

Constructing the Common Foreign and Security Policy: The Utility of a Cognitive Approach^{*}

Abstract

Traditional analyses of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) tend to characterise it either as an effete and declaratory expression of lowest common denominator politics or as a limited framework for median-interest foreign policy bargaining – yet another stall in the Union's policy 'market'. Even at a modest empirical level, however, these representations of CFSP fail to convince in view of the development of CFSP in recent years. By contrast, this article will argue that a cognitive approach towards the study of CFSP opens up new and crucial vistas for analysis and offers some striking conclusions on the reciprocal relationship between CFSP and national foreign policies and the transformatory capacity of the CFSP vis a vis national foreign policies, including their 'Europeanisation'. This approach, it is argued, offers a potentially better understanding of and explanation for CFSP with its comparative advantage defined in terms of its handling of roles, rules, identity and ideas.

The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)

CFSP is generally presented as a structured framework for foreign and security policy co-ordination in selected foreign policy areas among EU Member States (Pijpers, 1990:8; Wessels, 1993:12). While the 1993 Treaty on European Union declares unambiguously that 'A common foreign and security policy is hereby established which shall be governed by the following provisions.' (Treaty on European Union, Article 11), there is considerable and obvious distance between that ringing political declaration and the reality of subsequent policy formulation (Hill, 1994; Peterson and Sjurgen, 1999). If one can, however, restrain a naturally resulting scepticism, it is striking to consider the empirical development of this policy-making regime along at least three axes in recent years: bureaucratic structure, substantive policy remit and decision making capacity.

First, we have witnessed a significant strengthening in the policy-making structures underpinning CFSP.

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Since the 1970 inception of European Political Co-operation (EPC) there has been an ongoing debate as to how firmly this process needed to be grounded in bureaucratic structures and how closely these needed to be linked to the central institutions in the European Community/European Union (Nuttall 1992 and 2000). The trajectory of such development has been – and continues to be – towards greater institutionalisation and greater co-ordination. The development of a political/military committee structure, the establishment and growth of the political secretariat, the introduction of a policy planning cell and the office of High Representative for CFSP are all testament to this increased institutionalisation (Duke, 2001; Heisbourg, 2000; Smith, K 2000). Moreover, this has occurred alongside much greater co-ordination/integration with other Community institutions and policies (Cameron, 1998). The committees that underpinned much of the work of both EPC and CFSP, for example, have now been integrated with those that operated within COREPER (Tonra, 2000). The Commission, which participates at all levels of policy planning within CFSP, is now closely associated with the revised Presidency Troika and may make initiatives. For its part, the Parliament is consulted on policy issues and it must accede to certain CFSP-related budgetary expenditures (Piening, 1997). With greater co-ordination across policy portfolios (e.g. development, trade, economics, human rights and security) it is therefore less than surprising that participants in this policy-making system sometimes see themselves as operating within an EU foreign policy (White, 2001).

Second, the remit of policy discussion within CFSP has expanded considerably. From a point at which Member States were unable to discuss formally any aspect of security issues in the early 1980s, CFSP now includes ‘all questions related to the security of the Union, including the progressive framing of a common defence policy which might lead to a common defence...’(Treaty on European Union, Article 17). This broadening of the EU agenda has been accompanied by an extended agenda for action. Policy tools at the disposal of CFSP originally included a range of options from diplomacy through economic and trade mechanisms (Piening, 1997). Following the Amsterdam and Nice Treaties, it now also includes military options within the rubric of the so-called Petersberg Tasks, employing the European Rapid Reaction Force (Adreani et al, 2001; Duke, 2000; Heisbourg, 2000; Howorth, 2000).

Third, decision making within CFSP has also evolved. A hierarchy of decision-making procedures linked through ‘Common Strategies’, ‘Common Positions’ and ‘Joint Actions’ has replaced the self-conscious intergovernmentalism of EPC (Nuttall, 1992; Bretherton and Vogler, 1999). These procedures include an expanded scope for the use of qualified majority voting, the introduction of ‘constructive abstention’ and participation as-of-right in military decision-making for those Member States outside the framework of the Atlantic Alliance but who choose to participate in a military action of the Union (Keatinge, 1997; Regelsberger, 1997)). In all instances these developments are predicated upon the fact that the decision-making processes of CFSP remain distinct from those in operation under the ‘Community’ pillar of the European Union. While there is therefore no formal ‘communitarisation’ of CFSP decision-making, a system is under construction that has certainly moved away from formal intergovernmentalism.

A key question thus arises from this abbreviated review of the evolution in the structure, policy remit and

decision making capacity of CFSP over the last few years; ‘What is the impact of CFSP upon national foreign policy and, as a consequence, what is the nature of the CFSP’s policy-making and decision-making regime?’ This is the puzzle for which a cognitive approach offers some considerable assistance.

CFSP: What Kind of Regime?

It is the contention of this article that CFSP may be best viewed as a regime, defined as a set of ‘...implicit (and) explicit principles, norms, rules and decision making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations.’ (Krasner 1983) This delineation of CFSP as a regime has the advantage of side-stepping somewhat sterile debates about the institutional and procedural form of CFSP – whether it is *sui generis*, a modernised form of alliance or a foreign relations sub-system (Bulmer 1991: 74). What it opens up is the possibility of understanding the nature of the regime and the relationship between CFSP and the national foreign policies upon which it is based (Hasenclever, Mayer, and Rittberger 1997). Such a definition also ‘gives regimes an inescapable intersubjective quality... we *know* regimes by their principled and shared understandings of desirable and acceptable forms of social behaviour’ (Kratochwil and Ruggie, 1986:764). This clearly highlights the need to consider the ideational foundations of CFSP and how these might conspire to foment and embed shared understandings leading to the kind of deeper institutionalisation etc. outlined above.

