

# The Perils of Conceiving EU Foreign Policy as a »Civilizing« Force

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## Introduction

Is the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the second pillar of the European Union (EU), which came into existence in 1993, part of a »peace project« in which the EU acts as a civilizing force? What is the impact of this vision of CFSP on the construction of a »European identity«? To what extent are parliaments and citizens involved in shaping CFSP?

Academics and analysts of CFSP are deeply divided over these questions, although there is a growing consensus that CFSP is only one element of EU foreign policy. CFSP cannot be examined separately from policies adopted by the EU under its other two pillars – Pillar I: the European (economic) Community; Pillar III: Justice and Home Affairs – nor from those of its Member States (Smith 2003; Jorgensen 2004). CFSP can be conceptualized as one aspect of EU external relations, as a set of legal rules, institutional structures, and financial, human, and knowledge-based resources, influenced by competing norms and interests, that allow Member States to partly coordinate their foreign, security, and defense policies so as to re-forge the Western Alliance and other international institutions, while simultaneously interacting with non-EU states over a number of political, economic, and diplomatic issue-areas. One of the key characteristics of CFSP is that since 2000, with the signing of the Nice Treaty, it includes a new security and defense dimension: the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). ESDP has led to the creation of new military and political institutions – Political Security Committee, Military Committee, Military Staff, Defence Agency, civilian committee for crisis management, Siten, and so on – and has allowed the EU to have direct control over military forces, establish crisis management procedures, and develop common military capabilities and a security culture. ESDP has also introduced new flexibility mechanisms in decision-making that allow a group of countries, at times in cooperation with NATO and non-EU states, to take decisions and implement them. CFSP and ESDP are there-

fore not a form of »regional governance« but rather part of a complex web of state and non-state power relations that shape the global order.

I argue that CFSP has never been part of a »peace project« because it came into existence at a time of reconfiguration of the international system that brought to the surface contradictory trends. The idea of CFSP as part of a peace project was first expressed in the notion of »civilian power,« and has been recently reconceptualized in the work of one of its leading contemporary exponents, Professor Hanns W. Maull. His claims, along with those of some policy-makers, including Robert Cooper, that the EU is a »civilizing« force constitute an ideological intervention that attempts to foster a sense of European identity from above, defined against other non-Western cultures. After outlining Maull's argument, this paper argues that his analysis underestimates the internal and external dynamics shaping the EU and particularly CFSP. I maintain that CFSP and other aspects of EU external and internal actions have been subject to an intense process of »securitization« over the past five years. In other words, there is an attempt to reshape CFSP, through institutional restructuring and the introduction of new ideas, norms, and procedures so that its underlying objectives become the fight against alleged internal and external threats, be they foreign countries or specific groups in our Western societies.

In this essay I examine the reasons for this process and I stress that one often underestimated factor is the fact that CFSP and ESDP institutions, along with the nature of decision-making processes in this policy field, are insulated from parliamentary and public scrutiny. Moreover, they are not subject to the same checks and balances and trade-off of bureaucratic interests as the average national institutions. Free of these constraints, Brussels-based CFSP and ESDP institutions, at times in coalition with self-selected EU Member States and North American partners, have the ability to securitize the policy agenda and to introduce a radical agenda for external political intervention by relying on a human rights approach. In the conclusion, I argue that to safeguard the achievements of cooperation of European nations and their peoples with other non-Western nations it will be essential to develop a strategy to make CFSP accountable to both members of parliament and citizens through new forms of political engagement.

