

## **Emergent strategic culture and coexistence: can a CSDP based on lowest common denominator agreement be strategic?**

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### **Introduction**

Strategic culture has undergone significant change since the end of the Cold War, embracing a new and comprehensive security concept (Norheim-Martinsen, 2011; Biava et al, 2011). The EU Common Security and Defence Policy may lack strategic coherence (Biscop, 2009; Biscop and Coelmont, 2010; Biscop and Norheim-Martinsen, 2011; Howorth, 2010) and it struggles to convince in terms of capability (Witney, 2008; Menon, 2009), but nevertheless it is operational and has made a significant contribution through 27 missions. The European Security Strategy (ESS) called on the Union to develop a strategic culture, and while this remains a work-in-progress, it is emerging in a novel form of coexistence with pre-existing member state strategic cultures, themselves in a state of flux.

This paper uses evidence from interviews with ESDP/CSDP actors and experts to argue that the Union is developing a unique post-national strategic culture based on civilian/soft power and peacekeeping, accompanied by developing CIV-MIL cooperation. Security and defence cooperation tends to be on an issue-by-issue basis, an enduring feature of ESDP/CSDP. Military and civilian capability, and the lack of strategic focus are an unresolved weaknesses of ESDP/CSDP, and a lack of strategic actorness continues to undermine the coherence of the initiative. Nevertheless ESDP/CSDP has managed modest but by no means insignificant achievements. CSDP is marked by bureaucratic politics, and depends on both flexible application and tolerance of different perspectives as regards strategic culture. It is however frequently undermined by member states having different interests and until common interests are better articulated and prioritised the policy will not realise its potential to exercise significant influence on the contemporary security environment.

The paper examines the emergence of an EU strategic culture arguing that that from deeply unpromising beginnings, the Union has edged towards a level of defence cooperation and even integration that little more than a decade ago seemed inconceivable. The paper

suggests that the Union's Common Security and Defence Policy is a manifestation of bureaucratic politics which may explain the lack of strategic coherence in the emergent strategic culture of the EU.

The first part of the paper establishes how we understand the term strategic culture in the European context. The second part looks at why the EU struggles to present actorness, suggesting that diverse interests, a lack of political will and above all a manifest bureaucratic environment militate against state-like actorness from an organisation which of course is not a state. So paradoxically, while bureaucratic politics enables CSDP, it does not enable actorness.

The paper is informed by 28 interviews with policy experts and officials working in or close to the EU common security and defence policy since 2010.

### **Understanding EU strategic culture**

The EU began as the antithesis of military power as a soft power-oriented effectively pacifist organisation recovering from the trauma of European war. It developed as a civilian power (Duchêne, 1972) and its apparent successes in establishing itself on the international stage, and in attracting new members, led to a further important conceptualisation of the Union as a 'normative power' (Manners, 2002) through which the Union could even shape the policy preferences of others on the basis of the positive examples of good governance offered by the Union. Until 1998 the D-word had remained a virtual taboo (*Interview 22*).

The concept of strategic culture is contested (Gray, 1999:61; Longhurst, 2004:22). The term is understood in this paper as a 'context for understanding, rather than explanatory causality for behaviour' (Gray, 1999:49). It is a framework for ESDP/CSDP and a context within which the EU develops as a security and defence actor. A frequently cited definition of strategic culture is:

The institutional confidence and processes to manage and deploy military force as part of the accepted range of legitimate and effective policy instruments, together with general acceptance of the EU's legitimacy as an international actor with military capabilities (albeit limited) (Cornish & Edwards, 2001:587).

This definition perhaps privileges military force rather more than is appropriate for the European Union following ten years of European Security and Defence Policy, marked by the European Security Strategy which urged the Union:

to develop a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid and where necessary robust intervention (Solana, 2003:13).

Has it done so? And if so what kind of strategic culture has the EU developed? Biava, Drent and Herd (2011) present a persuasive case that the Union has achieved a strategic culture albeit we may suggest not necessarily one that manifests 'robust intervention'. However they argue that the Union has achieved a high degree of actorness through the structures, mechanisms and instruments, and evidenced by interventions and missions under ESDP/CSDP.

