



EUROPE AND IRAQ: TEST CASE FOR THE COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

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Since its beginnings in 1990, the Iraq crisis has exposed the dilemmas and paradoxes at the heart of European attempts to build a common foreign and security policy. It has also illustrated the varying aspects of U.S.-Europe relations. This article looks into the stances adopted by the main European countries and the debates within EU institutions regarding events in Iraq and the extent and nature of their engagement with that country in the post-Saddam era.

BACKGROUND

Differences in the European and U.S. approaches to the issue of Iraq began to emerge already in the 1990s. This period, following the successful expulsion of Iraq from Kuwait in 1991, was characterized by a policy of containment. Alongside this policy, however, the United States became progressively more involved in advocating democracy for Arab states, a process which had no parallel in Europe. The slow movement in Washington from a policy of containment to one of regime change reached a significant milestone in 1998, with the Clinton Administration passing the Iraq Liberation Act.¹ No parallel movement took place in Europe.

European opposition to a policy of regime change in Iraq meant that little deliberation had taken place in Europe as to what a post-Saddam Iraq might look like. There was also a pronounced wariness in continental Europe regarding the Iraqi opposition. Even a December 2002 conference on the subject of democracy in Iraq had to be moved from Brussels to London because of the sensitivity of the subject for continental Europeans. In Britain too, the country closest to the United States on Iraq, relations between

Iraqi oppositionists—who maintained a strong presence in London—and official circles were few.²

As this article will show, the split between the “Atlanticist” British and the French, with their desire to balance the power of the United States, has been a key division throughout in the European response to Iraq as well as to other foreign policy issues. A general European suspicion of bold unilateral actions by states outside of the framework of international institutions is also a crucial element. Less pronounced in the United Kingdom, this is a theme constantly repeated by French and German critics of the invasion of Iraq.

Europe's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) came into being following the Maastricht Treaty in 1993. In 1999, the CFSP was solidified through the creation of the position of its high representative.³ The Iraq crisis was the most significant test with which the CFSP had yet been required to contend. Iraq, however, saw the EU failing to act as one. Rather, the approach of real crisis resulted in the major powers of the EU splitting—with France in a familiar fashion pioneering opposition to the U.S.-led plans for invasion of Iraq; Germany supporting the French stance (the Iraq crisis saw Germany adopting the unfamiliar

stance of defiance of the United States); and the UK aligning itself firmly alongside America and committing troops to the invasion.⁴ Other European countries in essence gathered around one or other of these positions.

DIVISIONS IN THE APPROACH TO WAR

Concern at the ambitions of the Saddam Hussein regime and at the possibility that Iraq was concealing aspects of its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program from UN inspection teams was common to the United States and all EU nations. On the basis of this shared concern, Security Council Resolution 1441 was passed on November 9, 2002, with the appearance of unity within the EU.⁵ Evidence of a differing orientation toward the use of force among EU countries, however, was already discernible.

In France and Germany, the willingness to break openly with Washington on this issue was particularly noticeable from the outset. The U.S. Administration noted and was angered by the use of populist anti-war rhetoric made by then German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder in his bid for re-election in September 2002. It was the first sign of a new atmosphere of mutual impatience and exasperation between the United States and certain countries in Western Europe. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's much-quoted comments made at this time differentiating between "Old Europe"—France and Germany—and "New Europe"—the former Communist countries of Central Europe, who were more sympathetic to America's stance on Iraq, confirmed the attitude of mutual suspicion emerging between the U.S. Administration and the French and German governments.⁶

As military action began to look more and more inevitable in the first months of 2003, French President Jacques Chirac became the main spokesman for the view that UN weapons inspectors needed more time to search Iraq for banned arms. He backed a request by the UN's chief nuclear weapons inspector, Muhammad al-Barada'i, for an extension of "several months."⁷ The French president noted that his country was coordinating its positions closely with Germany. Germany indeed voiced its opposition to a UN Security Council vote on military action and, unlike France, indicated that it would oppose any request for UN support for military action.⁸

The French desire to act as a counterweight to the United States on the international stage is, as noted above, a perennial feature of international affairs. Germany, however, has been among the most pro-U.S. countries in Europe, and so its emergent opposition to the U.S. stand on Iraq was more surprising. It may be seen as an aspect of Berlin's increasing desire to play an independent, assertive role in international affairs in line with its own public opinion, as well as very deep skepticism in Europe regarding the reasons for war with Iraq.⁹

Opposed to the emergent Franco-German alliance against the war were countries representing both "Old" and "New" Europe, in Secretary Rumsfeld's terms. In the former category, both UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar were firmly with the U.S. view regarding the danger represented by Iraq, the brutally repressive nature of its regime, and its expansionist and WMD ambitions. There was clear resentment on the part of both these men for what they regarded as the high-handed attitude of the French president and the sense in which his attitude

seemed to imply a situation of natural French leadership in Europe.

