"But We Have To Do Something" : the drivers behind EU crisis management operations

Pohl, B.

Citation

Pohl, B. (2012, September 27). *"But We Have To Do Something" : the drivers behind EU crisis management operations*. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/19885

Cover Page

Universiteit Leiden

Author: Pohl, Benjamin
Title: "But We Have To Do Something" : the drivers behind EU crisis management operations
Date: 2012-09-27

CHAPTER II: ESDP OPERATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter develops four alternative propositions that contend to explain why the EU has engaged in ESDP operations. In so doing, it draws on the explanations that have dominated scholarly accounts so far, but elaborates and subsumes them under four classes of potential explanations. The four drivers underlying these explications in turn have a bearing on the purpose of ESDP at large: to what extent can they, individually or in various combinations, explain what EU governments have ostensibly been aiming for since they decided to equip themselves with this foreign policy instrument? Before discussing the respective propositions, however, this chapter will first address the questions why such a theoretical approach is called for; what obstacles it entails; and what sort of explanatory categories an examination of the drivers behind ESDP operations requires. This introductory section will address these preliminary issues.

The present book sets out to explain why EU governments repeatedly engaged in collective crisis management endeavours in the framework of the ESDP. When it comes to such multilateral decision-making, each sequel of decisions that results in a particular operation is informed by a multitude of factors, many of which are contingent on specific constellations. This begs the question whether it is sensible to search for (general) patterns behind these endeavours in the first place, and whether comparing those patterns' relative explanatory power is feasible. Jolyon Howorth, probably the most prolific scholarly writer on ESDP over the last ten years, has asserted that 'ESDP has emerged overwhelmingly as a series of empirical reactions to historical events' (Howorth 2007: 22-23). Claiming that theoretical approaches so far have failed to provide a satisfactory, comprehensive answer, Howorth suggested that inductive empirical analysis was basically sufficient for understanding ESDP (Howorth 2007: 23-24). He even went on to wonder 'why scholars would wish to detect mono-causal or even dominant drivers behind complex political and historical processes' (Howorth 2007: 28). Instead, he argued that ESDP needed to be understood as the consequence of the confluence of four fundamental processes: the end of the Cold War and the attendant lesser US interest in Europe, a 'new world order' transcending the Westphalian international state system, the experience of the 1990s Balkan Wars and progress in European integration (Howorth 2007: 52-56). This gamut of underlying causes suggests that ESPD's purpose cannot be reduced to a means of addressing any single foreign policy

objective, but that it can only be understood as an evolutionary response to multifaceted and unpredictable historical developments. Such a view has obvious implications for any attempts to grasp the rationale behind ESDP's policy output as well. If the framework's very emergence should best be explained by reference to four sweeping historical processes, how could we possibly hope that its numerous and diverse instances of implementation follow any underlying logic?

THE UTILITY AND LIMITS OF IR THEORY

It is hard to disagree on the difficulty of explaining complex, overlapping processes such as the emergence and frequent use of the ESDP framework by means of the parsimonious models international relations (IR) theories seek to provide. Yet comparing their respective explanatory prowess is helpful in probing the *extent* to which these models can explain the policy outcomes we observe. All four drivers identified by Howorth sound very plausible, but they may leave the reader wondering how much each of them mattered, whether they were all strictly necessary for the emergence of ESDP and whether they were collectively sufficient. Such wondering is not just an expression of self-referential intellectual curiosity, but it represents an attempt to distil those features which allow for comparison beyond the singular occasion where the four drivers coincided. The purpose of explicitly comparing the influence of various likely drivers is not necessarily to decide which driver was most important, but to enable the analyst to weigh the persuasiveness of each argument individually – and to gauge in which cases and under which circumstances it is particularly convincing.

Even if theoretical explanations necessarily fall short in accounting for a complex social reality, they are invariably part of our perception of 'events'. Thus Stephen Walt underlined that '[e]ven policymakers that are contemptuous of "theory" must rely on their own (often unstated) ideas about how the world works in order to decide what to do' (Walt 1998: 29; cf. Walt 2005a). It is for this reason that Robert Keohane insisted on the 'inescapability of theory' (Keohane 1986: 4; cf. Popper 1963: 46; Hempel 1965 [1948]: 243). Theories simply help us to distinguish the more important from the less important, and thereby allow for greater direction in collecting and linking relevant observations (cf. Kuhn 1962: 15-18; Popper 1963: 46). Since theoretical considerations are unavoidable, being explicit about the range of alternative explanations that the researcher has been examining should make it easier for the reader to make a more informed judgement as to the external validity of the author's conclusions. As a consequence, there is a strong case to be made for systematically considering expected causal relationships prior to any in-depth analysis – even where we expect to find a plurality of mutually irreducible drivers.

As the previous paragraph suggests, it is moreover important that we consider the full range of potential explanations as far as feasible. If the objective is to try to truly understand a phenomenon, it is insufficient to pick one explanation and dismiss alternatives on the basis of their supposedly mistaken assumptions – or by casting alternatives as straw men. Many explanations of ESDP have taken such a line though. For example, Bastian Giegerich justified his choice for a constructivist framework with 'an insufficiency of Realism', adding that constructivism offered 'crucial theoretical assumptions that [...] make it superior for the analysis conducted here' (Giegerich 2006: 29; cf. Krotz and Maher 2011: 567). Others have compared their preferred theoretical framework to contending alternatives, but closer analysis reveals that those alternatives are weighed against the main proposition primarily for rhetorical effect (cf. Jones 2007: 223-6; Gegout 2005). The danger of embracing a single, parsimonious theoretical model as the point of departure, however, is that it might lead us to focus on (and perhaps confirm) the presence of one of the drivers identified by Howorth, but to ignore the importance of the other three. More generally, '[n]o single approach can capture all the complexity of contemporary world politics. Therefore we are better off with an array of competing ideas rather than a single theoretical orthodoxy. Competition between theories helps reveal their strengths and weaknesses and spurs subsequent refinements, while revealing flaws in conventional wisdom' (Walt 1998: 30). In other words, the utility of theory-inspired analysis can be enhanced by systematically comparing the explanatory power of a range of alternative propositions.

If explicit theoretical frameworks are desirable as a point for departure, which domain should they derive from? ESDP is situated at the crossroads of at least three overlapping theoretical fields: international relations theory, European integration theory, and theories of foreign policy decision-making. This study primarily draws on the first of those three although its framework will resonate with the other two as well. The reasons for privileging IR theory over integration and foreign policy theories are threefold. First, IR theory has been the framework of choice for most scholars seeking to explain the phenomenon of ESDP. In order to engage with this literature, following this tradition seems most straightforward. Secondly, in the interest of placing the process of European integration into perspective it needs to be explained in relation to general IR theories rather than with reference to theories devised specifically to explain European integration (Moravcsik 1993: 474). This is all the less contentious as ESDP decision-making is formally intergovernmental and thus clearly belongs to the domain that general IR theories have been seeking to explain; ESDP is hence *a priori* not as special as the supranational aspects of European integration. Moreover, EU integration theories explicitly excluded the field of security and defence from integrationist pressures (cf. Ojanen 2006). They consequently lack substantive propositions that appear particularly promising for

explaining collective security policy. Thirdly, whereas IR theory has usually aimed at revealing general laws in international politics, foreign policy theory has primarily focused on foreign policy decision-making processes (cf. Hudson 2008: 16). In line with the former, this book primarily intends to explain the purpose rather than the process of ESDP activity – although, in the absence of directly observable data on the 'true' motives of decision-makers, analysis of the process is pivotal for gauging the objectives which likely informed decision-making.[5]

Yet whereas these three theoretical fields differ somewhat in what they seek to explain, those differences should also not be exaggerated. Theoretical approaches such as realism, liberalism and social constructivism have informed all three, and this study draws on theories only indirectly insofar as they inspire the four propositions whose plausibility it will compare. In doing so, it will primarily (and, as far as possible, comprehensively) engage those theoretical explanations for ESDP that have already been put forward in the literature. The latter however do not offer readily comparable accounts of the possible rationales that ESDP may have served because they partly remained under-specified and because hardly any of them has been applied to what the EU *does* in the framework of ESDP, i.e. its crisis management operations. This study's contribution thus consists not only in re-organizing and elaborating the different competing explanations, but also in applying them to an important and, in this respect, under-researched domain. Yet before we discuss *how* we might categorize the potential collective purposes expressed in ESDP, we need to dwell shortly on *what* it is we seek to explain.