## The Arguments for »Civilizing Power Europe«

Notions of CFSP as a »civilizing,« peaceful project are deeply embedded in assumptions that derive from Democratic Peace Theory and writings that use the metaphor of the EU as a »postmodern« space in contrast to the pre-modern world. An example is the work of Hanns W. Maull (2005), who in a recent article defines the EU as a postmodern system of governance that acts as a »civilizing force.« He predicts that »civilian« power will remain the EU's role or foreign policy idea for the foreseeable future. Maull develops this argument by relying on Robert Cooper (2003) – currently director general in the Council of the European Union. Cooper has argued that the world system is divided into three spheres: failed states; rogue states; and the postmodern realm. Countries in the latter have a mission to civilize the world. Maull adopts this way of thinking and explains that in the past he developed the notion of »civilian power« as a Weberian ideal-type actor in international relations for both analytical and normative purposes. According to this ideal-type construct, civilian powers strive to »civilize« relations between states along the lines of their own, democratic, domestic politics. In his view, they are »civilian powers« not because military power is irrelevant to what they are trying to achieve (a point to which I will return), but because of their aim of civilizing an alleged anarchic state of international relations.

Maull also uses the concept of »civilian power« as a way of evaluating policy performance. In his view, »civilian powers« have specific characteristics that can be located in power resources, their foreign policy cultures, their definitions of values and interests, and their grand strategy. To develop the »model« of a civilian power and to evaluate performance, Maull also borrows from the work of Dieter Senghaas, who developed the model of a »civilisatory hexagon« to illustrate the progress of civilization towards peace. According to this model, a power makes progress towards civilization when at least six conditions are fulfilled. These range from the de-privatization of force and abolition of sources of military power other than the state (or an international institution) to democratic representation in decision-making (Maull 2005: 779–781).

In contrast to his previous work, and to deal with critics who argue that the emergence of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) ended the notion of »civilian« power,<sup>1</sup> Maull claims that there is nothing

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1. For an up-to-date critique see Manners (2006).

in his »ideal type« construct that prevents civilian powers from using military force. Indeed, he stresses that »in some instances civilian powers may ideally be more inclined to resort to the use of force than traditional great powers, which will not be concerned about the transformation of international relations.« The key difference between a civilian power and a normal power is that the former will »impose significant constraints on themselves as regards their ability to project military power, and they will generally be rather skeptical about the utilization of military power in the context of building a »civilian global order«« (Maull 2005: 791).

Based on these assumptions, Maull provides a positive assessment of CFSP by stressing the achievements in state-building in the Balkans, promotion of regional cooperation and integration, specific campaigns such as the International Criminal Court, the global campaign against the death penalty, and so on. A similar positive assessment is given to one of the key developments in CFSP since 2001, the agreement on the European Security Strategy. If there are any limitations on CFSP so far, they are found in the lack of further integration, both vertically (across the three pillars of the EU) and horizontally (between Member States and EU institutions) (Maull 2005: 791–794).

## **A Critique of »Civilizing Power Europe«**

Maull's redefinition of »civilian power« is an attempt to come to terms with the complex dynamics shaping the development of CFSP and the trajectory of European integration, but his analysis is problematic because the »ideal Weberian model« that he adopts contains questionable assumptions about the nature of the EU system itself. Certainly, Europeans can be proud of their post-war achievements: the reconciliation among European elites, the culture of solidarity present in their social models, and past economic growth patterns, the result less of decisions taken in Brussels than of the creativity and stamina of European peoples. For these and other reasons, Europe retains unique characteristics. However, throughout post-war European integration there has always been a tension between three closely interwoven dynamics:

1. the policies that European political élites – represented by the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council in collaboration with selected interest groups and national bureaucracies – adopt at the EU level;

2. a dynamic which arises from below, what in sociological terms is captured in the notion of »civil society«: the day-to-day interaction of activities among European citizens and their own cultural, economic, political, and business associations;
3. the impact of external actors (states, multilateral institutions, NGOs, multinationals, and so on) on the formulation of policies within domestic and European institutions.

