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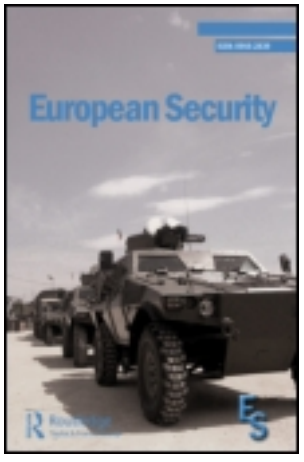

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The logic underpinning EU crisis management operations

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The logic underpinning EU crisis management operations

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The Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) epitomises the EU's aspirations to be a key actor in global security. The logic underlying the policy, however, remains contentious. In order to elucidate the latter, this article compares the plausibility of different theoretical frameworks. It suggests that liberal IR theory offers considerable explanatory power in this respect, and argues that the decisive forces behind CSDP operations are governmental interests as defined by domestic expectations. European governments' shared interest lies in being perceived to effectively further national interests and domestically held values. Yet, this preoccupation with domestic politics also entails and explains CSDP's often-noted inconsistencies and constraints.

Keywords: European Union; foreign policy; liberalism; CSDP operations; security policy

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Introduction

The recent ratification of the Lisbon Treaty has triggered a new round of analysis and prescription regarding the EU's place in international security governance (Howorth 2010, Bickerton et al. 2011, Schmidt and Zyla 2011, Smith 2011, Toje 2011). Observers remain divided as to whether the EU will (and should) become a stronger, more unified actor in international high politics. The European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), recently re-baptised Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), has been a focal point of this debate.[1] Theoretically informed discussion as to the policy's underlying drivers has, however, been much less prominent. This article seeks to contribute to such a debate. Reviewing the theoretical literature which seeks to explain CSDP, it proposes an alternative interpretation based on governments' domestic accountability. It does so by focusing on what arguably represents the CSDP's raison d'être, namely the operations conducted in this framework. There has recently been a host of studies looking at particular operations, not least in the pages of this journal (Heiduk 2011, Riddervold 2011, Larivé 2012). The present article, by contrast, will look at such individual cases primarily for the purpose of illustrating a more generic argument about the drivers behind CSDP activism.

In attempting to identify the factors behind CSDP, Tuomas Forsberg has suggested three sets of explanations (Forsberg 2006). Most straightforward is the claim by a number of American scholars, writing in the realist tradition, that CSDP represents an attempt by European states to balance the world's preponderant power,

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the US (Art 2004, Posen 2004, Posen 2006, Jones 2007). For these analysts, CSDP is a consequence of global systemic pressures derived from European states' relative power position in a world of anarchy and universal quest for protection against the stronger. Other scholars have argued, often but not exclusively from a constructivist perspective, that the CSDP has been driven by ideational factors, in particular by attempts to strengthen or even create a European political identity (Tonra 2003, Anderson and Seitz 2006, Anderson 2008, Mérand 2008). Last but not least, a number of observers of various theoretical persuasions see CSDP as a largely pragmatic response of European states to new crisis management needs (Forsberg 2006, Howorth 2007, Juncos and Reynolds 2007, Kaim 2007). In theoretical terms, these competing though not necessarily mutually exclusive explanations suggest that this policy could principally be driven from three levels: the international system; the European integration process; or the preferences of individual member states.

As this article will argue, it has been the voluntarism emanating from the third level, the EU's member states, that has been particularly important for determining what the EU does in the CSDP framework. This claim may appear commonsensical given CSDP's intergovernmental nature that formally puts member states in control. Yet, few theoretical works on the policy accord primary causal force to CSDP's domestic sources, even among those formally embracing the liberal label (cf. Dover 2005, Kaim 2007). There is obviously little point in asserting that European crisis management can be explained without reference to international crises or the process of European integration. Yet placing greater emphasis on domestic as opposed to international pressures will enhance our understanding as to what CSDP is there for and, accordingly, where it might be headed.

To explain what drives CSDP, I will build on liberal theory as conceived by Andrew Moravcsik. According to this school of thought, 'the foreign policy goals of national governments are viewed as varying in response to shifting pressure from domestic social groups, whose preferences are aggregated through political institutions' (Moravcsik 1993, p. 481). Liberalism thus puts governmental interests at the centre of foreign policy analysis, but understands them as driven less by international than domestic constraints. Strangely, the theoretical analysis of CSDP to date still suffers from an 'omitted theory bias' in this respect (cf. Moravcsik 1997, p. 538–541, Krotz and Maher 2011, p. 571). The absence of liberal analyses for understanding CSDP is surprising since the changed circumstances of foreign policy-making in contemporary Europe, where domestic discontent presents a far greater risk to governmental survival than foreign threats, should provide ample reason for privileging this assumption over realism's focus on relative state power. Hans Morgenthau famously defined realism as asking '[h]ow does this affect the power of the nation?' (Or of the federal government, of Congress of the party, of agriculture, as the case may be)' (Morgenthau [1948] 2006, p. 62). This article suggests that liberalism is more realist than the eponymous theory in that governments will first ask how any policy affects its own power. Governmental interest does not necessarily equal national interest or even relative external power, especially under the conditions that currently obtain in and for the EU. Most EU governments, for example, found it in their interest to opt for a secular decline in defence budgets over the last 20 years. In this sense, the liberalism this article embraces could conceivably be characterised as 'realism reversed'. Before further gauging liberalism's explanatory value for CSDP, however, this article will examine the plausibility of the

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alternative explanations that have characterised the theoretical CSDP research agenda so far.