Blair placed more stress than did the United States on the need for a clear international mandate for action over Iraq, and was a leading voice in arguing for a second UN Security Council resolution before any further steps were taken. This position was vital from the point of view of the British prime minister's domestic standing, but in practice served only to sharpen the differences between the British and French positions, rendering less likely the possibility of a joint European response.¹⁰

As mentioned above, this rift between the UK and France over the Iraq question cast into bold relief two starkly different positions regarding the role of Europe in world affairs. Blair, in the Atlanticist approach favored by nearly all post-1945 British prime ministers, sought to align with the United States while seeking to influence it and to embed U.S. action in international consensus. Chirac, again in line with his own Gaullist tradition, considered that the building of alternative alliances and acting as a counter-weight to American dominance was the proper European role. These were the poles around which other member states now gathered themselves.¹¹

Thus, broadly supportive of the French and German position were Belgium, Greece, Luxembourg, and neutral states such as the Republic of Ireland. In the Atlanticist corner, meanwhile, apart from the UK were to be found Spain, Italy, Holland, and—less emphatically—Portugal and Denmark. The additional support of Central European and Baltic EU member states for the U.S. position, as declared in February 2003, served to anger the French and led to President Chirac's famous outburst that the government of these

countries had “missed an excellent opportunity to keep silent.”¹²

There was a consensus in Europe that international action of one kind or another over Iraq was necessary. Yet it was differing outlooks regarding the efficacy of the use of force, the importance of the role of international institutions, and—not least—the power of the United States as much as analysis of the Iraq situation itself that seemed to determine the stance taken.

These differing stances did not remain on the declarative level alone. With no second UN resolution forthcoming, the UK, along with Spain and backed by the Netherlands, Italy, and Poland, committed troops to the invasion of Iraq. The war thus proceeded without the second UN resolution desired by the UK and with the open opposition of France and Germany. These latter countries found themselves in an unlikely alliance with Russia over the war.

The build-up to the Iraq War of 2003 witnessed an unprecedented situation, which revealed deep and basic divisions within Europe over the conduct of international affairs. These differences were based on known, differing conceptions of Europe's role. Yet the nature of the crisis led to the differences acquiring a hitherto unseen sharpness.

Robert Kagan, famously, expressed the view that “Americans are from Mars, Europeans are from Venus.”¹³ The Iraq crisis, however, indicates that within Europe, both partially-“Martian” and “Venusian” tendencies exist. France and Germany were committed to a view that stressed the absolute centrality of international institutions as the only basis for international order and for action by states in defense of that order.

The United States, in contrast, as by far the strongest single state, exhibited a

greater willingness to act alone or in cooperation with coalitions specifically created for the achievement of specific goals. Atlanticist-inclined European states, most significantly the UK and Spain, were to a degree caught between the two approaches. British Prime Minister Tony Blair was known to be concerned following the conclusion of the conventional state of hostilities in Iraq at the possibility of a real split of the developed world into opposing power blocs. Blair was undoubtedly no less sincerely committed to the goals of the war in Iraq than was the U.S. president. Yet the secondary goal of preventing such a rift from deepening was important for Britain.¹⁴

The sharp rifts in the approach to war in Iraq led to the emergence of popular, caricatured versions of the two sides' motivations. In Europe, the slogans of the large demonstrations that took place in the capitals depicted the American motivation for war as based on a desire for access to Iraqi mineral resources or a wish on the part of the U.S. president to continue the task of toppling Saddam, which his father had begun in 1991. In the United States, meanwhile, supporters of the war portrayed the French and German stance as motivated by the desire for contracts with Iraq or an inherent fearfulness of decisive international action.

