The Politics of a Policy: Framing European Security and Defence Policy

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European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)\(^1\) is a relatively new policy development on the EU’s agenda but one whose ideational underpinnings date long back to the history of the EU integration project. Despite its relatively modest scope, one can claim that it has thrived in terms of its institutional establishment within the Brussels landscape. ESDP thus represents a practical discursive achievement on the part of its shapers. The paper seeks to outline this successful framing. Restrained by the scope, I only briefly sketch the discursive resources engaged in the process of bringing the EU’s security claim into being via ESDP. Empirically, I identify the major politico-institutional framers and their handling of strategic opportunities to define a specific political situation. These actors do not act unconstrained, so I map out both the contestants to the ESDP project and the most intense areas of political struggle over it. Theoretically, two major threads my discussion. In the introductory section, I bring in the conceptions of framing and its politics that inform the analysis. Having then painted the empirical picture, in the concluding section I take up a theoretical argument about the thoroughly political nature of security framing within the EU. I suggest, contrary to the notion of security as predicated on exceptionalism, that the dominant understandings of security are products of politics broadly conceived. They are thus implicated in extensive framing by the institutional actors, whose action is fuelled by the institutional identities at play. With the latter being both unstable and solid, i.e. they are not fixed but appear to be so and are acted upon as such, the political action performative of security is contextual, i.e. it can hardly be understood via a priori assumptions, but it is not easily malleable: the actors involved are unable to change it on a whim and the notion of instrumental action is barely useful here. Actors are rather drawn in an ongoing process of interpretation of what they are up to and how they might be able to accomplish it. The framing they produce here reflects this contingent embeddedness.

**Politics and institutional framing**

Within my doctoral dissertation, I became interested in the politics behind ESDP as a political project, i.e. as a socially mediated quest to instil particular understandings of what EU security is about. I grew to reject the narrow interpretation of politics where the latter refers to an explicit and informed, conscious formulation of decisions in a context of choice. This is a time-honoured way of thinking about politics, for as March and Olsen (1989: 47) observe, “a conception of politics as decision making and resource allocation is at least as old as Plato

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\(^1\) ESDP was formally launched in 1999 as an ‘operational’ part of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), itself initiated in 1992 and constituting what is still referred to as a second, intergovernmental, pillar of the EU’s governance structure. ESDP consists to a large extent in civilian and military operations of different guises (currently 15 and deployed globally) and thus framed as a means to put CFSP into practice. For details see: [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.aspx?id=268&lang=en](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.aspx?id=268&lang=en)

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and Aristotle." Conversely, however, one might conceive of politics more broadly as strategies constituting the social world (Wæver 1993). According to this reading, and as March and Olsen insist as well (1989: 47), not all politics can be reduced to competition over material resources; indeed much of it concerns the struggle over collective (institutional) identity, including often deadly contests over the meaning of symbols signifying this identity. This take helped the formulation of still vague and hardly controversial an argument that considers politics as being about contentious claims about what is good and true, and building alliances around them in the quest to impose a particular definition of a situation. This quest consolidates the institutional identities involved and marks them out as keen to endorse their designation of the situation.

Policy in this context is a discursive battlefield with power relations and strategic interaction constituting the framework for action. It is also through the search for an endorsement of new definitions of the political situation that a policy emerges. This definition of the word ‘policy’ significantly expands and deepens the conventional conception of it as being constituted by the rhetoric of political speeches, the written documents produced by authorised agencies, the institutional mechanisms of decision-making and what people experience in their interaction with actors implementing the policy (Shore and Wright 1997, Introduction). In my thesis, I viewed ESDP as an instance of policy framing and political struggle that is itself productive of particular governance practices in the EU system, with governance understood both as institutional arrangement and ideological imposition. In this sense, framing signifies a process of selective control over the perception of the meanings attributed to certain phenomena. Its aim is to permit certain interpretations and rule out others. Framing, when it is successful, thus ensures that specific issues come to be considered as crucial, and, just as importantly, come to be viewed in certain ways rather than others. As such, framing should be seen as an adjunct to the political process of agenda setting. In the case at hand, the point of framing is to make specific conceptions of European security commonsensical and mould the proceedings accordingly. Analytically, we may see it as unfolding via certain representations of European security which include a diagnosis (what is the problem, where is it located and what/who causes this problem?), connected to a prognosis (how should the problem be resolved, what means should be used?), and a rationale or call for action (what courses of action are suggested, and who is responsible for this?) (Snow and Benford 1988). While analysing the framing of ESDP by its major politico-institutional shaper, the ‘Solana milieu’ as I call it, I used these categories to unpack the policy construction. I thus focused on the various actors in the domain and on their intersecting agendas, together with their relationships through which contextual power operates. While contestability is inherent to this process and indeed constitutive of the policy framing, I sought to illustrate how certain predominant ways of defining problems became
authoritative and cautiously protected. Here, ESDP symbolises a narrative of long overdue revival that serves to justify a change to the role of the EU as an international security actor. Progressively, it has become a discursive formation that empowers certain actors while silencing, or significantly backgrounding, others. ESDP remains a political feat executed through contextually woven purposeful action, but one that should not be construed in terms of game theory. The people-centred approach adopted supplies ample illustration how within the framework of the overarching declarations the policy’s more specific aims and means to endorse it have crystallised over time in a ‘we make it up as we go along’ fashion. As much as they have come into being via inter-institutional negotiation. This insight has challenged many of my assumptions as a constructivist security scholar. Admittedly, this only became clearer to me in the long run, as I reflected on my post-doctoral fieldwork research and in the process of teaching a critical security course where I thought certain arguments through more substantially and perhaps for the first time in such a systematic manner.

