

Discussion Paper

Do European States Have Foreign Policies Outside of EU Policy?

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I. Introduction

A participant of the *European Political Cooperation* (EPC) once recollected: “So we meet, eat well, and exchange views; and if we disagree, then *tant pis* [too bad], we will return to the question when we meet again.”¹ Reminiscent of a gentlemen’s dining club, this description of the EPC—which has metamorphosed into the *Common Foreign and Security Policy* (CFSP)—manifests a critical view on disintegrated European foreign policies. It touches on the underlying question of whether member states retain foreign policies outside of the European Union (EU), and it represents one side of the ongoing debate on whether a *Europeanisation* or a *renationalisation* is occurring. Proponents of either approach, however, illegitimately simplify the matter when seeking for an absolute answer, which rarely can be found in a dynamic (rather than a static) relationship. Accordingly, one must rather examine to what *extent* states pursue foreign policies outside of the EU. The purpose of this essay is to prove that while European states occasionally have foreign policies outside of the EU, the process of Europeanisation is reducing the frequency of such deviations from common policies; this development results from the increasing dominance of Europeanisation over renationalisation.

II. Background

Firstly, in order to properly approach this issue, (1) the term *foreign policy* must be defined, and (2) a brief history of the CFSP must be given. (1) Foreign policy can be characterised as the “attempts by governments to influence or manage events outside the state’s boundaries.”² This definition will be utilised in this paper not only

¹ Michael E. Smith, *Europe’s Foreign and Security Policy: The Institutionalization of Cooperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 88.

² Ian Manners and Richard G. Whitman, “Introduction,” in *The foreign policies of European Union Member States*, ed. Ian Manners and Richard G. Whitman (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 2.

because it is commonly accepted but also because it is appropriate in the context of the EU and intergovernmentalism, as it moves the focus away from the state to the government.

(2) Due to constraints in space, this essay will limit itself to CFSP, the central structure for EU foreign policies. Based on the Luxembourg Report of 1970, the EPC was created as a “vague forum for discussions about foreign policy [and] was neither a legal treaty nor [a European Community] institution.”³ But with the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty in 1991, EPC was transformed into the CFSP and, in turn, the formal policy-making process involved “agenda-setting, decision-making, implementation, financing, democratic oversight and coherence with other EU policies and procedures.”⁴ Thus, CFSP can be viewed as a more sophisticated and institutionalised version of the ECP.

III. Renationalisation of EU Member States’ Foreign Policies

According to the state-centric realist perspective, the “nation-state is the EU’s basic unit [and] national governments hold key positions at the juncture of national and EU policies.”⁵ Since states may decide to which extent they preserve their sovereignty and due to the voluntary character of the CFSP, the limitation of states’ foreign policies depends on how seriously they abide by the provisions of the CFSP.⁶ In other words, the mere existence of European foreign policy structures does not guarantee that states will possess the political will and interest to act as a collective.⁷ If European states disagree with EU policies, they can turn to other organisations of

³ Michael E. Smith, “Institutionalization, Policy Adaptation and European Foreign Policy Cooperation.” *European Journal of International Relations* 10 (2004): 104.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 109; EUROPA, “The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP),” (Brussels: European Communities), <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.asp?lang=en&id=248&mode=g&name=> (accessed on 22 March 2007).

⁵ Roy H. Ginsberg, *The European Union in International Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 36.

⁶ Manners and Whitman, 136.

⁷ Ginsberg, 42.

which they are members; most European states are members of an extensive network of external relations outside the EU, such as the United Nations (UN) or the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).⁸ Especially with the Iraq War, differences between NATO and the EU have become visible. David P. Calleo observes: “With NATO and the EU enfeebling each other, Europe’s old demons may well return.”⁹ This conflict forces European states to choose between the two organisations; either way, states’ will inevitably pursue foreign policies outside of either NATO or the EU.

Deviations from the common line of the CFSP became especially apparent over questions like the Iraq War.¹⁰ The policies of three of the most important member states—United Kingdom (UK), Germany, and France—diverged and undermined the EU’s unified appearance. The worsened German-American relationship complicated reaching an agreement between the UK and Germany; France’s opposition to the war also caused a split both in NATO and in the EU.¹¹ In effect, the Iraq War caused a division within the EU where, on the one hand, member states,

adopted high-profile, if opposed, stances, [and on the other hand] others ‘connived at their own irrelevance’ in the knowledge that any attempt to forge a common position within CFSP would be both futile and possibly even more damaging to the EU than not trying at all.¹²

Therefore, especially in times of crisis, states may regroup according to their foreign policies—a process of renationalisation can be observed.

⁸ Manners and Whitman, 141.

⁹ David P. Calleo, “Transatlantic Folly: NATO vs. the EU.” *World Policy Journal* 20 (2003): 22.

¹⁰ Christopher Hill, “Renationalizing or Regrouping? EU Foreign Policy Since 11 September 2001,” in *JCMS* 42 (2004): 160.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 152-153.

¹² Steve Marsh and Hans Mackenstein, *The International Relations of the European Union* (London: Pearson Education, 2005), 257.