At least three options are open to the analyst in looking at the CFSP as a regime. First, CFSP has been analysed as a power-based regime based upon a straightforward neo-realist calculation (Pijpers 1990; Ifestos, 1987). In this zero-sum analysis, the most powerful players establish the rules and purpose of the game. Smaller Member States have no choice other than to play at the margins of the game and to adapt themselves to it (Mouritzen 1991) or to risk systemic collapse by incessantly wielding their veto. It will be the hegemonic impulse of larger players that will determine policy outputs while smaller players can only be consoled by various side-payments (Mouritzen 1993). When displays of common action and common position might be expected, we may still witness examples of national obstructionism or policy defection (Keukelaire, 1994; Jakobsen, 1997) Within such an analysis CFSP can only be conceived of as the expression of lowest common denominator politics that can challenge no state’s core foreign policy interests (Forster and Wallace, 1996). Should it consistently do so, the system must, by definition, collapse. It can therefore only operate through a strict adherence to forms of intergovernmental decision-making.

Employing an interest-based regime approach provides an alternative perspective (Moravcsik, 1994). Such a neo-liberal model would look at CFSP through the lens of absolute gains. Participating states arrive at the negotiating table with a pre-established hierarchy of interests and proceed to bargain these interests with those of their EU partners (Hill, 1996; Allen, 1996; Smith, 2000). A complex incentive structure is then established in which Member States trade interests within the context of CFSP. In the case of informal or tacit package deals these may even run across EU policy boundaries. A light

regulative structure might also evolve. The most useful analogy of this situation is that of an especially complex poker game – where the Member States bring their cards to the table and must then deal amongst themselves to construct the best possible hand. Policy outputs can be characterised as median-interest bargains – beyond lowest common denominator but falling short of a truly ‘common’ foreign and security policy (Hill, 1998; Holland, 1995) since the self interest of states can never be fundamentally abridged. Crucially, the definition (as opposed to the pursuit) of national interests is unaffected by participation in CFSP.

While debate between these two perspectives is ongoing – especially at the margins of the absolute and relative gains debate – both these approaches share a core and frequently instrumentalist rationality. Rationality makes important assumptions about the way in which the world works. It begins by assuming that what exists is material, concrete, observable and measurable. Reality is therefore composed of things that we can perceive and that are external to ourselves – reality is ‘out there’ to be discovered. This assumption about what exists (ontology) is, in turn, based upon a particular philosophy of science (epistemology) that argues that we can only claim to know that which we can observe. As social scientists, therefore, it is the pursuit of parsimonious causal explanations that is the ultimate goal. This kind of ‘positivist’ science makes it difficult to consider ‘ideas, norms, culture – the whole socially constructed realm (which) are inaccessible to an empiricist form of knowledge’ (Williams, 1998: 208; Katzenstein, 1996; Risse-Kapen, 1995; Ruggie, 1998). While some efforts have been made to include ideas and beliefs as at least explanatory variables within an overall rationalist approach, the results have thus far been limited (Goldstein and Keohane, 1993; Parsons 2002), with ideas serving little more than a ‘mop-up’ function in most rationalist causal models.

In considering the empirical development of CFSP over the last 20 years there is clearly something of a disjuncture between this and what might reasonably have been expected to develop using either a realist-rationalist or liberal-rationalist explanation of CFSP. CFSP is now functionally deeper, substantively broader, more institutionalised and more collective in scope (if not yet ‘common’) than either approach might reasonably have foreseen. Moreover, if we wish even to pose – never mind address – fundamental questions about the CFSP’s impact on national foreign policy identity we must be in a position to ask ‘to what extent – if at all – is foreign policy constructed or constrained by collective belief structures, socially constructed norms and collective identity?’ (Prizel, 1998; Renwick, 1996; Aggestam, 1999) Thus the need arises for a conceptual framework that can accommodate these ‘embedded practices’

Such an approach must accommodate these practices as an active, malleable base from which a state’s foreign policy identity is constructed or as a framework through which state actors see themselves, their state and thus define their relationships with the rest of the world community. Such an approach will be based upon the assumption that state ‘interests’ are derived from within social interaction (endogenously) rather than created outside such interaction (exogenously) and taken as pre-determined ‘givens’ before any social interaction takes place. At the same time such a model must not go to the

opposite extreme by writing actors out of the script. Foreign policy actors are not ‘cultural dupes’ (Barnett, 1999; Glarbo, 1999:648; Aggestam, 1999:9) and they may indeed seek to exploit narratives of national identity to their strategic ends and consciously attempt to manipulate change in such narratives. Such actors may understand very well that ‘a subversive new idea is best gift wrapped in the rhetoric of the past’ (Kiberd, 1984:18).

