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# Chirac angers East Europe

## EU candidates say they will not stay silent on war with Iraq

By Craig S. Smith

The New York Times

**BRUSSELS:** The continental rift over Iraq widened sharply Tuesday after East European candidates for European Union membership reacted indignantly to advice from President Jacques Chirac of France to pipe down on the subject or risk losing their chance to join Europe's most powerful economic and political club.

"We thought we were preparing for war with Saddam Hussein and not Jacques Chirac," said Alexander Vondar, deputy foreign minister of the Czech Republic, one of the EU applicants that have drawn French ire by openly supporting the United States and Britain in the Iraqi crisis. Vondar said his country and its immediate neighbors "definitely cannot remain silent," as Chirac advised Monday.

Adam Rotfeld, deputy foreign minister of Poland, the largest of the EU candidates, said, "France has a right to define its own policy and we have to respect it," but he added that France must offer the same respect to Poland.

Chirac, in an unusual outburst to reporters in Brussels after a contentious emergency EU summit meeting Monday on Iraq, derided those Central and East European countries that have signed letters expressing their support for the United States as "childish," "dangerous" and missing "an opportunity to shut up."

He went on to suggest that opposing France and Germany could hurt candidates for EU membership.

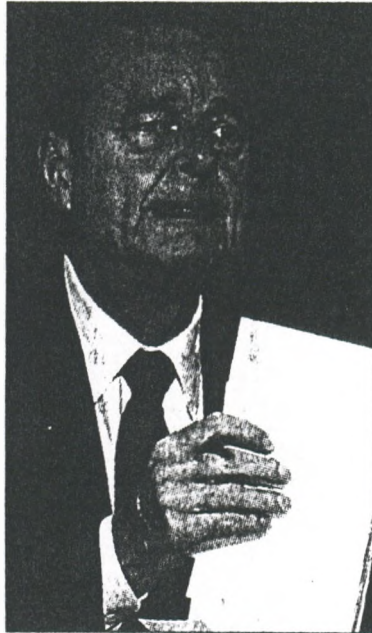
"When you are in the family," Chirac said, "you have more rights than when you are asking to join and knocking on the door."

He warned that Romania and Bulgaria, the poorest of the 10 candidates to the 15-member bloc, "could hardly find a better way" of reducing their chances for membership by speaking up against France.

The war of words heightened tension between the two sides as leaders of the European Union aspirants arrived Tuesday in Brussels for a briefing on the emergency summit meeting, which they were not invited to attend despite appeals by Britain and Spain.

That tension has grown steadily as Central and East European countries have sided with the United States over how to resolve the Iraq crisis.

France and Germany have resisted the American push for military action, leading the U.S. defense secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, last month to chastise the two as "old Europe," out of step with the "new Europe" made up of former Soviet bloc countries. The di-



Reuters

'These countries have been not very well behaved and rather reckless of the danger of aligning themselves too rapidly with the American position. They missed a great opportunity to shut up.'

— Jacques Chirac

## A big unhappy family

### How friendly can Europe be with U.S.?

By John Vinocur

International Herald Tribune

**PARIS:** President Jacques Chirac's warning to the new Europeans of EU and NATO enlargement that they cannot side with America and still fit his definition of membership in the family of Europe has exposed a profound, long-term contradiction that could tear the EU apart from within.

**NEWS ANALYSIS** While Europe bandaged for the moment its current internal wounds over NATO and Iraq at a Brussels summit meeting Monday night — offering up on paper a statement of unity that bears little resemblance to real policy — Chirac essentially told the East Europeans who will swell the EU's membership to 25 over the next three years that they risk being blackballed en route if they don't demonstrate more loyalty to a conception of Europe's role in the world that fits that of the French and German governments and not that of the United States.

The violence of the remarks acknowledged openly for the first time one of the basic reasons that Iraq has become such an existential issue for France, and in its manner, Germany.

Confronting the United States, and

marking out a line where euro-Atlantic coalescence must stop involves an attempt to re-assert French-German leadership in a Europe whose institutional future points toward the French and Germans being submerged by a new wave of entrants. These candidates from the former Soviet bloc refuse to define Europe's *raison d'être* in a foreign and security policy reflexively opposed to the United States.

