

Power is Always in Fashion: A State-Centric Realist Explanation of the European Security and Defence Policy

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The European Defence and Security Policy (ESDP) is evolving into a concrete structure with a significantly improved means of projecting influence in the international environment. Under the framework of ESDP, Europe has not only developed new military structures and capabilities; it is using them in small but significant missions. Much has been written on the intricacies of those developments, their effects on the relations between members of the European Union and on the transatlantic relationship.¹ The purpose of this paper, however, is to return to a more fundamental question: why is the EU developing a capability to project power in the distinct absence of any significant military threat to Europe?

International relations theory for the most part does not offer a good answer to this question. Those in the offensive realist camp argue that states develop military power and the capability to influence international affairs through its use to balance the power of other states regardless of whether or not they pose a threat.² In this view, states seek to ensure their security by expanding their influence whenever they can do so.³ They do not act reflexively, but rather exploit the opportunities presented by the international environment to their maximum advantage.⁴ Others in the defensive realist camp claim that states engage in expansive behavior to counter specific threats.⁵ When states perceive a threat to their

¹ See for example, Rory Keane, "European Security and Defence Policy: from Cologne to Sarajevo," *Global Society* Vol. 19, No.1 (2005): 89-103; Wolfgang Wagner, "From Vanguard to Laggard: Germany in European Security and Defence Policy," *German Politics* Vol. 14, No.4 (2005): 455-469; Jolyon Howorth, "Discourse, Ideas and Epistemic Communities in European Security and Defence Policy," *West European Politics* Vol. 27, No.2 (2004): 211-234; Anand Menon, "From Crisis to Catharsis: ESDP after Iraq," *International Affairs* Vol. 80, No.4 (2004) 631-648; Anthony King, "The Future of the European Security and Defence Policy," *Contemporary Security Policy* Vol. 26, No. 1 (2005): 455-469; Bastian Geigerich and William Wallace, "Not Such a Soft Power: the External Deployment of European Forces," *Survival* Vol. 46, No. 2 (2004): 163-182; Anand Menon, Anthony Forster and William Wallace, "A Common European Defence?" *Survival* Vol. 34, No.3 (1992). Anne Deighton, "The European Security and Defence Policy," *Journal of Common Market Studies* Vol. 40, No.4 (2002): 719-741

² John Mearshimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001).

³ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading: Assison-Welsley, 1979). Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

⁴ Eric Labs, "Beyond Victory: Offensive Realism and the Expansion of War Aims," *Security Studies* Vol. 6. No. 4, Summer 1997.

⁵ Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

security, they seek to expand their capability to influence events beyond their borders.⁶ Within this framework states are seen as expanding their power only when necessary rather than when they can.

But neither of those paradigms fully explains the development of ESDP. The European Union (EU) has no ability to balance or even check the military power of the United States. Even assuming all of the goals of ESDP were fulfilled, the deployable military power of the EU would be a fraction of that of the US Marine Corps, the smallest of the US Armed Forces. The development of ESDP also fails to fit the defensive realist paradigm. In fact, ESDP began to develop just as the Soviet Union—the one state that could actually pose a significant threat to Europe—was collapsing.

Offensive realism, however, does offer a starting point: the EU is developing its power to influence international events because it can. The post-Cold War international environment provides a unique opportunity since the beginning of the EU in which there is no military threat to Europe and the one remaining superpower is officially encouraging (with some ambivalence) the development of an independent European military capability. But such developments take more than an opening in the international environment to bring them to fruition; they also require that the entity in question have the institutional ability to project power and influence. This combination of realist international relations theory and domestic institutional development has been called *state-centric realism*.⁷

State-centric realism provides a more complete answer to the puzzle of why the EU is developing its capabilities to influence international events, including deployable military force at this particular juncture. Since the end of the Cold War, considerable governing authority and bureaucratic capacity has shifted to the EU from the member states. This occurred contemporaneously with the end of the Cold War and the restrictions it placed on the development of a foreign and security policy independent from that of the United States. Thus, the European Union's development of a greater capacity to influence events beyond its borders is the product of a permissive environment, but more importantly, it is also a product of its institutional development.

⁶ Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," *International Security* Vol. 9, Summer 1984. Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991). Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

⁷ Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

Since the end of the Cold War, the EU has progressively extracted powers from the national governments of its member states that are traditionally associated with sovereign states such as control over borders and the ability to mint currency. It increasingly sets the regulations that govern the everyday life of European citizens over a range of health, safety and other issues. After achieving a degree of authority over significant internal issues, it is now developing the means, including military power, to have a greater influence over the international environment.

This is a familiar pattern in the development of states, and in some ways it parallels the history of the United States as the federal government became a more powerful institution relative to the individual states.⁸ Until the end of the nineteenth century, the United States featured relatively weak federal state institutions, including a presidency that was usually outmatched on foreign policy issues by the representatives of the member states, particularly in the Senate. Despite its formidable economic power and size, the United States of the mid-nineteenth century lacked the ability to project power and influence, in part because the individual states had little interest in creating a stronger federal authority at their own expense. But following a series of changes that shifted increasingly more power to the federal government and the presidency in the 1890s, the United States rapidly began to develop the bureaucratic capability to effectively govern from the center and, in turn, developed its military and other capabilities to influence the international environment in the distinct absence of any territorial threat.

