inscrivent dans une perspective plus large, dans une véritable vision politique et diplomatique. Ce qui est en cause, c'est l'équilibre même de notre continent.<sup>21</sup>

Chirac (12 April 1999)

This argument was weak insofar as it did not explain France's change from a neutral mediator to an active party in the war. Even though all big parties were part of the government due to the *cohabitation*, the sensibility and legitimacy of the government's course were seriously challenged after the beginning of the air raids on Serbia.

The war opponents (“*anti-frappes*”), emphasised the omnipotence of the US and the powerlessness of Europe.<sup>22</sup> The air raids were interpreted as if mainly the US had intended and initiated them; Europe and France had only acquiesced reluctantly.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the US had purposely sabotaged the negotiations at Rambouillet to carry out their military strikes and to pursue their strategic objectives in the region.<sup>24</sup> They had been driven by their

deux mythes moteurs de l’Odyssée américaine (..): l’idéisme moral et la supériorité technique—disons le wilsonisme et plus le tomahawk.<sup>25</sup>

The communist party leader Hue (AN, 26 March 1999) explained in more detail that the US were above all concerned with the preservation of NATO as well as the implementation of their new strategic concept. Many *anti-frappes* criticised the obscure objectives and consequences of the “*diplomatie B52*”<sup>26</sup>, and the lacking exit strategy.<sup>27</sup> The *Front*

21 “(..) our military determination and our humanitarian commitment are part of a larger perspective—a true political and diplomatic vision. This is really about the preservation of balance on our continent.” (author’s translation).

22 This point of view was also supported by many discourse participants who criticized the NATO intervention only in part (like Philippe Séguin, RPR) or even considered it to be positive in principle (François Bayrou, UDF). See Eric Mandonnet: “*Kosovo: Nuances à droite*”, *L’Express* (8 April 1999) 16.

23 The communist daily *L’Humanité* came up with the title “*L’OTAN go home*” on 26 March 2003.

24 Communiqué de Georges Sarre (MDC) of 11 June 1999, <http://www.mdc-France.org/actualite/kosovo.html> [13/2/2002].

25 They were induced by their “*two driving myths of the American odyssey (...): the moral idealism and their technical superiority—in other words by Wilsonism and the tomahawk.*”; Régis Debray: “*L’Europe somnambule*”, *Le Monde* (1 April 1999).

26 Max Gallo and Charles Pasqua: “*Pas de paix sans indépendance de l’Europe*”, *Le Monde* (2 April 1999).

27 Le général Cot: “*Cette action va tout compliquer*”, *L’Humanité* (26 March 1999); Max Gallo and Charles Pasqua: “*Pas de paix sans indépendance de l’Europe*”, *Le Monde* (2 April 1999).

*National* argued that NATO only attacked the Christian Serbs to protect the Muslim population, and to create Muslim states like Albania and Bosnia in order to destroy the Christian Occident.<sup>28</sup> Leader Le Pen rhetorically borrowed a part of Zola's famous article to explain the US-European relationship: "*J'accuse l'OTAN, cheval de Troie des Américains en Europe.*"<sup>29</sup>

The *anti-frappes*' second objection focused on the legitimacy of the NATO attacks. For the first time after World War II, so the argument ran, there was a military operation against a sovereign state, which had neither started a war nor threatened one of NATO's member states.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the attacks defied the principle of the sovereignty of states.<sup>31</sup> Not only the communist PCF criticised the fact that the operation violated international law as it contravened the UN-Charter and was not covered by resolutions 1166 and 1203. Consequently, so they argued, the attacks contradicted those values which they pretended to stand up for.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the missing international legitimisation was not compensated by national legitimisation; quite to the contrary: French decision-makers decided on and initiated the attacks without even consulting the national parliament. Not only the pacifists sharply criticised this, but it was commonplace of all parties.

Beyond these two main lines of argument, some historically charged arguments were brought forward. Mitterrand's former adviser, Régis Debray, pointed out the highly complex structure of the historically charged conflicts in the region, which rendered simple external solutions such as the humanitarian intervention inadequate and illegal.<sup>33</sup> Former Minister of Defence, Charles Millon, explained that the concept of humanitarian intervention was based on a fundamental misunderstanding of Western policy which sought to impose the nation-state concept on the Balkan region, even though it was highly inappropriate in light of the history and the societies.<sup>34</sup> Editor of the magazine *Marianne*, Jean-Francois Kahn, even accused the Socialist government under Jospin of acting in the tradition of the "*social democratic aggressive foreign policy of the IV. Republic*", alluding to Suez and Algeria.<sup>35</sup> In a similar vein, Ignacio Ramonet stated in an editorial

28 Cf. Bernhard Schmid: "*Der Krieg der Petitionen*", <http://www.nadir.org/nadir/periodika/jungleworld99/15/20b.htm> [2 March 2002], pp. 1–3 (1).

