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**Article (Accepted version)
(Refereed)**

Original citation:

Marchi, Ludovica (2014) *The common security and defence policy in a state of flux?: the case of Libya in 2011*. [European Politics and Society](#), 15 (1). pp. 88-105. ISSN 1570-5854

DOI: [10.1080/15705854.2013.831265](https://doi.org/10.1080/15705854.2013.831265)

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This version available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/61444/>

Available in LSE Research Online: May 2015

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The Common Security and Defence Policy in a State of Flux? The Case of Libya in 2011

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Abstract: *This article focuses on the European Union's reaction to the Libyan crisis in 2011 as a case study. It seeks to demonstrate the limitations of the 'strategic culture approach' in observing and explaining the EU's lack of a common response, which would have involved the development of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), and to demonstrate that the 'domestic level approach' has greater explanatory power. It lays emphasis on France, Britain, Italy and Germany as a sample of the EU/27. The empirical material includes several interviews.*

Key words: CSDP, strategic culture approach, domestic level approach, crisis management, Libya, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, foreign policy analysis

Introduction

The European Union's reaction to the 2011 Libyan 'crisis' is a relevant issue to observe for its implications for the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). It throws a shadow across the future of the CSDP. This article's task is to demonstrate the limitations of the 'strategic culture approach' in observing and explaining the EU's lack of a common response, which would have involved the development of the CSDP, and to demonstrate that the 'domestic level approach' has greater explanatory power. As such, this article may make a novel contribution to the existing literature in the field.

When, in February 2011, violence erupted in Libya, with Gaddafi's use of force against civilians, collective action became necessary to stop it. A crisis management mission, the Unified Protector Operation, was launched by NATO, on 31 March, according to UNSC Resolution 1973. France, Britain and the US, with the support of American airpower and the Arab and European allies, participated in collective action, a coalition of the willing, with the US later withdrawing from the operation. There was no crisis management intervention by the EU/Common Security and Defence Policy. The EU member states could have taken the initiative within the framework of the European Union instead of leaving this to NATO. After a decade of rapid development in terms of structures and deployment, the CSDP could have been operational in Libya.

A response by the EU would have determined the growth of the CSDP. The development of the Common Security and Defence Policy implied the formation of policy convergence. The latter did not require all of the member states to be operational. A reduced number, such as those willing to intervene, was sufficient to set the CSDP in motion. The political support of all of the EU states was however necessary to activate the initiative.

This article's discussion of the concepts regarding the strategic culture approach and the domestic level approach will involve explaining their defining features and reviewing the existing literature in the field. The empirical discussion, then, shall

evaluate the evidence regarding the EU's lack of a common response to the Libyan crisis in terms of these two approaches. Based on this analysis, the article will disclose whether these approaches are suitable for analysing the development of the CSDP. The concluding remarks highlight certain 'missed opportunities' to enhance the future of the CSDP, and comment on whether the EU's response to Libya suggests a particular trend.

This article selects a few member states as a sample of the EU/27 to test the two approaches. France and Britain were an obvious choice due to their generally accepted leadership role within the context of security and defence. For the period 2011-2012, Germany joined the first two at the UN Security Council, as a non-permanent member, thus assuming a responsibility similar to that of France and the UK *vis-à-vis* the situation in Libya. Italy has recently acquired a new sense of responsibility regarding the governance of regional crises (Marchi 2013, 7), with personnel participating in several operations abroad.

This article avails itself of various sources: official documents from the UNSC, the European Union, and the governments of the member states, EU officials and prime ministers' speeches, parliamentary debates, specialised press on the EU (*European Voice*), specialised journals, newspapers (*New York Times*, *Financial Times*, *The Guardian*, *Das Spiegel*) and European magazines (*The Economist*), and a few secondary sources. Of the interviews conducted in Rome, Lyon, Cardiff, Oxford, London and Brussels, all have influenced the overall discussion in this case study. Interviews with senior officials from EU External Action also contributed as a source. All interviewees remain anonymous and their identity confidential.

The methodology

The strategic culture approach

'Policy convergence' was necessary for the development of the CSDP, as it would have occurred if the EU had been active in Libya with a military operation. 'Convergence' concerning the policies of the member states can be considered the process resulting from the combined effects of the mechanisms that are perceived in a similar way by these states. Within the area of security and defence, the mechanisms are the reactions to the security threat posed by an external challenge, the Libyan crisis. Considering the defining features of this approach, as other scholars engaged in 'strategic culture' analysis have observed (Meyer 2004, Howorth 2004, Martinsen 2004), these mechanisms of reaction to threats are based on the ideas, norms and patterns of behaviour of the actors involved in the security and defence policy. 'Culture' in this field of study can be referred to as the background created by the values, traditions and beliefs of a nation, while 'strategic culture' can be considered the culture that sees it as necessary to support a military and civilian action that might be required to deal with an external threat.

In the context of the EU/CSDP, strategic culture is the combination of 'ideas, norms and patterns of behaviour that are sufficiently shared at the national level by political actors and society, and are related to processes concerning European security and defence politics' (Martinsen's and Meyer's contributions). This definition is inclusive of society because it expands the idea of the 'political actor' to incorporate 'social actors'.

