

“The fourth EU Greek Presidency: a consensus builder or a bargainer in the framework of CFSP?”

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**“The fourth EU Greek Presidency: a consensus builder or a bargainer that tried
to promote Greek national interests in the framework of CFSP?”**

Table of Abbreviations

- **CAP:** Common Agricultural Policy
- **CFSP:** Common Foreign and Security Policy
- **COREPER:** Committee of Permanent Representatives of the European Union
- **COSAC:** Conference of Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the European Union.
- **ESDP:** European Security and Defence Policy
- **EU:** European Union
- **FYROM:** Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia
- **GAC:** General Affairs Council
- **ICT:** International Criminal Court
- **NATO:** North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
- **OP/CAT:** Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture
- **OSCE:** Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe
- **SAA:** Stability and Association Agreement
- **SAP:** Stability and Association Pact
- **UK:** United Kingdom
- **UN:** United Nations
- **UNSC:** United Nation Security Council
- **UNSCR:** United Nation Security Council Resolution
- **US:** United States
- **WMD:** Weapons of Massive Destruction
- **WTO:** World Trade Organisation

Introduction

Mediation constitutes a vital element in the EU decision-making process. Given that the EU member states' positions differ with respect to the policy they should adopt, EU actors should act as mediators (brokers) in order to reach a compromise. The two actors in the EU scene that can play a mediation role *prima facie* are the Commission and the Council Presidency. As it is mentioned in the handbook of the Council Presidency Secretariat, “*the Presidency should, by definition, be neutral and not unilateral*”.¹ The Presidency is an internal mediator and cannot show relational impartiality. Specifically, the Presidency is influenced by the expectations created to the third parties by the previous experience of the actors (as, for example, the particular relations created with various member states). As Ole Elgstrom stressed, some times the Presidency shows procedural impartiality but other times it intervenes in order to reach a favourable and conclusive solution².

The Presidency often balances between the readiness to become a broker and the difficulties to undertake this role. The concept of Presidency indifference increases the effectiveness of its actions and decreases the uncertainty of EU partners. All the delegations believe that the Presidency does not promote a proposal that will not favour it. As a result, the representations will look forward to revealing information to the Presidency increasing the possibilities for solutions that favour the win-win integration. Indifference makes easier for a negotiator to be detached and oriented to achieving consensus since it would be easier to look for better solutions while a Presidency that chases for the satisfaction of national interests (bargainer) is more difficult to constitute a neutral arbitrator³.

In other cases, the Presidencies fail to convince for their neutrality and impartiality, necessary to this end. It is argued that it is easier for the small states to be indifferent than the big states, since their interests are limited. They do not have national interest in the cases of conflict resolution, dispose restricted traditional power and privilege the positions of the majority. As Ole Elgstrom asserts: the big countries exercise their Presidencies more from their capitals while the small countries are based more on their Permanent Representations⁴.

On the other hand, the conduct of small states is considered to be almost passive and reactive (they react to events without taking initiatives). Due to the restricted capacity of the weak states in international relations, their activity is possible to be focused on the geographic area they belong to and on the essential issues that concern them⁵.

This paper tries to examine whether the Greek Presidency functioned as a consensus builder or as a bargainer. In 2003, before the Eastern enlargement, Greece was seen as a medium/small EU member state. In order to give an overall picture of the Greek Presidency action in CFSP, the study is divided in eight thematic unities based mainly on geographical criteria (Supplementing the activities of other organisations, Southeastern Europe, Mediterranean region, ex Soviet Union region,

¹ Elgstrom Ole, “‘The honest broker?’ The Council Presidency as a mediator”, European Union Council Presidencies- A Comparative Perspective (editor Ole Elgstrom)

² See footnote 1

³ Hayes-Renshaw F. & Wallace H, “The Council of Ministers”, London, Macmillan, 1998.

⁴ See footnote 1

⁵ Kouveliotis Kyriakos, “The Common Foreign and Security Policy and Weak States. The Case of Greece”, PhD thesis, Department of Politics, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, (pp. 97, 100)

Africa, Asia, Transatlantic relations and European Defence Policy). Each section answers to the main question (bargainer or consensus builder). However, the stance kept by the Greek Presidency was not of the same importance in all areas. Further analysis was required in some cases since the divergence among EU member states or the national interest of the country holding the Presidency (Greece) were more intense. Therefore, the eight thematic sections are not developed equally. To be exact, the sections on the Balkans, the Iraq crisis and the Transatlantic relations are more developed. Finally, it is worth mentioning that this study is mainly based on Official European documents and on articles from reliable Newspapers. Otherwise, if this study was more expanded it would be quiet difficult to reach conclusions.

The CFSP actions during the Greek Presidency

1. Supplementing the activities of International and European organisations

The national action of Greece in this area is restricted with respect to big EU member states. It is a common knowledge that the small states have restricted diplomatic capacities and representations in International and European organisations. Therefore, it could be argued that supplementing the activities of other organisations is not in their national interests. In general Greece tried solely to respond to the expectations of third parties according to past EU experience. In fact, in the General Affairs Councils under the Greek Presidency, the question of the activities of other organisations was not discussed to a great extent. The withdrawal of the ban of entry in EU member states' territory to officials from Belarus given the efficient function of the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission in Minsk⁶, the support of the efficient operation of the International Criminal Court⁷ were two of the three issues with which the Greek Presidency dealt.

In the January and February 2003 GAC (27/1 and 24/2⁸) the representation of the Netherlands (a country that held OSCE Presidency at that moment) expressed its interest for the coordination of views and activities of OSCE with EU activities and stressed that it intends to submit a report on the important developments that take place in OSCE. The Greek Presidency respected the request of the Netherlands.

2. Southeastern Europe

The Greek Presidency focused on the reinforcement of the Stability and Association Pact and included it in many discussions in the framework of EU mechanisms. The Special Coordinator of the Pact Dr. E. Busek argued that the EU-Western Balkans Summit “*Reinforced the mission of the Pact and characterised many of our activities as necessary for the approach of the countries to EU*”⁹

The April GAC¹⁰ recalled the importance that the EU attached to regional co-operation, as one the main elements of SAP.¹¹ The June GAC¹² completed SAP annual review in which the Council agreed with the position of the Commission that

⁶ 2501st &2502nd Council meeting, 14/4/2003, 8220-8221/03 (Press 105-106)

⁷ Common position 2003/444 (5/6/2003) and Thessaloniki European Council

⁸ 2487th &2488th Council meeting, 24/2/2003, 6604-6605/03, (Press 52-53)

⁹ Information Publication of the Secretariat of the Stability Pact, September 2003

¹⁰ See footnote 6

¹¹ SAP covers Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia and FYROM

¹² 2518th Council meeting, 16/6/2003, 10369/03 (Press 166)

deficits, slow progress and lax implementation of the reform procedure in many areas prevented the movement towards EU accession. As it was asserted in the June GAC, recent progress achieved by the countries of the Western Balkans contributed to the rapprochement of EU: continuation of the ratification procedure of the Stability and Association Agreements with FYROM and Croatia, opening of the negotiations for a SAA with Albania, study of an eventual SAA with Bosnia and Herzegovina and the adoption in Serbia and Montenegro of the Constitutional Charter and the presentation of the Internal Market and Trade Action Plan. Furthermore, the Croatian application for membership was at the moment under examination by the Commission.