Structural realism, the international system and CSDP

To date, realist and constructivist analyses have dominated theoretical reflections on the CSDP, with liberal approaches markedly absent (Krotz and Maher 2011, p. 571). The former, therefore, provide the benchmarks against which any alternative explanation should be compared. CSDP observers writing in the realist tradition have generally interpreted the emergence and content of the policy as a result of the pressures of the international system. Although usually describing the policy as being shaped by the interests of EU member states, they see these interests as derived mainly from states' (or the Union's) relative power position in the international and/or regional system rather than domestic factors. The pivotal characteristic of the system is unipolarity: in order to guard themselves against the vagaries of an unconstrained superpower, European countries close ranks to balance the potential threat or at least the influence of the USA (Art 2004, Posen 2004).

The basic problem with such a proposition consists in the fact that it is hard to discern both a convincing motivation as to why European countries would want to balance the USA and any empirical evidence that CSDP is in fact contributing to a shift in the balance of power (see also Howorth and Menon 2009). The first hypothesis, a *balancing strategy* on the part of Europeans, is easier to refute than the second, an eventually resulting shift in the *balance of power*, irrespective of intentions. Realist analysts typically claim to have detected intentions of balancing, but use the claim that CSDP may unintentionally lead to greater balance as an auxiliary argument (see especially Art 2006).

Yet in reality, most EU member states seem content to acquiesce into US hegemony. In fact, they are cooperating rather closely with the USA in NATO and elsewhere. Kenneth Waltz has explained his expectation of future balancing against the USA by underlining that benign hegemony today offered no guarantees against malevolent behaviour in the future (Waltz 1997). Yet even if we were to concur, why would European countries be more concerned about future US behaviour than about that of their European neighbours with whom they share borders and often difficult historical relationships? The presumed degree of consensus among EU powers sits uneasily with the 'relative gains' logic inherent in a balancing strategy such as the one supposedly underlying CSDP (cf. Wohlforth 1999, p. 31).

Realists' answer to this puzzle has been to widen the concept of balancing to include 'weak', 'soft' or 'constrained' balancing (Posen 2004, Pape 2005, Walt 2005, Peters 2010). In a nutshell, their argument is that the crucial (and shared) motivation for CSDP stems from EU members' desire to constrain (rather than actively counter) the USA. Yet while it is possible to drop threat perception as a trigger for balancing behaviour in favour of a more general 'balancing for influence' (cf. Stromvik 2005), the hypothesis of a balancing strategy becomes meaningless unless such purported behaviour involves some form of sacrifice in the shape of a policy trade-off (Brooks and Wohlforth 2006, p. 188). In short, in order to substantiate this proposition we would have to find evidence that constraining the USA was an important goal of CSDP for which member states were willing to pay a price. Not only did the staunchly Atlanticist UK co-sponsor the CSDP initiative and the European Security

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Strategy proclaim an 'irreplaceable partnership' with the USA. The balancing claim is above all hard to square with reality: in the context of CSDP, just where have EU governments pursued policies that reflect a '*conscious coordination of diplomatic action in order to obtain outcomes contrary to U.S. preferences*' (Walt 2005, p. 126, emphasis original)?

Perhaps tellingly, even the most extensive realist treatment of CSDP to date fails to engage with the drivers behind what the EU *does* in this institutional framework, namely CSDP crisis management operations (cf. Jones 2007). Jones derives his claim that the EU is competing with the USA from the fact that European states are increasingly cooperating in terms of common decision-making, economic sanctions, arms production and military forces. Thus, intra-European cooperation as such is taken as proof of balancing, without much attention as to what the EU is *doing* in terms of foreign policy. Such lack of attention to CSDP's tangible output is shared by most realist analysts. The only realist to explicitly deal with an CSDP operation, namely the military intervention in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) code-named ARTEMIS, presents little evidence to substantiate her claim of balancing intentions, but proves it by discarding one single alternative hypothesis, that European states may have 'felt obliged to act on humanitarian grounds' (Gegout 2005, p. 433).

The reality of CSDP operations flies in the face of balance-of-power theory. None has been at odds with American foreign policy goals, and in most cases their support for the latter is rather obvious. Table 1 details CSDP's operational record so far, and this list does not contain a single operation that would credibly have counteracted US preferences. Instead, CSDP operations relieved US resources in the Balkans, supported US-led state-building efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, and helped contain or improve conflict situations in places where the USA could not easily provide a credibly impartial third-party presence, from Georgia via Aceh and Gaza to Africa. In all these conflicts the USA, just as the EU, was interested in containment and stability, with the EU essentially providing a 'public good' for the prevailing Western order. The incipient institutional competition between the EU and NATO, which some observers like to cite as proof of balancing intentions, lessened considerably once it became clear that these organisations' capacity for crisis management would be outstripped by global demand for the foreseeable future. The USA has accordingly embraced CSDP already during the Bush administration, as best exemplified by speeches of then US ambassador to NATO Victoria Nuland in February 2008. Her claim that '[a]n ESDP with only soft power is not enough' because 'NATO cannot be everywhere' attests to the US Government's perception that the EU is seen as a helpful, not competing actor in international politics (Nuland 2008). Or, as her successor Ivo Daalder recently put it tongue-in-cheek, 'our problem is not that Europe is doing too much on defence'.[2]

Since one article clearly does not provide sufficient space for detailing the drivers underlying each operation, I will shortly discuss those two that, at face value, should be 'easiest' for the balancing proposition: the biggest military operations.[3] When it came to operation Althea in Bosnia, Washington was indeed less than enamoured by the process by which responsibility was transferred from NATO to the EU. However, as a member of NATO it could have stopped that process at any time. US doubts in fact caused a two-year hiatus between the European Council's December 2002 offer to take over and the actual start of Althea in December 2004. The very fact that