To deal with the question of the convergence of strategic cultures, and possibly towards a shared position in the EU/CSDP, several suggestions have been made. Its assumptions are that strategic culture (as defined above) needs to be shared at the EU level by member states in order to develop the CSDP (these assumptions thus becoming: the 'ideas, norms and patterns of behaviour, related to the processes concerning the European security and defence politics, which are satisfactorily shared at the national level (by political actors and society), are to be satisfactorily shared at the EU level in order to offer convergence in the CSDP).

Considering the assumptions of this approach (in terms of statements and norms which could be applied to the development of the CSDP), the ideas relate to the state's role in the world and its vision of a safe global order. This understanding matters because the state's vision of a safe and global order forms the basis for how it perceives any cooperation with other partners.

Norms define the conditions under which employing force is lawful, and describe its purpose and the procedures for obtaining consent, both in the national and international contexts. The circumstances that legally allow the deployment and the motivations, as well as the mechanisms for gaining approval for engaging forces, are not necessarily the same for all EU member states. Norms play a substantial part in explaining deployment within the CSDP.

Established patterns of behaviour can be largely seen as the way in which societies debate, the political actors take decisions, and the armed forces perform actions, all of which functions are related to security and defence (see Meyer 2004; Martinsen 2004). An established pattern of behaviour could be the accepted convention, within a certain society, that military and civilian operations are conducted only in a multilateral setting, or by contrast could be led by individual states. Many kinds of collective framework are operational, i.e. the UN, NATO and OSCE, the coalition of the willing and others. A member state may prefer to use the EU framework, as far as possible, to guide these operations, if its society and the incumbent political leaders may opt to use the CSDP for security and defence matters.

A further assumption of this approach relevant to this article suggests that an influential factor facilitating the development of a common strategic culture, and particularly its convergence in a shared position in the EU/CSDP, is the contribution of strong leadership at both the national and European Union levels (Giegerich 2006, 13).

The contribution of the literature

There exists a significant body of studies on strategic culture. Some research centres in particular on the European Union and its structures. What is the key argument of these works?

Defining strategic culture as 'the institutional confidence and processes to manage and deploy military force as part of the accepted range of legitimate and effective policy instruments', this contribution (Cornish and Edwards 2001) explored one issue in particular. It questioned whether there has been a change, within the EU, to consent to the Union having (or developing) something similar to a strategic culture. Arguing

that the creation of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) demands a corresponding ‘construction of the basic elements of a European security culture’, this other contribution (Howorth 2002) maintains that such a construction must reduce the ‘diversity’ of the patterns and approaches of the EU member states.

Another work (Howorth 2004) investigated how political elites have constructed a radically new discourse on European security; the role, in that construction, of ideas, epistemic communities, and advocacy coalitions, and the interplay of inter-subjective norms, values and identities; and how these ‘ideational’ dynamics have interacted with the apparently continuing interests of the nation-states.

Further research focused on the ‘dynamics and scope’ of strategic culture-building in the context of the EU’s aspirations to develop a common security and defence policy; claimed that strategic culture is valuable in judging the environment within which the CSDP works (Meyer 2004, 2005, 2006); described the term ‘strategy’ as the ‘civil and military means employed in ranked order’ to reach specific ends defined as ‘crisis management’ (Martinsen 2004); and examined the character and potential of the EU as a strategic actor, by setting the investigation in the framework of the strategic culture debate (Cornish and Edwards 2005).

Other contributions explained strategic culture as an ‘ideational milieu’ that governs the decisions of the EU states regarding the use of military force; embraced the issues of when, on what occasions, and in which situations military force is to be used as a political tool (Giegerich 2006); approached the European Security Strategy as a main manifestation of an emerging EU strategic culture (Martinsen 2011); and argued that a strategic culture was rising within the CSDP (Biava 2011).

The implication of this body of research¹ lies in the perspectives that it provides as background knowledge and a basis for investigation. These contributions are relevant because, thanks to their efforts, concepts and explanations of what strategic culture may entail have developed, whose involvement they have, directly or indirectly, assisted.

The domestic level approach

The domestic level approach hinges on the centrality of the member states and their national interests. The ‘domestic level’ can be deemed as that ‘domain’ within which policies are affected by the behaviour within a state. EU states are believed to be in continuous tension with external forces that originated beyond their borders. This approach lays emphasis on the linkage between the member state’s domestic sphere and the EU level of policies (which also involves its external policies).

This approach’s central assumption is that any explanation of the CSDP which does not include the domestic dimension is essentially flawed. In other words, attention to the domestic element, characterising, on that occasion, the EU state’s contributor to the CSDP, is vital. The domestic level has an important function in determining whether the CSDP is an appropriate ‘process’ for responding to the national interests and goals (see Hill 1997, 11-12; Bulmer 1983, 351-2).