Employing such an approach actually changes the nature of the kinds of questions one begins to ask about CFSP and any participating state’s foreign policy. The central rationalist/materialist approach leads to questions that focus upon why certain decisions, leading to certain courses of action, were made. It searches therefore for explanations of choice and behaviour. In terms of foreign policy these explanations may be found in global structures or in the choices made by individual policy makers. In more sophisticated rationalist variants, belief structures may be understood to act as maps or guidelines to policy choices where there is imperfect knowledge since in such conditions beliefs can provide a framework of both constraints and opportunities (Barnett 1999). By contrast, the cognitive approach advocated below asks how such decisions are possible – what are the bases (in dominant belief systems, conceptions of identity, symbols, myths and perceptions) upon which such choices are made (Doty, 1993: 298). In getting behind the rationalist/materialist questions – by lifting the metaphorical Wizard’s curtain - we can then begin to understand how it is that the range of ‘possible’ policy choices are defined and, crucially, how these may be limited by a dominant belief system. This does not presume to rule out strategic rationality in negotiation (although more radical social constructivists would dispute the point) but it does suggest that the bases of such negotiations are open to change.

Moreover, if we try also to understand change in such belief systems and values using concepts such as social learning (Checkel, 2001) we can offer a dynamic model of foreign policy and foreign policy change within the European Union far richer than that available through strictly rational accounts. All of this underlines a sense that ideas have a directional power or that ‘...very frequently the ‘world images’ that have been created by ideas have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest.’ (Weber, cited in Goldstein, 1989).

The cognitive approach advocated here is rooted within the meta-theoretical foundation of constructivism, the relevance of which to European Studies has been documented (Christiansen et al, 1999; Checkel, 2001; Olsen, 2000;). The first challenge, however, is that the term constructivism masks a wide variety of differences on substantial theoretical points. Some, such as Alexander Wendt (1992, 1994) see themselves as operating quite happily within a positivist, rational epistemology while maintaining the central ontological thesis that ‘the building blocks of international reality are ideational as well as material’ (Ruggie, 1998: 33). Indeed, it has been suggested that with its inclusive ontological position, the entire rationalist approach might best be subsumed within a broad constructivist church (Risse, 1999). Others, however, insist that the inevitable implication of a constructivist’s ontological choice (that agency and structure are co-constituted) is to embark upon a post-positivist epistemological voyage across discursive seas in which language predominates (Deiz, 1999).

There are a number of debates relating to the precise relationship that exists between material and social structures (Price and Reus-Smit, 1998). A spectrum is opened up between the hard cores of postmodernism and scientific rationalism (Keohane, 1988) with social constructivists aspiring either to 'bridge-the-gap' between them or distance themselves from the two poles (Christiansen et al, 1999: 536). At the first end of this spectrum it is argued that there are no material structures - no 'reality,' no 'out there.' Instead, what is created is particular kind of knowledge that defines and thereby creates the world that we think we see and in which we think we act. The proper role of the analyst is thus to deconstruct what appears to be the normal state of things - to identify its source(s) - and to challenge received wisdom as to how the world has been constructed and how it allegedly 'is' today (Smith, S. 1992). The methodology employed here is that of creating a genealogy of knowledge in which the historical layers of dominant belief systems are peeled back to reveal the power centres that defined them and to trace out the shadows of those ideas marginalized by such systems (Hollis and Smith). This allows us to situate knowledge in its appropriate context, to relate it to the centres of power that created it and to avoid according any knowledge a privileged position. The key issue in each instance is to assess where the power resides in established versions of reality and to identify those that have been excluded from that reality - by default or by design.

Moving slowly away from this post-modern perspective it is argued that material structures do exist but that these are invested with powerful social meanings (Ruggie, 1998). It is these social meanings that become the focus of analysis - how and by whom are they constructed and how and from what do they evolve? The significance of these social meanings is that they lead actors to adopt certain roles of behaviour in their relationships with other actors. Expectations and norms thus inform their actions. Crucially, it is in the playing out of these roles that the social meanings invested in material structures may be redefined. Thus, it is through social action that such meanings evolve - through a process of learning. A difficult question here is the extent to which, if at all, role-playing actors may be conscious of their roles and the narratives within which they perform and the scope for such actors to engage in strategic decision-making.

Alternatively, perhaps it is possible that actors are indeed engaged in rational choice and rational action but that such choices and action include ideas and belief structures as subsidiary decision-making variables (Keohane, 1994). Ideas in such a context provide focal points of action/decision, offer road maps of alternative policy options or establish world-views that underpin foreign policy decision-making. In any event, the identification of such beliefs and ideas contributes to our search for cause and effect relationships (Keohane and Goldstein, 1993) in explaining foreign policy.

Finally - at the opposite far end of our continuum - a scientific rationalist would argue that state actors employ ideas and belief systems only as calculated means - or hooks - to achieve their predetermined material objectives. They exploit individually held perceptions and beliefs as a means to their calculated ends and are wholly manipulative of same (Ferejohn 1999 and Schepsle 1998). The

objective of the analyst is therefore to test – using replicable quantitative social scientific methods - hypotheses of human behaviour so as to arrive at explanatory laws and models.

The argument presented here is a constructivist one (of the second variety) in that it is argued that social structures do indeed endow material structures with substantive meaning. In other words ‘material resources only acquire meaning for human action through the structure of shared knowledge in which they are embedded’ (Wendt, 1995:73). The goal of this approach is to study the impact of norms on the identity, role and behaviour of actors (Christiansen et al, 1999:535).