Maull's analysis of the EU as a »civilizing force« assumes that the first two dynamics are of equal importance in shaping the »European model,« as though there were no inherent tensions between the policies pursued by political and administrative élites and those that arise from »civil society.« It simply assumes that the European integration process was a project that brought together both civil society and European elites, while there is ample evidence that civil society, particularly its citizens, national parliamentarians, and societal interest groups have continuously had to struggle to be included in this process and remain unrepresentative. Moreover, the notion of the EU as a »civilizing« force is used to present a vision of the best-possible way of life on Earth: as though Europeans had attained the heaven of peace that Immanuel Kant imagined and the best possible form of internal democratic rule. The persistent presence, throughout post-war European integration history, of violent opposition to hierarchical power-centers, as identified in the struggle of the peace, women's and workers' movements, are simply erased from our histories in this vision of the EU.

Moreover, Maull underestimates the impact of the interaction between changed international circumstances, the new European political constellations that arose at the end of the Cold War, and conjectural elements. The end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union undermined the key pillar of internal cohesion among the Western powers: their own sense of identity based on the existence of an enemy (the Soviet Union). The threat of communism acted as a gel to keep allies together and gave coherence to their domestic policies. At the same time, it froze the question of the relationship between national identity and the state.

CFSP was a foreign policy mechanism of cooperation developed by EU Member States to deal with the emerging post-Cold War order. On the one hand, in the vacuum and sense of instability created by the end of the Cold War, European leaders saw in the European integration process an opportunity to retain a sense of cohesion, while on the other hand, they could not agree on the internal reform process and consciously decided

to insulate CFSP from parliamentary control and other forms of judicial checks and balances. Since the 1990s, EU leaders have embarked on a process of »deepening,« »widening,« and »hardening« of EU foreign and security policies that is having far-reaching transformative effects on the internal coherence of the European integration process and its foreign policy. The process of »deepening« is represented by the development of a hard-core of countries that take the lead in both CFSP and ESDP, that is, the application of flexibility mechanisms originally developed for other areas of EU policies: the introduction of the Euro, the Schengen agreement, and so on. Thus, in many key recent diplomatic negotiations, such as those with Iran in 2003–2004, only British, French and German officials sit at the table to represent the EU. In the military field, ad hoc coalitions have undertaken operations on behalf of ESDP and the draft European Constitution has suggested that Member States can form a hard core to foster further integration in the defense area (Bono 2004). »Widening« is represented in the scope of activities of EU foreign policy (the level of engagements in the Balkans, Africa, and Asia, enlargement and the development of the European Neighborhood Policy); »hardening« is represented by a merging of aspects of internal and external security related to the fight against terrorism and the increase in the deployment of external military means. From 2003 to mid-2005, the European Union launched ten operations, the so-called »Petersberg Tasks,« among which are four peacekeeping and peace-enforcement operations in the Balkans and Africa: Operations Concordia, Althea, Artemis, and Amis II.<sup>2</sup>

Maull explains that »civilian powers« embrace the use of force because they tend to want to transform the international system. This tendency is located in the assumptions of the civilizing process and the Weberian model. In contrast, it could be argued that the tendency to embrace the use of force, to want to change the international system, has different complex causes that lie in the dynamics shaping the emergence of the new international post–Cold War order. One cause is the intensification of the militarization of international relations as a result of the policies adopted by the only superpower, the United States, in cooperation with selected Western nations. Another cause is the reshaping of the domestic political landscape in Western advanced societies: the demise of the left/right divide, undermining the belief in the transformative powers of human

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2. The other operations are: Balkans, EUPM and Proxima; Iraq, Eujust Lex; Democratic Republic of Congo, Eupol Kinshasa and Eusec; Indonesia, AMM (Aceh).

potential, central to the Western Enlightenment tradition. These internal developments have created the conditions for the externalization of internal insecurity: so, for example, less developed countries are demonized and challenges of underdevelopment in non-Western countries are perceived as a threat to our Western way of life. The third cause is the impact of the end of the »Soviet model« and the withdrawal of the pattern of competition between the Soviet Union and the Western bloc from less developed countries, especially in the Western Balkans and Africa. The collapse has ignited conflicts driven by a scramble for internal resources and territories in a context of worsening local economic and social conditions. The nature of these conflicts, along with the other dynamics outlined above, created new opportunities for Western military intervention. The fourth cause is the specificity of policy-making that characterizes CFSP.

