

2015

Talking the Talk with a “Grand Strategy” or Walking the Walk with a “Comprehensive Approach”: the Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Union as an Effective Pan-European and International Security Actor After Lisbon – Why Supranationalism Fails (in the Case of Libya)?

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APA Citation

Wong, Y. (2015). Talking the Talk with a “Grand Strategy” or Walking the Walk with a “Comprehensive Approach”: the Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Union as an Effective Pan-European and International Security Actor After Lisbon – Why Supranationalism Fails (in the Case of Libya)?. Retrieved from https://repository.hkbu.edu.hk/lib_ugaward/3

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2015

Hong Kong Baptist University

Library Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Research

Talking the Talk with a “Grand Strategy” or Walking the Walk with a “Comprehensive Approach”: the Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Union as an Effective Pan-European and International Security Actor After Lisbon – Why Supranationalism Fails (in the Case of Libya)?

Wong Yu Wai

Introduction – the idealist-realist debate in ‘building the ship at the sea’: CSDP ‘talking the talk or walking the walk’?

The international security challenges & threats of the twenty-first century have been dramatically catalysed and diversified since the end of the Cold-War bipolarity. The suddenness of such historical momentum must be strongly emphasised for the **re-booting of European security architecture**: the over-night collapse of the Berlin Wall & the ‘Soviet eclipse’ coercively added a question-mark to not only the necessity of NATO’s military blessings but also Europe’s political significance for the United States, constituting a massive crisis of national security identity among the European states particularly after the Gulf War and the Balkan Wars in the 1990s.

The European Union’s responsive parturition of **the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)** – *“a new policy child that had to get its feet on the ground very quickly”* (Ciceo, 2010, p.30) – has unfolded a new era for the European security landscape and revolutionised the tailor-making of a post-Cold War European security identity, declaring its eagerness and readiness to become a security actor on the international stage. The architecture of **the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)** under CFSP has been a **piecemeal** and **evolutionary** saga of ‘three episodes’ – from the Saint-Malo Declaration to the European Security Strategy (ESS) and the European Defence Agency (EDA); from ‘the grand strategy’ to the Lisbon Treaty and the Post-Lisbon framework (CMPD and PSCD) – in which both simplicities and complexities of the macro-institutional & micro-operational changes have been recorded.

Notwithstanding the successful institution-building, the realist implications of the ‘Kissinger Question’ – *“Who do I call if I want to call Europe?”* – have yet been satisfactorily addressed by the European External Action Service (EEAS) and High Representative (HR) for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy under the Lisbon context, embarrassingly exposing **the Achilles’ heel** of military incapability. Such a classical question was not born out of a ‘crystal ball’ but the reality: the EU’s failure/incapability in the “militarily not too challenging” Libyan Crisis was a “paradigm shift” to assess CSDP as irrelevance but effectiveness – European statesmen reacted exactly as they had twenty-years earlier (Howorth, 2013, pp.32-33).

The ‘capabilities-expectations gap’ that places doubts on the ideas of a ‘grand strategy’ and the ‘comprehensive approach’ and unveils David Allen’s criticism of ‘governance without government’ (Smith, 2004, p.176) triggered **an idealist-realist debate in CSDP**. On one hand, the liberal-idealist orthodoxy defines CSDP’s civilian successes – “*idealist understandings of the EU as a civilian power... were widespread*” (Price, 2013, p.19); on the other hand, realism as ‘a dissent voice’ spotlights CSDP’s military failures – “*the (EU’s) power was conditional upon a strategic environment provided by the military power of states*” (Ibid., p.20).

My **research question**, under the simple **hypothesis** that the failure of CSDP stems not only from purely endogenous but exogenous factors, primarily asks ‘**why supranationalism fails (in the case of Libya)?**’ through the critical and scientific lens of **Moravcsik’s liberal intergovernmentalism**, and provides answers to the myth: the EU ‘talking the talking or walking the walk’? This paper first offers a literature review, constructs a theoretical framework of analysis and presents a case study on the Libyan Crisis, in an attempt to provide explanations for the failure of supranationalism and corresponding prescriptions – in which **three sources of political knowledge** are manifested: namely, description, analysis and validating judgements. My **thesis** is unambiguous: that internally the EU member states lack a collective political will (Stavridis, 1996) for pursuing a common European security identity & positioning long-term strategic interests, that externally NATO’s physical monopoly and rigid ceilings imposed on European security affairs restrain CSDP’s functionality and effectiveness, and that an asymmetrical civilian-military approach would not genuinely bring the EU to the ‘promised land’ of peace and security.