A second challenge to employing a cognitive approach is its operationalisation. Much criticism of the cognitive/constructivist agenda has centred upon the paucity of ‘testable’ empirical examples (Moravcsik, 1999: 670). This has in part arisen from the focus of many writers in establishing the meta-theoretical foundations of such an approach and the priority given by them to opening up ‘a future research agenda rather than present rigorously tested empirical findings...’ (Risse and Wiener, 1999: 777). Nonetheless, some progress has been made in this regard with writers such as Checkel (2001) identifying the scope conditions that signal when participation in a particular social process leads to fundamental preference change.

The significance of looking at CFSP as a cognitive regime is that we are offered an approach in which the interests, values, ideas and beliefs of actors are themselves the central analytical focus. CFSP might thus be better understood in terms of identity creation than as an exclusively rationally-based exercise in national self-interest. In the case of CFSP this entails looking at the creation not simply of a foreign policy system but a foreign policy society - a European diplomatic republic (Jørgensen 1997). This constructivist turn does not go so far as post-structuralist approaches: those far countries of postmodernism where language is everything and there are no material constructs only discourse. It does, however, offer a challenge to exclusively instrumental rationalistic accounts. It is the contention of this article that CFSP is an ideal empirical testing ground for what might be called this cognitive or *constructivist* approach.

CFSP and the Explanatory Power of Constructivism

Roles, rules, identity and ideas are the analytical tools that can offer us some insight to the drama that is the Union’s Common Foreign and Security Policy and it is a cognitive approach that offers a focus on these concepts. The concept of role, for example, owes much to its theatrical etymology. It is understood here as being the result of an actor delivering a script-based performance which also owes its existence to the identity and skill of the actor. As Hollis and Smith (1990: 168) put it ‘Role involves judgement and skill, but at the same time it involves a notion of structure within which roles operate.’ For their part, rules can be seen – stretching our dramatic metaphor further – as being about both stage direction as well as the unwritten ‘laws’ of drama. In addition to his script, the actor is also provided with

explicit stage direction but, by virtue of being an actor, is also internally directed towards performance outcomes that are understood to be consistent with his art and his nature as an actor. Identity is in turn formally defined as membership of a social group that consequently provides a system of orientation for self-reference and action (Ross 1997: 42) Here, it gives our 'actor' his self-definition and the resulting ego which facilitates the practice of his art. On our metaphorical foreign policy stage, ideas also play a critical function. They are the recurrent themes and plots that inform and direct the shape of the play's narrative. Ideas inspire and motivate – they generate commitment, dedication, opposition and engagement. In this definitional light, each of these concepts has a specific relevance to an improved understanding and explanation of CFSP

Roles

As regards *roles*, for instance, the key point of departure here is the consideration of actors not as rational utility maximisers but instead as role players. March and Olsen (1989) offer a conceptual model in which actors work to a 'logic of appropriateness'. Within this logic state actors (or agents) consider the context and expectations of the decision-making situations in which they find themselves and base their resulting decisions accordingly. That relationship, however, does not presume any ontological primacy between agent and structure. While the actor's identity and options for choice are shaped by the institutional structures that she inhabits, these self-same institutional structures exist and evolve as a result of actors' identities and choices.

Thus, our conception of CFSP is not that of a forum within which state/actors' interests are bargained but an environment from which CFSP itself evolves and within which the interest/identity of actors/policy makers develop and change. Evidence for this comes from policy makers themselves. In one of the most detailed and substantive early studies of EPC (Nuttall 1992), the existence of an 'automatic reflex of consultation' was noted in which national foreign policy actors sought out the views and opinions of partners before arriving at defined national positions. Thus, the first point of cognitive reference became 'what will the European partners think' rather than 'what is our position on this'. One former participant in the CFSP process noted that there had occurred a '... habit of thinking in terms of consensus' that went beyond formalised diplomatic consultation. Another insisted that '... where there is ever any new foreign policy initiative in the making, the first reflex is European. The question is now 'what will our European partners say - what is the opinion in Europe.' (Tonra, 2001: 261). Crucially, this intake of partners' views becomes habitual, even instinctual over time. It is not a calculated reflex but an automatic one - the national position is not clear until the partners' anticipated views have been considered. The coordination reflex is thus part of a continuous process – 'during which the basic political convictions of agents are shifted in a convergent direction' (Glarbo, 1999, 644) This process has also had structural implications for national foreign ministries with adaptations to bureaucratic structures and working methods being made explicitly to better link national foreign policies into the processes and procedures of the collective foreign policy machine (Tonra, 1994; Manners and Whitman, 2001).

This shift is crucially important. What it suggests is that the policy makers do not see themselves as policy emissaries, riding forth on a national steed to the CFSP joust. Instead, they are actively seeking to internalise the views of colleagues so as thereby to see that their own positions are at least complementary in the common and shared endeavour of CFSP (de Schoutheete, 1992 and Wessels, 1982). This goes beyond what even the most sophisticated rationalist approach might conceive – of national actors anticipating the views of others so that strategic negotiations might be better informed and thus more successful and/or productive (Moravcsik, 1993). Instead it posits that the roles adopted by national actors are evolving through their intensive interaction to the point at which ‘trust, shared identities and familiarity encourage further contact, further integration, an expansion of the number of topics appropriate for discussion, and the development of common definitions of problems and appropriate actions’ (March and Olsen, 1998:27) – precisely what has been seen in the development of CFSP over the last number of years.

