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

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CHAPTER IX: REVISITING THE PROPOSITIONS

After reviewing the diverse motivations that underpinned key national approaches to the four operations, it is now time to assess the extent to which these operations, in their objectives and effects, collectively confirm or contradict the propositions formulated in chapter II. The subsequent four sections will discuss the pertinence of each of them. To this end, each section will start out by shortly recalling the proposition and attendant empirical expectations and then summarize the evidence for each of the four operations. This in turn will be followed by a broader argument as to how each driver related to ESDP action. The fifth and final section will then conclude by examining their interdependence and discussing this study's contribution.

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

The first proposition had suggested that ESDP operations were driven by the quest for external power on the part of the EU and/or its most important member states. This 'geo-political' explanation had further been specified to imply that these missions would primarily have served to counter-balance the US' influence. From this idea it deduced that we should find that EU decision-makers were primarily focused on the power-political consequences of their activities, 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, and that the US would disapprove of, if not oppose these operations.

The analysis of the four cases under review in this study showed that there is only very limited evidence for any 'balancing' of the US on EU governments' part. As we saw, three out of those four operations were undertaken at least in part at the instigation of the US administration. In the case of Bosnia, there had been a perception in European capitals that Washington had wanted the EU to take over the mission, as well as public statements by US officials that warranted such a perception. As the preceding chapter highlighted, both British and German officials cited these US wishes as major reasons why their governments supported such a transition. The desire to please Washington continued to have an impact on Althea later on: as one official put it, some partners quit the operation because 'they could only win brownie points with the Americans for engaging in Afghanistan' (Interview with MS official). Whereas French objectives may have differed, they did not hold sway insofar as Paris consented to a 'Berlin Plus' operation, i.e. an operation conducted through NATO's headquarters. In other words, the intention of pleasing,

not of balancing the US proved to be the motive that won out at the EU level. Moreover, Washington evidently did not feel worse off with an ESDP takeover because it could otherwise simply have prevented it in NATO.

The same is true for the second Balkan operation, Kosovo. The EULEX mission served as a tool for implementing the solution of 'supervised independence'. That solution, in turn, was above all formulated and pushed by Washington (cf. Ker-Lindsay 2009b: 115-6; 123). This does not mean that Washington imposed it on reluctant EU governments: the US rationale was almost identical to those of its European allies. The latter, however, were slower to face up to what they eventually accepted as inevitable. As one official summed it up, 'the path of independence was decided in Washington, [but] with good arguments' (Interview with MS official). Moreover, Washington even decided to participate in this ESDP operation under the 'political control and strategic direction' of EU governments, something it would hardly have agreed to if it felt that the EU attempted to constrain its influence. In short, in Kosovo the EU again did not balance against but facilitated and, to some extent, followed US policy.

The third mission under focus in this study, EUPOL Afghanistan, also dovetailed with US foreign policy priorities. Although there is no evidence that Washington directly instigated the mission, its launch was clearly seen by many EU governments as a friendly gesture towards NATO and the US. Not surprisingly, the mission was therefore primarily supported by countries with a particularly transatlantic outlook. EUPOL admittedly turned out to be only marginally supportive of US policy insofar as the EU's investment into the mission remained limited. This caveat notwithstanding, EU governments have further increased their military contributions in Afghanistan since the mission's inception in 2006, and there is widespread consensus across the Atlantic that the training of local security forces, including the police in particular, needs to be enhanced. Even if EUPOL did not deliver as much as Washington may have hoped for, there is no doubt that the mission is on balance supportive of US foreign policy (cf. Nuland 2008).

Finally, there is the military operation in Chad. This operation arguably represents the most likely case among the four for any balancing intentions since it was initiated by France, has not buttressed or shadowed a US initiative, has been militarily the most ambitious operation undertaken by the EU so far, and has been conducted 'autonomously', i.e. without giving the US a formal seat at the decision-making table via official consultations with NATO. Yet the US indicated no qualms, and allegedly even considered participation. The only indication for 'balancing', then, could lie with EU-NATO relations, and in particular with the question whether 'autonomous' operations present a threat to NATO. Yet at the time when EUFOR Tchad/RCA was initiated, US fears that ESDP might undermine NATO had largely

subsided. This was partly a result of the absence of notable EU efforts in the realm of military integration during ESDP's first decade and partly in response to the new French president, who set out to fully re-integrate France into NATO military structures. In fact, just as the operation in Chad was starting, the US ambassador to NATO commended the operation in Paris and proclaimed that 'one of the most important things French leaders can do for global security is to strengthen and build the capacities of the EU', that 'Europe needs a place where it can act independently' and that '[a]n ESDP with only soft power is not enough' (Nuland 2008). As Nuland's above-cited speech indicates, the main US fear had shifted from Europeans consolidating military power outside of NATO to Europeans giving up on military power. Because the force generation process for EUFOR Tchad/RCA had demonstrated Europeans' limited military capabilities, even British officials valued the operation in that '[i]t was a good learning experience that Europe is at risk of becoming a paper tiger' (Interview).

In short, none of the four operations provides support for the proposition that ESDP might serve to counter-balance US influence. Whereas French rhetoric has sometimes been interpreted as balancing behaviour, it is not only dubious whether Paris has truly sought to constrain US power rather than play to domestic yearning for international visibility and purpose. Such aspirations were also explicitly opposed by London and Berlin, and are belied by US advocacy for ESDP action. The primary point of contention across the Atlantic had been the vexed question of EU-NATO relations, but this question divided Europe as much as (if not more than) the two continents, and its importance has been declining. That makes it noteworthy that this debate has nonetheless had an impact on all operations: British officials enlisted the priority that Afghanistan should enjoy as an argument against the operation in Chad, and French officials were suspected to have opposed the policing mission to Afghanistan on account of their purported willingness to showcase NATO's inaptitude. Yet in both cases these motives did not lead them to veto the respective mission. There is so little policy substance to this symbolic 'competition' that it is more plausible that the intended audiences were domestic, so as to gain and maintain their trust via the continuation of established foreign policy traditions. Even if the French government were to truly have wanted to balance against the US, that intention can hardly be described as a significant driver given that the US failed to oppose any of the operations, and that both the British and German governments professed to have been inspired in the most contentious EU-NATO case, Bosnia, by the perception of an opportunity to help the US. Last but not least, none of the operations led to increased EU influence at the expense of Washington.

THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL POWER BEYOND BALANCING THE US

If ESDP does not serve to balance the US, does it represent a means for enhancing EU governments' geopolitical power in other ways? One potential target of pooled power could be Russia: the EU's most powerful direct neighbour has pursued security policies at odds with those of the EU, and at least some member states in the Union's east perceive Russia as militarily threatening (cf. e.g. The Economist 2009). There is little to indicate, however, that ESDP missions have served to balance against Russia. Any full assessment of Russia's relationship to ESDP operations would certainly need to include those missions deployed in the borderlands between the two blocks, notably in Moldova and Georgia. Yet the decision-making surrounding EULEX (as the one mission under review here where the Russian position has played a palpable role) showed that non-recognizing EU governments priced their idiosyncratic national interests higher than countering what was widely perceived as Russian mischief-making. There is hence no evidence for balancing intentions – nor any convincing logic to that effect: NATO would provide a far more powerful instrument for containing Russia, and the US has taken a more critical stance towards Russia than have some of the EU's major powers.

