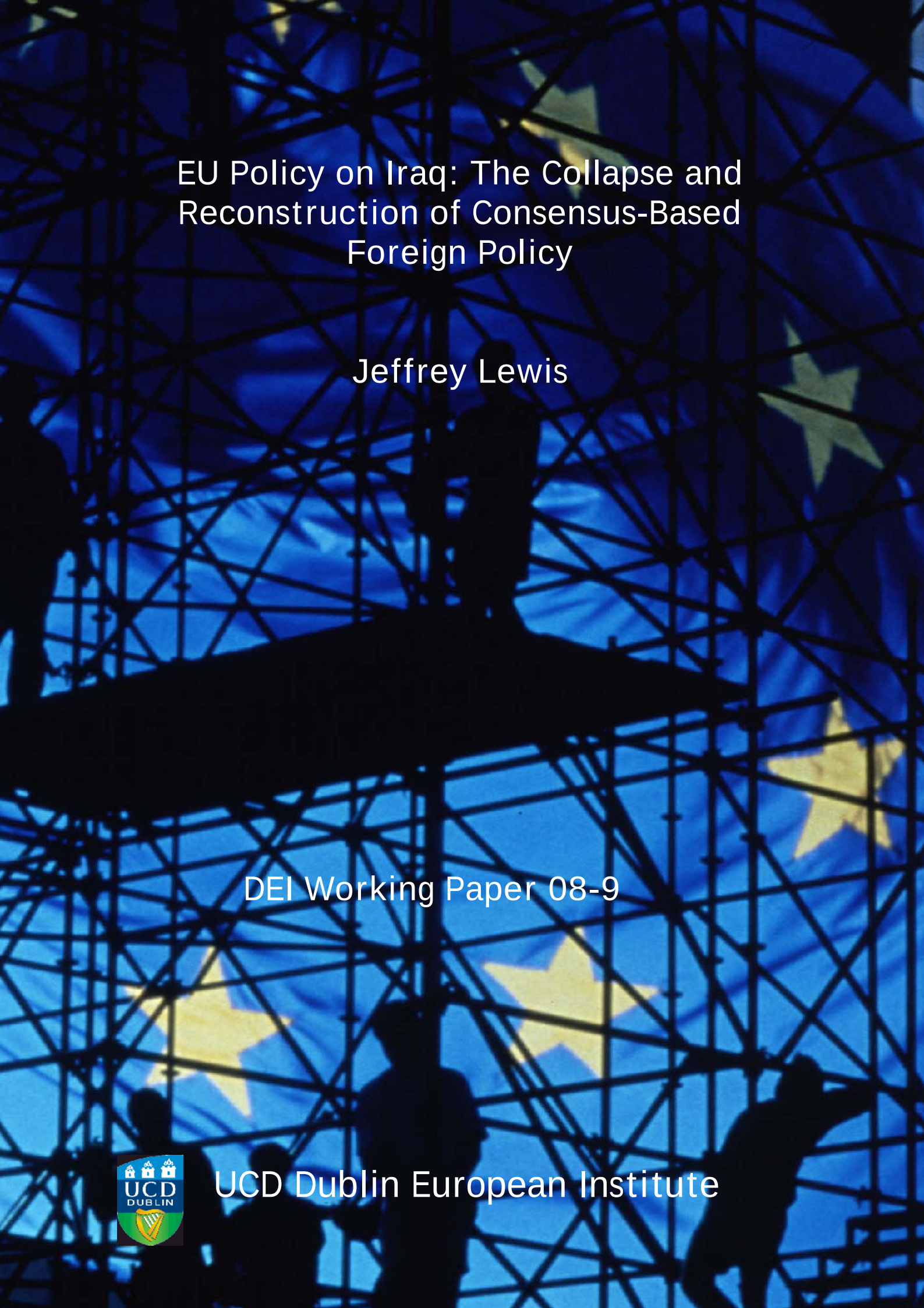

EU Policy on Iraq: The Collapse and Reconstruction of Consensus-Based Foreign Policy

Jeffrey Lewis

DEI Working Paper 08-9

UCD Dublin European Institute

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This paper should be cited as follows: Jeffrey Lewis, *EU Policy on Iraq: The Collapse and Reconstruction of Consensus-Based Foreign Policy*, UCD Dublin European Institute Working Paper 08-9, July 2008.

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About the Author

Jeffrey Lewis is Associate Professor of Political Science at Cleveland State University. Contact: J.Lewis07@csuohio.edu

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EU Policy on Iraq: The Collapse and Reconstruction of Consensus-Based Foreign Policy

Abstract: Contrary to the conventional wisdom on Europe's divided response to the Iraq crisis, deliberations among EU foreign ministers in the first half of 2003 highlight the durability of Member States' shared commitment to make foreign policy decisions *in camera* and by consensus, which tends to produce mutual compromises rather than lowest common denominator (LCD) outcomes. At first glance, Europe's bitter discord over the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 was a foreign policy debacle *par excellence*. And when a majority of Member States publicly broke ranks with a tenuously reached common position, skeptics argued that the EU's consultative and consensus-based process of foreign policy making was either fictitious or irrevocably broken. But in fact, the Iraq crisis triggered a normative reframing of security and defense policy and renewed a commitment to consensus-based decisions. As a result, rather than an LCD outcome, a compromise position was reached in the form of EU-coordinated economic and humanitarian assistance to rebuilding Iraq that has exceeded 200 million euros per year since 2004. This was possible because normative commitments to develop the EU as a global actor and to promote democracy and the rule of law worldwide legitimated EU action and thus constrained Member States with strong 'no EU action' and/or 'let the UN do it' preferences. The foreign ministers' ability to reach agreement on coordinated recon aid to Iraq also displays the Union's principled commitment to make decisions in a norm-governed and consensus-based institutional environment of cooperative bargaining.