In short, the United States became a significant power because it could. The lack of a threat in the late nineteenth century provided an opportunity, but the state had to develop institutions capable of channelling resources to the expanding interests of the federal government. It was the process of transferring power from the individual states to the central government that allowed the US to go from global weakling to global power in a short period of time at the end of the nineteenth century.

But can we use a similar framework to think about the current European effort to become a global player in its own right? Clearly direct comparisons to the US can be misleading, but there is no denying that the power amassed by the EU over the past two decades puts its capacity to govern well beyond the reach of any international organization.

⁸ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to the Present* (New York: Random House, 1987).

It may not be evolving into a state in the Westphalian sense, but it is certainly extracting many of the powers and attributes traditionally associated with the state.

Furthermore, if this is a convincing framework, then what are the implications for the United States and for transatlantic alliance? At one level we may see increased competition between the US and Europe as Europe becomes increasingly able to use military power as part of its effort to exert an independent influence in global affairs. Although the EU does not have the capacity or desire to balance against the US in a classic military sense, it may be able to use its new capabilities to exercise greater influence over US actions. As Barry Posen notes, it is possible that the credible promise of an EU intervention in some areas not considered part of the NATO ambit might force the US to support a NATO mission there solely to prevent a successful independent EU intervention that would raise questions as to the necessity of the transatlantic alliance.⁹

At another level, however, the United States and a more internationally engaged EU may become partners with increasingly similar perceptions regarding threats to their security and the use of military power in international affairs. From a realist perspective, power tends to shape interests, and the lack of power has led to a more pacifist Europe.¹⁰ But would a more powerful Europe perceive its interests differently and use the tools at its disposal to pursue them? Borrowing Robert Kagan's terminology, would the "Venus and Mars" identities meet, appropriately enough, at Earth? Furthermore, if the European preference for multilateralism and legalism is a product of the fact that it cannot independently play a large role in international security affairs, then will that preference change as the EU acquires more autonomous power? This is of course purely speculative, but if a state-centric realist approach explains the development of ESDP, it may also be a reliable guide for the broader implications of its successful realization.

Finally, it is worth considering the effects of ESDP on the development of the EU. It is possible to have a complex process of consultation between member states and the EU institutions on a range of issues that, while significant, are not immediate crises. But adding a hard security dimension to the EU means that some matters may need rapid and firm action requiring a streamlined and centralized decision-making process. Thus, the further

⁹ Barry Posen, "ESDP and the Structure of World Power," *The International Spectator*, Vol. 39 No.1 2004.

¹⁰ Robert Kagan, "Power and Weakness," *Policy Review* No. 113, 2002

development of ESDP may have a reflexive effect on the EU, pushing it to shift more decision-making power to Brussels.¹¹

This paper begins with an examination of the rise of the United States to demonstrate the importance of institutional capability on the development of power projection capabilities as part of a strategy for gaining greater international influence. Second, it argues that the EU can be viewed through a similar lens because it has adopted many of the characteristics traditionally associated with states and is progressively extracting sovereignty from the member states. Third, it details the growth of ESDP and other tools of power projection. Finally, it considers the implications for the transatlantic relationship and the development of the EU.

State-Centric Realism and the Rise of the United States

The United States experienced a massive transition in the forty years after the end of the Civil War. In both relative and absolute terms, the United States economy boomed in the decades after the Civil War, several depressions notwithstanding. Between 1865 and 1898, agricultural production grew by more than 200 percent, coal production by 800 percent, and railway track construction by close to 600 percent.¹² The population doubled between 1865 and 1900 as wave after wave of European immigrants moved to the United States. By 1885, the US passed Great Britain as the single largest manufacturer.¹³ In relative terms, the growth of the United States during this period is even more striking. The US was growing at a rate of approximately 5 percent per year compared to 1.5 percent for Great Britain.

Yet, despite this extraordinary growth relative to other states, the US remained a bit player in international affairs. The Department of State was miniscule and diplomatic representation was generally limited to honorary consuls and a handful of true diplomatic postings.¹⁴ Other states limited their representation to the United States, sometimes shutting embassies in what was regarded as the diplomatic backwater of Washington, DC. Most states did not bother to send their best diplomats, in fact until 1892 there were no foreign representatives of ambassadorial rank in the United States.¹⁵

¹¹ Jolyon Howorth, "European Defence and the Changing Politics of the EU," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 39, No.4 November 2001.

¹² Kennedy, p. 242-244.

¹³ Zakaria, p.45.

¹⁴ Zara Sterner, *The Times Survey of Foreign Ministries of the World* (London: Times Books, 1982).

¹⁵ Ernest May, *Imperial Democracy: The Emergence of America as a Great Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace 1961), p. 5-6.