Could ESDP conceivably fulfil a power-strategic purpose without being directed against powerful third parties? Some realists have argued that it (also) constituted a means of 'binding' Germany (cf. Jones 2007; Rynning 2011: 27). More generally, it might serve as an institution which channels balancing behaviour between the EU's major powers. Again, this study has not systematically assessed this potential explanation. Notwithstanding this caveat, whereas we saw that ESDP operations partly represented compromises between diverging national preferences, calling this an act of balancing would stretch that concept: the occurrence of ESDP operations is an expression of collective purpose, albeit not necessarily equal enthusiasm. While the operations in Chad and Afghanistan took place on the back of conflicting preferences, their opponents did not counter-balance but rather chose to limit their own engagement. Moreover, both cases were shown to have resulted less from a search for international power, but rather an attempt to leverage the EU for national priorities borne out of domestic political constraints and opportunities. In the case of the Balkan missions, on the other hand, there was little disagreement in the first place: when it came to the question of whether to intervene, all three member states discussed here (as well as others) were united in their willingness to act, and to act in the ESDP framework.

If ESDP's functioning cannot plausibly be portrayed as a power struggle with the EU's powerful neighbours or between EU governments, could it be interpreted as a collective exercise of power vis-à-vis weak states, a cooperative search for stability in Europe's neighbourhood reminiscent of the 19th century 'Concert of Europe'? In

some ways, this interpretation fits the operations analyzed in the preceding chapters. Through ESDP, EU governments have been pursuing 'milieu goals', i.e. non-exclusionary objectives in the Union's environment (cf. Hyde-Price 2006: 222; 226-7; Wolfers 1962: 73). However, this shared interest in 'stability' is more coherently linked to domestic political concerns – whether fears over crime and migration, or particular concern about human rights violations on the European continent – than to concerns about states' external power position. Their pursuit certainly indicates that EU governments were not primarily concerned about their relative power. Otherwise, the UK might have welcomed trouble in the Balkans for the reason that any negative spill-over would impact much more on Germany than Great Britain and thereby improve the latter's relative position. Yet with respect to ESDP operations there are simply no indications for these kinds of calculations. Instead, EU governments cooperated to attain collective benefits which, at least in the Balkan cases, accrued to locals as much as foreign principals. Moreover, the multilateral way in which these missions are undertaken, e.g. by giving every EU government a veto, undermines the comparability with the earlier 'Concert of Europe'. Whereas the pursuit of 'milieu goals' thus provides a link between ESDP and the search for international influence, it is not rooted in international security competition. It is instead an expression of shared responsibility embedded in converging domestic national views as to how regional conflicts should be addressed.

In sum, this section concluded that the operations under review can hardly be squared with the proposition that ESDP served to balance the United States. Not only did key member states explain their support for these operations with references to US wishes, the US partly instigated and generally welcomed them. Beyond that specific finding we also saw that considerations of external 'hard' power generally played a limited role in these operations: to the extent that the Union credibly sought to influence foreign events, it built primarily on the goodwill of host nations and offered them support for goals the latter ostensibly embraced themselves. Whereas these operations may partly have been conceived to gain influence in Washington or to adjust local incentives towards European preferences, they were rather inconsequential in Chad and Afghanistan. Their impact was more substantial in the Balkans, but served partly to extricate Western governments from unwelcome responsibilities they had incurred in the 1990s. There is hence little evidence for any claim that ESDP has been used as a voluntaristic means for increasing international influence – at least when it comes to competitively defined influence. Indeed, a number of ESDP scholars have recently called for the EU to adopt a 'grand strategy' that would include concrete objectives and priorities for the Union, calls that imply the absence of a discernible strategy so far (cf. Biscop 2009; Biscop and Coelmont 2010). This begs the question whether ESDP operations have perhaps instead served to expand European influence in a more indirect and veiled manner – by

promoting a liberal international order which concurs with European values and domestic order insofar as it advances human rights and the rule of law.

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

The second proposition had suggested that ESDP operations served primarily to promote collectively held liberal values. Accordingly, the principles laid down in the EU 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. From this proposition the second chapter deduced 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, and that their design reflected it; that EU governments were willing to take a risk and/or pay a price for their promotion in terms of power and/or welfare; and that the US would tend to support these operations due to a professed interest in similar liberal values.

The analysis of the four operations under review here showed that there is some evidence that normative motives played a role in getting EU member states engaged in ESDP operations. Yet whereas some aspect of the promotion of liberal order formed a declared objective in each mission, it was often subordinate to other goals EU governments wanted to achieve. In Bosnia, the transition from NATO to EU command was primarily undertaken to demonstrate the EU's ability to act in the military domain, not because an ESDP operation would be better placed to advance liberal norms. The West's overall intervention in Bosnia was however designed to defend liberal values insofar as it aimed to suppress further human rights violations and to draw the country into the 'Atlantic' community of liberal states (cf. Daalder 2000: 165; 173-8; Duke 2000: 223). Since the EU has participated in attempting to re-shape the country into a non-sectarian polity, it has also been accused of (and praised for) trying to impose a liberal peace (cf. Merlingen and Ostrauskaite 2005; Cooper 2004; Paris 1997). Thus, whereas the installation of operation Althea did not follow a specifically liberal impetus, it formed part of a wider effort (albeit not one restricted to the EU) which can be characterized as liberal and ethically inspired.

A similar assessment applies to EULEX in Kosovo: whereas the mission was not primarily driven by a selfless desire to expand the benefits of liberal order into Kosovo, EULEX has been part of a broader Western intervention that was significantly inspired by concern over human rights violations. Indeed, it was arguably embarrassment over the 'triumph of the lack of will' in Bosnia which got the West into Kosovo in the first place (cf. Ker-Lindsay 2009b: 1; Judah 2008: 87;

Wall 2008: 169; Gow 1997). Yet when it came to the deployment of the ESDP mission, the original Western goals of establishing a liberal multi-ethnic entity had subsided in favour of a narrower focus on stability and face-saving extrication from a difficult project. Neither the recognition of Kosovo's independence by most EU governments nor its rejection by five among them came down to normative deliberation, but to the consequences they expected regarding their national polities. Still, the wider context and the mission's focus on strengthening local rule of law show that the EU's decision-making on Kosovo was embedded into a wider response to the wars of Yugoslav succession which was significantly motivated by liberal aspirations.