1. Introduction

At first glance, the deep divisions in Europe over Iraq hardly represent a successfully chapter in the evolution of CFSP and the EU's long-term effort at becoming a coherent, influential international actor. The run up to the Iraq war in March 2003 split open fissures amongst EU Member States rarely displayed in such naked clarity: 'new' versus 'old,' 'Atlanticist' versus 'Europeanist,' and within the big state 'triumverate' of Britain, France, and Germany. According to David Calleo, 'internal divergences over Iraq mocked the geopolitical vision of European unity' (2004: 32). In terms of relations with the United States, one transatlantic scholar claimed 'the reservoir of mutual trust drained to depths not seen since Suez' (Peterson 2004a: 22). In a speech delivered to an emergency debate of the European Parliament on the day Iraqi air strikes began, External Relations Commissioner Christopher Patten declared:

…There can be no denying that this has been a very bad passage for the Common Foreign and Security Policy; a very bad passage for the European Union as a whole; a very bad passage for the authority of the UN; for NATO; and a very bad passage for transatlantic relations.[i]

What is striking about this case is *not* the failure of EU members to reach a common policy on Iraq. Indeed, as John Peterson notes, 'Iraq had been a bitterly divisive issue in both transatlantic and inter-European relations for at least ten years' (2004a: 11).[ii] What *is* striking, rather, is the normative reframing of policy for reconstruction assistance to Iraq which followed in the wake of such open Member State divergence. How and why Europe overcame discord on Iraq is the focus of this article, with the overall goal of explaining how the arguments for 'no EU action' and a 'let the UN do it' approach to Iraq's reconstruction became disempowered. Initially, the most recalcitrant 'no EU action' veto player was Germany, bolstered by a larger subset of Member States with strong 'let the UN do it' preferences, including France, Belgium, and Luxembourg. In other words, the initial divergence was between a small but insistent group of Member States who were loathe to use EU-level action to lend any legitimacy to the Iraq war, hence the 'UN only' viewpoint. The potential lowest common denominator (LCD) for this case is thus one of status quo, seen below at the conclusion of the first case (November 2002-March 2003) when the European Council declares that the UN 'Oil For Food' Program should handle Iraq's reconstruction.

The dependent variable of this article is a new EU common policy on post-invasion Iraq based on an EU-coordinated program that took a variety of forms and is documented in case two (March 2003 – June 2003). Using the Normative Institutionalist (NI) approach developed by Daniel C. Thomas (2008), the analysis attempts to explain how and why such a new common policy on Iraq's reconstruction was possible in the second case given the deep rifts exposed in

case one. Observables include sustained EU economic reconstruction assistance to Iraq, in excess of 700 million euros since 2003 and an integrated 'rule of law' mission (EUJUST LEX) which has provided training to over 800 judges, investigating magistrates, police and penitentiary officers since 2005. Less observable, but as significant for Europe's foreign policy aspirations is the renewed legitimacy attached to consensus-based CFSP and the shared understanding that the Iraq crisis violated a number of informal norms. In particular, the way some members (and accession candidates) publicly broke ranks with a tenuously reached common position by the foreign ministers in January 2003 was seen as a violation of CFSP consultation norms specifically, and the Council's 'code of conduct' generally.

How the EU reframed the dispute over military force in Iraq into a showcase of multilateral reconstruction assistance is thus a promising case study for the NI approach as outlined by Thomas, which 'posits that the EU's substantive and procedural norms shape the behavior of its Member States' (2008: 14). As this article documents, Europe's reframing efforts over Iraqi reconstruction offer confirming evidence for both NI hypotheses: entrapment (H1) and cooperative bargaining (H2). First, it will be shown that as the dust settled from a very public display of disagreement, the EU's normative commitments to become a global actor with capabilities to promote democracy and the rule of law worldwide entrapped those Member States with strong 'no EU action' and/or 'let the US/UN do it' preferences into accepting EU-coordinated reconstruction assistance (H1). It certainly helped that normative commitment arguments were inseparable from the view that EU recon aid was important to rehabilitate transatlantic relations and safeguard against being treated as a junior partner subjected to divide-and-rule tactics. Substantive policy commitments for Europe's long-term role in the Greater Middle East further entrapped those with 'UN-legitimated action only' and/or 'no EU action

period' preferences. As this article will document, a series of formal and informal meetings among the EU foreign ministers in the first half of 2003 gradually led to a new understanding that to do otherwise would fly in the face of long-term European commitments to promoting stability in the Middle East. Second, the Iraq crisis did *not* obviate the EU's norm-based process of foreign policy making; instead, it helped renew the principled commitment among Member States for such cooperative bargaining procedures as consultation and *in camera* deliberation (H2). The most directly observable instance of this is the informal foreign ministers' cruise in the Greek isles that legitimated a consensus on EU-coordinated aid and even more importantly gave a 'political green light' to CFSP High Representative Javier Solana to draw up a new comprehensive European Security Strategy (ESS).

In other words, the lessons learned from the Iraq crisis include a new shared understanding among the EU foreign ministers on principled, substantive, and procedural grounds for concerted EU assistance to post-invasion Iraq. While 'getting out the checkbook' may code to some observers as a minimalist LCD outcome, there are two reasons to question this interpretation. First, as case one shows, the LCD status quo was to let the UN 'Oil for Food' coordinate recon efforts and what the EU eventually endorses goes significantly beyond this. Second, the reasoning and meaning attached behind a new consensus-based approach to EU reconstruction assistance was inextricably linked to more intangible process and relationship interests in EU foreign policy making. This is thus an instructive case to see how procedural norms for cooperative bargaining can be deactivated and reactivated and the interplay between the two dynamics. There is also confirming evidence from close participants in the CFSP process that the Iraq crisis (and especially the public letter campaign) violated a number of unwritten

norms and procedures which should in the future proscribe similar behavior and may serve as guidance for a new 'code of conduct' in CFSP.

The remainder of the article is organized as follows. Section 2 documents case one, where the divergence among EU members during the Iraq crisis from November 2002 to March 2003 led to an atmosphere of uncompromising positions and a breakdown of informal norms of behavior once a tenuous common position was reached on the eve of war. Section 3 focuses on the second case (March 2003 to June 2003), where the EU's foreign policy debacle over Iraq was reframed around the issue of reconstruction assistance and assesses how this policy was rhetorically empowered in the face of several Member States who held contrary 'no EU action' preferences. Section 4 concludes by assessing possible longer term implications on the EU's ability to make effective common foreign policy decisions and whether a norm-driven, consensus-based bargaining style can help or harm Europe's influence in international affairs.

2. Case One (November 2002 – March 2003): Europe's Position On Iraq Goes From Ambiguity To Open Divergence

On 8 November 2002, after months of tough negotiations over the wording of conditions that Iraq needed to meet in order to avoid war, UN Security Council resolution 1441 was adopted. For Europe, the 'Iraq crisis' was about to live up to is name. During the Fall of 2002, intra-European divergence on policy towards Iraq became more public and more pronounced. Prior to this time the lack of agreement among Member States had been 'successfully clouded in ambiguity' (Toje 2005: 119).[iii] But during the Fall of 2002, the growing divide between Britain and the anti-war governments in France and Germany became regular headline news. Coupled

with a close domestic election race, by September 2002 the Schröder government had announced 'a very outspoken antiwar stance' that rejected German support for military intervention *even if legitimated by the UN* (Stahl et al. 2004: 422; Pond 2003). By November, in EU forums, the foreign ministers were barely discussing Iraq at all, and for all practical purposes the Iraq crisis ceased to be an active agenda item for the GAERC, the Union's premier foreign policy decision making body. National positions on Iraq became increasingly entrenched and were not subjected to the 'normal' back and forth process of frank exchange and mutual responsiveness found in the EU's deliberative decision making machinery. At the heart of this blockage was Franco-German opposition. As John Peterson recounts:

> Chirac and Schröder, together with very small groups of close advisers, crafted uncompromising anti-war positions on Iraq and thus made the bitterest of clashes with the Bush administration, and much of the rest of the EU, inevitable (2004a: 15).

