

FRANCO-AMERICAN RELATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PACIFIC

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Pourquoi les relations entre la France et les Etats-Unis sont-elles marquées par des périodes de convergence et de divergence extrêmes? Ce texte examine les relations franco-américaines en trois parties: 1) les différentes théories des relations transatlantiques, 2) les théories de la francophobie et de l'anti-américanisme, et 3) comment ces relations sont perçues par les étudiants des relations transatlantiques et de la France contemporaine à deux universités américain, qui reçoit un grand nombre d'étudiants étrangers. Il soutient que les tensions entre les deux pays proviennent des intérêts divergents entre deux grandes puissances, la compétition entre deux modèles politico-socio-économiques, et certains facteurs de politique intérieure. En particulier, chaque pays peut utiliser l'autre comme bouc émissaire quand il fait face à des difficultés intérieures, et cette pratique choque rarement car peu de Français sont établis aux Etats-Unis et peu d'Américains sont établis en France. Cependant, il semble que dans la région du Pacifique, on conserve un esprit

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ouvert, loin des caricatures qui paraissent dominer dans la région de l'Atlantique.

Why have Franco-American relations been marked by periods of such extreme convergence and divergence? This work examines Franco-American relations in three parts: (1) different theories of transatlantic relations; (2) theories of Franco-phobia and Anti-Americanism; and (3) how these relations are perceived by students of transatlantic relations and contemporary France at two American universities, which also had a large number of foreign students. It seems that tensions between the two countries stem from the natural divergent interests of great powers, the competition between two universal socio-political-economic models, and domestic politics. In particular, each country is able to use the other as a foil or straw man against its own political difficulties, and this practice is virtually cost-free because there is no French-American community or American-French community. However, it seems that in the Pacific region there is an open spirit that remains removed from the caricatures that dominate the Atlantic.

It was a pleasure to participate in this seminar, *New Approaches to Governance and Self-Reliance in Pacific Island Societies*. This is particularly enriching for me, because I am not an expert on Pacific island territories and states. However, because this is in many ways a joint Franco-American seminar, and I am a long-time observer of this relationship, I thought it would be useful to review Franco-American relations with a look towards a new future in the Pacific region.

The relationship between France and the United States is quite unique in the spectrum of alliances both countries maintain. It is in many ways a paradox, in which there are moments of extreme cooperation and friendship between them – such as the American War of Independence and World War One – and then moments of

almost hostility and suspicion – during the 1960s and again at the time of the Iraq War in 2003. When I ask my American students which ally is "the most difficult," France is almost always mentioned. While Great Britain is regarded as the "closest ally" and Germany the "most responsive ally," the "oldest ally" seems to be left out. These tensions in the alliance are mirrored by a similar dynamic in the cultural relations between the two countries that seems to jump from mutual fascination and inspiration, to abject disdain and loathing. Why is this?

I argue that this is because of four reasons. First, and perhaps most importantly, stereotypes that magnify the differences between the two are very useful domestically for debates about both domestic and foreign policies. Second, there is no significant Franco-American community, or American-French community, in either country that makes Franco-phobia and Anti-Americanism costly. These two factors have a synergistic reaction since it is both risk-free and politically useful to make these arguments, vastly increasing their usage. Third, both nations claim their social-political-cultural model is universal, attractive and exportable. Fourth, as structuralists told us years ago, these are two important states with global interests who have different amounts of power and are in different geographic locations. These two last reasons inform us that friction at times is to be expected in this relationship. To illustrate these points, this paper will be divided into three sections. The first re-examines the theoretical foundations of Transatlantic relations. The second explores in more detail specific reasons for French anti-Americanism and American Franco-phobia. Last, the paper concludes with some observations after teaching courses on Transatlantic relations and France.

I THEORIES OF TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

Franco-American relations are regularly seen within the larger context of Transatlantic relations, and this makes a good starting point for theoretical foundations. During the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq War, many commentators worried about the apparent "Transatlantic crisis" and decried the demise of the Atlantic Alliance after the US invasion of Iraq over French and German objections. Yet, if one examines the history of the Atlantic Alliance, it seems that the alliance is always on the verge of collapsing or at the very least in crisis. In the 1950s, there were several crises: over finding a way of defending Western Europe from a possible Soviet invasion, over German re-armament, over US punishment of the UK and France because of Suez in 1956, and over nuclear sharing. In the 1960s, crises continued over issues like the new NATO doctrine of Flexible Response, the French acquisition of nuclear weapons, and other issues, culminating in the withdrawal of France from NATO's integrated military structure in 1966. In the 1970s and 1980s, there were a succession of other crises, big and small: the neutron bomb, the INF (Intermediate Nuclear Forces) or "Euro-missiles" crisis, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the "Star Wars" program, and others. Even with the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, there seemed to be more crises: Bosnia in the early 1990s, Kosovo in the late 1990s, and various trade and cultural disputes.¹ It often seemed that the allies fought each other harder than they fought their enemies in the Cold War. In many ways, the Atlantic Alliance lived up to Churchill's quip, "The only thing worse than fighting a war with allies is fighting without them."