The domestic level approach is strengthened by bureaucratic politics (Allison and Halperin 1972) because the latter agrees with the notion that an actor, such as a EU

state and its leaders, could make an ‘acceptable decision’ as far as the EU state and leaders’ national goals and objectives are concerned (see p. 41). The domestic level approach’s assumptions, therefore, encompass the view that the national and European leaders’ (i.e. policy-makers’) behaviour is particularly affected by the gains they may wish to obtain.

This approach sees the CSDP as a process within which the EU member states have interacted among themselves and reacted to external and domestic inducements. By doing so, they generated a set of practices, stances and activities, including civil and military undertakings. This ‘quantity’ of measures, positions and operations could be reinforced or weakened. It would depend not only on the nature of the ‘external’ challenge (the Libyan crisis) but also on particular developments in the domestic arena of the member states. This volume of common procedures and actions is in a continued ‘variation’ contingent to the force of the member states to influence the response of the EU to an external event or crisis.

Looking at the answers to the Libyan challenge through this approach, the national scenarios and power of the interests and goals therein will be revealed. Domestic considerations may estimate the value of the ‘rapidity’ of an action of national security. They might assess the conduct of the national political leaders involved in taking a decision on the CSDP. Domestic judgment may influence a vote regarding confirming or changing the leaders’ position in national politics.

Developing the CSDP (and, also, by contrast, ignoring it) may also represent a particular interest of the national leaders. This is true also in relation to the EU’s deployment of military and civil forces. In this regard, France has often been discussed, by the other EU states and particularly Germany, for pursuing its national objectives (and also managing its domestic politics) at the EU level. It was spoken about for employing the CSDP’s deployment for the protection of France’s national responsibilities, especially in its African backyard (in Chad). Also, demonstrating *European puissance* through a ‘hyperactive’ CSDP (especially towards the US in connection with the EU’s ability to resolve regional crises) may respond to the national interests and goals, particularly at election time.

On the whole, the assumptions of the domestic level approach are made potent by national and domestic considerations and their linkage to the CSDP tier. Economic gains, political rewards, and the specific task of expanding a party’s political basis are key elements. Particularly, reassuring the pressure groups and (business and industrial) lobbies about the ability to win a consensus, and preserve the power that the lobbies expect to hold are critical phenomena within this approach.

The contribution of the literature

Within the existing literature on this field, one work in particular identified the importance of the domestic level of policy-making in analysing the European Community’s policies (Bulmer 1983), and set up a framework ‘to explain how the domestic level may have a vital impact on the EC’s outputs’. Another study (Marks 1996) sought to demonstrate that the government leaders are ‘usually decisive actors’ both in the domestic arena and in the European Union. An influential study (Putnam 1988) examined ‘how’ and ‘when’ domestic politics and international relations somehow become entangled, and offered a theoretical approach to this issue. Several

works have engaged in exploring the domestic level of policy-making and interrelation with the external forces (Gourevitch 1978; Milner 1997; Smith, A. 1998; Fearon 1998), or preference formation and power in the European Community (Moravcsik 1993, 1994). Yet one work in particular (Bulmer 1983, see above) remains the established contribution concerned with dealing with the domestic level and the European structures.

The political context of the crisis

The succession of initiatives

It is worth remembering that a few days after the crisis erupted in Libya, on 21 February the 27 EU foreign ministers, reunited in the Council of the European Union in Brussels, requested an end to the violence. Shortly afterwards, France, Germany and The Netherlands proposed sanctions, whereas Malta, Cyprus and Italy, led by former Prime Minister Berlusconi, were unwilling to endorse the proposal. In late February, Britain's Prime Minister Cameron declared that the United Kingdom was preparing to arrange a no fly zone, possibly under NATO's coordination. France expressly stated that it was keen to use NATO's military command to 'plan and execute air operations'. However it strongly believed that the North Atlantic Alliance should take no political control of the overall military operation. This would have alienated the Arab countries (France 2011a).

At the European Council meeting of 11 March, the EU states were addressed by France to recognise the Benghazi-based Transitional National Council (TNC), a recognition that France's former President Sarkozy made unilaterally the previous day (EurActiv).² Shortly afterwards, on 17 March, the UN Security Council approved the no-fly zone over Libya, and authorised all of the necessary measures to protect civilians (Resolution 1973). Sarkozy called a summit on Libya, in the French capital on 19 March, tasked with organising the political guidance of the operation authorised by the UN. It was agreed with America's President Obama that the first offensive action would be conducted by the US. Also it was agreed that, after the US had nullified Libya's air defence system, with what has been called Operation Odyssey Dawn, NATO would replace the American leadership. Such an arrangement was making clear that the direction was under non-USA authority (Howorth 2011, 18-19; Charlemagne 2011).

On 20 March, French fighter jets opened fire on Gaddafi's troops. The collective action which ensued, allowed by Resolution 1973, the Unified Protector Operation, was led by NATO. As the US withdrew, attacks on ground targets were undertaken by the French, British, Italian, Danish, Belgian, Canadian, Emirati, Qatari and Norwegian armies.