This uncompromising atmosphere at the highest political levels, effectively *deactivated* the EU's norm-based process for consultative and consensus-based foreign policy making. The public posturing which took place by both those who supported and those who opposed military intervention short circuited the institutional context within which the EU's CFSP normally operates. One former EU ambassador had this reflection five years later:

> I remain convinced that if politicians had allowed professional diplomats to try and find an acceptable form of words enabling each participant to do what he wanted to do anyhow, but without creating a major transatlantic and intra-European crisis, that could have been done in good Coreper fashion. But with Chirac, Rumsfeld et alia, this was not [in] the cards.[iv]

In the words of another high ranking EU official, 'On Iraq the three big leaders came out on very different positions. There is no [CFSP] mechanism to overcome that.'[v] This applies with particular clarity to the sidelining of the EU's CFSP High Representative, Javier Solana. Allen and Smith (2004: 95) note that 'Solana's attempts to preserve unity by brokering innocuous

common statements were undermined by the determination of larger Member States to pursue their own policies regardless of their impact on an EU common position.' As discussed below, the public letter writing campaign would further exacerbate this trend.

By January 2003, the internal divisions within the EU over Iraq already looked insurmountable but were about to face an even worse test of mettle. On 23 January, US Defense Secretary Rumsfeld dropped his caustic 'old' Europe remark when asked by a reporter to comment on the lack of European support.[vi] A common position on Iraq *was* reached by the foreign ministers on 27 January but it was an LCD status quo (endorsing a UN solution to the crisis) that fell apart within days. Fueled by 'old Europe, new Europe' headlines, the minimalist common position was circumvented as a group of Member States bandwagoned to sign public letters of support for the military intervention option favored by the US.[vii] First, on 30 January, the leaders of eight states (led by Spain and Britain) published an open letter in the *Wall Street Journal Europe* and twelve other European newspapers condemning Iraq as a 'clear threat' to international security.[viii] It was not difficult to read between the lines to comprehend this was an open endorsement for the US position. Even worse, the so-called 'Letter of 8' was published on the same day that the European Parliament adopted a joint resolution (by a vote of 287-209, with 26 abstentions) that the current material breaches of UNSCR 1441 *did not* justify military intervention. Second, on 5 February, a new US support letter from other regions of 'new' Europe was published. This letter became known as the 'Vilnius 10' as a reflection of the Central and Eastern European who signed on (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia). Immediately, the 'Vilnius 10' letter prompted a harsh rebuke from the French President that for newcomers and would-be club members, 'It is not really responsible behavior, it is not well brought-up behavior. They missed a good

opportunity to keep quiet.'[ix] A few weeks later an article in the *International Herald Tribune* documented how the 'Vilnius 10' letter was written in collusion with US lobbyist Bruce Jackson, a former Department of Defense employee known for his neo-conservative views and involvement with the US Committee on NATO.[x] The two letters had the effect of trashing the common position on Iraq which the EU15 foreign ministers had inked only days before and after lengthy wrangling over the wording.

The public letters were clear violations of the long-standing custom of consultation that was cultivated over time within the European Political Cooperation (EPC) process (Dimitrakopoulos and Passas 2004: 44).[xi] According to Michael Smith, 'the most fundamental principle of European foreign policy cooperation is that EU member states must avoid taking fixed positions on important foreign policy questions without prior consultation with their partners' (Smith 2004b: 101). The *Financial Times* claimed, 'to some diplomats, the 'declaration of the eight' was regarded as a betrayal of all the attempts by Javier Solana, the EU's foreign policy chief, to keep the Europeans together.'[xii] Solana apparently only learned of the letter's publication from the radio.[xiii] Nor was the Greek presidency consulted or even forewarned (Toje 2005: 119), another explicit violation of the Council's culture and procedural code. Some reports note that Greek authorities were not told beforehand even though Prime Minister Simitis spoke 'a few hours prior to the publication of the open letter' to both Prime Ministers' Blair and Berlusconi.[xiv] It is also significant that drafts of the letter bypassed the EU's institutions completely, routed instead through embassies to the individual countries.[xv]

While the media typically interpreted French President Chirac's chastisement of newcomers (i.e. – to 'shut up') as an 'extraordinary outburst,'[xvi] it is politically symbolic of the violation of unspoken rules in an institutionalized community setting. A clear if more subtle

reference to this violation can also been detected in a speech by the Dutch European Affairs Minister at Romania's European Institute shortly following the 'Letter of 10', where he notes, 'If we learn of partners' initiatives only from the press, something is clearly wrong. You do not always need to agree, but you do need to understand each other'.[xvii] If the 'Vilnius 10' letter by unsocialized applicants/newcomers prompted such a public reaction, the 'Letter of 8' was a more flagrant abuse of community standards of appropriateness amongst members. Granted, the common position reached by the EU15 foreign ministers on January 27 was nothing more than an LCD statement reaffirming the lead role of the UN in resolving the crisis, but it still represented a common position reached within the EU's institutional context after weeks of mutual responsiveness over semantics. The public letters were in effect (if not also in intent) a divide and rule tactic by Europe against itself. [xviii] There was a clear intention by the letter's organizers (especially Britain and Spain) to not inform or consult anti-war Member States. Citing an interview with a British foreign office official, Toje notes that a conscious decision was made to not approach France and Germany (2005: 119). The select countries that were asked to sign the letter kept the entire matter secret, and there was apparently a 'marketing' effort to give the letter only to select newspapers in countries where the prime minister signed on, along with the *Wall Street Journal Europe*.[xix] There are even reports that Prime Minister Blair spoke by telephone to President Chirac on 29 January and did not mention the letter's ensuing publication slated for the next day.[xx] A clear confirmation for the existence of appropriateness standards here can be seen in the Dutch invitation but refusal to sign on. The Netherlands was asked to sign the 'Letter of 8' but rebuffed the invitation under the reasoning that 'no purpose is served by accentuating differences between Member States on the Iraqi question.'[xxi] In one EU official's words, 'the Dutch didn't disagree with the position [in the letter] but they did disagree with the

procedure and they felt this was not the right way to do it.'[xxii] Perhaps because of their closeness to the French position on Iraq, Belgium was not invited to sign, as publically noted by Foreign Minister Louis Michel who added that 'Belgium has no wish to take part in this dividing up of the international community over the Iraqi dossier.'[xxiii]