Academics and analysts have focused on three main theoretical explanations for understanding difficult alliance relations: (1)

1 For a detailed examination of these crises, see Wallace Thies *Why NATO Endures* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2009).

structural/realist theory; (2) collective goods theory; and (3) cultural differences. The first, structural or realist explanation is perhaps best represented by Henry Kissinger in his work, *The Troubled Partnership*.² The key assumptions of structural theory are that members of the alliance differ because of two factors: (1) relative power; and (2) geographic location. Because the United States is so much more powerful than its European allies and because the Europeans are not only weaker, but also closer to the Soviet Union (and now Russia), they see issues in a different light. Europeans were more likely to feel threatened and helpless and wanted the US to "do more to protect them." However, they also feared that reckless American behavior (because the US was far away) could ignite another world war that would devastate Europe. Conversely, the US wanted the Europeans to "do more for themselves" so the US could watch over its interests in other regions. In many ways, this explanation still holds some truth if one replaces the area of potential threat as the Middle East and not only Russia as the area that is close to Europe and far from the US.

Structural theory offers that differences among allies are normal and that one can infer something about how a state will view a specific situation depending on its location and relative power position. In the case of the Franco-American relations, structural theory tells statesmen that France will be France not because its leaders are wicked or perverse or selfish or annoying, but because France and America are differently situated and thus see the same problem differently. Hence the solution is not to verbally lambaste the French or engage in silly gestures (Freedom toast and Freedom

2 Henry Kissinger *The Troubled Partnership: A Reappraisal of the Atlantic Alliance* (McGraw Hill, New York, 1965). Other good examples are Klaus Knorr (ed) *NATO and American Security* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1959) and Robert Osgood *NATO: The Entangling Alliance* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1962).

fries), but to talk with them, exchange views, look for areas of common concern and build on that.³

Collective goods theory was introduced in the path-breaking work of Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser, "An Economic Theory of Alliances."⁴ Rather than a geopolitical view of structural theory, collective goods theory was an economic explanation for alliance behavior. Alliances are supposed to produce public goods, in NATO's case, security. The problem with public goods is that by their very definition, all members benefit from them even if they do not do much (or anything) to produce them for the "common good." In other words, public goods suffer from sub-optimality and free-riding. There were little or no incentives for members to contribute since they could not be denied access to public goods. Perhaps more worrying from an American perspective, the smaller European powers would essentially "free-ride" on the efforts of the larger ones, in particular the United States. This leads to the ironic situation of the strong being exploited by the weak.

However, collective goods theory, suffered from the problem of not offering many solutions and also was not necessarily even true. It is not certain that absent an alliance, small states would spend any more on defence than they would with an alliance (perhaps neutrality would look more attractive). One could make the strong argument

3 My thanks to Wallace Thies for this point.

4 Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser "An Economic Theory of Alliances" *Review of Economics and Statistics* 48 (August 1966) at 266-279. See also Todd Sandler and John Forbes "Burden Sharing, Strategy, and the Design of NATO" *Economic Inquiry* 18 (July 1980) at 425-444; Wallace Thies "Alliances and Collective Goods" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 31 (June 1987) at 298-332; and Avery Goldstein "Discounting the Free Ride: Alliances and Security in the Postwar World" *International Organization* 49 (Winter 1995) at 39-71.

that small states might actually spend more in an alliance, viewing that expenditure as a "fee" to receive the benefits of the alliance.⁵ More importantly, it is not certain that larger states, which have global interests, would not have spent that money on defence anyway even without the alliance. For example, while expensive American aircraft carrier battle groups can defend Europe as part of NATO, they can (and are) used for protecting and promoting American interests in other areas of the globe. It is hard to argue that without NATO the US would not have built up the world's largest navy...

Lastly, and more recently, some have argued that cultural differences are the key to Transatlantic misunderstandings and crises. This was most popularized by Robert Kagan in his essay "Power and Weakness."⁶ For Kagan, the key is that today the US and the EU have fundamentally different values that stem from their different historical development, even though both are part of the "West". The powerful United States that prefers to be unfettered by institutional frameworks and sees force as a vital tool to resolve conflict and stop aggression seems to exist in a "Hobbesian world" of conflict and anarchy. The weaker EU operates in a "Kantian paradise" that has developed in a safe security environment and is dependent on international law and institutions to promote harmony between states. In short, the US is from Mars and the EU is from Venus. As many Transatlantic commentators drew attention to key cultural

5 My thanks to Wallace Thies for this point.

6 Robert Kagan "Power and Weakness" Policy Review 113 (June/July 2002) at 3-28. This was later expanded into a full-length book, *Paradise and Power: American and Europe in the New Era* (Knopf, New York, 2003). See also Josef Joffe "Continental Divides" *The National Interest* No 71 (Spring 2003) at 157-160; and the essays in Jeffrey Anderson John Ikenberry and Thomas Risse *The End of the West? Crisis and Change in the Atlantic Alliance* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2008).

differences between Europeans and Americans, especially over social issues, this view has attracted considerable attention.

However, in many ways the "cultural" explanation, according to Kagan, essentially rests on the power disparity between the two continents. The US has considerable military power so it often sees that as the answer to problems, the EU lacks military power, so it tends not to see military solutions to problems. The causal force is power, rather than culture.⁷ A more important problem with this view is whether or not this accurately describes either actor. This is particularly important for this paper. Kagan's view of a Europe that shrinks from the use of military force and seeks economic, institutional and diplomatic solutions to conflicts seems to be drawn from a certain view (or stereotype) of Germany. However, Germany has normally been viewed as being one of the most amenable countries for the US to work with during the Cold War.⁸ The country that most Americans think of for difficult relations with the US, France, does not fit well with Kagan's view. France, along with the UK, is one of the only countries in Europe that maintains robust conventional military capabilities and in 2008 had some 30,000 troops deployed globally, including combat missions in places like

7 One can be excused for thinking that Kagan has merely repackaged Kissinger's older structural theory...

8 There have been an increasing amount of comments that perhaps Germany is today not the "responsive ally," that it was in the Cold War. See for example, Charlemagne "The Berlin Stone Wall: Has Germany Replaced France as America's Awkward Ally?" *The Economist* 30 Oct. 2008. Structural theory again offers a more convincing explanation, that during the Cold War, Germany was on the frontline. An exposed state would likely be very responsive to the demands of its main protector. Post-Cold War Germany is no longer on the front line; it is instead surrounded by friendly and allied states. Sheltered as it is, post-Cold War Germany has the luxury of ignoring US demands.

Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire and Chad.⁹ Critics would point out that France pursues its own interests abroad in Africa and the Middle East, which is much more similar to Kagan's view of the US than the EU. This activist France that appreciates hard and soft power has at times reminded the Americans that France is perhaps the best ally, since it is not paralysed by internal doubts, like the Germans and sometimes the British are (more on this later).

In closing, it seems that the literature on Transatlantic relations offers a starting point for an analysis of Franco-American relations, but does not get at the specifics. All of the above theories point that while there may be broad shared interests on both sides of the Atlantic, there will likely be tensions and differences of opinion on what exactly are most important issues or threats, and how exactly to deal with them. However, this does not say much about why Franco-American relations should be generally regarded as tenser than Anglo-American, German-American, or even Danish-American relations. For this we have to examine things that are unique in this particular relationship.

II THEORIES OF FRANCO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

As mentioned in the introduction, Franco-American relations run the gambit from very close to very frosty. This is reflected in both the geopolitical and cultural spheres. In terms of geopolitics, French intervention in the War of Independence was critical for defeating the British. In World War One, the French military played a critical role in training and equipping American soldiers, and American economic and military power allowed the Entente to defeat

9 See the French Ministry of Defence website for numbers and locations for January 2009 <www.defense.gouv.fr>; Andrew Hansen "The French Military in Africa" *Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder*, 8 Feb 2008 <www.cfr.org>; and IISS, *The Military Balance: 2009*, at 122-125.

Germany. In the Second World War, the US liberated Nazi-occupied France. In various crises in the Cold War and after the Cold War, the US and France worked closely together: during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the INF Crisis and in the Balkans. Yet, there have also been tensions: Roosevelt and de Gaulle disliked one another and Roosevelt actively attempted to isolate and even eliminate the Free French in the first years of the war.¹⁰ In the Cold War, the US pressure on the UK and France caused them to end their intervention in Suez in 1956, and the US also attempted to pressure both Britain and France to give up their nuclear weapons in the 1950s and 1960s. In return, France withdrew from NATO's integrated military structure in 1966. These geopolitical tensions rose again to the fore in 2002-03, when France was seen as leading the opposition to the US war in Iraq at the UN Security Council.¹¹

What is perhaps most interesting about these tensions is that both sides point to certain specific events to make their argument about why "The French are ungrateful" and the "Americans are untrustworthy." For example, Americans often make the case that the French do not take the security threats in the Middle East seriously because they objected to the Iraq War. The fact that the French sent nearly 20,000 troops to the first Gulf War in 1991, or the second largest amount of aircraft to Kosovo in 1999 is forgotten or not known by most Americans.¹² Moreover, the French play an active

10 For more on this, see Jean Lacouture *De Gaulle: The Rebel 1890-1944* (Norton, New York, 1993).

11 Though some date the return of frosty relations to the late 1990s, see Huntington "The Lonely Superpower" *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 1999).

12 For the Gulf War, see David Yost "France and the Gulf War of 1990-91: Political Military Lessons Learned" *Journal of Strategic Studies* 16 no 3 (Sept 1993); and the French Embassy to Kuwait's website <www.ambafrance-kwt.org>. For Kosovo, see Ministry of Defense

role in many UN and EU military operations including 2,000 troops for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFL) in 2006 and 2,000 for the EU ongoing mission to Chad (EUFOR Tchad/RCA).¹³ Also, few Americans are aware that the US played the same obstructionist role against the British and the French during the Suez Crisis in 1956 that the French played over Iraq in 2002.

Generally ignored are moments where France actively sought to supplant Britain as the preferred American partner in Europe. Two come to mind, the formation of the Rapid Reaction Force for the Persian Gulf around 1980, and Bosnia and NATO expansion in the mid-1990s. November-December 1979 was arguably one of the worst two months in US diplomatic history during the Cold War. First, the US embassy in Iran was seized, then there were attacks on the Great Mosque in Mecca, US embassies in Pakistan and Syria, and then the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The US needed to be able to project forces to the Gulf region, but this depended on the British bases like Diego Garcia and Masirah. However, the special relationship was cool in the 1970s, both because the Labour governments of Harold Wilson and James Callaghan were less Atlantic minded many of their predecessors, and also the British distrusted of President Jimmy Carter's leadership skills. France also possessed both power projection forces and access to bases like Djibouti and Reunion in the region. The French saw an opening, and for the better part of two years the French constantly reminded American audiences that France had no anti-nuclear radicals, no

(France) *Loi-Programme Militaire 2003-08* (Dicod, Paris, 2001) at 2; and James Thomas *The Military Challenges of Transatlantic Coalitions*, Adelphi Paper 333 (2000) at 52-53.

