THE DYNAMIC TRANS-ATLANTIC PARTNERSHIP
AT THE BEGINNING OF THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

Ashley Anne Lubenkov

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Approved by:
Liesbet Hooghe
John Stephens
Gary Marks
ABSTRACT

ASHLEY LUBENKOV: The Dynamic Trans-Atlantic Partnership at the Beginning of the Obama Administration (Under the direction of Liesbet Hooghe)

This paper analyzes Robert Kagan’s theory that discord is a continual part of the trans-Atlantic relationship given that the United States, as the dominant power, is willing to exert force in the world and that Europeans, with smaller militaries and a concentrated focus on peace, will be reluctant to exert influence. The aftermath of the George W. Bush administration and the beginning of the Obama Presidency provide an opportunity to assess the trans-Atlantic relationship at the conclusion of a decade filled with many points of discord. To test Kagan’s hypothesis, this paper will analyze the American, U.K., and French media of varying ideologies, covering the first European trip of President Obama to Europe. These sources are analyzed for signs of convergence or divergence on US-European relations. While national differences are not negligible, it would appear that partisan ideology has the greatest impact on perceptions of the trans-Atlantic relationship.
INTRODUCTION

The past decade marked many changes in international dynamics. While Asian countries advanced in more ways than one, the modern trans-Atlantic relationship was put to the test. A showdown in a 2003 U.N. Security Council meeting regarding the Iraq conflict led the French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, to confront the United States and expose France’s lack of support for the American operation with the phrase, “Messieurs, vous n’avez pas de majorité” (Sirs, you do not have the majority). Thus, the United States was forced to face the fact that many of its closest allies, such as France and Germany, were unwilling to aid or even endorse the combat mission in Iraq launched by the Bush administration. The chill in the relationships between the countries that developed even extended to the U.S. Congress relabeling a familiar food item on its cafeteria menu “freedom fries” in lieu of French fries. While the United States gave the cold shoulder to its oldest ally and ties drifted to what seemed like a historical low (Canteloube and Vernet 2004), the Bush administration was still cherishing the warm relationship it held with the United Kingdom as Prime Minister Tony Blair and Downing Street pledged troops and resources to aid the U.S. in the war in Iraq (Coates and Krieger 2005).

It was in the prelude to this drama that Robert Kagan published his neoconservative analysis of the trans-Atlantic relationship in 2002, writing that Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus. Europeans, he argued, were still recovering from their previous war-torn centuries and wanted to build their societies
without the turmoil that had consumed them in previous generations. On the other hand, Americans were willing to exercise their unchecked power and had no problem taking on a solo warrior role. In the same fashion, Europeans on the continent were more than happy to insulate their economies from what they saw as a more savage form of capitalism by creating welfare states complete with economic regulation. It was the Americans and British who were content with their laissez-faire model of capitalism that was relatively free of government.

The fallout from the Atlantic alliance and Kagan’s path-changing assertion led many political scientists to assess the strength and efficacy of the trans-Atlantic relationship. One diagnosis held that it was the lack of diplomacy that created the rift along with a lack of vision and plan for the trans-Atlantic relationship (Asmus 2003). Other noted political scientists such as Peter Katzenstein and Robert O. Keohane went on to study various forms of anti-Americanism in the world. According to one such study, a long history of elite anti-Americanism flourished in France where there was an established history of looking down upon American culture (Katzenstein and Keohane 2007). Such sentiments call to mind European stereotypes of Americans as cowboys. While admitting an ebb and flow for pro-multilateralism among American Presidents, another scholar found that the European nations, such as France, also played the multilateral card to benefit their foreign policy goals. For example, by forcing the Iraq issue into the U.N. Security Council, France was able to take a stand on the world stage and have an important political decision decided in a body where it always had permanent veto power (Peterson and Pollack). Some believed, such as Robert Kagan, that the strong trans-Atlantic relationship was a relic of the past and that the United States
and Europe would be pursuing different agendas in the future based upon their history and place in the world. On the other hand, analysis by Brian Rathbun (2005) attributed the discord to a conflict of ideology and political parties as opposed to national and continental interests.

In assessing Kagan’s theory, Rathbun notes that ideologues in national arenas advocate for national interests in wildly different ways. He finds Kagan’s analysis is flawed in that it does not give enough credence to party ideology. Writing in 2005, Rathbun declared that “transatlantic convergence depends on domestic convergence as well. The combination also largely determines whether more or less of an US presence in Europe and beyond is desirable to Europeans. Current tensions are due to the combination of a Republican administration in the USA on the one hand and a Gaullist government in France and a Red-Green coalition in Germany on the other” (Rathbun 2005: 53-54). For Rathbun, the conflict in the Balkans and the debate within the countries involved in the conflict served as an example to show that the left and right assess issues much differently. Ultimately, he found that leftist parties were more “inclusive and antimilitaristic” than parties of the right wing and ended up being both more “humanitarian and multilateralist.” For example, leftist parties are willing to fight wars on humanitarian grounds with more passion than their colleagues on the other side of the political spectrum if they can justify the conflict. While Robert Kagan found the fact that even the left-wing of the U.S. supported bombing Milosevic to be evidence of the fact that Americans were from Mars, Rathbun found it to demonstrate the different analysis that the left uses to go to war in the first place. Support for conflicts among parties of the right-wing does not typically involve welfare.
The purpose of this paper is to further assess the validity of Robert Kagan’s analysis of the trans-Atlantic relationship and his 2002 assertion that Europe and the United States policies came from different places. The trans-Atlantic relationship played an integral role in twentieth-century policy, but it remains to be seen what relationships will define foreign policy in the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, the relationship between the U.S. and European actors will remain significant and could be a potential base on which to construct goals and tactics. Ultimately, if Kagan is correct and Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus, then it should not matter who is in charge of Europe or America. If Mars and Venus are, however, from different parties rather than from different countries, then it does seem to make a difference who is in charge in Europe and America. If the former is true, then the transfer of power to the Obama administration should not have made a difference; if the latter is true, that transfer should make a difference. In answering this question, this paper will first lay out the major points of Kagan’s theory. To put the hypothesis to the test, the favorability rating of the United States and the American Presidency by European countries will also be assessed. To assess the varying ideology within the countries and the convergences and divergences in the trans-Atlantic relationship, media of France, the United Kingdom, and the United States and its coverage of a trans-Atlantic event, U.S. President Obama’s first trip to Europe for the G20 and NATO summits will be analyzed.