In short, as Anand Menon nicely puts it, the letter's 'divisive impact stemmed from bitterness about the process that spawned its appearance' (2004: 638). Luxembourg responded to the letter's publication with perhaps the most public outrage, 'regretting the scandalous behavior and lack of solidarity of the eight European countries.'[xxiv] The letters of the '8' and '10' certainly shredded the EU's finely balanced if minimalist common position. But beyond the immediate damage to the thinly glued common position, was the perception by some that there was a 'tangible breach of some 'unwritten rules' of EU functioning' and that the 'lack of solidarity' should 'in the future be avoided by a 'code of conduct' for EU governments'.[xxv] A high ranking official characterized the public letter campaign as a 'very disruptive way of conducting business.' Explaining why, he goes on to nicely describe the standards of appropriateness which this project is interested in examining:

> [In the EU] we have a very elaborate way of talking with one another. We do not settle our problems this way. You don't go to the press and write open public letters.[xxvi]

In light of this, the Dutch non-signature offers an insightful illustration at how pro-norm behavior in EU foreign policy making relies on self-restraint and internalized standards of appropriateness (rather than external sanctioning and formalized rules of conduct). Noting that it would have been 'unsurprising' for the Netherlands to have signed the public letter given their strong 'Atlanticist' and NATO credentials, Menon and Lipkin (2003: 20) hypothesize several reasons why they may have held back support:

Concern about the potential effects on European relations (particularly relations with Germany) of such a public EU division, together with uncertainty associated with the absence of a new government after the general election, were key factors in persuading the caretaker Dutch government not to sign.

But the former rather the latter seem to weigh decisively in the decision not to sign the letter, especially given the outcome of the general election on 22 January 2003 which extended the existing Prime Minister Bakenende's CDA (Christian Democratic Appeal) seats in the parliament from 43 to 44 (with 28.3 percent of the vote). While it was several months before a new coalition government was sworn in, both the Prime Minister and a number of key foreign ministry personnel remained. Given the strong 22 January outcome for the CDA it is unlikely that withholding the Netherlands' signature from the letter was based on electoral calculations or new coalition-formation dynamics. Rather, it is more significant that the new Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs (from 3 December 2007) was Bernard Bot, a former long-standing former EU Permanent Representative who was well versed in the Brussels-based culture of decision making by consensus and cooperative bargaining.[xxvii] Likewise, the outgoing Foreign Minister (and soon to become Secretary General of NATO), Jaap de Hoop Scheffer was another top foreign policy official with strong credentials in the culture of European foreign policy cooperation. We can see indirect reference to the rhetoric of this culture in his speech before the Parliamentary Commission on Foreign Affairs in Paris at the inauguration of the Franco-Dutch Cooperation Council shortly after the letters' publication. Specifically, he refers to the foregoing Iraq crisis which 'laid bare a number of differences…within the EU itself,' by noting that 'over the years we have come to share an "esprit Européen" which transcends our occasional differences of opinion.'[xxviii]

The depth of Europe's divergence over Iraq is best seen in the conclusions of the ill-fated 17 February European Council in Brussels (dubbed the 'war summit' in the media[xxix]). The February summit was organized by the Greek presidency as an 'extraordinary' meeting with Iraq as the sole agenda item. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan was an invited guest. Britain allegedly did not want the meeting to happen, given the rigidity of national positions at this stage, but failed to persuade the Greek presidency to call it off.[xxx] Two days before, on 15 February, organized war protests across Europe saw mass demonstrations, estimated in the millions, against military intervention. France and Germany refused to send their Political Directors who were assigned a 'pre-summit' meeting the night before.[xxxi] The February summit was a crisis management session that produced a terse statement, less than two pages, conceding 'primary responsibility for dealing with Iraqi disarmament lies with the [UN] Security Council.'[xxxii] In summary, the highly public disagreement over the Iraq crisis led to uncompromising national positions and deactivated the deliberative and norm-laden institutional context of consensus- and consultation-based CFSP.

As the war commenced, the EU heads of state and government met in Brussels on the evening of March 20. Expectations were low, as this was the first face-to-face meeting between many EU leaders since the diplomatic breakdown at the UN over a second resolution on Iraq the month before.[xxxiii] At this point, one might expect EU humanitarian assistance as a minimalist LCD option for the European Council to endorse. The EU already had a decade of experience with multilateral humanitarian aid to Iraq, coordinated by the Commission's Humanitarian Office (ECHO).[xxxiv] Media accounts of the March summit note that EU leaders were expected to offer immediate aid to the Iraqis, but this did not happen. Richard Youngs (2004a: 2) notes, 'the Europeans' preference was for the UN to assume full control.'[xxxv] This was most strongly

advocated by the French, but with key support from Germany as well. According to Youngs (2006: 55): 'The German development ministry was eager to channel aid through the UN as a means of depoliticizing its potential contribution in Iraq by sheltering it from German public opinion.' Across Europe, in general, as reported by *The Independent*, 'The issue of reconstruction aid is seen as too sensitive since many countries believe that their taxpayers should not be asked to repair damage from a war they oppose.'[xxxvi] Thus, at this point in time, the outcome of the first sub-case is best characterized as a minimalist LCD outcome that at best endorses the status quo: any European-level assistance must occur through the UN *not* the EU-level. The 20 March European Council Presidency Conclusions simply state, 'We support the UN Secretary General's proposal that the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people can continue to be met through the 'Oil for Food' programme.'[xxxvii] However, as case two documents below, within two months of the March summit, the EU would reframe discord over the Iraqi war into a reconstruction program steadily increasing in scope and commitments.[xxxviii]

3. Case Two (March 2003 – June 2003): How Normative Entrapment And Cooperative Bargaining Led To The EU's Reconstruction Assistance Program

Between the European Council summit on 20 March and the 19-20 June Thessaloniki summit, the EU overcame discord with a new common strategy for the multilateral reconstruction efforts that would be needed in post-Saddam Iraq. The foreign ministers also initiated the development of a new comprehensive 'European Security Strategy' by Javier Solana's team that was adopted in December 2003 (discussed below). An initial, small package

of aid to Iraq was approved by the foreign ministers on 22 April 2003 for 'urgent medical needs,' but this was only a modicum of what was to come over the next several months and beyond.