Pure arithmetic and majority voting tell the tale. They turn France and Germany into minority presences over the expansion programmed for the next years. NATO goes to 27 members next year, reinforcing its American orientation. With most of same new countries involved, all regarding the United States as their ultimate protector, the EU increases to 25 in 2004, and then to 27 or 28, including Turkey, from 2007.

Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder referred a trace obliquely last week to the conflict, saying that the Iraq question really meant protecting "European sovereignty," and that the actions taken now would determine the development of Europe over the next 10 to 15 years. But with its shared borders and history of savaging Eastern Europe, the Germans are in no position to use the men-



# CHIRAC: Contradiction within EU is exposed

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acing and near-condescending language that came out of the French president.

Basically, with partially controlled rage, Chirac told the candidates, you must think as France and Germany do. With near total support for his positions in French public opinion, Chirac, thought-police style, set up as an obligation for the emerging half of the Continent the kind of unanimity now current in France that Liberation, the left-wing newspaper, said over the weekend "has something suffocating about it."

With a paucity of finesse that would have rivaled Donald Rumsfeld, Chirac told the new Europeans their positions were "dangerous" and "reckless."

Indeed, he said, they "would have done better to shut up" than sign on to letters, one involving eight countries organized by Britain, and the other taking in the Vilnius Group of 10 EU and NATO candidate countries, that supported the position on Iraq of the United States.

And Chirac threatened. He said it would take the vote of only one current EU member in a national referendum to block the entire enlargement process. As for Romania and Bulgaria — perhaps singled out as ingrates because they are grant-supported members of the French-funded organization of nations nurturing the French language — Chirac said, "If they had tried to decrease their chances for getting in Europe, they couldn't have done a better job."

Although no other member country spoke in his manner, or offered him support, Chirac insisted the former Soviet bloc countries' attitude "can only reinforce an attitude of hostility" in their regard. This came from a man who clearly sees himself as Europe's dominant voice — but after a majority of 16 countries in NATO, with a proce-

dural maneuver isolating France, forced Sunday night the delivery of defensive material to Turkey that a French, German and Belgian blockade had denied for a month.

On Tuesday afternoon, the East Europeans accepted the members' declaration from the night before at a meeting in Brussels, while making their discomfort clear, Romania going as far as calling Chirac's remarks "irrational" and "undemocratic."

Rather than applause, Reuters reported from Brussels, there were "seething" reactions, particularly within the European Parliament, to Chirac's tirade. In a dispatch from Warsaw, the news agency quoted an East European diplomat of accusing France of speaking in a tone "not even the Soviet Union would have used with its Warsaw Pact clients during as 40-year dominance of the region."

The intensity of the confrontation and the willingness of the East Europeans to make references to appeasement while continuing to state their affinity for the American position on Iraq, especially after France and Germany had brought Russia along to join their challenge to the United States, clearly went beyond what France had calculated.

In a weekend meeting of German and Czech officials in Munich, the Czech Republic's foreign minister, Cyril Svoboda, recalled the Munich agreement of 1938, when Czechoslovakia was sold out to the Nazis by Britain and France, and warned of the consequences of appeasing a totalitarian regime. The same suggestion of appeasement, with its implicit linkage of Iraq and a part of Europe, was made more directly on Monday by President Vaira Vike-Freiburger of Latvia, an EU and NATO candidate.

Commenting on the different attitudes in Europe after the massive anti-



Yves Herman/Reuters

Prime Minister Peter Medgyessy, left, of Hungary, Prime Minister Adrian Nastase, center, of Romania, and the Hungarian foreign minister, Laszlo Kovacs, enjoying a moment Tuesday in Brussels ahead of a meeting of EU candidate countries.

war marches over the weekend, she said of Latvia's post World War II occupation by the Soviet Union: "We certainly have seen the results of appeasement. It's much easier to tolerate a dictator when he's dictating over somebody else's life and not your own."