When it comes to the EU's mission in Afghanistan, the impact of ethical considerations was more limited. The mission's objective, contributing to 'effective civilian policing arrangements […] within the framework of the rule of law and respect[ing] human rights', clearly linked up to liberal values (Council of the EU 2007a: art. 3). Yet EU governments' efforts to achieve this goal remained relatively modest, especially if compared to the political capital invested into NATO's concurrent military operation. Rule of law for Afghans was decidedly secondary to military stability, even though the absence of the former impacted negatively on the latter. Moreover, the political rationale focused on demonstrating engagement in Afghanistan and on shifting domestic perceptions so as to be able to stress the civilian nature of the project and to dodge the contradicting pressures of showing alliance solidarity and international responsibility while avoiding casualties to the extent possible. The mission's liberal aspirations were thus overshadowed by the politics of blame avoidance.

The operation in Chad and the Central African Republic, finally, was the closest the EU has come so far to a 'humanitarian intervention'. Based on the cosmopolitan notion that vulnerable refugees deserved protection while comprising host nation consent, it might be presented as an archetypal case for 'normative power Europe'. Yet whereas humanitarian concerns played a role in the French initiative as well as for other important contributors, they were in themselves insufficient to trigger the operation. Rather, it was the domestic political interest in being seen to 'do something' for Darfur that was decisive, and domestic political risks that made other EU governments shirk involvement. This shift in perspective also helps to explain why the EU undertook an operation that was inherently unsustainable – limited as it was to treating symptoms of a conflict while restricting the duration of this treatment to one year. Whereas some governments likely acted on humanitarian impetus, the overall project came down to demonstrating solicitousness rather than engaging in a credible strategy of defending liberal values.

THE ROLE OF LIBERAL VALUES

Collating the drivers across all four operations, there is some evidence for concern with promoting liberal values abroad: the operation in Chad aimed to contribute to the protection of basic human rights whereas the other missions were focused on the promotion of a rule of law that took its inspirations from Western institutions. However, these objectives were generally not the *primary* aims of ESDP action, but were usually subordinate to other purposes – be they the avoidance of blame in Afghanistan and Kosovo, the expected benefits of visibly upholding humanitarianism in Chad, or the demonstration of EU governments' newly won ability to shape events in the Balkans. This assessment follows partly from the motives EU governments had for each mission, but above all from the limited adequacy of the EU's efforts against the yardstick of a 'normative power' seeking to transform the targets of its interventions, if not the nature of international relations. In the case of the Balkan operations, liberal aspirations were mixed with political objectives related to promoting the EU as a security actor and ensuring the region's stability. The motives for these goals were not limited to concern over liberal values, but also involved the desire not to see governments' credibility undermined by renewed violence and the concurrent realization in European societies that their investment into a liberal, multi-ethnic Balkan had paid off less than hoped for. In Chad and Afghanistan, the interventions were much more limited in what they achieved than what they insinuated to represent.

In short, ESDP operations were designed to promote liberal values, but not necessarily to do so effectively. This support for liberal order also tended to be in concurrence with rather than in contrast to political self-interest. There is, in particular, little to indicate that EU governments were prepared to pay a (significant) political price for the expansion of liberal norms. This shows, for example, in the divisions on the Afghanistan and Chad operations: whereas both operations purportedly promoted liberal values, Germany and the UK on the one and France on the other hand found themselves on opposing sides – with each supporting one but opposing the other mission. Similarly, despite its profession to shared (liberal) values, the EU could not achieve a collective response to Kosovo's independence – with each side rather choosing the path of least domestic political risk. In all three instances calculations of perceived political costs and benefits trumped principled policy.

Yet the realization that the EU's pursuit of liberal order through various ESDP missions was refracted through calculations of political interests should not lead to unrestrained cynicism. The operations' objectives were generally supportive of liberal values, and there is little indication that governments used them to deceive domestic or international audiences. Rather, such objectives remained expressions

of political aspiration, genuinely wished for but insufficiently backed up with much appetite to face up to (and address) the gap between expectations and capabilities (cf. Hill 1993). That does not mean that normative aspirations did not play a role, but that appearances and symbolic activism were ultimately more important.

In sum, this section argued that there is considerable evidence for the presence, but little for the preponderance of concerns over liberal values in decision-making on ESDP operations. All operations related to ethical concerns which were shared in the West more widely. It is likely for this reason that the US usually supported these interventions instead of regarding them as competition for influence. Yet with respect to liberal values EU governments tended to put the emphasis on their good intentions rather than on output and effectiveness – notably in the two operations outside of Europe. As a consequence, ESDP operations have partly served the purpose of making Europe feel good about itself rather than responding to local needs. European crisis management operations have thus suffered from similar defects as its policies of development cooperation – with governments forming a 'cartel of good intentions' (cf. Easterly 2002). Yet demanding that principled selflessness *prevail* over political self-interest implies setting the bar very high. Advocates of a normative power Europe may thus take solace in the fact that liberal norms did play a palpable role in EU foreign policy, even if they served as means for external stability, domestic approval or promoting the EU's security identity. Most optimistically, the EU's lack of decisive action could even be justified as an instance of liberal imprudence avoided (cf. Doyle 1986: 1163): the Union offered foreign governments opportunities for drawing closer to the zone of liberal peace but did not attempt to impose its values and preferences.

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

The third proposition had suggested that ESDP operations may have served as a tool for EU governments in their quest to advance European integration by means of showcasing the Union's ability of contributing to international security. According to this logic, governments' pursuit of visibility for the EU as an international security actor would have had to prevail over alternative considerations in the decision-making surrounding an operation. From this proposition the second chapter deduced that we would expect to find an emphasis on 'flag-raising exercises'; a conscious choice for the EU framework against plausible institutional alternatives (such as NATO or the UN) on the grounds of political visibility rather than functional adequacy; and an emphasis on demonstrating 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.

The examination of the four cases confirmed that there was considerable evidence for the promotion of the EU as a security actor, but only modest support for the idea that this in turn served to advance European integration. In other words, the second proposition comprised a composite causal framework which suggested in a first step that operations may have been done for the benefit of EU visibility and in a second step that this visibility was an instrument in the quest for legitimizing integration. The relevance and significance of the first motive can be gauged from the decision-making surrounding the operations. This is however more difficult for the second, ulterior motive because the observable implications of a clandestine integration agenda for any specific operation are limited. This section will therefore start out by establishing the degree to which the promotion of the Union's ability to act for the sake of EU visibility played a role in each operation. It will then return to the question of whether it was plausibly integrationist motives that propelled EU governments to promote such collective activism.