As we shall see below, however, this is not a neofunctionalist or zero-sum phenomenon of loyalty transfer from the nation state to a quasi-federal ambition – i.e. not a case of perfidious diplomats ‘going native’. It is instead a redefinition of national interests within a new Europeanised context. Hill and Wallace see this as having moved ‘the conduct of national foreign policy away from old nation-state national sovereignty model towards a collective endeavour, a form of high-level networking with *transformative effects*.’ (Hill and Wallace, 1996:6) – emphasis added.

This phenomenon is neither one-way nor inevitable since it does, in the first instance, rely upon trust – which may be lost or undermined, especially in crisis. According to one diplomat with extensive experience of CFSP this internalisation of others’ expectations ‘... works (only until) there is a real conflict when higher politics destabilises the framework...it happened with Yugoslavia.’ (Tonra, 2001:251) What’s crucial about this alleged collapse of the earlier EPC system over the recognition of former Yugoslav republics, Croatia and Slovenia in 1991/1992 is that it centred upon a loss of trust by Germany’s partners in the German government’s commitment to a collective policy (Lucarelli, 1997:36-44 and Owen, 1995:376). What’s crucial to bear in mind, however, is that in this instance, the crisis provoked efforts to deepen and further institutionalise the internalisation of role expectations. The development of a policy-planning unit within CFSP’s political secretariat was explicitly designed to provide for advance planning in response to possible crises – to engage in anticipatory internalisation so as to develop a mode of thought along the lines of: ‘what would my European partners think if...’ This to forestall crisis and loss of trust.

Rules

Rules are also a key new focus of analysis using a cognitive approach to the study of the CFSP with a particular focus upon the ways in which they are both regulative and constitutive (Finnemore, 1996; Klotz, 1996). Rule following is a more fundamental logic of action than the continuous calculation of expected utility (March and Olsen 1989, 1995) and Olsen (2000:6-7) has gone on to outline four

explanations for rule-following behaviour. First, they may be obeyed out of habit and a basic respect for authority. Second, it may result from rational calculation of the expected utility of alternative strategies. Third, it can arise due to an identity-derived fellow-feeling and associated sense of obligation/duty (i.e. arising from role). Finally, rules may be obeyed through interaction and argumentation, what Jeffrey Checkel has gone on to explore as social learning (Checkel, 2001).

If CFSP as a cognitive regime is to be conceptualised as ‘principled and shared understandings of desirable and acceptable norms of social behaviour’ (Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986) then it is necessary to consider rules in the construction of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Certain rules within CFSP are undoubtedly regulative, even though they lay outside the formal remit of the European Court of Justice and are thus ‘non-justiciable’ in EC law (Temple Lang, 2000). These explicit rules are important more because they contribute towards the establishment of policy precedents that, in turn, politically bind Member States into strategies and policy directions (von der Gabelntz, 1979:688-91). Moreover, when real contests erupt over policy direction, pre-eminence appears to be given to maintenance of the rules-system over the substance of policy orientation. The key example here is again the row over recognition of Slovenia and Croatia in the former Yugoslavia in late 1990/early 1991. The German Government insisted that these two republics be recognised. Setting aside objections from the EU’s own special representative, the UN Secretary General and the majority of its partners, the German Government was adamant. Faced with this obduracy the response of the majority of Member States was not to revert to their own national positions - and several governments were firmly and publicly opposed to recognition – but to save the system by crafting a threadbare compromise.

However, the action of the German government in threatening to break consensus - and which ultimately forced the others to back its line on recognition – was achieved at a high political cost. A diplomatic witness to the final denouement underlined the depth of feeling on this point, describing it shortly afterwards as ‘..The most boorish and offensive diplomatic performance witnessed in EPC to date.’ and one which ‘...cost them considerable respect and support.’ (Tonra, 2001: 232) This of course underlines the point that rule compliance is not necessarily the best guide to the significance of rules – and that they may, indeed, be seen as counterfactually valid (Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986)

CFSP rules, however, are not just regulative but they are also – and fundamentally - constitutive. Again, constructivism offers us an explanation for something which otherwise would be overlooked employing other approaches. CFSP rules are not simply devices for problem solving. Their purpose and explicit aim is to establish a clear identity and to pursue decisive collective action – indeed to create an identity for collective action (von der Gabelntz, 1979; Nuttall, 1992). On every occasion when member state and Commission representatives gather within CFSP a key motivating factor is the existence and/or credibility of collective action.

It is here that most rationalistic accounts of CFSP fall short. Their focus, more often than not, is on the policy outputs (Pijpers, 1990). If the outputs are limited or non-existent then they simply reflect the fact

that the major state interests (power-based perspective) or the bargaining process (interest-based perspective) has so determined it. They thus dismiss CFSP as an irrelevance and as ineffectual vis á vis the real world of international activity. These perspectives cannot understand what makes so many policy makers labour so long and so hard for what can only be seen as so little. What makes them do it?

Using a constructivist perspective we can better understand the motivations. Policy makers devote themselves to this task not only to contribute to a resolution of a particular crisis but also to see themselves acting, as they believe they must, collectively. They have established, at both a personal level and at an institutional level, the internalised expectation of common interests and common actions based upon a common understanding. They know that they fall short of that internalised expectation but they continue to do battle, with themselves, and their colleagues (nationally and within CFSP structures) to achieve that second end.