The ESDP policy field: historical discursive resources

“We are giving ourselves the tools to deliver”

The early days of ESDP as a coherent concept make it clear that the EU was to be endowed with a new kind of mission. Undisputedly, varied notions of European autonomy in the area of its own security had been circulating for decades, even if few of them developed into institutionalised form. They nonetheless fell short of converting into significant transformative leverage. Yet their continuous presence in the background of the debate made it possible to raise certain issues carefully without these ideas becoming instantly rebuffed. I leave out a comprehensive catalogue of the previous initiatives in the security realm, inter alia since I perceive the policy as an attempted emancipation from this failure. Principally, the previously formulated possibilities of a European security option, opened up in mid-1990s, were largely confined to thinking within the precincts of the ‘European pillar’ to NATO. Accordingly, many European leaders felt obliged to mention in their speeches that the new developments in the EU security were in no way to infringe upon the principle of the collective defence within NATO. The documents from late 1990s and the beginning of 2000s reveal the significance of extensive elaborations of what ESDP was not to be. In this respect, ESDP enlargement was not to be identified with building a European army, marching under the blue and gold-starred flag (Solana 2000b), nor was it to be an enterprise in any way impinging on the effectiveness of NATO (Blair 1998). Nor did it signify forcing countries to deploy their armed forces against their will (Solana 2000a) or was it aimed at ‘militarising’ the EU (Solana 2000d). European leaders went to great lengths to argue that ESDP was in fact very much to the advantage of NATO, as Europe would be better able to shoulder its fair share of responsibility (Solana 2000c).
A significant if at first largely unnoticed event was the assumption by Javier Solana of the functions of Secretary General of the Council of the EU and High Representative of the EU for CFSP (SG/HR) in October 1999. Together with the post, further staff appointments were made within the Secretariat General of the Council of the EU (Council Secretariat). Formally his mandate envisages assisting the Council in matters falling within the scope of CFSP, in particular through contributing to the formulation, preparation and implementation of policy decisions, and, when appropriate, acting on behalf of the Council at the request of the Presidency, through conducting political dialogue with third parties. This seemingly administrative and thus negligible institutional and coordinating arrangement would yet to prove fateful as the new SG/HR immediately engaged in piecing together a tangible and workable scheme under the label of ESDP. Solana’s view that “What I do was in general not being done before either by the Commission or the Council” (Solana 2001c), would seem to lend weight to the argument that this point marks the inauguration of a new enterprise.

The Solana milieu has gained substantial influence over the following years, steadily but consistently contributing to what is now ESDP. Already in remarks to the press after assuming his functions, Solana used an argument vaguely present before but reformulated in specific terms, namely that introducing improved military capabilities is consistent with Europe’s growing role in the world. As much as a declaratory statement, this formulation marks the beginnings of an organised interpretation of EU security policy. Challenged by the differing visions of the member states, and their unwillingness or incapability to acts cooperatively at certain times, it has nevertheless developed into a kind of constitutive mantra.