In the case of operation Althea, there is considerable evidence that EU governments pushed for the transition from NATO to EU command in order to demonstrate the EU's ability as a military actor. Not only French and German, but also British officials attested to this motive. While this change to an EU command was helped by the fact that the US wanted to disengage, it was also brought about by a desire within the Union to show that ESDP was 'more than paperwork' – and a feeling that the Western Balkans were a suitable testing ground (Interviews; cf. Andréani 2000). Thus, European institutions, and Javier Solana in particular, pushed for this transition in order to establish the Union's credentials in peace support operations. The added benefit of developing ESDP in the Western Balkans was that the participating forces already knew the environment, that no member state had doubts about the Union's collective interest in south-eastern Europe, and that it offered the chance for a flattering comparison in demonstrating the development the EU had undergone since it last engaged in Bosnia in the early 1990s. Given the limited value-added that Althea provided compared to its NATO predecessor, it is plausible that part of the transition's objective was to provide a symbolic booster for ESDP.

The motive of showcasing the EU's added value played a somewhat lesser role in Kosovo. Although EU governments were originally content at the prospect of taking over from the UN, the choice for the ESDP framework also happened on functional grounds: EULEX' UN predecessor had lost much of its local legitimacy and ability to influence the situation, making a transition more urgent than with NATO's deterrent force in Bosnia. Yet whereas in Kosovo raising the EU flag was less of an end in itself, the mission was consciously used as a tool for demonstrating European unity – and in this sense served the objective of 'ever closer Union'. Aware of the derision that the EU's 'common' foreign policy would be faced with as a consequence of member

states' differing positions on independence, the EU sought to downplay the question of recognition and instead emphasized its unity regarding the practical challenges of state-building which it would address via EULEX (cf. Haber 2009). The objective of demonstrating collective purpose was even shared by those governments which found themselves isolated on the issue of recognition: by agreeing to the mission, they in fact indirectly agreed to implementing the Ahtisaari proposal and thereby tolerated EU supervision of and support for Kosovo independence (Interview; cf. ICG 2007a: 13; 20). The dissenting EU governments arguably would not have taken this step in the absence of a common EU foreign policy, which in turn indicates that they considerably valued this foreign policy. The objective of containing the damage to Europe's common foreign policy evinces the latter's value to EU governments.

When it comes to the policing mission in Afghanistan, the motive of furthering the EU's actorness in international security by raising the Union's flag was again in display, even if it was likely not decisive. A number of observers suggested that part of the reason for this mission was the EU's search for greater visibility in Afghanistan (Interviews; cf. Wilder 2007: 21). Interestingly, the mission's French detractors also invoked the necessity of strengthening ESDP – by protecting it from the overwhelming challenge a commitment in Afghanistan might entail (Interviews). Yet chapter VI also showed the limits of this logic for EUPOL Afghanistan: most officials reasoned that it would likely not have taken place had Germany not decided to support this project – a decision that was largely based on other motives. Moreover, the desire to see the mission, and thereby the ESDP instrument succeed was insufficient to convince a majority of EU governments to undertake greater efforts in providing adequate resources.

With respect to the Union's operation in eastern Chad there is also only limited evidence of acting for the sake of promoting ESDP. Paris' emphasis was more on showing activism than on activating the EU – although the French government certainly appreciated the positive effect that the operation turned out to have on ESDP. The motive of advancing ESDP also came in for some major contributors, notably Poland and Sweden. Finally, and similarly to the mission in Afghanistan, the existence of the ESDP framework facilitated the translation of a French policy idea into concrete collective action: far fewer EU governments would arguably have participated had this operation been undertaken in a different institutional framework, and the German decision to formally support an operation the government felt decidedly queasy about also owed to Berlin's unwillingness to potentially harm future EU foreign policy cooperation.

In bringing together the evidence of all four cases it becomes clear that promoting ESDP has played a distinct if variable role in EU governments' motivations. Whereas it loomed large in Bosnia – and, interviewed officials pointed out, many of the other

early operations, – its import has subsided since. One official even described ESDP's early phase as 'mission shopping [...] for the sake of ESDP being able to prove its capacity to act' (Interview with GER official). Yet several officials also pointed out that by 2009 the EU had started to take a much more defensive stance in terms of accepting new crisis management responsibilities (Interviews with MS officials). Before, the motive of strengthening the EU's standing as an international security actor showed in the widespread unwillingness to openly defy the initiatives and preferences of other member states for fear of hurting the prospects of future collective action. This logic was particularly salient in the case of Kosovo, but also showed up with respect to Afghanistan and Chad.

THE ROLE OF INTEGRATIONIST MOTIVES

If there is evidence that EU governments used ESDP operations to promote the EU's standing in the domain of international security politics, can we in turn infer that this objective was subsidiary to promoting European integration? The idea that ESDP (action) served the ulterior motive of advancing European integration is inherently linked to an element of disguise insofar as the straightforward alternative would be to openly argue for and act towards greater integration rather than having the EU act abroad to bolster its legitimacy at home. Because a degree of deception is thus explicitly assumed in this 'integration by stealth' proposition, this motive cannot follow directly from the circumstances of the decision-making or even simply the fact that the Union acts collectively. After all, such collective action has similarly been taken as evidence of balancing intentions or the convergence of national aspirations for European foreign policy. In determining whether the integration conjecture is plausible we thus need to establish the extent to which undertaking such missions could be instrumental in achieving greater integration, and the extent to which EU governments would credibly have pursued this objective.

The absence of evidence for integrationist motives in the four operations obviously does not imply evidence of absence. It is however matched by important theoretical reasons that militate against such an interpretation. The first reason why interpreting ESDP action as a nation-building exercise is doubtful is that its design is arguably ill fit for this purpose. To the extent that national identity is wedded to security and defence, it is wedded to the notion of an existential threat (cf. Waever 1996). Yet territorial defence, by which such an existential threat would be most palpably addressed, has consciously been bracketed in ESDP (cf. EU 2010: art. 42). Moreover, the potentially powerful tool of building identity through a common (or at least more integrated) army is largely absent, despite potentially significant positive (notably budgetary) side effects (cf. Heise 2006: 5). If nation-building was the true purpose behind ESDP, the path chosen in devising ESDP would thus be a

conspicuously unambitious and rather ineffective one. This should also be evident once we compare ESDP to NATO. No one suspects NATO of pursuing a transatlantic nation-building agenda, but the EU comprises a lower degree of military integration than the Alliance. Obviously, lack of ambition within ESDP might reflect societal opposition to further integration, but accepting this supposition would defeat the logic of using a common foreign policy in order to promote the EU vis-à-vis its citizens.

The second reason to doubt that the pursuit of an EU security identity served to promote European integration as such lies in the absence of a shared interest of EU governments in pursuing this aim. As we saw in the last chapter, of the three major EU members surveyed in this study only the German government professed a preference for pursuing greater integration in the area of defence policy – and Berlin has been the least proactive of the three in the field of ESDP. Whereas the French government also sought to advance the latter, this was usually in pursuit of French national objectives – whether they related to domestic calculations as in the case of Chad or the promotion of European 'autonomy' in the case of Bosnia. For the British government, promoting further integration has been anathema – and to the extent that considerations of integration have impacted on the British position, they have consisted in attempting to prove that no such thing was or would (ever) be occurring.