The US military was similarly limited in the thirty years following the Civil War. The navy, the main tool of power projection at the time, was a fraction of the size of European powers with smaller economies.¹⁶ The US Army was even less significant with an authorized end strength of 27,000 that was in practice considerably less. Enlisted men were poorly paid and desertion rates were high: nearly one-third of the Army deserted in 1871.¹⁷ Much of the military strength of the United States was in the hands of the individual states, which provided militias of generally poor quality and training to national efforts.

Yet, by the first decade of the twentieth century, the situation was radically different. The United States had defeated Spain in the Spanish-American war, taking possession of strategic islands and coaling stations from the Pacific to the Caribbean in rapid succession. The United States Navy had been transformed from one so minor that it was on the receiving end of Oscar Wilde's wit to being one of the most modern and potent in the world.¹⁸ The United States was no longer a bit player international affairs as demonstrated by the role it played in ending the Russo-Japanese War, and this was only a precursor to the decisive role the United States would play in ending World War I and shaping the subsequent map of Europe. In a span of less than forty years, the United States was transformed from a minor player outside of its immediate region into a significant global actor.

This transformation took place in part because of the massive expansion of the American economy following the Civil War. Many observers at the time expected that the United States would become a major power in global affairs in the 1870s. Benjamin Disraeli predicted that the outcome of the Civil War would be, "a different America from that which was known to our fathers and even from that which this generation has had so much experience. It will be an America of armies, of diplomacy... and probably of frequent wars."¹⁹ Although Britain was most concerned about the emergence of a potential rival and a new naval power, other European states also believed that they could expect the United States to play a significantly larger role in international affairs.

Yet, it took nearly thirty additional years for the United States to begin to fulfil those predictions. Disraeli was correct in his analysis; the United States had the material power to become a major player in international affairs in the 1870s and 1880s. But it failed to live up

¹⁶ Kennedy, p. 203.

¹⁷ Russell Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) p. 270.

¹⁸ In response to the contention that the United States had no curiosities or ruins, Wilde wrote that, "You have your manners and your Navy."

¹⁹ Belle Becker Sideman and Lillian Friedman, eds., *Europe Looks at the Civil War* (New York: Orion, 1960) p 233.

to its predicted role because *it lacked the institutional capacity in the federal government to harness the nation's strength for expanding its interests in global affairs until the end of the century*. A series of changes between 1865 and 1900, however, gradually shifted power away from the individual states to the federal government. At the same time power also shifted within Washington from the legislative to the executive branch. This combination of events created a central government that was not only more capable of extracting resources, but more importantly, capable of using them in the interests of the national government.

The Centralization of Power in the United States

It is often assumed that the United States of the twentieth century is simply an expanded version of what existed previously, but the strength of the federal government and the presidency is a relatively new phenomenon in the history of the nation.²⁰ Throughout most of the nineteenth century it was clear that the bulk of power rested in the individual states and their representatives in the Congress. The federal government was one with only, “a token administrative presence in most of the nation ... whose sovereignty was interpreted by the central administration as contingent on the consent of the individual states.”²¹ The Senate, which had a particularly powerful influence over foreign policy, was designed to give equal representation to the individual states. Until 1913 Senators were elected by the individual state legislatures, which made them very much the representatives of their state's interest rather than the broader national interest. The Senate used its prerogatives to the full extent, leading Henry Adams to quip that the United States had a government, “of the people, by the people, for the Senate.”²²

The power of the Congress and relative weakness of the executive branch led Woodrow Wilson to write *Congressional Government* in 1885, in which he argued that the Congress was the supreme governing body in the American system, but that it lacked the ability to function effectively. He proposed creating a cabinet within the Congress that would function as an executive and relegate the president to essentially the role of Head of State. Wilson himself later acknowledged his errors (particularly when he became president), but when he first wrote *Congressional Government* it was an accurate depiction of the United States for much of the preceding century. The Congress was far more powerful than the

²⁰ Richard Franklin Bense, *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America 1859-1877* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

²² Robert Beisner, *From the Old Diplomacy to the New: 1865-1900* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1986) p. 6.

executive branch, which lacked the staff, funding and administrative capacity to govern effectively. The individual states had considerably more authority and autonomy in the 1870s and 1880s than they would have at the turn of the century. States controlled much of the regulatory structure that existed and the federal government did not gain control over immigration until 1882.²³ The Congress was dominant in most areas and the individual bureaucracies of the federal government were in practice responsible to the Congressional committees rather than the president. This extended into foreign affairs to the point that British diplomats in the 1870s were convinced that the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was the director of foreign policy in the United States, not the Secretary of State.²⁴ Given the state of affairs, this was a reasonable conclusion.