29 *Discours de Jean-Marie Le Pen lors de la fête de Jeanne d'Arc—1er Mai 1999*, <http://www.front-national.com/discours/1999/1mai99.htm> [11 March 2002]. "*I blame NATO, the Troyian horse of the Americans in Europe.*"

30 Hue (26 March 1999) 27.

31 Max Gallo and Charles Pasqua: "*Pas de paix sans indépendance de l'Europe*", *Le Monde* (2 April 1999) 1.

32 E.g. Michel Muller: "*Cette intervention illégale*", *L'Humanité* (25 March 1999) but also the contributions of former Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson: "*Rien ne force la France à suivre l'OTAN*", *L'Humanité* (26 March 1999), of CGT head Bernard Thibault: "*Arrêter le processus de guerre*", *L'Humanité* (26 March 1999) as well as of Alain Peyrefitte: "*L'Heure de l'Europe européenne*", *Le Figaro* (15 April 1999).

33 Régis Debray: "*Lettre d'un voyageur au président de la République*", *Le Monde* (13 May 1999).

34 Charles Millon: "*Dénationaliser des Balkans?*", *Le Monde* (16 April 1999) 18.

35 "*Marianne part en guerre contre l'OTAN*", *Le Monde* (31 March 1999).

in *Le Monde diplomatique* that European social democratic governments had once again betrayed humanity and socialism.<sup>36</sup> Germany was also suspected occasionally to have clandestinely and continuously expanded its influence in the Balkans over the past ten years, in the tradition of the Austria-Hungarian Empire. Like in World War II, the Serbs were in the way of the German chancellor.<sup>37</sup> After all, Germany was also to be blamed for the destruction of Yugoslavia and the lacking integration of Europe since the latter was turned into a vassal of the United States.<sup>38</sup>

However, the debate in parliament on 26 March 1999 already clearly showed that all other parties—apart from the communists and the leftist republican *Mouvement des citoyens* (MDC)—as well as the ‘*nouveaux philosophes*’ and the vast majority of the political advisors in foreign affairs supported the intervention.<sup>39</sup> Due to increasing criticism, the president entered the debate through televised speeches and the Prime Minister intervened through speeches in parliament and interviews. President Chirac was outspoken: What was going on in Kosovo was a

monstrueuse opération d’épuration ethnique planifiée et conduite avec le plus grand cynisme et la plus grande cruauté par le régime serbe.<sup>40</sup>

Chirac (6 April 1999)

There had to be put an end to the acts of a regime which had been pursuing a policy of ethnical cleansing for a decade. In a televised speech to his citizens, the president exclaimed (29 March 1999): “*Enough is enough!*”

French representatives of government supported by popular intellectuals considered the current situation to be similar to past conflicts in the Balkans: the lessons from the war in Bosnia,<sup>41</sup> the stations of horror in Vukovar, Sarajevo and Srebrenica<sup>42</sup> and the massacre of Raçak.<sup>43</sup> Chirac vividly described that standing by would follow the “spirit

36 Ignacio Ramonet: “*Social-conformisme*”, *Le Monde diplomatique* (April 1999) 1, <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/1999/04/RAMONET/11938.html> [24 March 2002].

37 Marie-France Garaud: “*Kosovo: l’absurdité et le péril*”, *Le Monde* (27 March 1999).

38 Eric Rouleau: “*Errements de la diplomatie française au Kosovo*”, *Le Monde diplomatique*, [www.monde-diplomatique.fr/1999/12/Rouleau/12754](http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/1999/12/Rouleau/12754) [14 December 2001], pp. 1–11(7).

39 See the contributions by Claude Goasguen, Jean-Marc Ayrault, Jean-Bernard Raimond, Marie-Hélène Aubert and Giscard d’Estaing in the debate of 26 March 1999: *Séance du 26 Mars 1999: Situation au Kosovo. Déclaration du Gouvernement et débat sur cette déclaration*, Compte rendu intégral, <http://recherche.assemblee-nationale.fr/search97cgi/s97cgi.exe?action=View&VdkVgwK> [1/03/2002].

40 The actions in Kosovo were “*monstrous ethnic cleansing, planned and carried out with the greatest possible cynicism and greatest possible brutality by the Serbian regime.*”

41 France’s Representative at the UN (24 March 1999).

42 Jospin (AN, 26 March 1999).

43 Chirac (26 March 1999), Jospin (26 March 1999). See also Alain Finkielkraut: “*Régis Debray, ou les aveuglements de l’intelligence*”, *Le Monde*, 4 April 1999.