**Kagan’s contention: militaristic Americans and peacenik Europeans**

Robert Kagan’s critique of U.S. and European power on the world stage was bold and advocated a new direction for U.S. foreign policy.
“It is time to stop pretending that Europeans and Americans share a common view of the world, or even that they occupy the same world. On the all-important question of power—the efficacy of power, the morality of power, the desirability of power—American and European perspectives are diverging. Europe is turning away from power, or to put it a little differently, it is moving beyond power into a self-contained world of laws and rules and transnational negotiation and cooperation. It is entering a post-historical paradise of peace and relative prosperity, the realization of Immanuel Kant’s ‘perpetual peace.’

Meanwhile, the United States remains mired in history, exercising power in an anarchic Hobbesian world where international laws and rules are unreliable, and where true security and the defense and promotion of a liberal order still depend on the possession and use of military might. 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. When it comes to setting national priorities, determining threats, defining challenges, and fashioning and implementing foreign and defense policies, the United States and Europe have parted ways” (Kagan 2002).

Kagan’s somber assessment of the American-European foreign policy dynamic is sweeping and does not dismiss accounts of discord as mere blips in an overall smooth relationship. He argues, instead, that the Mars and Venus caricatures were created by history, with Europe experiencing war fatigue from the twentieth century and the United States poised to assert itself on the world stage. In addition, he believes that Americans have more power and think they can use it to get their desired results. Europeans, on the other hand, do not have the same high level of confidence to push for an international
outcome with hard power. He also contends that being the one with the greatest amount of power puts a target on the back of the United States because it has the role of the enforcer. In turn, this role can lead the U.S. to be feared and demonized. On a more cheerful note, he also remarks that the plans and goals of the United States and many European nations created the current continent that contains hegemony. In an ironic twist, it was the hegemonic interests that created World War I and World War II that incited a backlash to retrain Germany and other national interests in overtaking the continent. In the grand scheme of things, Americans should be happy with post-World War II Europe as the current state of peace was the ultimate vision that Americans initially charted for the continent after the conclusion of the war. At the same time, the varying degrees of power on the continents do not preclude Europe and the United States from having common norms and values.

Kagan also asserted that Europe was inherently multilateral in foreign policy while the United States was uniquely unilateral. This was a result of Americans having more military might in what Kagan saw as a contrast to Europe:

“[Europeans] are less willing to acknowledge that their hostility to unilateralism is also self-interested. Europeans fear American unilateralism. They fear it perpetuates a Hobbesian world in which they may become increasingly vulnerable. The United States may be a relatively benign hegemon, but insofar as its actions delay the arrival of a world order more conducive to the safety of weaker power, it is objectively dangerous” (Kagan 2002).
The unilateralism that Kagan asserts also leads the United States to be less inclined to work with international institutions or act with other countries to achieve an objective. In further realization of what Kagan calls a Kantian perpetual peace, “[Europeans] generally favor peaceful responses to problems, preferring negotiation, diplomacy, and persuasion to coercion. They are quicker to appeal to international law, international conventions, and international opinion to adjudicate disputes. They try to use commercial and economic ties to bind nations together. They often emphasize process over result, believing that ultimately process can become substance.” Americans, according to Kagan, are none of these things.

Absent from Kagan’s theories is significant recognition of the differences within political parties and philosophies. He does note, however, that his analysis serves as more of a caricature. In addition, he claims that some Americans may be more “European” and some Europeans more “American.” Colin Powell, for example, may not have the same foreign policy outlook as Donald Rumsfeld. Nevertheless, he feels that most Americans have more in common than they would with another European.

Although Robert Kagan did not dwell upon the “commercial and economic ties” in his “Power and Weakness” analysis, they do agree in with his analysis, and he did comment on economic policies in relationship to Europe at a later date. In a column he wrote on April 2, 2009 for the Washington Post that was intended to coincide with Obama’s first trip to Europe for the G20 and NATO summits, Kagan updated his theory and included commentary on the divergences of economic policy. As was the case with
military and security, European economic policy came from a history of turmoil. In his article, Kagan highlighted “the rampant inflations and depressions of the 1920s and 1930s.” To highlight the conflict with an American response to economic recession, Keynesian economics, Kagan wrote, “The E.U.’s economic strictures, which now act as a barrier to Keynesian deficit spending, were put there by the Germans, for whom memories of inflation, not depression, are the great nightmare. The Germans and French prefer welfare payments to government stimulus spending, for they are part of the passive system of social safety nets on which their citizens have grown so comfortably dependent. The creative destruction of the business-oriented political economies of the Anglo-Americans is too violent and unstable, too brutal and unpredictable. Better to regulate more tightly the international capitalists who can cause havoc through their inventiveness. Better to be less rich than less secure” (Kagan 2009). In Kagan’s neo-conservative world view, Europeans and Americans are in a different place economically and militarily. The Americans are ready for risk and ready to use their strength. Europeans, on the other hand, are more than reluctant to take the same path that led them to so much trouble in the past.