Overcoming divergence on Iraq took place slowly over several months, with many bilateral, informal, and 'back channel' discussions leading the way rather than group deliberations within the framework of Council-based CFSP settings such as the GAERC. Complicating any analysis of the EU's post-invasion policy towards Iraq is the lack of a clear turning-point moment, single decision, or smoking gun argument that wins the day. The way divergence over war in Iraq was reframed is thus not unproblematic to interpret since there was simply not a clear winning argument that persuaded those with 'do nothing' and/or 'let the UN do it' preferences to change positions. In general, the period of April-June 2003 represents a cooling of tempers and principled effort by member state officials at a range of levels (foreign ministers and their close advisors, EU Political Directors, COPS ambassadors) to reactivate the cooperative bargaining style of policy making based on norm-governed and consensus-based agreements, to cope with one of the worst transatlantic crises in postwar history, and to further Europe's substantive long-term goal of promoting peace and stability in the Greater Middle East.

During this period, overcoming EU divergence on Iraq is best characterized by the emergence of a compelling overall logic that the opportunity costs both in transatlantic relations and Europe's influence in the Greater Middle East and beyond (globally) were too high a toll to pay and forced a more-or-less grudging admission for a new common policy endorsing EU-based reconstruction assistance. Those with 'no EU action' preferences gradually became entrapped by the EU's longer term normative commitments to become a global actor. At first, around the time of the February and March summits, a group of Member States opposed to military intervention were flatly against any EU-directed material support since it could be

viewed as legitimating a conflict they opposed. We see direct evidence of this view in the 'let the UN Oil for Food program do it' position advocated in the 20 March EU Presidency Conclusions. Iraq reconstruction assistance as a legitimate EU foreign policy was incrementally empowered between March and June 2003 because it fit several key themes in the type of international actor the EU aspires towards: as an advocate of UN-centered multilateralism and as a worldwide promoter of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. In short, the debacle over preemptive military action soon became repackaged as an opportunity to showcase Europe as a regional source of 'soft power.' All of these arguments were on the table during the foreign ministers' deliberations (with an emphasis on informal and restrictive *in camera* sessions, see below) during the timeframe of the second case (March-June 2003).

Characterizing the overall tone of these meetings, one EU official emphasized there was an effort to 'look at the situation as it was, to leave the background [over military intervention] aside. Emerging from this was a rationale that [reconstruction assistance] was the right thing to do…This was a gradual coalescing and positions were slowly evolving.'[xxxix] The 'no EU action' arguments were slowly losing force in the face of arguments that reconstruction aid was consistent with the normative commitments listed above. The same official more or less described this process in his own words, by adding, 'There was not a lot of back-and-forth to be honest, it was more a common realization of what are we to do now, where can we be useful. It was a subtle process.'[xl]

At this point we are able to focus more directly on the two NI hypotheses developed in Thomas' framework paper. *H1: Entrapment.* First, the EU's normative commitments played a direct role entrapping those with 'no EU action' preferences into accepting the idea of EU-coordinated reconstruction assistance to Iraq. After March 2003, the irreconcilable and open

disagreements over whether military force in Iraq was justified faded into the background of discussions centered on what the EU could and should do next. An important background condition for the normative entrapment process to disempower the 'no EU action' viewpoint was the increased involvement of the UN in Iraq. Several EU officials stressed this was an absolutely essential point before reconstruction deliberations among the foreign ministers made any headway. As the UN became more involved in post-invasion Iraq, the 'no EU action, period' view (most strongly expressed by Germany) lost its clarity and this rhetoric fades from official policy pronouncements. Skepticism remained (especially among the 'chocolate summit' Member States) but from March onwards, officials close to the discussions confirm that there was little conviction that nothing should be done. Once the UN became more implicated in post-invasion humanitarian and reconstruction discussions, then the conversations among EU foreign ministers shifted to what means and methods of European involvement would be the most effective. But for the original 'veto players' to EU action, obtaining UN legitimacy was an absolute prerequisite to EU involvement. According to one official, EU reconstruction assistance 'was in a way legitimized by the UN as the UN became more involved.'[xli] Another participant was even more specific on the timing:

> At the heart of the problem were the issues of legitimacy and impartiality. Hence the continual insistence on the UN's role. That legitimacy was not in fact provided until UNSC Resolution 1483 was approved at the end of May[xlii], and that in turn formed the basis for the Thessaloniki conclusions. It was also a point that was made very clear at Rhodes/Kastellorizo [an informal meeting among the EU foreign ministers].[xliii]

Reconstruction assistance also resonated strongly with Europe's shared values in promoting liberal democracy and the rule of law and this made the 'no EU action' views more difficult to maintain.[xliv] As early as March 2003, the Political and Security Committee ambassadors all 'saw a clear responsibility of the EU, and an opportunity, for humanitarian

assistance, reconstruction, institution building and assisting the establishment of a more democratic order and civil society in post-Saddam Iraq'.[xlv] By the early summer of 2003, there was growing momentum behind a concerted and long-term EU reconstruction effort. The Iraq reconstruction policy fit Europe's ongoing humanitarian and economic assistance program, and anticipating this, Commission officials had begun preparing an Iraqi aid strategy back in December 2002, even before the military conflict broke out.[xlvi] In general, as Pace describes citing an interview with a Commission official in the External Relations DG, 'EU reconstruction and aid projects are construed by EU actors as vital for peace to stabilize and civil society to flourish in devastated, conflict areas' (Pace 2007: 1046).

By May 2003, those who viewed Iraq as the United States' war and the United States' problem were seeing their argumentative power losing force.[xlvii] A representative sample of this view is former French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine's public comment that it is 'hard to take responsibility for a war we thought was wrong, now that the United States finds itself in a traditional colonial trap.'[xlviii] And Richard Youngs cites an EU diplomat who claimed there were real concerns 'not to be associated with a failure' (2004a: 5). But over time the compatibility of reconstruction aid to the EU's shared values empowered an EU-directed assistance program. In this sense, the EU utilized a policy failure to creatively recast Europe's shared commitment to post-conflict reconstruction efforts, currently a 'fashionable policy topic' (Rathmell 2005: 1037) within NATO, the UN and a number of other national militaries, including the United States (Berger and Scowcroft 2005). The EU integrated rule of law mission was a later extension of EU multilateral assistance in Iraq, and perhaps a policy trend which other states such as the US will emulate in the future (Peterson 2004b: 628).

