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the European Union in Iraq and Afghanistan**

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Footprints in the Sand: Analyzing the Role of the European Union in Iraq and Afghanistan

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The European Union has played a significant role in Iraq and Afghanistan since the US-led invasion; yet, the EU has handled the two countries with a significantly different approach. These varying approaches have led to both marked success and failure. This paper seeks to outline and analyze how the EU has handled Iraq and Afghanistan, while addressing the differences in approach. The policies and strategies of the EU are addressed in depth within this paper, first with a focus on Iraq, followed by a focus on Afghanistan.

Iraq

Iraq has proven to be an especially dividing factor within the European Union. From the Gulf War through today, policies on Iraq have drawn division lines between EU member-states. Member-states could not agree on the best strategy for approaching the regime of Saddam Hussein after the Gulf War; moreover, member-states could neither collectively oppose nor support a US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.¹ It is important to explore these differing views on Iraq to understand why the European Union has struggled so much regarding its policies toward Iraq.

Following the Gulf War, many of the European Union member-states shared a collective belief that the best strategy for Iraq was containment, that is, restrictions on weapons development and improvements in human rights. Containment was sought due to the fact that instilling a complete regime change could lead to complete chaos in the region, as the politically diverse country could divide into various segments.² However, in the 1990s collective agreement on Iraq began to wane. In fact, talks on Iraq were kept outside of the newly formed Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), out of fears that the CFSP was currently incapable of handling such a sensitive topic.³

One of the biggest debates in the 1990s in Europe was the lifting of the sanctions imposed on Iraq. France prepared to lift sanctions on the country—allowing French firms to visit Iraq, and bid for contracts. However, other countries, such as the UK, chose not to lift the sanctions. The UK tended to take a common stance with the United States on policy views concerning Iraq. In fact, in the 1998 bombing raids of Iraq, the UK was the only European country to aid the United States.⁴

Perhaps the biggest division—which carries through to today—involves the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Once again, Britain and France—two of the strongest European Union member-states—differed concerning military use. There was a difference of opinion on how much time to give UN weapons inspectors to continue searching for weapons of mass destruction (WMD).⁵ Even more conflict arose following the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime, with some

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¹ ROY GINSBERG, *DEMISTIFYING THE EUROPEAN UNION: THE ENDURING LOGIC OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION* 285 (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc 2007).

² RICHARD YOUNGS, *EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST: IN THE SHADOW OF SEPTEMBER 11TH* 32 (Lynne Rienner Publishers 2006)

³ *Id.* at 33.

⁴ CNN.com, Transcript: President Clinton Explains Iraq Strike (Dec. 17, 1998) <http://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/stories/1998/12/16/transcripts/clinton.html>

⁵ YOUNGS, *supra*, note 2, at 35.

governments favoring a quick regime change, while others favored a slower-paced transition. Member-states were completely divided over how to approach Iraq. France, Germany, Luxembourg, Greece, Belgium, and Ireland all disagreed with the United States' approach. Conversely, the UK, Spain, Holland, Portugal, and Denmark took a more pro-US view.⁶ Moreover, countries which had not yet officially joined the EU—Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Croatia and Albania—were all threatened by French President Chirac, due to their pro-US stance. Chirac stated that these pro-US countries had, “missed an excellent opportunity to keep silent.”⁷

In 2004, the European Union approved a new strategy for Iraq. Stability in Iraq, and a fixed regime was crucial to the European Union for a variety of reasons. First, a stable Iraq meant that the Iraqi exiles living in the European Union member-states could return back to Iraq. Additionally, a more stable Iraq meant a more stable Turkey.⁸ The strategy involved a variety of elements. The EU would have a dialogue with the new Iraqi government to help ensure an efficient political process was utilized; that security efforts in Iraq were supported; and, to improve the judicial system in Iraq. Additionally, the EU would use its current relationships with other Middle Eastern countries to encourage those countries to aid Iraq.⁹

However, some European Union member-states were unsure of what the political presence of the European Union should be. Nevertheless, it was later recommended that the European Union could play a significant role in the aiding of Iraq in its elections. Some European Union member-states also sought to open an EU office in Iraq.¹⁰ Additionally, there was talk of financial assistance to Iraq. Unfortunately, most of these ideas could not be agreed upon, with many member-states taking firm stances against the proponents of these ideas.¹¹ In fact, even members of the Euro-Med Partnership did not want Iraq to be a part of the framework due to the fear that too much EU assistance would be diverted to Iraq and away from other countries.¹²

During the Allawi government in Iraq, the EU had several concerns. For instance, the interim government was autocratic, the death penalty was reintroduced, and there was severe media censorship.¹³ The European Union demanded improvements in these areas before they would consider any sort of trade and cooperation agreement. In 2005, the European Union officially agreed to open trade talks with Iraq, and to implement procedures for opening a European Union delegation in Iraq.¹⁴ The European Union's influence in Iraq through 2005 could be considered minimal at best. The EU constantly—and perhaps correctly—criticized the actions of the United States, yet failed to take any proactive measures to alter the situation. The EU chose to abstain from exerting its powerful presence in Iraq during the elections; however, it criticized the United States for the direction it was pushing Iraq in.