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Table 1. Overview of ESDP operations.[a]

Mission acronym	Host country	Type of mission	(Approximate) maximum number of international personnel	Time period
Concordia	FYROM	Military	400	31/03/2003–15/12/2003
Artemis	DR Congo	Military	1800	05/06/2003–01/09/2003
EUFOR Althea	Bosnia	Military	7000	Since 02/12/2004
EUFOR RD Congo	DR Congo	Military	2000	12/06/2006–30/11/2006
EUFOR Tchad/RCA	Chad/Central African Rep.	Military	3300	28/01/2008–15/03/2009
EUNAVFOR Atalanta	Somalia	Military	1800	Since 08/12/2008
EUTM Somalia	Uganda	Military training	120	Since 04/07/2010
EUPM	Bosnia	Civilian/Police	500	01/01/2003–30/06/2012
Proxima	FYROM	Civilian/Police	200	15/12/2003–14/12/2005
EUJUST Themis	Georgia	Civilian/Rule of Law	10	16/07/2004–14/07/2005
EUPOL Kinshasa	DRC	Civilian/Police	30	09/12/2004–30/06/2007
EUJUST Lex	Iraq	Civilian/Rule of Law	60	Since 09/03/2005
EUSEC RD Congo	DRC	(Military) security sector reform	50	Since 08/06/2005
EU support to AMIS	Sudan	Civil-military assistance	50	18/07/2005–31/12/2007
Aceh Monitoring Mission	Indonesia	Civilian/monitoring mission	220	15/09/2005–15/12/2006
EUPOL Copps	Palestinian territories	Civilian/police	50	Since 14/11/2005
EUBAM Rafah	Palestinian territories	Civilian/border control	70	Since 25/11/2005
EUBAM Moldova-Ukraine	Moldova/Ukraine	Civilian/border control	120	Since 01/12/2005
EUPAT	FYROM	Civilian/police	30	15/12/2005–14/06/2006
EUPOL Afghanistan	Afghanistan	Civilian/police	320	Since 15/06/2007
EUPOL RD Congo	DRC	Civilian/police	60	Since 01/07/2007
EULEX Kosovo	Kosovo	Civilian/rule of law	1650	Since 04/02/2008
EU SSR Guinea-Bissau	Guinea-Bissau	Civil-military security sector reform	15	12/02/2008–30/09/2010
EUMM Georgia	Georgia	Civilian/monitoring mission	340	Since 15/09/2008
EUAVSEC	South Sudan	Airport security support	64	Since 18/06/2012
EUCAP NESTOR	Eastern Africa	Maritime security support	200	Since 16/07/2012
EUCAP SAHEL Niger	Niger	Police training	50	Since 16/07/2012

[a]The precise number of missions could be challenged on the basis that two 'new' missions (EUPOL RD Congo, EUPAT) were simply the continuation of older missions under a new label, that the EU's support to AMIS did not strictly qualify as a mission in its own right, and that EUBAM Moldova-Ukraine is, strictly speaking, not governed by the ESDP framework. In nevertheless including those activities, I am following the overview provided by the Council Secretariat's website: The maximum number of international personnel has been compiled from: the Council Secretariat's website; Howorth (2007), pp. 210–211); Grevi *et al.* (2009).

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Washington eventually agreed shows that, on balance, it preferred transferring responsibility to the EU. This was also what the Clinton and Bush administrations had earlier requested. Moreover, both German and British officials cited US wishes of getting out of Bosnia as being among the main reasons for their governments to embrace this transition. This intention to please rather than balance Washington was also reflected in the institutional arrangements which had the EU draw on NATO assets for the operation's planning, command and control. Althea thus cannot be conceived as proof of balancing intentions or effects.

If the operation in Bosnia cannot be linked to balancing behaviour, how about the military operations in Central Africa? After all, the latter were executed 'autonomously', i.e. without drawing on NATO assets. Yet even if we look at the biggest such operation to date, in Chad, there are no indications of balancing behaviour. True, this operation was a brainchild of French politicians, and Paris is generally the most suspect of all EU governments when it comes to anti-US balancing. The US administration, however, voiced no opposition (or asked tough questions in the UN Security Council which provided the mandate for this operation), and one interviewed EU official even claimed that Washington had considered participating, only to be stopped by 'Ayatollahs in the Pentagon' who opposed US participation in EU military operations on scholastic grounds. According to one of the 'Wikileaks' cables, the US administration went as far as doing France's bidding in Berlin. A US diplomat thus confirmed that he conveyed Washington's position to German authorities, 'underscoring U.S. support for the mission and urging Germany to consider ways of contributing to it'.[4] This position clearly shows that the operation, although conducted 'autonomously', was not perceived as an act of counter-balancing US influence. Instead, the primary French motive was to live up to earlier promises made during the electoral campaign (cf. Marchal 2009, Weissman 2010). One month before the presidential elections, all mainstream candidates had signed a pledge to protect Darfur's refugees.[5] Acting on this promise also helped the new president Sarkozy to weaken the Socialist opposition by co-opting a prominent Socialist into his administration (Marchal 2009, p. 2). Finally, to quote another EU official, the 'purpose of the operation was to show the French political elite that, despite France's return to NATO, CSDP is still in the cards'. The operation was hence based on a French domestic political logic (for a detailed analysis of the domestic politics of the Chad operation and its comparison to the nearly simultaneous EU non-intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2008, see Pohl 2012). In sum, even in those cases where the EU put up sufficient resources to conceivably have the ability to counteract US preferences, the operations tended to support US interests.