Concerning Turkey, Thessaloniki European Council expressed its support to the reform procedure and to the revised Accession Partnership, which constituted the cornerstone of EU-Turkey relations in view of the of the decision to be taken by the European Council in December 2004¹³.

2.1. Balkans

*“Balkans constitute main priority for the Greek Presidency.”*¹⁴ The main objective of the Presidency was the reinforcement of the European orientation of Western Balkans as well as the enrichment of the European political stability and association Pact using elements from the enlargement procedure. EU should reassure that a supplementary mid-term overall compromise context or agreement will not be necessary for each country that integrates in SAA. Furthermore, the working document mentioned that the Greek Presidency would focus on specific horizontal issues of significance to the region, such as exploring ways to address the issues of refugees, to ensure protection and rehabilitation of historic and religious monuments, and to ensure collection of small arms¹⁵.

In fact, in parallel with the signature of the Accession Treaty of the new members on the 16th April, the negotiations with Bulgaria and Romania continued intensively. After the end of the Greek Presidency, Bulgaria had closed 25 chapters and Romania 19. In the Thessaloniki Conclusions it was made clear that *“Bulgaria and Romania are part of the same inclusive and irreversible enlargement process... the objective is to welcome Bulgaria and Romania as members in 2007”*.¹⁶

The Greek Presidency proposed the formation of criteria for the verification of the progress made by the Balkan countries in order to establish a rule of law. Great importance was given to the alignment of the foreign policy of the Balkan countries with EU policy. Greece recommended a part of the budget foreseen for enlargement to be transmitted to the Balkans.¹⁷

The Greek Presidency gave great importance to the regional dimension of conflict prevention in Western Balkans, as it was shown in the seminar¹⁸ and in the May GAC¹⁹. In view of the Thessaloniki European Council, a report was being

¹³ “Results of the Greek Presidency by Policy Area: A Scoreboard”, Source: Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs

¹⁴ “Working Document: Greek Presidency Priorities for the Western Balkans” 13/1/2003, <http://www.eu2003.gr//gr/articles/2003/1/13/1487/>

¹⁵ See footnote 14

¹⁶ The Conclusions of the Thessaloniki European Council, http://www.eu2003.gr//multimedia/doc/2003_6/1081.doc

¹⁷ See footnote 14 & Eleytherotipia, 22/5/2003

¹⁸ Athens, 4-7 May 2003

¹⁹ 2508th & 2509th Council meeting, 19/5/2003, 9377/03&9379/03 (Press 138)

elaborated for the implementation of the EU programme on violent conflicts prevention.

The June GAC²⁰, in response to the invitation by the Spring European Council of 21 March 2003, approved “*The Thessaloniki Agenda for the Western Balkans – Moving towards European integration*” (Annex A). The agenda examined the ways and means for further strengthening of the Union's stabilisation and association policy towards the Western Balkans according to the provisions of the working document on Balkans.

EU urged the countries of the region to maintain and expand the gains in macroeconomic stability. It stipulated that economic development in the region would also be promoted by increasing regional co-operation²¹. The Thessaloniki Declaration, product of the EU-Western Balkans Summit²² as well as the Agenda reconfirmed the complementary role of the SAP for South-Eastern Europe to the Stabilisation and Association Process and accession to the countries of the Western Balkans, especially in “horizontal issues” (mentioned above) that constitute priorities for the Pact itself.²³

The document adopted in the Thessaloniki European Council advanced significantly the accession course of those countries. Therefore, Greece was more active in this area than previous Presidencies. It could be argued that in this area, the fourth Greek Presidency tried to promote its national interests.

3. Mediterranean

3.1. The Iraq crisis

The *Iraq crisis* affected the Fourth Greek Presidency and constituted a catalyst in internal EU developments. Less than three months before the diplomatic culmination of the crisis, the successive NATO summits in Prague and EU summits in Copenhagen welcomed the parallel enlargement of these two organisations to the East and declared their joint commitment to become pillars of the euro-atlantic security and prosperity. In addition, there was a deep feeling of lack of unity. The francogerman alliance had already been revived: in October 2002 the two European states “imposed” to the other European states the delay of the CAP reform until 2007 and in January they submitted to the Convention a series of joint proposals²⁴.

At the beginning of its term, the fourth Greek Presidency was balancing between the safeguard of the European political “*acquis*” and the need not to be isolated from the transatlantic partner. At the domestic level, the Greek government could not ignore the popular reaction to the American intentions against Iraq as well as the repercussions in economy and the security of the Middle East area. As it was claimed in the Greek Presidency Priorities, “*The handling of the Iraq crisis constitutes a particular challenge in terms of maintaining the cohesion of the CFSP and enhancing the role of the Union in the international arena*”.

²⁰ See footnote 16

²¹ See footnote 16, Par. 37

²² 21/6/2003

²³ The Declaration of EU-Western Balkans Summit in Thessaloniki http://www.eu2003.gr//multimedia/pdf/2003_6/1090.pdf

²⁴ “Contribution franco-allemande a la Convention européenne sur l'architecture institutionnelle de l'Union”, Paris et Berlin, le 15 janvier 2003 CONV 489/03, & Fragkos Sp., “The revival of the francogerman alliance”/«Η αναβίωση του γαλλογερμανικού άξονα», Το Vima, 19/1/2003.

The main objective of the Greek Presidency was the formulation of a joint position on Iraqi non-compliance to the UN inspections. A few days before the January GAC, the Greek Permanent Representative²⁵ presented at COREPER a non paper on Iraq. There was consensus on three main points on EU policy: Iraq disarmament according to UN Resolutions, EU assistance to the mission of UN inspectors and consultation in the Security Council and in EU at ministerial level.