In fact, however, what was revealed in the approach to the war were basic differences in the view of the international system, which did not disappear with the U.S. decision to rely only on the "coalition of the willing," and which have continued to inform the approaches of European countries to Iraq in the period following the invasion. These different perceptions derive from a combination of intellectual conception and orientation, the self-interest and the desire of states to offset the power

and influence of other states, and of course economic interests.

EU AND EUROPEAN STATES' POLICY ON IRAQ FOLLOWING THE INVASION

In observing the direction and nature of European policy since the invasion, the following section will focus on three areas: the political/diplomatic, economic, and military/counterterrorism fields.

Politics and Diplomacy

Following the invasion and the destruction of the Saddam Hussein regime, the initial stance taken by France, as the main Western opponent of the war, was for the rapid ending of the U.S. and British occupation, and, in its place, the creation of a UN administration of Iraq. There was little attempt to disguise the fact that the French view of the invasion as an illegitimate act was at work here. This view, and the subsequent failure of the United States and its allies to find the Iraqi WMD, over which the war was fought, formed an important backdrop to the subsequent stance taken by France and Germany. It has been noted that France and other European countries were keener on UN involvement in Iraq than was the UN itself at that time.¹⁵ This was despite the evidence that the UN did not enjoy high levels of legitimacy and popularity among ordinary Iraqis, and hence its involvement was no clear panacea or solution to the issue of occupation.

The French were also highly critical of the political arrangements put in place by the United States following the war. On April 5, 2003, French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin was scathing about U.S. plans for reconstruction in postwar

Iraq. The French foreign minister criticized the United States for the issuing of contracts to U.S. companies. Iraq, he said, should not be seen as a “paradise for invaders,” or a pie in which all could have a finger. De Villepin's statements were made at a joint press conference with the German and Russian foreign ministers and are indicative of the atmosphere of anger and suspicion engendered by the war.¹⁶

For France and its allies in the anti-war camp, the issue of the rapid recovery of Iraqi sovereignty and the ending of the American occupation was paramount from the outset. In this regard, the French justified their failure to engage closely with bodies associated with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) by claiming that to do so would legitimize an invasion and occupation to which France had been opposed. As 2003 wore on, it became apparent that this stance was not winning France friends within Iraq itself. An article in *Le Monde* in March 2004 depicted this. The article spoke to Iraqis from a variety of backgrounds and ethnic origins. It found that French failure to engage with postwar Iraq had led to widespread disillusionment and hostility among Iraqis, including those Iraqis fiercely opposed to the U.S. invasion.¹⁷

For the UK, leader of the “pro-war” faction among European countries, the most pressing diplomatic problem following the war was preventing further deterioration in U.S.-EU relations. The British had their own criticisms of U.S. handling of the occupation in the first months. There were differences with the United States over military tactics, with British observers critical of the performance of the 3rd Infantry Division in Baghdad, and particularly of the performance of the team under General Jay Garner, who for a short period administered postwar Iraq. A series

of secret memos sent by Prime Minister Tony Blair's envoy John Sawers to 10 Downing Street depict early severe doubts on the part of senior British Foreign Office personnel.¹⁸

Sawers's dispatches, of course, may tell us as much about internal differences within the UK regarding Iraq policy as they do about the actual state of affairs in Iraq. Some of the criticisms, however, later became commonly expressed. This included the sense of insufficient planning for the postwar period and the wholesale sackings of Ba'ath Party members—including very junior ones—from their posts, which critics believed needlessly hampered efforts to build up coherent administrative structures in Iraq in the period following the war.¹⁹

Despite these misgivings, British diplomacy centered on mending the transatlantic rift. Tony Blair was worried at the possibility that the differences that emerged during the war could lead to “two rival centers of power,” as he put it at the time. He sought common ground, while never retreating from his staunch defense of the war itself. The British commitment of troops in Iraq remained the most significant after that of the United States.²⁰

The differing outlooks of the UK and France were not fundamentally altered by the war itself. Nor have they been changed by subsequent developments. On June 28, 2004, power was formally handed over by CPA Head Paul Bremer to an interim Iraqi government to be led by Ayad Alawi.²¹ The handover took place in secret, against the backdrop of the continuing insurgency and bloodshed in Iraq. British Prime Minister Tony Blair was the only European leader to be aware that the handover of power was made earlier—an indication of Britain's role as the European country closest to the United States.