of Munich”, and would be cowardly (12 April 1999). Indeed, this was a “*guerre juste*”.<sup>44</sup> To shy away from an intervention would be no less for France than “*to lose her soul*.” Therefore, France’s war was a “*combat de l’honneur*”.<sup>45</sup> The socialist Prime Minister agreed with Chirac, since Kosovo was no longer an international conflict but a national matter that touched upon the foundations of the nation (Jospin, 27 April 1999, 454). During Rambouillet’s negotiations, the President himself appealed to the warring parties to turn to a policy of reconciliation, just like Germany and France who had set an example for Europe.<sup>46</sup> Due to its barbaric policy, Chirac maintained, the Serb regime stood, “*sur notre sol, notre continent*” against Europe, against the idea of democracy, and against the European idea of a “*certaine idée de l’homme*”.<sup>47</sup> Insofar, Chirac considered the actions against Serbia to be of a new quality that would raise the intervention above traditional considerations:

(..) le combat (..) est exemplaire. Il n’est pas fondé dans les arrières pensées économiques ou stratégiques, mais sur une conception de la morale et de l’honneur des nations.<sup>48</sup>

Chirac (3 May 1999)

Consequently, the air strikes were not aimed at the people of Serbia, but against their oppressors.<sup>49</sup> Thus, Chirac and Jospin succeeded in countering the *anti-frappes*’ arguments. Their chain of arguments was highly convincing since it combined moral values, historical experiences, pictures on TV and security policy needs: early April 1999, close to 80% of those interviewed were content with the government’s policy on Kosovo.<sup>50</sup>

### 3.3 Germany in the Iraq war: (Self)-confidently omitting history

Until the election campaign took off in August 2002, Germany had maintained a low profile concerning Iraq.<sup>51</sup> The coalition government of the Social democrats and the Greens

44 According to former Foreign Minister and Minister for Housing at the time Hervé de Charette (27 April 1999) 17.

45 Chirac (26 April 1999); Alliot-Marie (27 April 1999).

46 Chirac (6 February 1999). He already used of this analogy one year before in a speech in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Chirac (7 April 1998).

47 Chirac (24 March 1999), (3 May 1999), (26 April 1999), (10 June 1999); Jospin (26 March 1999).

48 “(..) *this war (..) is exemplary. It is not grounded in economic or strategic aims, but in a moral conception and the honour of the nations.*”

49 Jospin (26 March 1999); also Alain Madelin: “*Sommes-nous prêts à nous battre?*”, Le Monde (1 April 1999) 18.

50 See Christophe Barbier et al.: “*La politique à l’heure du Kosovo*”, L’Express (15 April 1999) 28–30 (30).

51 However, Foreign Minister Fischer had already revealed in February 2002 that he doubted the connection between Al-Qaida and Saddam Hussein; Fischer (BT, 22 February 2002).

had participated in the Kosovo intervention and the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan—however, chancellor Schröder had to endorse the latter military engagement by means of a vote of confidence. The approaching election campaign in the summer of 2002 was designed as a *Lagerwahlkampf*—a campaign stressing the differences between the right and the left. Since the government was not in the majority, it would have depended on the constructive behaviour of the opposition to be able to join the “coalition of the willing”. Faced with this situation, Schröder and Fischer opted for a “double No” in August 2002: Germany would not participate in military actions against Iraq, no matter what the UN Security Council would decide. After the election, Germany found itself in a difficult situation regarding its foreign policy since the government, in principle, maintained its comparatively extreme course.<sup>52</sup> Only due to France’s change of course in January 2003, Russia’s scepticism and Europe-wide mass demonstrations on 15 February 2003, did the government feel reassured in its position—especially as the position of the US did not get a majority in the Security Council in February and in March.

A rather content-related argumentation was presented by Foreign Minister Fischer. At the EU meeting in Helsingør, he projected risk scenarios for the Middle East, and warned above all against the consequences of war.<sup>53</sup> Like Schröder, he maintained that an attack on Iraq would weaken the war on terror. In addition, he was simply “not convinced” by the American threat analysis (cf. Szabo 2004, p. 40). However, the main argumentation in the German discourse was different: it emphasized the German freedom of choice to refuse to join the military campaign:

Druck auf Saddam Hussein ja. Wir müssen es schaffen, dass die internationalen Beobachter in den Irak können. Aber Spielerei mit Krieg und militärischer Intervention—davor kann ich nur warnen. Das ist mit uns nicht zu machen.<sup>54</sup>

Chancellor Schröder took an uncompromising stance on this point, and assured that he would not give up this position:

Und wer glaubt, dieses Land, diese Regierung würde erneut den bequemen Ausweg gehen, nämlich den, der unter Kohl gang und gäbe war, wir bleiben draußen, aber wir zahlen, der irrt. Dem sage ich, dieses Deutschland, unser Deutschland, ist ein selbstbewusstes Land. (...) Aber eines sagen wir genauso selbstbewusst: Für Aben-

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52 In Germany, a heated debate broke out on how to interpret the German No in individual cases at issue: the topics included mine-sweepers and patriot missiles for Israel, armoured reconnaissance vehicles in Kuwait, German pilots in AWACS-planes and patriot missiles for Turkey—the so-called BND-scandal was a more recent issue. The media and analysts increasingly voiced their criticism; see the coverage of the Financial Times Deutschland: “*Deutschland in Irak-Frage isoliert*”, FTD headline from 2 February 2002, “*Rot-grüne Kritik an Schröders Irak-Kurs wächst*”, FTD (13 September 2002) 11, “*Amoklauf eines Bundeskanzlers*”, FTD (11 February 2003), and “*Stunde der Dilettanten*”, Die ZEIT headline from 13 February 2003.