⁶ Jonathan Spyer, *Europe and Iraq: The Test Case for CFSP* THE MIDDLE EASTERN REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, June 2007, http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2007/issue2/jv11no2a7.html#_edn12.

⁷ Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, *Fury as Chirac Threatens New EU States* (Feb. 18, 2003) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/1422441/Fury-as-Chirac-threatens-new-EU-states.html>

⁸ YOUNGS, *supra*, note 2, at 42.

⁹ *Id.* at 42.

¹⁰ The European Union. *A Framework for EU-Iraq Engagement*. http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/external_relations/relations_with_third_countries/middle_east/r16005_en.htm (last visited on September 30, 2009)

¹¹ YOUNGS, *supra*, note 2, at 43-44.

¹² *Id.* at 44.

¹³ YOUNGS, *supra*, note 2, at 44.

¹⁴ Kuwait News Agency, *EU, Iraq Agree on Opening Office in Baghdad* (Dec. 12, 2005), <http://www.kuna.net.kw/NewsAgenciesPublicSite/ArticleDetails.aspx?Language=en&id=1588245>

Security Within Iraq

Regarding security within Iraq, even more debate ensued in the European Union. France was originally completely opposed to the idea of European engagement in Iraq; however, it began to discuss the notion after realizing that it was beginning to become ostracized. In fact, at the time (2003) a number of member-states wished to participate by sending troops to address security issues in Iraq. However, by 2004, almost all of Europe had become weary of the war in Iraq. Spain had chosen to withdraw its troops, and even the United Kingdom waned, sending troops to Afghanistan over Iraq. Additionally, the European Union placed extreme pressure on Turkey—a candidate country—not to send troops.¹⁵

One idea that circulated was the concept of an EU police force to patrol following the war. However, after the deaths of Italian police trainers in Iraq, many countries became wary of having EU police forces patrol. The UK also felt that patrolling Iraq with EU police forces would be far more difficult than what police forces faced in the Balkans. Germany reluctantly began training police forces, but did so in the United Arab Emirates. Denmark shifted away from training police forces. France promised a police training center only after full sovereignty was returned to Iraq.¹⁶ Once again, the European Union member-states remained divided on issues regarding Iraq.

In 2005, police strategy in Iraq resurfaced, this time it seemed as if there would be greater commitment to police forces in Iraq. However, France—once again—refused to make significant commitments. France and Germany, having opposed the invasion in the first place, felt no obligation to send troops to police Iraq.¹⁷ In fact, France, Germany, and Spain only committed a few thousand Euros to train Iraqi police forces—which would be trained outside of Iraq.¹⁸ Soon, the amount of money coming from the European Union to Iraq began to dwindle. Many experts believed that the European Union wished to remove itself as much as possible from the situation, so as not to be associated with a failure.¹⁹

To date, the European Union has contributed \$3.5 billion towards Iraq, with \$1 billion coming directly from the Commission. However, this is a very modest number compared to other countries—this is only two-thirds the amount offered solely by Japan. Moreover, less than \$1 out of every \$10 in aid promised has actually been disbursed.²⁰

Aiming for a Stable Iraq

Despite the differences, the European Union has an interest in a stable Iraq for four main reasons according to an in-depth study.²¹ First, a stable government in Iraq means less violence in the country. With less violence, it is less likely that extremism will spread both within the borders and outside of the borders into the greater Middle East region. Moreover, with less violence, there is less migration from Iraq into the European Union. Second, the EU must support reconstruction in Iraq in order to combat social and economic issues within the country. The greater the social and economic levels are within Iraq, the smoother the governmental operations will be. Third, Iraq sits on ten percent of the world's oil reserves; therefore, the EU must secure oil at reasonable and stable prices. The more stable the trade, the more likely businesses are to invest in the

¹⁵ Yalim Eralp, Charting New Paths for Europe at Home and Abroad (June 10, 2003), <http://www.epc.eu/en/ce.asp?TYP=CE&LV=177&see=y&t=42&PG=CE/EN/detail&l=6&AI=332>

¹⁶ YOUNGS, *supra*, note 2, at 51-52.