The purported goal of strengthening integration by means of foreign policy collaboration not only sits uneasily with the professed objectives of the British government, but also with the widespread practice of EU governments to ostentatiously defend national identity and lay blame for domestically troubling policies at Brussels' doorstep. This obviously does not prevent them from cooperating in the European framework. However, the changes applied to the Constitutional Treaty in its makeover as the Treaty of Lisbon – i.e. the scrapping of the most symbolic provisions reeking of nation-building such as the title of European 'foreign minister' or the designation of a European anthem – suggest that governments are aware and wary of societal opposition to further integration in this domain. That does not mean that integrationist calculation is entirely absent from the ESDP's inception and development: progress to that effect may indeed be welcomed by some actors, but hardly constitutes the main (much less shared) driver.

In sum, this section demonstrated that the examined ESDP operations provide substantial evidence for EU governments' interest in promoting an EU security identity, but that this interest did not amount to a disguised agenda for deeper integration. Neither the UK nor France evinced much interest for a greater pooling of sovereignty in the area of foreign policy. Moreover, while we saw some emphasis on

'flag-raising exercises' in the early stages of ESDP, this has subsided with the maturation of the policy. There has also been some commitment to the objective of demonstrating European unity as an end in itself, notably over Kosovo, but that very case also showed the limits of European foreign policy solidarity. The following section will explore the roots of the continuing diversity in unity.

D. ESDP AND DOMESTIC POLITICS (IV)

The fourth and last proposition had suggested that ESDP operations served above all to safeguard or improve governments' domestic political position by advocating popular causes, dodging domestically difficult foreign policy issues, or perhaps even by diverting attention from other contentious issues. Accordingly, the decision which missions to embark on, the scale of every country's participation, and the conditions it may formulate for support or toleration would be made by each government with an eye towards showing responsiveness to societal priorities and keeping potentially risky issues at arm's length. For this proposition to be vindicated, chapter II deduced that national positions on these missions be tailored with a view to the respective societal preferences and priorities rather than target needs; that policies would diverge from what would constitute 'effective solutions' with respect to enhancing external power and/or promoting liberal values; that these policies would lack a credible strategy with respect to these goals as the latter would be 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 reflected differing domestic political priorities.

Across the four case studies the impact of domestic expectations was arguably most limited when it came to the operation in Bosnia. The threat of bloodshed in, and the associated media attention for Bosnia had largely receded by the end of 2004, thereby limiting opportunities for taking credit. Yet the deployment of EU peacekeepers has to be contrasted with the potential domestic liability of a situation where Washington might publicly call on Europeans' inability to relieve them of simple peace-keeping duties, or where a unilateral US drawdown would even result in renewed instability. EU governments thus likely valued the opportunity to show that they were able to collectively take responsibility for a country where they had conspicuously failed a decade before, with the international community and European publics aghast at their inability to impose an end to the violence. Moreover, the differing preferences regarding the relationship between the EU and NATO that dominated much of the discussions on Althea in Brussels can be linked to domestic politics as much as geo-strategic considerations. However, neither of these links was direct. Domestic expectations thus led to certain dispositions which

shaped decision-making on Althea rather than explaining those decisions themselves.

The case of Kosovo reveals both similarities and differences as compared to Bosnia. Similarly to Bosnia, EU governments shared an interest in presenting themselves as capable of contributing to a solution for the regional situation – again in stark contrast to their earlier reliance on US power. In contrast to Bosnia, the potential downsides of a failure to achieve a transition away from the UN lead, i.e. the threat of violence and the concomitant problems of justification at home, were greater in Kosovo. Decision-making on EULEX also featured a different conflation of 'national interests' and domestic politics: whereas the EU-NATO cleavage had much receded, it was replaced by a new divide regarding the question of Kosovo's independence. Although it is possible to deduce the interests of the five countries unwilling to recognize the latter directly from their national predicament of housing restive minorities or feeling close to Serbia, linking them to domestic politics is more convincing. The threat to all governments was domestic backlash against the perception that they would risk the 'national interest' of upholding the principle of territorial integrity, not any actual threat to their national polity. Whence came the lament of a Spanish official that 'our position on Kosovo is extremely contradictory between our goal to strengthen EU foreign policy on the one side and the fact that we contribute to weaken it on the European continent itself. In the government everyone is aware of this contradiction, *but we cannot change our position for the moment*' (ICG 2010a: 2; emphasis added). In other words, foreign policy goals were subordinate to domestic political calculations.

The police-building mission in Afghanistan was also influenced by domestic political considerations insofar as it was designed to appeal to publics' preferences for a distinctive European and less militarized approach. This was particularly evident in Germany, where the need for greater policing resources was explicitly invoked to rebut US demands for greater military engagement (cf. Bundeskanzleramt 2007; Jung 2006; Kaim 2008). For this reason German politicians also pushed through a (virtual) doubling of EUPOL's size against the advice of EU planners. The importance of domestic political considerations was far less in evidence for the UK and France, except insofar as the traditional foreign policy postures they took – sceptical towards the US and NATO for France, and supportive of the US while reluctant to fully engage with the EU for the UK – also correlated with domestic political convenience. Yet insofar as Berlin played a decisive role in the crucial decisions regarding EUPOL, the latter's motives were critical in determining the drivers behind the EU as a collective.

Domestic expectations and their anticipation finally played an important role when it came to EUFOR Tchad/RCA. The operation's instigator, the French government,

was in search of a means of 'doing something' to show that it would honour its electoral promise of addressing domestic indignation over Darfur. While many analysts presumed that this coincided with French strategic interests in the region, chapter VII demonstrated that the latter are unlikely to have been the primary cause of the operation – a reasoning that ostensibly convinced numerous other EU governments with no interest in being perceived as a side-kick to French neo-colonialism. Their reactions also reveal a preponderance of domestic political considerations of their own. Those that perceived an accommodating domestic political setting, notably in Ireland, Sweden and the Netherlands, eventually made (limited) contributions whereas those who felt at risk of domestic backlash, as in the UK and particularly Germany, stood apart. By contrast, this pattern of participation cannot directly be linked to the intra-EU cleavages regarding geopolitical outlook, support for an EU security identity, or national levels of support for liberal interventionism.