An important theme running through the project from its infancy is that the EU needs to act immediately as ‘time is pressing’. These come with an insistence on the pragmatic character of the policy-making which oftentimes provides an excuse for unconventional performance. A glimpse at the operational philosophy embraced by the Council Secretariat is instructive to grasp the non-codified code of conduct in its daily work, offering a valuable insight into the nature of the practices that constitute the policy. ESDP is framed as an essentially pragmatic exercise. Hence, although principles are necessary, they do not suffice in and of themselves, they have to be turned into reality (Solana 2001a). The phrase “giving ourselves the tools to deliver” draws this out explicitly. So does the fact that the policy appears to have been developed from experience rather than prescriptive action, an important imperative being that member states will go with ESDP if it is shown to work (Solana 2001d). That is perhaps why so little time is spent on worrying about theory or

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2 Article 26 of the Treaty on the EU.
institutional issues and the focus rather is on solving real issues (Ibid). Tellingly, Solana evokes his related experience as the former Secretary General of NATO:

I am very obsessed with the rhythm in which deployments out there can arrive because I have seen this experience. I was Secretary General of NATO when we deployed in late 1995/early 1996 the first troops to Bosnia and I had to take a decision collectively [...]. If we had waited to have all the elements until the last letter of the document for the first time that NATO was going on to do a peacekeeping operation resolved and understood, it probably would be still without finish or without a start. We had to say, “Let’s go, let’s do it, we will be able to do it, we have the spirit” and, if we had not gone then, by the time we arrived, the catastrophe that we claimed we wanted to stop would have been more difficult to stop or would have been unnecessary to stop because they had killed each other and the reconstruction would have been more difficult, etc, etc. (House of Lords 2004).

Catharsis – “a secure Europe in a better world”

The ESDP story vividly illustrates how significant symbolic gestures represent the endorsement of concrete political projects. It also demonstrates how seemingly merely declaratory politics become constant points of reference and thereby tangible instruments within a particular political repertoire. The EU Security Strategy (ESS) offers numerous examples. Figuratively entitled “A secure Europe in a better world”, it was first drafted in June and finally adopted in December 2003 in the midst of a severe internal crisis with differing security conceptions coming to the fore. Two esteemed columnists conceived of Europe at that time as ‘gripped by self-doubt and traumatised by weeks of recrimination over the war in Iraq’ where ‘Iraq-led invasion raised profound questions whether the EU can develop its own foreign and security policy and whether the disagreements that opened up during the crisis will solidify into permanent divisions’. The adoption of the ESS seems to have gradually contributed to overcoming this impasse. According to Solana, the ESS is the EU’s ‘strategic identity card’ that identifies it as a global, responsible, and credible security player (2004: 6).

The perceived need to provide conceptual and political grounding for ESDP crisis management missions and to strengthen ESDP at a time when CFSP seemed in shambles over the Iraq discord were important reasons behind the formulation of the strategy (Mawdsley & Quille 2003). The perceived necessity to operationalize the latter and demonstrate its feasibility generated a demand for more ESDP missions in line with the goals outlined in the strategy. In this sense, the ESS has become a constant point of reference providing justification for further action where the expansion of ESDP missions is seen as an endorsement of the ESS. One can argue that, not only did the ESS help heal the wounds of the Iraq crisis, but that it also contributed to the emergence of new conceptions. The seemingly fatal injury generated by the Iraq debacle hence provided for a cathartic moment

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in the development of ESDP in that it induced the adoption of the ESS and the launching of first ESDP missions.\(^5\)

The receptiveness of the ESS is further instructive in seeking to grasp the contours of the ‘Solana milieu’. Composed by a few high-level officials in the Council Secretariat, the document hardly indicates the bottom-up emergence of the member states’ agreement on the EU foreign policy. Rather, the process validates the argument about the entrepreneurial role of the ‘Solana milieu’, not only through managerial coordination, but also via conceptual engineering, agenda management and practical execution. The distinctive skilfulness of this particular agent reveals how it effectually obtained a doctrinal document that reflected its interpretation of the EU’s security situation. Particularly, the Council Secretariat succeeded in creating a document, which was relatively easily digestible by the major audience it targeted, i.e. the EU member states. Domestically in terms of the institutional governance, the European Commission reaction to the adoption of the document is of interest. The official declarations were welcoming, and the subsequent international EU activity was described as operationalising the strategy.\(^6\) However, interviews taken at the Commission expose an alternative posture according to which the ESS was at first not recognised in principle, and then resented as yet another attempt by the SG/HR to reinforce his position and take over a dominant stand vis-à-vis the Commission.\(^7\) Admittedly, the mere existence of the strategy has been recurrently presented as a success in itself and evidence of major accomplishments of the EU in the realm of security policy. It has become a framing document and as such has provided the boost for further discursive sedimentation of ESDP. The concepts elaborated in the strategy legitimately entered the repertoire of SG/HR securitising, and the call for operationalising the strategy followed.