The EU's lack of a common response

No military operation was aired, as one to be taken under the initiative of the CSDP within the European framework. Not that a discussion on the matter was eluded by the EU states. However, there was no sign of the 'ambition in the field of military crisis management' that some Swedish defence ministers had previously predicted for the EU (Engberg 2010, 408). Nor any indication emerged regarding the so-called 'tarzan' narrative, which the EU had constructed in the first decade of the twenty-first century (Flockhart 2011).

As late as 12 April, at a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Luxembourg, a debate on whether the CSDP should intervene with armed forces occupied the agenda of the EU states. The meeting was held after the European Council, on 1 April, had agreed to the EUFOR Libya CSDP military mission.³ This one was anchored to the United Nation's request to intervene in support of humanitarian assistance operations (Council Decision 011/210/CFSP). An operational plan was needed for the military humanitarian intervention. The discussion on that matter, in Luxemburg, unveiled the contrasting positions of the foreign ministers. In particular, the claim emerged that the UN retained access to Misrata, which was under siege by Gaddafi's forces, and a EU military action would have jeopardised the UN endeavours. Also, the contention was advanced by the Italians that they could not understand the need for a military intervention to deliver humanitarian aid. The argument, outlined by others, that the deployment of forces was driven by a desire to demonstrate that the EU had a military planning capacity, distinct from that of NATO, was also aired. The indication that a military intervention was the only possible way to halt Gaddafi was, definitely, made. Concern about the time-consuming decision to agree on 'when' and 'how' to end the military mission was also reportedly evident at the meeting. Apparently, disagreement about the EU being divided among the 'do-gooders' and the 'warriors' was impossible to restrain. In the end, a high level UN aid-and-relief official's letter to EU High Representative Ashton finally answered these objections. The letter disclosed the reservations about providing military support for a humanitarian mission (Vogel 2011a).

By contrast, a few days after the EU foreign ministers met in Luxemburg, France's former President Sarkozy and Britain's Prime Minister Cameron underwrote a letter, signed also by the US President Obama, which was published in the *New York Times*, declaring that 'Gaddafi must go and go for good' (*New York Times* 14 April 2011).

How does the empirical discussion evaluate the evidence regarding the EU's lack of a common response to the Libyan crisis in terms of the two approaches: the strategic culture perspective and the domestic level of observation?

The empirical discussion: the strategic culture approach

The key questions here are whether the strategic culture approach is suitable: i) for analysing the development of the CSDP, and ii) explaining the (possible) causes behind the EU's lack of a common response through the CSDP. Two investigations follow.

Strategic cultures' general characters

As for this approach, 'convergence of strategic cultures' of the EU member states was a condition for offering a EU/CSDP common response. To deal with this issue, this approach offered hints. Its assumptions were that 'ideas, norms and patterns of behaviour, related to the processes concerning the European security and defence politics, which are satisfactorily shared at the national level (by political actors and society) are to be satisfactory shared at the EU level in order to offer convergence in the CSDP'.

Through applying this approach to Italy, France, Britain and Germany as a sample of the EU/27 to assess and compare their strategic culture ‘in general’, differences surfaced.

The ideas led to several findings. The French (and their strategic thinking) were traditionally led by ideas of *grandeur*. Yet, even nowadays, they remained vitally tied to the general *grandeur* objective of their culture (Interview with a French public official, Rome and Lyon, May 2011). The British had a self-perception as a great power. By contrast, the Italians, as the background feeding their strategic culture, still currently struggled with the need to preserve their national pride (Ferrara 2003), an attitude left over from the Second World War. They had no ideas of *grandeur*, like the French, nor a power perception, as the British still maintained.

‘Ideas linked to patterns of behaviour’ produced other findings. The British found it essential to express a strong attachment to their own sovereignty, whereas the Italians encouraged ‘cooperative security’. In addition, the British, analogously to the French, traditionally employed armed forces and performed this as a foreign policy instrument along with civilian resources. As a key difference, both were less hesitant regarding this option than Italy.

Also, attention to ‘norms and their impact on other states’ guided this article’s findings. By contrast with Britain and France, Italy’s culture perceived the need for a UN, or an Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) mandate, before embarking on an operation that utilised the military. The general agreement that Italy had never held a seat on the UN Security Council, unlike France and Britain, contributed towards creating a sense that ‘something was missing’ in order to embrace a strategic culture worthy of the name (Interview with an Italian high-rank government and NATO official, Rome, September 2011).

‘Similarity in strategic cultures’, and the ‘influence of ideas and norms’ on the state’s behaviour, produced new evidence. Italian strategic culture appeared similar to that of Germany, whereby the Germans perceived the need to submerge their nation-state into the wider whole (Schmidt 2006). Also, the Germans felt uneasy about the combination of military and civilian tools, and in particular rejected force projection, favouring instead the use of civilian means. Besides the particular influences of the Prime Ministers, very peculiarly, Italian public opinion accepted only a specific ‘Italian way of peacekeeping’, that removed any idea of combat (Interview with an Italian senior analyst from CeMISS, Military Centre for Strategic Studies, Rome, May 2010). The ‘Italian way’ emphasised post-stabilisation aid, and reduced the function of the military to that of a Non-Governmental Organisation. Perhaps this particular character induced former Foreign Minister Frattini, at the EU meeting in Luxemburg debating on whether the CSDP should intervene with armed forces in Libya, to question the need for a military intervention in Libya to deliver humanitarian aid.