While a cognitive approach offers the analytical capacity to understand the significance of rules within CFSP it does not, in and of itself, provide an explanation of how compliance with such rules contributes to interest and identity redefinition (Haas, 1990 and 1992; Adler 1997; Ruggie, 1998). Processes of social learning have been identified as the means by which both norms and rules are disseminated and instantiated in any particular regime, provoking the development and redefinition of interests and identity (Checkel, 2001). This has been described as process whereby ‘compliance (with rules) results from social learning and deliberation and lead to preference change... the choice mechanism is non-instrumental and the environment... is one of social interaction between agents, where mutual learning and the discovery of new preferences replace unilateral calculation’ (Checkel, 2001: 560). Illustration of this process is to be found among the perceptions of CFSP actors themselves. One senior diplomat argues that ‘while countries came (to CFSP) from widely different positions there was a *psychological process* of narrowing differences’ while another described it as ‘...a learning process...’ (Tonra, 2001:252) – emphasis added.

Identity

That learning process – linked to its impact on roles within CFSP, has clear implications for *identity* formation (Jepperson et al, 1996; Marcussen and Risse, 1997; March and Simon, cited in Olsen, 2000). The study of identity formation is a crucial component of constructivist research with a central focus upon the role of language and discourse, especially as these contribute to the creation of epistemic communities and a shift in foreign policy identity. The added value of a cognitive approach here is that it facilitates a study of the transformatory nature of CFSP. In terms of national foreign policy and identities, the cognitive approach is focused upon the process of foreign policy *change*. This breaks out of the more static rationalist approach which offers a choice between intergovernmentalists who see foreign policy change resulting from shifting domestic policy bargains and comparativists who assume that CFSP can be and should be compared to other national foreign policies. (Christiansen et al 1999: 537)

Language has always been crucial to identity-creation in EPC/CFSP. Indeed, in the early days of EPC the only action open to Member States – following discussion and consultation - was through the use of political declarations or statements and diplomatic *démarches*. The significance of the latter was grounded in the fact that a Member State diplomat had physically to deliver the statement to its addressee. As one participant noted a ‘... whole sort of network of bureaucrats and a common language...’ had by this time developed (Tonra, 2001: 260). It is this language and the common modes of thought upon which it is based that gives CFSP its collective identity and its material existence that, in turn, impacts upon the identity of national foreign policies and practitioners.

The *raison d’être* of EPC and later CFSP deliberations was, of course, information. The very first expression of EPC in the Luxembourg/Davignon Report of 1970 was in the development of a structure for regular meetings between Ministers and senior officials whose explicit purpose was to share and exchange information. Over time this network has expanded in participation and increased in frequency. It now entails discussion within the European Council, the General Affairs Council (GAERC), the Political Security Committee (COPSi), COREPER, through issue or region-specific working groups of officials, among Member State embassies in third countries and among Member State delegations to major international organisations such as the UN. Between themselves, of course, the Member States rely upon the COREU telex system through which the foreign ministries exchange reports, analyses and comments on international issues and through which the drafting of common statements occurs (Cameron, 1998). An entire bureaucratic infrastructure has been developed to manage and distribute this information. It is the function of these dedicated European Correspondents to collate, analyse and disseminate the fruits of this huge information-sharing network. It is from this common pool of information that member state foreign ministries are then invited to develop common views.

It was Philippe de Schoutheete – analyst and practitioner – who characterised EPC as being a process that would first create a community of information, leading to a community of views and ultimately a community of action.(de Schoutheete de Tervarent 1986). In sum, an outstanding rendition of the constructivist argument that international regimes such as CFSP ‘...comprise understandings shared by the members concerning the right conduct in circumscribed situations’ (Hasenclever, Mayer, and Rittberger 1997:163).

The creation of this common information pool and language contributes crucially to identity change in national foreign policies as a result of participation in EPC/CFSP. The nature of politics, domestic and international, goes beyond simple, rationalistic calculations of cost and benefit. Member States do not look at CFSP and tot up the occasions on which they have 'won' or 'lost' collective foreign policy arguments. At least in part, perceptions of the process revolve around how Member States - their governments and populations - see themselves. A study of the foreign policies of three small EU states concluded that CFSP ‘has had, and continues to have, an identifiable impact on the Member States. The formulation and output of national foreign policies has changed as a direct result of participation in this process.’ (Tonra, 2001:280). This is evident on an empirical basis and is endorsed by policy makers

from within the process.

A look at these three small states – which shared a comparable world-view on entry to the EEC but which had adopted quite different security/defence profiles – offers a useful test case of adaptation, Europeanisation and a shift in foreign policy identity. National officials in each of these three states are wary of the imperial predilections of some of their larger partners and share self-perceptions of being cooperative and useful world citizens who believe their foreign policies to be based upon enlightened self-interest. They would, therefore, be most sensitive to any development of CFSP that would either privilege the hegemonic instincts of the larger states or which would result in their marginalisation as foreign policy actors. In each case, however, these actors see CFSP as having had a positive impact in re-shaping the identity of these states' foreign policies.