Longhurst provides a definition which usefully ties concepts like beliefs and attitudes to policy making (she uses the term practices) in relation to force. She defines strategic culture as:

A distinctive body of beliefs, attitudes, and practices regarding the use of force, which are held by a collective and arise gradually over time, through a unique protracted historical process (Longhurst, cited in Sedivy & Zaborovsky, 2004:193).

Presumably this incorporates the possibility of a *pacifist* strategic culture, for some a contradiction in terms. But 'beliefs, attitudes and practices regarding the use of force' must surely incorporate the potential for *non-use*, which for some EU member states has been a long held principle. A third definition also includes the concept of values:

A set of semi-permanent elite beliefs, attitudes, and behavioural patterns socialized into a distinctive mode of thought (that) guides and circumscribes thoughts on strategic questions, influences the ways in which strategic issues are formulated, and sets the vocabulary and perceptual parameters of strategic debate (Snyder, 1977:8).

Both these definitions fit with a *comprehensive* understanding appropriate to the European Union in what Robert Cooper has described as a post-national approach to European security constructed around a transnational system for 'a postmodern world' (Cooper, 2004:26). I argue that the concept of strategic culture is context related and that different

polities construct different strategic cultures depending on threat perception and how states interpret expectations of their role in the world, and importantly in the EU context how states relate to their allies and partners. This allows for strategic culture to be evolving, or emergent, and even flexible depending on variable needs, threats and aspirations. Strategic culture therefore is not a predetermined hard concept but a fluid notion that develops over time in response to changing circumstances.

The comprehensive approach matches the changed circumstances post-Cold War and post-9/11. It constitutes an adjustment in how strategic culture is understood consistent with Gray (1999), Rynning (2003) and Biava, *et al* (2011). The traditional focus on military capability alone to assert state preferences is no longer valid, and not only because the EU is not a state. Instead a multilateral approach using a broad set of instruments from economic and political pressures to military threat arguably constitutes a 'European way of war' (Everts, *et al*, 2004).

Norheim-Martinsen (2011) and Biava, *et al* (2011) appraise Europe's transition towards a strategic culture and refer to the widening reach of EU security interests, the emerging consensus on how threats should be managed, and the evolution of institutional means to achieve security objectives. Biava *et al* echo Gray's description of the European strategic culture environment, indicating a high context culture, in contrast to the US (Gray, 1999), and echoing Menon *et al* (2004) in their rebuttal of Kagan's (2004) blunt analysis of Europe as lacking a strategic culture of any kind.

So while strategic culture has traditionally centred on military capability and coercive power, this is not the basis for EU strategic culture. The comprehensive variety instead embraces conflict resolution through a 'toolbox' approach:

The EU's ability to provide the complete package of military and civilian tools to tackle crises is regarded as a hallmark (Drent and Zandee, 2010:10).

This comprises a spectrum from soft diplomacy to military intervention. The EU pursues the comprehensive approach out of conviction and political necessity in order to gain buy-in from all member states, all of whom, for historical reasons have come to the party with very different perceptions of what constitutes a strategic culture.

The ESDP process underwent a shift from the autonomous defence aspirations of St Malo and the HHG to something that chimed with the soft power preferences of many if not the majority of member states. This involved the 'civilianisation' of the initiative (*Interviews* 1,11,16), a process which prevented the collapse of the entire ambition in 2003-04 when the Europeanist-Atlanticist divide threatened the fragile unity of Europe's foray into the defence and security field. ESDP adopted a focus on civilian crisis management within a policy framework that has broadened further since the Lisbon Treaty, now closely tied to a range of Commission responsibilities, stretching EU ambition in this area to cover political and economic development within a framework of conflict prevention. Not only has ESDP/CSDP civilianised, it operates within the wider ambition of the European External Action Service and is therefore brought into a closer relationship with Commission interests.