Furthermore, reconstruction aid was rhetorically framed as a strategic investment to repair transatlantic relations and proponents of this view emphasized the EU's normative and policy commitments as a region to shape world politics in the age of the 'American imperium' (Peter Katzenstein's term, 2005). In the words of one high ranking official, 'Transatlantic relations were very bad and this would improve them globally.'[xlix] Strategically, the motives here include both negative (cost) and positive (benefit) calculations. The former, 'costs' for continued dissension are nicely summarized by John Peterson (although he carefully discounts the United States' capacity for 'divide-and-rule' tactics in the EU). In his words, 'Iraq showed the EU to be both weak and divided as a collective, and surprisingly supportive of American aims if approached as 25 separate states. From a US perspective the cherry-picking of European allies was a remarkable success, despite overwhelming European public opposition to the Iraq war' (2004b: 614). Normative reframing would enable the EU to dispel the image of an internally divided Union easily manipulated by the US. In positive terms, the benefits of reframing EU-Iraq policy were equally evident. That is, the EU's concerted reconstruction program would help rebrand Europe's credentials at projecting power (and especially 'soft power') internationally. Measured in terms of international economic assistance, the EU is a 'civilian superpower' which of course includes 'aid for democracy building in the Middle East, where – excepting Iraq – the EU dispenses 15 times more aid than the United States' (Moravcsik 2006: 30; Hill 2004). Reconstruction helped reframe the issue with Iraq away from negative transatlantic disputes to positive and proactive EU involvement. Among EU Member States, this new approach had tactical advantages which'expressly focused on the long-term structure of EU-Iraq relations to avoid short-term controversies' (Youngs 2004a: 3). Both the ESDP 'rule of law' operation to promote an integrated criminal justice system (whose mandate was extended to 31 December

2007) and negotiations for a Trade and Cooperation Agreement with the EU (initiated on 20 November 2006) are encouraging signs of a longer-term perspective on Iraq and one that engages the US on the multilateral and rule of law principles so strongly articulated in EU policy. Broadly stated, the idea is to rebalance the imbalance in transatlantic relations by strengthening the European voice, and EU-led reconstruction assistance fits into that normative ideal.[l]

Finally, Iraq reconstruction assistance dovetails with Europe's long-term strategic interests in helping to promote a stable, prosperous, and democratic Middle East.[li] In this view, as Peterson explains, Europe has real potential for 'genuine partnership with the United States in terms of actual policy: that is, stabilizing, pacifying and eventually democratizing the Greater Middle East' (2004b: 619). To the extent conflict resolution in the Middle East has 'long been one of the EU's top foreign policy priorities' (Pace 2007: 1042), EU reconstruction assistance was a substantive policy highly resonant with those normative goals. And likewise, those who advocated 'No EU action' positions found themselves increasingly entrapped by the logic of such a substantive policy connection between Iraq and long-term efforts at conflict resolution in the Middle East.[lii]

H2: Cooperative Bargaining. A second enabling condition for EU reconstruction assistance, also consistent with the NI view, is seen in the calculated effort by foreign ministers to renew a principled commitment for CFSP decision making *in camera* and by consensus. [liii] Following the unusually public violations of the procedural norms embedded in EU foreign policy making (especially over the public letter campaign) EU recon aid presented an opportunity for foreign ministers to *reactivate* the established institutional context for collective deliberations and ringfence the set of 'bad practices' that had emerged during the former months.

After several weeks for 'cooling off,' a number of meetings were slated with the intent to lubricate (or 'heal') the mechanisms for CFSP decision making without per-say attempting resolve EU divergence over Iraq or decide anything EU policy-related to the post-invasion situation. Framing the sensibility of such a collective *rapprochement* on consensus-based foreign policy was the exit threat posed by the so-called 'chocolate summit' on 29 April between France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg to discuss the viability of an European level military command center under the general rubric of 'enhanced cooperation.' Triggered by Iraq, and in large part a reaction to US 'divide-and-rule' tactics ('old' Europe quips, promotion of public letter writing campaigns), the praline summit broadcast another important message as well. Namely, that options of 'exit' among a core group of states should not be ignored if Europe's military and security policy making could not be improved.

Of particular note in the renewal of CFSP norms in the wake of the Iraq crisis is the informal meeting of the foreign ministers on 2-3 May aboard a luxury yacht which traveled between the Greek islands of Rhodes and Kastellorizo. The informal meeting was a welcome relief to months of hostile exchanges and the ministers agreed to put their differences over military intervention in Iraq behind them (this meeting occurred one day after the US declared an end to major combat operations in Iraq).[liv] Emerging from a five hour cruise to Kastellorizo on the second day of talks, EU foreign ministers had reached a common understanding on the need for systematic EU assistance in post-conflict Iraq as well as a broader green light for Javier Solana to formulate a new 'EU Security Strategy.' According to one EU official, 'It was the relationship with the US and NATO, rather than assistance to Iraq, which was at the center of the debate at Rhodes- Kastellorizo.'[lv] The same official went on to elaborate:

Kastellorizo did not, then, solve this issue but in approving the concept of a European Security Strategy it did set the basis for a more independent, more coherent, and more specificially

European response to global threats. In short it adroitly succeeded in defusing the problem by gaining time, and in papering over the cracks by, effectively, changing the subject.[lvi]

Another EU official confirms this general view: 'Six months later we have our first Security Strategy, a direct outcome to this divergence. It served a double objective: overcome division over Iraq, and at the same time, deal with the US who says you are hard strategy wimps.'[lvii] The foreign ministers also discussed the issue of Iraq reconstruction at a restricted lunch session of the 19 May GEARC.[lviii] Before the 19-20 June Thessaloniki summit, the foreign ministers met on 16 June and requested Commission options for reconstruction assistance. And at the Thessaloniki summit, EU leaders endorsed a wide ranging package of assistance based on these recommendations, declaring: 'the [EU] stands ready to participate in the reconstruction of Iraq…[and] invites the Commission and High Representative to submit proposals for an EU contribution.'[lix]

Procedurally, a new common policy on Iraqi reconstruction assistance was instrumental in reactivating and reiterating a shared commitment to the norm-governed and consensus-based style of making foreign policy. Close participants describe a 'never again' attitude among the foreign ministers and key advisors in the period of March-June 2003 and this intangible component to overcoming discord on Iraq may have the most significant long-term effects. A similar conclusion is reached by Puetter and Wiener who describe the Iraq crisis as less the result of 'fundamentally diverging policy agendas' than a coordination failure in the 'framework for collective processes of norm contestation and interpretation' (2007: 1080, 1084). It was precisely this framework which the 'cracked tempers' over UNSCR 1441 deactivated and then later publicly scorned with the open letters. Irrespective of the substantive and normative reasons

discussed above, a common policy on Iraq's reconstruction was important to reach given the process-level stakes in recommitting Member States to the EU's decision making culture.