The Greek Presidency encountered various difficulties. Hans Blix, the head of the UN Monitoring, as well as the French government had made clear that another Resolution of the UN Security Council was required before the outbreak of the military operation²⁶. The Greek Presidency tried to reach consensus on the necessity of a Resolution of the Security Council for any further action on Iraq, and on giving extra time to UN inspectors and a break to war preparations in order to create the adequate circumstances in conflict resolution²⁷. Therefore, the Greek Presidency convened a meeting of the ministerial Troika with the Foreign Ministers that participated in the Security Council (France, UK, Germany and Spain) just before the January GAC²⁸. In the January GAC²⁹, the EU member states reaffirmed that full cooperation of Iraq on disarmament in accordance with UNSCR 1441 as well as the renewal of the intercultural dialogue/dialogue of civilizations was an urgent objective shared by all.

The joint statement of 8 European leaders³⁰ encouraging the European states to support US in an eventual attack to Iraq jeopardized the Greek Presidency's efforts for consensus building. This statement apparently represented the whole EU as expressions such as “We the Europeans”, “We in Europe” were used. The fact that the Greek Presidency was not informed by the member states aggravated the situation. On 29 January the Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis alarmed by diffused information, tried to prevent dissent. He contacted Silvio Berlusconi and Tony Blair who did not inform him on that matter³¹. It should be referred that the Netherlands were also aware of this movement³².

Simitis condemned this action by a written statement, underlying the importance of a united European position and referring to the Conclusions of the January GAC on Iraq. According to Greek newspapers³³, almost simultaneous statements of the Greek Prime Minister and of France and Germany on that matter insinuated that there was previous consultation between the three countries. The Greek government tried to disperse any suspicion pointing out that the Presidency of the EU Council does not fall in with any group of countries³⁴. The publication of a letter of similar content to

²⁵ Ambassador Aristidis Agathoklis

²⁶ Seitanidis D., “Looking for a common policy”/«Ζητείται κοινή πολιτική», *Eleftherotyria*, 26/1/2003.

²⁷ Adam Kyra, “Europe for Iraq: Yes, non, si, nein”/«Ευρώπη για Ιράκ: Yes, non, si, nein», *Eleftherotyria*, 26/1/2003.

²⁸ Podimata Annie, “The Greek non-paper for preventing invasion”/«Ελληνικό non-paper για την αποτροπή της επίθεσης», *To Vima*, 26/1/2003.

²⁹ 27-28/1/2003. Iraq crisis was discussed during the 2482^d Council meeting of the GAC, 27/1/2003, 5396/03 (Press 8).

³⁰ This statement resulted from the initiative of the Spanish Prime Minister signed at the beginning by the Prime Minister of UK, Italy, Portugal, Denmark, Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, and then of Slovenia and Slovakia.

³¹ Pretenteris I., “Counter-attack against the American group”/«Αντεπίθεση στην αμερικανική φράζια», *To Vima*, 2/2/2003.

³² Karanasopoulou Irini, “A torpedo in Europe”/«Τορπίλη στην Ευρώπη», *Ta Nea*, 31/1/2003.

³³ See footnote 32

³⁴ Karelias G, “(The Greek Presidency) disapproves again and strives for an extraordinary Summit”/«Αποδοκιμάζει ξανά, ψάχνει για έκτακτη σύνοδο», *Eleftherotyria*, 1/2/2003.

the joint statement of 8 European leaders a week later by the “Vilnius group” (signed by Bulgaria, Romania, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Croatia, Albania and FYROM) aggravated the situation.

The critical comments made by multiple European actors and newspapers on the stance of the European countries mentioned above deepened divergence³⁵. On the other hand, the representatives of the ten countries argued that they expressed their solidarity to US without contesting the common European position concluded in the GAC few hours before and that there was no point in notifying the Greek Presidency since they knew that it had a different opinion.³⁶

On 4 February the Greek Presidency following the GAC Conclusions carried out a demarche³⁷ to Iraqi diplomatic missions in Athens, in Brussels and in New York expressing the EU’s full support to the mission of the UN inspectors. Otherwise Iraq would be responsible for the consequences given that the time limit was coming to an end. This was the hardest warning made by the Greek Presidency during its term³⁸.

Since 31 January Costas Simitis communicated the intent of the Greek Presidency to convene an extraordinary European Council on Iraq. At first, the Greek Presidency hesitated about making this move in order to avoid the intense divergence of the two camps being “registered”. It is worth mentioning that Germany expressed publicly its support to the Greek proposal while the Greek Presidency was sounding the intentions of the European governments³⁹. However, a series of factors contributed to taking finally this decision: the connection of Turkish support to US with the Cyprus question, the need to satisfy the domestic public opinion as well as the fact that the President of the European Parliament and European leaders had requested from the Greek Presidency to organise a Summit⁴⁰.

In fact, the Greek Presidency convened an extraordinary European Summit in Brussels on 17 February. The President of the EU Council declared that *“as a high priority is set the effort to safeguard the common position of the 15 on Iraq... I find it very important to meet and to discuss the late developments, in view of the report that the UN inspectors will submit to the UN Security on 14 February 2003...”*⁴¹

The Greek Presidency had to overcome many difficulties in organising this Summit. It is significant that numerous contacts with the British Prime Minister Tony Blair were required in order to make him accept the invitation. Then, Blair demanded the participation of the accession and candidate countries in the summit. His objective was the prevalence of the ‘pro-american’ positions⁴². While the Greek Foreign Minister had declared that he would invite the 13 accession and the candidate countries to the Summit, Simitis in his letter to EU leaders favoured holding a special

³⁵ Delastik G., “A split in Europe in the name of US”/«Σχίσμα στην Ευρώπη εν ονόματι των ΗΠΑ», Kathimerini, 2/2/2003, Le Monde, 31/1/2003

³⁶ See footnote 31 & Kallergis K., “They promise to be wise in the future”/«Υπόσχονται να είναι φρόνιμοι στο μέλλον», Kathimerini, 19/2/2003.

³⁷ “Demarche by the Presidency on behalf of the EU regarding Iraq”, 4/2/2003, <http://www.eu2003.gr/gr/articles/2003/2/5/1814/>

³⁸ The Acceding Countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia, the Associated Countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey aligned themselves with the demarche carried out on 4 February by the EU Presidency.

³⁹ Papachristos Ch., “An extraordinary Summit is being forwarded”/«Πρωθυεΐ έκτακτη Σύνοδο Κορυφής», Ta Nea, 1/2/2003.

⁴⁰ Karanasopoulou E., “The Extraordinary Summit”/«Εκτακτη Σύνοδος Κορυφής», Ta Nea, 10/2/2003.

⁴¹ Letter from Prime Minister C. Simitis to his EU Counterparts, 13 February 2003, <http://www.eu2003.gr/gr/articles/2003/2/13/1912/>

⁴² Adam Kyra, “Yes to the Council with a British trip-up”/«Ναι στη σύνοδο με αγγλική τρικλοποδιά», Eleytherotypia, 12/2/2003.

information meeting with the “13” a day after. This decision was backed by France and Germany trying to push aside the ‘pro-american’ group.