The states through their representatives in the Senate were able to frustrate most plans of the executive to use the material power of the United States to play a larger role in international affairs in the 1870s and 1880s. Throughout the period immediately following the Civil War, the Senate simply refused to take under consideration treaties that would have expanded the reach and influence of the United States such as the treaty for the annexation of the Danish West Indies. The Senate rejected outright the Reciprocity Treaty with Hawaii, which was seen as a first step towards annexation. Many other accords, treaties and trade agreements that would have extended the influence of the United States died in the Senate or were never submitted for approval because of the certainty of a Senate rejection.²⁵

Part of this was owed to the Congressional reluctance to assume the expense of expansion, but much of it was tied to the ongoing battles between the states and the executive for authority over domestic affairs. Greater involvement in foreign affairs would necessarily increase the power of the federal government relative to the individual states. Becoming embroiled in world affairs was consistently opposed by many in the United States because it was feared that would necessitate a large standing military and, in turn, increased taxes and demands on the citizens and individual states.²⁶ This concern articulated by Thomas Jefferson and others in the earliest days of the republic was a constant in American political discourse and it was particularly salient in the aftermath of the Civil War and the military occupation of the South that followed in the 1870s. It should be remembered that one-third of the states in this period had fought to dissolve the union and were only readmitted between 1866 and

²³ Zakaria, p. 101.

²⁴ David Donald, *Charles Sumner and the Rights of Man* (New York: Knopf 1970) p. 465

²⁵ Beisner, p. 6.

²⁶ Zachary Selden, "Neo-Conservatives and the American Mainstream," *Policy Review* No. 124 (April/May 2004).

1870. Even after the Civil War and reconstruction, “states’ rights” remained the rallying cry for blocking the expansion of federal power in the South well into the twentieth century.

The balance of power, however, between the states and Congress on the one hand, and the federal government and the executive branch on the other, began to shift rapidly with a series of reforms begun in the 1880s. Those changes occurred in response to the rapid industrialization of the country. In particular, the rapid growth of the railways created a continental market for goods that required national level regulation. The expansion of the rail system was subsidized by the federal government, and with subsidization came government regulation.²⁷ The Supreme Court strengthened the idea of federal supremacy over interstate commerce and the railroads when it ruled repeatedly in this period that the federal government had responsibility for the regulation of interstate business.

Rapid industrialization also led to the birth of the federal agencies such as the Civil Service Commission in 1883, the Bureau of Labor in 1884 and the Interstate Commerce Commission in 1887. At the same time, the rapid growth in cities required new forms of regulation over the new technologies providing public services over large areas such as gas, electricity and telecommunications. Reformers of the time successfully campaigned to expand the power of the federal government to regulate an increasing large number of issues such as health and safety standards that had previously been in the hands of the individual states or local authorities.²⁸ This led to the creation of new bureaucracies under the control of the central governing authority that gradually gained the expertise and competency to expand its powers at the expense of the sovereignty of the individual member states. This power was centralized in the executive branch because most reformers at the time saw the Congress as too incompetent and parochial to cope with such challenges in a effective manner.²⁹

This broad centralization of authority built up new bureaucracies that made the executive the head of a growing, and more powerful administrative apparatus. A need for efficient central control less oriented around the patronage politics that dominated Congressional appointments to the bureaucracy led to a series of reforms designed to create more professional institutions. In turn, institutions such as the Civil Service Commission and the Presidential Commission on Economy and Efficiency became, “visible symbols not only of a transfer of initiative for administrative reform from the legislative to the executive

²⁷ Robert Angevine, *The Railroad and the State: War, Politics and Technology in Nineteenth Century America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004)

²⁸ John Sproat, *The Best Men: Liberal Reformers in the Gilded Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

²⁹ Morton Keller, *Affairs of State: Public Life in Late Nineteenth Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977).

branch, but also of the tipping of the constitutional balance from Congress to the President.”³⁰

Civil service reform was a particularly significant development. The drive to create more efficient institutions led to competitive exams and other processes that resulted in increasing numbers of competent civil servants filling positions that were previously occupied by individuals whose main qualifications were close ties to a political party or member of congress. All of this started as a means to cope with the domestic challenges of industrialization, but it soon spilled over into international affairs as successful reforms of domestic bureaucratic institutions prompted a re-evaluation of the State Department and the military. The American diplomatic corps in the nineteenth century was a source of more embarrassment than diplomatic achievement. In the 1870s the American minister to Ecuador attempted to kill the British ambassador, while the American representative in Tokyo amused himself by careening through the streets in a carriage and terrifying pedestrians with cracks of his bullwhip.³¹ But starting in the 1880s, the State Department began to become an increasingly more professional organization whose consuls and secretaries were the product of exams and merit-based promotions. Although many top-level postings remained political appointments, the most important officers just below them were now competent professionals whose number doubled in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.³²

The civil service reform process also drove some to consider how the military could be managed more efficiently. The militia-based system was increasingly seen in the late nineteenth century as chaotic and inefficient. There were few clear lines of responsibility and the chiefs of the separate army and navy bureaus had independent relationships with Congress to the extent that, “in peacetime, even the President’s authority over the armed forces took a second place to these horizontal relationships.”³³ Sweeping reforms proved impossible to implement because the states were determined to retain their control over the militias, but a professional military education system and naval intelligence office were established in the 1880s. Competitive examinations for the promotion of officers introduced in the same period helped to establish a professional officer corps, and the bureaucracy

³⁰ Leonard White, *The Republican Era, 1869-1901: A Study in Administrative History* (New York: Macmillan, 1958) p. 364.