**Method: Polling “Venus” about “Mars”**

To analyze the conclusion that Americans and Europeans are worlds apart, one could take a look at opinion polls to find the favorability of one country among others. For example, one can compare the approval that Europeans had of the United States under the Republican Presidency of George W. Bush and the Democratic Presidency of Barack Obama. While it is not the function of this study to predict whether Barack
Obama will be able to resurrect a strong and mutually beneficial relationship with Europe while in the White House, public opinion polls do tell a great deal and at least show an initial desire to renew the friendship. As opinion polls and events seemed to demonstrate, the polarizing years of the Bush administration may not have been the best time to put this theory to a test given the polarizing nature of George W. Bush himself on the international stage. At the end of the Bush Presidency, it became clear that Kagan himself was at least wrong in one area of his theory. The United States was not able to be as unilateral as the neoconservatives such as Kagan had initially hoped. The unilateralism could even have been the Achilles heel of the administration as it overstretched the United States military and ultimately forced George W. Bush to go back to his Venusian allies and continue to seek commitments for more troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. The failure of America’s unilateralism pushed American Presidential candidates in 2008 to promise some form of multilateralism. The current crises affect both Europe and the United States, with a globalized economy touching everyone and many European nations having had their own experiences with the previously Afghanistan-based terrorist group al Qaeda.

Kagan’s theory seemed to reflect the feelings and events of the time as many Europeans on the continent were reluctant about sending troops to the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan and completely against playing any role with the operation in Iraq. After the U.S.-led invasion in Iraq, public opinion of the U.S. on behalf of Europeans also dropped significantly. The favorability of the United States among French citizens was 62, 42, and 37 percent in 2002, 2003, and 2004, ultimately showing a large drop after the American drive to invade Iraq. The same sentiments during the matching time period for
another large group of continental Europeans, the Germans, were 60, 45, and 38 percent. For the British, however, the opinion did drop, but not to the same extreme, measuring at 82, 80, and 72 percent favorability of the United States (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2010).

Conversely, the countries’ public opinion levels did jump much higher at another point in time, after the election of U.S. President Barack Obama. In 2007, 2008, and 2009, public favorability of the United States from the perspective of the French and German people was 42, 75, and 73 percent and then 31, 64 and 63 percent respectively. The opinion rating of the United States stayed relatively the same for the British with opinion fluctuating from 70, 73, and 73 percent in 2008, 2009, and 2010 (Pew). The opinion of British citizens ultimately did not vary to the degree of that of the Europeans on the continent. The fluctuation of French opinion of the United States, however, is nothing new in itself for the trans-Atlantic relationship. The relationship has generally had its strong and weak points like many friendships, but the swings have been frequent and can even be extreme. French President de Gaulle had his significant points of contention with the United States leading up to France’s withdrawal from NATO in 1966, long after de Gaulle had initially proposed a US-UK-France ‘directorate’ for the Alliance in September 1958. Successive French and American Presidents encountered similar cycles when their ties would be tested by events such as war in the Middle East or France’s desire to chart a different course outside of NATO. The Presidents have always seemed to enter their own respective offices hopeful of renewing the old friendship (Bozo and Parmentier 2007).
The election of Barack Obama helped take away some of the negative stigma that
the United States and the American Presidency seemed to take in the previous decade that
went beyond the traditional ebb and flow cycle. After all, the French had approval
ratings of the respective American Presidents in 2008, 2009, and 2010 of 13, 91, and 87
percent. During the same years, the Germans had opinion ratings of 14, 93 and 90
percent while even the British had opinions of 16, 86, and 84 percent. In 2003, the first
year that this question was asked, the French had a 20 percent approval rating of George
W. Bush, the Germans a 33 percent rating and the British a 51 percent rating (Pew).
Obama’s popularity also serves the function of depriving European leaders the
convenient excuse of blaming policies or lack of an accord on an unpopular American
President. With Obama’s popularity abroad, European leaders will have to make an
earnest attempt at negotiations. The rising Obama fever, as it has been called in the
United States, could also lead to disappointment on behalf of the Europeans in the United
States and its lack of ability to deliver the change that the Obama campaign had
emphasized. Ultimately, many issues that will need to be addressed for Europeans after
eight years of the Bush administration and the need for a change may run aspirations so
high that they can never be fulfilled (Schake 2007).

Study: Ideologies across the newspapers of France, the U.K., and the U.S.

A second way in which one could gauge the veracity of Kagan’s views is through
content analysis of media reporting on particular US-EU events. If Europeans and
Americans are that far apart, the tension exhibited at summits will come through in the
media. In addition, the events would be news-worthy and will be covered by media on both sides of the Atlantic.

The current moment in history does present one such clear moment to analyze the distance between Europe and the United States. France returned to the full NATO structure in 2009 forty-three years after its initial withdrawal, sixty years after the Cold War structure was created, and twenty years after the beginning of the end of the Cold War. The conflict in Europe’s backyard in the Balkans is also largely over as is much of the initial fallout over the Iraq war and the September 11 attack (Vaisse 2009). With great global challenges instead of neighborhood projects being the focus of the trans-Atlantic relationship on terrorism and the financial crisis, the convergences and divergences on policy should be clear as each policy issue will have to be negotiated (Howorth and Keeler 2003).

One such significant event was President Obama’s first European tour as President of the United States in April of 2009 (within the timeframe of the first one hundred days in office that U.S. administrations use to symbolically set the tone for the rest of the administration), President Barack Obama garnered much media coverage as he visited London for the round of G20 negotiations, Strasbourg, France and Baden Baden, Germany to commemorate the 60th anniversary of NATO, Prague to visit the country of the European President at the time, and Turkey. These events provide an opportunity for different governments to present their policy goals in a public forum and negotiate. They also provide material to analyze where the countries stand on issues. Instead of focusing on the politics of all European NATO, EU, or G20 members, there will be a focus on France and the UK as Obama visited both countries on economic and security issues. In
addition, France also seems to advocate for the same agenda as Germany in international circles. As a large European country, France is also comfortable with taking the role of representing the Europe. While the UK is also one of the larger European nations, it is known to be reluctant to completely embrace the points of view of the continent and often demonstrates a viewpoint similar to that of the United States (Parmentier 2002-2003), which is why some say that the English Channel is wider than the Atlantic Ocean. Britain’s unique position with one foot in Europe and one in step with the United States also provides a good vantage point to analyze the relationship.