Meanwhile the European strategic culture demonstrates another key characteristic apart from its comprehensiveness. It is emergent and evolving, and coexists with pre-existing member state strategic cultures which are also in a state of flux. This is consistent with the notion that 'a security community may have several strategic cultures' (Gray, 1999:54), so various member states maintain different national strategic cultures but also share a European strategic culture.

Germany is not the only state to demonstrate considerable change in its strategic culture even if the basic aversion to military deployment remains. Ireland, a neutral state with almost no military, has been a significant contributor to ESDP. Sweden has been a leading player in the development of transnational collaboration in battlegroups. Poland likewise has been a major partner in the Weimar Initiative with Germany and France (Chappell, 2012). Belgium and the Netherlands have been foremost in the concept of pooling and sharing, effectively merging their navies (Biscop, 2013). Britain and France, albeit in a demonstration of the durable nature of traditional bilateralism, have agreed significant defence cooperation since the UK coalition government came to power in 2010, but it is also likely that France sees this bilateralism as a precursor to bringing in other EU partners as occurred with St Malo (*Interview* 11,12). Across the piece the traditional Europeanist/Atlanticist divide has to a large extent crumbled in recent years. This means that a more coherent coalescing around shared perspectives has enabled a European strategic culture to develop, characterised by Biava et al (2011) as unique and evolutionary, but clearly in evidence through missions, increasing levels of cooperation and a developing sense of common purpose.

But for an EU post-national strategic culture founded on multilateral principles to be truly effective, even within a relatively limited geographical scope, it is necessary that CSDP is better enabled through adequate capability. This brings the discussion to criticisms of the EU performance through CSDP in respect of a lack of actorness.

### **European strategic culture and actorness**

Leaving aside outright rejectionists who dismiss the whole notion of a European strategic culture as impossible on account of its very comprehensiveness and lack of substance (Hyde-Price, 2004) there are a number of scholars, whom for convenience this paper labels as strategy enthusiasts, who complain that the EU fails to adopt an adequately strategic approach to its own security (Biscop, 2009; Biscop, *et al*, 2009; Howorth, 2009, 2010a; Biscop & Coelmont, 2010; Drent and Zandee, 2010; Simòn, 2011). The case is that while the EU may have an emergent strategic culture it is inadequately strategic (Heisbourg, 2004). Heisbourg complained that the European Security Strategy, considered by many to be the fulcrum of the EU approach to security, is actually not a security strategy at all. Others have criticised the ESS for being vague and containing no means to achieve actorness, defined as the 'capacity to behave actively and deliberately in relation to other actors in the international system' (Sjöstedt, 1977:16). Actorness is summarised by Biscop as follows:

The EU must be a *power*, i.e. a strategic actor that consciously and purposely defines long-term objectives, actively pursues these, and acquires the necessary means to that end. Being a model for others to emulate is not sufficient, for too many, swayed by nationalism, radicalism, fundamentalism or just cynicism, simply no longer see the EU as a model. Attractiveness alone does not generate soft power – the EU must be seen to act upon its strategy. The EU therefore cannot be a status quo power that seeks to maintain current conditions: its agenda entails a commitment to proactively shape the environment (Biscop, 2009:19-20).

While the notion that EU civilian and normative power can have a transformative effect beyond the EU's immediate neighbourhood is widely discredited, the transition to becoming a strategic actor is fraught with difficulty. Asseburg and Kempin describe a strategic actor as one:

capable of long term planning and implementing activities in order to achieve the goals it has set (Asseburg and Kempin, 2009:11).

Strategy enthusiasts bemoan the lack of actorness and also the failure to build up capability. For Europe to have a properly comprehensive strategic culture it must also possess military capability. Gray suggests that Europe 'has turned its back on war' (Gray, 2007:276). He warns that while Europeans live in a realm of affluence, beyond Europe's borders lie regions of poverty and desperation. Europeans should prepare for disorder and discover the means to deal with potential threats. This in part explains the urgency in some minds for the EU to consider seriously the need for enhanced capability, and strategic actorness.