³¹ Beisner, p.29

³² Richard Werking, *The Master Architects: Building the United States Foreign Service, 1890-1913* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1977).

³³ Stephen Skowronek, *Building the New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) p. 96.

expanded to include new Assistant Secretary positions in the Department of War and the Department of the Navy.

Thus, *the process of centralizing authority to better cope with domestic challenges ultimately gave the executive branch the authority and bureaucratic resources to develop improved tools of exerting more influence over international affairs as well.* The central state could extract more resources, and the federal budget more than doubled between 1877 and 1900.³⁴ More importantly, however, it could use those resources to expand the international influence of the United States because the more centralized and capable administrative structure allowed it to respond more effectively to international opportunities and pressures.

Once this process of centralizing power in the federal government and in the executive was firmly ensconced, the United States began to develop a power projection capability that reflected its economic strength. The navy was expanded dramatically at the end of the nineteenth century. What was a low-to-middling power projection force at best during the 1880s became the third largest in the world at the start of the twentieth century.³⁵ It is important to note that this took place in the distinct absence of any serious threat to the United States. Relations with Britain were significantly better than they had been in recent memory, and no other European power with the exception of Spain held significant overseas territory close to the United States. Analysts at the time were well aware of this and advocated a larger navy not to defend against a specific threat, but rather as a part of assuming the United State's rightful place as a world power with military might that reflected its economic strength. As one popular journal of the time stated, "We need to be armed to be a great Power."³⁶

As the state became more centralized and the tools of power projection were developed, that power was used in a variety of ways to expand American influence in the international environment. American foreign policy became much more assertive over the course of the 1890s. Zakaria's study of the period reveals that the United States seized 78 percent of the opportunities to expand its influence between 1889 and 1908. But between 1865 and 1889 it only took 27 percent of those opportunities.³⁷ The expansion of American influence did not rely solely or even primarily on military interventions; the United States began to play a larger role in diplomacy, international conferences and treaties, a role that

³⁴ M. Slade Kendrick, *A Century and a Half of Federal Expenditures* (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1955).

³⁵ Kennedy, p. 247.

³⁶ Maurice Halstead, "American Annexation and Armament," *Forum* (September, 1897).

³⁷ Zakaria, p.130.

was previously hampered by a strong Congress that reflected the more restricted interests of the individual states. The same United States that was absent from international negotiations in the 1870s was now playing a central role in ending border disputes between Britain and Venezuela, securing a route for the Panama Canal, negotiating with the European powers in naval conferences, and guaranteeing western trading interests in Asia by the end of the century.

American leaders clearly had a desire to play a larger role in the international arena and to develop the ability to project power before the 1890s. The country was also internationally recognized as having the material wealth and power to take on that role. Presidents and Secretaries of State attempted to expand the reach of the United States in the decades following the Civil War, and the massive expansion of the navy in the 1890s was preceded by several attempts to give the United States a navy that reflected its economic and territorial strength. Yet, those previous attempts to do so failed when blocked by the representatives of the individual states in the Congress. It took the emergence of a more potent federal government and a strengthened executive relative to the legislature to allow the United States to pursue a broader conception of its interests abroad. But that strengthened central authority emerged in response to the need to develop better regulatory structures for the increasingly interconnected continent-wide market of the United States, not in response to an external threat. In broad strokes this pattern should be familiar to students of the European Union.

Applying State-Centric Realism to the European Union

Although state-centric realism offers an explanation of why and when the United States expanded its role in global affairs, does this framework apply to the EU, which, of course, is not a state? There is a healthy academic debate over what exactly the EU is and how to compare with other institutions. Although it is clear that it has expanded well beyond the realm of any other international organization, many scholars maintain that it lacks many of the key features of a state and that explicit comparisons as such are unwarranted.³⁸ Others insist that it is *sui generis* or a post-modern state that defies comparison.³⁹

Yet, neither of those approaches is particularly productive for further comparative analysis. It is true that the EU lacks powers associated with modern governance, but this critique could be applied to other states at different times in their history. The EU has no

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direct power to tax the citizenry, for example, but neither did the United States federal government until World War I. On the other hand, labelling the EU *sui generis* effectively shuts down comparative analysis and restricts study and discussion of the EU to describing its unique features rather than trying to better understand it in a comparative context.

A more productive path might be to focus on the state-like institutions the EU has developed over the past two decades and consider the implications for further integration on security and defense issues in the coming decades. Few would have been willing to predict in the early 1980s that the EU would have a common currency in twenty years time that would not only hold its own against the dollar, but also challenge it as a major reserve currency. We should not, therefore, dismiss the direction and progress of European integration on defence and security matters as something doomed to founder on the immutable rocks of national sovereignty.