53 FTD (2 September 2002) 1. See also: Fischer (BT, 13 September 2002).

54 “Yes, we have to put pressure on Saddam. We have to manage to get international observers into Iraq. But I can only warn against playing around with war and military intervention. We won’t have it.” Schröder (BT, 5 August 2002); similarly: BT, 9 August 2002.



teuer stehen wir nicht zur Verfügung, und die Zeit der Scheckbuchdiplomatie ist endgültig zu Ende.<sup>55</sup>

Schröder (5 August 2002)

Minister of Defence Struck (SPD) added that Germany had always behaved loyally towards the alliance but was not “*under the custody of the US*” (FAZ, 12 August 2002). Party whip of the social democrats, Müntefering, was quoted as follows after a meeting of the party committee: “*We have to go our own German way*”. This implied that Germany had to assist in averting violence: “*To secure prosperity also means to avoid war.*” War against Saddam “*would set back our economy*”.<sup>56</sup> The term ‘German way’ was taken up by the opposition and it was related to the historically loaded term of the German *Sonderweg*.<sup>57</sup> While it long served to justify a restrained foreign policy with reference to the German past, it was redefined during the out-of-area debate by equating the rejection of the German special path with a more active, resolute foreign policy which was intended to resemble the self-confident actions of other European states. During the debate on Iraq, the term was re-framed once again. Schröder turned the request for “self-confident and loyal” actions as voiced by the proponents of a more active foreign policy (“normalists”) during the out-of-area debate into “self-confident” vis-à-vis the United States with “restrained” results, while the normalists urged to a restrained style of action in conjunction with loyal behaviour vis-à-vis the United States. The head of the CDU, Merkel, accused the government of having weakened the international organisations and of having broken with the approach that the chancellors Adenauer, Brandt, Schmidt and Kohl had shared: “*Never again a German Sonderweg*” was the lesson to be drawn from history.<sup>58</sup> Wolfgang Schäuble and the head of the European Peoples Party in the European parliament, Gert Pöttering, agreed with her and warned against Germany’s possible isolation.<sup>59</sup> The Bavarian minister-president, Stoiber, even argued that Schröder’s foreign policy reminded him in a fatal manner of the Emperor’s (Wilhelm II) foreign policy errors due to the fact that it was “*unreliable and characterized by megalomania*”, for which generations of Germans had to pay a high price (FAZ, 11 February 2003). In the face of this massive criticism, Schröder softened his stance in the course of the debate. According to Schröder, Germany and France were acting in line with European traditions,

die dadurch begründet sind, dass sich tief ins kollektive Bewusstsein der europäischen Völker die Erfahrung von Krieg eingegraben hat. Mit Krieg als Mittel der Politik

55 “*And those who believe that this country, this government will once more take the easy way out, namely the one it used to take under Kohl—we’ll stay out but we’ll pay—they are wrong. I tell them: this Germany, our Germany, is a self-confident country. (...) We say just as confidently: We are not open to adventures. The times of cheque-book diplomacy are finally over.*”

56 Cf. R. v. Rimscha: *Schlupfloch nach Bagdad*, Tagesspiegel (7 August 2002).

57 The term “German special path” was associated with different meanings in the German discourse after World War II. It already reoccurred in the discourse on rearmament in the 1950s, see Wette (1996).

58 FAZ (14 February 2003) 6; Washington Post (20 February 2003), Süddeutsche Zeitung (21 February 2003).

59 Interview in the Deutschlandfunk on 20 September 2002; Interview in the FTD (15 September 2002); FTD (5 September 2002) 15.

geht man inzwischen Gott sei Dank sehr, sehr zurückhaltend um, ja, man begreift Krieg wirklich als Ultima Ratio.<sup>60</sup>

He maintained that his foreign policy resulted from “*the sum of historical experiences*”, he no longer wished to speak about German or European approaches in this context.<sup>61</sup> Schröder’s interest-oriented argumentation was mainly taken up by the CDU’s foreign policy expert, Wolfgang Schäuble, and was related to a contrary instruction. In view of terrorist threats and WMDs, he lamented the lack of influence of and dissent within Europe.<sup>62</sup> Schäuble did not entirely oppose the means of ‘*pre-emptive strikes*’, and warned against a policy of appeasement for the wrong reasons (ibid.). According to Angela Merkel (BT, 13 February 2003, 1880), Chancellor Schröder was also “*on the wrong track*” as he had “*unfortunately made the war in Iraq more likely instead of less likely*”. In doing so, Merkel combined an interest-grounded claim with an instruction which some social democrats agreed with (like H.-U. Klose).<sup>63</sup> The designated Deputy Minister of Defence, Friedbert Pflüger, provided the most nuanced defence of the appeasement critique (2003: 8):