During his introductory speech, the Greek Prime Minister stressed that the EU should achieve a dual target: securing Iraqi compliance with UNSCR1441 and averting war. He argued that, given the EU’s international role and European citizens’ expectations, the European leaders should not repeat their disagreements but express EU opinion on the Iraqi war⁴³.

It was evident (even from NATO meeting that took place one day before) that the fifteen member states came over the Summit with modified positions⁴⁴. During the Council session, France insisted on not putting any time limit to the mission of the international inspectors in Iraq, arguing, however, that a second UN resolution is not necessary. On the other hand, the United Kingdom insisted that time should not be given indefinitely. The position of Germany was balanced and did not coincide any more with the position of France⁴⁵.

The stance of the Greek Presidency to be open to the ‘pro-american’ member states facilitated the 15 member states and the 13 under accession countries to formulate a joint statement on Iraq. It was claimed that the Greek Presidency had received a francogerman draft proposal that did not isolate the partners lined up with the United States. The impressive public participation in the rallies of the 15th February, particularly in the big member states that were lining up with US constituted another parameter that affected the Summit proceedings.

The extraordinary Council common position verified the commitment of the European partners to the spirit of the January GAC Conclusions. The member states recognised the primary role of UN and the full political responsibility to UNSC. However, they also stressed that the war is not inevitable and that Iraq regime is the only responsible for the consequences⁴⁶. It is rather significant that, as Gerhard Schröder has argued, after the insistence of his country, the final document did not contain the phrase that “time is running out quickly for Iraq” as it was approved in the draft⁴⁷.

It was argued that not only in general but also in the February European Council there was not a supranational outcome surpassing the existing differences on Iraq. It was more about the formulation of a common position that “changed nothing and that could be signed by anyone”⁴⁸. However, even the existence of an official Conclusions document constitutes a success of the Greek Presidency, since few hours before the end of the Council no one could predict this outcome. The 15 member states managed to follow a common line after everything that had happened. Therefore, the strategy followed by the Greek Presidency prevented the breakdown of the Council.

In the Presidency Press Conference, the President of the EU Council stressed that the EU’s objective was to make the member states talk with each other, formulate

⁴³ “Introductory remarks by C. Simitis at the European Council extraordinary meeting”, 17/2/2003, <http://www.eu2003.gr/en/articles/2003/2/17/1942/>

⁴⁴ Adam Kyra, “The responsibility now goes to the Security Council and to Saddam”/«Μπαλάκι σε Συμβούλιο Ασφαλείας και Σαντάμ», Eleytherotypia, 18/2/2003.

⁴⁵ The position of France: Everything possible should be done in order to avoid the use of violence.

⁴⁶ Conclusions of the Informal European Council, 17/02/03, <http://www.eu2003.gr/gr/articles/2003/2/18/1945/>

⁴⁷ “Europe has a single voice after the European Council”/«Με ενιαία φωνή η Ευρώπη μετά το Συμβούλιο Κορυφής», Kathimerini, 18/2/2003.

⁴⁸ Kallergis K., “They promise to be wise in the future”/«Υπόσχονται να είναι φρόνιμοι στο μέλλον», Kathimerini, 19/2/2003,

common positions and follow the same line⁴⁹. The formulation of a common position turned the extraordinary Council into Formal European Council. Reaching an agreement was characterised as a significant success of the Greek Presidency that with prudent conduct managed to balance the contradictory views and led to a partial convergence⁵⁰.

The compromise was temporary. On 17 February, Tony Blair wrote a letter to the 13 European under accession and candidate countries and approved their positions for eventual warfare and their right to express their opinion freely. The Greek Prime Minister avoided commenting on this letter, as well as on the remarks made by Chirac, on purpose so as to avoid further division⁵¹. The Greek Presidency kept holding a mediation stance. In the February GAC⁵², the Greek Foreign Minister suggested the formulation of a list of obligations with which the Iraqi regime should comply within a fixed timetable⁵³. The foreign ministers confirmed that the full cooperation of Iraq on disarmament according to the UNSCR 1441 constituted an emergency.

Within the period between the February European Council and the Spring European Council (March), EU looked as an observer of the evolutions. A few days before the Spring European Council, the leaders of Spain, UK and Portugal acted beyond the EU framework and put the Greek Presidency into an awkward position. The three European countries met the American President Georges Bush in Azores and decided to withdraw the plan of a second UN resolution in order to prevent a humiliating rejection of the other European states⁵⁴.

The Spring European Council took place while the military operation had already started in Iraq. After the war and in view of the Spring European Council, the objective of the Greek Presidency was to launch a coordinated and effective EU effort for direct restoration of the rule of law and humanitarian aid to the Iraqi people⁵⁵. Therefore, trying to avoid dissent, the Greek Presidency preferred the Spring European Council not to focus on the Iraq war but on the post-war period⁵⁶.

The joint declaration on Iraq included in the European Council Conclusions⁵⁷ was rather rhetoric. Among other things, it was declared that “*The EU is committed to the territorial integrity, the sovereignty, the political stability and the full and effective disarmament of Iraq in all its territory*”. It was stressed that EU should urgently respond to the needs arisen by the conflict and would back the proposal of the UN Secretary General to cover the humanitarian needs with the programme “Oil for food”.

The focus of the discussion on reconstruction issues contributed to the rapprochement of the European member states since their positions on that matter

⁴⁹Presidency Press Conference: A Common Position on Iraq, 18/2/2003, <http://www.eu2003.gr/gr/articles/2003/2/18/1973/>

⁵⁰The Guardian, 18/2/2003, www.guardian.co.uk

⁵¹Le Monde, 19/2/2003 & See footnote 48

⁵²Podimata A., A list of obligations from the ‘15’ to Saddam”/«Λίστα υποχρεώσεων στον Σαντάμ από τους ‘15’», To Vima, 23-02-2003

⁵³This list would be renewed when the UN inspectors collect new information.

⁵⁴The International Herald Tribune, 18/3/2003 & “The ‘war council’ in Azores”/«Το ‘πολεμικό συμβούλιο’ των Αζορών», Το Βήμα, 16/3/2003.

⁵⁵“EU discusses about the day after”/«Η Ε.Ε. συζητεί την επόμενη ημέρα», Kathimerini, 20/3/2003.

⁵⁶Adam Kyra, “The ‘15’ manoeuvre in order to avoid division”/«Ελιγμός των ‘15’ για ν’αποφύγουν διαίρεση», Eleftherotypia, 20/3/2003.