France again led the charge in its trenchant criticism of the new arrangements emerging after June 2004. The French were critical of the make-up of the new government, which they maintained did not represent a sufficient departure from the previous, U.S.-led administration. Some observers, however, felt that French diplomacy was wrong-footed by the June 2004 transfer of power and the appointment of Prime Minister Alawi. The French had placed such an emphasis on the need for a transfer of power, that their continued trenchant criticism seemed at times more intent on deliberate obstruction than constructive engagement.

From June 2004, the beginnings of a more general cautious re-engagement of EU countries with the new Iraq can begin to be discerned. A strategy paper produced by the EU the same month recommended an active European engagement with the new Iraqi government. The document envisaged the EU inviting Iraq to join the EU's Strategic Partnership for the Mediterranean and the Middle East. It also recommended that EU states join in pushing for Iraq to be admitted to the World Trade Organization, and that the EU should reinstate favored trading partner relations with Baghdad.²²

This document, while representing a significant change in tone from the EU, has suffered from many of the usual drawbacks of policy statements issued by the EU. That is, while it laid out a coherent and new general strategy for the EU to follow, it had little to say regarding the immediate short-term priorities that the EU needed to adopt regarding events in Iraq. As such, it served to paper over the very real differences between member states and Iraq, rather than really confronting and then reconciling them.

The result was that the new strategy had less impact than had been hoped by those

who formulated it. Whatever the ringing declarations emerging from Brussels, European countries remained deeply divided.

A year after the war, while the two camps remained clearly defined, there was movement between them. As mentioned, the essential dividing line in European perceptions on Iraq ran between France and Germany on the one hand, and Britain and the Spain of Jose Maria Aznar on the other. Smaller neutral countries then tended to align with France and Germany, and a number of new member states were with the UK and Spain. In mid-2004, however, following Aznar's defeat in elections by the Spanish Socialist Party of Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, Spain effectively crossed over to the other camp. Zapatero announced his intention of withdrawing his country's forces from Iraq. Spain had committed a force of 1,400 troops. Zapatero, demonstrating his fealty to the French view of events in Iraq, initially stated that he might be willing to see Spanish forces stay as part of a UN-led solution in Iraq. Since this was clearly not on the horizon, he ordered their withdrawal, which began on April 20, 2004, and was completed within six weeks.²³

Yet the Spanish departure notwithstanding, the involvement even of anti-war countries with the new Iraq was slowly moving ahead. The announcement on November 22, 2004 of elections in Iraq played a further important role in the slow, cautious re-engagement of European countries. Events were clearly moving forward, and regardless of differences over the policy that had led to the occupation of Iraq, it was clear that European countries would only harm themselves by being sidelined from engagement with the forces now emerging to dominate the new Iraq. At the same time, the presence of insurgency

and the sense of vindication among countries that had opposed the war limited the scope of involvement.

Holland, which had supported the war and which held the EU presidency in the year 2004, was keen to promote practical assistance in the elections. A mission was sent with the intention of exploring the possibility of European monitors taking part in the Iraqi polls. Divisions among member states hampered these efforts, however, and it proved impossible to secure agreement among member states for the commitment of observers.

The general sense regarding the government of Ayad Alawi was one of caution and skepticism among formerly anti-war European countries. The European “hands off” attitude toward Alawi's administration contrasted sharply with European attitudes to aid and involvement elsewhere in the region, for example in the Palestinian Authority area. Whereas there, European countries have been particularly conspicuous in their grassroots efforts to aid social and political processes (for example, the prominent European role in the PA elections of January 2006, and the extensive social and educational projects maintained by European governments and NGOs dealing with all aspects of life in the Palestinian areas), in Iraq, the attitude has been more circumspect. In Iraq, there has been a desire to make involvement conditional on progress toward democracy while, crucially, avoiding what might be seen as a European endorsement of, or partnership with, what is seen as the U.S. project of the invasion and re-making of Iraq. This attitude does not, of course, apply to EU member states such as the UK, which supported the war. Yet the sharp divisions that continued in the postwar period served to prevent a common, coherent European stance.

In the run-up to the elections, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell publicly expressed his hopes that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which played an important role in supervising elections in Ukraine, would undertake similar tasks in Iraq. This did not take place, however, and the responsibility for international supervision of the elections of January 30 was undertaken by a relatively small group of 35 UN staffers. The European Commission donated the sum of 31.5 million Euros toward preparation for the elections, which included a training program for Iraqi observers of the electoral process and the deployment of three European experts to Baghdad to work with the UN mission.²⁴ The small size of this group was attributed to the problematic security situation in Iraq. In addition, an ad hoc group called the International Mission for Iraqi Elections monitored the electoral process from Jordan, because of fears related to the security situation.²⁵ This mission included members from Britain, but no other EU country.