13 For Lebanon see "Lebanon – UNIFIL – Background" <www.un.org>; and for Chad see "EUFOR Tchad/RCA" Council of the European Union <www.consilium.europa.eu>.

pacifist Left, no qualms about using force, and would make an excellent partner in the region.¹⁴

The second instance was right after Jacques Chirac was elected President in 1995, when the Clinton administration was attempting to revise its Bosnia policy. Like in the 1970s, Anglo-American relations was rather cool: British and American policy was often at odds in Bosnia, and John Major resented Clinton's meddling in Northern Ireland, in particular, Clinton's decision to invite Sinn Féin politician Gerry Adams to the White House in March 1995.¹⁵ Chirac, in contrast to his processor François Mitterrand, wanted France and the US to take a more active role in ending the Bosnian conflict, in response to the Bosnian Serb's use of captured French peacekeepers as human shields. Chirac and Clinton's coordination played a vital role in setting up the NATO Rapid Reaction Force of 10,000 men in July.¹⁶ Chirac even then pushed in 1995-97 for France's complete re-integration of NATO, though this ultimately did not come to pass.¹⁷

Moreover, the memory of heroic selfless Americans "saving France" in both World Wars is simplistic and ignores that in both wars the French were fighting the Germans for years before the

14 Thies, *Why NATO Endures*, above n 1, Chapter 6.

15 Reportedly Major declined to take Clinton's phone calls for a while, see Alan Rushbridger and Jonathan Freedland "Mandela Helped Me Survive Monicagate, Arafat Could Not Make the Leap to Peace – and for Day John Major Wouldn't Take My Calls: Interview with Bill Clinton" *The Guardian*, 21 June 2004.

16 See Ivo Daalder *Getting to Dayton: The Making of America's Bosnia Policy* (Brookings, Washington, 2000) at 44-45.

17 Charles Cogan has an excellent examination of the failed discussion over re-integration and command of AFSOUTH in *French Negotiating Behavior: Dealing with La Grande Nation* (USIP, Washington, 2004) at 165-186.

Americans decided to become involved. While some Americans may be quick to say, "Hey, we saved you twice from Germany, be grateful," the French response is, "Yes you did, but by the time you came 100,000s or millions of French people had already died. Why did you wait so long?" What strikes French observers is how quick Americans are to praise their British allies, while often French support is forgotten. For example, while all Americans saw British Prime Minister Tony Blair being called out for special attention in 2002 and 2003, few Americans know that French President Jacques Chirac was the first foreign leader to visit ground zero after the September 11th attacks.¹⁸

This spectrum of convergence and divergence is reflected in cultural relations as well, in particular on the French side. On the one hand, there is a long history of mutual fascination and learning from each other dating back to the period of the founding of the American and French Republics. Both Thomas Jefferson or Benjamin Franklin were devote Francophiles and spent many years living in France and bringing French culture back to the new country. George Washington and the Marquis de Lafayette had such a deep friendship that Lafayette offered Washington one of two keys to the Bastille, perhaps the symbol *par excellence* of French *liberté, égalité et fraternité!* Moreover, when the new capital was built Washington called upon a French architect, Pierre L'Enfant to design it. This relationship continued into the 19th Century with Alexis de Tocqueville's journey to America in 1848 to learn about democracy in America as a model for the new Second Republic.

In the 20th Century, this link endured when the lost generation of Hemingway and Fitzgerald enjoyed the high culture and energy of 1920s Paris and then in the 1950s and 1960s when French New

18 Charlie Rose "A Conversation with Prime Minister de Villepin" *International Herald Tribune*, 17 March 2007.

Wave directors re-invented many techniques and themes from the Golden Age of American cinema. In recent years, one need only think of the work done by French intellectuals like Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber or Jean François-Revel in showcasing the strength and power of American culture and ideas.¹⁹ In terms of pop culture, the image of Johnny Halliday, with his American rock and roll music on top his American Harley Davidson motorcycle, or the awarding of the Legion of Honor to Clint Eastwood illustrates that France appreciates many aspects of American culture.²⁰ On the American side, it is surprising to see the influence that "French theory", represented by thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault have had on American academia and intellectualism, in particular in fields like sociology, gender studies, anthropology, and history.²¹ One could make the case Derrida and Foucault in particular they have had greater influence in the Anglo-Saxon world than in France.²² In popular culture, as will be explained later, there remains a strong American fascination for French culture and lifestyle, with many Americans visiting France each year and bookstores full of French travel books and self-help guides that stress the benefits of a "French lifestyle."

19 Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber *Le Défi Américain* (Editions Denoël, Paris, 1968) "Obituary: Servan-Schreiber, 82, French Publisher" *International Herald Tribune*, 7 Nov 2006; and Jean-François Revel *Anti-Americanism* (Encounter Books, San Francisco, 2000).

20 "Eastwood Receives French Legion of Honor" *CBS News*, 17 Feb 2007 <www.cbsnews.com>.

21 For an overview, see the respective entries in Lawrence Kritzman (ed) *The Columbia History of Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Columbia University Press, New York, 2006); for a fun look at this, see Jim Powell, *Derrida for Beginners* (Writers and Readers, Danbury, 1997).