I. Literature Review – under-investigation or simply out of a contemporary sense?

There are various motives arisen from this particular research: 1) the under-investigation & limited existing literature in academia especially after the Lisbon ‘big-bang’: most scholars in the field are obsessed with the question of ‘**how** successes/changes are witnessed’ rather than ‘**why** failures are still observed’; 2) the renewed European security landscape & narratives: the ability of classical analyses, arguments and critiques to make contemporary sense is highly questionable under theoretical favoritism and factional biases; 3) the optimal condition of ‘relative

developmental stability'. The research re-asks the same question but attempts to give alternative and contemporary answers. A literature review is provided through a 'question-answer' paradigm.

Concerning theoretical tools for CSDP analysis, Rynning (2001) argues that classical realism is ultimately a more persuasive framework for understanding CSDP as a "power project" lied between Europe's shared heritage and the national legacy. Price (2006) subscribes to the power of structural realism in challenging the normative & civilian power concepts and spotlighting the systemic pressures that "shape and shove" member states' international behaviour.

Regarding the (re)assessment of CSDP's effectiveness before and after Lisbon, an initial general picture of Hill (1993)'s "capabilities-expectations gap" fundamentally offered explanations for the failure of EU foreign policy in national, supranational and international levels. Specifically, in a constitutional perspective, Duna (2010) asks **"What future for the EU as a global security actor?"** and evaluates the implications of three core documents: the ESS, the Constitutional Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty, concluding *"the EU is moving into the right direction"* (p.31) yet political willingness is essentially lacked. From an institutional perspective, Kirchner (2006) applies a yardstick on three security functions (conflict prevention, peace-enforcement and peace-building) and three core components of governance (coordination, management and regulation) to give four answers to his question **"Does security governance capture the EU's function as a security actor?"**. The question **"How do European Union security practices constitute the EU as an actor in global politics?"** by McDonagh (2014) is ended with 'the EU's security identity still in infancy'. With the question **"Will the Treaty of Lisbon be able to bridge the capabilities-expectations gap?"**, Ciceo (2010) concluded that the Lisbon Treaty has shown greater willingness to develop a 'military arm' but any desire for an integrationist approach. Bickerton (2011)'s book raises a similar question but argues in a different way: it is precisely the political functionality limits faced by the nature of the EU, not its institutions and military capabilities, that constitute *"conflictual political relations between unstable and functionally disparate institutions"* (pp.121-123).

In an operational perspective, Hynek (2011) focuses on civil-military coordination in the EU's crisis management structures and emphasises an overall significant progress in terms of decision-making & leadership after Lisbon, yet urges a rapid, consistent and robust joint response to "all sorts of crisis situations on the ground" (p.97). Smith (2013) optimistically argues the EU's process of **experiential institutional learning** indicates negative 'flexibility' and is "*an idea under development rather than a reality in EU security affairs*", whatsoever a considerable degree of institutional improvisation and improved capacity is realised (p.42).

II. Case Study – the Libyan Crisis: the untouchable Achilles' heel?

The Gaddafi regime had been seriously wavered by the duplication of Egyptian and Tunisian successful experiences in 2011. On 15th Feb, a riot in Benghazi was unexpectedly turned into massive uprisings, with which the state coercively responded by repression and violence against civilians. The subsequent eruption of civil war envisaged a first testing-ground for CFSP after Lisbon. A debut military CSDP mission was, presumably, on the edge of deployment.