⁵⁷The Spring European Council, 21-22/2/2003, http://www.eu2003.gr/multimedia/doc/2003_3/751.doc

coincided to a great extent. In view of the June EU-US Summit, discussions were shifted towards the review of EU international role and the placement of the EU-US relations into a more realistic basis⁵⁸. The British Prime Minister was more determined, at this stage, to bridge the euroatlantic gap of the previous months. In addition, the UK did not want to be blamed again for a new clash in EU. Therefore, Tony Blair tried to make sure that the UN would play a primary role in Iraq reconstruction backing the proposal of the Iraqi government approved by the UN⁵⁹.

In the parliament session of the 27th March, the Greek Prime Minister repeated the moderated stance of EU Greek Presidency. “*EU Presidency strives to find a common denominator. Greece cannot support the one or the other position when there are controversial views.*”⁶⁰

On 12 April the French, German and Russian leaders as well as the UN Secretary General met in Saint Petersburg on Iraq reconstruction. The objective of this meeting was to give an answer to declarations of American officials that UN role would be restricted to humanitarian aid⁶¹. In April GAC⁶², the European ministers exchanged opinions on UN role as well as in the types of integration means, that could be used in the after war Iraq (apart from the humanitarian aid). During the ceremony of the Accession Treaty signature⁶³ a disposition of alleviation was evident⁶⁴. The Presidency did not want the Iraq issue to damage the historical significance of that day. However, this issue dominated in bilateral contacts. The Greek Presidency preferred not to participate in the member states discussions. On 16 April and after the initiative of the British Prime Minister, a draft document of four EU member states (France, UK, Germany and Spain) started circulating. In the evening of the same day a meeting among these four countries and UN Secretary General took place. Since this procedure could not be prevented, the Greek Prime Minister started to sound all EU partners about this document. His aim was to find out whether an agreement could be reached so as to present it in the context of the Spring European Council.⁶⁵

Therefore, in the Athens Declaration it was cited that: “*We are committed to facing up to our global responsibilities, ...to tackle global terrorism. The Union pledges its support to the United Nations and its efforts to assure international legitimacy and global responsibility.*”⁶⁶ This document could be seen as a first step in bridging the gap that was perturbing Europe at that period. When Simitis was asked whether the EU accepted fully the sovereign role of the US President, he stressed that

⁵⁸ Pagoulatos G., Blavoukos S., “The last Greek Presidency”/«Η τελευταία Ελληνική Προεδρία», Papazissis, 2004.

⁵⁹ Plaff William, “Old Europe grieves for the new America of Busch”, International Herald Tribune, 1/4/2003.

⁶⁰ Ist Period (Presidential Republic), Council meeting Γ', Session Α', <http://www.parliament.gr/ergasies/main.asp?orderby=1&sunodosid=0&periodid=1&keyword=&pageno=17>

⁶¹ “The ‘three’ seek for a role in peace”/«Οι ‘3’ αναζητούν ρόλο στην ειρήνη», Kathimerini, 13/4/2003 & Chirac, Schröder and Putin with Annan in Saint Petersburg”/«Σιράκ, Σρέντερ, Πούτιν με Ανάν στην Αγία Πετρούπολη», Kathimerini, 9/4/2003.

⁶² 2501st & 2502nd Council meeting, 14/4/2003, 8220-8221/03, (Press 105-106).

⁶³ 16/4/2003, Athens

⁶⁴ See footnote 57 (p. 131)

⁶⁵ Adam Kyra, “One day thriller with the document on UN-Iraq”/«Ολοήμερο θρίλερ με κείμενο για ΟΗΕ-Ιράκ», Eleftherotypia, 17/4/2003.

⁶⁶ “Informal European Council: Athens Declaration”, 16/4/2004 <http://www.eu2003.gr/gr/articles/2003/4/16/2531/>

compromises are required in order to form joint statements⁶⁷. The Greek Presidency could feel proud for persuading its European partners to let their initiative appear as a EU Declaration⁶⁸. In addition, the relations between the opposing camps were normalized. The meeting of the German chancellor Gerhard Schröder with the British Prime Minister Tony Blair in Hanover⁶⁹ could be considered as an effort to recover the lost EU unity. In addition, US Foreign Minister Colin Powell visited Berlin⁷⁰, the last stop in his tour in Europe.

In the Thessaloniki European Council, discussions on Iraq were similar to discussions in the ceremony for the signature of the Accession Treaty as well as in the two previous General Affairs Councils. EU expressed its satisfaction for the approval of UNSCR 1483, driven by the new cooperation spirit in the framework of the International Community⁷¹.

Taking into account everything mentioned above, we come to the conclusion that the Greek Presidency on Iraq played, more or less, the role of the broker and of the consensus builder. However, it could be argued that the Greek Presidency stayed loyal to the francogerman position for the war prevention since it could not disregard these two countries on which Greece counted for its European prospects. On the other hand, it was impossible for Greece to oppose to US plans due to the bilateral binding cooperation agreements and due to the need to preserve the US assistance on the Cyprus question and to crack down terrorism in view of the Olympic Games. Being aware that, even the most fervent European partners would retreat at the end, the Greek Presidency did not choose to hold a tough position. It is for these reasons that Greece sometimes appeared to favour the one or the other camp. But, in general, the Greek Presidency kept a low profile and strove to formulate a joint European position in the lowest possible level. As it was pointed out “*Without any initiative, the Greek Presidency would be accused of inexistence. With many initiatives with no result the Greek Presidency would be disregarded*”⁷². Therefore, the stance of the Greek Presidency was realistic and moderate

3.2. The Mediterranean region

As far as the Common Strategy on the Mediterranean⁷³ is concerned, it is worth examining the stance of the Greek Presidency because of the great interest of Greece in the Mediterranean area. The June GAC⁷⁴ discussed its review and recommended that the European Council should deal with it. The seminars organised by the Greek Presidency⁷⁵ in Rhodes (1-2/11/2002) and in Corfu (9-10/5/2003) on the Mediterranean dimension of CFSP fell mainly in the area of defence. The objective of

⁶⁷ Papadiochos K., “A ‘Bridge’ with US through UN for Iraq” /« Γέφυρα’ με Αμερική μέσω ΟΗΕ για Ιράκ», Kathimerini, 18/4/2003.

⁶⁸ See footnote 67

⁶⁹ 15/4/2003

⁷⁰ 16/4/2003

⁷¹ See footnote 57

⁷² Damanaki Maria, “Europe deals with a death announced in advance”/«Η Ευρώπη στο χρονικό ενός προαναγγεληθέντος πολέμου», Eleftherotypia, 28/1/2003.

⁷³ The Common Strategy in Mediterranean was approved during the Portugal Presidency in Feira (June 2000).