Respondents interviewed for this research consistently argue that ESDP/CSDP, including specific missions, lack adequate resources. Actorness without adequate resources is impossible, or at least difficult. Clearly CSDP is undermined by a resources issue. Respondents commenting on institutional arrangements implied that once a request for resources is made, the states usually respond 'not yet' or 'no'. This illustrates the limited actorness of CSDP. A senior official in EUFOR HQ comments:

By 2005 we in EUFOR were getting more contact with EUMC under the PSC, and Chiefs of Defence Staffs from the EUMS, and they still come regularly and they apply what we can call a finger on the pulse approach. (...) they report it back in Brussels along with the reports that we send. It's an assessment of EUFOR by EUFOR in the report, and if we ask for something then the EUMC take the message and they'll reply yes or no, and if it's something we want then it's usually no. The decisions are taken at PSC level, EU Ambassadors. They're on message with their capitals. So the *modus operandi* of the PSC is to get requests from the military people and report back that the governments say not yet or they don't agree and that's all there is to it (*Interview 18*).

An official in the CMPD reports similarly, that mission experience shows that CMPD requests depend entirely on states agreeing to supply resources, and usually the request is met with a negative (*Interview 9*). This underlines that it is not the processes that are at fault, nor institutional weakness. Instead there is a failure of political will that means the Union does not demonstrate actorness.

A key concern of the strategy enthusiasts is the lack of capability being constructed around CSDP. Capability is lacking in both military and civilian terms. State spending on defence has declined since the end of the Cold War and in a climate of financial austerity has declined still further. Witney (2008), Biscop and Coelmont (2010), and Menon (2009) call for a greater commitment to improving military capability:

If Europeans are to make the contribution to international security that their rhetoric aspires, far more progress must be made in enhancing military capabilities (Menon, 2009:244).

Heisbourg (2000), Witney (2008), and the Venusberg Group (2007) have called for a convergence criteria process that could enhance military and civilian capability, even without major increases in expenditure and the EDA is at the forefront in recommending rationalisation through pooling and sharing (Biscop, 2013). A concern during a period of cuts due to austerity is that states defend local interests rather than coordinate reduced spending in a way that produces intelligent rationalisation of resources (*Interview 4*).

Indeed the lack of capability makes inaction, or inadequate action, more likely. Respondents for this research report serious deficiencies in terms of civilian capability where there is no common funding and no system for accumulating a supply of civilian experts to participate in missions. At least in the military there are standing armies whose job it is to go to zones of conflict or risk. For civilian interventions no such equivalent to the battlegroup concept is under creation, and civilian training is a major concern, where for example Carabinieri or Guardia Civil are engaged in police training but they themselves are not trained in how to impart such training, so processes can be somewhat ad hoc. EULEX Kosovo has since its inception been plagued by a shortage of judges and prosecutors (*Interview 27*).

These deficiencies will continue even as the European strategic culture continues to evolve, limiting the extent to which the Union becomes a serious milieu-shaping international actor. Resources have remained inadequate even during the intense institutional innovation that this policy field has witnessed since St Malo. The institutional challenge is whether the post-Lisbon architecture permits an adequate quality of civil-military coordination. There is a risk that Commission/CFSP interests remain geographically organised while the European External Action Service (EEAS) is under the umbrella of the Council (Gourlay, 2011:18-19). The High Representative for the Union's Foreign and Security Policy, Baroness Ashton, heads the EEAS within which CSDP is located. It is doubtful whether the HR can

satisfactorily bridge the two worlds of Commission and Council so 'turf wars' between different institutions may threaten policy coherence (*Interviews 9,22*).