These general characters concerning the strategic cultures of the EU member states (and societies) were powerful in motivating their policies. They were influential because the ideas conveyed the kind of image that the EU states – France, Britain, Italy and Germany – held about a nonviolent, stable world as well as how they foresaw their own wider responsibility therein. Norms expressed the nature of the domestic consensus on deployment for which the EU states, and their societies, had

opted, and the patterns of behaviour generated the consequent conduct. On the whole, these characters were also influential in shaping the possible convergence of the strategic cultures and policies of the EU states.

With regard to this investigation of strategic cultures' convergence on the CSDP, this approach's contribution has proved relatively inadequate. Highlighting more differences than similarities among the general features defining the strategic culture of EU states would suggest that differences negatively impinge on a convergent position. The argument goes on to claim that there would be no development of the CSDP, but, despite the member states' differences in strategic culture, they have marked up over 20 civil-military operations through the CSDP since 1998. All the more, albeit the gap between Italy, France and Britain's notions of strategic culture, Italian forces also took part in over 20 international missions up to January 2012, including CSDP operations. Therefore, this approach does not appear appropriate for analysing the development of the CSDP.

This calls for more evidence on the usability of the strategic culture approach, such as an explanation of the likely motivations for the missed common response from the EU/CSDP.

Reaction to Libya

As its assumptions include 'political leaders/policy-makers' and 'society' as actors, this approach makes it possible to examine their 'response' regarding European security and defence politics. What was the reaction to Libya by societies and policy-makers, at the time of the crisis?

Society in Britain was more prone to repatriate their share of policy from Brussels than to tie in with the CSDP and its military (*Financial Times* 21 May 2012). Concern about becoming embroiled in excessive bureaucracy and, perhaps on occasions, being obliged to depend on the policies and choices made by others (Interview with a senior British official, London, November 2012) did not favour a friendly vision of the CSDP, even with regard to Libya.

Society in France was largely behind Sarkozy's military initiative, with Parliament accepting the notion of a new era in the Mediterranean, and not rejecting Sarkozy's assertive role under the claim of further action in the CSDP (France 2011b). If questioned about the feasibility of a CSDP accomplishment in Libya, the French would respond that, above all, rapidity of action was important (Interview with a French public official, Rome and Lyon, May 2011).

In Italy, society was, above all concerned with Berlusconi's tardy reaction rather than with deserting the CSDP. However, when political observers were interviewed by the Italian national broadcaster, La7, soon after the crisis developed, reference to the 'existence of a process to be put into motion especially in these occasions', the CSDP, was made. To others, the fact that 'European nations' conducted the military intervention was, by itself, a synonym for European unity. They rejected any preoccupation for bypassing the CSDP (Interview with an Italian political scientist, RomaTre University, Rome, October 2011).

Society in Germany questioned the government's non-alignment with its traditional allies rather than its weak attachment to the CSDP as a civil-military actor (*Das Spiegel* 18 March 2011). Yet, the usual emphasis, expressed in Berlin's Bundestag on 'non-attachment to the military CSDP', also concerning the case of Libya, was downplayed as an approach which performed well with a certain electorate (Interview with a German security analyst, Cardiff and Oxford, March 2013).

Also, the attitude of EU HR Ashton, of making no effort to enhance the reputation of the CSDP to challenge authoritarian Libya, had not helped societies to generate support, and make the EU/CSDP more influential. Her assertion, at the Corvinus University (February 2011), that the strength of the EU lay (paradoxically) in its inability to throw its weight around was a sign that Ashton wished to distance herself from a CSDP military mission (Corvinus).

With regard to this second investigation, it is true that this approach gave indications of the member states' (society and policy-makers) reactions to the Libyan crisis concerning the CSDP, but its ability to shed light on the causes of these reactions seems insufficient. This approach has not been shown 'to hold the power' to offer a 'thorough explanation' of the likely reasons behind the EU/CSDP's missed common response.

The approach's limitations

There are flaws and limitations to the strategic culture approach which the empirical evidence revealed.

In its assumptions, which we have just revisited, there was no advantage to explaining the 'convergence of strategic cultures'. Three orders of factors support this.

Firstly, in relation to the EU states, the situation of those states that responded differently, as discussed in the sample of the four member states, to external threats or pressure for merging strategic cultures does not encourage the view that convergence was certain.⁴ Secondly, concerning this approach's indication that strong national and European leadership is needed in order to attain a common strategic culture at the EU level, this condition is useful, but by itself does not assure convergence. Neither Sarkozy's assertive role nor EU HR Ashton's behaviour served the cause of convergence in the CSDP. Thirdly, regarding the European Union, the reactivity to the crises is conditioned by the fact that the EU's strategic culture *vis-à-vis* the military is rooted in deployment based on a mandate, limited in time and space, and foreseeing an exit strategy.⁵ Agreeing and formalising all of this contrasts with the rapidity needed on these occasions. This problem was discussed at the meeting in Luxemburg.