ESDP operations are the result of a collective decision of EU governments to mandate such an operation. In comparing the explanatory power of competing propositions as to what may have led the latter to adopt the respective decision, this study takes a rationalist approach by assuming that these decisions are the result of some form of conscious weighing of the benefits and drawbacks on the part of EU governments. That calculation's rationality may very well be bounded in that governments were unwilling or unable to fully appreciate the consequences of their decisions – this is in fact very likely. The assumption of a rational calculation of expected consequences, i.e. a 'logic of expected consequences', contrasts however with theoretical approaches which assume that such decisions are the result of a 'logic of appropriateness' (cf. March and Olsen 1998). According to the latter, EU governments would initiate, approve or reject an operation because that would appear natural and legitimate given the role and identity they have internalized in

---

[5] The problems connected to evaluating the plausibility of diverging putative explanations will be discussed in greater detail in the context of this book's research design in chapter III, section c.

their foreign policy posture or within the EU more specifically. Instances of role conflict might accordingly be overcome through argumentative persuasion, which contrasts with the bargaining logic embraced by rationalist approaches (cf. Checkel and Moravcsik 2001).

While various authors have attempted to test the plausibility of the 'logic of appropriateness' against that of a 'logic of consequences', it is dubious whether such a comparison will yield convincing insights (cf. Fearon and Wendt 2002). Whether actors in international relations are *fundamentally* driven by the desire to fulfil the expectations of significant others or the pursuit of individually derived preferences (or which mix thereof) is more a debate about ontological assumptions than about observable empirical implications. In comparing the plausibility of potential policy drivers on the basis of attendant empirical implications, this study opts to start from a rationalist perspective that examines the consequences that EU governments expected from whichever course of action they chose. Contrary to some bad practice in the discipline, this choice regarding ontological assumptions however does not entail any *a priori* commitment to privileging material over ideational factors (cf. Wight 2002: 39-40). There is no categorical reason why the 'logic of expected consequences' would not be compatible with governmental concerns about societies' ideational preferences and its own legitimacy.

LATENT PURPOSES OF ESDP OPERATIONS

If we assume that governments' behaviour in the ESDP framework is the consequence of rational calculations, what is it that governments seek to accomplish by conducting ESDP operations? To the author's knowledge there is no comprehensive theory of the sources of state preferences in foreign policy. As others have argued, this also extends to the more specific activities subsumed under the label of peace-keeping (cf. Bures 2007).[6] Instead of attempting to weigh the import of (all) possible drivers against each other, scholars have explored specific explanations that focus on states' relative power in the international system, the quest for national welfare and security, emerging global norms and duties, state-level variables relating to national strategic cultures, party-political preferences, transnational pressure groups, bureaucratic and governmental politics, media attention, public opinion as well as individual leaders' psychology or ideological preferences (see e.g. Smith et al. 2008). As this non-exhaustive list suggests, it would be difficult to explore every single possible aspect for all actors across a number of

---

[6] Bures uses the term in a broad sense that makes it roughly equivalent to the sort of operations undertaken in the ESDP framework.

case studies. Therefore, this study will summarize and classify these potential drivers from the point of view of the formally responsible actors, namely EU governments. It will investigate what sort of interests they pursued, and which sort of pressures triggered their pursuit.

Any attempt to categorize the range of possible foreign policy drivers will likely be contentious and partial. In view of the potentially countless and historically contingent objectives governments may pursue in foreign policy, Raymond Aron concluded that a general, deductive theory of foreign policy was impossible (Aron 1968: 102). Yet at an abstract level we can arguably distinguish potential goals along two dimensions: whether foreign policy behaviour is primarily a function of pressures emanating from the international system or the domestic polity; and whether foreign policy primarily serves to increase actors' material power or whether it is driven by ideational interests and values. In other words, does foreign or domestic politics take precedence in governments' decision-making? And is foreign policy above all a function of the universal quest for survival and power, or does it reflect ideological purpose? These two distinctions yield the following matrix of potential drivers of security policy:

TABLE 1. POTENTIAL PURPOSES OF FOREIGN POLICY

Objectives	*Power as an end*	*Ideational purpose*
External purpose	I	II
Internal purpose	IV	III

The first distinction, between 'external' and 'internal' purposes, evokes the old divide between the international and the domestic level of analysis (cf. Singer 1961). It problematizes Ranke's claim of a 'primacy of foreign policy', the idea that a state's purpose consisted above all in its self-assertion in the international arena and that therefore foreign policy interests would take precedence over domestic politics (cf. Hefter 1951: 1; Cooper 2004: 102). Instead, it allows for the possibility that foreign policy may serve domestic political purposes. Given the EU's status as a hybrid between international arena for its member states and collective actor in the world, however, the distinction between 'external' and 'internal' seems more appropriate than one between 'international' and 'domestic': 'external' refers to the role that EU governments might want ESDP to play in the EU's environment whereas 'internal' refers to the function it could fulfil within the EU and/or its constitutive members.

The second distinction, between 'power as an end' and 'ideational' purpose, takes up a long-standing tension between those who emphasize the pursuit of (international and/or domestic) survival and power *per se* as the primary objective of politics and those underlining the specific, idea-bound objectives which define political purpose. In the context of security policy, 'power' comprises state and/or domestic political survival – and the power resources that enhance the likelihood of the latter. 'Ideational purposes', on the other hand, encompass the policy goals that political actors seek insofar as those are not primarily instrumental to enhancing power. Clearly, the two are anything but mutually exclusive, but it is principally possible to distinguish between cases where a policy responds to specific ideational objectives and those where it mostly serves as an instrument in the quest for power.

Whereas the above matrix takes up ongoing theoretical debates on ESDP – notably between constructivists and role theorists on the one, and realists on the other hand – it proposes to re-organize them in a novel way. It assumes that foreign policy can be conceptualized as serving (at least) one out of four purposes: starting from the upper left corner and moving clockwise, it could be targeted at (I) influencing the external power position of the EU and its member states; it might (II) promote some normative vision of global order; it could (III) serve to indirectly advance particular political ideas at home; and finally, it might (IV) be intended to bolster a government's domestic political position. Distinguishing between these purposes is obviously not always straightforward since the dividing lines are blurred and because these purposes are often causally interconnected. Achieving global ideational objectives, for example, may contribute to greater relative power which in turn might increase a government's domestic support – or the other way around, or in a different sequence. Moreover, these dimensions are frequently complementary. Public policy can conceivably be intended to simultaneously advance ideological agendas, provide functional solutions to policy problems and garner political support. There is no reason to suspect that foreign policy would necessarily be different in this respect. Yet this book aims to investigate which sort of purpose was *pre-eminent* when it came to ESDP operations – or at least to provide an analytical framework for examining this question.

The two dimensions that this analytical framework reflects have played an important role in many of the contemporary debates between the various theoretical paradigms in IR theory. As Colin Wight deplored, such paradigmatic debates however tend to conflate various distinctions in the service of demanding 'that one declares one's allegiance. Once declared, one's analytical frame of reference is specified and one's identity firmly fixed. As a rationalist you *will* privilege material factors, causation and science; as a post-positivist/reflectivist you *will* privilege ideational factors, deny causation and are anti-science' (Wight 2002: 40, emphasis original). Similar conflation has characterized the dispute over explaining ESDP,

which primarily pitted social constructivists against realists. Whereas realists emphasized the structural pressures of the international system, the importance of material capabilities and a consequentialist self-help logic, constructivists have often countered by insisting on the significance of national identities, ideational processes and the logic of appropriateness (cf. Rynning 2011: 32; Giegerich 2006: 29; Berenskoetter and Giegerich 2010; Meyer and Strickmann 2011). In disentangling these dimensions, the analytical framework above allows us to transcend the paradigmatic debates on ESDP at the same time as it enables us to zoom in on the substantive questions they have raised.

SPECIFYING LATENT FOREIGN POLICY PURPOSES

How can we further specify these four purposes with respect to ESDP? Earlier theoretical investigations offer us an array of purported functions that the policy supposedly serves, and which can be fused with the empty matrix above. When it comes to linking ESDP with external power interests (I), the clearest proposition has come from structural realists. They have interpreted ESDP as some form of 'balancing' of European states against the world's strongest power, the US (Posen 2004; Stromvik 2005; Walt 2005b: 126-132; Art 2006; Posen 2006; Jones 2007; Peters 2010). According to their analysis, ESDP chiefly has an external function that it exercises on behalf of EU member states, and the latter is defined in terms of (relative) power. On the other hand, the EU may also pursue an external agenda tied less to its narrow power interests, but rather a commitment to certain (shared) normative principles for global order (II). This is not only the way the EU presents itself, but it has been elaborated by theorists brandishing the notion of a 'civilian', 'normative' or 'ethical power Europe' (Manners 2002; Aggestam 2004; Manners 2008; EU 2010: art. 21; Duchêne 1972). According to this interpretation ESDP's primary purpose would similarly lie in influencing the EU's external environment, but it would be defined by the liberal global order it seeks to strengthen.

The above dichotomy between a quest for power and the desire to shape the world in accordance with certain ideas and values will be familiar fare for IR theorists. What has received lesser attention in the discipline are the (potential) domestic functions of foreign policy, namely the idea that external action might primarily be aimed at achieving internal objectives. However, a number of social constructivists and rationalists have indeed interpreted ESDP in this vein, namely as a tool for strengthening European political community (III) if not an exercise in EU state- and nation-building (Tonra 2003; Anderson and Seitz 2006; Mitzen 2006; Anderson 2008; Selden 2010). It might appear somewhat counterintuitive to categorize European nation-building as an 'internal' function; yet from the perspective of a putative collective EU foreign policy it would be fundamentally different from the

pursuit of policy objectives directed at the EU's environment. And whereas furthering European integration is admittedly just one possible internal ideational purpose of EU foreign policy, it is the one that has figured most prominently in the literature, constituting an important contender for explaining ESDP thus far.