And she went on to emphasize the central issues that the EU's rejiggered common statement on Iraq skirted and left to the Security Council. The core obligation concerning Iraq's disarmament, she said, "is what we are going to do about it, and what is the time frame that Iraq is to be given, and, of course, what happens if it doesn't comply."

The pugnaciousness of the candidate countries was reinforced by what British diplomats said was successful French and German pressure on Greece, the EU's current rotating president, to reverse an invitation it made to

the candidates to attend the summit meeting Monday night as observers.

"Some EU countries were probably afraid to hear voices they don't want to hear at the summit," said Janusz Reiter, the former Polish ambassador to Germany, who is now head of the International Relations Center in Warsaw.

Another Pole, Radek Sikorski, a political scientist working in Washington, was reported by Reuters as taking the issue directly at the door of the French and the Germans. "France and Germany can no longer control the Continent. America has too many friends in Europe who realize that America and Europe are one civilization."

Whatever the interpretation, virtually all attention was on the confrontational nature of what Chirac said and its negative fallout.

At its most destructive, the outburst

could well be the step too far that fractures Europe's confidence in its capacity to manage its vast expansion and re-organize its institutions, while creating a sense of unity and democracy that could be shared by all its peoples.

At the same time, it could be an indication that France is putting together the elements of an equation — including the argument that it is saving the real Europe from the U.S. plans to undermine it — that would help justify a French veto later in the week of a new Security Council resolution enabling a strike against Iraq.

If it is only venting frustration at the cold prospect of France's diminished influence in Europe, a step not incompatible with the French president's personality, it is all the same a gesture that has brought Europe's future serious new pain and uncertainty.

# EU: Criticism by Chirac widens split on continent

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vide broke into the open when eight European leaders, including those from EU candidates Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, signed a letter of support for Washington's position in January.

That letter was followed by another signed by 10 countries, including seven EU candidates.

The controversy has highlighted France's ambivalence toward the European Union's enlargement, which it has long feared would weaken the Europe's power on the world stage, or at least weaken France's ability to dominate it.

Jacques Rupnik, a leading French expert on Central and Eastern Europe, said the French were beginning to feel that they perhaps ought not to have let the Easterners join the EU after all.

"There is a lot of irritation in France about the alignment of the candidates toward the U.S. position," said Rupnik, adding there is suspicion in France that the poorer European countries are attracted only by EU economic support but that "for the serious stuff they address themselves to Washington."

## ■ Differences papered over

In the end, the two sides united Tuesday behind a hard-fought declaration warning Iraq that it has one last chance to disarm, papering over the acrimonious dispute, The Associated Press reported from Brussels.

The joint declaration agreed to by the present EU members Monday night and endorsed Tuesday by the future members warns Iraq that it must disarm "fully and completely."

They agreed to give UN weapons inspectors more time, but set no deadlines and asserted that "war is not inevitable," a concession to France and Germany, which have long sought a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

"We had extensive, very effective and constructive consultations and we have reached an agreement," on the EU summit declaration, said Prime Minister Costas Simitis of Greece, whose country holds the rotating EU presidency.

But the Chirac tirade demonstrated the limits of the declaration in achieving a united front.

"It is not really responsible behavior," Chirac told reporters Monday just after the EU issued its declaration on Iraq. "It is not well-brought-up behavior. They missed a good opportunity to keep quiet."

Britain and Germany defended the future members' right to express their own opinions, a blow to French aspirations to be one of the primary architects of European foreign policy.

Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain made clear his disagreement with Simitis's decision excluding the new members from the emergency summit meeting on Monday. "They have as much right to speak up as Great Britain or France or any other member of the European Union today," Blair said in London.



# Europe has a commitment to UN that U.S. doesn't share

By Richard Bernstein

The New York Times

**BRUSSELS:** The declaration of unity on Iraq issued by the 15 heads of state of the European Union might have read more like an arbitration finding — a bit for this side, a little for that — than a ringing or even an unambiguous statement of purpose.

**NEWS ANALYSIS** But there was one point, encompassed in two sentences of what was otherwise an anodyne compromise document that allowed for no ambiguity, and it was the point that precisely expressed the divide between the United States and the vast majority of European public opinion.