In this study, newspaper articles regarding Obama’s visits to the events will be analyzed to see if they fit with Robert Kagan’s theory that Americans are the warriors from Mars and Europeans the Venussians. For ideological balance, a mix of different media from the three countries are used in this study: four British newspapers (The Guardian – left of center, Daily Telegraph – conservative, The Times – right of center, and The Financial Times, a business newspaper) and the three French newspapers of the left, the right and the center (Le Monde – slightly left of center, Liberation – left, Le Figaro – right and more business-focused) will be analyzed for their coverage; the New York Times (slightly left), Washington Post (moderate), USA Today (center), and the Wall Street Journal (right of center and business-focused) will constitute the American papers. Analysis and editorial copy that leaves an assessment regarding the meeting will be taken into account for showing divergences or convergences in trans-Atlantic financial policy. A piece that shows a convergence and then a divergence within the same article will be considered neutral while event summaries will be disregarded from analysis altogether. After all, newspapers are not only a semi-public forum for debate with the
elite giving their opinions, but also a source of information that readers can choose from. Media can also reinforce attitudes and serve as a relevant marketplace of ideas for healthy societies. The United Kingdom is known for having several strong newspapers of different backgrounds based in London. Like the U.K., France’s national newspapers are based in its capitol and have varying ideologies. The United States, on the other hand, has several regional newspapers, but the papers considered to be national papers are the four American papers that make up this study. Given that the events took place at the beginning of April, the search was conducted during the one-week time frame at the beginning of the month following Obama’s arrival and after his initial meetings with other world leaders. For the first week of the month in April, the media is especially on Obama’s first overseas trips and meetings.

ANALYSIS

During his European trip, President Obama visited a triumvirate of European powers: the United Kingdom in London, France by way of Strasbourg, and Germany by visiting Baden Baden. The events in London revolved around the G20 summit. Thus, they provide an opportunity to assess economic convergences between Europe and the United States. The events in Strasbourg and Baden-Baden merged as they were nearby on the French-German border and dealt with security and NATO issues. These two major events will be the source of media coverage by French, British, and American newspapers to analyze.

a) THE G20 MEETING

At the G20 meeting in London, President Obama met with several international leaders including China’s Premier and Russia’s President. The major negotiations that
took place between several parties focused on several issues among which financial regulation and stimulus money were priorities. As might be expected, France and Germany as well as other continental European countries represented in the larger G20 group wanted an agreement to move towards more financial regulation. The United States is generally more hesitant regarding financial regulation, especially regarding international rules. The free market that dominates the American economy and its supporters of laissez-faire economics have often been at odds with any type of financial regulation. The United States economy is typically the most “liberal” economy in the world according to most economists. The United Kingdom also typically tries to avoid financial regulation of its large banking sector. As many noted, this was a major point of contention in the meetings that the newspapers did touch upon. According to the groundbreaking book *The Three World of Capitalism* by Gosta Esping-Andersen that analyzes the various forms of capitalism, France represents a typical “corporatist” economy while the U.S. economy possesses a great degree of economic “liberalism”. The U.S. economy is built upon having a laissez-faire economic system, which contributes to large boom and bust cycles. The French economy is based around a heavily regulated economy centered on a traditional family. The United Kingdom’s economy tends to follow the model of the American economy while the German economy is like that of France. Naturally, this can lead to some sort of friction and show some friction at an international summit focused on dealing with a major global financial crisis.
France and the G-20: concern with regulation

Overall, the French media showed some points of contention in what happened during the negotiations regarding regulation. The three French newspapers had seven pieces focused on Obama’s work at the meetings at the beginning of April. Five articles highlighted the fact that the United States was not on the same page as France, whereas the two positive pieces regarding France and the economy had more to do with an appreciation for how Obama handles himself in meetings and a willingness to give him “a chance” in regards to the meeting. On April 2, Le Figaro, the right-leaning business-centered French newspaper highlighted the fact that France and the United States were not on the same team in two articles, as opposed to Germany, which was clearly on the same side. The editorial that Le Figaro featured on the same day praised Obama’s diplomatic skills, but recognized that that would not be enough. The more centrist Le Monde also highlighted a similar theme in one article that the United States system is approaching the economic problem from a different place altogether. The other article developed the typical French motif that France needed to show a united Europe and push the European economic agenda at the event, especially given the fact that the Czech Presidency of the European Union in spring 2009 was especially weak. Like Le Figaro, Le Monde focused on the differences between the United States and Europe in its pieces. It was the more left-leaning Liberation that offered an editorial written by Francois Sergent entitled “Give Obama a Chance.” The editorial argued that France needed to give the U.S. some prospects. The positive piece was centered on his celebrity and also lauded the devotion he had given in order to turn around the economy within the United States. The piece that showed the trans-Atlantic divergence amongst the left-leaning
Liberation was directly showing a contrast between American and French priorities. The United States wanted to keep the economy going, while France was more interested in regulation.

**Figure 1.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>G20 France</th>
<th>France overall</th>
<th>Liberation</th>
<th>Le Monde</th>
<th>Figaro</th>
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<tr>
<td>+ convergence</td>
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<td>2</td>
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**G20 and the UK: convergence on the left, divergence on the right**