Finally, EU foreign policy may be intended to bolster EU governments' domestic political power (IV). This proposition has received least attention in the literature but if, as Moravcsik wrote, 'the primary interest of governments is to maintain themselves in office', we might expect them to utilize foreign policy for that objective (cf. Moravcsik 1993: 483; Downs 1957). The relative dearth in applying this proposition to ESDP notwithstanding, some scholars have made arguments that (partly) fit this line of reasoning in contending that ESDP reflects domestic societal preferences, that it helps governments to share and deflect potential blame, and that preferences for a stronger European role tend to correlate with domestic political constraints on foreign policy, so that intergovernmental decision-making might be suspected to serve the purpose of strengthening governments vis-à-vis their societies (Kaim 2007; Dover 2007; Matlary 2009; Koenig-Archibugi 2004b). As with European state-building, foreign policy would primarily serve internal objectives, although in this case 'internal' refers to national polities rather than the EU as a whole. The reason is that the politicians who formally control ESDP decision-making are elected within these national polities, and are thus set to politically profit or otherwise as a function of any policy's popularity within that polity. We thus end up with the following matrix of four classes of objectives EU governments may have pursued via ESDP operations.

TABLE 2. POTENTIAL PURPOSES OF ESDP

Objectives	*Power as an end*	*Ideational purpose*
Purpose external to EU	Pursuit of relative external power / balancing	Promotion of liberal values abroad / 'Normative Power Europe'
Purpose internal to EU	Pursuit of domestic political gain	Promotion of EU integration

In sum, this matrix suggests that ESDP operations might serve to balance outside powers; to promote liberal norms and values in its external environment; to advance political integration within Europe; or to help governments meet domestic

expectations. These propositions arguably comprise and expand on the strongest theoretical explanations for ESDP that have been offered so far. Yet none of the potential purposes identified above has been systematically compared against what the EU is doing in the framework of ESDP, and some have not been applied to ESDP at all. This book aims to close that gap in the literature by systematizing, specifying and comparing the explanatory power of each of these ideas against the evidence provided by four ESDP operations. The caveats set out earlier in this section showed that this analytical framework cannot comprise all (possible) theoretical explanations for the drivers behind ESDP operations. Yet it offers a heuristic starting point which is theoretically driven and reflective of the state of the theoretical literature on ESDP while avoiding the danger of overly restricting the domain of possible findings. The rest of this chapter will explore each proposition in greater detail.

B. ESDP AND THE QUEST FOR EXTERNAL POWER (I)

This section will further specify the proposition that ESDP might be driven by an attempt to increase the EU's relative power in the world. The underlying idea has been the focus of structural realists' work, and some of the latter have also applied it to ESDP. At the same time, there has been little theoretical competition for realists in linking ESDP to the pursuit of external power. Therefore, the first proposition can be transferred quite easily from the existing realist literature – even though not all structural realists would necessarily subscribe to the notion that ESDP indeed served this purpose (cf. Rynning 2011: 26-8; Hyde-Price 2006).

Structural realism posits that a state is primarily concerned with its external environment and its own power position therein. This concern is deduced from the anarchical nature of the international system. Given the basic assumption that every state wants to survive but needs to rely on self-help, its relative power position is pivotal. Power is a means rather than an end though. What states primarily seek is security, i.e. assurance of their survival as independent actors (Waltz 1979: 126). In order to protect themselves against those that are more powerful, states will ally and bring about a balance of power (Waltz 1979: 128). Based on this proposition various realist scholars have argued that European states' cooperation in foreign policy is the consequence of the US' overwhelming weight in international politics after 1991, and that the former was intended to balance the latter (Posen 2004; Art 2004, 2006; Jones 2007).

The notion that international politics is largely driven by the power-political demands of the system rather than the preferences of its individual actors has a long pedigree. That 'order is the result of balancing by states under the condition of

anarchy to counter opposing power concentrations or threats […] is the most elegant and time-honored theory of international order' (Ikenberry 2002: 3). Applying it to Europe, Barry Posen argued that 'unless the ultimate failure of all aspiring hegemons on the Eurasian landmass in modern times is to be attributed to chance or the intervention of Providence, it must be concluded that balancing ultimately happens and is backed with enough force to bring down the greatest powers' (Posen 2004: 7). From this vantage point, his argument that ESDP provided fresh empirical evidence for such balancing behaviour is only consequential.

The basic problem with applying the balancing proposition to contemporary Europe is that it is difficult to square with the fact that most EU member states seem content to acquiesce into US hegemony. In fact, they are cooperating rather closely with the US in NATO and elsewhere. Kenneth Waltz has motivated his expectation of future balancing against the US 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? It is possible that such alignment could be explained by the sheer concentration of power in the US' hands, but the required degree of consensus among EU powers sits uneasily with the 'relative gains' logic inherent in a balancing strategy such as the one supposedly underlying ESDP (cf. Wohlforth 1999: 31).

Realists' answer to the absence of a determined counter-push against the US has consisted in widening the concept of balancing to include 'weak', 'soft' or 'constrained' balancing (Posen 2004; Pape 2005; Art 2006; Walt 2005b: 126-132; Peters 2010). They solve the puzzle of a European alliance without an appropriate threat by replacing that direct threat with an indirect, longer-term one where European states need to hedge against future vagaries of the US. In a nutshell, their argument is that the crucial (and shared) motivation for ESDP stems from EU members' desire to constrain the US (Art 2006: 182). 'Soft balancers' have had to concede that the purported balancing behaviour was not triggered by security threats, an admission which, in the eyes of some detractors, robs the balancing concept of its traditional meaning and thus undermines the argument's validity (Brooks and Wohlforth 2005: 78-79; Lieber and Alexander 2006: 192; see also Howorth and Menon 2009). Yet it is possible to conceive of incentives for balancing in the absence of any perception of threat if we adopt the logic of a 'balance of influence' argument (cf. Stromvik 2005). Because materialist versions of the balancing theory that focus on capabilities appear unrealistic from the start, Stromvik instead builds on Jeffrey Hart's conception of power as the ability to influence events. Testing this hypothesis against rival explanations, she finds that the 'EU's foreign policy cooperation has intensified during (or quite soon after)

transatlantic disagreements over international security management' (Stromvik 2005: 180).

Whereas any threat-based balancing logic founders on its inherent contradictions, the 'balance of influence' hypothesis offers a promising starting point for scrutinizing whether systemic power-political pressures are driving the European Security and Defence Policy. Although this proposition's logic diverges from realism's core concern for survival in an anarchical world, it reflects the theoretical paradigm insofar as the pivotal driving factor behind foreign policy activity is the search for relative power. However, as all foreign policy can generally be interpreted as an attempt to increase a state's influence in some way, we have to ascertain that this proposition does not become an unfalsifiable catch-all alternative. It is therefore necessary to insist that 'balancing for influence' involve some sacrifice in the shape of policy trade-offs (cf. Brooks and Wohlforth 2006: 188). Hence, it should be the desire to constrain third parties rather than a general aspiration for influence that would lead us to conclude that systemic balancing pressures drive ESDP. Or, in the words of Stephen Walt, such policies would reflect a '*conscious coordination of diplomatic action in order to obtain outcomes contrary to U.S. preferences*' (Walt 2005b: 126, emphasis original).

The most widespread proposition tying ESDP to the pursuit of external power thus revolves around the notion that the policy is intended to balance the US, and this hypothesis' strength seems greatest if it is focused on constraining the influence (rather than the threat or material power) of the latter. This idea in fact underlies a considerable part of the entire theoretical literature seeking to explain ESDP, notably the structural realist accounts. Alternative realist explanations that might focus on the role of Russia (as a potential threat to Europe) would be less convincing since ESDP hardly provides value-added in this respect over NATO. In fact, by alienating the US ESDP could be construed to undermine NATO and thereby expose EU member states to a greater threat. Yet although no one has argued as yet that Russia's power has been a driver for ESDP, we should keep it in mind insofar as it may provide a similar if secondary incentive for EU states to stick together.

The evidence realists cite in support of their proposition that ESDP was about balancing against the US is not only based on theoretical considerations. Analysts often point to one alleged instigator in particular: France. French foreign policy has traditionally insisted on national independence and *grandeur*, praised the advantages of a 'multi-polar' global order, and exhorted fellow Europeans to adopt

their own position autonomously rather than follow Washington.[7] Ever since French president Charles de Gaulle pulled France out of NATO's military chain of command in 1966 and twice vetoed Britain's accession to the European Community in 1963 and 1967 because the latter supposedly represented Washington's 'Trojan horse', French foreign policy has been perceived as seeking to balance the US. Since the 1950s, French governments repeatedly attempted to create an 'autonomous' European defence alliance, and Paris played a pivotal role in bringing about ESDP in 1998/99. Moreover, France has usually insisted on keeping such European endeavours as far removed from NATO as possible, leading to the charge that it sought to undermine the latter. Therefore, the importance of France's imprint on ESDP has often been regarded as a proxy for the EU's balancing intentions vis-à-vis the United States.