Although CFSP is an intergovernmental method of coordination of EU Member States' foreign, security, and defense policies in the sense that nation-states retain the final say over decision-making, Brussels-based institutions have substantial influence. EU officials have the power to shape the CFSP agenda debated in Brussels-based institutions – COREPER, Political and Security Committee, Military Committee, and so on – and to play a mediating role between competing national interests. This process has been defined as the »Brusselizing of CFSP« (Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet 2002). In my view, Brussels-based institutions responsible for CFSP have wide room for maneuver to introduce radical policy agendas and, at times in cooperation with selected Member States, to securitize issues because they are not subject to the same level of pressure from parliamentary accountability or bureaucratic politics that shape decision-making in national capitals.<sup>3</sup> For example, the European Security Strategy (ESS), agreed in December 2003, was introduced and substantially shaped by key officials in the cabinet of Javier Solana, the High Representative for the CFSP. Although the ESS was debated among some restricted circles of experts, it was never subjected to full scrutiny by national parliaments or the media.<sup>4</sup> This is one of the reasons why such a radical agenda was easily endorsed.

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3. On the lack of parliamentary control in CFSP see Stavridis (2001) and in ESDP (Bono 2005); further research will be required on differences between levels of bureaucratic pressure in EU decision-making as compared to national decision-making.

4. The exception was a debate in the German Parliament.

The building of a consensus is facilitated by the rules of decision-making in CFSP and ESDP. It is a basic assumption of political life that there are competing visions and interests at stake in the formulation of any policy. It is through a process of bargaining procedures that the best arguments win. However, this does not always happen in CFSP and ESDP in that the pressure to agree leads countries to settle their differences on the lowest common denominator. Decisions arrived at on the basis of a low common denominator can be interpreted differently by certain governments according to varying circumstances. This has dramatic consequences in security and defense areas where, as previously mentioned, EU Member States have introduced »flexibility« mechanisms. Flexibility mechanisms such as hard cores in defense and ad hoc coalitions in peace-keeping create standards and norms with which the entire body of the EU is then made to comply. To put it bluntly: decisions to launch humanitarian or peace-enforcement operations based on ad hoc coalitions of the willing and legitimized by the EU seem to be made easily in Brussels.

By relying on the »Weberian model« and by uncritically accepting the adoption of assumptions of a »postmodern« reality as developed by Robert Cooper, Maull is contributing to a dominant discourse that fosters a sense of European identity through the dichotomy of self and other. In this case, the »self« is the idealized European postmodern condition, and the other the »uncivilized.« This intervention represents a new ideological dimension of crucial significance and needs to be located alongside a number of decisions taken by the European Council since 2000, including the agreement on the ESS. This, far from being a reaffirmation of traditional norms for the respect of international law in the use of force, as Maull argues, represents a move towards a new vision of the EU's external role that is dangerously close to US thinking as outlined in its latest US National Security Strategy. The ESS endorses five »new types of threat«: international terrorism, the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), »failed states«, »organized crime,« and »regional conflicts« (European Council 2003). As has been argued, the striking feature of the ESS was the introduction of the notion of »threats« rather than the »risks« that had been common in earlier EU official documents. The return to the notion of threats focuses on the reaction to such threats rather than their political sources. Threats are perceived in absolute terms and are presented as »illnesses« that are outside our system and need to be eradicated. Threats are not conceptualized as products of the interaction between international actors with political strategies and dilemmas



of national security. The only differences between the US National Security Strategy and the ESS are the use of the concept of »failed states« rather than »rogue states« and the importance given to regional conflicts and multilateralism. Nevertheless, the ESS fully endorses the framework of security threats developed by the Bush administration. In addition, the ESS includes a radical inversion of discourses about underdevelopment. The ESS states that the causes of insecurity are to be found in poverty, corruption, and bad governance. This new framing of the discourse and relations between security and development locates the causes of poverty in the internal structural problems of the developing countries, and so removes any discussion of the role of the international economic system and of the manner in which some Western governments are involved in fuelling armed conflicts (Remacle 2004).