Despite determined attempts by Sunni insurgents to disrupt the elections, the January polls were hailed as a success. The model of genuine but limited European support for the political process in Iraq was here established, and has not been substantially deviated from in subsequent landmark events in Iraq. Thus, EU involvement in the referendum on the constitution consisted of a 20 million Euro contribution toward the constitutional process, which again was channeled through UN bodies working on the referendum.²⁶ The successful conduct of the referendum was welcomed by European governments and by the Commission. Yet direct European involvement was not a feature of the referendum process.

The same situation held for the Iraqi elections of December 2005. Once again, the European Commission provided a limited amount of assistance for the election, channeled through UN-controlled bodies. The victory of the United Iraqi Alliance, a Shi'a religious-led list, in the elections was an indicator that the putting in place of an electoral framework had not served to alter fundamentally the confessional and ethnic basis of politics in Iraq. The possibility of growing Iranian influence in Iraq now became a matter of concern.

The "hands off" policy of France, Germany, and the countries that had opposed the war seemed to them to be justified by as the failure to return stability to Iraq following the toppling of Saddam Hussein. Further defections from the pro-U.S. camp took place in 2006. Elections in Italy in May 2006, brought back to power a coalition led by the Socialist Party. The new prime minister, Romano Prodi, used his first speech in parliament following his victory to issue a harsh criticism of the war in Iraq. He referred to it as a "grave error" that could ignite war across the Middle East. Prodi announced his intention to withdraw Italy's commitment of 2,700 troops in Iraq.²⁷ This, together with the substantial cutting down of the Polish contingent in Iraq, left the United States with its British allies almost alone in attempting to maintain their commitments in Iraq.

Thus, the very sharp divisions that existed from the outset in the views of major European countries regarding the U.S.-led enterprise in Iraq persisted following the conclusion of the conventional phase of the conflict. These differences have served to prevent the emergence of a coherent, pan-European policy. Europeans who opposed the war

derive a sense of vindication from subsequent events in Iraq. At the same time, however, as representative bodies have emerged in Iraq, so a limited engagement with them has taken place.

The next section will consider how this dynamic has been reflected in the areas of European economic and commercial engagement with the new Iraq and will also discuss European attitudes to the ongoing insurgency in the country.

European Economic Relations with the New Iraq

European funding and aid for the reconstruction of Iraq has been limited. Once again, the opposition of principal European countries to the invasion has been the key factor here. At the Madrid donor conference in October 2003, shortly following the invasion, the total of \$33 billion was contributed for the reconstruction of Iraq. Of this sum, fully \$20 billion came from the United States, \$5 billion was donated by Japan, and \$1 billion by the UK. France declined to make any contribution. In total, \$1.5 billion was donated by other EU member states. European levels of aid to the new Iraq have remained at a modest level. The European Commission as a body has donated 518.5 million Euros. Individual contributions have varied according to the stance toward the war taken by the country, but have remained overall low.²⁸

In November 2004, the sensitive issue of Iraq's public debt was addressed in an agreement between the new government in Iraq and Paris Club member states.²⁹ A major debt reduction plan was agreed upon, which would bring the debt down by 80 percent over three phases, linked to Iraq's compliance with the IMF standard program.³⁰

Regarding trade with Iraq, the United States is its main trading partner, with 40.7 percent of the total amount traded. The EU is second, with 20.7 percent. The EU is also the second largest exporter to Iraq. Regarding imports, as Iraqi oil production has picked up, so energy exports to Europe have correspondingly increased. Iraq is now tenth among the major energy supplies to Europe. Iraq is responsible, however, for only 1.4 percent of the total of European energy imports. There is thus a long way to go before pre-1991 levels of trade are regained. Trade fell sharply in 1991, before picking up again after the beginning of the oil-for-food program in 1997. By 2001, the EU accounted for 33.3 percent of overall trade and 55 percent of Iraq's imports, after which it began to decrease once again.³¹

European economic engagement with Iraq is thus increasing, and can be expected to continue to increase depending, ultimately, on the level of stability in Iraq. European aid for reconstruction in Iraq, however, has been modest, and here political factors are significant. Countries that opposed the war have been reluctant to contribute largely to the rebuilding of Iraq in a process that they regarded as fundamentally illegitimate. The French refusal to make a donation of any kind at the conference in Madrid in October 2003 offers perhaps the clearest example of this.