The EU's first wave of responses was effortless: a declaration from the HR Cathy Ashton and a suspension of negotiations on the EU-Libya Framework Agreement. The second-round reaction was passive: the Council (according to the Decision 2011/137/CFSP) imposed economic sanctions adopted by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) against Libya and later arms embargo following UNSC 1970 & 1973 Resolution. On 19th March, the leading states (UK, France, the U.S.) formed a coalition of willing for air strikes under the command of NATO, which did not either involve any institutional/policy link with or attract any EU responses – the endorsement of a 'no-fly zone' was even blocked by the abstained member states (Koutrakos, 2013, p.126).

On 1st April, the Council finally adopted a Decision (2011/210/CFSP) on a military operation (EUFOR Libya) for **humanitarian assistance** in the regions, which was never launched and now expired. One EU diplomat cynically concluded: "*CFSP died in Libya – we just have to pick a sand dune under which we can bury it*" (Menon, 2011, p.76).

III. Theoretical framework – liberal intergovernmentalism (LI)

The process of both formal and informal European integration has been traditionally and centrally under the IR spotlights of classical realism and neo-realism. The realist combination of Blumer's domestic politics approach and Putnam's "two-level games" gives birth to Moravcsik's LI with a neo-liberal focus on **formation and interaction of national governmental preferences**.

It utilises the model of "two-level games" – "*national executives play games in two arenas more or less simultaneously*" – to illustrate a 'demand-and-supply' mechanism of European integration: "*a liberal theory of national preference formation and an intergovernmentalist account of strategic bargaining between states*" (Rosamond, 2000, pp.136-137). The demand (integration outcomes) and supply (intergovernmental bargaining) indicate national preferences shaped by domestic politics (voters, parties, interest groups & bureaucracies): while the demand side highlights the advantages of cooperation and policy coordination, the supply side draws the restricted range of possible integration outcomes (Ibid.). The process of interstate bargaining at the European level reciprocally reinforces states vis-à-vis home politics (Ibid., p.138) Integration enhances the domestic autonomy of governments and becomes a way of either solving common problems or resurrecting the established order (Ibid., pp.138-140). In sum, Moravcsik's LI is a three-step model composed of a liberal theory of national preference formation, an intergovernmental bargaining at EU level and a rational choice theory of institutional choice and "credible commitments" (Jones, Menon & Weatherill, 2012, pp.10-11). Sandholtz's revisionism of LI goes further to take the role of extra non-state domestic preference into account (Rosamond, pp.144-145).

IV. Why the 'clinical death' of supranationalism in Libya?

The failure of supranationalism in the EU's foreign and security policy and particularly CSDP could be explained through the lenses of liberal intergovernmentalism – the greatest **internal** factor concerns the political will of the EU member states & neo-realism – the greatest **external** factor considers the existence of NATO.

a. The fragility of collective political will – a common European security identity?

The fragility of collective political will in pursuing a common European security identity and positioning long-term strategic interests fundamentally provides a first explanation for the ‘clinical death’ of supranationalism in Libya. The mutually exclusive relationship between domestic politics and fragile collective political will must be emphasised under LI: domestic situations, rather than supranational institutions, shape national interests/preferences.

The new theoretical tool, distinguished from the classical one which draws a boundary between high and low politics, is universally applied into the EU reality. Schimmelfennig presents the realisation of LI at low politics through the three stages (national preferences formation, intergovernmental bargaining and institutional choice & credible commitments) – the euro area crisis (Schimmelfennig, 2015, pp.177-195). In the same vein at high politics, specifically in the Libyan Crisis, national interests & preferences of the ‘big players’ are under serious considerations: for example, Germany as one of the abstained states and biggest budget contributors paid special attention to its domestic politics: **the upcoming federal state elections**. The EU member states’ fragility of collective political will is visibly embedded in three areas of manifestation.

i. Military incapability – ‘civilian fetishism’ or ‘intergovernmentality’?