In short, a number of academic analysts have argued that the ESDP served to increase EU governments' relative power in the world by pooling their capabilities, and that the primary purpose of this was to increase the EU's global influence at the US' expense. The resultant first proposition is thus that *ESDP operations primarily serve to counter-balance the influence of the US.* This implies that considerations of balancing would have to take precedence over other concerns in the decision-making surrounding an operation. For this proposition to be vindicated, we should thus find that EU decision-makers were primarily focused on the power-political consequences of their activities, especially with respect to constraining US influence; that EU decisions and operations were based on a strategy which could credibly result in an increase in relative power vis-à-vis the US; that France took the lead in accordance with its traditional balancing objectives; and that the US would disapprove of, if not oppose these operations. Conversely, the absence of constraining intentions vis-à-vis the US and of power-political considerations (as evidenced by a credible logic by which EU action would result in greater relative power) would spell trouble for this proposition – as would US support for ESDP operations.

Does the above proposition cover all possible ways in which the quest for external power might inform ESDP? Although it resonates with a majority of those theoretical analyses that have sought to link the two in an explanatory framework, it does not cover all possible variations, and neither can it claim to represent all work that has been carried out under the label of 'realism'. The proposition notably does not fully

---

[7] Anthropomorphizing capitals only serves to enhance readability – Washington et al. are simply shorthand for the respective government, unless specified otherwise. It should not be read to imply that governments are always unitary actors, but simply that they collectively acted on certain motives in a given situation.

comprise the explanations offered by classical realism because the latter often remain too indeterminate. For example, one recent review concluded that classical realism saw ESDP 'as a result of the changes wrought on Europe's nation-states by Europe's history, political choices and global processes' (Rynning 2011: 32). That sounds very plausible, but tells us too little about the suspected drivers to be channelled into a clear-cut proposition that could be contrasted with credible alternatives.

The first proposition also does not fully include those approaches that emphasize states' incentives to pool resources in order to enhance their own influence, irrespective of third parties' power, for example by creating 'voice opportunities' (Grieco 1996). The reason to shirk such a wide definition is that they cannot automatically be attributed to causal mechanisms which derive from the competitive search for relative power (cf. Legro and Moravcsik 1999). 'Voice opportunities' might also be about promoting a state's ideational interests or about advancing domestically popular causes. A search for influence defined too broadly would simply lead to a lack of falsifiability and could at most be contrasted with 'idealist' accounts – and any idea or ideal could still be subsumed under 'voice opportunities'. The first proposition thus resonates with realist thinking yet represents but one (albeit important and not very restrictive) interpretation of structural realism. Its focus on power-political systemic pressures moreover contrasts sharply with the normative purposes that the following alternative account ascribes to European foreign policy.

C. ESDP AND 'NORMATIVE POWER EUROPE' (II)

Where realists have invoked the pressure of power politics to explain the emergence of ESDP, a second strand in the literature has cited the normative aspirations of the EU for a better world to explain why the Union is increasingly engaging in crisis management. As in the case of our first proposition, its collective foreign policy would primarily be directed at its environment. Its objectives however would be less defined by the power position it would strive for than by the purposes for which power is used. Rather than defining security competitively in the sense of relative power, the EU would seek to transform (parts of) its environment in its own image. The claim that purpose trumps the quest for power and security might sound naive, but could also be sign of a greater rationality that sought to overcome a competition-based international security system in favour of collective security based on institutions providing for the non-violent resolution of conflicts – an objective often invoked by statesmen and international treaties. This proposition has a long intellectual pedigree in idealist, liberal and constructivist writing and is by no means a feature unique to the European Union.

To the author's knowledge there is no scholarly work that explicitly infers ESDP action from the EU's ideational aspirations. A number of analysts have however made related claims which could be transposed into such a proposition. To start with, Lisbeth Aggestam has argued that by the late 1990s British, French and German policy-makers converged around a conception of Europe as an 'ethical power'.[8] This 'common role of Europe as an ethical power', she continued, 'is slowly cementing a presence in international politics through the development of a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)' (Aggestam 2004: 20). Though less concerned with ESDP, Ian Manners has similarly argued that the EU is playing a transformative role in international politics, promoting a number of universally applicable principles such as democracy, the (international) rule of law, and fundamental human rights (Manners 2008: 46; 2002). John Owen has asserted that 'a major cause' for EU cooperation in the field of crisis management was 'the need to carry out liberal foreign policy more efficiently', implying that liberal purpose was more important than the exercise of power as such (Owen 2001: 142). Likewise, Michael Smith argued that 'the EU is increasingly attempting to articulate a unique vision of *ultimate ends* as well: promoting itself as a "civilizing force" for global governance and world peace' (Smith 2011: 160-1, emphasis original). Finally, even an avowed structural realist has argued that 'the EU has come to serve as the institutional repository of the *second-order normative concerns* of EU member states', although the implication here is that these are very much concerns of *second* order and partly reflect European hypocrisy (Hyde-Price 2008: 31, emphasis original). This caveat notwithstanding, his claim suggests that the EU might pursue a special if perhaps inconsequential normative role in its foreign policy.

The idea that the EU's foreign policy primarily flows from European principles and values is not only suggested by various scholars. It also reflects the way the EU presents itself. Its foundational 'Treaty on European Union' stipulates that '[t]he Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law' (EU 2010: art. 21). Similar aspirations can already be found in the Union's 'European Security Strategy' of 2003, which

---

[8] As the claim of convergence makes clear, the international role of the EU is linked to national role conceptions of its member states, which in turn relate to their respective national political and strategic cultures. See section e) for a detailed discussion.

expressed the EU's ambition to 'contribute to an effective multilateral system leading to a fairer, safer and more united world' (European Council 2003: 15).

What are the values that the EU putatively promotes? As the above quote from the EU treaty indicates, the principles that the EU seeks to advance largely overlap with classic liberal values: their emphasis on human and civil rights, democratic representation and rule of law underlines the importance societies attach to the freedom of the individual (cf. Doyle 2008: 50). Moreover, the EU treaty explicitly affirms the universalist tinge of these principles. This poses only limited problems in relations with other liberal democracies because they are founded on comparable value systems, but it creates tensions with respect to governments who abuse the rights liberal democracies have come to consider self-evident (cf. Doyle 1986; Doyle 2008). The commitment to the idea that liberal norms should apply universally might thus create the basis for a normatively driven foreign policy that seeks to support other societies in a transformation towards liberal polities.

By itself, the EU's high-flying rhetoric should not be overemphasized since many nations' constitutional documents embrace similarly benign aspirations. Even the US' hawkish 2002 National Security Strategy claimed that '[o]ur Nation's cause has always been bigger than our Nation's defense' (Bush 2002: 1; cf. Sjursen 2006: 240). To ascribe (universally) good intentions to one's own policy is inherently self-serving. As Richard Youngs has pointed out, the EU's supposedly normative policy of promoting human rights has frequently been subordinated to strategic self-interest, changing in accordance to what looked politically convenient at given moments (Youngs 2004). If it was indeed self-interested political convenience as opposed to commitment to liberal principles that drove policy, then the causal effect of the invoked liberal principles would be spurious. However, there are reasons for giving the EU the benefit of the doubt at the outset of our investigation. It is not only a special kind of actor in international politics, but it arguably operates in the absence of significant international constraints and thus might actually be in a position to pursue a value-based foreign policy. That does not necessarily imply that it will, but the EU *could* plausibly define its security in such comprehensive terms as international rule of law and universal application of human rights. Moreover, for EU foreign policy to be guided by liberal principles there is no need for European states to entirely abandon power politics. As Hyde-Price suggested they may simply pursue such objectives in other institutional venues, using the EU as a convenient vehicle for secondary normative goals (Hyde-Price 2006, 2008). The EU's averred normative approach might thus be facilitated by the fact that there is a difference between European and EU foreign policy.

The claim that ESDP serves to promote the liberal values that the EU vaunts is therefore *ex ante* plausible enough to warrant closer examination. However, how can

we be persuaded that any invocation of norms and ideals does not just reflect an 'uncanny ability to make the most inspiring idealism coincide almost perfectly with rather ordinary objectives' (Lundestad 1990: 41)? As Helen Sjursen has argued, that distinction might be revealed by the extent to which the EU relies on legal norms, i.e. whether specific policies are based on generally applicable and potentially universalisable and self-binding principles of conduct (Sjursen 2006: 243-5). In particular, 'a focus on strengthening the cosmopolitan dimension to international law would be a strong indicator for a 'normative' or 'civilizing' power' (Sjursen 2006: 249). Insofar as a cosmopolitan dimension would emphasize the rights of individuals (as opposed to states) in international law and promote human security, such a focus would clearly promote liberal values. Scholars need to be careful not to set the bar unrealistically high, but readers should note that this characterization of normative power does not demand a revolution of international relations, but 'merely' an effort by the EU to pursue these values in a fashion that reaches beyond their invocation whenever this coincides with self-interest. As in the case of the first proposition, i.e. that the EU was balancing for influence, we however need to make sure that the pursuit of normative principles does not become an explanation by default. In order for us to accept that the quest for expanding liberal values was a driving force, the EU would also need to show that it was willing to pay a price for realizing them.