In Denmark and Ireland, CFSP has placed core foreign policy interests and preferred security/defence structures under pressure and contributed to their redefinition. In Ireland, the vast bulk of the political elite struggles to explain to an unconvinced domestic audience and to agitated interest groups, Ireland's move towards full engagement with key European security and defence structures (O'Mahony, 2002). Irish officials acknowledge the problematic nature of this evolution in Ireland's foreign policy identity and point nervously to the disjuncture between a convinced elite and a sceptical public. In Denmark the traditional Nordic ambition in Danish foreign policy has been largely abandoned by policy elites – with only a Baltic garden as its memento. The 1995 EU enlargement mortally wounded Nordicism as an alternative political/economic framework while the absence of any significant 'Nordic voting bloc' has undermined lingering hopes for its significance. According to one Danish diplomat '... more and more it's clear that the view of the (others) defines our views on the individual issues.' (Tonra, 2001: 265) This identity shift is clearly a sensitive issue. Another senior diplomat notes that at least on the Middle East, 'The government has had to be very careful not to give the impression that they suddenly shift (position) but there has certainly gradually over the years been a move which has been recognised and accepted by most political parties' (Tonra, 2001: 265)

In the case of The Netherlands, Dutch foreign policy identity is increasingly seen as being very largely synonymous with that of an effective EU foreign policy identity. This has two aspects. On the one hand it reflects an assessment of a smaller member state as to what it can reasonably expect to achieve internationally: 'we (Dutch) are more inclined to seek consensus rather than try and implement our own positions for fear of being isolated and losing influence.' At the same time, however, this is also expressed as a positive turn so that 'if you show that you are willing to seek consensus and not act outside it, then you would expect your partners to do likewise.' (Tonra, 2001: 251) Such a perspective has significant implications for foreign policy identity with one Dutch journalist insisting that CFSP has '... Europeanised Dutch foreign policy. Everything is legitimised through Europe - 'this is our position on Cambodia because it is that of the (EU)'' (Tonra, 2001: 265)

A study of larger state foreign policy draws somewhat similar conclusions as to shifts in foreign policy

identity (Aggestam, 1999). Here French, British and German foreign policies have been studied to assess the extent to which if at all, any shifts in foreign policy identity can be identified. The study notes that 'Europeanisation of foreign policy has taken place' and this is ascribed to 'the build-up of mutual trust, increased communication and the political will among its members' (Aggestam, 1999:6) A crucial role is ascribed here to the contribution of 'role conceptions'. Another point prioritised in this study was to underscore the point that agents involved in CFSP and national foreign policy formulation did not see themselves engaged in any sort of zero-sum identity game. In fact, the Europeanisation of national foreign policy was acknowledged and indeed celebrated in national interest terms with the actors regarding their interaction 'in a strategic and self-interested manner' (Aggestam, 1999: 6).

Thus, whether looking at the impact of CFSP on smaller or larger states a cognitive approach would assert the medium to long-term likelihood of this process leading to '*a transformation* in the way in which national foreign policies are constructed, in the ways in which professional roles are defined and pursued and in the consequent internalisation of norms and expectations arising from a complex system of collective European policy making' (Tonra cited Manners and Whitman, 2000:245) – emphasis added. The central implication of that transformation will be to give increased specificity to the content and greater shape to the structures of that common policy. In turn, it will be shaped by the shared values and ideas to be found at the foundation of member state foreign policies.

Ideas

Finally, a cognitive approach strengthens our understanding of the role of *ideas* as generators of collective identity within CFSP. As certain ideas become consensual, they contribute in turn to the transformatory power of CFSP through processes of social learning and the creation of an epistemic community within CFSP (Haas, 1992). Ideas have the capacity to become consensual by virtue of 'discursive processes or persuasion and deliberation' (Risse Kappen, 1995). This is not a process that is necessarily hidden between the ears and accessible only to psychologists. It is instead an exploration of complex social learning 'a process whereby agent interests and identities are shaped through and during interaction' (Checkel, 2000:561) Obviously, as that process intensifies and broadens to incorporate more and more actors, the dissemination of the ideas becomes wider and the consensus may broaden. Again, however, this process is not unidirectional and assumes no inevitable logic of its own. It is premised upon an open exchange of argumentation and deliberation that is free of coercion and it is through such a process that preferences may change and identities evolve. Checkel (2000) has developed this argument by offering his own middle-range theory of scope conditions under which agents may be open to such change. This gives considerably greater potential to operationalise measurement of ideational change and its impact - with interests and identity being reconstituted through such an open interactive process of socialisation.

Since the ontology assumed here 'emphasises the dependency of state identities and cognitions on international institutions and relates the formation and maintenance of particular regimes to these pre-established identities' (Hasenclaver et al, 1997) we should witness in CFSP a strong emphasis being

placed upon the definition of collective ideas and values. In the case of CFSP this is the case. The first formal delineation of EPC in the 1970 Davignon Report spoke of the Member States' ambition to make an international contribution that was '...commensurate with its traditions...' These were later defined in the same text as including '...the common heritage of respect for the liberty and the rights of men...' (Government of the Federal Republic of Germany 1988). Subsequently, in the 1974 Document on the European Identity, the 1983 Solemn Declaration on European Union and the 1987 Single European Act these values were alluded to further.

One key weakness, however, in the ideational base of EPC and later CFSP, was that these statements were not directed more specifically to the international environment. In other words what did a respect for liberty and the rights of man entail for one's (collective or national) foreign policy? This was an issue with which the Member States continued to grapple. Efforts to collate a catalogue of common ideals, for example, failed (Fink-Hooijer, 1994). From a meeting at Asolo in Italy in 1990 the Member States sought to compile such a list but could agree neither to its content nor to what the derivation of such a list would entail for the procedures of CFSP (de Schoutheete de Tervarent 1997). If one could not agree on common ideals could one instead consider agreed objectives based upon values?