"We are committed to the United Nations remaining at the center of the international order," said the declaration, which was promulgated Monday. "We recognize that the primary responsibility for dealing with Iraqi disarmament lies with the Security Council."

In fact, the emergency conference of European leaders, held to hammer out a common position on Iraq, was saturated with a commitment to world govern-

ment, the supervision of countries by an international civil service bureaucracy whose headquarters is the United Nations. This is a notion that has long been viewed with suspicion and sometimes outright hostility by the United States.

In a sense, all the analyses of the cultural differences between Europeans and Americans — about Europeans being less reliant on force and more willing to sacrifice their sovereignty — boil down in practice to this: European governments believe in the United Nations as the center of world order, and the U.S. government, especially the current American government, does not share that view.

"Europeans already operate a kind of world government inside the confines of Europe, and they would like to replicate their experience on a global scale," said Robert Kagan, whose book, "Of Paradise and Power," is a study of the cultural differences between Europe and America. "But in the United States, which has never operated in such a system, both Democrats and Republicans are skeptical that you can do this."

"It's also a question of power," Kagan said. "It's historically been the case that

weaker powers have sought to constrain stronger powers through the mechanisms of international legal structures."

The summit meeting did more than reaffirm an attachment to the UN. The European leaders also warned Iraq to disarm and allowed that force might be used against it, though only as a "last resort."

But the most common refrain was the collective expression of trust in a world order governed by the UN Security Council.

Present in Brussels, for example, was Kofi Annan, the secretary-general of the United Nations, who told the assembled European heads of state and foreign ministers that the United Nations was the only source of legitimacy for the use of force in the world.

"If the international community fails to agree on a common position and action is taken without the authority of the Security Council," Annan said, "then the legitimacy and the support for that action will be seriously impaired."

Similarly, President Costas Simitis of

Greece said at a press conference, "We believe that the focus of the international system is the UN, which has primary responsibility for managing the Iraqi crisis."

The public opinion polls showing clear opposition in Europe to a war rang of this same conviction. There was the one published in the German news-weekly Spiegel showing that 53 percent of the German public believed the United States to be the greatest threat to peace in the world, while only 27 percent chose Iraq for that distinction.

To most Americans, as well as to many Europeans, that idea seemed ridiculous. But the 53 percent were probably not saying that they preferred Iraq to the United States. More likely, they were saying was that their greatest fear was of a superpower untrammelled by international control. They would rather do nothing about a dictator like Saddam Hussein of Iraq, who, in the European view, is too weak and hemmed in to be much of a threat, than

see the United States do something without the approval of the United Nations.

It is possible that polls in Europe could show very different results if, in the weeks ahead, the Security Council votes for military action against Iraq and the United States leads a UN-sanctioned coalition there.

There is a paradox in this because, despite the unilateralist reputation of the Bush Administration, it has so far more or less accepted the Europeans' multilateralist rules of the game.

Indeed, after contemplating unilateral action in Iraq, the administration now finds itself enmeshed in the sort of Security Council machinations and negotiations that American unilateralists — and, of course, not all Americans are unilateralist — find anathema.

Skeptics about world government say that the United Nation's record is not very good.

In the critics' eyes, the United Nations's work in Bosnia, to take an extreme example, failed precisely because it placed too much emphasis on negotiation and not enough on military force — before the United States stepped in to lead the effort to bring an

end to the genocide there. It was not for nothing that, following Sept. 11, the United States did not ask for United Nations help in its war against Al Qaeda.

For skeptics about world government, the United Nations is the sort of organization in which the European members could quietly abstain as Libya was voted the new chair of the UN Human Rights Commission.

Europeans have no illusions about the human rights record of Libya, but their impulse is to regard the occasional institutional absurdity as the price for having the institution in the first place. Americans, already dubious about the value of world government, are more dismissive.

Europeans, of course, are aware of the very good possibility that the United States, frustrated with what it sees as Security Council obstructionism on Iraq, may decide to ignore the United Nations and go to war with an informal coalition of the willing. Europeans know that such an action would be a blow from which the idea of world government might not recover, and their message in Brussels was to Washington: don't do it.

**'Europeans already operate a kind of world government within Europe.'**