



GWEN IFILL: So is there a growing chasm in policy, politics and public opinion between the United States and its European allies?

We take a look at what's at stake with: Robert Kagan, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Robin Niblett, executive vice president and senior fellow of the Europe program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies; and Andrew Kohut, the author of the Global Attitudes Poll -- he's the director of the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press.

Andrew Kohut, the results that we just saw of the poll that you took. Does this show that anti-U.S. public opinion in Europe is hardening?

A wedge between the U.S. and Europe?



ANDREW KOHUT: Well, opinion of the United States plummeted after war in Iraq. And a year later, it's gotten worse. I'll just read you the German numbers. In Germany, prior to the 9/11 attacks, 80 percent of the Germans had a favorable opinion of the United States. That fell all the way to 45 percent in May 2003, after the war. It's now at 38 percent. We see that not only in general opinions. We

see it reflected in how the Europeans look at the war on terrorism, how they look at their relationship with us, their security and foreign policy relations, historic relationship with us.

GWEN IFILL: It is not news to most of us that there was objection to the United States entry into the war in Iraq in many of the countries you surveyed but I guess what I'm curious about is to why it has seemed to get worse in the time since instead of better?

ANDREW KOHUT: Well, Iraq is judged to be not a success. Among Americans, a majority think the country has been well protected by the war in Iraq. The war on terrorism has been furthered. Europeans don't think so. And there is ... what the Europeans came away telling us in this poll is America is less credible, less believable to them as a consequence of the war in Iraq.

GWEN IFILL: Is this kind of opinion, Robert Kagan, driving a wedge that's widening between the United States and Europe, or are we seeing isolated incidents like what we saw in Spain this week?

ROBERT KAGAN: No, I mean, it's a manifestation of a wedge that's been opening between the United States and Europe though for sometime I would say. Whatever the polls may reflect, there is no question that Europeans and Americans have had very different attitudes about issues like the use of force, the legitimacy of the use of force. You can see some of these gaps opening up even in the '90s and they've become exacerbated since Sept. 11 and especially since the Iraq war. We're in for a fundamental gap I think which is going to be with us for sometime.

GWEN IFILL: Robin Niblett, do we see what happened in Spain with the new socialist government in Spain, is that something which might create a domino effect?



ROBIN NIBLETT: I don't think so. The circumstances in Spain were quite specific and as I think a lot of commentators have pointed out recently, Zapataro really took advantage of a sense that the Spanish government of Jose Maria Aznar had lied, that they had used those few days after the attack to try to pin the blame on ETA as opposed to of allowing the possibility that al-Qaida might have been involved as well. So there was a very specific reason for the punishment that took place. When you look at each of the governments around Europe, they exist in very different political circumstances.

The U.K., for example, you are probably not going to throw out the Labor Party to bring in a conservative party that is pro-war and probably more pro-American than the Labor Party. So I think the chance of the domino effect politically is unlikely. Nevertheless, each of those leaders that were part of the so-called new Europe, those on periphery that supported the U.S. in the war in Iraq and went in there and put troops there, are in a weaker position in terms of perception. They have much less room for maneuver. Voters won't necessarily determine their votes purely on the war in Iraq, but each of those leaders now has much less room for maneuver.

Does the 'new Europe' still exist?

GWEN IFILL: Let's talk about the new Europe, for a moment, Robert Kagan. This is a term that Donald Rumsfeld so famously coined when talking about who was supportive of the United States effort to go to war and who was not. Does the new Europe still exist in the same way that he meant it then?



ROBERT KAGAN: Well I was always dubious about the idea of new Europe and partly because -- precisely because in places like Spain and even in some of the eastern

European countries, public opinion was dramatically different from where the governments were, and so in a way, new Europe, the concept of new Europe was always built on shifting sand. And we've seen the consequences of that. I would say that overall public opinion in Europe, regardless of government stance, is more like that of France and Germany than it is of Britain and Tony Blair or Poland, for instance.

GWEN IFILL: But what this administration is concerned about is the leadership. Where is the leadership as much as where is the public opinion. When we heard Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage said today that the reason this happened is because Jose Maria Aznar had mishandled the aftermath of the bombing, is that, in your opinion, an effort by the United States to try to appeal to other governments not to jump off the old bandwagon there?

ROBIN NIBLETT: I think so. And also you've got to remember that European leaders, as you pointed out, are in a different position to their publics. I think what has been very noticeable is that through to December, European leaders developed a new European security strategy. That European security strategy mirrors to a remarkable extent the views of this U.S. administration on what the nature of the threat is. They put terrorism at the top, proliferation second -- countries way, way from the European periphery in India and so on as great sources of concern.