The idealist implications of military CSDP are promising but rhetorical, depicting the EU’s increased readiness and ambition for security identification as reflected in the ESS: “*we need to be more active, more coherent and more capable, and ready to act before a crisis occurs*” & to “*add particular value by developing operations involving ... military capabilities*” (See European Security Strategy). The Headline Goals 2010 (HG 2010) with the revolutionary invention of ‘Battle Groups’ (BGs), committed to “*respond to a crisis with rapid and decisive action applying a fully coherent approach to...crisis management operations*” (Howorth, 2007, p.81). Judged not by ambitious texts but on-ground military conflict management missions, *EUFOR Comcordia 2003* involved all-states contribution (Koutrakos, p.108).

The realist implications urged the EU to develop “*a harder or more martial strategy*” (McGuire and Smith, 2008, p.234). The phenomenon of EU’s ‘civilian fetishism’ and ‘military ceremonialism’ has resulted in an asymmetrical/imbalanced ‘comprehensive approach’ and widened the “capability-expectations gap”. The EU’s over-emphasis on civilian power outlooks in ‘post-conflict’ societies is an open secret and normalises the format and function of CSDP: there are 10 completed and 11 on-going civilian-based missions (e.g. police, judicial) by 2015. The civilian CSDP’s attempt to “*round out EU military capabilities building on the EU heritage as a civilian power*” (Biscop and Whitman, 2013, p.97) nurtures ‘military ceremonialism’. Howorth (2013) asked a critical question after the Libyan Crisis: “*If a clear majority of EU member states do not consider Libya a fit subject for discussion as a possible CSDP mission, then what exactly is CSDP for?*” (p.33). The BGs have never been launched on a single mission: the actual readiness of national capabilities is judged by the EU-28 and among which there are differences in terms of participatory compatibility with national security objectives (Howorth, 2007, p.84).

The myth of post-Lisbon ‘military ceremonialism’ is institutionally reinforced by the intergovernmental nature of CFSP voting method. The Maastricht Treaty rejected the idea of political supranationalism and favoured the security decision-making under states’ control – known as unanimity/veto power. The ‘high politics’ deadlock remained unsolved after Lisbon despite the introduction of qualified majority voting (QMV): Article 31 (1) maintains the rule of “constructive abstention”, and Article 31 (2) only permits the use of QMV under certain circumstances – there is an “emergency brake” for “*vital and stated reason of national policy*”(Ciceo, 2010, p.38). Smith writes: the member states “*understand how to make international procedures work*” and “*have not really deviated from the determination to maintain unanimity*” (Jones, Menon & Weatherill, 2012, p654).

ii. Institutional incoherence within the Lisbon framework

Coherence has topped the agenda priority of CSDP: institutional coherence concerning inner structures for external service was described by Smith “an unfinished business” and “residual institutional issues” (Smith, 2004, p.8 & 209). Coherence, or cohesiveness in the context of EU foreign policy-making implies

effective coordination (who coordinates and who is coordinated) and political solidarity characterised by closer institutions & procedures and the Union's acting independence. The question of external action competences generates institutional in-fightings between the intergovernmental Council and the supranational Commission: both of them have the rights of coordination & responsibility for external action without a third party's involvement, as laid down by the decisions in Maastricht and Nice (Whitman and Wolff, 2012, p.26).

The Lisbon Treaty introduced a doubted-hatted HR to which the coordinating rights & mediating responsibility are transferred to "ensure the consistency of the Union's external action" in terms of policy formulation and implementation (Hynek, 2011, p.83). However, the HR is seen as a coordinating mechanism rather than centralised supranational authority facilitating supranational-intergovernmental reconciliation, creating inter-institutional conflicts and legal ambiguities for allocation of responsibilities – "unclear functional ratio" and legal competence – as provisions for a leading role on certain specific foreign and security issues are unfound within the Lisbon framework (Whitman and Wolff, 2012, pp.26-27).

iii. Oligopolistic and shrinking defence budget

The EU member states' fragility of political will is realised in the defence budget, demonstrating CFSP/CSDP's short-sightedness and shrinking significance. First, a tendency to decrease EU defence budget is no longer a myth: with a few exceptions, nearly all member states reduced their contribution/spending significantly by 2010. Second, the 'big three' contributors (namely, UK, France and Germany) constituted over sixty per cent of the Union's total defence expenditure (USD \$250,108) (Howorth, 2007, pp.85-86).

b. The physical monopoly & rigid ceilings of NATO – 'guardian angel' or 'American missionary'?