¹⁷ SPYER, *supra*, note 6, http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2007/issue2/jv11no2a7.html#_edn12.

¹⁸ YOUNGS, *supra*, note 2, at 54.

¹⁹ *Id.*, at 55.

²⁰ Richard Gowan, The EU and Iraq: starting to find a new strategy? (Jan. 26, 2008), http://www.ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_gowan_eu_and_iraq_strategy/

²¹ TOBY DODGE ET AL., THE EUROPEAN UNION AND IRAQ: PRESENT DILEMMAS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION (2004), <http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/e-texts/IraqStrategyPaperdbl040623.pdf>, at 9-10.

country. Fourth, secure the stability of the Gulf region, and make sure that Iraq remains at peace with its neighbors so that it may be integrated into a regional security framework.

Lastly, European Union member-states agree on four major principles regarding Iraq: 1) the unity of Iraq must be upheld; 2) the governing system of Iraq must be a democracy; 3) the governmental system in Iraq must be geographically decentralized; and, 4) Iraq must operate peacefully with its neighbors and renounce the use of military force in disputes.²² Prior to the 2005 general elections in Iraq, it was recommended that the European Union aid Iraq in two principal areas. First, it was suggested that the European Union foster reconstruction of the Iraqi civil society by, “supporting non-governmental organizations and offering training in democratization, human rights and civil conflict management.”²³ Additionally, the European Union should work to gain the backing of Muslim organizations and individuals both in Iraq and within the European Union in order to gain support for their initiatives. It was suggested that the EU create exchange programs for students, teachers, journalists, and professionals to reduce the isolation that Iraq has faced, and to increase the knowledge that citizens of the European Union member-states have regarding this state/region.

The second suggestion was for the European Union to work to implement a rule of law in Iraq. Because of the diverse member-states that compose the European Union, the EU is in a unique position to advise on establishing a uniform legal system in a diverse community. The European Union should train employees in both the law-enforcement and judicial realms within Iraq: this includes, but is not limited to, police officers, border patrol, judges, and lawyers. Lastly, it is suggested that the European Union engage in a dialogue concerning the future of Iraq’s relations with its neighbors, specifically regarding non-interference in internal Iraqi affairs, and border control. The authors also suggest that the European Union should follow the United States²⁴ and reduce or even forgive the national debt of Iraq, which is at \$120 billion—one of the highest in the world. All of these goals are invaluable to creating a safer and more stable Iraq.

In closing, the European Union has undoubtedly struggled to form a unified front in Iraq. Varying policies, views, and histories, have caused rift among the member-states. This lack of direction has weakened the image of the European Union, in that, the world can see the cracks in the foundation of a powerful structure—still working to gain international prominence. Although the situation in Iraq seems more dismal each day, it is imperative that the European Union take a unified stance, and shape their policies accordingly. This, without doubt, is paramount to a more successful Iraq.

Afghanistan

To show how powerful the role of the EU has been in Afghanistan, it is important to note that twenty-three European Union member-states account for nearly two-thirds of the NATO troops that are serving in Afghanistan.²⁵ Additionally, the European Union and its member-states are the largest donors to Afghanistan in the world: in 2002, the EU allotted €800 million in overall aid; in 2003, €900 million was put forward. From 2004-2006, the EU pledged €2.2 billion.²⁶ Moreover, The EU has established several agreements with the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan since 2001. Much has been built on the Bonn Agreement, which, although was a United Nations agreement, should be analyzed as a foundation upon which the European Union has built its relations with Afghanistan.

²² *Id.* at 10.

²³ *Id.* at 12.

²⁴ CNN.com, US Cancels Iraq’s \$4.1 Billion Debt (Dec. 17, 2004), <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/meast/12/17/iraq.main/index.html>

²⁵ GINSBERG, *supra*, note 1, at 315.