A brief synopsis of the institutional architecture of CSDP is useful. Since February 2010 the Crisis Management Planning Directorate (CMPD) is central to mission planning and policy implementation, responsible for drafting a crisis management concept (CMC) which covers the political and military aspects of a crisis intervention. The military input comes from the EU Military Committee (EUMC) and EU Military Staff (EUMS) while civilian expertise is provided by the Committee on Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM) and the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability unit (CPCC). The CMC is presented to the Political and Security Committee (PSC) for comment and recommendation, before forwarding to the Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER) and the Council of Ministers for approval. The PSC continues to exercise oversight once a mission is undertaken, receiving local reports from Mission Commanders and from EU Delegations.

The CIV-MIL cooperation and comprehensive vision within the CMPD is intended to secure coherence in crisis intervention. CMPD also engages with the Commission on the economic and political implications of crisis management, including the Commission role in post-crisis stabilization, economic matters, democracy and rule of law, human rights and institutional development. The CMPD therefore encapsulates the 'toolbox' approach of CSDP, and is a step towards comprehensive CIV-MIL and Commission/EEAS coordination. However according to Drent and Zandee (2010:36) it does not yet fully achieve this and might be another interim step in a still evolving process.

The battlegroup concept has enabled a high level of transnational partnership and a further institutional innovation, the European Defence Agency (EDA) has had a pivotal role in encouraging the Commission to introduce secondary legislation, approved by the European Council, to enable Single Market law to prevail in defence industry procurement, a highly significant step towards rationalisation and efficiency savings for European militaries. Moreover the EDA has pursued further efficiency gains by identifying and encouraging the pooling and sharing of military assets between member states, a process further enabled by another Lisbon Treaty innovation, Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). According to Biscop (2013) these developments can in time bring significant capability enhancements.

So while there has been striking institutional development in little more than a decade including evolving civilian-military partnership, resources have not followed the institutional

lead. Why is it so difficult for the EU to provide adequate resources, and to embrace actorhood in the manner advocated by strategy enthusiasts? My answer to this is based on two explanations: interests and bureaucratic politics.

### **Interests and bureaucratic politics undermine actorhood**

Interests are central to the lack of adequate EU strategic actorhood. Developing a post-national strategic culture such as that being constructed by the EU cannot induce the Union to behave *like a state*, that is with coherence and consensus around what is required in the conduct of foreign and security policy. This is a fundamental barrier to both adequate resourcing of CSDP and the ability of the EU to achieve strategic actorhood. For sixty years the EU that has been founded on consensus politics which inevitably struggles to unite 28 members around a common position, and will continue to do so until there is adequate recognition of common interests. This is as yet under-developed in the foreign and security policy arena. It is not enough to summarise threats as the ESS did, updated in 2008 by the report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy (European Council, 2008). What is needed is a full understanding of the common interests as well as the threats.

A challenge to EU strategic culture, but even more to the concept of strategic actorhood, is that member states remain conditioned to focus on state interests where foreign and security policy is concerned. This is partly a historical mindset, a reflex towards assuming that state interests must in every instance be to the fore over common interests. But if the EU is serious to its international security role then it follows that member states should have a proper debate about their common interests. One respondent refers to the diversity of interests among member states:

There's no ambition because the member states don't agree on what this ambition should be (*Interview 14*).

But the absence of debate makes it more difficult to find common interests. Respondents interviewed for this research report the lack of debate around the framing of the ESS, and the continued absence of debate around the Report on its Implementation. This silence continues, even more so since 2009 and amid understandable concerns over the financial crisis affecting the euro, the consequent austerity ought to be a stimulus to rationalisation and pooling and sharing among member states anxious to get more bang for their bucks in

defence spending (*Interview 4*). There is also a risk that local interests hold sway and inefficiencies continue in defence of employment (*Interview 3*). Poorly coordinated defence industrial misdirect R&D resources and result in production waste and field inadequacies caused by equipment and communication incompatibility.

The absence of adequate debate about security and defence also fuels the fundamental lack of legitimacy in EU politics, though admittedly at all levels defence spending and security policy generally is not an area marked by democratic consultation and representation of popular will. Nevertheless it is beholden on member state governments to explain to their electorates the basis of policy and this is rarely achieved. CSDP is a policy field far from public knowledge. It might help CSDP and defence policy more widely if politicians showed leadership in discussing how they and the EU should contribute to international security. This debate is not happening. This I contend is a contributory factor in limiting the actorness of the EU in the execution of CSDP.