22 My thanks to Vincent Joly for this point.

On the other hand, it is well known that there is a strong feeling in France that American culture is spreading and is a threat to France. This apparent paradox that American culture is both fascinating and repellent to the French is significant. To use an everyday example, most people know that many French citizens complain about the presence of McDonalds in their culinary world, yet the very fact that so many McDonalds exist in France means that many French people eat there (recently it was reported McDonalds makes more money in Europe than in the US).²³

What theories or explanations are there about why there seems to be such levels of animosity in both countries? In terms of international relations and foreign policy, there are two general reasons for tensions in the relationship. First, both nations have global strategic interests and both value their sovereignty. Just as the US has interests to protect and goals to promote in the Middle East and Africa, so does France. Again, this has less of a role to play where either country deals with allies that are either more regional in focus, or content to play a more secondary role in "high politics" (as Germany and Japan traditionally do). Kissinger and the other "structuralists" of the 1950s and 1960s did make a very powerful observation on the role that power and geography play in alliance relations.

Second, it must be remembered that these are two countries that firmly believe that they have political-cultural models that are universal and exportable. Moreover, these models fundamentally differ on the role of the state in matters pertaining to the economy, religion, and culture. This introduces tensions into the relationship that are not present when the US works with Japan or Germany, or when France works with Italy or Spain. In particular, since the early

23 Laurie Goering, "Disney, Other American Cultural Icons Are Fitting in Europe," *Chicago Tribune*, 8 Feb 2009.

1990s, it has been popularly assumed that because of globalization, the American liberal model was becoming the dominant model world-wide.²⁴

Two leading researchers on this topic are Sophie Meunier and Justin Vaïsse. Sophie Meunier, at Princeton University has written and presented widely on Franco-American relations and French Anti-Americanism. Sophie Meunier wants to find out what is it about French Anti-Americanism that makes it different from other forms of anti-Americanism. Two of the reasons she finds is that (1) France has a long history of anti-Americanism; and (2) it comes from several different sources/groups. In regards to the first point, in France anti-Americanism predates America. It dates back to negative views members of the French *ancien régime* had for the New World and in particular the English colonies that were threatening French colonies there.²⁵ Many of the countries in the Middle East or Asia that are normally considered to have large numbers of anti-American thinkers and activists, are actually debutants at anti-Americanism in comparison to France, which has over 200 years of thinkers and observers making Anti-American arguments. This provides a large well or store of potential arguments that can be resurrected at key moments. For example, when issues of American economic power are mentioned in recent years, it is easy to recall the 'Uncle Shylock' criticism of the US after WWI for expecting war debts to be re-paid quickly.²⁶

24 In particular, see Cogan *French Negotiating Behavior*, above n 18.

25 Sophie Meunier "Anti-Americanism in France" *French Politics, Culture and Society* 23, no 2 (2005) at 126-127.

26 Benjamin Rhodes "Reassessing 'Uncle Shylock': The United States and the French War Debt, 1919-1929" *The Journal of American History* 55, no 4 (March 1969).

Secondly, there are many different types of anti-American arguments that can be made. Meunier identifies seven types of arguments.

- (1) The Sovereignist, or Gaullist approach: US foreign policy threatens French power and influence;
- (2) Legacy: American actions against France in the past must not be forgiven;
- (3) Liberal: America does not live up to its professed liberal ideals at home and abroad;
- (4) Elitist: American popular culture is vulgar and repulsive;
- (5) Nostalgic: American popular culture is displacing the French way of life;
- (6) Social: American liberal-capitalism is brutal and degrading to people;
- (7) Radical Muslim: Muslim minority view that the US is a threat to Islamic civilization.²⁷

These groups are not necessarily exclusive and many times can borrow and mix arguments from each other.

Justin Vaisse, at the Brookings Institution, has written extensively on American Franco-phobia. In his article, "American Franco-Phobia Takes a New Turn," he examines different motivations and groups that use Franco-phobia at the height of the Iraq crisis. He finds four distinct sources in the US:

- (1) Diplomatic: the US State Department deals with tensions and conflicts of interest between the two states

27 Meunier, "Anti-Americanism in France", above n 26, at 130-134.

- (2) Liberal: because France differs so much from the Anglo-Saxon model, in terms of the size and strength of the state and its Republican tradition that refuses to endorse a multicultural society, liberals wonder if France is really "democratic."
- (3) Neoconservative: a mixture of traditional Anglo-Saxon, conservative disdain of the French, the French political-economic model, and new dismissal of French foreign interests.
- (4) Anti-Semitic: since France seems to be "against" Israel, by extension France is anti-Semitic. In particular, this argument uses the history of the Vichy regime, and the National Front.²⁸

Amazingly, Meunier and Vaisse come up with very similar reasons for the important roles these feelings of distrust and hatred play on both sides of the Atlantic. First, they assist in identity building by identifying the "other." In the French case, America can represent several disliked stereotypes: rampant capitalism, racism, inequality, etc.²⁹ For example, in response to proposed economic reforms by conservative politicians like Alain Madelin in the 1990s or Sarkozy in the 2000s, simply saying that an idea was "American" was enough to cast doubt on the idea.³⁰ This has been particularly

28 Justin Vaisse "American Franco-phobia Takes a New Turn" *French Politics, Culture and Society* 21, no 2 (2003) at 20-24.