Die historische Lehre im Umgang mit Diktatoren und Aggressoren zeigt: man darf vor ihnen nicht ängstlich zurückweichen. Wer aus Angst zurückweicht, ermutigt nur Aggressoren und Terroristen. Sie schlagen vor allem dort zu, wo sie Angst und Unsicherheit vermuten, weil sie dort den größten Effekt erzielen können. Und jedes Mal würde ihre Macht größer werden.<sup>64</sup>

The most prominent participants in the governmental discourse hardly reacted to the appeasement critique. However, the Green’s security policy expert, Winni Nachtwei countered:

Von Appeasement gegenüber dem Irak kann keine Rede sein. Im Gegenteil wurde er seitdem sehr effektiv eingedämmt. Und eine Parallelisierung zwischen Saddam Hussein heute und dem NS-Regime in den 40er Jahren mit einer hochmodernen Wehrmacht und einem beispiellosen Eroberungs- und Vernichtungsprogramm ist völlig geschichtslos.<sup>65</sup>

Nachtwei (21 February 2003) 3

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60 “...which is explained by the fact that the experience of war is deeply inscribed into the collective consciousness of the European peoples. War as a means of politics is implied only very, very reluctantly by now, thank God. War is conceived of as Ultima Ratio.”

61 Interview in DIE ZEIT (27 March 2003).

62 Wolfgang Schäuble: *Transatlantische Verlässlichkeit statt Antiamerikanismus*, FR (3 December 2002).

63 FTD (13 September 2002) 11.

64 “*The historical lessons of living under dictators and aggressors show: one must not falter out of fear. Those who falter out of fear only encourage aggressors and terrorists. They mainly strike in places where they expect fear and uncertainty because that is where they have the greatest effect. And every time they do so, their power increases.*”

65 “*We cannot speak of an appeasement policy towards Iraq. On the contrary, he has been effectively contained ever since. Furthermore, drawing a parallel between Saddam Hussein today and the NS-regime in the 40s with its highly modern army and an unprecedented imperialist and destructive agenda proves that there is no sense of history.*”

It remains an open question whether the opposition's criticism was without a sense of Germany's history or whether Schröder's foreign policy was "*unhistorical*", as the liberal party head Guido Westerwelle (FAZ, 14 February 2003) claimed. In any case, the main arguments were 'unhistorical' in the sense that Schröder and Fischer virtually did not use any historical references while the opposition merely evoked memories of 'Munich 1938'. This obviously does not mean that historical arguments were missing entirely in the debate. Only once, in a governmental statement in February 2003, did the chancellor use a historical analogy:

Aus unserer eigenen Geschichte wissen wir, dass tiefgreifende Veränderungen oft nur durch langfristige Prozesse erreicht werden können. Das glückliche Ende des Kalten Krieges ist eben auch ein Erfolgsbeweis für die Politik der Eindämmung und Abschreckung. Ohne dass je eine militärische Option auch nur zu Gebote gestanden hätte, konnten am Ende die Ziele von Freiheit, Frieden und Rechtsstaatlichkeit erreicht werden.<sup>66</sup>

Schröder (BT, 13 February 2003)

However, this analogy was not taken up in the discourse and remained an exception. Other historical borrowings in the discourse were rather unfortunate and induced amusement or even embarrassment. For example, CSU-faction leader Glos (FAZ, 2 February 2003) argued that whenever people talked about the "*Moscow-Berlin-Paris axis*" one felt reminded of times when Germany's neighbours suffered from the Third Reich's "*axis policy*". The SPD's vice chairman of the parliamentary group, Ludwig Stiegler, knew how to surprise with another rather audacious comparison: Currently, the US considered themselves

als das neue Rom. Bush benimmt sich so, als sei er Princeps Cäsar Augustus und Deutschland die Provincia Germania. So geht es nicht.<sup>67</sup>

Minister of Justice Herta Däubler-Gmelin's (SPD) historical excursion went completely wrong when she supposedly compared Bush with "Adolf Nazi" in an official setting since both had tried to distract from domestic policy problems by going to war.<sup>68</sup>

66 "We know from our own past that profound changes can only be achieved through long-term processes. The happy end of the cold war also proves the success of policies of containment and deterrence. Freedom, peace and the rule of law were achieved without ever having even considered the option of a military intervention."