IV. Europeanisation of EU Member States' Foreign Policies

Another ongoing evolution, which stands in precise contrast with renationalisation, can be traced back to the concept of European foreign policy.¹³ It is supposed here that domestic foreign policies have changed by participating in policy-making at the European level; this development is referred to as the *Europeanisation* of national foreign policies.¹⁴ This phenomenon finds its roots in states' assumption that collective action carries more weight than their individual policies and produces lower costs and risks for them.¹⁵ Accordingly, states seek *common* foreign policy positions by mutually adjusting national positions.¹⁶ The EPC institutionalised this attitude, and "an increasingly binding set of behavioural standards emerged from a small set of informal guidelines, and states generally considered the opinions of their partners before forming their own."¹⁷ This institutionalisation and the process of Europeanisation interact with each other in a way where the latter necessitates the former.

This progressive institutionalisation of communicative processes serves as the primary driving force in European foreign policy cooperation. The underlying principle is that "member states must avoid taking fixed positions on important foreign policy questions without prior consultation with their partners."¹⁸ Already the intensified use of means of communication attests to states' adherence to this principle:

By the mid-1970s, EU states were sending an average of 4800 COREU ["CORepondance EUropéenne"] telexes a year regarding sensitive foreign policy issues; this number grew to nearly 13,000 a year by the 1990s.¹⁹

¹³ Brian White, *Understanding European Foreign Policy* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 118.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Ginsberg, 27.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 276.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁸ Smith, *European Journal of International Relations*, 101.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 108.

Certainly states did not abide by the principle in every single incident, but the point here is that states increasingly made the effort to conform to it; a growing tendency for collective European actions is discernible. More important, however, is the emergence of a *culture* of cooperation based on the shared efforts to consult each other, standard behaviours, and common norms, which were institutionalised by the EPC.²⁰ This evolution of a common ground for policy-making manifests the potential prevalence of Europeanisation in the long-term. Typical characteristics of a *team* are being adopted with regards to “the use of ostracism or peer-pressure to sanction potential defectors” in order to promote common interests; thereby a shift from a “bargaining style of cooperation to a problem-solving style of cooperation” becomes perceptible.²¹ The most recent example, which substantiates the evolution of a culture of cooperation, is the concerted efforts to resolve the question of Iran. In 2003, France, Germany, and the UK sought to prevent Iran from further enriching uranium and to convince it to allow an inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) by offering Iran an extensive package of economic incentives.²² Currently, the EU is participating in nuclear talks in Turkey, and the High Representative for the CFSP, Javier Solana Madariaga, is advancing the EU’s position in talks with Iran’s nuclear negotiator.²³ After the EU’s solidarity was disrupted by the dispute over Iraq, the handling of the question of Iran appears to unify the EU again.

This problem-solving style of cooperation has tended to strengthen institutional and weaken governmental control, indicating that states increasingly approach important foreign policy matters through the EU rather than tackling them

²⁰ Ibid., 105.

²¹ Smith, *Europe’s Foreign and Security Policy: The Institutionalization of Cooperation*, 11

²² EUROPA, “The EU’s relations with Iran,” (Brussels: European Communities), http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/iran/intro/index.htm (accessed on 27 March 2007).

²³ Ibid.

individually.²⁴ The unison, in which member states act externally, can also be clearly perceived through the UN General Assembly vote data, where a definite increase in unified voting among member states can be discerned after the creation of the EPC.²⁵ This empirical evidence also annihilates the renationalisation argument mentioned in part III, according to which European states pursue policies in international organisations that do not correspond to EU policies. Furthermore, Dutch and Belgian foreign policies underline the amplified efforts towards attaining a common policy:

Once agreement on a common [European] position has been reached both governments will adopt it as their own national position. Any attempt of 'going alone', where preference is given to a national position over a common European position, is out of the question.²⁶

Thus, while Europeanisation obviously is an ongoing process, it increasingly channels member states' foreign policies to common European policies, thereby reducing the extent to which states pursue foreign policies outside of the EU.

V. Conclusion

The juxtaposition of the two processes of Europeanisation and renationalisation elucidated several aspects on the question of whether member states possess foreign policies outside of the EU. Firstly, the EU's foreign policy structures, or more specifically the CFSP's structures, currently merely present a platform for member states to coordinate their policies; no guarantee for collective action can be given since such decisions depend on states' interests on a given matter.

Secondly, times of crisis illuminate that the CFSP is still not completely, firmly established and sometimes fragile. Such times are characterised by an increase in

²⁴ White, 31.

²⁵ Smith, *European Journal of International Relations*, 115.

²⁶ Manners and Whitman, 130.

the extent to which members pursue policies outside of the CFSP. This shows that the process of Europeanisation is not yet completed and is still challenged by renationalisation.

However, when regarding the whole picture, Europeanisation is more substantiated in that states generally favour it because they reap benefits of it—for example, lower costs and risks of their policies. Through the institutionalisation of this approach, a culture of mutual policy adjustments is evolving and, in turn, the process of Europeanisation is amplified.

These observations lead to two main conclusions. Firstly, the institutionalisation of common European foreign policies is a long-term process, in which member states see virtue. With the progression of this development, states' policies outside of the EU's will diminish and domestic governments will more readily adopt EU policies.

Secondly, instances of states pursuing individual policies, such as in times of crisis, are caused by national interests on the given issue. These interests are limited to the issue at hand and are mostly only *short-term* interests. The more encompassing and long-term interests are promoted by Europeanisation. As such, it seems reasonable to claim that Europeanisation will ultimately prevail and minimise member states' separate policy-making, thereby transforming the CFSP from a "gentlemen's dining club" to a well-established institution.

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