29 For more on this point, see Revel, *Anti-Americanism*, above n 20; and Cogan, *French Negotiating Behavior*, above n 18, at 23-58

30 For Madelin, see Marlise Simons "U.S.-Style Conservative Runs as Outsider in France" *The New York Times*, 16 April 2002; for Sarkozy, see Jean-Marie Colombani "Deux France" *Le Monde*, 3 May 2007.

useful in the construction of a European identity since the early 1990s.³¹

This is also used in the American case. The stereotype of socialist, statist France that is ossified by the weight of unions and regulations is useful in domestic arguments about maintaining the American liberal system. For example, in 2008, during the debate over the political response to the financial and economic crisis, Congressional Republicans criticized "bailout" plans as being too much like "French socialism." Jim Bunning, the Chair of the Senate Banking Committee, told Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Paulson, on July 15 during a hearing, "When I picked up my newspaper yesterday, I thought I woke up in France. But no, it turned out it was socialism here in the United States."³² Even writers in *Newsweek* joined the chorus. An article about how the Obama stimulus package was making all Americans "socialists" ends with the following sentence, "As entitlement spending rises over the next decade, we will become even more French."³³

This is part of a larger role that France, and Europe in general, play in US debates about domestic politics. For several decades liberals in the United States used an idealized image of Europe for their goals of expanding the social-welfare system. The general idea was to show Americans what the US could do in terms of national health care, benefits, low-cost university education, vacation, public transportation, by following the European example. The argument went along the lines of, "Why does the US have such a small social

31 Benoit Duteurtre "Anti-US Go Home" *Le Figaro*, 29 June 2002.

32 Matthew Benjamin "Senator Bunning Say Paulson Acts like Socialist: Should Resign" *Bloomberg*, 9 Sept 2008 <www.bloomberg.com>.

33 Jon Meacham and Evan Thomas "We Are All Socialists Now" *Newsweek*, 7 Feb. 2009.

safety net in comparison to other post-industrial, developed countries? Look, universities are free in Germany; health care is free in Sweden, etc. We should introduce some European-style reforms."³⁴ This would normally include a "human interest story" about how "Jacques enjoys six weeks of vacation" or "Lars in Oslo can take six months of paternity leave to raise his daughter," etc. This was mirrored by a cultural fascination since the early 1990s for a "European lifestyle" where leisure and quality of life seemed attractive to an American population that was working longer and longer hours and job stability and security seemed precarious.³⁵

In response, in the 1990s, as part of the "Conservative Revolution" there emerged a conservative discourse on Europe. To advance their goals of reducing or even dismantling the American social-welfare system, the conservatives made the argument that what was wrong with Europe was what the liberals liked. The reason the US was a superpower and a wealthy country was that it did things differently than the Europeans. Europe was an old, declining power and the US needed to stay competitive against the large economies of Asia.³⁶ This argument went something like this, "European economies are sluggish and are being beaten by Asian economies, it is because of the size of the state's role in the economy. Moreover, the quality of those services is much worse than in the US and they are very expensive and raise taxes." The conservative "human interest story" would mention how "Roger from Birmingham

34 An excellent example was the recent NPR story, "Health Care for All: In Western Europe, It's a Reality," NPR, July 2008 <www.npr.org>.

35 A classic comparison still worth reading is Michel Albert *Capitalism Against Capitalism* (Wuhr, London, 1992).

36 Tim Walberg, "Commentary: GOP Health Care Card" *The Washington Times* 3 June 2008; Jon Meacham and Evan Thomas "We Are All Socialists Now" *Newsweek*, 7 Feb 2009.

almost died from cancer because of the incompetence of the British national health service and now he lives happily in the US after receiving superior care from an American hospital" or "Gretchen from Munich enjoys the quality of an American university after the primitive conditions back in Germany."³⁷ The threat was that if the US implemented any of these reforms, it would soon become old, stagnant, and irrelevant as they argued Europe had become.

The conservative argument was very successful in the 1990s and the early 2000s, becoming prominent even in nominally center-left publications like *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. This gives a strange schizophrenic quality to these papers and American elites, depending on the issue in question. For example, if one reads the world/international and particularly the editorial sections of these papers, the image of France from Tom Friedman or Roger Cohen essentially reflects the conservative discourse: France's statist economy was falling behind, reform was impossible, French resistance to globalization was quixotic and shortly France would become an irrelevant power.³⁸ However, if one went to the lifestyle or vacation sections, the travel and cultural writers would still extol the liberal idealized view of France and Europe: how to take time out for yourself and your family the French way, how French women stay thin while eating *foie gras*, live in Provence for the summer and

37 A classic example is Rush Limbaugh "Socialized Medicine Does Not Work" 17 June 2003 <www.freerepublic.com>.

38 Classic examples, are Roger Cohen's "Liberty, Equality, Anxiety: For France, Sagging Self-Image and Esprit" *New York Times*, 11 Feb 1997; or "France's Frivolous Campaign Nears Its Overdue Close," *International Herald Tribune*, 17 April 2007. For Thomas Freidman "Vote France off the Island" *New York Times*, 9 Feb 2003; and "Our War With France" *New York Times*, 18 Sept 2003.

make your own *chèvre*, etc.³⁹ This always left me confused about which image of France is the correct one. The old, decaying France that represents a failing social-economic model, or the successful one that I should emulate before I die of a stress-induced heart attack from the American pace of work? In other words, is France a "Paradise of leisure and culture" or an "Old lazy civilization that's falling behind?"⁴⁰

This view illustrates one of Vaisse's most interesting and overlooked points, that Franco-phobia in the US is not a *chasse gardée* of the right. On the contrary, there is a strong, vibrant group of Franco-phobes on the left. This stems from two sources: first, the neo-liberal (in terms of economics) free-trade left, the left of Thomas Friedman and various "Third Way" figures.⁴¹ As mentioned above this group champions free-trade and promotes globalization and France is the "unforgivable country" for having the audacity (or ignorance) to stand up to the universal American model. The second group sees France as not being particularly "liberal" (in terms of multiculturalism, democracy and human rights), focusing on issues like gender, sexuality and minority groups. For this group, France is

39 Travels books about living in France have been plentiful since the early 1990s, see Peter Mayle *A Year in Provence* (Vintage, New York, 1991); and Rebecca Ramsey *French by Heart: An American Family's Adventures in La Belle France* (Broadway, New York, 2007).