4. Conclusion: Europe's Norm- and Consensus-Based Promotion of Common Foreign Policy

As numerous commentators have argued, agreement on any policy over Iraq would have given the EU more credibility in the long run both in 'Greater Middle East' and with the United States. A common position gives the EU much greater influence internationally (including with the United States) and makes it much more difficult to ignore Europe's voice (Peterson 2004b; Crowe 2003: 546). By this yardstick, the Iraq crisis was a resounding failure for the EU's foreign policy aspirations. Particularly in the way that the thinly veneered common position agreed in January 2003 came almost instantly unglued with a public letter campaign, one could convincingly conclude there is a paucity of norms to guide and inform behavior in EU external relations. But as the second case above documents, the deliberative processes that led to a new consensus on EU reconstruction assistance suggests such a judgment may be premature or even wrong. Between March and June 2003, utilizing substantive and normative consistency reasoning, Europe's foreign ministries quietly forged a new shared understanding that EU-coordinated reconstruction aid was important to rehabilitate transatlantic relations, ensure Europe's longer term role in the Greater Middle East and global affairs, and support Europe's high standards for liberal democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. The key scope condition for a new mutual compromise on EU-level reconstruction aid was greater UN involvement, and hence, legitimacy. Without this, the potential veto players – Germany, France, Belgium, and Luxembourg – would have insisted on the status quo LCD reached in March 2003. Procedurally,

the new common policy on EU reconstruction aid helped renew the long-established cooperative bargaining style of making foreign policy. The damage done to the EU style of cooperative bargaining in the first case raised the stakes of a status quo LCD outcome of 'no EU-level action' in the second. The trauma of the 'cracked tempers' over UNSCR 1441 and the public letter campaign shaped the choices of the March-June 2003 period and contributed to a shared understanding among the foreign ministers that a new EU common action on post-invasion Iraq could help repair the institutional environment of norm-governed and consensus-based policy in deliberative, *in camera* settings.

Europe's security and defense policy is not dead; if anything it has emerged from the Iraq crisis stronger and more amenable to consensus-based decision making (Menon 2004). The Iraq crisis 'strengthened general support for a Europe able to look after its own security' (Calleo 2004: 35).[lx] Doing so will require updating the informal rules of consensus-based foreign policy decision. In most areas of EU policy making, constructive abstention is a 'normal' way for dissenters to accept and live with collectively legitimated decisions – external policies, especially those with military and security implications, are still fairly new for 'enhanced cooperation' but there is good reason to hypothesize that EU's institutionalized culture of consensus can take hold here as well. Future foreign policy differences among EU Member States will now take place in the shadow of the Iraq crisis, and Member States who contemplate uncompromising foreign policy positions or public dissent from collectively legitimated positions will likely calculate their costs/benefits differently. In this regard, the way in which EU policy makers overcame divisions over Iraq and utilized EU-coordinated reconstruction assistance as a way to reactivate consensus-based decision making shows evidence of the general pattern identified by Thomas. Namely, how 'frequent and intensive consultation between Member States has weakened

egoistic identities and accustomed national policy-makers to seeking out the views of their EU counterparts before determining a national position on a particular issue' (Thomas 2008: 4).

But the above analysis is not intended to paint too glossy a portrait of Europe's Iraq policy. The findings offer an interpretation that is perhaps a touch too optimistic to this author's eye, and it needs balancing with a conclusion that is upfront in noting that the EU still faces a 'crisis of purpose over Iraq' (Peterson 2004b: 621). Below the rhetoric of reconstruction are substantive differences over the means and ends of what a long-term role for the EU in Iraq's rebuilding effort should be. EU recon assistance is particularly noteworthy for the high degree of normative coherence with a markedly lower degree of policy coherence. In terms of advanced liberal democracies promoting the rule of law and the values of civil and political liberties internationally, the lessons are unclear. Strong normative commitments to democracy and the rule of law do not necessarily translate into coherent policies promoting them. It does not help in this case that some EU Member States retain what Richard Youngs calls a 'legacy of opposition' to a conflict they opposed to begin with, which works against more systematic EU involvement in Iraq (2004a: 1).

While still premature to gauge whether EU reconstruction efforts will be a 'success,' the embarrassment of the Iraq crisis to Europe's common foreign policy aspirations may well be a critical juncture remembered more for a renewed commitment to consensus-based foreign policy decision-making and the collective legitimacy behind promoting UN-centered multilateralism, liberal democratic values and the rule of law. A long-term implication of the Iraq crisis for Europe is the 'desire for leverage on US policy and will to achieve it through greater internal unity' (Peterson 2004a: 24). Just as the Balkans wars of the 1990s helped trigger the development of the CFSP pillar and ESDP, the Iraq crisis has the hallmarks of a similar long-

term comprehensive rethink for the Union’s foreign policy aspirations and principled commitments to becoming a more coherent international actor.

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Notes

[i] Speech by Christopher Patten, External Relations Commissioner during the European Parliament Iraq Debate, Brussels, 20 March 2003. Speech/03/148.

[ii] See also Crowe (2003: 534-35).

[iii] See also Crowe (2003), Youngs (2006: 33).

[iv] Personal correspondence, former EU permanent representative, 12 February 2008.

[v] Interview by telephone with author, 16 January 2008.

[vi] According to the Department of Defense transcript, the exact statement was, 'You're thinking of Europe as Germany and France. I don't. I think that's old Europe. If you look at the entire NATO Europe today, the center of gravity is shifting to the East. And there are a lot of new members' (Washington Post, 24 January 2003, Final Edition).

[vii] Nominally, this includes 5 of the EU15 and 15 of the EU27.

[viii] The 'Letter of Eight' was signed by the Heads of Government of Britain, Spain, Italy, Denmark, Portugal, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Agence France Presse, 30 January 2003, accessed via Lexus/Nexus.

[ix] Associated Press, 17 February 2003, accessed via Lexus/Nexus.

[x] According to the IHT story, the idea for the letter comes from a luncheon at Slovakia's embassy in Washington attended by Bruce Jackson and 'Vilnius 10' ambassadors. BBC Monitoring International Reports, 22 February 2003, accessed via Lexus/Nexus.

[xi] For an authoritative history of EPC norms and the development of a consultation reflex, see Smith (2004a).

[xii] The *Financial Times*, 18 February 2003, UK edition.

[xiii] European Report, 1 February 2003, No. 2747, accessed via Lexus/Nexus.

