The EU as an international security provider: the need for a mid-range theory

Annemarie Peen Rodt, Richard G. Whitman, and Stefan Wolff

There is an increasing amount of scholarship on the EU's international security role, but most of it remains focused on security aspects in specific policy areas, such as Union enlargement, European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), development assistance, and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)[1] (Rodt 2011, Hill 2010, Menon

[1] Bagoyoko, Niagalé, and Marie V. Gibert. 2009. "The Linkage between Security, Governance and Development: the European Union in Africa." *Journal of Development Studies* 45 (5):789 - 814.

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and Sedelmeier 2010, Delcour 2010, Pace 2010, Hughes 2009, Bagoyoko and Gibert 2009, Bailes 2008, Youngs 2008). Some scholars have also examined the Union's role in this regard across various regions of the world (Whitman and Wolff 2010 and 2012) or discussed it in the context of (grand) strategy (Biscop 2009; Howorth 2010; Smith 2011) and strategic culture (Bonvicini and Regelsberger 2007, Chappell 2009, Cornish and Edwards 2005, Moustakis and Violakis 2008, Quille 2004). Another strand in the literature has focused on particular conceptions of security, such as human security or comprehensive security, and how they are reflected in EU policy (Matlary 2008, Kaldor 2007, Manners 2006) (Gebhard and Norheim-Martinsen 2011). A number of authors examine the EU's place in the international arena of security organisations and the way in which the Union manages to find its place and cooperate (or not) with other actors that have been engaged in this area – often much longer than the EU (Hynek 2011, Irondelle and Mérand 2010, Stewart 2008, Duke 2008, Major 2008, Cascone 2008, Touzovskaia 2006). Finally, there is a persistent strand of scholarship focused on the EU's internal processes of security policy making within and among EU institutions and member states as well as increasingly between them (Hynek 2011, Kaunert and Léonard 2011, Wagnsson 2010, Blockmans and Wessel 2009, Schmidt 2009, Sperling 2009, Mérand, Bonneu,

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and Faure 2009, Devine 2009, Rieker 2009, Chappell 2009, Jacoby and Jones 2008, Gross 2007, Brummer 2007, Reynolds 2007). Most of this otherwise relevant literature, however, remains focused on the actual process of policy-making and its institutionalisation, including the dynamics of inter-governmental bargaining and linkages between EU institutions and member states (Morillas 2011; Norheim-Martinsen 2010, Hynek 2011). A considerably smaller, albeit growing, body of literature is focused on what the EU actually achieves with its security policies. While empirically rich, this strand of the literature is significantly less developed theoretically and does often not connect sufficiently with the more established but traditionally inward-looking EU literature (Hughes 2009, Tocci 2007, Coppieters et al. 2004).

The purpose of this collection is to draw some of these diverse strands of scholarship together to develop a more comprehensive approach to the analysis of the EU's increasingly complex role as an international security provider. This can then serve as the foundation for developing a mid-range theory of the EU as an international security provider, which would account for both outcomes of the EU-internal policy making processes and their effectiveness in providing security. Such a theory would need to describe accurately the various actors involved, their relative influence, and the dynamics and results of the policy-making process that ensues in their interaction. While we have been – and continue to be – open to different theoretical, conceptual and methodological approaches, one of our aims is to synthesise and further develop existing theories in order to arrive at an integrated theoretical approach to the EU as an international security actor, more broadly conceived than is often the case. With this overarching objective in mind, we argue that such a theory would need to, first, synthesise and apply existing theoretical frameworks of international relations, security, organisation, as well as foreign policy analysis to the case of the EU; second, conceptualise the notion of 'actorness' – or agency – in the context of the EU as an international security provider and relate it in detail to the process of policy-making; third, examine empirically how the EU conceptualises security overall and how this feeds into different policy areas relevant to its international security role, including, in particular, the formulation of

international security policies; fourth, investigate empirically whether and how outcomes of the policy-making process translate into impacts, including whether and why particular policies are more/less likely to succeed in achieving EU objectives and providing security; finally, use single and comparative case studies to reflect on the utility of particular theoretical approaches to the study of the EU as an international security provider, all in order to contribute towards further theoretical development in this area.

