

'Old' Europe reuniting East with West

Level 3 | **Advanced**

1 Pre-reading | What do you know about the tensions between the US and Europe?

1. Who did the US Defence Secretary describe as "Old Europe"?
 - a. Poland and Hungary
 - b. France and Germany
 - c. Romania and Bulgaria
2. Who did French President Jacques Chirac describe as "infantile"?
 - a. Poland and Hungary
 - b. The USA and the UK
 - c. The Eastern European countries
3. Who are the "gang of eight"?
 - a. Eight candidate countries for the European Union
 - b. Five current EU members and three candidate countries
 - c. Eight current EU members
4. Why did Jacques Chirac criticise the European Union candidate countries?
 - a. Because they are all pro-American
 - b. Because they openly supported President Bush's policy on Iraq
 - c. Because they want to join the European Union in 2004

Now look in the text and check your answers.

2 Key Vocabulary

Fill the gaps using the words in the list:

countdown incautious enlargement subsidy infuriated row measured tabloid

1. _____ means 'extremely angry'.
2. Counting backwards, from ten to zero, is called a _____.
3. A _____ is a very noisy argument.
4. A _____ response is one which is slow, careful and deliberate.
5. _____ is the process of making something larger.
6. A _____ is a small newspaper which does not contain much serious news.
7. An _____ person acts without thinking first and without using good judgement.
8. A _____ is an amount of money paid by a government to reduce the costs of a product or service.

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Europe's relations with the United States have been one of the victims of the Iraq crisis so far. But as tensions increase in the countdown to conflict, collateral damage may be spreading to the old continent's most ambitious project - reuniting its western and eastern sides and erasing cold war boundaries forever. That at least was a fair reading of what Jacques Chirac, the French president, achieved when he lambasted the east European countries that are joining the European Union next year for publicly supporting George Bush on tackling Saddam Hussein.

Their behaviour, Chirac said at the end of the emergency Brussels summit on Iraq, was "infantile" and "dangerous". Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and the other EU candidates had "missed a good opportunity to keep quiet", he said. "When you are in the family, after all, you have more rights than when you are asking to join, and knocking on the door." Romania and Bulgaria were told they had been particularly incautious since they were still seeking to join.

Chirac's blunt rebuke came at the end of a long day of haggling over the summit declaration, which pulled off the trick of offering something for both hawks and doves in a divided union. This was not just a fit of pique by a tired 70-year-old anxious to get back to the Elysee for a good night's sleep, but a carefully calculated warning. France has always been lukewarm about the EU's eastern enlargement, seeing it in some ways as an Anglo-Saxon plot to transform beyond recognition the club it

helped found. French farmers will find it far harder to keep their generous subsidies when all those Polish smallholders join. La langue de Moliere has already been supplanted by English as the dominant language of the expanding union. And, worst of all for a country that has never really abandoned its Gaullist instincts, the post-communist governments in Warsaw, Prague, Budapest, the Baltics, Slovenia and Slovakia are by and large pro-American.

Last month Chirac was infuriated when Donald Rumsfeld, the US defence secretary, criticised France and Germany as "old Europe" in contrast to the friendlier easterners of "new Europe". The pro-American open letter of the "gang of eight" - five current EU members and three of the new lot - and then of the "Vilnius Ten" of candidate countries, seemed to confirm the point. So did the bitter month-long row inside Nato, when France, Germany and Belgium opposed alliance plans to defend Turkey in case of attack by Iraq.

France is not alone in feeling the chill wind from the east. Germany has complained too that it is wrong of the candidates to accept handouts from Brussels and then give their support to Washington. Romano Prodi, the president of the European Commission, said he was "very, very disappointed" by the stance of the future member states. Still, Chirac's suggestion that enlargement might be put to a referendum in France - where it is deeply unpopular - sounded suspiciously like a threat.

This wave of expansion has been in the works for a decade. The final deal was done at the Copenhagen summit last December; the accession treaty for the 10 newcomers is to be signed in Athens in April and referendums held in the coming months. They are scheduled to join on May 1, 2004. It is a measure of how angry and divided European governments feel at this tense moment in international affairs that France is even considering such tactics.

The responses from the easterners were measured. Bronislaw Geremek, the former Polish foreign minister, pointed out that France and Germany had failed to consult not only the candidates, but also the other current EU member states when they launched an initiative to head off military action against Iraq - before the two letters expressing support for Bush.

The perceptive recognised that this was to some extent a war by proxy. "Every time I have a dispute with my wife I shout at my sons," explained Romania's prime minister, Adrian Nastase. By which he meant that France's problem was with the US and Britain, but it was far easier to take it out on the easterners. It could have been worse: no one called Chirac a "worm", which is what the British tabloid newspaper the Sun did. Still, if Europe's fissures continue to deepen, traditional British "frog-bashing" may turn out to be one of the milder side-effects as this world crisis takes its course.

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3 Comprehension Check

Match the beginnings with the endings

1. Divisions between Europe and the US over Iraq...
2. President Chirac strongly criticised the East European countries ...
3. Romania and Bulgaria had been particularly careless because ...
4. Chirac mistrusts the enlargement of the EU because ...
5. Donald Rumsfeld praise the countries of the "new Europe" because ...
6. Germany has criticised the candidate countries because ...
7. When France and Germany launched their initiative to prevent war in Iraq ...
8. "Frog-bashing" in the British media ...

- a. ... they were friendlier and more pro-American.
- b. ... is excessive criticism of France.
- c. ... they accept money from the EU but then support the US.
- d. ... might threaten the enlargement of the European Union.
- e. ... they were still applying to join the European Union.
- f. ... they failed to consult other European countries.
- g. ... he sees it as a plot to transform the EU beyond recognition.
- h. ... for publicly supporting the Americans over Iraq.

4 Vocabulary Work

Find the word. They are in chronological order as they appear in the text.

1. Two words that together literally mean 'ordinary citizens who are killed during a war'.
2. A verb that means 'to criticise angrily'.
3. An adjective that means the opposite of 'mature'.
4. A verb which literally means 'to argue over the price of something'.
5. An adjective which means 'not very enthusiastic'.
6. A three-word expression which means 'for the most part'.
7. A noun which means 'an attitude or view about an issue'
8. A two-word verb which means 'to prevent something from taking place'

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5 Vocabulary Work: Collocations

Match the adjectives in the left-hand column with the nouns in the right-hand column. Although there may be more than one possibility, each word is used only once.

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| 1. bitter | a. rebuke |
| 2. cold | b. response |
| 3. blunt | c. wind |
| 4. generous | d. letter |
| 5. chill | e. row |
| 6. measured | f. subsidy |
| 7. mild | g. war |
| 8. open | h. side-effect |

6 Discussion

Do you think the Eastern European countries are right to support the US over Iraq?
Is it more important for the Eastern European countries to support France and the EU?