The Maastricht Treaty offered a five-point list of objectives – the first of which promised to 'safeguard the common values, fundamental interests and independence of the Union'. Other policy objectives of the new CFSP were to strengthen the security of the Union, to preserve peace and strengthen international security, to promote international co-operation and to develop and consolidate democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The 1992 Lisbon European Council agreed a set of collective interests and CFSP goals. These were further delineated in the Amsterdam treaty's incorporation of the Petersberg Tasks. An explicit declaration of values was later made in the revised common provisions of the Treaty on European Union. While not specifically linked to CFSP this new provision dedicated the Union to '...the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law...' (Treaty on European Union, Article 6).

It is significant that considerable time and attention has been devoted first to the declaration of a set of common values and later to the outline of policy objectives based upon these common values. In addition, it should be born in mind that the operation of CFSP – and in particular the strength of precedent within the policy process – has also contributed to the creation of a 'value set'. For example, precedents set on the denunciation of human rights violations became powerful tools in arguments as to whether particular incidents warrant comment and, if so, in what terms. Enormous effort went into the crafting of declaratory statements on human rights abuses in the Middle East, for example, to ensure that such statements were balanced and reflected previous precedents (Ifestos, 1987). All this underlines the significance which policy actors themselves placed in the derivation and representation of a collective set of 'values' expressed through foreign and security policy co-operation

Conclusion

This article has made the case that a cognitive approach to the study of the Common Foreign and Security Policy – one that is rooted in a constructivist meta-theoretical position – can yield significant returns in our study of CFSP and its impact upon national foreign policies. The opening move in the argument was to assert that that traditional rationalist models of CFSP have not captured important empirical developments defined in terms of bureaucratic structure, substantive policy remit and decision making capacity. Traditional models tend to dismiss or at least undervalue both the significance and the impact of CFSP for Member States. That failure, it is argued, is rooted in the methodological individualism of rationalist approaches and their inability to take ideational structures seriously.

The second move was to define the CFSP in terms of a regime – thus side stepping debates about the unique or comparative nature of CFSP. Again, rationalist regime models were modelled against the profile of CFSP and found to be inadequate to the task of addressing some central questions. It was then argued that a constructivist approach – despite its limitations and underdevelopment – was potentially better equipped. In particular it opened the way to addressing a new and potentially interesting set of questions about the relationship between CFSP and the national foreign policies of the Member States. It was argued that while some rationalist scholars have indeed sought to incorporate non-instrumental social variables into their work, they are hampered by an excessively tight causal epistemology. Taking up the idea of an emerging constructivist turn in European Studies offers considerable potential in sharpening our analysis of foreign, security and defence cooperation in Europe and the impact of this process upon the identity of national foreign policies. One key consideration here was that such an approach would offer a better conceptual framework for understanding the development of CFSP as an ongoing process rather than as a static fact.

After outlining the parameters of such an approach it was argued that much of the added value offered by a cognitive ‘turn’ to the study of CFSP was to be found in its handling of key concepts such as roles, rules, ideas and identities. It was argued, for example, that the roles played by national actors within CFSP were neither narrowly instrumental nor exclusively strategic. National interests brought to the negotiating table can be seen to have evolved and changed over time as a direct result of their participation in CFSP with the very formulation of national foreign policies taking place in a new and evolving context. Next it was argued that a cognitive approach facilitated a deeper understanding of the significance of rules within CFSP. Beyond being simply a regulative framework for problem solving, rules within the CFSP regime are also constitutive of an epistemic community - the formal and informal norms within CFSP conspire to create a sense of ‘we-feeling’ and community. Processes of social learning, it was argued, mediate the position of individual agents and the regime as a whole with the result that these agents have a commitment to, and an investment in, the protection of the rules and norms underpinning the policy structure. Identity-creation and change was acknowledged as being central to any cognitive approach- and indeed this may be argued to be its central value core. The centrality of language and the CFSP’s early and continuing focus on the dissemination of information are important clues to its

transformatory potential. If each national foreign ministry shares from the same pool of information from which analyses are made, speaks a similar language of values and the people shaping those analyses share a common commitment to the rule-based structure of the regime, then the foundations of a policy consensus are potentially very strong indeed. Studies of both larger and smaller states suggest that these factors are, indeed, having some defined impact upon the national foreign policies of the Member States and that this might even be defined in terms of Europeanisation. Crucially, however, this process is not automatic or inevitable. The role of ideas – and the emergence of a consensus behind those ideas – is critical to the process. The article highlighted how social learning, conducted through an open and non-coercive process of argumentation and deliberation, serves to disseminate and embed ideas. That process of social learning rests, crucially, upon trust and shared core beliefs and a set enabling conditions by which such ideas are successfully disseminated.

The ambition behind this article is to assist in opening new fields to the empirical investigation of the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy – including its emerging European Security and Defence Policy. While the literature is replete with detailed and significant studies of the varied 'interests' and strategic calculations behind these developments there is also a need to look behind the rational curtain and to explicate what, if any, more fundamental changes are underway. The Europeanisation of national foreign policies, the evolution of a converging set of European foreign policy values and the development of new forms of social learning are all deserving of sustained academic attention. This should not be seen as contributing to facile either/or debates in which respective ontologies are encouraged to take up hostile epistemic positions along an alley wall. Rather, it should provoke all analysts to ask different sorts of questions about the development of the Union and how best we might come to explain *and* understand it.

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