[xiv] European Report, 1 February 2003, No. 2747, accessed via Lexus/Nexus.

[xv] Global News Wire, 1 February 2003, No. A2003020855-3BB6-GNW, accessed via Lexus/Nexus.

[xvi] Associated Press, 17 February 2003, accessed via Lexus/Nexus.

[xvii] 'Europe: Making It Work'. Speech by Atzo Nicolaï, State Secretary for European Affairs, European Institute, Bucharest, Romania, 17 February 2003. Accessed online at: http://www.minbuza.nl/nl/static/actueel/toespraken/2003/02/europe_making_it_work.html

[xviii] It is ironic in this regard that the 'Letter of Eight' (entitled 'United We Stand') claims 'our strength lies in unity.'

[xix] Financial Times Information, Global News Wire, 1 February 2003, accessed via Lexus/Nexus. Part of the motivation for the later 'Vilnius 10' letter may have been that some of these countries would have signed on to the 'Letter of Eight' had they been asked. On 31 January 2003, Agence France Presse claimed that Slovenia, Slovakia, and Lativa have declared their post-publication support for the 'Letter of Eight' (accessed via Lexus/Nexus).

[xx] For a discussion of this point see, Philippe de Schoutheete (2003) 'Du bon usage de la diplomatie'. *La Libre Belgique*, 29-30 March 2003, 11.

[xxi] European Report, 1 February 2003, No. 2747, accessed via Lexus/Nexus.

[xxii] Interview by telephone with author, 16 January 2008.

[xxiii] European Report, 1 February 2003, No. 2747, accessed via Lexus/Nexus.

[xxiv] European Report, 1 February 2003, No. 2747, accessed via Lexus/Nexus.

[xxv] European Commission, DG External Relations, Unit of the European Correspondent, 'Note for the File,' Seminar on 'CFSP Confronting Iraq,' at the EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris, 3 March 2003, dated 7 March 2003, pg. 2.

[xxvi] Interview by telephone with author, 16 January 2008.

[xxvii] Bernard Bot served as the Netherlands EU Permanent Representative from 1992-2002 and was Minister of Foreign Affairs from 3 December 2003 to 22 February 2007. His first posting to the Dutch permrep in Brussels was from 1964-1970.

[xxviii] 'Making Europe Stronger: Our Common Task'. Speech by Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Paris, 14 May 2003. Speech available online at: http://www.minbuza.nl/nl/static/actuell/toespraken/2003/05/making_europe_strongerx_our_common_task.html

[xxix] See for example, the *Financial Times*, 14 February, 2003.

[xxx] The *Financial Times*, 18 February 2003, UK edition.

[xxxi] Ibid.

[xxxii] Presidency Conclusions, Extraordinary European Council, Brussels, 17 February 2003, 6466/03.

[xxxiii] During a closed session of the UN Security Council 'tempers cracked' and a 'shouting match' erupted between French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin and his British counterpart, Jack Straw (*Financial Times*, 18 February 2003, pg. 12, UK edition).

[xxxiv] ECHO contributions between 1992 and 2003 were approximately 157 million euros (Iraq Assistance Program, 2004. COM (2004) 667, 4/3/04).

[xxxv] This position was consistent with public opinion at the time. In October 2003, 58 percent of EU citizens favored the UN to manage the rebuilding of Iraq (*Flash Eurobarometer 151*, First Results, conducted 8-16 October 2003). A slight majority, 54 percent, also supported their own country's financial participation in the rebuilding of Iraq (ibid.).

[xxxvi] *The Independent*, 21 March 2003, pg. 10.

[xxxvii] Council of the European Union, Presidency Conclusions, Brussels European Council, 20-21 March 2003, 8410/03/32.

[xxxviii] Communication From the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Recommendations for Renewed European Union Engagement with Iraq, COM(2006) 283 Final, 7.6.2006.

[xxxix] Interview by telephone with author, 16 January 2008.

[xl] Ibid.

[xli] Ibid.

[xlii] UNSC Resolution 1483 was adopted on 22 May 2003.

[xliii] Personal correspondence with EU official, 5 October 2007.

[xliv] Around this time, the European Council issued a statement on 16 April 2003 to celebrate the accession of the new ten Member States. Known as the 'Athens Declaration,' it states 'our commitment to democracy' is 'the fundamental value underpinning the Union.' For a more theoretical discussion of the EU's 'normative power,' see Manners (2002).

[xlv] European Commission, DG External Relations, Unit of the European Correspondent, 'Note for the File,' Seminar on 'CFSP Confronting Iraq,' at the EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris, 3 March 2003, dated 7 March 2003, pg. 2.

[xlvi] A parallel 'prewar' planning body for recon assistance was initiated at the UN by the Secretary General 'but was careful to keep the plan "secret" lest it suggest a view on the inevitability of war' (Mac Ginty 2003: 608).

[xlvii] Although such views did not become extinct. A year later, new Commission President Barroso found it necessary to state in an interview, 'Some people in Europe may think that it is good that things are going badly for the US in Iraq. I really think that is an irrational and a bad policy' (As quoted by the Associated Press, 20 August 2004, accessed via Lexus/Nexus).

[xlviii] *National Journal*, 20 December 2003, pg. 3833, cited in Peterson (2004a: 20-21).

[xlix] Interview by telephone with author, 16 January 2008.

[l] A representative statement of this view can be seen in Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt's idea of a 'new Atlanticism' articulated in February 2003 (cited in Menon and Lipkin 2003: 16).

[li] In October 2003, 81 percent of EU citizens supported greater European involvement in the Middle East peace process (*Flash Eurobarometer 151*, First Results, conducted 8-16 October 2003).

[lii] On this reading, there are interesting similarities (and possible 'learning effects') to the logic of EU Palestinian assistance. See Pace (2007: 1046-47).

[liii] See Thomas (2008:3) on the macrolevel trend of EU foreign policy making by consensus.

[liv] The *New York Times*, 4 May 2003, pg. 21.

[lv] Personal correspondence with EU official, 5 October 2007.

[lvi] Ibid.

[lvii] Interview by telephone with author, 16 January 2008.

[lviii] On the importance of restricted sessions and especially Council luncheons for CFSP decision making, see Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace (2006: 60-61). On the general role of *in camera* meetings of the Council in facilitating deliberation and consensus-based decisions, see Stasavage (2004) and Lewis (2005).

[lix] Council of the European Union, Presidency Conclusions, Thessaloniki European Council, 19-20 June 2003, 11638/03/25.

[lx] Similar effects on public support for EU security and defense are attributed to the post-Cold War Balkans crises. See Youngs (2004b: 418) for a discussion.