The issue of interests plays heavily in CSDP. Respondents report the lack of member state engagement with what happens on the ground in established and continuing CSDP missions, notably EUFOR Althea in Bosnia Herzegovina and EU EULEX Kosovo. (*Interviews 15-21,27*). Member states remain largely disinterested in these missions, adversely affecting their resourcing, and reducing their chances of beneficial and efficient impact. Member states do not confronting the underlying dysfunctions in Bosnia and Kosovo, including endemic corruption and a sectarian divide between different ethnic groups. Bosnia Herzegovina is widely reported as a seriously dysfunctional state (Gross, 2007b; Whitman and Juncos, 2011; Bertin, 2008). Meanwhile the EU has progressed accession for Croatia (joining the Union in 2013) and for Serbia, while in Kosovo, according to a EULEX expert interviewee, there is a sense that the EU has marginalised Kosovo and that EULEX has become a kind of status quo holding operation. It would be better if the Union and its member states developed a better understanding of the issues, and furthermore determined exactly which EU and member state interests are at play in Kosovo. The same criticism is made by numerous officials attached to the EUFOR Althea mission.

Interests have a direct impact on deployment decisions. Critics of the battlegroup concept point to the freedom of states to withdraw or deny the use of facilities which is likely to sharply devalue effectiveness or mean abandoning a mission (Haine, 2008:3). This undermines the battlegroup concept but also the entire CSDP project. Germany showed extreme reluctance to deploy a battlegroup when the largest contingent of troops would have

been German in DR Congo in 2006 and again in 2008. According to a former member of the Venusberg Group Germany is prepared to engage in civilian assistance missions, and even in peacekeeping, but military engagement in armed conflict remains off-radar *as much as possible*. This concerns interests as much as strategic culture. It is difficult to connect a conflict in central Africa to German interests, especially if there is a sense that France was seeking to 'export national interests' to the EU (Gross, 2009:120) in pushing for a European deployment.

In summary interests and the lack of a proper understanding of where these are common among all member states undermine the aspiration that the EU should become a strategic actor.

The second argument concerns bureaucratic politics. Bureaucracy, using a Weberian conception, is an essential feature of advanced societies:

The modern capitalist state is completely dependent upon bureaucratic organisation for its existence (Giddens, 1971:159).

Giddens summarises the Weberian bureaucratic organisation as comprised of specialist officials appointed on the basis of technical competence evidenced by diplomas and qualifications, and experience; they perform clearly defined functions within authoritarian and clearly demarcated hierarchies. Weber considers bureaucratic organisation as:

the most rational known means of carrying out imperative control (and) superior to any other form in precision, in stability, in the stringency of its discipline and in its reliability (Weber, 1970:267).

Weber's positive perspective contrasts with contemporary criticism of bureaucracy as complex, restrictive, unresponsive, and frequently dismissed as 'red tape'. This tendency is challenged by a respondent to this research on the basis of Kosovan experience, arguing that in post-conflict societies, bureaucracy that enables the development of modern state characteristics is more important than imperfect democracy, and infinitely better than nationalism-inspired chaos (*Interview 27*). From a classically Weberian perspective he argues that competent officials are preferable to politicians tainted by past associations, so it is a mistake to assume that bureaucratic politics is necessarily disadvantageous or at the expense of democracy, as implied by another expert in Berlin (*Interview 25*).

I suggest that the complex dynamics around CSDP reflect bureaucratic politics. This reflects the application of bureaucratic politics to the Cuban Missile Crisis by Allison and Zelikow:

(Government organizations) are called into being by political processes; their goals, like their masters, are often diffuse; (they) are especially burdened by unique constraints; they cannot keep their profits; they have limited control over organization of production; they have limited control over their goals; they have external (as well as internal) goals governing their administrative procedures; and their outputs take a form that often defy easy evaluation of success or failure (Allison and Zelikow, 1999:149).