67 "(...) as the new Rome. Bush behaves as if he was Princeps Cesar Augustus and Germany the Provincia Germania. This is a no-go". Münchner Merkur (7 September 2002). In the second debate on TV with Schröder, the Union's Stoiber took up Stiegler's reference. However, he took it up the wrong way, criticising that Bush must not be compared to *Julius Cesar*. Tagesspiegel (9 September 2002).

68 FAZ (20 September 2002). The outrage on the other side of the Atlantic was so great that Schröder had to write an explanatory letter to Bush, that did not, however, contribute to deescalate the situation at all (Szabo 2004, p. 30).

The people, meanwhile, were highly satisfied with the government's course: already in Summer 2002, 80% voiced their opposition against Germany's participation in a military intervention, and, again, 80% considered an allied attack on Iraq to be wrong (Collmer 2004, p. 212). The coalition in office thus managed to make up lost ground in surveys during the election campaign and won the election in September 2002 by a narrow majority.

### 3.4 France in the Iraq crisis: independence in a multipolar world

France had actively supported the US in security crises ever since the Suez debacle in 1956, such as in the military campaign for the liberation of Kuwait in 1990/1991 and during the Kosovo war. After 9/11, this pattern seemed to prevail since France reaction to the attacks was characterized by unreserved solidarity, and Chirac promised Washington the greatest possible military support (Gordon and Suzan 2001). French diplomacy had maintained a low profile on Iraq during 2002. Then, in drafting resolution 1441 in November, they were heavily engaged in the negotiations. Unlike the German position, Paris insisted that military violence was indeed a legitimate option after having exhausted all diplomatic means.<sup>69</sup> Only in January 2003, when it was foreseeable that the US government's decision was indisputable, Paris changed its course towards an active obstruction policy with regard to a second Security Council resolution which was meant to legitimize military force. France's obvious opposition in the Security Council, her active recruitment of votes and finally Chirac's veto announcement triggered some resentment in Washington (Gordon and Shapiro 2004, p. 177 et seq.).

The French decision makers mainly argued that the stability of the international system was threatened. An attack on Iraq would rather weaken the war on terror and destabilise the Middle East.<sup>70</sup> In this respect, the most important part of their argument was France's vision for the international system:

Il faut voir dans quel monde nous voulons vivre. Nous voulons vivre dans un monde multipolaire, c'est à dire avec quelques groupes qui aient entre eux des relations aussi harmonieuses que possibles (...).<sup>71</sup>

Chirac (10 March 2003) 1

A second, idealistic main line of argument referred to the importance of international law, the role of the United Nations and the successful work of the inspectors up to that

<sup>69</sup> De Villepin (Le Monde, 7 February 2003).

<sup>70</sup> Chirac (10 March 2003); (11 March 2003); Juppé (AN, 26 February 2003) 1434; Balladur (AN, 26 February 2003) 1432; de Villepin (Le Figaro, 26 February 2003).

<sup>71</sup> "We need to consider *what kind of world we want to live in. We want to live in a multipolar world, that is to say with groups of states whose relations are as harmonious as possible.*" similarly: Raffarin (AN, 26 February 2003) 1435; Bocquet (AN, 26 February 2003) 1420; Hollande (AN, 26 February 2003) 1426; de Villepin (21 March 2003).

time.<sup>72</sup> Prime Minister Raffarin maintained that France's commitment to international law was in line with the majority of states and public opinion.<sup>73</sup> Only some intellectuals, the so-called *nouveaux philosophes*, raised objection to him, as did some human rights representatives like the current Foreign Minister Kouchner. With regard to the suffering of the Iraqi people, they criticised that France basically took sides with Saddam.<sup>74</sup> UMP Head and former Foreign Minister Alain Juppé referred to the values that France and the US shared with regard to democracy and human rights, and honoured the oldest democracy's achievements:

Personne n'oublie ici (..) la dette de sang que nous gardons envers la grande nation américaine, qui, par deux fois, a apporté une contribution décisive à la libération de notre sol.<sup>75</sup>

Juppé (AN, 26 February 2003) 1425

At the same time, however, he wondered about how the "country of Wilson's Fourteen Points and the San Francisco Charter" could conduct such a policy. He took up Rumsfeld's disrespectful statement about Germany and France, and made it clear that:

Nous, peuples de la vieille Europe—oui, de la vieille Europe—nous sommes trop instruits des malheurs de la guerre et des souffrances qu'elle a infligées sur notre sol à tant d'innocentes victimes pour ne pas tenter jusqu'au bout de donner encore une ultime chance à la paix.<sup>76</sup>

Juppé (AN, 26 February 2003) 1425

The socialist's head, Hollande, added, that it was absolutely necessary to be on guard against a "*return to imperialism, to unilateralism complemented this time perhaps with a personal or even religious trait by George Bush*".<sup>77</sup> Thus, Hollande brought the argumentation full circle to the interest-based line of argument when he emphasised that

72 Raffarin (AN, 26 February 2003) 1417; Bocquet (AN, 26 February 2003) 1421; Juppé (AN, 26 February 2003) 1423; Hollande (AN, 26 February 2003) 1427.