Again, on the issue of strategic cultures' convergence in the CSDP, neither the first nor the second investigation found evidence that this approach offers suggestions regarding a 'stable condition of strategic culture' as a foundation for the CSDP, or a 'progressing degree of convergence'. Even more strikingly, the investigation found no evidence of a 'collective strategic culture', as a common platform for the CSDP, with the understanding that there is a joint responsibility to face external threats. This

article warns about the risk of employing the strategic culture framework to explain the development of the CSDP.

The fluidity and volatility of the convergence process can be seen in the political opposition (from Berlin, London and Paris) that was not overcome (October 2012), when the convergence of strategic cultures on pooling and sharing was required for the merger of an integrated European aerospace construct and defence group (EADS-BAE). Convergence was taken hostage by the political leaders of the EU states and their politics. If the national interests and politics of the member states and their leaders were at stake when convergence was an option, the national level might be more appropriate than the strategic culture perspective to examine developments concerning the CSDP.

The empirical discussion: the domestic level approach

Is the domestic level approach more appropriate for considering the strong national and European leadership needed for convergence in the CSDP, which the previous discussion judged an insufficient condition to guarantee the development of the CSDP?

The domestic level's assumptions specified that the 'national and European leaders' (i.e. policy-makers') behaviour is particularly affected by the gains they may wish to obtain'. Re-interpreting the strategic culture assumption through the domestic level approach (and keeping an eye on the gains that could attract the 'leaders'), this article concentrated on their behaviour, specifically their conduct in response to the crisis, in terms of supporting a CSDP civil-military operation. This investigation found the following evidence.

In France, former President Sarkozy's personal standing was at stake in view of the relatively soon national contest for the presidency (April 2012). France generally held the initiative within the CSDP, inspired by *Europe de la defence* ideas. On this occasion, Sarkozy may have wished to avoid suppressing France's own interests and influence in Africa in the pursuit of a minimal European consensus (Haine 2011a, 14). On previous occasions, France had already experienced the extent to which the CSDP lacked promptness of action. Regarding Chad, it had to make efforts to convince the other member states to participate in the EU's operation (Haine 2011b, 594). The project for an integrated Mediterranean area had been the focus of Sarkozy's attention since 2008, reviving the idea of a Union of the Mediterranean. In March 2011, during the Libyan crisis, the then Prime Minister Fillon claimed, in the French Parliament, that 'France want[ed] to see a new era in the Mediterranean region' (France 2011a). Sarkozy had already wasted time, and lost the opportunity for initiatives, during the previous challenge of the Tunisian unrest. His failure to respond to that crisis already overloaded his government with the dismissal of the Foreign Minister. He needed rapidity of action, and the CSDP was not congenial towards Sarkozy's decision to oppose violence in Libya.

In Britain, Prime Minister Cameron's decreasing domestic consensus on the uneasy handling of his coalition government challenged his position and reputation. Much of Cameron's efforts were aimed at raising his standing by reinforcing his party. Perhaps Blair, the former British Prime Minister, would have sought an

initiative by his country in Europe, leading the CSDP to calm the violence in Libya, believing it to be a positive asset. Through his attempts to broaden his political basis, however, Cameron reignited Britain's European political controversies. The promise of an in-out referendum on Europe, in 2017, if the Conservatives win the next general election had been aired as manifesto. Cameron could inconceivably be the promoter of a security operation in Libya within the CSDP. Yet, he was ready to intervene in Libya, even without a UN resolution.⁶ The then European Security and Defence Policy was never mentioned in Britain's 2010 national security strategy document and, soon after his election in May 2010, Cameron signed with Sarkozy a British defensive treaty with France, in November 2010. On that occasion, Britain's Prime Minister indicated that, through that agreement, the two leaders could 'do more things alone as well as together' (*The Guardian* 2010). By using the management of the Libyan crisis as an occasion for the joint operational and political leadership of these two states (Benitez 2011) instead of passing it to the EU, Cameron aimed to increase his reputation at home.

In Germany, not very differently from her European counterparts, Chancellor Merkel was concerned about not jeopardising her position within the party. Becoming involved in any process backing deployment was raising the question of how the electorate would react to it, in the upcoming elections, in some states (18 September 2011). The Chancellor also faced parliamentary opposition to her plans for the European Financial Stability Facility (*Das Spiegel* 26 August 2011). Her party's power was expected to be eroded. Merkel could not sponsor the CSDP to play a role in Libya. Apparently, the German 'ontological' problems with security countered the 'military connection'. This position was, however, paradoxical. As an opinion poll conducted on 22 June 2011 in EU countries and the US revealed, Germany was the first after the primacy of France to underwrite the military operation which actually took place (Menotti 2011). A paradox was also the much-talked abstention, on 17 March, from UNSC Resolution 1973 imposing the no-fly zone, which the EU also supported. Convinced human rights champion Chancellor Merkel aligned Germany with Russia and China, unquestionably no great human rights supporters. These paradoxes and the inability to compromise show that concessions, including championing the CSDP, were endangering Merkel's domestic position.