Organizations' limited resources constrain their ability to fulfil goals set by their masters and inertia sets in as the transaction costs of change increase. An inevitable characteristic of complex bureaucracies, of which armed forces are an example, is the obligation to compromise on what principals define as organizational goals. This seems apt for CSDP and may explain sub-optimal levels of achievement and even strategic incoherence. Organizations do not lack central purpose or goals, but they become prey to 'bureaucratic drift' (Allison and Zelikow, 1999:152). They adopt rules, norms and routines:

where satisficing is the rule stopping with the first alternative that is good enough (...) the menu of choice is severely limited and success is more likely to be defined simply as compliance with relevant rules (Allison and Zelikow, 1999:152).

This matches the observation that ESDP/CSDP reflects lowest common denominator agreement (Smith, 2008:10, Rynning, 2011:30), a view echoed by several respondents (*Interviews* 8,9,12,14) including EUFOR Althea officials who report member states having little interest in political process or progress in Sarajevo; Althea becomes a holding operation governed by the principle that no violence means all is well, or well enough (*Interviews*, 15-22).

Before St Malo, European Political Cooperation (EPC) and CFSP accounted for EEC/EU foreign and security policy. During the 1980s EPC attempted to bring coherence to policy statements from member states, and the European Commission could represent the 'community view' on major foreign policy issues. EPC worked reasonably well but produced only tepid declarations easily countermanded by individual states. However Bickerton (2011)

cites the EPC contribution to the Helsinki Final Act as an important administrative process which now resembles CSDP, especially the way of working within its principle policy determining body, the Political and Security Committee (PSC) which is:

in a no-man's-land between intergovernmental and supranational policy-making (...) with an orientation towards consensus and compromise (Bickerton, 2011:178).

Bickerton cites Howorth's detailed study of the PSC which found that:

the quest for consensus (was the) basic stock in trade of the PSC members (and that) the dominant mode of interaction is consensus-seeking rather than bargaining around fixed national positions (Howorth, 2010b:16).

Bickerton argues that the PSC and CSDP more generally are largely orchestrated by proxy through a bureaucratic process that has colonised the European Union. This is part of the evolution of the EU and represents a 'transformation of the modern state' (Anderson, 2009:109) through which democracy has given way to bureaucracy in policy making, and consensus seeking is dominated by compromise. Bickerton (2011) argues that the modern state and the European Union display bureaucratic politics at the expense of democracy, citing Beetham (1987:89) who writes that 'the power of the bureaucracy is inversely proportionate to the strength of democracy'.

This view accords closely with a Berlin-based expert extremely critical of the direction of CSDP (*Interview 25*). But compromise and consensus is surely what it takes to achieve agreement among the now 28 member states. That the process is bureaucratic may be enabling, as opposed to it being blocked by veto and individual state interpretations of democratic will. In other words the bureaucratic process of CSDP may be what allows it to function at all, even if one of the consequences is that strategic actorhood is hard to achieve.

It is highly unlikely that national politicians, even once on the European stage, can drive major policy changes, or an adequate degree of strategic actorhood, with reasonable levels of public support in an environment characterised by bureaucratic politics. Legitimacy is compromised as politics gives way to process. Characteristics already identified as typical of ESDP/CSDP become the way of working, namely lowest common denominator and issue-by-issue policy making. Strategic planning, and grand strategy (Venusberg Group, 2007; Howorth, 2009; 2010a; Biscop, 2009) become improbable. If the bureaucratic critique is

correct this arguably countermands the grand strategy approach to achieving actorness. If CSDP is eventually to deliver an increased strategic actorness on the part of the EU, this will continue to be a gradual and incremental process, governed on an issue-by-issue basis and more often than not dependent on lowest common denominator agreement.