⁷⁴ 2518th Council meeting , 16/6/2003, 10369/03 (Press 166)

⁷⁵ In cooperation with the Institute of Defence Analysis and the Ministry of Defence.

the Greek Presidency was to clear out EU military intentions and any misconception on the promotion of mutual understanding⁷⁶.

The Corfu seminar⁷⁷ discussed the need for better coordination of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership with NATO Mediterranean Dialogue. In addition, the Greek Presidency asked for action to be taken on a series of questions such as: the better possible understanding of the special interests and needs of the Mediterranean partners on maritime security through a Joint Conference, the information of the Mediterranean partners on EU policy especially on ESDP through six months meetings and the participation of the Mediterranean countries in EU activities (planning and guidance of operations)⁷⁸.

The mid-term Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Meeting⁷⁹ had been evaluated as successful⁸⁰. The Crete Declaration contained the guidelines for the intercultural dialogue. In order to strengthen legitimacy in the decision-making procedure, a Ministerial Convention was created that would act as a consultative body with the participation of national and European parliamentarians. Furthermore, in view of the intercultural dialogue, the principles and the objectives of the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation were set up. Furthermore, the European Council Conclusions cited the EU's conviction that partnership with the Arab world should be strengthened and invited the European Commission and the High Representative to formulate a detailed work plan to be presented to the European Council in October 2003, taking account of the Barcelona Process and the New Neighbours Initiative⁸¹.

On Cyprus, it could not be argued that the Greek Presidency strove to promote its national interests. The Spring European Council expressed its regret for the failure of the Secretary General's efforts to find an overall arrangement of the Cyprus question. EU strongly supported the continuation of the Secretary General's mission of good offices and of negotiations on the basis of his proposals. It urged all parties concerned to strive for a just, viable and functional settlement and, in particular, the Turkish Cypriot leadership to reconsider its position⁸².

In the *Middle East* and in *Iran* the Greek Presidency was not asked to choose between the role of bargainer and of consensus builder. More or less, at that moment EU member states did not have divergent positions (as in the case of Iraq) and Greece did not have special interests on that matter (as in the case of the Balkans).

The Greek Presidency could not be seen as a broker in the area of the Mediterranean since there was no evident divergence among EU member states (except from Iraq). If we compare the actions taken by the Greek Presidency on this region we will come to the conclusion that Greece gave more importance to the Mediterranean than some other EU Presidencies but less gravity than Spain or France in the past. Therefore, Greece tried to promote its national interests without, at any case, surpassing the “*acquis politique*” of the EU and the typical neutrality of a Presidency.

⁷⁶ Xenakis Dimitris & Chrysochoou Dimitris, «The 2003 Hellenic Presidency of the European Union. Mediterranean Perspectives on the ESDP», Discussion Paper Center for European Integration Studies, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, C128 2003

⁷⁷ “Security construction for the people of the Mediterranean”.

⁷⁸ See footnote 76

⁷⁹ Crete 26-17/5/2003

⁸⁰ See footnote 76, p.17

⁸¹ Presentation of the European Council results in the plenary Council meeting of the European Parliament by the Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis., 1/7/2003, www.eu2003.gr

⁸² See footnote 57

4. The Ex Soviet Union region

In the Priorities of the Greek Presidency Russia was characterised as a strategic partner of the EU. In addition, it was pointed out that relations with Russia should be reviewed (the EU-Russia Summit⁸³ would be the starting point) within a coherent and integrated framework not only on the economic, but also on the social and security level. In addition, the completion of the revision process of the Common Strategy for Russia during the Greek Presidency constituted a priority⁸⁴.

Apart from Russia, the Priorities of the Greek Presidency dealt with EU relations with Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. In view of the coming enlargement, it would be necessary to elaborate proposals to enhance cooperation with these countries in all sectors and through the improvement of the conventional framework⁸⁵. The two legal actions⁸⁶ adopted on this area were the ones expected. Too be exact, they complied with the Europeans requirements on the region, without adding anything else.

However, in the 2003 EU-Russia Summit,⁸⁷ the Greek Presidency played the role of the broker. During the negotiations, the Greek Presidency tried to find a compromise between the expectations of Russia and the expectations of the Netherlands, of the Scandinavian countries (that “*are traditionally suspicious with Moscow*”)⁸⁸ and of the Baltic and East European countries (that were also skeptical). On the other hand, the big member states (France, Germany and UK) supported the strengthening of EU-Russia relations. The European partners kept on denying till the last moment the request of Vladimir Putin to create an area of free circulation without the need of visa between the EU and Russia. The final compromise included the open promise of the EU to examine this prospect in long term. Concerning the declaration on human rights violation in Chechnya, Vladimir Putin reacted against any reference to the need of emergent humanitarian assistance from international Non-governmental Organisations claiming that this constituted a domestic question. On the other hand the European partners threatened Russia that the outcome of the Summit would also be negative (given the failure of the December 2002 EU-Russia Summit). Finally, the compromising statement of the Greek Presidency that the recent economic and social reconstruction would lead to the refunctioning of the rule of law and would promote the protection of human rights in Chechnya prevented the failure of the Summit⁸⁹. It is significant that after the end of the Summit⁹⁰, Putin thanked solely the Greek Presidency for preserving the level of the EU-Russia relations.

Therefore, the Greek Presidency could be characterized as a consensus builder as far as EU-Russia relations are concerned.

⁸³ May 2003

⁸⁴ “Priorities of the Greek Presidency”, <http://www.eu2003.gr/en/articles/2002/12/24/1310/>

⁸⁵ See footnote 84

⁸⁶ The Common Position 2003/139, L 053, 28/2/2003 on the region of Transnistria in the Republic of Moldova and 2003/472, L 157, 26/6/2003 extended the EU cooperation programme on disarmament of Russia

⁸⁷ Saint Petersburg, 31/5/2003

⁸⁸ Adam Kyra, “EU-Russia in cold blood”/«Ε.Ε.- Πωσία εν ψυχρώ», *Eleftherypia*, 30/5/2003.

⁸⁹ “Joint Statement: EU-Russia Summit, St. Petersburg”, 31/5/03 <http://www.eu2003.gr/en/articles/2003/5/31/2942/>

⁹⁰ As it was stressed by Kyra Adam, “A compromise in Greek terms”/«Συμβιβασμός αλλά ελληνικά», *Eleftherotyria*, 2/6/2003.