Comparing the relative influence of domestic calculations across the four cases, their role in explaining both the fact of cooperation in the ESDP framework as well as its inherent limitations seems substantial if indirect. EU governments' interests converged where they all faced incentives to display their ability to act consequentially, as they notably did in the Balkans. They were more diverse with respect to the two operations outside of Europe because domestic perceptions of the wisdom to act in these places, and the price a particular public would be willing to pay, varied more widely. This in turn defined the prospective political costs and benefits for the respective governments, and influenced their willingness to initiate, support, tolerate or oppose a certain measure: with respect to Chad, the French government counted on net public relations benefits from its grand-standing whereas neither its British nor its German government could expect them; with respect to Afghanistan, the German government sought to downplay the predominantly military nature of the West's engagement and to avoid the political costs of increased military engagement without risking the charge of ignoring its international responsibilities whereas France did not feel similar pressures. Although there was greater unity of purpose with respect to the Balkan missions, the cleavages that did arise in the respective intergovernmental debates also reflected domestic national priorities at least in part: in Kosovo, most EU governments were above all interested in extricating themselves from an increasingly thankless and risky responsibility whereas five of them were more afraid of the potential domestic repercussions of Kosovar independence; and in Bosnia, the differences between 'Atlanticist' and 'Gaullist' preferences related to dearly held traditions that had become engrained in the self-images of national foreign policy elites.

THE ROLE OF DOMESTIC CALCULATIONS

The import of domestic political calculations did not only show from the fact that national positions on the four ESDP operations corresponded to domestic considerations and priorities. It arguably also transpired from the emphasis on doing *something* irrespective of whether an operation amounted to a credible strategy for the issue at stake: the greater the gap between aspirations and plausible outcomes, the more likely it is that an operation's objective was about demonstrating good intentions for the benefit of domestic audiences rather than actual achievements in the field. Asked about the logic behind ESDP operations, one interviewee thus explained that 'typically it is preceded by an outcry in the media […] and then Solana says his famous words, "but we have to do something". […] Why? […] Because we want to be a global player. In principle, we want to jump on every additional new topic, no matter where it takes place, just to show how important we are' (Interview with CGS official).

As the preceding case studies showed, this element of grandstanding was greater for the operations in Chad and Afghanistan than for those in the Balkans – although the lack of unity on Kosovo and concomitant pretences suggest that even there at least some member states ranked domestic political convenience above foreign policy coherence. The fact that such discrepancies between genuine action and purported political objectives rose with geographical and mental distance bolsters the proposition that foreign policy action was in fact targeted at domestic audiences. EU governments face greater incentives for investing into sustainable results in their neighbourhood than they do in faraway places. Not only are changes in Afghanistan or Chad – for better or worse – much less palpable for European publics, they are also not as easily imputable to EU governments' activities than comparable changes in Bosnia or Kosovo. A focus on domestic expectations is thus consistent with this study's finding that the operations conducted outside of Europe were less consistent with either any power-political or value-driven strategy.

Whereas the importance of domestic politics has plausibility with respect to societal clamour for doing something about Darfur or pursuing a less militarized approach in Afghanistan, this is more debatable when it comes to domestic demand for foreign policy credibility or for continuity in traditional foreign policy stances. The reason lies in the difficulty of distinguishing between two potential causal chains. On the one hand, a government might embrace a (traditional) foreign policy role because it believes that this best serves the national interest – and this perception might well be shared by domestic foreign policy elites in the media, bureaucracy, civil society and academia whose judgment influences the public's view of a government's foreign policy competence and legitimacy. This is the view that tends to characterize much of the work undertaken under the banner of strategic or political culture. On

the other hand, the government may adopt a (traditional) foreign policy role as the path of least resistance because it assumes that this would most easily convince relevant societal actors of the government's competence and thereby improve its chances of remaining in power. This view would tend to take prevalent domestic conceptions and the resulting foreign policy traditions – such as a preference for close ties with the US, a belief into the importance of embedding external action into multilateral frameworks, pacifism-induced antipathy to military intervention, or similar dispositions – as variables to be weighed by governments against each other and against the policy's prospective political costs, i.e. the risk of casualties and visible policy failure. Accordingly, governments' guideline would not be 'the national interest', but society's perception thereof, with a view towards eliciting approval, limiting criticism, and avoiding future blame.

Since decision-makers' motives are ultimately unobservable, it is impossible to know for sure to what extent governments 'honestly' seek to distil 'the national interest', however defined, or whether they take their clues from opinion-makers' expected response. Divergences between a government's actions in the field and the discourse it embraces might provide indications however: to the extent that a government *de facto* abets Kosovo's independence while ostentatiously combating it; substantially contributes to NATO operations while publicly distancing itself from the organization; takes part in military counter-insurgency in Afghanistan while insisting on the humanitarian nature of the operation; or contributes to a humanitarian operation that is inherently unsustainable, analysts may suspect that domestic political calculation trumped foreign policy strategy. At the same time, such discrepancies can of course also be the result of mistaken beliefs on the part of decision-makers. This study did not offer conclusive evidence that domestic political calculations rather than the beliefs of diplomats and politicians were generally decisive for policy-making, but only showed that national positions were in accordance with domestic incentives.

If it is true that domestic politics took precedence in defining EU foreign policy, this begs the question why governments engage in ostensibly unpopular operations. For example, how come Germany is not withdrawing from ISAF in the face of domestic opposition to the operation? Why would France participate in NATO operations, and why would the UK allow any EU foreign policy in the first place? Is such behaviour not an indicator that countries' 'real' foreign policy is determined by power-political considerations, if perhaps hidden behind the smokescreen of a public relations-inspired EU foreign policy that focuses on secondary normative objectives? Whereas these questions necessarily go beyond the research question at hand because they demand an analysis of countries' overall foreign policies, part of the answer might lie in the diverging exigencies governments and their societal counterparts face in terms of consistency. Governments frequently need to take quick decisions in the

face of crisis and later have to face up to those decisions' unintended consequences without undermining the public's confidence into their competence and foresight. They therefore need to hedge their bets and ensure some continuity. With respect to Germany's continuing military engagement in Afghanistan, the explanation may thus lie in the contradictory risks and opportunities that the government faces: any quick withdrawal would be risky because, in the absence of an improved situation in Afghanistan, it would beg the question as to why the government invested so much in the first place. Moreover, such a move might easily backfire if it was perceived to result from political opportunism rather than deeply held convictions. This makes any turn-around difficult in the absence of a cataclysmic event. Similarly, the perception of opportunistic behaviour in foreign policy could easily be interpreted as a lack of statesmanship and a threat to long-term German interests of being perceived as a reliable and responsible ally. There is finally also an opportunity for politicians in presenting themselves as leaders rather than followers of public opinion by ostentatiously upholding the national over the electoral interest in specific cases.

In short, the quest for domestic political benefits does not equal following public opinion. It instead consists in finding a balance between appealing to wider public sentiment and convincing foreign policy elites that the policy is neither rudderless nor damaging to longer-standing national interests. The easiest way to do so, in turn, is to discursively embed foreign policy in respected traditional national security cultures. The fact that national positions on ESDP operations largely correlated with these traditions also implies that this study did not contradict the results of the literature on 'national strategic cultures'. Rather, it complemented their findings by putting greater emphasis on the trade-offs that governments had to make in each case, and by providing an explanation for why national dispositions were translated into less than coherent foreign policy behaviour: because the expected political price for living up to national self-conceptions differed in response to various other factors such as concerns over cross-national burden-sharing, diverging geographic priorities, or the perceived likelihood of success.