Also for Italy, the found evidence has not diverged from the kind of reasons, and personal preoccupations, behind the other EU leaders' behaviour in response to the crisis. Former Prime Minister Berlusconi focused on avoiding, as far as possible, the disastrous personal impact that the situation in Libya was threatening to generate. His party and government had several consequences of the crisis to face. The development of a EU/CSDP operation was not the focus. In 2008, Berlusconi had agreed with Tripoli a friendship and cooperation treaty. The commitment that Italy would not consent to the use of its territory for any 'hostile act' (or engage in 'direct or indirect' military action) against Libya was made. The former prime minister feared that this would have a negative impact on many Italian companies, which were partly owned by the Libyan government (e.g. FIAT SpA and UniCredit SpA). The Italian national energy corporation, Eni SpA, had been active for more than fifty years in Libya. More than 1,300 Italian workers had to be rescued from that country prior to any military action being taken (Italian Government 24 March 2011, p. 20). Berlusconi was concerned about the flow of Libyan migrants into Italy that, together with other problems, would damage his political party's foundation. In addition, a

quarter of Italy's crude oil requirements were being supplied by Libya. This was a further motive confirming that any reference to military CSDP activity in Libya was far from what Berlusconi wanted.

In the European Union, High Representative Ashton unveiled no aspiration to support CSDP military interference in Libya. Ashton was apparently obsessed with the problem of the 'reality of 27 member states who are sovereign, who believe passionately in their own right to determine what they do, particularly in the area of defence' (*DawnComWorld* 2011). At the European Council emergency meeting of 11 March 2011, the HR's views prevailed when the EU leaders signed a communiqué that omitted any mention of the no-fly zone that was keenly sponsored by France and Britain. The communiqué sparked a furious debate. In London, 'should [Baroness Ashton] not serve the member states of the European Union rather than pretending to lead them?' was the prevalent MPs' accusation, which engaged Prime Minister Cameron in a defensive debate in the Commons (*The Guardian*, 15 March 2011). Ashton was influenced, if not taken hostage, by the politics of Britain and France, with Cameron and Sarkozy covertly instructing her not to interfere in the military decision-making (Interview with an EEAS official, Brussels, November 2012).

Yet, the strength of the domestic level approach, in the context of this discussion, is demonstrated by overcoming shortcomings of the strategic culture analysis. The exercise of re-interpreting the strategic culture assumption in the light of the domestic level assessments proved beneficial. By adjusting its focus to the advantages that the leaders/policy-makers may have sought to obtain through their action, the domestic level analysis was more skilled than the strategic culture in explaining why the CSDP was not favoured, in the event of responding to the crisis. It highlighted the relevance of the rewards and benefits at which the policy-makers may have aimed, that the latter approach could not perceive as the influential factors motivating the (non-)development of the CSDP. It lay emphasis on domestic interests, burdens and pressures, as forces which impacted on the CSDP and its growth. It stressed that the fear of losing the acquired power in the domestic political context, or politically damaging their reputation (EU HR Ashton), were among the motives justifying the policy-makers' behaviour, and the refusal of the CSDP. Hence, in terms of the probable reasons for the EU's missed military intervention, this approach performed better than the strategic culture analysis.

The domestic level perspective performed better also in relation to examining the development of the CSDP. As far as this perspective is concerned, the CSDP was prey to the member states and their desires. This approach's definition of the present 'state' of the CSDP is that of an on-going process, in 'continued variation', within which 'convergence' is a process that has not been concluded, is still developing, and could supposedly cease and be reversed too.

Concluding comments

The view of the CSDP being prey to the member states' wants, and risking extinction, leads analysts to 'wonder' about its future. It leads this article to reflect on 'certain missed opportunities'. Four observations seek to demonstrate that the neglected opportunities would have been (and remain) an option for the future development of the CSDP.

First, the defence of European interests in the region. In 2010, Libya was the sixth major energy provider to the EU, fulfilling 17 per cent of European energy requirements. The EU framed no common energy policy, and so the member states were compelled to make direct acquisitions on an individual basis. In 2010 also, France was a strong importer (205,000 oil barrels per day) and also Germany and Spain (respectively 144,000 b/d and 136,000 b/d), and Italy was, by far, the biggest buyer (376,000 b/d). For Britain, the reduced availability of energy resources in the North Sea, in addition to the desire to lessen its reliance on Russian Gazprom, had served to strengthen its energy dealings with Libya (95,000 b/d in 2010) (*The Economist* 2011; *Caspian Weekly* 2011). Along with the strategic aim of fostering stability in the neighbourhood (Schroeder 2009, 501), the protection of a key region for European wellbeing concerning the security of energy sources, maritime security, and sea commercial lanes as well as migration control, was a logical task for the CSDP policy to undertake.

Second, the promotion of a CSDP operation formed by those who were willing to take action. Officially, the choices made within this area conform to the norm of unanimity, namely the 27 Foreign Ministers need to agree within the Foreign Affairs Council. In situations of particular importance, the Heads of State and Government united in the European Council have the right of decision, and individual member states hold a veto over any joint choice. On that occasion, the member states and the EU could make an effort, and bridge the gap between the willing to intervene in the crisis management and those less interested in doing so. They could give support to the shaping of a CSDP military operation formed by the 'keen to intervene states'.