Even prior to the formulation of the ESS there was some ambivalence in statements shaping CFSP and policy implementation. This was most evident in relation to issues that involved the use of military force. CFSP promoted precious norms that upheld dialogue with neighboring countries (especially Russia and the Mediterranean region) and attempted to develop conflict prevention practices.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, CFSP contributed to rewriting the principle of equality among nation-states in the international system and legal norms regarding the use of force. The undermining of the principle of national sovereignty was initially most evident in the decision to recognize the breakaway republics of Yugoslavia. Indeed, in the many statements made in relation to the crisis in the Balkans and the war against Serbia in 1999, EU leaders endorsed NATO's explanations for military intervention on humanitarian grounds. During the negotiations that led to the definition of ESDP, as found in the main text and annexes of the Nice Treaty, European officials, with the exception of representatives from Ireland, avoided making explicit reference to the necessity of an UN mandate for peacekeeping and peace-enforcement operations (Remacle 2004; Delcourt 2003).

A landmark in relation to this trend was the EU's recent position on the reform of UN peace and security tasks. In these negotiations, which led to recommendations from the UN High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (UN 2004) and subsequently to the UN 2005 World Summit held in New York in September 2005, EU officials gave full support to a new potentially politically ground-breaking redefinition of the

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5. For an overview of some of the achievements see chapters in Holland (1997).

UN Charter to incorporate the doctrine of the »Responsibility to Protect.« In the High Level Panel's report, this doctrine, a more up-to-date version of the doctrine of humanitarian intervention that has been hotly disputed, is given a new status under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which allows for the use of peace-enforcement actions against a state. After arguing that the »international community« had a right to use humanitarian means, in accordance with Chapters VI and VIII of the UN Charter, to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, the final declaration states: »we are prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter, including Chapter VII, on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations as appropriate« (United Nations 2005, p. 31).

Some EU officials and national politicians have openly described this event as a landmark in the EU's contribution to international peace and stability.<sup>6</sup> But the opposite could be argued. This doctrine challenges the principle of domestic jurisdiction in Article 2.7 of the UN Charter. It marks the end of the key principles of reciprocal and formal parity among states. The EU's support of this doctrine challenges the constitutional tradition of the nineteenth century that allowed the creation of international law based on cosmopolitan principles. The five criteria outlined in this doctrine do not constitute legal principles, rather they are political rules subject to total subjectivism. It is interveners who decide, according to their morals and ideologies and in relation to the limited information available, who is the victim in a conflict. Moreover, the focus on »human rights« abuses and gross violations of human rights is part of a discourse that situates the causes of such violations at the level of the behavior of corrupt individuals and by doing so removes from the analysis of the causes of conflicts the complexity of economic, political, and social dynamics that interact at local, regional, and international levels. This discourse disassociates the causes of conflicts in the Third World from the influence that Western nations and the world market system exercise on the economic and political dynamics of countries in which human rights abuses are perpetrated. There is also ample evidence that the practices of international humanitarian intervention, as experienced in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, do not prevent conflict. Experience shows that

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6. Mr Armand de Decker speaking at a conference organized by the WEU Assembly on 20 September 2005 in Brussels.

the new doctrine will intensify Western involvement in the affairs of less developed countries and will lead the EU to take sides in extremely complex territorial disputes, which might result in the creation of many new protectorates on the model of Kosovo.