The ESDP policy field: institutional struggle and major contestants

The scope and purpose of this paper do not allow for a detailed reconstruction of the institutional modalities of the ESDP’s policy field. For the sake of clarity therefore I only describe in more depth the two major contestants and the main arenas where they engage in contentious framings.

Crucially, the hazy institutional setup and unclear relationships between the different bodies involved in the process of ESDP making leaves considerable room for manoeuvre for the Council Secretariat leadership. As elaborated above, the office of the SG/HR, or ‘the Solana milieu’, assumed the conceptual and political agenda setting within CFSP via practically designing and endorsing ESDP. By means of rendering explicit and visible the

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\(^5\) For an argument along similar lines, see Menon 2004.
\(^6\) Interview with an EC research fellow, Florence, November 2005.
\(^7\) Interview in the team of EC Representative to the PSC, Brussels, November 2005.
new EU security agenda, Solana’s office commenced already in 1999 a quest to put together the missing link of EU security policy, namely a skilful if at first low-profile pragmatic leadership. The continuity of this leadership contributes to the build-up of an institutional memory of how to do things effectively and ensures a strategic agenda management. The milieu does more than set the ESDP agenda. Its influence extends to what Jonas Tallberg (2006: 68-70) refers to as ‘agenda structuring’, i.e. the ranking of issues according to salience, and, by extension, ‘agenda exclusion’, or the mobilisation off the agenda of certain issues. Neil Fligstein describes agenda setting as a strategic social skill and action (1997). In his reading, agenda setting requires behind-the-scenes action to convince multiple actors and groups that the agenda is in their interest. This effectively determines where the group is going and what their collective identity is likely to be.

In this respect, the Council Secretariat has been busy winning over the member states for the endorsement of its project. A primary example is the way in which it has negotiated hard to instigate missions. As the primary objective is to have missions, less attention is devoted to the formula of particular operations, the concerted effort being instead focused on gathering the member states around a project. As a consequence, compromises are made that perhaps undermine the potential of a particular operation to make a substantial difference on the ground. The immediate stakes are elsewhere, however. They consist in bringing the member states together in order to enable an international action in the first instance. This proceeds by ingraining the idea of the EU’s unique capabilities in international crisis management, the potential viably to tap them in a particular case and the corresponding urge to do so for the sake of the EU credibility. While this purpose is overtly stated in the discourse, the means to achieve it is left unexplored in policy analysis.

In particular, practitioners involved in daily making of ESDP characteristically provide a multifaceted picture of policy design. There the policy work is seen as a continuing process, concerned with the maintenance of relationships as well as the production of documents. Practitioners stress a wide range of participants, with diverse agendas and values, who are thrown together in various ways to produce ambiguous and provisional outcomes. In this situation, and regardless of intrinsic political struggle, the emphasis often is on generating cohesion around courses of action, and strengthening the capacity for future collaboration. And although policy is predominantly seen as being about choice, it is perhaps more about meaning, generating understanding what appropriate concerns are, why they are appropriate and what actions are appropriate responses. Put differently, ESDP making is

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8 Interview with a Council Secretariat functionary, Turin, 8 February 2007.
9 These summary conclusions are based on serious of repeated interviews between July 2005 and February 2007 with functionaries involved to different degrees in ESDP making.
concerned with the formation and maintenance of certain interpretations of the policy at
different levels.

Against this background, the strategic actions taken by the Solana milieu should not
be construed as calculated instrumental steps that address problems and identify goals, but
should instead be problematised as political agency operating within mediating webs of
interaction. The policy process is best approached here as being about problem-finding:
defining the world in such a way that known (or advocated) practices of governing represent
appropriate responses. ‘Naming and framing’ (Rein and Schon 1994) is a central element in
the constitution of the policy. This means that the identification and specification of policy
concerns involve the interplay of different sets of understandings. As Giandomenico Majone
(1989) argues, it is less like laboratory science than legal argument: a process of finding
good reasons for doing things in situations where neither the nature of the problem nor the
appropriate response is clear and unambiguous. With the participants struggling to get their
language accepted rather than that of others, this process remains inherently contested (Gill
and Colebatch 2006).