²⁶ *Id.* at 352

The Bonn Agreement

Officially known as *the Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions*, the Bonn Agreement was implemented to foster in a new government in Afghanistan following the US-led invasion resulting from the September 11, 2001 attacks. Leaders from four rival factions in Afghanistan met in the European city of Bonn to discuss the future of their country. The hopes of the UN were that the factions could share power in the new interim government. However, this hope was largely defeated when the largest faction, the Taliban, did not attend the conference. The four rival factions that did attend were: the Northern Alliance, who controlled the capital, Kabul; the delegation of the former king, Zahir Shah, comprising a multitude of ethnicities; the Cyprus group, representing exiles and one-time mujahidin fighters; and, the Peshawar group, with ties to Pakistan.²⁷

The Bonn Agreement called for an interim authority, judicial system, and administration to be instilled until a formal government could take its place.²⁸ Moreover, the agreement called for the cooperation of the interim government to control the Afghan mujahidin; to fight against terrorism, drugs, and organized crime; to abide by international law, and work cooperatively with the international community; and, to work within the confines of UN Security Council resolution 1378.²⁹ This agreement was a significant step in ensuring the stability of Afghanistan.

The European Union fully supported the UN initiative. Chris Patten, of the European Union External Relations Commission, stated:

[T]his is an important - and long-awaited - day for the Afghan people. It should lay the foundation for a stable, peaceful and democratic future for the country and will provide the international community with a partner for providing reconstruction assistance. The European Commission is mobilizing its Rapid Reaction Mechanism to provide immediate support for the task force led by UNSR Brahimi and for an initial package of support to the interim administration to help it to address the formidable challenges it faces.³⁰ Moreover, according to a Eurobarometer survey in 2001, over seventy percent of European residents thought that the European Union should provide “massive” funding for reconstruction of Afghanistan.³¹

The EU-Afghanistan Joint Declaration

On September 18, 2005, the Afghan National Assembly was established, which marked the end of the political process set forth in the Bonn Agreement. The European Union firmly wished to continue improvements in Afghanistan following the UN-led Bonn Agreement. Therefore, following Bonn, the European Union and Afghanistan drew up a new agreement with the idea that efforts would continue to be put forth by the European Union in the aiding of Afghanistan. This agreement sets forth several initiatives that the EU and Afghanistan sought to build upon. The European Union and Afghanistan agreed to work together to build stronger and more transparent government, with an improved civil service. Afghanistan undertook to improve their regulatory and legal system to make it more predictable and transparent. Additionally, Afghanistan agreed to help foster the growth of a private sector open to both foreign and domestic

²⁷ Euractiv.com, Bonn Conference Prepares Ground for New Start in Afghanistan (Nov. 27, 2001) <http://www.euractiv.com/en/security/bonn-conference-prepares-ground-new-start-afghanistan/article-116361>

²⁸ Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions, December 22, 2001 <http://www.un.org/News/dh/latest/afghan/afghan-agree.htm>

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ European Union@United Nations. http://www.eu-un.europa.eu/articles/en/article_475_en.htm (last visited September 30, 2009).

³¹ *Id.*

business. Along with this, Afghanistan provides for tax incentives for European business to invest in Afghanistan.³²

In the security realm, the European Union formally recognized the sovereignty of Afghanistan, and the non-interference by others in its internal affairs. However, Afghanistan agreed to abide by international law, and act peacefully towards its neighbors. The European Union agreed to lend military and civilian resources to NATO in its efforts to maintain peace in the area, and support the US security operations in Afghanistan. Afghanistan agreed to pursue all efforts to build and maintain its own national security forces. The European Union reiterated its support in developing and training Afghan police and border police forces. Lastly, the European Union agreed to help Afghanistan to create a better justice sector to help create the rule of law in the country. Afghanistan agreed to better coordinate the judicial bodies within its borders.³³

Another major issue discussed in the Joint Declaration was counter-narcotics. Afghanistan is considered to be a major drug producing country.³⁴ The European Union has agreed to aid Afghanistan concerning its combating of drugs through the Afghan budgetary processes, and the launch of the Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund.³⁵

The European Union and Afghanistan plan to work closely together to reduce poverty and reach the targets of the Millennium Development Goals in Afghanistan. Developments in these fields are to be made through ensuring that the Afghan budget is covered through state revenues. The European Union intends to make funds available to Afghanistan from the European Union budget.³⁶

Regarding human rights, civil society, and refugee return, Afghanistan pledged to protect freedoms under the Constitution, create a democratic society, and protect human rights. Afghanistan has recognized the equal rights of all individuals. The European Union agreed to support Afghanistan in order to ensure these goals are met with success. Additionally, the European Union has stated that it will actively work to create a multitude of media outlets within the country. Additionally, Afghanistan and the European Union have agreed to work together to implement a safe and meaningful return of refugees to Afghanistan.³⁷

Lastly, the European Union and Afghanistan pledged to work together to improve the educational standards of Afghanistan, from the most elementary levels through higher education. The European Union and Afghanistan planned to do this by creating scholarships and exchange programs so that scholars may travel between the EU and Afghanistan—sharing and providing education.³⁸