Europe and the Insurgency

Again, the approaches of European countries to the insurgency in Iraq, and to broader questions of security, cannot be separated from their core interpretation of the Iraq invasion. For France and Germany, the insurgency at least tacitly seemed to offer a vindication of their warnings regarding the very advisability of the invasion. The French attitude on security at

the outset stressed the need to develop a UN-led security effort in Iraq, as an aspect of their broader desire for greater UN involvement.

France and Germany, having opposed the invasion, felt themselves under no obligation to commit forces to police post-Saddam Iraq or to oppose the efforts of Sunni Arab insurgents in the center of the country. Yet even countries that had supported the war provided only small contingents in the post-conventional phase of the conflict. The entire occupation force was, of course, also of relatively modest dimensions—an aspect which would later be the subject of much criticism. Britain took security responsibility in the Shi'a south of the country, centering its operations in Basra. The British army, with its experience in Northern Ireland and other post-1945 insurgency situations, was confident in its ability to maintain order in the Shi'a south successfully, where in any case there was little immediate interest in a strategy of rebellion. Italy, Spain, and Poland also committed forces at the outset. Smaller commitments were made by Denmark, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Norway.

As the insurgency gained pace in late 2003, there was some British criticism of U.S. tactics and strategy. The British, in the much more peaceful south, stressed attempts to work with and coopt potentially hostile forces, including the Mahdi army of the young firebrand cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. The U.S. view was, initially at least, a more across-the-board opposition to all illegally constituted militias. The British considered that their own approach—which they viewed as more respectful of existing local power structures and traditions and less openly assertive—stood a greater chance of success.

In practice, however, in the course of 2004, British and U.S. practices were tending toward convergence. A number of violent incidents placed a clear limit on the extent of British ability to co-opt and cooperate with local organizations. The United States, meanwhile, found its own way toward limited dialogue with Sunni militias, for example, in its contacts with such organizations to end the Fallujah situation in April 2004. At the same time, the British desire and belief in the possibility of a more police-oriented, less military approach has remained a constant and observable point of disagreement between the UK and the United States.

As detailed above, changes in government in a number of countries, such as Spain and Italy, have led to a reduction of the European military commitment in Iraq. European commitment to involvement in civil policing has been similarly limited.

In the course of 2005, however, following the beginnings of greater European engagement in Iraq and moves toward greater Iraqi self-government and elections, the views of the governments of countries opposed to the war became more nuanced. While opposition to the original project in Iraq remained, there was a growing sense that what was now important was the successful maintenance of the situation in order to avoid the collapse of the country into chaos, which was in the interest of none but the forces of radical Islam. Thus, in December 2005, when asked on CNN regarding the issue of a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. and coalition forces from Iraq, French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin did not issue a demand for the immediate end of foreign military involvement in Iraq. Rather, he said that "the real timetable is the Iraqi situation.... We should avoid at all

costs the chaos in Iraq, which, of course, will be disaster for the whole region."³²

De Villepin had been among the most vocal and active French opponents of the war in 2003. However, statements of this type have not translated into substantive aid in combating the insurgency, nor in major contributions to the building up of the new Iraqi security forces. The pattern in which countries opposed to the war have preferred to hang back rather than be associated with what they regard as a failed policy has remained. The general sense in Europe—certainly among European public opinion—is that the Iraqi invasion has been an unsuccessful enterprise. This is the case also in countries such as the UK, where government policy has remained consistent in its support for the war, active engagement in counter-insurgency, and the building up of the new Iraq.³³

However, the trend—as witnessed in Spain and Italy—has been for countries initially supportive of the war to go over to the more skeptical camp. The result is that regarding European security commitments, efforts by coalition allies have been toward seeking to maintain existing commitments (with limited success) rather than expanding the European representation.

CONCLUSIONS

A combination of widespread prewar opposition to the policy of invading Iraq, a sense that initial doubts have been vindicated, and genuine apprehension at the deepening uncertainty regarding the future of Iraq have limited European willingness to engage in the reconstruction of Iraq. This has applied even to areas where the European contribution could not have been construed as retrospective justification for the policy of invasion.