Yet may the mere fact that the EU is active and possibly successful not entail potential future constraints for US foreign policy (cf. Posen 2006)? As indicated above, this hypothesis can hardly be disproven. Since neo-realism in its parsimonious form does not predict when balancing would happen, or who precisely would participate, the absence of either balancing behaviour or an ensuing balance cannot be taken to indicate anything about the validity of the hypothesis. If, however, neither the absence of balancing intentions nor the absence of a balancing effect contradicts balance-of-power theory, then the latter cannot explain CSDP in the affirmative either. In fact, Kenneth Waltz himself made this clear by arguing that 'international political theory deals with the pressures of structure on states, and not with how

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states will respond to the pressures' (Waltz 2000, p. 27). Since CSDP is precisely one such response, neo-realism as such is not applicable. Whereas structural realists are thus correct to point out, if *ex post*, that structural pressures impacting on European states made CSDP possible (cf. Hyde-Price 2006), they simply do not *explain* it.

Indeed, Hyde-Price's characterisation of the EU foreign policy, and by analogy of CSDP, as an 'institutional repository for the "second order concerns" of its member states' which would be sacrificed if states' core interests were threatened (Hyde-Price 2006, p. 222–223) is certainly the most realistic among realist characterisations of the policy. Yet this only underlines that the international system's impact on CSDP did not take place via the causal mechanism structural realists invoke, that is, as an attempt to balance the preponderant power. Rather than embodying international security competition, most ESDP missions have served to support the liberal peace-keeping agenda that Western societies identify with. Thus, structural realists have misspecified the causal mechanism that links unipolarity and CSDP: the former facilitated the latter by *removing* the predominant concern with territorial defence. In and by itself, however, unipolarity cannot explain what is behind CSDP.

Social constructivism, European integration and CSDP

The main theoretical competition to realist approaches in explaining CSDP has come from constructivists. Yet whereas realist scholars have explicitly focused on the drivers behind CSDP, constructivists have more often pondered the emergence or otherwise of a common European strategic culture (cf. Giegerich 2006, Meyer 2006, Schmidt and Zyla 2011). They have been less explicit in specifying the drivers behind CSDP because, rather than causality, it is the 'how' or 'how possible' question that is of greater import to the constructivist research programme (Wendt 1998, p. 105). The latter challenges constructivists to explore the impact of ideas, discourses, norms and identities on policy. Rather than being confronted by some objective reality which everyone treats with consequentiality to achieve certain pre-determined goals (e.g. power or survival in the different strands of realism), it is an actor's conception of reality, and the behaviour it deduces as appropriate from this conception that makes this reality objective. With respect to international relations, this insight has been captured in the aphorism that 'anarchy is what states make of it' (Wendt 1992, p. 395).

A second reason why there is no generally shared constructivist narrative of CSDP against which alternatives could be compared is that constructivism as such is a social rather than substantive theory. It 'operates at a different level of abstraction', and therefore '[c]onstructivism does not [. . .] make any particular claims about the content of social structures or the nature of agents at work in social life. Consequently it does not, by itself, produce specific predictions about political outcomes that one could test in social science research' (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001, p. 393). Since constructivism is thus rather a tool or method capable of generating any number of different narratives, it cannot in itself be tested against substantive IR theories. Bearing this caveat in mind, this article will instead evaluate the plausibility of specific, substantive constructivist hypotheses which have linked CSDP to Europeanisation.

In the context of the EU's foreign policy, constructivists have been particularly interested in the interaction between national identities. Some analysts have seen

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constructivism vindicated by the fact that national diplomats in Brussels have considerable leeway in defining national positions, and that negotiations tend to be focused more on 'problem-solving' than on 'bargaining' (Juncos and Reynolds 2007, see also Checkel and Moravcsik 2001). However, the alternative against which constructivism is tested in this case, a non-negotiable national position defined in isolation in national capitals, seems a bit of a straw man. Moreover, Juncos and Reynolds explain diplomats' flexibility in perfectly rationalist terms, namely ambassadors' interest in getting results in order not to lose credibility or be sidelined in the future, as well as the lack of interest many member states display regarding numerous agenda items (Juncos and Reynolds 2007, p. 144–145). In short, without evidence of specific instances where member states have been genuinely persuaded to change substantive national preferences, this hypothesis does not amount to a direct challenge to rival explanations.

Other constructivists have described a common EU foreign policy as geared towards spawning stronger European identity. Ben Tonra speculated that 'CFSP might thus be better understood in terms of identity creation than as an exclusively rationally based exercise in national self-interest' (Tonra 2003, p. 738). This interesting hypothesis has to date most clearly been elaborated by Stephanie Anderson and Thomas Seitz, who have argued that CSDP represented a way of building a European nation via 'swaggering' (Anderson and Seitz 2006, p. 34). In the absence of credible resource commitments to CSDP, their argument runs, the whole enterprise makes sense only as a step towards new symbols of European nationhood.

Yet whereas it is important not to lose sight of the symbolic importance of a European defence policy, there is insufficient evidence to support the argument that CSDP was designed to 'keep the European Union unified' (Anderson and Seitz 2006, p. 38). First of all, to start out by asking why Europeans would 'seek to create a *competing* military force outside NATO' (Anderson and Seitz 2006, p. 24, emphasis added) means starting from the wrong premises – and, therefore, judging the policy against a fictitious benchmark. Both NATO and the CSDP draw on the same pool of national forces, which are assigned to either institutional framework on the basis of the mission they are asked to carry out. The CSDP is thus at most a competing institutional framework for organising these forces. Rather than being designed for collective defence, NATO's traditional primary objective, CSDP provides the EU's collective diplomacy with an institutional framework for crisis management. Against this yardstick, the charge that CSDP must *primarily* be about swaggering simply because its level of ambition (i.e. to create a substitute for NATO) is unrealistic loses much lustre.