Nonetheless, there is a clear difference between the “low politics” of domestic regulation and economic affairs and the “high politics” of security and foreign affairs, which is explicitly recognized by the pillar structure of the European Union. From a traditional realist perspective that informs the intergovernmental approach to the EU, the member states should not be expected to surrender more sovereignty over high politics because the areas of security and foreign affairs are tied to the core concepts of what defines the national interest. The EU has no “national interest” by definition; therefore, high politics is expected to remain firmly in the province of the decision-making authority of the member states.⁴⁰

But it should be noted that most of the member states already have surrendered some sovereignty over issues that affect their core ability to function as independent actors in the international environment, including issues that touch on fundamental aspects of national sovereignty and national security.⁴¹ The adoption of the Euro, for example, represents a massive transfer of national sovereignty from the member states to the EU, encompassing the ability to set interest rates and manipulate national currencies. Those rights had been gradually constrained by exchange rate mechanisms for decades, but the introduction of the Euro formally transferred this power to the European Central Bank. In addition, national budgets and the ability to run deficits are constrained by the (admittedly much violated) growth and stability pact.

⁴⁰ David Allen, “Who Speaks for Europe?” in *A Common Foreign Policy for Europe?* John Peterson and Helene Sjursen eds. (London: Routledge, 1998).

⁴¹ Michael Smith, “Does the Flag Follow Trade?” in *A Common Foreign Policy for Europe?* John Peterson and Helene Sjursen eds. (London: Routledge, 1998). William Wallace, “The Sharing of Sovereignty: the European Paradox,” *Political Studies*, No. 47 1999.

The Schengen agreement that allows for free movement across borders represents another significant transfer of national sovereignty to the European Union that impinges on national security. Control of the national territory and borders is a key defining point of national sovereignty. Yet, in much of Europe the national governments have relinquished the power to scrutinize who and what enters their country if it comes from another EU member state. It is true that Italian customs and immigration authorities, for example, still control who and what enters Italy from outside the EU, but what enables a system where Germany accepts the Italian level of scrutiny as sufficient is a common framework set at the EU level.

The implications of this transfer of national sovereignty are far-reaching. It is not too far a step to imagine, for example, a common customs and immigration police force at some point in the future. In fact, there is already some movement in this direction with the creation of FRONTEX in 2004, an EU body that coordinates border security among the members and promotes the development of integrated border security. FRONTEX has an operational aspect and manages the European Patrol Network that monitors the southern maritime frontier. It is also responsible for establishing agreements and memorandums of understanding with third party countries on controlling illegal immigration.⁴² Although it is still a nascent institution, the growth of FRONTEX could be a significant step forward in the EU's growing power over issues that blur the line between high and low politics.

On a more pedestrian level, most legislation dealing with health, safety and workplace regulation is now crafted at the EU level and implemented at the national level. There is considerable leeway in how the national governments choose to implement the legislation, but the EU has, and increasingly uses, its ability to enforce its will over a range of policy issues.⁴³

Thus, the member states have progressively transferred power to the EU over a range of issues that have traditionally defined sovereignty: the ability to mint currency, set national monetary policy, determine who and what enters the national territory and how and what law will apply to its citizens on a range of issues that affect daily life. Just as importantly, however, the EU is developing effective institutions to use that power, although not yet in the realm of "high politics." But this is precisely the point at which the development of the EU parallels the emergence of the United States as a more significant actor in the international arena. The need to regulate markets and standardize regulations across the American

⁴² <http://www.frontex.europa.eu>

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continent led to an accretion of power at the level of the federal government, particularly the executive branch and its administrative agencies. But the process of creating more efficient administrative structures for domestic affairs soon spilled into the State Department and the military, making them more capable as well. This rendered the central government more capable of expanding its influence in the international environment, in part through the acquisition of the tools of power projection. In the 1870s, foreign policy decisions in the United States were more often than not made by the representatives of the individual states in the Senate. But that control over high politics was gradually transferred to the president and the executive agencies after they acquired increased power over domestic regulatory affairs.

There has been something of a similar process of development in EU institutions and more effective decision-making structures since the Single European Act of 1986.⁴⁴ The Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice summits have all created new bureaucratic structures and expanded the breath and depth of expertise within the EU bureaucracy. At the same time, more efficient decision-making structures such as Qualified Majority Voting and constructive abstentionism have been introduced. This has been done mainly to cope with the challenges of integrating the European common market, but the separation between high and low politics is not always a clear line. The Schengen agreement, for example, was originally oriented around facilitating the movement of goods across the common economic space. But as noted above, it begins to impinge on the sovereignty and independence of the member states in the realm of high politics. As the European Security Strategy states, the main threats today are generally seen to be emanating from transnational terrorist organizations and criminal syndicates.⁴⁵ Determining who and what enters the national territory is a vital component of guarding against this threat, and decisions about this are increasingly formed at the EU level.

This is not to say that the EU is going to become anything resembling what might be called a Westphalian state, but the concepts of state and sovereignty should be thought of along a continuum rather than in absolute terms. There are different types of states, and sovereignty is rarely absolute. States often allow infringements on their sovereignty through treaties, international obligations and conventions.⁴⁶ We should also consider that the terms “state” and “government” are not synonymous. While the EU may have a relatively small

⁴⁴ This section to be expanded in subsequent drafts.