73 Raffarin (AN, 26 February 2003) 1418. This was only occasionally contradicted, although by members of his party, see for example: Alain Madelin: *De quel droit?*, Le Monde (29 March 2003).

74 See Le Monde (20 March 2003); Pascal Bruckner, André Glucksmann and Robert Goupil: *Saddam doit partir, de gré ou de force!*, Le Monde (4 March 2003); Glucksmann, A. (2003): *Ouest contre ouest*, Paris: Plon; as well as Bernhard Kouchner and Antoine Veil: *Ni la guerre, ni Saddam*, Le Monde (4 February 2003).

75 "No one here has forgotten the blood debt we owe to the great American nation who twice played a decisive role in liberating our country."; similarly: Chirac (16 March 2003) 7.

76 "The horrors of war, and the suffering it brought about our countries with so many innocent victims taught us, the peoples of the old Europe—yes, of the old Europe—that one should spare no effort to give peace a last chance."

77 Hollande (AN, 26 February 2003) 1428. Chairman of the PCF parliamentary party Alain Bocquet (AN, 26 February 2003) 1421 and Green Noël Mamère (AN, 26 February 2003) 1431 made even more drastic anti-American statements.

the French-American relations were founded on a strong and solid basis due to their joint interventions in the 1990s and the acts of solidarity after 9/11. This relationship had not been permanently damaged by the disagreements at that time; after all, it had been straightened out again even after France had withdrawn from the military part of NATO in 1966 and after de Gaulle's criticism about Washington's Vietnam policy (ibid 1427). At this point, UMP-atlanticists entered the debate, lamenting the strains within the transatlantic alliance and the simultaneous weakening of the international as well as EU institutions.<sup>78</sup> Nonetheless, one of the main issues of their interest-based line of argument was that in their view, France was absolutely obliged to pursue an active, independent foreign policy due to its history and its tradition—however, this was not to be confused with a pacifist policy.

Notre indépendance de jugement, qui est dans notre histoire, est pleinement compatible avec le souci de rassembler la communauté internationale. La France s'y est constamment, inlassablement employée.<sup>79</sup>

Raffarin (AN, 26 February 2003) 1418

According to the chairman of the parliamentary defence committee, Guy Tessier, history would come to acknowledge the greatness of the French position (AN, 26 February 2003, 1435). UDF's speaker in the *Assemblée nationale*, Pierre Albertini, (AN, 26 February 2003, 1429) even placed France's calling in a philosophic context by citing Camus: "*Il n'y a de fatalité dans l'histoire que celle que nous y mettons.*"<sup>80</sup> Chirac's change in position in January 2003 was almost uniformly approved of among the French political elite:<sup>81</sup> President Chirac was hailed by all political parties, from the Head of the socialists Hollande, to the right-wing extremist Le Pen, to the Head of the communists Buffet.<sup>82</sup> As outlined above, there were no real discussions in the national assembly (on 26 February 2003) since the vast majority of the representatives—independent of their party affiliation—backed Chirac's change. However, not only the elite but also the people agreed with Chirac's argument: 70% approved of France's threat to make use of its veto. Chirac's popularity reached the highest results of a government since 1938 (!).<sup>83</sup> Unlike the British, the French would have rejected war even if it had been legitimised by a Security Council mandate (Stuchlik 2005, p. 23).

<sup>78</sup> See Le Monde (13 March 2003); Frankfurter Rundschau (8 February 2003); FAZ (1 March 2003).

<sup>79</sup> "*Our independent judgement, which is embedded in our history, is fully compatible with the concern to unite the international community. France has been constantly and untiringly striving for this.*" Similarly: Chirac (10 March 2003) 11et seq.; Hollande (AN, 26 February 2003) 1426.

<sup>80</sup> "*There are only those fatalities in history that we see in it.*"

<sup>81</sup> J. Hanimann: "*Eid auf de Gaulle. Der Irak aus Pariser Sicht: Die Kulturelite stärkt Präsident Chirac*", FAZ (3 March 2003) 33.

<sup>82</sup> Economist (15 March 2003).

<sup>83</sup> Economist (22 February 2003); Guardian (29 March 2003).

#### 4 Conclusion: the usage of history in foreign political discourses

The initial thesis of this paper held that historical arguments were the pivot of war legitimisations. This thesis has to be put into perspective due to the empirical analysis. Only in one case—the case of Germany in the Kosovo war—did historical patterns of argumentation proved to predominate. In all other cases, the recourse to history was either of medium significance (France-Kosovo) or even marginal (Germany/France-Iraq).