The London media was able to comb its own city for stories about the G20 in the financial capitol. Ultimately, however, its papers did not show the same level of divergences between Europe and the other side of the Atlantic as the French media. Seven stories at the beginning of April highlighted commonalities, seven stories showcased the differences and two stories were generally equivocal about the negotiations themselves. Several articles allied the United Kingdom with the United States in regards to their respective financial systems. Others, on the other hand, showed a distance from France and Germany. The conservative Daily Telegraph highlighted the greatest amount of discord with all five of its stories from April 1 to April 3, 2009 and focused on the divergences on economic policy on both sides of the Atlantic. The common motif was the idea that the United States and the United Kingdom were on the same team working against France and Germany. An April 2 editorial by Ian Martin underscored the importance of the free market. The left-of-center Guardian, on the other hand, focused on the positive sides of the negotiations and the common ground that was
achieved in all three of its articles. Its April 3 piece claimed that the meeting had good results. A light article that ran on April 1 was positive regarding the American diplomacy at the meeting. The April 1 article noted that the two sides of the Atlantic really were not that far apart after all. First, the piece mentioned the bizarre dynamic of having left-of-center governments in the United States and the United Kingdom for an economic policy meeting while many of the continental European governments were far more conservative. Although the right-wing governments may not be embracing Keynesian economics and spending to prime the pump of the economy as Barack Obama was advocating, they were doing their own sort of emergency spending in the end as they were spending much more than their liberal economy counterparts as a result of the safety net within their own welfare systems. Like the Guardian, the slightly right of center Times also emphasized commonality. In their April 1 article, the newspaper noticed that it was the United States that was in fact moving closer to a European position on regulation. The two April 2 pieces were not as focused on bridging a trans-Atlantic divide as they were about focusing on pure ideology. One article claimed that it was center-left governments that were responsible in financial crises and not those of the center right because center-left governments ultimately turned to Keynesianism. The other April 2 article highlighted the fact that Brown and Barack were a natural team when it came to navigating the summit because Democrats are, after all, similar to the Labour Party when it comes to ideology. Thus, the differences did not have as much to do with the countries at hand as it did with an international political spectrum. The Financial Times, like other conservative papers, was willing to highlight some trans-Atlantic divergences on the economy. Two articles highlighted convergences and divergences in
policy (ultimately neutral), while two showed differences, and one showed the common ground forged by diplomacy. Two articles that came out on April 2 did note the gap in financial policy between the Anglo-Saxons and the continental Europeans, but they also mentioned the positive developments and common ground forged by Obama’s diplomacy. An April 1 article mentioned the friction at the conference. One April 3 article highlighted the positives of diplomacy at the meeting. The other April 3 piece, however, mentioned French President Sarkozy’s victory claim regarding the summit while contrasting his statement with a call from France’s Socialist Party leader Martine Aubry for more stimulus funding in France like Obama did for the U.S.

Figure 1.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>G20 UK</th>
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<th>Guardian</th>
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<th>Daily Telegraph</th>
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**G-20 seen by the United States: good results**

The print media of the United States was ultimately more positive regarding the G20 summit than the media of France or the U.K. Two articles were neutral regarding potential trans-Atlantic differences, nine seemed to show common ground, and one showed differences. The *New York Times* showed a portrayal of more convergences in policy with three articles showing common ground and the other two being somewhat neutral after pointing out both consensus, but also divisions across the Atlantic in articles published on April 2 and April 5. *The New York Times* gave a good review of the summit on April 3 and on April 1 claimed that it was the U.S. that was moving towards European regulation (while avoiding pressure on Germany to add more stimulus). Despite the
seeming lack of Keynesian economists at the summit on the continental Europe side, the
*The New York Times* noted that stimulus is happening in Europe in other ways, notably
through welfare spending. As such, the U.S. and Europe really were not that far apart.
The centered (although sometime right-leaning) *USA Today* included one article on April
3 that left a generally positive assessment of the summit with a note on managing
expectations. The moderate *Washington Post* offered three positive articles on the
summit including a modest appraisal that the G20 summit was fine in an April 3 editorial.
An April 2 editorial by David Ignatius indicated that Europe should be receptive and
Obama should himself move closer to Europe and regulation. A financial column also
indicated that financial transatlantic tension was improving after the summit, certainly a
rosy picture. The sole portrayal that included a negative divide was an editorial by
Harold Myerson published on April 1 that indicated that there was still a continental
divide when it came to regulation. Aside from generic summaries, the Wall Street
Journal offered one positive piece on April 2 that claimed that Germany and France and
Obama’s America were really not that far apart on foreign policy.

**Figure 1.3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>US G20</th>
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<th>NYT</th>
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**G20 Analysis**

When it came to the G20, the American media seemed far more apt to point out convergences in policy with Europe than its European counterparts. The U.K. media found a mixed bag of convergences and divergences in policy, while the French media overall found plenty to set itself apart from Anglo-Saxon economies. The difference within the countries was that the papers on the left of the political spectrum seemed more ready to point out the common ground in financial policy on both sides of the Atlantic instead of focusing on the divisions.

Naturally, there were some points of contention, which is why the leaders meet in the first place. The differences cannot be blown out of proportion nor can they be swept under the rug. They do not seem to create, however, a depiction of two groups that inhabit Venus and Mars. Poll numbers of the populations, according to 2009 Transatlantic Trends, do show a difference in opinion amongst nationalities in regard to the free market. 81% of Americans and 69% of E.U. citizens felt that a free market economy was best for people. In terms of loyalty to a free market system, 54% of Americans strongly agreed with a free market leaving people better off compared to 37% of the British and 20% of the French.

The issue of regulation seemed to dominate the news much more than Keynesian economics even though John Millard Keynes himself was English. It seemed that in the end the Obama administration decided not to push too hard on the stimulus issue, which is perhaps one reason why it did not make the papers in the end. The other reason may be that continental Europeans felt that their welfare states already matched the emergency stimulus programs enacted in the United States.
b) Strasbourg, Baden Baden, and NATO

After leaving London, Obama headed to the French town of Strasbourg to address students at a conference and then to Baden Baden in Germany for a NATO summit and a celebration of the Alliance’s 60th anniversary. The tasks for Obama would be to address and win over a crowd of students and then hopefully get more troops for Afghanistan from other NATO nations. Although European nations have contributed significant numbers of troops to Afghanistan, there is still a strong amount of reluctance on the part of country leaders to commit more troops to the region. Robert Kagan seemed to have argued in 2002 that Europe is reticent to get involved in military conflicts. Compared to other armies around the world, however, the countries of NATO seem to have demonstrated willingness for combat. Given that countries need to have a relatively high per capita income before establishing a strong military force as well as advanced technology and a history of military spending in the past, European countries are uniquely suited allies. While Robert Kagan’s generalization about Americans being from Mars and Europeans may sound dismissive about European might, 21 percent of world spending on military is European. This is significantly higher than the 5 percent of China or the 3% of Russia. Currently, 21 of the 24 allied countries engaged in Afghanistan are European (Moravscik 2010). Nevertheless, Europeans and Americans may have different beliefs among citizens as to how involved they should get.