The militarily hegemonic existence of NATO additionally provides a second reason for the 'clinical death' of supranationalism in Libya – as Howorth concluded: "*CSDP seemed to have declared itself to be irrelevant and to have handed*

back the responsibility for greater European security to NATO” (Howorth, 2013, p.33). The idealist perspective of the EU-NATO long-term transatlantic strategic partnership is best seen through the Berlin-Plus Agreement, and subsequently the ESS and its Report of Implementation 2008 and the New Strategic Concept 2010, in which convergence of security interests & values and mutual strategic importance are indubitable. However, the creation of CSDP was sensitively unwelcomed and questioned by scholars – is CSDP “asset or threat to NATO” or “NATO’s companion or competitor”?

The neo-realist implications of such a relationship would appropriately ask the question in a reciprocal way: is NATO a threat and competitor to CSDP? The EU’s behaviour as is conditioned by NATO and its failure is explained by the U.S. attitude: on one hand the U.S. expects Europe shoulders greater security responsibilities; on the other, the U.S. wishes to maintain influences of NATO as the only security actor in Europe (Peterson, 1998, p.11).

The unstated rule of ‘NATO first’ is recognised by Lisbon’s Article 42(7) – the mutual defence clause is under the command of ‘consistency with NATO’ (Ciceo, 2010, p.36). The tradition of ‘NATO for hard security; EU for soft security’ discourages any incentives for the pursuit of supranationalism as the only way of ensuring European security, turning the EU into a security ‘free-rider’ whose military powerlessness relies solely on NATO’s blessings. In particular, the conspiracy of the American standards & ceilings being imposed on CSDP and European security capabilities dominates popular discussion. The Libyan Crisis confirmed NATO’s role of “senior partner” and its “right of first refusal” (Howorth, 2007, p.138).

V. Prescriptions and Conclusion

Under the intergovernmental deadlock of political will, the recommendation for a higher degree of institutionalisation within EEAS – the establishment of a permanent EU strategic planning and conduct structure (e.g. the Crisis Management and Planning Directorate) for greater coherence & consistency in civilian-military capability development & crisis management (Hynek, 2011, p.98) – would not be a

satisfactory answer to the revival of supranationalism. Regarding this endogenous factor, **developing military capability without supranationalism** is one of my validating judgements: the successful experiences derived from the 'NATO model' have the implications that security could be achieved with quasi-supranationalism and those individual EU member states with stronger political will could play their own games and work together inside and outside the EU framework. **The UK-France Defence and Security Cooperation Treaty** well demonstrates the functioning of liberal intergovernmentalism: with closer and similar national strategic interests, same national preferences are always witnessed.

Concerning the exogenous factor, Howorth after the Libyan Crisis argues there must be a recalibration of NATO-CSDP relationship by offering three options which are given from an idealist and neo-functionalist perspective: CSDP to 1) "cease to exist", 2) "carve out a workable relationship with NATO as a separate and autonomous entity and 3) "merge with NATO and take over NATO" (Howorth, 2013, pp.35-36). However, Ojanen's '**NATO-EU fusion**/division of labour' is realistically preferable in terms of comparative advantage and mutual dependency: on one hand, the EU with a civilian power outlook would be responsible for crisis prevention and reconstruction; on the other, NATO would do the "dirty job" of military crisis management (Ojanen, 2006, pp. 68-71).

In conclusion, this paper chiefly explains the 'clinical death' of supranationalism and efforts have been made to answer 'why supranationalism fails?' through the lens of liberal intergovernmentalism and neo-realism, in which three sources of political knowledge are built. My **thesis** is that internally the EU member states lack a collective political will for pursuing a common European security identity & positioning long-term strategic interests, that externally NATO's physical monopoly and rigid ceilings imposed on European security affairs restrain CSDP's functionality and effectiveness, and that the EU essentially requires a stronger military but not civilian outlook and strengthening military capability is the only answer to genuine peace and security in Europe.

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