⁴⁵ *The European Security Strategy, A Secure Europe in a Better World*, December 2003

⁴⁶ Stephen D. Krasner, “Sharing Sovereignty: new Institutions for Collapsed and Failing States,” *International Security* Vol. 29, No.2 (2004): 85-120.

bureaucratic structure and resources compared to the member states, it increasingly provides the structure of governance and rule in society.⁴⁷

Regardless of the degree to which it does or does not resemble the model of the Westphalian state, the EU is increasingly extending its governance over issues that traditionally define national sovereignty. There are many unique aspects of the European Union, but that does not erase the fact that the EU has evolved into an entity about which we can make analytical comparisons with other actors in the international system.

What is striking, however, is that the EU began to develop the European Security and Defence Strategy shortly after consolidating significantly increased authority over a range of issues related to internal regulation as well as developing the institutional mechanisms to use that authority. In more than in a few ways, this parallels the United States development of military power in the wake of its centralization of power over domestic affairs in the federal government and the executive at the end of the nineteenth century.

ESDP: From Nothing to Something

The development of ESDP from raw idea to burgeoning institution in a very brief period is impressive given the weight of the issues and the generally pace of developments in the EU. ESDP became a concrete issue at the Maastricht summit in 1993, and observers at the time thought that the idea was something to be realized only well into the future.⁴⁸ Yet in the intervening years, and particularly since 1998, ESDP began to crystallize with increasing speed. It now has a permanent bureaucracy in the form of the EU military committee and military staff, a framework for conducting operations and securing force goals from the member states, the beginnings of an agency for defence and armaments co-operation, and a security strategy that puts forth the political mechanisms and conceptual reasons for how and when this force would be used.

The EU is not just developing the institutional mechanisms; it is using them in small but significant operations in the Balkans and Africa. The EU has conducted three operations within the context of ESDP. Two of them - the mission in the Republic of Macedonia (Operation Concordia) and the police mission in Bosnia - were conducted within the Berlin Plus framework

⁴⁷ James Caporaso, "The European Union and Forms of State: Westphalian, Regulatory, or Post Modern?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* Vol 34, No. 1 (1996);

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that spells out the mechanisms for co-operation between the EU and NATO. The operation in the Congo (Operation Artemis) was conducted without reference to Berlin Plus.

What is apparent from those missions is that European military resources are stretched to provide the forces and logistical support for those limited operations. Yet, there are signs that European militaries are developing the ability to deploy and sustain small military forces in challenging environments. Progress in strategic air and sea lift could give European militaries the ability to move their forces with less direct support from the US by 2012. Recent lease agreements to use Ukrainian Antonov 124-100 commercial aircraft, and the collective purchase of several American C-17 military transport aircraft grant European militaries considerable reach well before then. European countries are also investing considerable amounts into Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) systems.⁴⁹ If properly leveraged, those developments could allow European states as individuals, or the EU as a collective, to project a larger amount of sustainable military force in the near future.

The flat nature of most European defense budgets has led many analysts to conclude that there is simply not enough funding to sustain procurement programs and develop more robust deployable forces.⁵⁰ Although it is true that many countries in Europe spend less than 2 percent of GDP on defense, there is mild trend in shifting expenditures to equipment procurement from other budget accounts. After falling to an average of 13% for much of the post-Cold War period, the percentage of defense spending devoted to equipment purchases has rebounded to just over 15%. This is close to the 1985-1989 average of 15.5%.⁵¹

In addition, European militaries are taking advantage of asset sharing arrangements that could lead to considerably more coordinated capability in strategic lift (air and sea transportation of military equipment and personnel) without significantly larger expenditures. Strategic lift is a critical test case for asset sharing, and there are some encouraging signs of progress. Seaborne transport is particularly important because the majority of military equipment is transported by sea given its weight and volume. The outlook is good for strategic sealift, not the least because of the oversupply of commercial shipping capacity in

⁴⁹ Michelle Flournoy, et al, *European Defense Integration: Bridging the Gap Between Strategy and Capabilities*, (Washington DC: CSIS, October 2005); John Shimkus, *Progress on the Prague Capabilities Commitment*, Report of the Subcommittee on Transatlantic Defence and Security Cooperation, NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 2005.

⁵⁰ Richard Bitzinger, "European Defense's Never-Ending Death Spiral," *RSIS Commentaries*, 4 April 2007.

⁵¹ Calculated from the *NATO-Russia Compendium of Financial and Economic Data Relating to Defence*, 18 December 2006.

the global market and the willingness of the commercial sector to enter into contracts to supply sealift to the military. Eight EU members are participating in a strategic sealift group, and aim to have ten ships (mainly roll-on/roll-off) available for operations on a mix of assured access and full-time charter contracts.⁵² The sealift group currently has arranged assured access to three ships, including one Norwegian and two Danish roll-on/roll-off ships, and the residual capacity is four of the UK's roll-on/roll-off ships.