In short, if ESDP was an instrument of EU governments' global pursuit of liberal values, we would expect that the activities undertaken in this framework reflect and further these principles. The resultant second proposition is thus that *ESDP operations primarily serve to promote collectively held liberal values.* In other words, the principles laid down in the treaties such as advancing democracy, the (international) rule of law, and fundamental human rights would have to take precedence over other considerations in the decision-making surrounding an operation. For this proposition to be vindicated, we would expect to find that EU decision-makers, in designing and directing foreign policy, were primarily concerned over the effective promotion of such principles; that the quest for improving the world proved more important than narrow self-interest; that EU decisions and operations were based on a strategy to this end; that EU governments were willing to take a risk and/or pay a price for the promotion of such principles in terms of power and/or welfare; and that the US would tend to support these operations due to its foundation on, and promotion of similar liberal values. Conversely, the proposition's plausibility would suffer if ESDP operations were not informed by liberal values, if they would not add up to a credible scheme for promoting the latter, or were contingent on being cheap or serving other EU interests.

This second proposition clearly resonates with classic liberal IR theory although, as in the case of realism, it cannot claim to fully represent the approach much less test

it (cf. e.g. Morgan 2007: 30). It also overlaps with some constructivist interpretations that have sought to understand foreign policy as deriving from (national) identities, which in turn were seen as expressions of, primarily, domestic ideas of collective purpose and normative aspirations (see e.g. Katzenstein 1996; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Risse et al. 1999; Hopf 2002). Clearly, the EU could be imbued with a similar identity – and Aggestam made that argument when she contended that 'British, French and German policy-makers gradually converged on a common role for Europe as an 'ethical power' at the end of the 1990s' (Aggestam 2004: 12). This particular role identity also resonates with the 'English School's' concept of 'good international citizenship' (cf. Dunne 2008). Dunne takes care to emphasize that this concept blends the idealism of promoting liberal values with realist prudence, but the above proposition does not necessarily imply that the pursuit of principles be reckless. Rather, it merely entails a focus on supporting the spread of liberal values abroad in a way that is not reducible to (collective) competitive self-interest.

In sum, the second proposition draws on a number of diverse theoretical approaches. These approaches overlap, however, in their focus on the ideational content of foreign policy, which in the case of the EU is most frequently associated with the promotion of liberal values. The main difference between the first two propositions then lies in whether the inescapable realities of global power politics or the normative aspirations of the EU inspire the ESDP operations we can observe. Both propositions share the expectation that the EU's collective purpose as expressed in such action is directed towards its environment, albeit for different purposes and with different implications as for the EU's likely strategies and priorities as well as third parties' likely response. By contrast, the subsequent sections will discuss two alternative interpretations which conjecture that ESDP action might be more about European navel-gazing than a tool for influencing its environment.

D. ESDP AND THE SEARCH FOR 'EVER CLOSER UNION' (III)

In seeking to theorise ESDP, some scholars have identified a third rationale which they have credited with providing a convincing explanation for the phenomenon. This is the idea that the true purpose of a common foreign and defence policy might lie less in what it could achieve for the world than what it could do for European integration. In other words, ESDP may not so much have been about influencing the EU's environment, but about furthering the union among Europe's nations and governments. Such a focus is partly vindicated by history. European Political Cooperation, the precursor of the EU's current Common Foreign and Security Policy into which ESDP is embedded, 'was not created to help Europe solve international problems; it was created to prevent international problems from disrupting the

Community' (Smith 2004: 4). The Union's seemingly incessant preoccupation with tinkering with its institutional setup over the last two decades may suggest that the days of European self-absorption have not waned – which makes the suggestion that a common defence policy might primarily serve to advance institutional integration *prima facie* plausible.

The idea that ESDP may be the result of the objective of building closer European political community has primarily been suggested by a number of constructivist observers. 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: 738). Others have stressed how European foreign policy cooperation responded to EU governments' desire for 'ontological security'. Faced with a 'deep, incapacitating fear of not being able to organize the threat environment', actors search out routines to bring threats under cognitive control (Mitzen 2006: 273). In the case of the EU, this was purportedly achieved by a 'coordination reflex', which helped EU member states to maintain a sense of stable identity in the face of deep uncertainty (Mitzen 2006: 275-80). What this suggests is that EU governments may be primarily interested in maintaining and fostering such a sense of shared identity rather than in achieving specific foreign policy objectives. This proposition also resonates with research carried out under the label of 'Europeanization'. The concept has been criticized for its exceeding flexibility, comprising as it does processes of collective identity formation, 'uploading' of national preferences to the EU level, and 'downloading' of EU policy initiatives into national political processes (Moumoutzis 2011). Yet the idea built into the concept of Europeanization, namely that EU governments may adapt national positions to accommodate European policies, relates to the proposition that European integration as such might provide an ulterior motive (cf. Gross 2007b: 505). This proposition is also reflected in the writings of Michael Smith, who, from an institutionalist perspective, argued that the EU's collective foreign policy 'helps provide a valuable social commodity for the EU: internal unity' (Smith 2004: 257).

A second, even more radical approach linking ESDP with the objective of closer European integration has been proposed by Stephanie Anderson and Thomas Seitz, who have argued that ESDP represented a way of European nation-building via 'swaggering' (Anderson and Seitz 2006: 34). In the absence of credible resource commitments to ESDP, the argument runs, the whole enterprise makes sense only as a step towards new symbols of European nationhood: 'ESDP is a tool for creating pride among the people and support for the European Union' (Anderson 2008: 62). The primary objective of an EU foreign policy, in other words, is to garner legitimacy for the Union rather than to shape the EU's environment in whichever way.

The idea that ESDP may be linked to the quest for 'ever closer Union' that the EU Treaty's preamble invokes has even received indirect support from realist quarters. Zachary Selden ventured the thesis that the ESDP 'is in large part a product of the institutional development of the EU and the consolidation of its authority over internal issues' (Selden 2010: 397). Drawing parallels with the US' development in the late 19th century, Selden argues that central authorities on both sides of the Atlantic developed means of power projection because they could, rather than because of any specific threats or balancing necessities (Selden 2010: 398). Selden's line of reasoning suggests that 'central authorities', i.e. the European institutions, will in a first step be interested in centralizing power, irrespective of foreign policy necessities. In stretching this argument, one might suspect that these authorities may leverage foreign policy for the purpose of centralizing power – a logic that would chime with the larger idea that ESDP served the purpose of European integration.

Whereas all of the accounts related above differ in the precise causal chain by which they explain EU cooperation in the field of foreign policy, they share the idea that such cooperation might be embraced more for internal than external reasons. Such cooperation and the European unity that it attempts to generate is seen as a goal in itself, and ultimately as a means towards deeper political integration within the Union. This begs the question how such an objective could be distinguished from the more specific aims that foreign policy seeks to achieve – or those generic objectives that the preceding two propositions laid out. Beyond professed motivations, the answer again lies partly in the price that the EU would be willing to pay. Would it be willing to sacrifice external influence or normative principles for the sake of European unity, or, alternatively, are its activities primarily sensible as acts for the sake of European action?

In short, if ESDP was an instrument for EU governments to pursue closer European integration, we would expect that the Union's operations were conceived in a way to increase EU visibility and advance its legitimacy. The third proposition is thus that *ESDP operations are driven by EU governments' desire to promote European integration by means of showcasing the EU's ability to contribute to international security.* To put it differently, the pursuit of international visibility for the EU as an international security actor would have to prevail over alternative considerations in the decision-making surrounding an operation. For this proposition to convince us, we would expect to find an emphasis on 'flag-raising exercises'; a conscious choice for the EU framework against available institutional alternatives (such as NATO or the UN) on the grounds of political visibility rather than functional adequacy; and an emphasis on EU unity and EU activity as a goal in and of itself, irrespective of the effect an operation could be expected to have on its target. By contrast, if we were to find that considerations of external influence trumped concerns for EU unity and

action, or if the latter did not have any recognizable impact on decision-making, this would undermine the plausibility of our third proposition – even if ESDP operations in effect were to have led to greater European integration.

