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HEADLINE: Euro relations with America at new low

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BODY:

TENSIONS over Iraq reverberated across Europe yesterday, leaving relations with America at their lowest for decades.

Indignation at the reference by Donald Rumsfeld, defence secretary, to the Franco-German alliance as representing "old Europe" was led by Germany where Chancellor Schroder telephoned Russian President Vladimir Putin in a publicised show of solidarity. German newspaper commentators rounded on America's leadership, accusing it of being "arrogant" and "neo-colonial".

The Frankfurter Allgemeine newspaper dedicated two pages to condemnations by prominent German and French intellectuals of Mr Rumsfeld's remarks, which the newspaper called "a provocation which is opening up a new conflict". It asked: "Why did Rumsfeld not go ahead and extend the axis of evil" to Germany and France?

A statement by a group of intellectuals, including Gunter Grass, the Nobel prize-winning writer, called for Europe to say **no to war** with Iraq.

However, the conservative Die Welt gave warning that, if the German cabinet did not change its mind, "eventually the German-American relationship will, like Saddam Hussein's career, lie in ruins".

In its editorial, Liberation wrote that Mr Rumsfeld's remarks "isolate America and feed an already virulent anti-Americanism by confirming all the stereotypes about the bellicosity and imperial arrogance of the cowboys".

Fury at Mr Rumsfeld's comments, however, found little resonance with Tadeusz Iwinski, senior foreign policy adviser to the Polish prime minister, Leszek Miller, who endorsed Mr Rumsfeld's contention that the "centre of gravity of Nato is shifting to the east".

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