France, security, and the Atlantic Alliance: NATO Now?

After just having just recently rejoined the Atlantic Alliance, the meeting in Strasbourg was significant for France. The decision to rejoin NATO after being absent
since 1966 was met with much controversy throughout the country among citizens and officials. In 2009, 63% of French people thought that NATO was necessary. Nevertheless, France reestablished itself as a full-fledged member. The media coverage of some of the first official business at the summit was met with several opinions. Overall, five significant stories expressed a gap between France and the rest of the alliance, four expressed some convergence, and one story was neutral. *Le Monde* displayed the mixed feelings that France seemed to have towards the NATO policies with two positive stories and three negative stories. The negative news brief that was printed on April 5 described a supposed adversarial relationship between European leaders and President Obama. One positive piece of editorial analysis written by Natalie Nougayrede on April 3 described a new phase and starting point for the Atlantic alliance. The announcement of the closing of Guantanamo prison by the Obama White House had issued in a new era for the link between the continents. The popularity of Obama and the gesture to demonstrate common values had helped to create more soft power for the United States. The other positive story simply of April 5 simply described the charm of Obama. The main two negative stories that were both printed on April 5 claimed that Obama had the same message as Bush and that while there was politeness on the surface, there were still great divergences. *Liberation* continued to show that it accepted a more cooperative outlook and that France bought into the collective defense ideology with the headline “Ton allie tu defendras” (your ally will defend you) in the April 4 paper by Jean-Dominique Merchet. The other article from *Liberation* on the same day showcased a press conference with allies. *Le Figaro*, on the other hand, was less enthusiastic. Its article that seemed to be relatively neutral showcased NATO as a rival of a European
security agency. Another article claims that reintegration with NATO was not a good decision and that the EDSP (a European security force) would be better. A minor story also referenced that the troop request by Obama was politely refused. For years, reintegration with NATO was a dead letter for French governments. President Chirac made an effort, but ultimately failed to get the necessary votes. The fact that France finally did reintegrate, however, seems to show some reluctance and acquiescence to an international alliance. The French may still show trepidation in committing more troops for Afghanistan, but the government ultimately made a step towards another alliance.

Figure 2.1

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The United Kingdom and security: We’re better than the rest of Europe

The U.K., like the United States, has sent troops to the Middle East for the better part of a decade. The enthusiasm for NATO is also higher in the U.K. According to Transatlantic Trends, 72 percent of U.K. citizens believed that there was a need for NATO in 2009 compared with a high of 76 percent in 2002. The United Kingdom has often acted in tandem with the United States on affairs regarding the Middle East. It also has had an evolving interest in European security and affairs in the form of the European Security Defense Policy that it initiated with the French in 1998, although France had been the major driving force of its creation and the continuing work horse (Major and Molling 2007). Its special relationship with the United States and its special position within Europe helps give the U.K. the opportunity to evaluate both European and
American policies. On the whole, four pieces in the U.K. media suggested a union between continental European policies and Anglo-Saxon approaches. Eight articles, however, suggested deviation. The right-of-center *Times* advocated an increase of more support troops while its other article lamented Europe’s lagging in the Atlantic alliance and divisions. Entitled “Europe: No we can’t”, the article claimed that Obama had failed to win the NATO troops he wanted for Afghanistan from other European nations. In Europe, “Gordon Brown was the only one to offer substantial help. He offered to send several hundred extra British soldiers to provide security during the August election but even that fell short of the thousands of combat troops that the US was hoping to prise from the Prime Minister.” This stands in contrast to France, the host of the event, which offered no troops. The only other European countries that made commitments in offering troops were Belgium and Spain. Spain would send 12 military trainers and Belgium 35. The two articles of The *Guardian* echoed pessimistic analysis as well. One article from April 4 offered historical analysis with a questioning tone regarding NATO, an alliance of different goals. The other, which was printed on April 3, claimed that Europe had let down the United States.

The *Financial Times*, like the other newspapers, mentioned the diplomatic style of the U.S. President as a positive change. In two of their articles, however, the positive change was the main focus. With headlines such as “No time lost in building bridges” (April 4), the articles suggested an accord. When it came to further participation in the Afghanistan war and a surge in troops, the articles were more critical of Europe. Ultimately, this seems to push the U.K. into the same camp as the Americans when it comes to the outlook on the war and demonstrate a schism between Europe and the
“Anglo-Saxons”. Three Financial Times articles showed that schism. The opinion piece printed on April 8 penned by Quentin Peel claimed that Europe was wrong in not helping more with the war. In his article “Afghan war: what is wrong with the Europeans?”, Peel confronted the white elephant in this debate regarding what role public opinion polls were doing to influence the foreign policy decisions of leaders. “But European governments are terrified of offending hostile public opinion that cannot understand—and has never had it explained—why their soldiers should be dying in such a distant land.” Peel found European countries to be in the wrong on the issue. Three out of the four articles in The Daily Telegraph also wrote about the differences in the country. The only so-called convergence in an April 8 piece was Barack Obama’s popularity, not his politics. The other two articles that highlighted the divergences claimed that the U.S. came home empty-handed and highlighted that French President Sarkozy was not going to increase French troop levels. The article that did suggest a coming together gave the assessment that Barack Obama came to the summit humble and also talked about American arrogance of the past. In effect, it was Obama who was trying to move closer to Europe.