How can we distinguish the proposition that ESDP operations have been promoted for the sake of European integration from the two rival explanations discussed earlier on? Clearly, the idea that ESDP be done to promote a more visible, coherent and legitimate EU is in principle consistent with the latter. Further integration may put the EU into a better position to pursue external power or promote liberal values. Yet whereas the propositions are presented as competing explanations, evidence for one of them does not necessarily falsify the others. What is at issue are the drivers that have been behind ESDP missions, not the ultimate state of the world that they may (un)wittingly advance. If there is evidence that such operations seek to promote European integration, we can still weigh the claim that this may 'only' be an intermediate objective on the way to ulterior goals. In contrast to the argument advanced by some realists (cf. Jones 2007; Art 2006), however, the present study does not accept closer cooperation between European states *in itself* as proof of such ulterior motives.

The proposition that ESDP served European integration primarily takes up social constructivist interpretations of European foreign policy which have focused on the relationship between EU action and an emerging European security identity. Yet whereas many constructivists have sought to understand the interaction between the two, this third proposition focuses only on the extent to which the objective of closer European integration fostered EU action – rather than the feedback the latter might have (had) on closer integration. The reasons for this self-limitation are twofold. On the one hand, the operations under review in this study took place within a relatively short timeframe so that their impact on the formulation of basic governmental preferences (such as the one for a EU security identity) can be expected to be limited as of yet. On the other hand, this study self-consciously opted to limit itself by starting from a set of classes of possible foreign policy goals rather than seeking to identify their fundamental sources. It may well be that '[t]hrough complex processes of institutionalization, the EU has fundamentally changed the way its member states define and pursue their interests' (Smith 2004: 263). As Michael Smith's monograph however makes clear, these results were the long-term and often unintended consequences of cooperation rather than governments' explicit objectives. The third proposition, by contrast, simply examines to what extent the deliberate quest for closer European integration has had an impact on ESDP policy-making, not whether the resulting habits may have impacted back on national preferences with respect to integration.

In short, the proposition that the objective of closer political union in Europe might lead the EU to be active in the framework of ESDP is consistent with, and made plausible by, the research agendas of several theoretical approaches in international relations as well as European integration studies. At the same time, it does not (aim to) do justice to all possible hypotheses that could be derived from these approaches. Rather, as pointed out before, these theories and their previous applications to EU foreign policy serve as inspirations for potential causal mechanisms which might be at work in the run-up to ESDP operations. After thus examining the way in which ideational interests in European integration may have inspired EU external action, we now turn to the remaining power-political interest that potentially informed governments' positions: their pursuit of domestic political profit by way of European external action.

E. ESDP AND DOMESTIC POLITICS (IV)

The final proposition explores how EU foreign policy might have been targeted at winning domestic approval. This proposition combines two ideas: first, that foreign policy objectives reflect societal preferences, and second that governments, in making foreign policy, primarily consider likely domestic reactions. The first consideration is rather widespread (if sometimes implicit) and has informed work in most theoretical paradigms: from constructivist investigations into the 'national strategic cultures' underpinning ESDP via liberal analyses of member state preferences and preference assumptions in rationalist institutionalism up to classical realists' assertion that foreign policy behaviour was shaped by 'national legacy in terms of history, culture and outlook' (Rynning 2011: 31). This shared assumption has however rarely resulted in systematic comparative analysis of the extent to which governments have represented such domestic preferences, and how their influence on governments' positions compares to other drivers in their impact on foreign policy.

Whereas most researchers agree that states in international politics promote their national interests, the drivers behind the latter are contested between the various theoretical paradigms. It is primarily scholars from the constructivist and liberal camp who have sought to elucidate the sources of these interests within national polities (cf. Checkel 2008: 74; Moravcsik 1997). When it comes to understanding ESDP, the most important strand within constructivism in this respect has been the literature on 'national strategic cultures' and 'political cultures'. This literature links states' behaviour to nationally shared sets of beliefs, values and ideas about the appropriate means and ends of foreign policy (see e.g. Giegerich 2006; Meyer 2006; Katzenstein 1996; Duffield 1999). It conceptually overlaps with the role-theoretical literature discussed in the section on 'normative power Europe', but it differs to the

extent that it stresses the differences between *national* strategic cultures within the EU rather than the convergence if not consensus on the EU's external role that the former highlighted. For this reason such cultural approaches have often been understood as constraints on, rather than drivers behind a collective foreign policy (cf. Hyde-Price 2004: 326-7; Giegerich 2006; Duffield 1999).

Although the literature on national security cultures provides a plausible framework for linking national beliefs and values to foreign policy activity, it cannot be directly appropriated for the proposition that governments may use foreign policy for domestic political purpose. The reason is that the causal link this literature invokes runs directly from nationally shared principles to governmental behaviour. Governments hence do not use beliefs *strategically* with respect to their societies, but out of a stable and collectively shared understanding of history. Changes in policy are possible if rare as such national consensus may intermittently be punctured by events that lead to its re-interpretation. One frequently cited example is the effect of the 1990s Balkan wars on Germany's earlier refusal to use force 'out of area' (cf. Hyde-Price 2001; Maull 2000). Yet whereas the culturalist literature often relies on a 'logic of appropriateness', the exact nature of the link between shared beliefs and foreign policy positions is generally asserted rather than tested against alternative explanations. 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. As Brian Rathbun put it, '[e]lectoral and cultural concerns work in tandem' (Rathbun 2004: 37). Similarly, it is conceivable that the 'norm entrepreneurs' that constructivists have often invoked to explain policy change promote new norms as a result of the proven inadequacy or incoherence of their previous policies (cf. Giegerich 2006), but also that they do so because they perceive political opportunity in an adjusted policy position.

In short, there is *a priori* no reason as to why the relationship between national beliefs and values and foreign policy stances should follow a logic of appropriateness rather than one of expected consequences, and the literature on ESDP and national strategic cultures does not provide strong arguments to that effect. Much of the empirical evidence of this relationship that scholars in the culturalist line of research have assembled could thus also be marshalled in support of the idea that governments attempt to please domestic audiences. This observation obviously should not be turned around into the equally flawed conclusion that any deference to or defiance of national belief systems is necessarily proof of politicians' scheming calculations. The question of likely motives is rather one to be decided on the basis of the empirical evidence – although, as this chapter's introduction warned, that might frequently be difficult and sometimes impossible to decide. This caveat notwithstanding, the fourth proposition examines whether governments are

primarily influenced by domestic expectations rather than cultural conditioning because this fits more clearly into the matrix of potential purposes of foreign policy and the study's meta-theoretical choice for a 'logic of expected consequences' set out at the beginning of this chapter.

The second theoretical paradigm in which the link between national polities and foreign policy has undergone close examination is liberalism. The relationship has figured most prominently in the 'new liberalism' literature, which claims that governments (face strong incentives to) represent domestic interests in foreign policy-making (Moravcsik 2008, 1997; see also Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2005). According to this interpretation, democratically elected governments respond to the demands and expectations of domestic groups or the general public out of self-interest, namely their desire to remain in office (Moravcsik 1993: 483; Doyle 2008: 61; Downs 1957). Remarkably, this idea has not received a lot of attention in the literature on ESDP (cf. Krotz and Maher 2011: 571), despite the fact that 'liberal intergovernmentalism', the EU studies equivalent of 'new liberalism', has been fairly influential in the literature on European integration. Two monographs have used this framework to investigate the emergence of the ESDP (Kaim 2007; Dover 2007). Both however interpret liberal intergovernmentalism in a loose fashion, with Kaim emphasizing structural changes in the international environment over domestic expectations of governmental responses and Dover criticizing the framework for misrepresenting the nature of the domestic political process as well as its inability to subsume motivations relating to external objectives such as 'geopolitical considerations and the desire to appear pro-European' (Dover 2005: 521).

The idea that ESDP operations may serve governments in their quest for political profit largely overlaps with new liberalism's emphasis on representation of societal interests. Yet it is also able to incorporate Dover's criticism insofar as it does not depend on a process whereby governments simply aggregate societal wishes.[9] Instead, it implies that governments may act out of their own volition if they expect net political gains from (in-)action. Moreover, whereas (sincerely) geopolitical motives are indeed beyond the explanatory power of a framework focused on domestic political gain, the desire to *appear* pro-European or otherwise might just be explained by the latter, provided the intended target is the domestic audience. In principle, even geopolitical or European considerations could thus fall under a 'domestic politics' explanation if there is sufficient reason to believe that such

---

[9] It should be noted that liberal intergovernmentalism, too, does not predict that foreign policy is a consequence of direct societal pressure, but that governments in this domain are relatively free to pursue symbolic goals 'under loose public or elite opinion constraints' (Moravcsik 1993: 495).

considerations were primarily the result of an attempt to direct attention away from domestic political conflicts and scandals, or to appear at home as a competent steward in matters foreign policy. The crucial question dividing this proposition from the first is whether the perception of domestic audiences or foreign powers is the primary target of any policy. Distinguishing between the two may sometimes be difficult, but can arguably be deduced from the (lack of) credibility of the strategy used to pursue the ostensible foreign policy objective.