THE LIMITS OF THE DOMESTIC POLITICS EXPLANATION

As the preceding chapter showed, there are good reasons to conclude that key national dispositions evident in intergovernmental debates on ESDP operations – emphasis on *grandeur* and strategic autonomy for France, proximity to NATO and Euro-scepticism for the UK, and aversion to military force projection for Germany – were nods towards domestic sensibilities as much as expressions of geopolitical strategy. Yet the above also makes clear that the explanatory power of domestic expectations owed considerably to its ambiguity. It appeared as a generally plausible

explanation which however could not account for the 'agency slack' that the four ESDP operations featured: EU governments, third parties, or even individual politicians or bureaucrats chose to promote various actions, autonomously though not independently from the examined underlying drivers. Many aspects of the EU's engagement came down to individuals' political initiatives and ideas for action rather than inescapable structural pressures. For example, it is unclear that the EU would have intervened in Chad in the absence of Kouchner's appointment and preoccupation with Darfur. Although the resulting operation fit into a logic of domestic grandstanding, the latter does not explain the former's ideational origins.

Explanations which assign policy some underlying political rationale may thus miss the point. This idea has also been conceded by one of the founding figures of modern IR who otherwise insisted on the necessity of the rationality assumption for giving meaning to international politics: Hans Morgenthau suggested that the explanation for U.S. behaviour in the Vietnam War may lie in a 'counter-theory of irrational politics, a kind of pathology of international politics' (Morgenthau 1978: 7). For illustration, he went on to cite a 1970 *Wall Street Journal* article arguing that 'the desire to "do something" pervades top levels of Government and may overpower other "common sense" advice that insists the U.S. ability to shape events is negligible. The yen for action could lead to bold policy as therapy' (Morgenthau 1978: 8). Put somewhat less radically, a theoretical framework focusing on underlying drivers cannot account for the 'white noise' of foreign policy ideas and initiatives that were introduced for addressing particular problems rather than pursuing grand political objectives – even if the former were often formulated so as to appeal to (or at least fit into) such a political logic.

The comparison across both the case studies and the preferences of pivotal actors showed that ESDP operations were driven by an amalgam of different motivations. Interviewed officials frequently explicated their countries' preferences with reference to practical foreign policy objectives: enhancing the effectiveness of security sector reform in Afghanistan by ensuring coordination among European partners, or protecting refugees in Chad because Western forces would not be accepted in Darfur itself. The Balkan missions were likewise often characterized by interviewed officials as 'natural developments' stemming from the Union's increasing engagement in this region and the resultant effectiveness gains related to organizing international involvement through the EU. In applying the theoretical framework developed in chapter II, domestic politics constituted the most credible of the four putative drivers by comparison. There was however only limited evidence that domestic expectations had a verifiable direct impact on foreign policy decision-making, much less one that was independent of the other drivers. The analytical framework thus proved too broad to allow for more than a comparison of the plausibility of different classes of reasons. In particular, it fell short in specifying

when and how exactly (anticipated) domestic expectations would lead policy-makers to propose, tolerate or oppose specific actions. This lack of a direct link between the diplomatic history of ESDP operations and overarching political purposes suggests that theory-driven analysis will continue to face well-founded challenges from those promoting the advantages of inductive historical analysis over attempts to identify dominant underlying drivers. This is in part because such deeper drivers constitute amorphous and indeterminate reasons rather than direct and active causes. In turn, this implies not only a need for further research as to how exactly domestic expectations come to shape national foreign policy dispositions and specific actions, but also begs the question of how domestic expectations may interact with the search for external power, the quest to spread liberal values, and the objective of closer European integration. The following, final section will address this issue.

E. CONCLUSION

The quest for external influence was the first putative driver behind ESDP that this study analyzed. As we concluded earlier in this chapter, this search was characterized by support for rather than balancing against the preponderant power. To the extent that ESDP operations reacted to US foreign policy preferences, it was by taking up suggestions of how the EU could be helpful for broader Western objectives – although this did not necessarily imply interchangeable aims or hugely resourced efforts. This collaboration can be (and has been) interpreted as a geopolitical strategy targeted at keeping the US engaged on international security issues and thereby securing some influence on US policy. Yet the impact of US expectations on EU action also relates to domestic expectations: in all the cases evoked – Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan – it was Western governments collectively who intervened, to an important extent as a consequence of domestic indignation over the violation of norms that Western societies considered non-negotiable.[44] Their collaboration reflected shared domestic expectations that Western peace-building would entail more than a collective geopolitical interest in lording it over three poor mountain regions. Western governments subsequently shared an interest in managing, and extricating themselves from, these situations in a way that they would not become political liabilities at home. Insofar as this logic holds, the

[44] This arguably pertains to Afghanistan as well when it comes to the state-building exercise (rather than the terrorist hunt) into which the EU has become engaged: whereas the original intervention followed a logic of national security, it was quickly enhanced by humanitarian and liberal motives designed to appeal to domestic audiences (cf. Bellamy and Wheeler 2008: 532; Blair 2001).

question whether these operations were triggered by domestic or US expectations becomes somewhat spurious because they blend into transnationally shared expectations of Western societies. These did not follow geopolitical *diktat*, but were rooted in a shared sense of purpose.

The domestic dimension of transatlantic cooperation moreover related to the degree to which good relations with the US means good domestic politics for many EU governments: insofar as the US is seen as providing an ultimate security guarantee (and as representing a kindred Western power), European societies expect their governments to maintain good relationships with Washington – even if self-esteem demands that this relationship be characterized by friendship, not subservience. EU sensitivity to American preferences finally reflected a desire of being able to show that the respective country was contributing to defending Western interests and values: (most) European governments can profit domestically from being perceived as close to the leader of the 'free world', and one way of procuring invitations to the White House is by giving support to US foreign policy. In short, the close collaboration with the US suggests that the EU's quest for external influence via ESDP operations is linked more with domestic expectations regarding the purpose of such influence – largely shared with the US – than any intrinsic need for balancing influence.

The second driver that this study analysed was the idea of a 'normative power Europe', a power driven in its external interaction by the constitutive liberal values that define it internally. The impact of such values was visible if limited because it expressed itself in demonstrating concern over the expansion of liberal values rather than in committing to a credible strategy to that end. While these findings may seem disillusioning to advocates of a normative or ethical power Europe, they imply an inherent possibility of progress: if governments react to domestic political incentives, their commitment to expanding liberal values will be a function of societal insistence on real results rather than placebos. EU governments ostensibly tried to 'do good' in the case studies surveyed, but faced disincentives to take bigger political risks. Therefore, the EU's pursuit of liberal values in its crisis management operations has sometimes bordered grandstanding and self-deception.