40 For two excellent works on this subject see, Edward Knox "Déjà Views: How Americans Look at France: Introduction" *French Politics, Culture & Society* 21, no. 2 (Summer 2003); and Pierre Verdageur "A Turn-of-the-Century Honeymoon? The Washington Post's Coverage of France" *French Politics, Culture and Society* 21, no 2 (Summer 2003).

41 Timothy Smith is a good example, see *France in Crisis: Welfare, Inequality and Globalization since 1980* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004); and Sebastian Budgen's review of this work "Liberal Francophobia" *New Left Review*, 38 (March-April 2006).

a profoundly racist, authoritarian, sexist, patriarchal state and society.⁴²

Lastly, this type of rhetoric on both sides of the Atlantic is politically "safe". As implied earlier, in France and in much of the EU in general, anti-Americanism is the one "safe prejudice" to have. There is no stigma attached to anti-Americanism. In fact, one can make the case that it is fashionable. Similarly in the US, Francophobia seems to sell to a sizable market. There were several anti-French books published right after the Iraq crisis that were on the shelves of many bookstores throughout the country, including John Miller and Mark Molesky's *Our Oldest Enemy: A History of America's Disastrous Relationship with France*, Denis Boyles, *Vile France: Fear, Duplicity, Cowardice and Cheese*, Richard Chesnoff, *The Arrogance of the French: Why They Can't Stand US-and Why the Feeling is Mutual*, and Kenneth Timmerman, *The French Betrayal of America*. It is difficult to imagine similar books sold about other American allies like Germany or the United Kingdom. One reason for the safety of French bashing in the US stems from the fact that there is not a large, "Franco-American" immigrant community in the US, unlike Irish-Americans, Italian-Americans, Polish Americans, Czech-Americans, etc.⁴³ France was one of the

42 Jean-Philippe Mathy "The System of Francophobia" *French Politics, Culture and Society* 21 no 2 (Summer 2003) at 25. Some of the inspiration for this group likely comes from the academic works of some of the leading Anglo-American leaders of French studies, like Alec Hargreaves "Half-Measures: Anti-Discrimination Policy in France" in Herrick Chapman and Laura Frader (eds) *Race in France: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Politics of Difference* (Berghahn Books, New York) at 227-245; and Joan Wallach Scott *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2007).

43 Vaisse "American Franco-phobia Takes a New Turn", above n 29, at 41-42.

few European countries that was a country of emigration rather than immigration in the 19th Century. There was no large movement of French citizens to the US in the 19th or early 20th Century. Therefore, there are no domestic costs to French bashing, unlike what a politician or newspaper might suffer if they engaged in Irish or Italian bashing.

This tactic of using the other as a foil is also useful for foreign affairs. Difficulties or failures are easier to explain to the public when it is not the country's fault, but a conspiracy by the "troublesome ally." For example, it became common in 2003 and afterwards to blame French actions for the opposition in the UN and international community to the US war in Iraq. The failure to get a second resolution and the small size of the "Coalition of the Willing" were all more palatable if they were laid at the feet of the "treacherous French." Therefore, according to this view, none of this had to do with the clumsy nature of American diplomacy leading up to the crisis, or genuine concerns other countries had that the invasion was a bad idea. This is not new. In response to the debacle of the Suez Expedition in 1956, it has been commonplace in France to explain that the failure was due to American coercion of the weak British (the "sneaky Anglo-Saxons"), and not that the policy of invading Egypt and overthrowing Nasser's government was a mistake and ultimately untenable in an era of decolonization.

This linkage of the US and the UK as a single unit, the "Anglo-Saxons" marks another, less obvious reason for tensions. It is often said that in the 20th Century, when the US became a superpower, it picked up the British mantle of leadership. In this case the US also picked up something else: the old British rivalry with France. Much of the debate on both sides of Atlantic reuse many of the old examples and terms from the centuries of conflict between the UK and France, from 1350 to 1902. This is perhaps easier to understand on the French side since the US is in origin a British colony, whose

colonists fought against French colonists in the French and Indian Wars in the 18th Century. Moreover, the special cultural and geopolitical relationship between the two English-speaking nations seems to maintain this colonial link in French eyes. The perfidious America has simply replaced the perfidious Albion. However, the US adoption of traditional British views of France is perhaps more puzzling. Much of the anti-French rhetoric in the US has a decidedly British ring to it, such as calling the French "frogs", and references to English victories like Crecy and Agincourt that took place long before the American continent was even discovered by Europeans... A classic example is Charles Krauthammer's praising of the film *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World* about a British frigate during the Napoleonic Wars:⁴⁴

Even better is the fact that the hero in his little British frigate is up against a larger, more powerful French warship. That allows American audiences the particular satisfaction of seeing Anglo-Saxon cannonballs puncturing the Tricolor. My favorite part was Aubrey rallying the troops with a Henry V, St. Crispin's Day speech featuring: "Do you want your children growing up and singing the Marseillaise?" It was met by a chorus of deafening "Noes." Maybe they should have put that in the trailer too.

