

Review - EU Foreign Policy and Crisis Management Operations

Written by Neil Winn

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NEIL WINN, APR 14 2014

EU Foreign Policy and Crisis Management Operations: Power, Purpose and Domestic Politics

By: Benjamin Pohl

London and New York: Routledge, 2014

EU Foreign Policy and Crisis Management Operations is a theory-based diplomatic analysis of the influences which are brought to bear on the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the European Union (EU). The analysis rejects conventional explanations derived from realist, normative, and integration-based theories of how CSDP operates in crisis management situations in favour of domestic politics explanations. The book analyses the intergovernmental and transgovernmental diplomatic bargaining processes and the drivers behind CSDP. The analysis focuses on four case studies of EU operational involvement in CSDP and the accompanying key drivers behind policy: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Chad. The book is based on the author's PhD thesis that was defended at the University of Leiden in 2012 and went on to win the inaugural EDA-Egmont PhD Prize in European Defence, Security and Strategy in 2013.

The book is predicated on a number of propositions which are tested in the course of the analysis: First, that CSDP operations primarily serve as a counter-balance to the United States (US); second, that CSDP operations primarily serve to promote collectively held liberal values; third, that CSDP operations primarily serve EU member governments' need to showcase European integration and its contribution to international security; and fourth, that CSDP operations primarily serve to safeguard or improve governments' domestic political position by advocating popular causes or avoiding difficult foreign policy issues domestically. The book looks at CSDP outputs in terms of analysing the four case study operations. The book is based on around 70 interviews with key policy-makers engaged in CSDP in Brussels, Paris, Berlin, and London. National preferences are reconstructed in the analysis in order to assess the relative explanatory power of the four theory-inspired propositions above.

The first case study on Bosnia-Herzegovina examines Operation EUFOR Althea. The chapter on EU Althea highlights that the EU's key member states were willing to cooperate to present an alternative to the US and the Atlantic Alliance to bolster the Union's position as a credible actor in international security. This was partly possible because of transatlantic differences over Iraq after 2003. Additionally, there was a degree of competition between the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) over security and governance issues in Bosnia. More significantly, the EU member states' backing of the Union in this context was also popular in the domestic politics of many EU member states.

The second case study focuses on the EU's rule of law mission in Kosovo (EULEX). The case highlights that the EU was an appropriate actor to manage the transition in Kosovo moving from international protectorate possibly and eventually to (quasi-) state status despite differences between EU member states on the issue. The case also highlights that EULEX was a means for the EU to "practice" a full scale CSDP operation of considerable size and helped to maintain unity between the EU's member states as far as was possible in the circumstances. This constituted a form of muddling through at the EU level that was driven predominantly by domestic political arrangements.

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The third case study focuses on the EU Police mission (EUPOL) in Afghanistan. The EU's member states in the main worked together well (though not all participated) in the EUPOL Afghanistan mission. The real reason for keeping the mission together had less to do with maintaining security and stability in Iraq (although this was an extremely important end in itself) than assuaging German domestic politics against US counter-insurgency tactics in Afghanistan. The mission was also about the explication of German domestic political opinion (which favours civilian solutions to international issues) against the American charge that Berlin was not doing enough in theatre militarily.

The fourth case study focuses on Chad and was named EUFOR Tchad/RCA according to its French acronym. This operation was a French initiative. The aim of the operation was to do something practical for the victims of Darfur which could also be projected onto domestic political systems in EU member states for their consumption. When national interests and domestic drivers converge, then there is policy movement in CSDP, as was the case here. This was less about traditional Gaullist French foreign policy aggrandisement and much more about domestic politics and national interests in the EU's member states converging.

The cases collectively highlight that the big three diplomatic players in Europe, Britain, France, and Germany, each had their own reasons for participating in CSDP mainly for reasons of domestic politics and national interests. This confirms the author's fourth proposition above all others as a driver for explaining CSDP process and outcomes: that CSDP operations primarily serve to safeguard or improve governments' domestic political position by advocating popular causes or avoiding difficult foreign policy issues domestically. For France, the operations highlight that CSDP should be separate from NATO. For Britain, the opposite is true, meaning an alignment of CSDP with NATO and transatlantic security policies. Germany sought to ride two horses and use CSDP for transatlantic purposes to stay close to Washington, linking into NATO whilst at the same time tying CSDP to furthering European integration more generally. Where there was intra-EU cooperation, it was based on voluntarism and was largely for domestic reasons.

Theoretically, this rejects arguments around realist balance-of-power theory and related theories, as advanced in the first proposition in the book, that CSDP operations primarily serve as a counter-balance to the US. In terms of promoting liberal values (according to the second proposition in the book), the EU only propagated such preferences when this was politically expedient to do so at the domestic level in the EU's member states. The third proposition in the book postulates that EU member states engage in CSDP operations so that the EU can participate in the management of international security as an actor in its own right. However, EU operations were not driven by European integration or nation-building agendas but by domestic considerations. The fourth proposition postulates that domestic politics in the EU explain how CSDP operates. This implied a form of institutionalised multilateral cooperation between member states, as this is what national publics demand, and is also coterminous with national strategic cultures and political constraints in the EU's member states. This form of highly institutionalised, domestically-driven, voluntaristic international cooperation is the *sine qua non* for understanding CSDP operations.

Theoretically speaking, therefore, the study challenges International Relations theories. The book maintains that considerations of EU external power were largely absent in EU decision-making in the crisis management operations scrutinised in the book. The actions were more about the embedding of domestic expectations, which were concerned with managing international security in Europe and beyond, as well as the constraints of achieving this. This is an extremely radical interpretation of the key drivers in international security, in general, and of the understanding of CSDP, in particular. This makes the analysis contained in the book worthy of reading in its own right.

EU Foreign Policy and Crisis Management Operations is a *tour de force* of CSDP scholarship. It eschews conventional International Relations theory expectations of externally-driven conceptions of EU foreign policy for domestic explanations, and does this exceptionally well. Indeed, the book combines excellent contemporary diplomatic history, research design, and theory to arrive at a landmark in the study of EU crisis management operations through CSDP. The book makes contributions to its own field, but also to cognate areas, especially domestic approaches to the study of international security. The book should be read by interested academics, policy-makers, journalists, and all those interested in the diplomatic interplay of foreign and security policies within European states, between the EU's member states, and the key drivers determining outcomes in international security, more generally.

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