This policy has not been of unambiguous benefit to European countries. There is evidence, for example, to suggest that France's opposition to the policy of invasion could paradoxically have been to the benefit of the French in engaging with the new Iraq, and the reluctance of France to engage was a source of disappointment and surprise to some Iraqis.

Clearly, these arguments apply in the main to the anti-war camp in Europe. Europe remains split between the camp led by Britain, which includes a number of new, Central European member states, and the camp led by France, which includes a number of smaller, traditionally neutral countries. Since the Iraq War of 2003, two major European countries—Spain and Italy—have, in effect, passed from the British-led camp to the French-led camp as a result of elections in those countries. Germany, meanwhile, has gone over to the broadly Atlanticist camp as a result of general elections. Current chancellor Angela Merkel was publicly critical of Gerhard Schroeder's Iraq policy when she was leader of the German opposition, and she also made her opposition clear during visits to the United States.³⁴

A paper produced in 2004 at a pro-Blair think tank in London suggested that ample opportunities for a constructive European role in Iraq existed, for example, in assistance in security reform, mediating with insurgents, and helping political parties to develop. "Existing challenges," the writer concluded, "provide ample opportunity for the EU to apply its own experience and expertise to good effect."³⁵ While European engagement has increased since 2004, strong factors militate against the likelihood that European involvement will move substantially beyond current levels. The reasons for this reluctance are to be found in issues of high politics and

policy, and can only be understood with reference to these, rather than in practical limitations preventing efforts from being made. These issues of policy have served to prevent a united European response on Iraq.

The European response on Iraq offers the latest proof for the survival of specific and sometimes opposed foreign policy orientations among leading European states. British Atlanticism versus the French desire to balance U.S. power internationally remains the key divide. Despite the existence of bureaucratic bodies attesting to the existence of a Europe-wide foreign policy, the experience of Iraq from 2003 until now indicates that no such policy can be said to exist in a meaningful sense.

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NOTES

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²² See "The EU's relations with Iraq - Overview,"

http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/iraq/intro/.

²³ "Spain PM firm on Iraq withdrawal," *BBC Online*, March 17, 2004, <http://www.bbc.co.uk>.

²⁴ "Commission offers fresh support for the electoral process in Iraq," European Commission website, November 4, 2004, http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations

²⁵ Robin Wright, "No Foreign Observers to Monitor Vote in Iraq," *Washington Post*, January 22, 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

²⁶ "Iraq: Situation after referendum on Constitution," speech by European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighborhood policy Benita Ferrero-Waldner in European Parliament in Strasbourg, November 16, 2005, European Commission website, http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations

²⁷ John Hooper and Suzanne Goldenberg, "Prodi signals early end to Italian role in Iraq 'occupation'," *The Guardian*, May 19, 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk>.

²⁸ Esther Pan, "Madrid Donor Conference," Council of Foreign Relations, October 30, 2003, <http://www.cfr.org>.

²⁹ The Paris Club is an association of major creditor nations. It has nineteen members, including France, the United States, the

UK, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Canada, and Finland.

³⁰ Craig S. Smith, "Major Creditors in Accord to Waive 80% of Iraq Debt," *New York Times*, November 22, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com>.

³¹ See "Bilateral Trade Relations," European Commission website, for further details on Europe's past and current economic relationship with Iraq, <http://ec.europa.eu/comm/trade/issues/bilateral/countries/iraq>.

³² John Ward Anderson, "EU Leaders and public differ on pullout in Iraq," *Washington Post*, December 9, 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com>.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ John C. Hulsman and Nile Gardiner, "US-German relations in the Merkel era," Backgrounder # 1907, Heritage Foundation Policy research and analysis, January 11, 2006, <http://www.heritage.org>; "German-Iraqi business conference highlights opportunities," July 22, 2005, <http://www.portaliraq.com>. Since a gradual increase in engagement of formerly anti-war countries may be traced from mid-2004 onwards, Mrs. Merkel was not confronted with a policy of strict disengagement from Iraq and has not radically increased levels of involvement. Germany was among the Paris Club members who voted to relieve Iraq's debts in November 2004. By that year, the value of German exports to Iraq totaled \$479 million, about prewar level. This example is quoted to show that the situation is not black and white. Increased European engagement, particularly in the economic sphere, is occurring to a limited degree.

³⁵ Youngs, "Europe and Iraq."