5. Africa

In the case of Africa, it could not be argued that the Greek Presidency tried to promote its national interests. In addition, there was no need to play the role of the broker since there was no serious divergence among EU member states. We could mention that the Greek Presidency just respected the mission of the previous Presidencies on this area without adding anything else. The programme of the Greek Presidency did not give great importance to the African continent. Namely, it referred to the EU-Africa Summit⁹¹ and underlined that it provided a good opportunity to upgrade the role of the EU in the continent. This was the case for the actions taken on the Great Lakes Region⁹², on Zimbabwe⁹³, on the Ivory Coast⁹⁴ and on Liberia⁹⁵. The most significant action taken by the Greek Presidency was in Kongo. The common decision 2003/432⁹⁶ launched the EU military operation in Kongo and the joint action 2003/423⁹⁷ modified this military operation.⁹⁸

6. Asia

As far as Asia is concerned, the Greek Presidency did not play the role of the mediator since this was not requested. It just expressed the common will of all EU member states. The Greek Presidency dealt with *China* and, especially with the situation of the human rights in this country. There was little reference to China in the Priorities of the Greek Presidency⁹⁹. The March GAC urged China to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OP/CAT) and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The Council decided that the EU would transmit its deep concern over the serious violations of human rights in China at the UN Commission on Human Rights. In addition, it was declared that, if a draft resolution on human rights in China would be tabled at the UN 59th session, EU members of the UN Commission would consider favourably voting for its adoption.

On Burma/ Myanmar the Greek Presidency adopted a common position¹⁰⁰ on the removal of the personnel in the embassies of this country in EU member states. The situation in this country was also discussed in April GAC and in June GAC, when EU asked the government to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and supplementary sanctions to be imposed until October 2003

The non compliance of *North Korea* with the international Treaties on nuclear weapons was discussed in the Spring European Council. In the April GAC the

⁹¹ Lisbon, 5/4/2003

⁹² That is the Joint action 2003/447 (L 150, 18/6/2003) that extended the mission of the EU Special Envoy in the region till December 31

⁹³ In the January GAC the situation in Zimbabwe was discussed. In addition, the common position 2003/115 (L 046, 20/2/2003) was adopted on restrictive measures against the country.

⁹⁴ In May GAC the European ministers exchanged positions on the situation of the Ivory Coast and the possible support of a EU peace procedure.

⁹⁵ The Common position 2003/365⁹⁵ extended the common position 2001/375 until the 7 May 2004 (on EU restriction measure in order to implement the UNSCR 1478).

⁹⁶ Official Journal, L 147, 14/6/2003

⁹⁷ Official Journal, L 143, 11/6/2003

⁹⁸ The third legal action adopted on Kongo was Common Position 2003/319, L 115, 9/5/2003 on the cease fire in Lusaka.

⁹⁹ “The development of the EU’s relations with Japan and China should gradually reach a level commensurate with the size and importance of these two countries”, *See footnote 84*

¹⁰⁰ 2003/297 L 106, 29/4/2003 on the removal of the personnel in the embassies of this country in EU member states.

possibility of organising a special session of the Council with the participation of the neighbour countries was examined. The Thessaloniki European Council repeated the concern of EU on the nuclear programme of North Korea as well as the promptness of EU to contribute towards a multilevel diplomatic solution.

7. Transatlantic relations

As it was shown in the chapter on Iraq, the Greek Presidency tried to balance its stance between the US and the EU. Given the existing tension in US-EU relations, the efforts made by the Greek Presidency for the success of the EU-US Summit showed an effort of mediation. In the Priorities of the Greek Presidency, the US was presented as an important EU partner. In this context, the EU would seek to enhance dialogue and cooperation on all levels (the fight against terrorism, the handling of international issues, the growth of international trade and the promotion of sustainable development)¹⁰¹.

A week before the May GAC Tony Blair had rejected “United Europe” as an independent power, if its foreign policy is different from US external policy¹⁰². In May GAC¹⁰³ a Presidency report on the EU-US summit was presented. The alternate foreign minister Tassos Yannitsis claimed that external policy with emphasis on transatlantic relations would constitute the second priority issue of the Thessaloniki European Council. In addition, Yannitsis underlined the need for the adoption of a special initiative on the fight against the diffusion of Weapons of Mass Destruction, a fight that could reconcile the two sides in view of a common objective¹⁰⁴.

In the US-EU Summit¹⁰⁵ both sides expressed their intention to leave behind their contradictions and to have a better cooperation in the future. Therefore, EU and US expressed their deep concern on the diffusion of WMD in Iran and in North Korea. The Council formulated a new transatlantic agenda inspired by the approach of “constructive rapprochement”. The Presidency proposal to extend the transatlantic meetings on the parliamentary level and on the level of working groups was accepted. In addition, the new security doctrine elaborated by Solana and approved by the Thessaloniki European Council strengthened the negotiation position of the President of the EU Council. Moreover, it should be mentioned that there was no agreement on the question of the ICC competences and the US’s refusal to recognise it as well as on a series of economic and commercial issues (the preparation of WTO second round).

Speaking at a joint press conference after the Summit, US President George Bush referred to the “historical and strong ties” between the EU and the US. The German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder as well as the British Prime Minister Tony Blair ascertained that the clouds in the EU-US relation went away¹⁰⁶. It cannot be claimed that EU-US relations were normalised only because of the moderate stance of the Greek Presidency. As it was argued previously (see section 3.1.) it was a series of

¹⁰¹ See footnote 84

¹⁰² “EU can quietly control US”/«Η Ε.Ε. μπορεί διακριτικά να ελέγξει τις ΗΠΑ», Kathimerini, 3/5/2003.

¹⁰³ See footnote 16

¹⁰⁴ Statement of the Presidency on the Thessaloniki European Council by Mr. T. Yannitsis before the European Parliament, Strasbourg, 4/6/2003, <http://www.eu2003.gr/gr/articles/2003/6/4/2984/>

¹⁰⁵ 25/6/2003

¹⁰⁶ “EU-USA Summit: joint press conference of US President George Bush, President of the European Council Costas Simitis and European Commission President Romano Prodi”, White House (25/6/03), <http://www.eu2003.gr/en/articles/2003/6/25/3154/> & Efstathiadis St., “EU throws transatlantic bridges”/«Η Ε.Ε. ρίχνει διατλαντικές γέφυρες», Το Βίμα, 22/6/2003.

external factors as well that contributed to this end. However, Greece managed to play its Presidency role well.

As far as the EU action on *Latin America* was concerned, the Greek Presidency did not play the role of the mediator since this was not requested. It just expressed the common will of all EU member states (as it did in Asia and Africa)¹⁰⁷.

8. European Defence and Security

An important development that took place during the Greek Presidency on defence¹⁰⁸ was the initiative of the four countries (Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg) in July 2002 for closer cooperation¹⁰⁹.

In the April informal Council of defence ministers¹¹⁰ divergent positions appeared. The French defence Minister argued that the British policy did not cope with international legitimacy. The need for the creation of a core of member-states came up. It is worth mentioning that the then British defence minister notified that he could not attend the Council due to the events in Iraq¹¹¹.