Secondly, the purported goal of strengthening the Union by means of military swaggering sits uneasily with the widespread practice of EU governments of ostentatiously defending national identity and laying blame for domestically troubling policies at Brussels' doorstep. This obviously does not prevent them from cooperating in the European framework, not least in the CSDP. However, the fixes applied to the Constitutional Treaty before its reincarnation as the Treaty of Lisbon, that is, the scrapping of the most symbolic provisions, suggest that EU governments are rather wary of European nation-building. Moreover, the logic of bolstering the EU by way of foreign policy integration implies that EU governments would use CSDP operations to garner support for integration. For this to be plausible, there would have to be significant public relations efforts within EU

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member states advertising the CSDP's benefits. Yet neither are the successes of CSDP widely promoted, nor is the determination of achieving collective successes generally in evidence. This is perhaps clearest in the case of the EU's police-building mission in Afghanistan (cf. Larivé 2012), a public relations opportunity for CSDP if ever there was one, given NATO's widely publicized troubles. Yet member states' investment into this mission has remained very limited, and EU governments continue to highlight their individual, national contributions at the expense of collective effectiveness (Buckley 2010).

Perhaps the most important argument against interpreting CSDP as primarily a nation-building exercise, however, is that its design is ill fit for this purpose. To the extent that national identity is wedded to security and defence, it is wedded to the notion of an existential threat. Yet territorial defence, by which such an existential threat would most palpably be addressed, is explicitly outside the remit of CSDP. Moreover, the potentially powerful tool of building identity via more integrated armed forces is largely absent, despite potentially significant budgetary gains (cf. Witney 2008). If nation-building was thus the true purpose behind CSDP, the path chosen in devising CSDP would be conspicuously unambitious and rather ineffective. This should be evident once we compare CSDP to NATO. Why would the EU contend with a lower degree of military integration than the transatlantic alliance – or would anyone suspect NATO of pursuing a transatlantic nation-building agenda?

In short, the constructivist interpretation of CSDP as being driven by European integration, if not in fact than as an objective, has so far not been convincingly substantiated. This also applies to functionalist explanations of CSDP, which would similarly treat CSDP as a 'spill-over' of the wider European integration project (cf. Ojanen 2006). Whereas CSDP would unlikely exist without the preliminary integration steps undertaken in the EC/EU framework, the resulting pressures in themselves were not very strong. This becomes apparent upon considering the absence of integration in the realm of security policy for more than 40 years, despite several initiatives to this end such as the European Defence Community and the Fouchet Plan, and the explicit restrictions on the European Political Cooperation. That does not imply that integrationist calculation is entirely absent from CSDP's inception and development. Progress to that effect is indeed welcomed from some corners, but hardly constitutes the main driver.

Both the realist and constructivist explanations of CSDP based on the global distribution of power and efforts at European nation-building thus fail to advance an empirically convincing framework for the drivers behind this policy. The problem has arguably less to do with the respective theoretical frameworks as such than with their focus on the international and European level, at a time when Europeans felt free to design their foreign policy as a navel-gazing exercise. This does not mean that either the international or European level was irrelevant. When it comes to impulses external to the EU, Washington has played a pivotal role in enticing the EU to become active in the realm of international security governance. The USA thus made clear its interest in supportive EU action in the Western Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq and beyond. For example, interviewees evoked the EU border monitoring mission in Gaza as an instance where US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice approached and challenged the EU to provide a monitoring presence.

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EU-level institutions have similarly had an impact, especially with regard to setting the agenda for EU collective action in the CSDP framework (Dijkstra 2012). Yet such suggestions clearly remained dependent on EU governments' willingness to engage, especially if considerable resources were involved. Whereas EU officials faced and acted on self-interest-related incentives for promoting CSDP operations, they generally 'pushed open doors' in promoting missions where either most member states were interested in doing something or where at least some governments gave strong support in the context of wider indifference. For example, Dijkstra shows how EU officials played an important role in setting up the mission in Kosovo. That mission was, however, simultaneously part of a Western choice for 'supervised independence' that was primarily steered by the 'Quint', the governments of the USA, the UK, France, Germany and Italy (Ker-Lindsay 2009). Whereas EU institutions thus had some leeway regarding the design of the mission, this influence was predicated on the EU's function as an enabler of a controlled exit strategy for Western governments from direct responsibility in and for Kosovo. Finally, the EU's self-inflicted disunity regarding Kosovo's eventual status and the attendant loss of influence vis-à-vis third parties shows not only that the scope for intra-EU persuasion is limited, but also that the Union is difficult to use for the purpose of maximising relative power (cf. Weller 2008, p. 94).

The lack of empirical plausibility of the first two explanations is thus a question of the level of analysis. That social constructivism in particular can otherwise offer more powerful explanations for the CSDP record becomes clear once we compare the 'EU nation-building' proposition to the research undertaken in the framework of 'national strategic cultures'. Focusing on the differences between various national approaches to security policy has provided plausible explanations for the EU's collective behaviour, and may even help to forecast its future stance (Meyer 2011). Whereas the subsequent section agrees with a key argument of this strand of the literature, namely that national perceptions have been pivotal in driving the CSDP, it takes a slightly different stance from those who see foreign policy decisions as driven by identity and culture. Instead, it treats identity and culture as underlying conditions that, though indeterminate, frame domestic political reactions and thus inform how governments calculate the domestic political costs and benefits of (in-)action.