Overall, interest-based and realistic patterns of argumentation that were rather static in character predominated the discourse. At the same time, the arguments in both countries revealed significant differences: In France, elements of a “realistic” understanding of international politics (the role of the Great powers, multipolar world order, balance of power on the continent) represented the primary reference of French decision-makers in justifying their foreign policy. A largely static perspective on the situation with little consideration for historical connections predominated in terms of two patterns: The first one—mainly used by Gaullists in the discourse concerning Kosovo—related the “honour of the nation” to the “experiences of Munich 1938” and the wars in Bosnia. The second one—above all used in the discourse concerning Iraq—referred to France’s historically determined role as a Great power.

In Germany, the picture is a little less straightforward. During the Kosovo crisis, German politicians chose rather idealistic and history-laden arguments whereas in the case of Iraq, they justified their behaviour “un-historically” with respect to their interests. While German Foreign Minister Fischer, for instance, radiated with idealism based on “lessons from the German history” in 1998/1999, he poured forth realistic arguments in 2002/2003 when cautioning against a de-stabilisation of the Middle East. The same applies to the German Chancellor Schröder: while he had supported the justification of the first military intervention of the German army since World War II with strong historical arguments, with respect to the question of Iraq, he laconically referred to Germany as a state that was able to say No and that had reached its bounds of capability. However, the American justification for the military engagement offered plenty of possibilities to bring forth historical arguments (the German Reich’s wars of aggression, Vietnam, the intensification of the historically induced ‘clash’ between Orient and Occident, experiences of human suffering in World War II etc.). The German political elite did not make use of any of them. The change in the lines of argument from the Kosovo to Iraq is stunning.

Overall, the difference hypothesis is verified if one recalls the differences in the patterns of argumentation in both countries. It is noticeable that French historical arguments reach back to the French Revolution, whereas German arguments originate mostly from World War II. This confirms the extraordinary significance of World War II for the German post-war identity. Older points of reference were only seldomly used—and rather unsuccessfully. Furthermore, arguments critical of the US were omnipresent in France, on all sides of the political spectrum. In Germany, they remained a side issue within the leftist faction.

However, there is a wealth of arguments that are used equally in both countries—like the “Yugoslav lessons of the war”. This shared wealth of arguments points to a certain potential for conducting joint military operations abroad and further capacity building within the frame of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP).

Moreover, the war hypothesis was also validated on the whole: In both discourses on the Kosovo, historical references were used a lot more extensively and frequently than in the discourses on Iraq. In the former case, historical arguments were mainly used to explain the drastic change in foreign policy to the people. With respect to France, this was true for the time of the sample period—i.e. after the failure of diplomatic efforts—with regard to Germany this was true from the start as the first military employment after World War II had to be justified. Historical arguments stand out in the German discourse concerning Kosovo. The memory of the fascist past and the Nazi-crimes were related to the horrors of the wars in Yugoslavia and the current situation in Kosovo. Similarly, in France, historical arguments played a major role in the changing line of argumentation of Chirac and Jospin. After the government's realistic rhetoric was extensively challenged by the *anti-frappes*, Jospin and Chirac—supported by popular intellectuals—argued in an idealistic manner with arguments resembling those of Fischer and Schröder: The World War II experiences as well as the wars in Yugoslavia called for an intervention! In contrast, in the discourses on Iraq, references to history were rare and were rather used to discredit the Bush administration. The opponents to the German Iraq policy attempted in vain to successfully use the argument of the German *Sonderweg* against the government.

In the case of Kosovo, Germany succeeded in establishing a new discourse hegemony with the help of historical arguments. However, it turned out to be short-sighted to set the standards for interventions abroad (humanitarian catastrophe, genocide) so high and to conjure up the intervention in Kosovo as a one-time precedent. In the discourse on Iraq, this uniqueness was confirmed in principle, this time, however, it was justified with an interest-based argumentation ('Germany as a country that is able to say No'). The excessive use of the Auschwitz argument in combination with a by now well-established unilateral option led to increasing difficulties in legitimising military engagement abroad and to a loss of legitimising consistency. On the one hand, one may ask why the German foreign policy kept such a low profile in cases of genocide similar to that of the Kosovo (Sudan, Congo). On the other hand, Germany has increasingly faced difficulties in justifying its policy in cases where it has been engaged militarily but where it can hardly justify it with reference to 'genocide' (Macedonia, Lebanon, Afghanistan). The rhetoric walk on eggshells regarding the "characteristics of war" in the German debate on Afghanistan underlines Germany's legitimacy problems beyond "genocide" and "humanitarian disaster".

In France, the risks lie elsewhere. The constitutional practise of the 5th Republic enables French decision-makers to launch military interventions without societal feedback. The rhetorical whitewash of France's influence in view of the constant increase in perceived threats encourages the diffusion of abstract fears among large parts of society. Charging the government's rhetoric with references to civilization can subdue these fears only to a limited extent. The persistence of such fears not only perpetuates the insidious de-legitimation of the political system of the 5th Republic but also highlights France's "adaptation problem" after the end of the Cold War which has been frequently pointed out.



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