This is closely tied to the better co-ordination of sealift through the Sealift Co-ordination Centre at Windhaven, the Netherlands, which arranges for ships that would otherwise be traveling empty or only partially loaded on return trips to carry the material of other partner countries. For example, an empty UK vessel returning from the Persian Gulf was used to carry Dutch air defense equipment, saving both countries about 500,000 euros each.⁵³ Those savings of a few million euros per year are only a tiny fraction of the approximately 193 billion euros that Europe spends annually on defense, but the sealift co-ordination program represents a commitment by European militaries to do more to rationalize their defense expenditures and avoid unnecessary duplication.

Another cooperative project that is showing some signs of initial success is the European Airlift Co-ordination Centre in Eindhoven, the Netherlands. This centre co-ordinates the airlift and refueling assets of Germany, Belgium, Italy, the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands. The center costs approximately 200,000 euros per year to operate, but has saved participating nations many times more than that already by consolidating cargo and preventing many empty return flights. Its initial success has led to a combined approach for air and sealift operations that could maximize the utility of all strategic transportation equipment.

Beyond those military advances, there are a number of other developments that could enable the EU to play a comprehensive role in security affairs and allow it to fill the critical gap between military and civilian capabilities. Several European countries have deployable paramilitary police forces that are in many ways a mixture of light infantry and a police force. They are trained for police activities in a way that almost no military personnel are, but they are relatively heavily armed compared to any police force and can be fitted into

⁵² Assured access allows the military to use those ships for set periods of time. Full-time charters allow the military to have continual use of those ships although the ships are owned and operated by private companies.

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a military chain of command. Such forces can be vital in stabilization operations that require this mix of skills and training.

Recent developments could make European paramilitary forces very relevant to likely future missions. The European Gendarmerie Force (EGF) was created in 2004 with the participation of France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and The Netherlands.⁵⁴ The five contributing member states have already announced that the EGF could be available to other international organizations and, although it is not an EU structure, all of the contributing states are EU members. It is still a small force, but it could serve as a prototype for the sort of force most needed in situations where traditional military units might be inappropriate. In addition to this force, the EU is building a 5,000-strong civilian police force of which some 1000 are to be deployable on 30 days notice.⁵⁵ The combination of those two forces when combined with advances in strategic lift could enable the EU to play a significantly larger independent role in stabilization operations in the near future.

The developments outlined above should not be interpreted as an attempt to build a “European army” but they do represent an adaptive response to demonstrated shortfalls within realistic budgetary constraints. Although many analysts have focused on the top-line numbers of European defense budgets and concluded that little has changed in recent years, a more detailed look shows that there is some progress in using available resources in a more cost-effective and militarily efficient manner.

Implications for the Future

From a realist perspective it is a relatively short step to conclude that the development of more robust independent power projection capability by the EU will lead to increased friction with the United States. With the Cold War long over, Europe no longer needs the American security guarantee and is free to develop and implement a security policy completely independent from the transatlantic relationship. As the EU becomes an increasingly coherent political entity, it will seek to exert its will in the global environment. For a traditional realist, this can only lead to increased competition with the US for influence over international events.

⁵⁴ David Armitage and Ann Moisan, “Constabulary Forces and Post-Conflict Transition: The Euro-Atlantic Dimension”, *Strategic Forum*, No. 218, November 2005.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.4.

At the same time, however, an increasingly powerful and proactive EU in the international security arena may acquire expanded interests and an expanded threat perception more similar to that of the United States. EU interventions in parts of Africa or the Middle East, however well-intentioned, would be perceived in hostile terms in some quarters, particularly radical Islamist circles. European and American threat perceptions could rapidly converge as an increasingly capable EU takes on missions in troubled regions of the world where their actions will clash with the goals of Islamist extremists.

Beyond the Transatlantic relationship, the development of ESDP may have reflexive effects on the EU itself. If interests expand with capabilities, then it is likely that the EU's interests will grow to take on progressively larger and more difficult missions under ESDP. Some of those will inevitably require rapid decisions, which could be a driver for more streamlined decision-making structures in the EU.

The nature of the security challenges may also tend to push more decision-making regarding security issues toward the EU. The increase in the number of relevant security actors- private security companies, non-governmental organizations, charities, police and paramilitary police- needed to address the challenges outlined in the European Security Strategy presents a challenge of governance. Rather than a purely national and hierarchical structure, a more "heterarchical" structure allowing inputs from a range of actors becomes more relevant.⁵⁶ This complexity may create a perceived need for coordination at a European-wide level and thus push more coordinating authority toward the EU.

Regardless of the implications for the future, the relative rapid progress of ESDP in the absence of a military threat to Europe begs the question of "why now?" The short answer is that the EU has the ability to do so now because of a permissive international environment and internal developments that render it more capable of projecting power to gain greater influence over international events. Doing so does not require deployable military force of anything approaching that of the US military. In fact, given the wide array of stabilization missions that are likely to feature prominently in the coming decades, the EU could be an influential contributor to global security through the development of relatively small numbers of deployable military units in combination with specialized paramilitary forces.

⁵⁶ Mark Webber, et al, "The Governance of European Security," *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 30, 2004, pp. 3-26.