Liberalism, domestic politics and foreign policy

After reviewing the role of the international and European level on CSDP, this section examines the influence of the national level. It does so by building on liberal IR theory as defined by Andrew Moravcsik who argued that the theory's central tenet was that the nature of national polities mattered for international relations (cf. Moravcsik 1997, p. 516–524). The claim's justification is that these polities, rather than general laws dictating the pursuit of power and/or security, generate the national preferences whose interaction drives international politics (Moravcsik 1997, p. 523). Governments are thus conceived as agents of societal principals. In democracies, their fundamental interest consists in being re-elected, for which they must ensure the support of voters generally, and specifically of those domestic actors that are capable of influencing public opinion in the respective policy field (Moravcsik 1993, p. 483). Regarding foreign policy, this implies that governments

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formulate the latter not primarily with a view to shifts in international power or norms, but with respect to what their societies want (although the former may influence the latter). Support for democratic governments will thus partly depend on the perceived legitimacy and competence with which they handle foreign affairs. Even if the latter is not particularly salient in citizens' electoral choices, the desire to please voters (and to avoid irritating them) is likely to inform policy-making.

In and by itself, the claim that governments orient foreign policy action towards expected domestic political benefits does not tell us very much, but needs to be complemented by substantive assumptions about societal expectations when it comes to CSDP-style crisis management. Two incentives appear prevalent. On the one hand, EU governments might politically benefit from demonstrating that they are capable of influencing international events in line with domestic values and priorities. There is an incentive for governments to act in the face of (potentially) mediatised conflagrations (cf. Robinson 2001). Put differently, their legitimacy might be threatened if they prove unwilling or unable to exert such influence and thereby appear callous or irrelevant. On the other hand, they are threatened by the potential perception that they are paying too high a price in treasure or casualties for foreign policy projects which turn out ill-conceived. Societal expectations moreover correspond to a fundamental constraint on foreign policy in liberal democracies: the fact that the public is unwilling to support policies at odds with broader societal values (Doyle 2008, p. 61). The reactions of European publics to the 2003 war against Iraq provide a particularly vivid example of both the political risks of ignoring public opinion and the political opportunities of catering to the latter.

The mechanism that ensures governments are taking societal preferences into account is two-pronged, related both to the direct pressure of public opinion and to the more indirect pressure of foreign policy elite whose judgment on governments' foreign policy performance may eventually influence public opinion (cf. Doyle 2008, p. 61). The 'CNN effect' might challenge governments to demonstrate their ability to act at the behest of vulnerable individuals. Admittedly, direct public pressure is likely to drive governments' foreign policy behaviour only in cases that capture headlines, and few missions carried out in the CSDP framework gather such attention. Yet governments' policy is also monitored by foreign policy elite in the media, political parties, non-governmental organisations, bureaucracies and academia. Inasmuch as their opinion on the government's foreign policy record confers domestic legitimacy, they serve as a transmission belt. Governments, therefore, have an incentive to ensure that their foreign policy is judged as competent and legitimate in the eyes of this constituency.

To illustrate the argument that domestic expectations are pivotal in foreign policy-making, consider the reaction to the succession wars in the former Yugoslavia. James Gow summed up the motivations in Western capitals concerning their reaction to the wars in Yugoslavia by pointing out that '[t]he political worries of Western governments concerned popular opinion and the need to win votes at the next election' (Gow 1997, p. 306, cf. Daalder 2000, p. 109). While this made them reluctant to use force for fear of the risks attached to fighting a war that was not strictly necessary, the resulting lack of consequentiality also posed significant domestic political risks. In the USA, Madeline Albright played a key role in convincing President Clinton to finally engage by stressing that 'the disaster in

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Bosnia was 'destroying' the administration's credibility' (Daalder 2000, p. 93, 159, cf. Power 2002, p. 437).

Europe's public stood similarly aghast at the all too apparent failure of their governments to act decisively in defending the values that were supposed to now form the basis of all European societies, if not a 'new world order' (cf. The Economist 2005, Bretherton and Vogler 2006, p. 196). Arguably, it was the public's expectation that governments do something to alleviate the crisis rather than the latter's 'material' spill-over in the shape of refugees and 'security risks' which prompted European governments' involvement. A focus on domestic political risks would thus help explain why Germany was among the least willing to stomach military intervention although it was the Western country most strongly affected by the material consequences of the Yugolav wars. As David Auerswald has shown in a detailed empirical survey of the positions of the most important NATO members during the Kosovo war in 1999, a focus on their domestic situation goes a long way to explain their foreign policy stance (Auerswald 2004). Against the background of EU governments' earlier failure during the dissolution of Yugoslavia, it should not come as a surprise that the first and the biggest CSDP military operation took place in Macedonia and Bosnia respectively. A similar if less urgent sense of moral indignation and bad conscience has also underwritten CSDP operations in former European colonies in Africa.

Since governments' self-interest relates to domestic constituencies, it lies first and foremost in being perceived to act. Helping solve a humanitarian crisis will obviously facilitate bringing about this perception, but so might a useless but visible effort to this effect, unless foreign policy elites call the bluff. Consequently, governments need to pre-empt the twin dangers of standing accused of pointless activism and excessive risk-taking or complacency and weakness. Both incentives vary across (member) states since the domestic political benefits from being seen to 'do something' as well as the preferences for where and how (not) to intervene hinge on geographic and historical factors.