Of course, the irony of this is that the film is a combination of two books in the series (*Master and Commander* and *The Far Side of the World*) and the reason why this particular enemy ship was larger and more dangerous than the British frigate in the original novel is that it was an American 44-gun frigate (like the USS *Constitution*) named the USS *Norfolk* and took place during the War of 1812 fought

44 "Success on the High Seas" *Washington Post*, 14 Nov 2003.

between the US and the UK.⁴⁵ So much for Anglo-Saxon unity against the Gallic enemy... .

III STUDENT OBSERVATION

The final section deals with some of my own observations from teaching courses. I started teaching a course on Transatlantic relations in spring 2006 at a private college on the East Coast, and in the fall of 2008 I began a new course on Contemporary France at a private University in Hawai'i. The class sizes were about 20-25 students, the courses have been popular and were attractive to students who wanted to learn more about France and Europe. Also, in Hawai'i our largest number of international students come from Europe, in particular Northern and Central Europe. I must add that my institution specializes in East Asia and most of our international courses focus on this region. Yet, there is significant student interest in France and Europe.

In general terms, I noticed that there is a small core of Francophile students. These students have often traveled to France, some several times, and have done exchange programs in large cities like Paris and Lyon. These students were attracted to France by many of the positive images that were reflected in the earlier mentioned "lifestyle" sections of newspapers, or travel books like Peter Mayle's *A Year in Provence*. These students had seen a fair number of French films, read some French literature, and some even had studied the French language.

In opposition to these was a similar sized core of Francophobes. Most had limited knowledge of France and their hostility stemmed from two particular sources: (1) that France was opposed to US interests (concentrating on ingratitude for WWII and opposition to

45 See the original book, Patrick O'Brian *The Far Side of the World* (Harper Collins, London, 1984).

the Iraq War); and (2) hatred for "European-style" social welfare systems. These students were surprised to learn that France deployed a large number of troops in Afghanistan or that the French health care system is not "socialized" and relies mostly upon private health care providers.⁴⁶ However, one thing that was very interesting is that francophobia was not limited to the right. An equal number of the Francophobes considered themselves liberal. Their criticisms of France tended to fall into three areas: (1) French statism in terms of the economy and cultural protection (the Tom Friedman camp of free-trade liberals); (2) perceived French "arrogance" in foreign affairs; and (3) criticisms of French domestic politics that clash with liberal ideas of multi-culturalism and individual rights.

As expected, the majority of students were ambivalent but curious about France. Some knew France only vaguely while others had travelled there. They were critical on some issues, but very open to learning more about France. Interestingly, they saw the clash between the two countries over Iraq as a "dip" and not a "rupture". Both of the institutions also had a large percentage of international students. What was most surprising about this group is that with the exception of the British students, they had no idea that there were any special tensions in the Franco-American relationship. For them, Franco-American relations were no different than Anglo-American relations, German-American relations, etc. This was true for students from a wide variety of countries, including Germany, Latvia, Norway, Turkey, Japan, and Micronesia. The exceptions were the British students who were well aware of tensions in the relationship.

46 For an excellent comparison of the US and French health care systems, see Paul Dutton *Differential Diagnoses: A Comparative History of Health Care Problems and Solutions in the United States and France* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2007).

One of the most interesting observations is that most of the critiques of France have their origins in "Anglo-Saxon" culture. Before teaching these courses I had always viewed the French term "Anglo-Saxon" with some amusement, because it reflected an old view that the US is still a WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) country tightly linked to British culture and heritage, whereas in fact most Americans are not predominantly Anglo-Saxon any more. However, to my surprise most criticisms of France came from the differences in the respective models, in particular the protectionist role of the state and the centralized Republican national identity. This criticism crossed the political spectrum from left to right and came from students of all ethnic, geographic, and economic backgrounds. The more conservative students objected to the large role of the state in the economy, and the more liberal students objected to the rigid French immigration model and lack of multiculturalism in France. All students were surprised that France had not decentralized yet and felt that American style reforms were essentially "inevitable" in the long-run. Perhaps there is something to this French view of *les Anglo-Saxons*...

In closing, and keeping the intention of this conference in mind, I would like to offer that the Pacific holds opportunities for improving Franco-American relations. I strongly feel that these opportunities are actually stronger than on the US mainland. While this initially seems contradictory, since Hawai'i is so far away and culturally different, this is actually the reason for my hope. The biggest difference I noticed in comparing students in Hawai'i with students on the East Coast is that while they had slightly less knowledge of France, they also had minds that were more open. Students on the East Coast had some greater knowledge, but they also carried some of that inherited baggage from the UK/US-France rivalry with them. Students in Hawai'i were more willing to learn about France since they were starting from a "cleaner slate" than the mainland students. This does not mean they came away with an overly romanticized

image of France of only being chic cafés and bathing on the *Côte d'Azur*. They seemed to appreciate some French accomplishments like the health care system, high speed trains, and philosophy, but also to criticize things like immigration and naturalization policies, the role of women, and French policies toward sub-Saharan Africa. Their criticism came not from some inherited and ill-founded prejudice, but from their own studies and reasoning. I strongly feel we can take advantage of this and move Franco-American relations forward in the Pacific, avoiding most of the positive and negative caricatures that exists in the Atlantic.