According to the Greek defence minister Yannis Papantoniou, the Greek Presidency promoted the creation of a European military force. On 12 March 2003, the working groups completed the European Action Plan on military capacities in order to cover the deficits in the arm systems as well as in financing. The materialization of the European Security and Defence Policy is related directly to the reinforcement of the industrial and technological EU foundation and the harmonization of national requests with a single European market of defence products. In addition, further expenditure in the area of research and technology was put forward. The Greek Presidency's proposals were adopted in the Spring European Council¹¹².

During the proceedings of the Spring European Council, Guy Verhofstadt initiated the idea of enhanced cooperation on defence in the EU framework. Furthermore, a meeting of the interested member-states was scheduled on 29 April 2003. This initiative made difficult the mission of the Greek Presidency. The momentum (the Iraq war and division in EU) gave the impression that EU relations with NATO were weakened. The British Prime Minister Tony Blair expressed openly his opposition to this meeting. In his speech in the Greek Parliament session on 27 March, the Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis argued that Greece would examine all the proposals in the framework of the Presidency mission. He added that, after the end of the Greek Presidency term, the country would participate in such developments¹¹³.

In the beginning of April, the Greek Presidency was considering the possibility of this meeting taking place under the auspices of the Greek Presidency, if Spain and Italy agreed. In view of this, the Defence Analysis Institute and the German Institute

¹⁰⁷ It is worth mentioning the 3rd Mixed EU-Mexico Council that took place in Vouliagmeni on 27 March and contained political dialogue, commercial as well as the first dialogue forum on the Civil Society

¹⁰⁸ Due to the Danish opt out, the Greece held the Presidency on Defence one year.

¹⁰⁹ Dimakas L., “We should not play in the US territory ”/«Να μην παίζουμε στο ΗΠΑ», Ta Nea, 10/2/2003.

¹¹⁰ 14-15 April, Athens.

¹¹¹ Tsakiris G. & Vagenas D., “The ‘15’ are gathered in Athens while France strikes against Britain”/«Με γαλλικές βολές κατά Βρετανίας οι 15 στην Αθήνα», Eleftherotypia, 15/3/2003.

¹¹² Papantoniou Y., The European security”/«Η Ευρωπαϊκή ασφάλεια», To Vima, 4/5/2003

¹¹³ See footnote 60

of Strategic Research on International Affairs elaborated a study on “Prospective of the European Defence Industry”¹¹⁴. In a document issued by the Belgium government it was mentioned that France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg supported the Greek Presidency intention to establish a European service of Military Capacities during the Thessaloniki European Council¹¹⁵. Finally the Greek Presidency did not participate in the meeting of the four, not even as an observer.

The four countries concluded to the establishment of a Rapid Reaction Force based in the joint francogerman brigade. They decided to create a headquarter of joint planning in Brussels without the recourse to NATO resources. The four EU member states declared that their objective is not to weaken or to abolish NATO since this form of cooperation will be open to all member states¹¹⁶.

The Greek government was quietly removed from this initiative. It kept on repeating that this issue should be discussed in EU framework. However, as a Greek journalist had argued no decision on this issue could be taken in the EU framework by definition since unanimity would be required¹¹⁷.

In an informal Council in Rhodes, the foreign ministers decided that the High Representative should elaborate an overall strategy for a European doctrine on foreign and defence policy. In order to overcome the negative atmosphere, the Greek Presidency had collected working documents from 40 academic personalities and institutes in Europe and in US. The Presidency acted as a mediator and took into account the memorandum submitted by the member states¹¹⁸.

The Solana Paper presented by Javier Solana during the first day of the Thessaloniki European Council reflected the spirit of the formula proposed by the Greek Presidency, something that proves that Greece played its mediation role correctly.

On the 29th COSAC session on 5 May in Athens, the Greek Prime Minister talked about the need of “joint communication” among the 25 member states on the issue of autonomous external and defence policy and was in favour of the enhanced cooperation in the EU framework. The Prime Minister argued that the objective of the Greek Presidency was the safeguard of normal functioning of the Union even in conditions of crisis and of international insecurity¹¹⁹.

The Presidency report on ESDP was favourably accepted by all member states, given that it respected the existing sensibilities. Specifically, for the UK, the reference on the new threats justified the preventive action and for Germany and France, emphasis was given to the cooperation with international organisations for the conflict resolution. Finally, the clear reference on the US and NATO dissipated any concerns for EU being competitive and autonomous.

¹¹⁴ “All believers come to the new EU”/«Όσοι πιστοί προσέλθετε στη νέα Ε.Ε.», *Eleftherotypia*, 6/4/2003.

¹¹⁵ Podimata Annie, “Europe holds consultation on its defence”/«Η Ευρώπη (συ)σκέπτεται για την άμυνα της», *To Vima*, 26/4/2003

¹¹⁶ See footnote 115

¹¹⁷ Delastik G, “Troubles for the European defence in Aegean Sea”/«Φουρτούνες για την ‘ευρωάμυνα’ στο Αιγαίο», *Kathimerini*, 11/5/2004.

¹¹⁸ Podimata Annie, “A new doctrine of external policy”/«Νέο δόγμα εξωτερικής πολιτικής», *To Vima*, 4/5/2003.

¹¹⁹ 29th Conference of the Community and European Affairs Committees of Parliaments of the EU (COSAC): Speeches by Prime Minister Costas Simitis and Foreign Minister George Papandreou, 5/5/2003 <http://www.eu2003.gr/gr/articles/2003/5/5/2672/>

Conclusions

The Greek Presidency did not function as a tough bargainer since it played the role of the negotiator solely in the area of Western Balkans. In the other areas, Greece can be characterised as a consensus builder. Through my study I came to the conclusion that Greece acted as a consensus builder notably in the management of the Iraq crisis, in the development of a European defence, in the transatlantic relations and in the EU-Russia relations. Greece tried to find a common denominator “forgetting” in all cases how it would act as a sole country. Even in the regions of Asia or Africa, the Greek Presidency tried to express the common will of all EU member states and to link the activities of the previous Presidencies with the activities of the forthcoming ones (EU continuity).

As Ole Elgstrom had stressed, apart from the power of a country, its identity mainly affects its stance. The fourth Greek Presidency acted as a broker not because it is a small/medium EU member state (as it was pointed out in the introduction) but mainly because a different conduct would be controversial to the model of a europeanised Presidency. The prospects, the significance and the functional role attributed by a member state to the European Union depend on the level of its europeanisation¹²⁰. During the two first EU Presidencies of Greece, the Greek foreign policy was not europeanised, only the objectives of its foreign policy were. Therefore, the option made by the Fourth Greek Presidency -to be a more or less a consensus builder- shows that Greece had indeed been significantly europeanised.

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