Third, taking the political control and strategic direction of the NATO military operation if Berlin-Plus had been used. Not possessing the necessary military capabilities was watched with 'anxiety' on the other side of the Atlantic and branded by some as 'the European culture of demilitarization' (Gates 2010). This hurdle was nonetheless lowered by the US granting assistance and support in the light of the lack of aircraft carriers, smart munitions and enablers of modern warfare, surveillance and air tanking (Witney 2011, 2). The kind of setting of a Europe-led NATO command configuration was not new. It was defined, in the 1990s, as the European Security and Defence Identity, namely a NATO mission, conducted by the Europeans operating through US military resources. It was surpassed, in 2002, by the Berlin Plus arrangement, which allowed the CSDP to use NATO (i.e. US) assets to handle an operation without the involvement of US forces (Howorth 2011, 19; 2007, 99-102). The Berlin Plus mechanisms were successfully used in Operation Concordia in Macedonia, in 2003 (Mace 2004; Abele 2003). They were indeed offering a more 'European' option to mark the operation in Libya. Specifically, even though the military action was implemented under NATO command, the member states' choice to resort to the Berlin-Plus procedures would have allowed the CSDP to take strategic control of the military action.

There was also a stringent logic in support of this alternative. The EU was involved in making long-term policies in the region aimed at nurturing stability in its neighbouring belt. The EU was, by intention, well disposed towards eventually developing a comprehensive relationship with Libya. It was willing to offer a framework agreement, finally including Libya's participation in the European Neighbourhood Policy (Biscop 2011, 2; Bosse 2011, 442).

Fourth, the Union and the member states had estimated that they were willing, as a group or part of it, to perform disarmament operations and rescue missions through the CSDP (Lisbon Treaty Art. 43). By contrast, as a result of their choices, the Responsibility to Protect People (R2P) was also among the overlooked charges. This was a paradox at least for two reasons. Firstly, the member states made efforts, and succeeded in having the R2P recognised as a responsibility of the international community, at the 2005 World Summit. Secondly, they incorporated it within the EU's own security strategy priority tasks.

If the future of the CSDP were in the member states' interests, in the event of the Libyan crisis the EU's common response might have followed this other alternative:

a EU military operation made up by the 'willing to intervene EU states', under the political control and strategic direction of the CSDP (thanks to Berlin-Plus), in defence of the R2P obligation, and of the many European security interests in the region.

On the whole, this article sought to demonstrate the limitations of the strategic culture approach in observing and explaining the EU's lack of a common response to the Libyan crisis, which would have involved the development of the CSDP, and to demonstrate that the domestic level approach has greater explanatory power. By describing the flaws of the strategic culture perspective to explain the 'convergence of member states' strategic cultures at the EU level', and therefore in the CSDP, this article warns of the danger of using this approach to analyse the CSDP. By highlighting the 'consideration' that the behaviour of the national and European leaders/policy-makers is mostly influenced by the advantages that they believe it is possible to obtain *via* their action, this article enhanced the key assumption of the domestic level approach.

The findings concerning the EU's lack of a common response to the Libyan crisis cannot be generalized. Emergency situations in the Democratic Republic of Congo have been approached by the EU/CSDP with integrated civil-military efforts. However, the more recent developments in Mali have not seen the launch of a CSDP civil-military mission either.⁷ The management of that crisis was a French unilateral initiative. This would suggest that the EU's answer to the Libya challenge is not a 'one-off' response. The EU's lack of a response to Mali may be interpreted, in the context of this paper, by the view that the influence of the EU structures is eroded by the effect of the 'nationalism' of the member states. The unwillingness to sponsor joint actions within the EU framework is a growing trend. The common security and defence policy is in a state of flux. Perhaps there will be better occasions. The whole, however, throws a shadow across the future of the CSDP.

Notes

¹ There is no space for further references still relevant, such as the accounts of strategic culture by Johnston (1995, 1999) and Gray (1999), and other contributions: Rynning (2003) investigated the 'likelihood' that EU member states develop a strategic culture embracing 'common interests and views of the world'. Hyde-Price (2004) warned about the risk that the European strategic culture reproduces old scenarios and inhibits the development of new European security strategies relevant to our time. Matlary (2006) discussed the concept of human security as the possible foundation for a new type of European strategic culture.

² On 14 March, France and Britain were working on a draft resolution, supporting a NFZ, with Cameron hinting that ‘he might consider action without a UN mandate’.

³ The Operational Headquarters were in Rome and an Italian rear admiral was nominated as the EU Operational Commander.

⁴ Meyer (2004, 20) concedes that ‘convergence is not an inevitable phenomenon’.

⁵ See: Marchi 2011; Biava 2011.

⁶ See: Gowan, R. and Brantner, F. (2011), ‘The EU and Human Rights at the UN: 2011 Review’, *ecfr.eu* Policy Memo, 4.

⁷ The EU was present only in terms of training and reorganising the Malian armed forces (EUTM Mali).

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