This collection is meant to serve as a point of departure for this journey and to encourage dialogue among scholars from different sub-fields of political science and international relations. It begins to chart a path towards integrating theoretical and empirical debates on the EU as an international security provider and to bridge the traditional gap between accounts of policy-making and policy impact. While marking the beginning of this longer journey, our collection also presents the fruits of an ongoing collaborative research agenda, which, over several years and with support from the British Academy, the UK's Economic and Social Research Council, the European Consortium for Political Research, as well as the Universities of Bath, Birmingham, Kent, Nottingham, and Roskilde has brought together our contributors at a number of workshops, seminars and conferences, leading to a variety of scholarly outputs (Rodt and Okeke 2013, Peen Rodt 2012, Whitman and Wolff 2012, Whitman and Wolff 2010) but also engagement with policy makers in EU institutions and at national as well as international levels.

The six contributions brought together in this issue represent both a state-of-the-art review of current knowledge and understanding and push their boundaries towards the mid-range theory of the EU as an international security provider that we argue is critically missing in current debates on the EU's international role.

In the opening contribution, 'The European Security Continuum and the EU as an International Security Provider', Alistair Shepherd argues that the European Union has long been seen as a distinctive or sui generis actor in international politics, epitomised by the notions of civilian or normative power, or more recently, by the

'Comprehensive Approach'. However, these conceptualisations of the EU as a distinctive international security provider are being challenged by the blurring of the traditional internal-external security divide. The threats and challenges identified in the various EU security strategies increasingly transcend geographic and bureaucratic boundaries, creating what he calls a 'European security continuum', which complicates the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the EU as a security provider. Significant friction continues to exist in the formulation and implementation of security policy as EU institutions and capabilities struggle to overcome the traditional architecture separating internal and external security. In parallel the cross fertilisation of internal and external security norms and practices undermines extant understandings of the EU's role as a normative international security provider.

Following on from this, Benjamin Pohl and Niels van Willigen discuss 'Analytic eclecticism and EU foreign policy (in)action'. They suggest that twelve years after the EU began to deploy crisis management operations, their underlying drivers are still disputed. They argue, this state of theory is partly due to the staleness of many theoretical debates in international relations. In response, they call for analytic eclecticism, hoping to combine causal mechanisms from various theoretical traditions where this promises new insights into real-world phenomena. This article sets out to provide such an eclectic framework for the purpose of analysing EU security provision. It argues that the interventions that the EU has undertaken in the framework of its CSDP can best be explained by a two-stage model. First, the model proposes, any potential EU action is assessed by EU governments against their general security policy dispositions, which are a function of both national and partisan preferences and belief systems. Second, against these broader dispositions, the positions of individual EU governments regarding CSDP-actions are shaped by far more parochial assessments of the costs and benefits of these actions. The article presents a conceptual framework and a plausibility probe of the two-stage model. In the conclusion, it promotes a further research agenda for analysing the interaction between governmental dispositions and more narrow governmental interests, and how they inform decisions on CSDP operations.

The third contribution, 'The EU's Responses to Conflicts in its Wider Neighbourhood: Human or European Security? by Argyro Kartsonaki and Stefan Wolff posits that the conflicts in the EU's wider neighbourhood, within and between the "neighbours' neighbours", have been on the EU's foreign and security policy agenda for some time and therefore offer a useful set of cases to examine rival claims in the existing literature about the extent to which the EU's foreign and security policy is driven by human or European security imperatives. In order to understand how and why the EU has responded to these conflicts, they present an overview of all conflicts among and between the neighbours' neighbours, broken down first by sub-region and then by conflict type. They then discuss the EU's responses to these conflicts and offer a comparative analysis, with a view of describing and explaining existing variation in terms of the EU's responses and their impact. They find – across these cases – that the Union's response is most in line with a human security approach in relation to those conflicts where it perceives to have the greatest self-interests at stake.

Gorm Rye Olsen's contribution, 'After Afghanistan: The European Union as security provider in Africa', asks why the area stretching from Senegal over Nigeria to the Horn of Africa/East Africa is considered so important to European security. The area, he argues, is clearly not the 'near abroad' like the Middle East/North Africa or indeed the former communist countries to the East. The paper launches three arguments aimed at explaining the European Union's crisis management policy towards the region, in particular explaining its strong focus on failed states and terrorism. First, it posits, there is a perception among European Union decision-makers that Europe's security is threatened by a 'Somaliasation' of African states. The second argument states that EU decision-makers are so strongly influenced by French and US security priorities that fighting terrorism becomes a remarkably high priority of Union's Africa policy. Third, European Union decision-makers share a common notion that immigrant communities in Europe might be inspired by the radicalisation taking place among Muslims in some African countries. Thereby, it is feared Muslim immigrant communities may contribute to breeding 'homegrown' terrorists. The article concludes that the perception of a threat stemming from 'Somaliasation' in

Africa, the impact of French and US security/anti-terrorism priorities and the fear of 'homegrown terrorists' together explain the comprehensive crisis management initiatives launched in the region by Brussels in recent years.