In order to unpack the Solana milieu’s political action in more detail, I borrow from
Neil Fligstein (1997) and Steven Lukes (1974). First, agency knowledge relies upon ‘taking
what the system gives’, which in turn implies social awareness of the system, the agency
position within it and the possible channels of manoeuvre. If good fortune, however, offers up
unplanned but potentially rewarding opportunities, the actors grab them even if uncertain as
to the ultimate usefulness of the gain. This has been demonstrated by the Council
Secretariat’s eager embrace of varied possibilities for the launching of missions. Second, we
can track intense framing of action. As examined at length before, the milieu has organised a
distinct interpretation of the EU security potentialities and responsibility. Third, within the
inner debates among the member states, the Council Secretariat profiles itself as a cautious
negotiator, creating an image of an honest broker. This pops up in the Council Secretariat’s
handling of member states performance in the policy and its evaluation. While the necessity
of acting together in a coherent way never leaves the agenda, the Council Secretariat is at
pains not to antagonise the member states towards one another and towards the Council
itself by explicitly attributing blame. Fourth, the Solana milieu will always ‘ask for more while
settling for less’. This applies both to the CFSP budget and the member states’ political will.
Accordingly, the stakes are repeatedly raised and the EU position habitually magnified in an
attempt to put together what is ultimately a rather modest project. Fifth, and accordingly, the
usual take is ‘trying five things to get one’, the expectation being that most things will fail but
all one needs is a few victories to convince others. This must not be confused with
reputational risk-taking. ESDP has the reputation of waiting for the right crisis to occur for the
EU to engage. ESDP performers often ‘pick up’ the enemy according to the means at hand in
the fear not to spoil the EU's image through outright failure. In this context, trying multiple courses of action consists rather in exploring different possibilities within the scope identified as attainable. Sixth, the Council Secretariat needs to engage in aggregating interests, i.e. it must find ways to persuade actors with widely different preferences. This aggregation process unfolds in the negotiations over various endeavours within ESDP and it usually takes on a life of its own as the Council Secretariat can hardly foretell the outcome of this social game. In this regard, it is revealing to observe how ESDP performers often admit that, setting off on a particular venture, they regularly 'don't know how it's going to end'.

Despite this humble working attitude, the aim of the endeavour is by no means ad hoc. It is instead strategic in the sense that it seeks ultimately to establish the EU as a viable security actor of a specific character. In order to accomplish this, the domestic position has to be secured alongside the negotiation of an international identity with other players in world politics. Seventh, it is indispensible others think they are in control. In this respect, it is crucial to observe how the perception on the part of national capitals that on the key issues in the second pillar it is they who are in control has proven instrumental to the development of ESDP.

The practical emancipation of the Council Secretariat from the member states can hardly go unnoticed, however. It is facilitated by the states’ wish to delegate power to the Council ‘informally’ on issues that require a degree of engagement and expertise they can ill afford. This is not to suggest that member states renounce their prerogatives. They like to view ESDP through national lenses and become active in ESDP decision-making when a region falling within their interest is on the agenda. Hence, the clichés of France’s dedication to Africa and of the preoccupation with post-Soviet space of the Eastern European members apply. The Council Secretariat is correspondingly conscious about this differentiation of concerns and never fails to acknowledge them, tacitly and behind-the-scenes if necessary or in a more conspicuous manner if that suits the situation at hand.

Importantly, the broader institutional machinery of ESDP should not be viewed in administrative terms only. Quite to the contrary, at the higher echelons of the administration, the work of civil servants is often highly political and administrators are more than neutral technicians (Duke and Vanhoonacker 2006: 164). Along these lines, the Policy Unit attached to the SG/HR, together with the Private Office comprising SG/HR advisors and special representatives for particular issues, may be seen as shells where major conceptual trends are begun and discursive repertoires elaborated in the pursuit of adequate ‘staging’ for ESDP. The SG/HR provides political entrepreneurship and handles generic issues of

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10 Interview with a functionary from Secretariat General of the Council of the EU, Policy Unit, Turin, 8 February 2007.
11 Interview with a functionary from DGE 5, Secretariat General of the Council of the EU, Brussels, 14 November 2005.

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conceptual and operational nature, thereby mobilising the appropriate political capital. The Directorate-General E in the Council Secretariat (External relations, politico-military affairs), and especially DGE 9 (civilian crisis management) and 8 (military crisis management) within the latter, shape the agenda in that general schemes are converted into specific operational plans and assessments.