And so there is probably a coming together, certainly after Madrid in terms of the nature of the threat, where there isn't a coming together is on how you deal with it. The Europeans place far more emphasis obviously on multilateral solutions, far more emphasis on what they call rather cleverly preemptive engagement. By that they mean diplomatic engagement not military engagement, than do the United States. So I think there is a coming together of perceptions but still a lot of difference in terms of how we go about it.



GWEN IFILL: I want to know whether you think there's this coming together and also if the coming together is around the notion that al-Qaida is responsible for the terrorism. Can the European allies pursue al-Qaida without the U.S. and can the U.S. do it without these European allies?

ROBERT KAGAN: Well, that's a good question. I mean, we're in an ironic situation. It used to be that the Europeans were trying to make the Americans understand they couldn't go it alone and now the United States is sort of in a position of telling Europe that it can't go it alone, that it can't fight the war against al-Qaida by itself. My concern -- I agree the governments will probably stay solid but I'm worried the effect of the Spanish elections on public opinion, the average person in

Europe is that they will believe. There was a Finnish journalist who asked a question of General Myers suggesting that many Europeans will believe that the safest route will be disassociation from the United States. If they want to protect themselves from al-Qaida, it's not about using force. It's about steering clear of the United States.

GWEN IFILL: Another famous term that this administration coined was the coalition of the willing. Does it still exist?

ROBIN NIBLETT: To the extent that new Europe is not a factor in foreign policy the coalition of the willing is now the coalition of the slightly uncertain you might be able to say. But otherwise I presume it does still exist.

ROBERT KAGAN: It still exists but I think at this moment we are at a crisis moment, I think, potentially a crossroads. I think it is very important for European leaders, that includes Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schröder to say to the European publics that opting out is not an option. That disassociation from United States is not an option. That we are all in it against al-Qaida. The European publics will take their cues to some extent from their leaders. I think it's important that they hear that now.

Views of American and British leadership

GWEN IFILL: Back to the public opinion piece of this, Andrew Kohut, is there a connection between ... we notice there were fairly negative views of President Bush and Tony Blair in this poll. Is there a connection between the views of these two leaders and the views of the war?



ANDREW KOHUT: Well, I think the views of President Bush in Europe have been negative from the get go. I did a poll in August of 2001 before the Sept. 11 attacks and the Europeans were charging Bush as a unilateralist. And I think a lot of the reaction here is against Bush. But in all of these polls, what we see in Europe is also something bigger than Bush, which was resentment and suspicion of American power. When we asked the Europeans who doubted the sincerity of the war -- American-led war on terrorism -- what's America up to? Large percentages of them said America wants to dominate the world. That was the majority view in France and Germany.

GWEN IFILL: Well, where in your poll, because there weren't just two countries, France and Germany, involved in this, there were nine countries altogether -- where in your poll has the image of the United States improved?

ANDREW KOHUT: Russia. More support for the war on terrorism went from the 50 or 40 percent level back up to 70 percent. A little bit of improvement in some of the Muslim countries. In Turkey, we saw the percentage of people who approve of the war on terrorism going from 28 to 37 percent. Sounds like small numbers, but it's a trend in the right direction, perhaps because the Russians and even the Turks to a certain extent given the attacks last November, think they may have a little more in common with us.

Future opportunities to improve relations

GWEN IFILL: Final question to you two gentlemen. The president announced he will be going to a European summit in Ireland in June. Is that a good thing? Will it help on this front?



ROBERT KAGAN: Well, it couldn't hurt. I mean I guess I wish he were going a lot sooner. I think that this was a moment for the president to go to Europe, to show kind of solidarity that the United States seeks from Europe and to give it as well to Europe and to sit down with European leaders and talk about how we are going to fight the common battle against al-Qaida. I think June is a long way away, and there can be a lot of drift in Europe before the president arrives in June.

GWEN IFILL: Robin Niblett?

ROBIN NIBLETT: One of the key things that needs to be done between now and June and you can use that time, hopefully in the intervening time, to do some practical work. Can we find a way to get the Spanish to be able to keep their troops in Iraq after June 30? The prime minister has been obviously very strong in his condemnation of the United States. Partly he has to make a point that his views are views of conviction and that they weren't driven by the terrorist attacks.

But if you can find a way to have a U.N. resolution that provides some cover -- and you have an Iraqi sovereign government, I believe it is not out of the question that the Spanish government might find a way to keep the troops there.

GWEN IFILL: We are always back at the United Nations, aren't we? Robin Niblett, Robert Kagan and Andrew Kohut, thank you all very much.