CHAPTER 1

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND SECURITY INTEGRATION

The idea of European unity is fairly old. It can be traced back to Sully, Podierbrand, and perhaps even Charlemange and the Holy Roman Empire. However, with the end of the Second World War the idea of an union on the European continent took on new qualities of practicability and desirability. Writing in the early 1950s, the preeminent international relations scholar Hans Morgenthau regarded the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC) as an attempt by the member states to compensate, through united effort, for the loss of power of the individual European nations. However, when reviewing the plans for the European Defence Community (EDC) set forth by Frenchman Jean Monnet, British prime minister Winston Churchill commented that it was a “sludgy amalgam.” Regarding the practice of European unity this vivid image applied for the years and decades to come and scholars continue trying to comprehend this amalgam.

The elusiveness of European unity was further expressed pointedly by Henry Kissinger when he was U.S. secretary of state during the 1970s and posed the following question: “If I want to call Europe, what phone number do I use?” Kissinger’s implication was clear: although Europe was moving toward a union, in reality it was lacking the necessary coherence. Certainly, however, this was not true in the aftermath of the tragic and horrific terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. France, Great Britain, and Germany as the main forces within the European Union (EU) were quick to agree on a coherent strategic orientation against the Taliban regime and terrorist cells in Afghanistan. And even before the attacks some spectators noted that national differences in Europe are narrowing, describing the emergence of a European foreign policy as an “ineluctable...
trend,” and stating that the “center of gravity is moving towards greater, not lesser acceptance of the use of military force.”

However, such conclusions turned out to be premature. Collaboration on the European continent regarding the war in Afghanistan gave way to discord with the onset of the crisis with Iraq and the subsequent war starting in March 2003. The lack of European cohesion motivated U.S. secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld to split the community of European states into “New Europeans” and “Old Europeans.” Having apparently understood the new geopolitical realities and asserting itself in an aggressive foreign policy, Great Britain stood out as the most prominent “new European.” Displaying a hesitancy to follow suit and advocating a continuation of political means as instruments of conflict resolution, Germany and France were the most prominent “old Europeans.”

This fundamental disagreement among these three most important EU members over the war in Iraq illustrated that Europe still does not have one phone number and that its members continue to search for a coherent European foreign and security policy. Past research has accompanied this search. Here one often finds descriptive studies that focus on tracing the EU’s foreign policy behavior and assessing its performance in the international system. In particular, these studies tend to assess the Union’s ambitions for a common foreign and security policy (CFSP) on the basis of its policy output and more often than not, the EU seems to come up short in these assessments. As one observer wrote, “International crises have a habit of embarrassing the European Union.”

There are also many analytical studies about Europe’s arrangements toward CFSP and these studies often build on classic institutional theory. Most prominently, scholars have argued that the EU is a complex political and legal phenomenon and they have spent much time discussing and investigating these aspects. Many instances of institutional viability or lack thereof are ascribed to the structural factors inherent to the EU. The recommendations that follow subsequently focus on questions of how to improve or amend its institutional design.

There are limits to this line of argument. For international institutions to be effective their injunctions, directives and prescriptions have to be obeyed. Matters of institutional “obedience” are located on the national level and not within the institution. This insight requires a departure from conventional institutional theorizing with an emphasis on institutional features towards an emphasis on agential theorizing. This effort must be embedded in a framework carrying implications about questions of institutional viability.