Since domestic politics in EU member states is structured by competition between political parties, a focus on the former begs the question how foreign policy might relate to governments' partisan composition. Surprisingly little comparative research has been done in IR to systematically link party politics and foreign policy decisions – perhaps because of the continuing legacy of a focus on 'national' interests. One very notable exception is a monograph by Brian Rathbun which examines the relationship between party ideology and support for humanitarian intervention in the Balkans with respect to the three European countries this book also focuses on, the UK, France and Germany (Rathbun 2004). He concludes that there was a palpable partisan divide in that left-leaning parties supported interventions on account of 'inclusive' party ideologies emphasizing solidarity with (vulnerable) foreigners whereas right-leaning parties focused on 'exclusive' objectives such as foreign policy credibility and suppression of refugees. He moreover finds this 'policy-seeking' behaviour a stronger explanation than rival accounts based on 'national culture' or electoral 'office-seeking'.

While the partisan hue of national governments doubtlessly plays a role in their respective approaches to foreign policy-making, the fourth proposition, in linking foreign policy to domestic politics, does not distinguish *ex ante* between party ideology and 'office-seeking' behaviour. The reasons are threefold: first, the distinction is difficult to test empirically. Rathbun expects office-seeking behaviour to be characterized by the party leadership initiating policy changes prior to elections and compares this to changes introduced by experts after events threaten parties' ideological coherence (cf. Rathbun 2004: 35). Behaviour in line with the first hypothesis may however carry significant risks. As politics supposedly stops at the water's edge, blatantly opportunistic changes in party position that are not carefully couched in ideological recalibration might provoke a backlash and undermine party credibility (cf. Downs 1957: 142). Moreover, incoherent responses to the issues of the day also present political risks. In other words, what Rathbun defines as 'policy-seeking' could very well be a more reflexive mode of 'office-seeking' behaviour whereas his 'office-seeking' behaviour equals a populism that might be self-defeating for the mainstream parties he focuses on. The second reason for dropping the distinction between party ideology and 'office-seeking' is that the timeframe that this study focuses on saw only one change in government that would allow us to

compare parties' stances independent of whether they carry governmental responsibility or not.[10] Thirdly, the operations undertaken in the framework of ESDP were far smaller in scale, less risky, and therefore less politicised than the Balkan interventions of the 1990s. In the absence of politicization, partisan debate is much less likely.

Given the conceptual, empirical, and theoretical caveats listed above, an abstraction from partisan ideology at the investigation's outset seems justifiable. That does not imply that such findings are excluded. At the conceptual level, however, party ideology can for now be subsumed under the quest for domestic political gain since its independent effects are likely to be small in our cases and correlated with the latter. Governments as well as political parties need to show that they stand for something while managing the risks of a potential fallout with public opinion at large. This leads us to the question of what policies governments might pursue in order to achieve domestic political gain.

In and by itself, the claim that governments orient foreign policy action toward 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 ESDP-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. Put differently, their authority and 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 whose benefits are dubious, uncertain or essentially public goods. 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, historical and cultural factors.

Does this entail that EU governments can just do whatever they believe might benefit them domestically? It certainly does not because EU governments are

---

[10] The very first discussions on the earliest operation under consideration here started in 2002, and all operations were in their implementation phase by 2009. In between, only the German government's 'colour' changed, and even that change was arguably minor for foreign policy as Social Democrats who had previously led the government held onto the Foreign Office.

significantly constrained in their behaviour by the interdependence of state preferences (cf. Moravcsik 1997: 523). Interdependence arises first and foremost with respect to the countries that form the object of foreign policy. As multiple attempts throughout history show, it is simply difficult to influence foreigners (Cooper 2004: 113-27). Yet interdependence is particularly palpable in the case of multilateral foreign policy cooperation, where consensus between 27 member states on whether and how to attempt to exert such influence is a formal prerequisite to interaction with target countries. Debate and negotiations among EU member states over ESDP operations are consistent with all propositions introduced so far as governments may differ in their preferred strategies over how to achieve the purported collective objectives such as external power, the spread of liberal values or the promotion of European integration. What is distinctive about the fourth proposition, however, is that such divisions would be a reflection of the differing incentives governments face with respect to their domestic audiences.

In sum, there are a number of theoretical angles which suggest that domestic drivers might loom large in foreign policy-making even if the domestic political consequences of security policy have rarely been the focus of systematic analysis – a gap that the fourth proposition aims to close. If ESDP was an instrument of EU governments' pursuit of domestic political profit, we would expect that operations were tailored to appeal to societal expectations and to eschew potentially negative reactions as a consequence of foreign policy (in-) action. The resultant fourth proposition is thus that *ESDP operations primarily serve to ensure or improve governments' chances for domestic political gain by advocating popular causes and/or avoiding domestically difficult foreign policy issues*. Put differently, it would be the appearance of competent and legitimate foreign policy, responsiveness to societal priorities and the ability to manage potentially risky issues at arm's length that would determine which missions to take on and under which circumstances. For this proposition to be vindicated, we would expect that national positions on these missions be tailored with a view to the respective societal preferences and priorities rather than target needs; that policies may diverge from what would constitute 'effective solutions' with respect to enhancing external power and/or promoting liberal values; that these policies may lack a credible strategy with respect to these goals as the latter are secondary to domestic politics; that the emphasis would be on activities that domestic audiences would feel good about while avoiding risks and deflecting potential blame; and that debate between EU governments primarily reflected differing domestic political priorities. On the other hand, if we were to find that considerations of external effect trumped domestic political concerns, that EU governments chose to pursue unpopular projects in the national or even European interest, or that domestic considerations simply played no role in negotiations, we would reject this proposition.

As set out before, this fourth proposition partly resonates with liberal and constructivist interpretations even though it goes beyond most of them in suggesting that governments may not just be guided and constrained by domestic expectations but may seek to use foreign policy for net political gain at home. It also (partially) evokes the logic of 'two-level games' according to which governments use domestic constraints to manipulate the outcomes of international agreements and exploit international agreements to overcome domestic resistance to preferred policies (Putnam 1988). Janne Matlary has used that model to analyze ESDP and argued that collective crisis management helped EU governments to share political risks and blame at a time when European publics were unwilling to countenance unilateral foreign policy adventures (Matlary 2009). Others have pushed that logic further by dwelling on the correlation between support for the 'supranationalization' of EU foreign policy and domestic constraints. If the German and Italian governments are particularly supportive of diluting national autonomy in this field, then perhaps that is because it may improve their position vis-à-vis strong parliaments (cf. Koenig-Archibugi 2004b)?

The emergence of ESDP has even been interpreted more generally as a struggle of state bureaucracies against the shackles of democratic control (Bickerton 2011; for a more charitable interpretation of the role of bureaucracies, see Mérand 2008). This image of a domestic political struggle for power is also echoed in a realist's observation that ESDP 'reflects the erosion of political power within Europe and is, as such, a measure created to cope with inner weakness, not external power' (Rynning 2011: 32). Yet the bureaucratic struggle for greater discretionary power also chimes with, and provides a plausible motive for, the third proposition, namely that ESDP is an instrument for advancing greater European integration. In order not to confound two distinct objectives – appealing to societal principals versus unshackling the state from societal control – and because the former can be more usefully compared to the other three propositions, the focus of the fourth proposition is on the need for governments to appeal to their electorates.

Although the interpretations of the works cited above are rather diverse and partially differ from that embraced in the fourth proposition, they overlap insofar as they attach primary importance to the domestic as opposed to the international struggle for power. However, whereas it is comparatively straightforward to discern between the pursuit of external power and domestic popularity, how can the latter be distinguished from the promotion of liberal values? After all, the idea underpinning 'normative power Europe' is also that the EU advance values which are collectively shared, so their promotion might conceivably bring governments domestic credit. The difference between advancing liberal values and pleasing domestic audiences by appearing to promote these values is thus not a clear-cut one. However, there are two elements which might help to make the distinction: the

extent to which domestic priorities might diverge from the endorsement of such values, and the credibility of any strategy designed to advance them. With respect to the first element, if governments are unwilling to invest anything substantial into promoting liberal principles for fear of domestic criticism of the expense, we can conclude that the invocation of values was primarily for domestic consumption. Similarly, if governments do not have a minimally credible strategy for achieving what they purport to achieve, they are likely playing to the domestic gallery. Both distinctions admittedly involve difficult value judgments, but whether those are convincing can best be decided in hindsight.

In sum, the proposition that ESDP operations may serve to procure domestic political net gains for EU governments' relates to a number of theoretical approaches and specific hypotheses that have been put forward to explain ESDP. At the same time it entails a number of restrictions so as not to constitute a residual explanation capturing any driver at the domestic level. Focusing on governmental objectives in claiming credit and avoiding blame for foreign events, it sets aside party ideology as well as the struggle of the state apparatus for autonomy against democratic control – except for where they overlap with the pursuit of domestic political gain. The following, concluding section will summarize and contrast the four propositions and attendant empirical implications and discuss the benefits and drawbacks of using this novel framework rather than engaging in the traditional exercise of comparing the plausibility of various theoretical paradigms.