Overall, the comments showed the differences between the Europe and the United States and showed a convergence between the attitudes of the United States and the United Kingdom. The critiques of European policies in not being engaged or committed enough to the NATO mission in Afghanistan also seemed to add credence to Kagan’s notion that Europeans of the continent were reticent to get involved in war. At the same time, one must acknowledge that European countries were already involved in the conflict. Both the United Kingdom and the United States have had major terrorist attacks
that originated from al Qaeda’s network. Notably absent from the articles, however, is skepticism from the Europeans about the mission in Afghanistan. The area of contention comes with deciding what to support with troop numbers. It may be harder for other European countries to make the case that they should extend their resources to Afghanistan. The three options for the European countries could be to (1) withdraw, (2) maintain the status quo, or (3) increase troop levels. At the summit, it seemed that most chose to maintain the status quo and contributions to increase troop levels were modest. For newspapers, the status quo may not be newsworthy, but it is still a choice.

**Figure 2.2**

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**United States, international security, and NATO: Show us the troops**

Like the London-based media, American newspapers also revealed the discords of the summit. Barack Obama had talked about Afghanistan during his campaign as a critical war and discussed the need to reach out to more allies. A more multilateral approach is something that Robert Kagan would have deemed as being more “European”. The multilateral approach seemed to be a part of Barack Obama’s style and rhetoric at events. Nevertheless, the American media was eager to point out the lack of troop contributions from European countries at the summit. In advance of the summit, President Obama had pledged 21,000 troops to be part of a surge. At the summit, he asked Europe to do more as part of a speech and warned that not supporting the surge
“would leave Europe open to a fresh terrorist offensive”. Overall, six articles assessed a climate of division, two were positive, and 2 were neutral. The New York Times had a piece that was generally neutral regarding the summit on Obama’s speech about how Europeans need to meet the United States halfway. The other modestly-positive piece was a positive one on Barack Obama’s style at the event. The negative article in the Times highlighted the lack of troop contributions. The Washington Post followed a similar pattern in having three pieces that each showed positive diplomacy, a sense of balance, and also general discord. A positive analysis of Obama’s speech showed diplomacy and a certain sense of convergence internationally. The overall neutral article reflected the confidence and belief in the mission among Europeans while they were also reluctant to contribute more troops. The article that focused on the discord centered on the lack of troop contributions from the reluctant Europeans leaders.

The coverage in both the Wall Street Journal and the USA Today did not include any articles that suggested some level of accord amongst Europeans and the United States. One article of the three articles published April 4 discussed the weak support for the mission. Another did note that Obama did have some popularity abroad, but chose to highlight that his popularity was fading. The strongly-worded opinion piece decried Obama’s foreign policy worldwide and general viewpoint, with author Bret Stephens having had highlighted what he perceived to be Obama’s numerous missteps. Following the author’s narrative of “Obama’s unreality tour” was the inability to get more NATO troops for the mission in Afghanistan. Stephens, having represented a neoconservative viewpoint, also criticized Obama’s wisdom on arms control, which he argued will only end up weakening countries that believe in disarmament. The sole article in the USA
Today did not offer such a harsh critique of the current U.S. administration, but did fit the news story that Europe was not delivering in the trans-Atlantic relationship. Curiously, the neoconservative author of the Wall Street Journal piece was the only one in U.S. media to set itself apart from the Obama administration and question its goals and actions in regards to the NATO summit. His piece, however, still attempted to show a divergence between U.S. and European foreign policy in regards to security.

**Figure 2.3**

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**Overall European Trip: a mixed review**

The conclusion of Obama’s first trip abroad in Europe as President at the end of the week gave the media an opportunity to address the developments of the previous few days. The overall assessment was mixed in France, although it leaned positive while the U.K. was slightly negative. As can be expected, the United States was full of different opinions and analyses.

Overall, the French media was not critical of President Obama’s new administration. While an April 7 editorial in Le Monde did say that differences will persist on issues and that it was impossible for Obama to measure up to the hype, it also made clear that there was some progress. What had changed the most, according to the article, was the manner of Obama’s approach. The sense of working together did count
for something. *Liberation*’s general critique was that Obama was generally better than Bush and a step in the right direction. The overarching piece that was printed in *Le Figaro* on April 2 during the tour attributed differences between the Obama administration and Europe to the new dynamics of having governments of the left in the United States and the United Kingdom while having governments of the right in most of continental Europe, such as France, Germany, and the Czech Republic during the Czech Republic’s term as President of the European Union.

The *Financial Times* was the sole British newspaper to offer two opinion pieces about the tour. One op-ed penned by Gideon Rachman that was published April 7 criticized the summit and its lack of substance and predicted a doubtful verdict on actual results. On a more positive note, author Jonathan Freedland did suggest a positive substantive change for the trans-Atlantic relationship in his article “All around Europe, we are getting used to a very different president.” Like the French media, the British articles did not critique the new American administration’s policies or tactic in Europe.

The American media had both praise and optimism for the new trans-Atlantic relationship, but was also more critical of the progress that Obama had made. The *USA Today* on April 6 published a general good review about the summits and gave the assessment of a good first step. The *New York Times* left it to a German perspective to make the case that the new U.S. foreign policy was making the right moves abroad for the Europeans. According to the author Nicholas Kulish, one of the perceived problems Obama was facing regarding European reluctance had more to do with German stubbornness than anything else. The *Washington Post* published two opinion pieces that doubted trans-Atlantic agreement. In an April 5 editorial, the author Jackson Diel
suggested that “Obama [was] going along to get along”, which could just show a desire for a trans-Atlantic relationship and not any substance.