In addition, although EU foreign policy documents and the ESS make constant reference to the principle of multilateralism, there is considerable inconsistency between statements and policies. For example, far from supporting central authority within the UN system, EU Member States are following the example of the United States and are using the UN as a way of legitimizing their own military operations and actions to develop ESDP. They are extremely reluctant to put their own forces under UN command. Quite simply, they want to shape the UN agenda while retaining strict autonomy in decision-making with regard to the use of military and civilian forces. Thus, for example, Operation Althea in Bosnia-Herzegovina is not under the direct control of the UN. It is an autonomous EU-led operation, which relies on the support of NATO, and that reports to the UN Secretary General through the submission of an annual report. Another example was Operation Artemis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. During this operation, the EU obtained a mandate from the UN, although the French Government planned and led the operation, in collaboration with other nations (Tardy 2005).

In summary, if CFSP is not fully representative of views in the EU and is dominated by unaccountable institutions that seek to »securitize« CFSP, what can ensure that CFSP decision-making takes into account the views of citizens and gives a role to their elected representatives?

## **Citizens and CFSP: The Democratic Challenge**

Many proposals have been advanced concerning how to bring European citizens and their representatives back into CFSP. The differences characterizing the proposed solutions lie across two interrelated axes: the extent to which citizens and parliaments are involved in the ex-ante or post-ante phases of decisions and, the extent to which citizens support vertical structures of power or new horizontal power centers. Advocates of post-ante accountability in CFSP believe that citizens and parliaments should not have much influence or power to control executive decisions in this policy area because of issues of urgency and secrecy. Those advocating ex-ante accountability assume that, even if there has to be a certain level of

secrecy and urgency, key decisions have to be subject to parliamentary control and clear adherence to international law. The differences between citizens' support for vertical or horizontal structures are closely related to competing visions of the European integration process. Believers in vertical integration want more powers to be given to a combination of EU institutions (Commission, Council, European Parliament, European Court of Justice); believers in horizontal integration, in a simplified version of disparate views, argue vehemently against the EU moving towards a hierarchical power center based on the centrality of Brussels-based institutions dominating the landscape of cooperation between European nation-states and their peoples. From their perspective the vertical option of integration creates a sort of empire based on a seemingly decentralized network of relations (Walker 2000). In contrast, they advocate stronger checks on vertical structures of power through the re-emergence of the concept of »the political subject« that simultaneously reinvigorates political parties and creates new forms of local, national, and trans-national organizations.

Given the »securitization« of CFSP, I believe that the best solution is a multifaceted one. European citizens should demand the introduction of accountability mechanisms in CFSP decision-making in both the ex-ante and post-ante phases. Efforts to try to resolve these challenges can be found in proposals advanced to strengthen the role of parliaments in CFSP and ESDP.<sup>7</sup> It will be vital that the solutions advanced allow parliamentarians to reconnect themselves to citizens and create public spaces to safeguard the spirit of enquiry and open debate of our Western democracies.

## Conclusion

In the last few years we have witnessed an intervention by intellectuals to justify a »civilizing« mission for the EU. This intervention is misguided and dangerous because it contributes to reinforcing a climate of fear of the other, a climate of exclusion. It fosters a culture of judging other, less

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7. For a summary of the solutions see Bono (2005). The solutions differ according to which institutions are to be given powers (national parliaments and/or intergovernmental parliamentary bodies and/or the EP) and the extent of their powers to exercise oversight.

economically developed nations as a danger to us – what has been defined as securitization. Implicit in their arguments are notions of Democratic Peace Theory that build on the idea of CFSP as a »peace project.« The thesis of CFSP as a »peace project« underestimates the extent of the militarization of international relations; the effects of the process of »deepening,« »widening,« and »hardening« on European foreign policy. It neglects the fact that there is a deep malaise in Europe that has its roots in the lack of a political vision able to mobilize individuals for progressive, international, and humanist solutions to the challenges of economic stagnation and war. It underestimates how the insulation of CFSP decision-making from citizens and their parliamentary representatives is contributing to a new consensus among European élites about the direction that the EU should take internationally that has the potential to further militarize international relations. We desperately need a more coherent and outspoken intellectual culture of questioning government policies and the introduction of accountability mechanisms in CFSP.

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