F. CONCLUSION

The preceding sections specified four propositions about generic drivers that may have propelled EU governments into undertaking ESDP operations. They linked these drivers to, and distinguished them from those elaborated in earlier theoretical work. Moreover, each section deduced some empirical expectations that would likely indicate that the respective driver was at work. For better overview, they are summarized in one table below:

TABLE 3. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSITIONS REGARDING DRIVERS BEHIND ESDP

Drivers	*Propositions*	*Empirical expectations*
EU governments' pursuit of relative external power (I)	*ESDP operations primarily serve to counter-balance the influence of the US*	Concern primarily over power-political consequences
		Presence of credible strategy to increase relative power at the expense of US influence
		EU-US disagreement, US opposition
		France taking the lead
EU governments' pursuit of liberal values (II)	*ESDP operations primarily serve to promote collectively held liberal values*	Operations designed to effectively promote liberal values rather than narrow self-interest
		Presence of credible strategy for effective expansion of liberal norms
		US goodwill or support
EU governments' pursuit of European integration (III)	*ESDP operations primarily serve EU governments' desire to promote European integration by means of showcasing the EU's ability to contribute to international security*	Emphasis on 'flag-raising exercises'
		Conscious choice for EU framework against plausible institutional alternatives (such as NATO or UN)
		Emphasis on EU unity / activity as goal in and of itself, irrespective of functional adequacy in theatre

EU governments' pursuit of domestic political gain (IV)	*ESDP operations primarily serve to safeguard or improve governments' domestic political position by advocating popular causes and/or avoiding domestically difficult foreign policy issues*	National position tailored to respective societal preferences rather than target needs or expected consequences in terms of external power
		Divergence from 'effective solutions', absence of credible strategy
		Focus on avoiding risks and blame that may cause domestic political harm

While these propositions arguably comprise most of the theoretically inspired attempts to explain ESDP so far, they clearly do not encompass all possible explications. Rather, they offer four 'ideal types' of purposes that may only be approximated – and which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Moreover, it should be stressed that all these propositions are not intended to check whether the theoretical stances informing them *as such* are correct. Instead, this study merely seeks to examine to what extent they can explain collaboration in the ESDP framework.

If this analytical framework systematically covers external and internal as well as both power-related and ideational purposes, what could it be missing? As already mentioned, the two ideational purposes (II and III) simply represent the conceptions most prevalent in the literature. This omits potential rival ideational objectives. Moreover, each proposition could have been specified differently, as the discussion of each 'related' literature attests. Whereas this discussion served to identify the presumably strongest alternative, empirical research may yet call for a revision of that judgment.

Beyond those theoretical qualifications, however, two further caveats are in order. First, the driving forces behind each operation will necessarily relate to the *proximate* policy objective it seeks to promote. The latter, however, may not always be easily or unambiguously attributable to any one of the *underlying* purposes set out in the propositions. Secondly, the proposed underlying drivers are political in nature whereas most of the day-to-day policy-making is characterized by the interaction of bureaucracies. While diplomats and military officers will generally support their political masters, they face additional incentives related to organizational goals that may cross-cut and even eclipse political purposes. This

effect is likely to be stronger with respect to issues that are not heavily mediatised and politicised – as may arguably be the case for many ESDP operations. Both these qualifications may dilute the extent to which we are able to find unambiguous evidence for one or more of the potential drivers specified in this chapter. Yet these caveats notwithstanding, we should expect to find *some* evidence for our propositions. After all, foreign policy-making in general is subject to comparable friction, qualifications and constraints, but this has not made it inaccessible to theoretical explanations that focus on its links to various political purposes.

RELATING THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK TO IR THEORY

In searching for general political patterns, the four propositions relate to key theoretical cleavages in IR, but attempt to overcome the battle of the 'isms' in favour of a narrower distinction between the potential purposes ESDP may serve. Yet what is the advantage of introducing yet another analytical framework rather than simply testing the more familiar IR theories? In fact, the benefits of such an approach are threefold. First, and as discussed in this chapter's introduction, it allows us to break into their individual elements the different dimensions along which such approaches simultaneously oppose each other. Secondly, IR theories overlap considerably in the mechanisms they invoke for explaining international politics. As a consequence, there is extensive controversy about which paradigm 'rightfully owns' which mechanism. A good part of the debate in IR consists in scholars accusing rival paradigms of expropriating arguments or even terms that are 'properly' realist or liberal (see e.g. Mearsheimer 1995; Moravcsik 1999; Legro and Moravcsik 1999). By introducing propositions related to, but not identical with or comprehensively representing theoretical paradigms, this study aims to make use of their analytical insights while eschewing the descent into a debate merely about labels.

Thirdly and most importantly, the mainstream IR theories of realism, liberalism, and social constructivism are often indeterminate when it comes to translating their generic explanatory models into specific policy explanations. This is clearest in the case of social constructivism. As two well-known constructivists pointed out, '[c]onstructivism is not a substantive theory of politics' and does not 'make any particular claims about the content of social structures or the nature of agents at work in social life' (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001: 393; see also Checkel 1998: 342; Kratochwil 2003: 126). Moreover, it is a social theory that in principle could be applied to all levels of analysis, whether it be the EU's position in international society, member states' behaviour within the EU, or the role of domestic or bureaucratic norms and identities. Last but not least, constructivists are not necessarily committed to explanation. Instead of focusing on causality, it is the 'how' or 'how possible' question that is of greater importance to the constructivist

research programme (Wendt 1998: 105). Clearly, these properties do not provide the preconditions for specifying 'the' constructivist explanation for ESDP operations.

Although liberalism and realism are by contrast substantive theories of international politics, and, at least in their modern guises, committed to causal explanation, their explanatory models equally do not translate into singular propositions whose plausibility could be compared. Liberalism for one has been accused of lacking the necessary coherence for constituting a single paradigm since the causal models used under this label vary widely – variously 'appropriating' the domestic level in the case of Moravcsik's 'new liberalism' or any independent variable that may explain international cooperation, such as states' regime properties in the democratic peace theory or the effects of international institutions on state behaviour (Rathbun 2010). Without any inherent core logic, what could liberalism *as such* explain about a specific phenomenon in the vein of ESDP? Contemporary realism, particularly in its neo-classical guise, has had to contend with similar charges (cf. Legro and Moravcsik 1999). Even structural realism, the most parsimonious and focused of the paradigms, has struggled to reach a common position on explaining ESDP. With respect to the latter, one realist thus identified three positions in the literature which contradict each other (Rynning 2011: 25-8). It is hence again impossible to arrive at 'the' realist explanation, and the rejection of any one particular interpretation labelled 'realist' would likely trigger the counter-argument that the theory's application had been misconstrued.

The fact that it is impossible to relate the 'grand theories' of IR to one specific view on ESDP thus provides a strong argument for detaching our investigation of the policy's drivers from any purported testing of theoretical labels. As we saw in the earlier sections, all propositions with the exception of the first were linked with all three paradigmatic theories in one way or another. This underlines the gap between grand IR theory and the preconditions for explaining specific foreign policies, and supports the case for building the sort of 'middle-range' theories the propositions encapsulate (cf. Merton 1957). Yet narrowing down the scope of our investigation to the specific objectives that governments may have had for pursuing particular policies also comes at a price. By restricting itself to a focus on governmental incentives, this study gives up on some of the theoretical richness that linked particular objectives with specific drivers such as the role of societal actors, supranational institutions, global norms, or national identities. In particular, this limits the number of specific empirical expectations these propositions generate. Since we cannot directly observe governmental objectives, we can only draw inferences from the process by which decisions are taken and the vigour with which certain objectives are apparently pursued. By sacrificing specific predictions on what pressures push governments into action, and instead focusing on their goals, we are

deprived of some possible markers as to which sort of causal process we might be witnessing.

On the upside, a focus on governments' objectives rather than the structural constraints they face removes some of those theories' limitations by allowing for purposive and anticipatory behaviour on the part of the essential actors. With its greater appreciation for the role of agency such a framework attenuates the structural bias that IR theories arguably exhibit. This appears appropriate in view of this book's focus on one particular feature of foreign policy, and thus on only one aspect of the overall set of measures by which governments react towards the manifold pressures and incentives they face. The focus on agency is all the more fitting as we are facing a policy which, at face value, seems to confound IR theorists' emphasis on structural pressures at the expense of discrete choices. Clearly, EU governments' foreign policy choices are formulated against a background of dispositional and, ultimately, structural causes (cf. Carlsnaes 2008). Yet in historical comparative perspective, European states have rarely faced fewer external security threats and pressures. Similarly, the potential internal demands for expanding liberal values, deepening European integration or pursuing a more proactive foreign policy seem also less than inescapable. Given the absence of visible pressures, making ESDP happen reveals substantial voluntarism on the part of EU governments and so justifies a focus on their objectives rather than inexorable structural pressures. Subsequent chapters will therefore analyze how and why the EU governments *chose* to collectively engage in four foreign crises, and what this says about our four propositions. Before, however, the next chapter will elaborate *how* this book will study their plausibility.