Prima facie, the reasoning above might be taken as a re-statement of the idea that national strategic cultures drive CSDP (cf. Giegerich 2006, Meyer 2006). Yet it differs in two important respects. First, it does not build on the constructivist argument which has governments follow culturally derived national norms according to the 'logic of appropriateness'. Rather, it assumes that they adapt their behaviour according to expected electoral consequences. The two will frequently coincide, but there is a priori no reason as to why the relationship between national beliefs and values and foreign policy stances should follow from a logic of appropriateness rather than one of expected consequences, and the literature on CSDP and national strategic cultures does not provide strong arguments to that effect. Politicians may of course embrace nationally shared ideas because they believe in them, but simply assuming so excludes the possibility that their stance is of tactical provenience, that they do so because it helps them survive domestically.

The 2010 Anglo-French defence agreement, to take a recent example, could be explained as an instance of two proud nations pooling capabilities with the only appropriately prestigious counterpart in Europe.[6] It is also possible, however, that the British conservatives felt the need to 'offset' their defence cuts with the objective of greater effectiveness through cooperation. Whereas the obvious (and arguably most effective) institution for this purpose would have been the purpose-built European

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Defence Agency, the British government likely feared upsetting the sensibilities of conservative backbenchers steeped in Euroscepticism (cf. Allen 2011). Moreover, a bilateral deal with France likely seemed more palatable to British nationalists than being seen to cooperate at eye level with the likes of Belgium (a 'non-country' according to an infamous rant of UK Independence Party leader Farage in the European Parliament) in defence matters. Although the logic underpinning the two explanations is different, their constituent parts are similar because the pursuit of domestic political gain usually incentivises politicians to embed their decisions into widely accepted cultural 'belief systems'. As Brian Rathbun put it, '[e]lectoral and cultural concerns work in tandem' (Rathbun 2004, p. 37).

The second difference between this liberal reading and the explanatory model advanced by those focusing on national strategic cultures is that a rationalist logic allows us to integrate a second range of motives into the governmental decision-making process, namely more 'material' concerns. Governmental behaviour, I allege, is equally influenced by the need to demonstrate that it is defending the 'national interest', i.e. that it will not pay a disproportionate price. The ubiquitous discussions about burden-sharing are a case in point. Such concerns were evident, for example, in the 2010 Dutch withdrawal from NATO's Afghanistan mission, which was forced on the government with the argument that, compared to other allies, the Netherlands had done more than enough (cf. NYT 2010). When it comes to CSDP operations, the importance of this second element is visible in the fact that those member states that invest political capital by bringing an intervention to the table are expected to deliver the greater part of the necessary capabilities. Accordingly, the question why Germany and the UK have been reluctant to actively support French-inspired military operations in Africa is less a question of normative differences (or strategic rivalry), but of the domestic political risks of supporting French projects of dubious gain, and of cross-national differences in appreciating foreign policy showmanship. These differences also go some way towards explaining the 'slump' in CSDP activism from 2009 to 2012. In the context of the financial crisis and the predominant concern with Afghanistan, the costs of new foreign policy 'adventures' such as the UN-suggested operation in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in late 2008 or the still-born EUFOR Libya in 2011 appeared relatively higher so that some EU governments, notably Berlin, perceived little potential domestic gain, but significant risks.

The record of CSDP operations fits the liberal argument that governments conduct their foreign policy primarily with a view to its expected domestic political consequences, and that the sources of domestic expectations are determined by *both* normative values and perceptions of national interest. This is evident, on the one hand, from the Union's penchant for civilian missions. The latter form a big majority despite the CSDP's origins in the quest for greater military cooperation between Europeans. One reason for this development is that such missions entail lesser (domestic) political risks than military operations. EU governments can thus claim international engagement while shirking many risks attached to really taking responsibility. Moreover, such a focus on 'soft' security is what (a significant part of) European publics want. To the extent that the Union has conducted military operations anyhow, these were justified primarily by humanitarian reasons and limited in time so as to avoid actual responsibility (Bosnia being the exception, for the reasons discussed above). This pattern of humanitarian justification also holds for the anti-piracy operation off the coast Somalia (cf. Riddervold 2011), even

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though economic interests (and interested domestic groups such as shipping companies) likely played a greater role in this particular case (Germond and Smith 2009).

On the other hand, the link to domestic politics becomes obvious once we look at the diplomatic history of specific missions. The operation in Chad was a public relations exercise for the French government (a pattern recently repeated in Libya, see e.g. The Economist 2011). The police mission in Afghanistan was similarly embraced by the German government because it promised to solve a domestic political problem. On the one hand, Berlin sought to avoid blame for its relatively limited engagement in Afghanistan, including its internationally agreed 'lead function' in building an Afghan police force. Maintaining a close transatlantic relationship has traditionally been a key aspect of Germany's security culture (Harnisch 2010, p. 62). Since good relations with Washington are particularly important to centre-right parties, the government was eager to avoid the impression that the caveats attached to its military engagement might damage this relationship. On the other hand, it wanted to contain its own exposure to domestic criticism of an 'overly militarised' approach by NATO in Afghanistan (cf. Kaim 2008). What better way out of this dilemma than to emphasise, as did the chancellor upon visiting Afghanistan in November 2007, that military, police and civilian reconstruction were equally important and that 'if there is one area where Germany should do more, then it is for the time being in police-building' (Bundeskanzleramt 2007) – and then to leverage the EU for this purpose.