Country Strategy Paper: 2007-2013

Although Afghanistan has made remarkable strides since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, and the onset of the Bonn Agreement, issues still remain in the country concerning drugs, security, and ethnic tensions.³⁹ To elaborate, opium trade in Afghanistan has become a major problem in part because it is corrupting the fragile Afghan government. Regarding security, 2005 and 2006 saw increased casualties in part due to Taliban uprising. Moreover, insurgents have targeted reform-

³² EU-Afghanistan Joint Declaration, EU-Afg. Nov. 16, 2005, available at, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/05/st14/st14519.en05.pdf>, at 3.

³³ *Id.* at 4

³⁴ Office of National Drug Control Policy, Certification for Major Illicit Drug Producing and Transit Countries. http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/international/factsht/cert_major_illct.html (last visited September 30, 2009).

³⁵ EU-Afghanistan Joint Declaration, *supra*, note 32, at 5.

³⁶ *Id.* at 5.

³⁷ *Id.* at 6

³⁸ *Id.* at 7.

³⁹ The European Commission, European Union Country Strategy Paper. http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/afghanistan/csp/07_13_en.pdf, at 7.

oriented government officials, sending tremors through an already delicate government. Concerning ethnic tensions, voting studies show that Afghanistan is still largely divided based on ethnic ties.⁴⁰

The Afghan economy grew in 2006; however, trade with the European Union has been limited. Nevertheless, it is the goal of the European Union to foster trade between Afghanistan and its neighbors.⁴¹ Concerning monetary donations to Afghanistan, the European Union gave a tremendous amount of money to a tremendous amount of causes in the early stages of redevelopment in Afghanistan. However, now there are more international actors in Afghanistan, which means that the European Union can target funds to specific causes, which can be monitored more effectively, and disbursed more adequately. Moreover, it is now time for the European Union to move towards targeting more long-term humanitarian issues, and countering migration.

To continue, the European Union must also work towards focusing on local governments now that they have helped structure the national government.⁴² If there is no democracy at the local government level, then the citizens will surely abandon their hopes of a fully democratic nation. The European Union plans to improve local government by assisting in local elections, and strengthening community ties. Moreover, the EU will provide proper training for civil servants in the country.

Additionally, the European Union must work to improve financial management in the country. Because of the mismanagement of state funds, the country is often required to turn to private lenders—who exert their influence in turn on the political leaders. This undoubtedly can steer the country in a negative direction. The EU plans to aid Afghanistan in tax implementation to ensure that the state obtains the proper revenue in order to improve the state infrastructure.

However, the state government is still in its infancy, and must be shaped through improving the rule of law and public administration. Efforts must be put forward to improve the quality of judges, prosecutors, and defense lawyers. The European Union has also committed to continuing its donations to the Law and Order Trust Funds in Afghanistan to ensure that these goals are met.⁴³

Furthermore, the European Union intends to continue aiding Afghanistan with regards to healthcare issues. The European Union has successfully brought a Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) to ten provinces in Afghanistan.⁴⁴ The EU will also work to improve human rights such as gender equality, specifically access to education and training.

The EU seems to have taken proactive measures, in a unified front, to tackle and correct pressing issues in Afghanistan. Because of the fragile state of Afghanistan, it is imperative that the EU maintain this effort until Afghanistan is strong enough to take full control. As for now, international assistance, especially from an international actor as powerful as the European Union is the crux of Afghanistan's forward progress. Despite obvious setbacks and challenges which will surely face both Afghanistan, and the European Union, the will of the EU to make the situation better in Afghanistan shows an unmatched level of commitment, and sets a precedent for the rest of the international community.

Conclusion

Overall, the European Union has done a much better job handling the situation in Afghanistan—compared to Iraq. Iraq is the consequence of a European Union plagued by division and political

⁴⁰ <http://www.mideasti.org/summary/afghanistan-parliamentary-elections-and-beyond>

⁴¹ European Union Country Strategy Paper, at 13

⁴² *Id.* at 16-17

⁴³ *Id.* at 23.

⁴⁴ *Id.* at 24.

sparring. Conversely, Afghanistan—while far from a success—has taken a better path (if one exists) due to the cohesion and uniformity of the European Union. It is interesting to see how two countries in the same region, facing similar struggles, can be approached so differently. One can only hope that the European Union follows a collective path in order to maintain progress in Afghanistan, while improving the conditions in Iraq.