Yet in both their rhetoric and (in-)action, EU governments simply anticipated what they thought that their societies would appreciate. Held to higher standards domestically, they may well take the courage of investing more into expanding liberal order. It is ultimately societal debate that determines what the 'national interest' is, and to what extent it is to include the welfare of foreigners (cf. Rathbun 2004). Any aspirations to that effect obviously come with important caveats, relating above all to the difference between good intentions and good results. In all four cases – Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Chad – the question whether Western

intervention, and the shape in which it took place, was on balance reasonably well executed measured against the benchmark of spreading liberal order remains debatable. This caveat notwithstanding, the drivers of 'normative power' and domestic expectations are not antithetical. Instead, they were only partially aligned because European societies were simultaneously worried over the risks and costs of foreign engagement, and because they seemed ready to accept policies designed to assuage lingering guilt over earlier Balkan failures and colonial pasts rather than to hold their governments against higher benchmarks.

The third examined driver behind ESDP operations was a shared interest in creating an EU security identity for the purpose of advancing European integration. Objectives in this regard diverged across the Union, and there was little evidence for any hidden integration agenda – though this does not exclude additional integration pressures as a result of the unintended consequences of increasingly acting collectively. Instead, EU governments' interest in an EU security identity seemed to be linked to the concurrent ability to act and take credit for foreign policy successes while avoiding or at least sharing blame that may have resulted from an inability to act or any action gone wrong. Kent Weaver identified various forms of a voluntary shrinking of discretionary power such as agenda limitation and 'passing the buck' as well as scapegoating as a political strategy for avoiding blame (cf. Weaver 1986; Matlary 2009). It follows that 'outsourcing' crisis management to a jointly controlled entity such as ESDP can be rational for EU governments even in the absence of an hidden integrationist agenda. This applies in particular if governments retain the ability to upload national preferences that are less than fully shared among EU partners, as France and Germany managed with respect to the operations in Chad and Afghanistan (and others did with respect to national priorities of their own). The main threats, from a government's perspective, are then twofold: one is linked to generic domestic unease over shrinking national discretionary power, as evident in the UK. The second stems from the tendency to find oneself pushed into responsibilities that the public rather not shoulder, as manifest in the German response to French enthusiasm for intervening in Africa (cf. Schmidt 2006; Brummer 2012). Yet as long as the political benefits outweigh the costs, a condition that national vetoes and the possibility of non-participation usually imply, support for an EU security identity is perfectly compatible with an emphasis on the explanatory power of domestic politics.

Whereas the quest for an EU security identity can be linked to domestic politics, it also relates to the other two examined drivers, liberal values and external influence. With respect to the latter, an (autonomous) European institutional platform gives many governments the opportunity to participate in foreign policy activities where neither their influence nor the overall outcomes are necessarily marginal. For most EU governments, unilateral action has become too costly, and the alternative

institutional venues are inhibited by significant disadvantages: within NATO, public perceptions of an over-emphasis on military tools and one overbearing partner make it difficult for most EU governments to play (and be perceived to play) a consequential role – and not every EU member is in NATO; within the UN, the same lack of visibility and influence results from the Secretariat's greater autonomy, perceived lesser effectiveness, and the key role for the Security Council. Thus, ESDP operations offer many governments a prospect for wielding influence. As the operationalization of this framework shows, however, ESDP has served less as a vehicle for accumulating power, but primarily as a means for contributing, however narrowly, to advancing a liberal order. By creating a more effective outlet for such aspirations, EU governments have also created an institution that has come to place additional demands on them for contributing to collective endeavours. The promotion of an EU security identity can thus be interpreted as a means of 'self-binding' regarding the pursuit of liberal objectives – although the limits of this logic showed in all four case studies insofar as personnel contributions were concerned.

CONTRIBUTION AND REMAINING CHALLENGES

The above conclusion challenges the prevailing view among traditional international relations theorists, who tend to emphasize systemic pressures and assume the primacy of foreign policy over domestic politics. Offering a framework that directly compares the two, this study showed that considerations of relative external power were largely absent from the EU's decision-making on crisis management operations, or at least subordinate to other considerations. This may be due to the exceptional geopolitical context in which ESDP has so far operated, with no clearly preponderant external threat to concentrate minds, as well as the fact that the ESDP constitutes only one subset of the foreign policy conducted by its members. At the same time, this finding is partly contingent on the conceptualization of external power as primarily a means for balancing. Instead, the ESDP's actions were embedded into a larger aspiration that Europeans shared with North Americans: the stabilization if not the expansion of an international liberal order based on individual rights and the rule of law. Although partly self-serving, this shared objective was rooted more in national role conceptions than geopolitical constraints. The pursuit of liberal order was however constrained by its very source; whereas it fed on domestic expectations that European governments do something to improve the world, it was also hampered by a lack of trust on the part of governments that the public would (continue to) support ambitious foreign policy objectives. What the EU did (and did not do) in the framework of ESDP was above all what EU governments believed their societies expected from them in terms of international security policy – under the constraints that institutionalized multilateral cooperation entail.

This interpretation of the ESDP's record raises interesting questions that international relations theory generally, but also the analytical model employed in this study has not solved satisfactorily as yet: namely how and when (anticipated) domestic expectations trigger action by policy-makers. Part of the reason for this gap lies with the fact that underlying political purposes are ultimately unobservable. In the end, diplomats or ministers themselves may not know why, deep down, they pursued a certain policy. The introductory citation of a political science classic, *Essence of Decision*, thus quotes president Kennedy with the words that '*the essence of ultimate decision* remains impenetrable to the observer – often, indeed, to the decider himself' (Allison and Zelikow 1999, emphasis original). In other words, the decision-making even by those in the highest echelons of power, and at the most critical junctures, may be far less conscious and rational than the public or indeed political scientists assume in their search for patterns in political behaviour – and these patterns a product of hazard and contingency rather than deliberate calculation. Speculating on this subject, Dutch novelist Harry Mulisch conceived the neat metaphor of a 'Golden Wall' that the public sees and behind which it assumes a controlled, reliable and virtually all-knowing power, an image 'confirmed by the dark suits, the silent limousines, the guards, the protocol, the perfect organization, the velvety calm in the palaces and ministries. But anyone who's actually been behind the Golden Wall, like you and me, knows that it's all sham and that in there, where decisions are made, it's just as improvised a chaos as in front [...] Should anyone discover how a policy is made – which is virtually impossible – he will spend the rest of his life with a fundamental feeling of insecurity' (Mulisch 1996: 554). This study is thus also a reminder of the challenges IR theory as a whole continues to face in integrating different structural pressures, their reception by policy-makers, and perceived opportunities for remedial action into an explanation that is at once meaningful and parsimonious. What precisely triggers the perception of a 'need to do something', and what determines the shape of the latter? Further research into these questions will not only be interesting for those seeking to understand the dynamics of international relations, but also for those attempting to influence foreign policy in the interest of the 'better world' that the title of the EU's security strategy evokes.