In sum, liberalism's emphasis on domestically derived national preferences which interact in an intergovernmental bargaining setting goes a longer way towards explaining CSDP action than the competing theoretical frameworks on offer. The positions that individual governments adopted with respect to certain operations as well as the collective outputs they have produced so far underline the importance of domestic legitimacy in terms of defending national values *and* perceived interests rather than any particular geo-strategic logic or normative persuasion. This lack of any over-arching logic is also visible from the haphazard pattern that CSDP activism has so far taken beyond the EU's neighbourhood – a stack of national initiatives uploaded onto the European agenda.

Conclusion

This article set out enquiring into what drives CSDP. Examining existing theoretical accounts, it demonstrated that CSDP neither originated from a (perceived) balance-of-power necessity nor represented a self-serving means to clandestinely advance European integration. Instead, it argued, CSDP arises from the expectation of European societies that their governments act effectively in preventing and managing external crises and in fostering domestic values abroad – or rather in governments' attempts to respond to such perceived expectations. CSDP operations, the most tangible output of this policy framework, reflect the resulting pressures and constraints.

In theoretical terms, this article compared the liberal concept of governmental foreign policy-making as a response to societal expectations with the realist focus on relative power and the constructivist emphasis on ideas, norms and identities. The three are not per se in mutual contradiction. Societies may expect protection of

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national interests and even national grand-standing, just as they might expect the propagation of certain values. In fact, they frequently do. A focus on governments' (electoral) interests shows that the often-invoked antagonism between values and interests is spurious because European societies expect the pursuit of both. In their own interest, governments will need to be seen to be both competent in securing societies' interests as well as acting legitimately, i.e. in concurrence with, and support of prevalent norms. In the specific cases where the two clash, as indeed they sporadically do in foreign policy, domestic politics rather than relative power or the appropriateness of various possible actions decides national positioning.

While liberalism arguably constitutes the framework of choice by pointing to the crucial driver, domestic expectations, its theoretical alternatives offer important insights as well. In pointing to the shifts in the balance of power that preceded the EU's venture into the realm of security and defence, structural realism underlines if not a precondition for, than a defining feature of CSDP. The removal of the restraints of bipolarity and hence of the overriding preoccupation with territorial defence at least facilitated the pursuit of the 'second-order' concerns that CSDP has come to embrace (cf. Hyde-Price 2008). That, however, makes systemic forces at most a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for the emergence of CSDP. Structural realism is thus too parsimonious to elucidate the driving forces behind the policy. By analysing the normative underpinnings of foreign policy, constructivist analyses, on the other hand, have enriched our understanding of one significant source of governmental behaviour. To understand the substantial variation in policy outcomes, however, this needs to be combined with the other incentives influencing governments' cost-benefit analyses. Focusing on the pressures and constraints arising from democratic representation, liberalism strikes a middle path by theorising the ideational *and* material interests that governments pursue at the behest of their polities.

This article's attempt to account for the drivers behind CSDP is not intended as an exercise in theoretical imperialism, of inflating liberalism's explanatory power. Rather, by putting governmental interests centre-stage, it seeks to offer an alternative image of how to understand the drivers and inconsistencies behind European foreign policy. Extending Moravcsik's model from economic to security policy entails a price, however, which lies in the frequent absence of explicit societal demands for specific action in the realm of international security. The model's associated need to rely on implicit expectations, which governments pre-emptively take into account, is theoretically somewhat dissatisfactory and empirically difficult to prove. Addressing this shortfall requires relaxing the assumption that governments' 'policy supply' is directly based on societal demands. In a context where the (unintended) consequences of a huge gamut of potential actions are unclear, governments are rarely pushed into specific positions, but face ex post accountability. Future research on the domestic dimension of security policy should, therefore, focus squarely on the opportunities and constraints that governments perceive or unconsciously assume. At the same time, liberalism's shortcomings in this respect mirror those in neo-realism, which equally offers an account of structural pressures rather than remedial action, and social constructivism, where 'norm entrepreneurship' is often used as a *deus ex machina* to account for agency.

In linking these theoretical considerations back to the reality of foreign policy-making, what does this analysis entail for the EU's future as a global actor in the security realm? Assuming that the influence of domestic politics remains the

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prevalent driver, chances for a 'grand strategy' or even a development equalling that of the USA in the late nineteenth century are limited (cf. Biscop 2009, Howorth 2010, Selden 2010). Europe's ageing population is unlikely to become less risk-averse and parochial and more courageous and extrovert in defining its place and purpose in the world, and the associated expectations provide a constraint on EU governments perhaps even stronger than the frequently invoked rise of China and other non-Western powers. Yet since European governments also have an interest in appearing to be actively shaping Europe's fate, we can expect the EU to continue to 'do something'. The result, with respect to CSDP, is, however, more likely to be a continuation of muddling through than the emergence of an overarching strategic or ideological logic.

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Notes

1. For the purpose of readability, I will henceforth only use the term CSDP even if the analysis pertains to a time when the policy was still called ESDP.
2. 'After the Chicago Summit: What Priorities for NATO?', speech in The Hague, 6 June 2012.
3. Whereas this article seeks to make a general argument about the drivers behind CSDP operations, it draws on some 70 anonymous interviews with EU and national officials that sought to re-construct the diplomatic history behind specific operations.
4. See cable dated January 18, 2009, from U.S. embassy in Berlin to U.S. State Department, http://wikileaks.org/cable/2008/01/08BERLIN89.html# [Accessed 20 August 2012].
5. For details, see http://www.liberation.fr/evenement/010197123-candidat-je-m-engage [Accessed 20 August 2012].
6. I would like to thank one of the reviewers for suggesting this example.

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