Jan Orbie and Karen Del Biondo examine 'The European Union's 'comprehensive approach' in Chad: securitisation and/or compartmentalisation?' The EU, they suggest, aims for a comprehensive approach to security in developing countries. As a result, attempts have been made to enhance the nexus between the EU's security policy and other policy areas, particularly development, humanitarian assistance, and democratic governance. This article analyses the EU's comprehensive approach in the case of Chad, focusing on two questions. First, has the EU's comprehensive approach been able to supersede the compartmentalisation of the EU's political system? Second, has it led to the securitisation of non-security policy areas? These questions are answered by investigating the nexus between the EU's security, democracy, development and humanitarian aid policies in Chad from 2006 onwards. This analysis confirms the compartmentalisation scenario, especially regarding development and humanitarian aid where the relation with security policies was at times openly conflicting. While the EU's democracy promotion policies are found to be securitised, this is not the case for development and humanitarian aid.

Laura Davies concludes the collection with her piece on 'Reform, or Business as usual? EU Security Provision in Complex Contexts: Mali'. According to the Treaty, she proposes, the EU is to promote various principles, including peace and justice for human rights violations in its external action. In fragile contexts, peace and justice are considered fundamental for contributing to reforms that address the causes of conflict and prevents recurrence. Her article draws on field research examining whether and how the EU translated these principles of peace and justice into policy and put them into practice in its response to the crisis in Mali in 2012, particularly by contributing to peace mediation, transitional justice and security sector reform. This demonstrates the importance of considering practice to understand EU foreign policy and finds that the EU emerged from this crisis a political actor, and although in many ways it promoted reform, in practice it risks supporting business as usual.

This mix of conceptual, theoretical, and empirical contributions reflects the editors' and contributor's aspiration of mapping the parameters of a new mid-range theory of the EU as an international security provider. While not yet presenting such a theory in a coherent 'package', taken together the following six contributions identify a number of common elements and new themes in the study of the EU as an international security provider. These include the need to conceive of the environment in which the EU operates as shaped by a security continuum in which internal and external aspects of security combine rather than as a nexus in which these two dimensions can be neatly separated. Related to this is the acknowledgement that operating in such an environment the EU needs to, and to some extent already does, adopt a comprehensive approach that seeks to overcome traditional compartmentalisation of different policy sectors and to replace it with a greater degree of interconnectedness of foreign and security policy with other policy areas, such as development, humanitarian assistance, and democratic governance.

As evidenced in the empirical analyses in this collection, the flip-side of such a more comprehensive approach, however, is the securitisation of a number of policy areas, reflected also in the drivers of EU policy in this area. Underpinning the challenges that the Union and its member states face in formulating and implementing different aspects of the comprehensive approach are the at times competing motivations that exist for specific security provision initiatives, and the EU's very self-conception of its international security role more generally. This is evident in the way in which human security principles are implemented as part of a particular European approach to international security and how the translating of these principles into policy practice is dependent on how strong a security threat the Union perceives to its own interests.

EU self-interest, in this sense, has not per se been detrimental to the Union's 'net-contribution' to international security, but it has, unsurprisingly, determined the extent to which resources were mobilised and capabilities brought to bear from Senegal over Nigeria to Horn of Africa/East Africa, Chad, Mali, and the 'geographical region' of the neighbours' neighbours more generally. In other words, the

perception and definition of threats (such as terrorism) and their geographical origins (such as Central Asia or the Middle East) have shaped the EU's commitment to act as an international security provider both in terms of its nature (the extent to which a human security doctrine can be seen to be in operation) and extent (the human and material resources made available).

Future scholarship in this area will need to draw these diverse strands together more systematically than this collection can do and consider carefully the analytical and empirical implications of the arguments put forward by our contributors. While the EU in many ways remains a unique actor in the global arena, a mid-range theory of its role as an international security provider is, as we have sought to demonstrate, not only feasible in terms describing, explaining, and predicting the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy but also essential for our understanding of what we should expect of the Union in not just making Europe more secure but also in being a positive net-contributor to international security more broadly.

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