The editorial by Robert Kagan published in the Washington Post also on April 2 seemed to offer an updated version of his critique of trans-Atlantic dynamics. In 2009, Kagan still stood by his analysis of a European Venus and American Mars. After all, he saw divergences on every level including the economic system and the military. He did note that now the EU was conservative. However, the barrier to Keynesian economics and deficit-spending had been put in place by Germany because they have the social safety nets and therefore will not respond to Barack Obama’s deficit spending plan. In addition, he noted that Europe’s war fatigue had not waned, meaning that Europeans would have been reluctant to become entrenched in Afghanistan and other wars. In his updated column, Kagan instead advocated for the Obama officials to find out if they believed that the gap created by Bush will vanish. He instead prescribed a soft unilateralism. Instead of pressuring Europe in the future, he advocated having low expectations for Europe and to continue going on without them.

Conclusion: Europeans and Americans are not necessarily from Venus and Mars

Several years later, Robert Kagan seemed to still feel that his analysis of Americans being from Mars and Europeans from Venus still held true. In the grand scheme of things, European and American media still noticed policy differences, but the dramatic level of clash between civilizations did not seem to be present as he laid it out in his “Power and Weakness: Why the United States and Europe see the world differently.” At the G20 summit, European and Anglo-Saxon government seemed to acknowledge that
more regulation needed to be a part of the financial systems, although both groups differed on some level as to the extent. There were differences regarding how best to stimulate an economy. The continental European government seemed content with a small amount of stimulus, and instead, a reliance on their social safety nets. The leaders of the United States and United Kingdom, however, tried to push for a strong global stimulus package—an idea that was not strongly embraced in Europe. The underlying difference between the groups, as many of the articles in the media seemed to indicate, may have had more to do with political ideology. This certainly seemed to be the case for the newspapers as media outlets on the right side of the political spectrum traditionally found more conflicts in policy than the traditionally left-wing papers. The fact was that European governments were currently conservative and Anglo-Saxon governments were leaned left in 2009. John Millard Keynes may have been from Europe, but continentals were not embracing his policies as much as the Obama administration. Conservative governments chose instead to rely on conservative economic policies.

In regards to the NATO summit, the governments of the United Kingdom, France, and the United States seemed to be on the same page for the first time in about half a century. The differences of the governments had more to do with the war in Afghanistan and a potential troop surge. The U.K. was on board and promised some troops. France, on the other hand, did not promise the troops requested by the Obama administration. Although it refused the request, France did not rebuke the policies nor promise a pull-out date in the future of its current troops as it could have. The U.K. and the U.S. media pointed out the refusal and noted the difference in approach. In this respect, Robert
Kagan’s contention that continental Europeans are peaceniks with war fatigue would certainly have merit. At the same time, the French press, which had been critical of NATO, did not come out against the Afghanistan war. The French, who were certainly not very enthusiastic about the war, could have chosen not to participate. After all, it takes work to defend the status quo and continue to devote resources to an international war effort. As a new full-fledged member of the Alliance, however, it did show some reluctance in further Afghanistan involvement with a refusal to provide more troops.

Media in all three countries certainly were able to find points of harmony and discord throughout Barack Obama’s first trip abroad. One obvious point of agreement among countries was the positive reception and approach of Barack Obama and his diplomatic style. American media may have dismissed some of this as mere public relations, but it seemed to go a long way with Europeans. Some even saw the approach and style of diplomacy as a manifestation of a more multilateral approach, which contrasts sharply with the more go-it-alone unilateral strategy of the previous American administration. In his approach to reach agreements, Obama was clearly showing a desire for multilateralism over the unilateralism that Robert Kagan saw as the traditional American approach according to his theory. In realizing their “Kantian perpetual peace”, Kagan claimed that Europeans prefer negotiation and a more nuanced approach of analysis. Although he himself was the American President, Barack Obama appeared to exhibit these so-called “European” qualities. Neoconservatives may say that President Obama was “European”, but he was overwhelmingly elected by a majority of Americans.

It is not clear if a second Republican administration in the White House would have also rejected unilateralism, although the campaign run by the Republican nominee
in 2008 did not indicate a strong multilateral desire. It does seem that a Democratic administration does embrace a multilateral policy. To his credit, Robert Kagan did note that Europeans were different across party lines as are Americans when it comes to the Venus and Mars model. When George W. Bush was President of the United States, the Labour Party was also in power in the United Kingdom. The French had a center-right Gaullist leader in President Jacques Chirac, and the Germans had a leftist leader in Gerhard Schroeder. It is difficult to say if it was the unique administrations of these individuals that showed a trans-Atlantic rift; it is hypothetically possible that a different political party within the countries could have exhibited a different policy. Robert Kagan’s theory regarding Venussians and Martians seemed to lack a clear reference point that could withstand a litmus test throughout time. Following Kagan’s logic, however, it seems that President Obama may have moved closer to Europe and that Europe could have moved closer to the United States since the last major rift. Ultimately, however, if Americans are really from Mars and Europeans are really from Venus, it should not matter who is in charge. Political parties, administrations and philosophies do, in fact, alter human events and the course of history.

As it is often said, Europe and the United States do share norms and values. The various countries want to spread prosperity, democracy, and a dignified way of life around the world. While they have many similarities, it is clear that they are not twins. The twenty-first century is thus far much different than the twentieth, but the realities a few years into the twenty-first century seem to be much different than those of previous years. Consider, for example, the fact that Robert Kagan agreed with Timothy Garton Ash’s assessment that “America has too much power for anyone’s good, including its
own” that was written in the September 9, 2002 issue of the New York Times justifying American unilateralism and the need of Europe to provide counterbalance. Many changes and developments have occurred since then, including the rise of many developing nations. The current world seems to have much more international actors that may necessitate more multilateralism abroad. Since 2002, the American military and economy have been put to the test by two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as a financial meltdown. Many other European nations have also had to deal with these conflicts and the financial crisis. The difficulties may have pushed the two sides of the North Atlantic back together because they need both an international effort to combat the global financial crisis and terrorism. Although many differences remain on both sides of the Atlantic, it would appear that in the beginning of 2009, Americans were not necessarily the Martians and Europeans were not always the Venusians.
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