### **Conclusion: common interests to the fore**

In conclusion, and to unite the key parts of this argument, for the EU to advance its strategic actorness through CSDP requires that the emergent strategic culture is augmented by an open debate about the objectives from security and defence policy. This is a prerequisite to achieving consensus on common interests, an essential step towards actorness. Once common interests are established and adequately aired in public, political will and leadership needs to come to the fore, so that a level of engagement with CSDP and the wider CFSP happens above the bureaucratic functioning of the officials and technocrats currently charged with responsibility for the process of governance around CSDP. The Union needs to step beyond process towards proactive engagement and this requires a full understanding of the common interests of member states.

Inevitably for common interests to hold sway over state interests, whenever the two conflict islands of cooperation (Mawdsley, 2012) or Permanent Structured Cooperation needs to become the accepted modus operandi of CSDP. Some form of Qualified Majority Voting is unlikely due to the 'neuralgic issue of sovereignty' (*Interview 11*) and in any case unlikely to work, as substantive intervention in CSDP is always likely to need the backing of one or even two of the largest member states in order to be successful (*Interview 21*). But in the post-sovereign environment the EU strategic culture and the debate about its implications needs to address the question of interests more purposefully. This will require leadership and vision, qualities which prominent post-holders at a European and state level need to demonstrate to adequately confront contemporary challenges.

A further difficulty standing in the way of strategic actorness is the nature of contemporary politics and of CSDP in particular. The EEAS and practically the entire personnel engaged in policy implementation are a textbook example of a Weberian bureaucracy: technocratic official, experts operating in a hierarchical environment where efficiency and satisficing, especially within the permissible or practical boundaries of limited resources, is the order of the day. While such an environment is typical of most if not all modern capitalist

democracies, a clear outcome is an emphasis on process rather than outcomes. The sophisticated construction of an institutional architecture through which the Union pursues its security and defence policy is symptomatic of this tendency. But the irony is that the below-the-radar incremental and gradualist approach of bureaucratic politics may actually turn out to be the one way that CSDP can over time have a substantial impact. It may even achieve strategic actorness.

## **Appendix: Interviews**

- 1 Security and defence policy expert, ISIS, Paris 16/06/2010
- 2 Expert on EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, Brussels 17/06/2010
- 3 European foreign and security policy expert, Leeds 25/06/2010
- 4 Security and defence policy expert, Brussels 01/07/2010
- 5 Former military officer and ESDP expert, Brussels 08/09/2010
- 6 Expert on Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management, Brussels, 09/09/2010
- 7 Senior Official in EDA, Brussels 10/09/2010
- 8 Official in EU Military Staff in Council Secretariat, Brussels, 22/09/2010
- 9 Military official in CMPD, Brussels, 24/09/2010
- 10 Security and defence expert in ECFR, London 30/09/2010
- 11 EU Foreign policy expert, York, 18/11/2010
- 12 Senior Official in MoD, London 10/03/2011
- 13 Military representative inside EEAS, Brussels 23/03/2011
- 14 Former Member of Venusberg Group, Munich 25/03/2011 (telephone)
- 15 Consultant to EUFOR Althea, 16/05/2011
- 16 Senior Official in OHR, 17/05/2011
- 17 Chief of Political Dept in OHR, 17/05/2011
- 18 Senior Official in EUFOR HQ, 18/05/2011

19 Senior Official (2) in EUFOR HQ, 18/05/2011

20 Consultant to project for EU Delegation/European Commission, 19/05/2011

21 Senior Policy Adviser to EUSR/EUFOR, 25/05/2011 (telephone)

22 Defence and security expert, SWP, Berlin 27/09/2011

23 Defence and security expert, German Council for Foreign Relations (DGAP) Berlin.  
27/09/2011

24 SPD Member of Bundestag in Grand Coalition 2002-06, 09/07/2012

25 Defence and security expert, ECFR, Berlin 11/07/2012

26 Senior Official in the European Parliament, 10/05/2013

27 Expert on Kosovo and EULEX implementation, Leeds, 18/07/2013.

An additional respondent (28) worked as a Senior Brussels-based journalist, with whom the researcher had a number of informal discussions and email exchange during the research period. These discussions were not formally transcribed.

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