The position of DGE 9 should be stressed in this regard. Despite a modest depiction in the ESDP apparatus, its role has increased in connection with the rising number of civilian operations. Within DGE 9, concrete operational and conceptual scenarios are drafted. Not only are exploratory and fact-finding missions prepared here but so are concepts of operations and operational plans. Since ESDP ‘inherited’ military scenarios from the Western European Union, in DGE 9 they had to be converted into civilian schemes which involved a substantial amount of interpretive and innovative work. Despite a rather technical task description, then, DGE 9 proved politically instrumental in the process of launching a number of operations.

Another crucial dimension related to the positioning of DGE 9 is the in-house evaluation of civilian missions. Drafting evaluations and lessons learned constitutes a fundamental element of ESDP. By generating certain logics regarding the depiction of operations and their practices, together with setting specific means of measuring success, the evaluations generate institutional vocabularies and *modus operandi* that in turn contribute to the overall picture of the policy. This has its particular significance due to the fact that DGE 9 reports are subsequently distributed to the national representative bodies. As the basis for discussion, these become framing reference points, and a seemingly merely administrative body thus effectively contributes to the establishment of a specific institutional identity.

Advantageously for the ‘Solana milieu’, the organizational field of EU security and crisis management was barely structured. The EU had previously shied away from tangible defence initiatives, with the Commission engaged in tasks of a development assistance character and, externally, NATO as a defence alliance. Still, initiating change proved a competitive activity, better described as ‘warfare’ than a textbook account of the policy-making process.

**Civilian crisis management**

ESDP’s deep intrusion into the area of civilian crisis management has caused explicit frictions with the European Commission, which until not long ago regarded promotion of rule of law and institution-building as its exclusive competence. The Commission’s institutional resentment of the encroachment of ESDP on its turf is further aggravated by the current trend that has seen the Council reclaim political influence it had previously ceded to the supranational body. In response, the Commission seeks to be involved at every stage of the
ESDP policy cycle. This is facilitated by, first, its role as a budget manager and executor of civilian ESDP and, second, its mandate to ensure consistency and procedural integrity of EU external action at every level of CFSP. In practical terms, the involvement of the Commission becomes politically tangible in the course of negotiating the formats of particular civilian missions as well as their budgets and adherence to procurement policy rules. Each time a civilian mission is planned, negotiations over its format between the Commission and the Council begin from scratch as no template of co-operation has been agreed as of yet.12 Fundamentally, it is important to recognise in what ways the realm of civilian crisis management offers political opportunities potentially accessible to both the Council and the Commission. This induces struggles over the definition of a given political situation and the applicability of instruments at the disposal of one actor as opposed to the other.13 Below I briefly elaborate on what constitutes the background and the means of this struggle. Ideationally, the different conceptions of the security-development nexus provide for potent discursive weapon. The rules of financing EDSP operations and legal actions assumed by the two bodies illustrate in turns concrete means of endorsing their institutional standings.

Framing the security development nexus

Rigid as the dichotomy may seem, the security-versus-development debate demonstrates its vigour in the conceptual and institutional differentiation between the Council Secretariat and the EC and the respective institutional practices reflect these differing understandings. In the Commission’s lexicon, ‘development assistance’ remains of central importance (Ferrero-Waldner 2006). The Commission advocates the principle that long-term investments in developing democratic practices, introducing the rule of law and boosting the strength of civil society in fragile communities, is a key to bringing about security. ESDP interventions are therefore often framed as ‘a drop in the ocean’, aimed at acquiring political clout and hardly capable of inducing systemic changes.14 Conversely, the ESS explicitly spells out that security is a precondition of development as ‘conflict not only destroys infrastructure, including social infrastructure; it also encourages criminality, deters investment and makes normal economic activity impossible’ (Solana 2003b:2). Although no Council official calls for the reduction of development aid, Solana believes that it cannot be distributed and used in a productive manner if the security situation is shaky (House of Lords 2004:8-9). In order to aid in reconstruction in post-crisis situations, one has to guarantee security first. ‘We have several examples of how by not creating the conditions of security lots of money has not arrived to where it should arrive and has not been used in the best

12 Ibid.
13 See Kurowska 2008 and Kurowska and Tallis 2009 for concrete illustrations of this.
14 Interview with an EC desk officer, Relex, Brussels, 11 April 2006.
manner. It does not mean that you have to bring to zero the economic help but it is a question of *phases* [emphasis mine - XK] (Ibid.). The latter envisages the process of prioritisation along which the most immediate security concerns come first and need to be sorted out before the Commission reconstruction projects come in. This insistence on a ‘harder’ security vocation of the EU implies not only reconceptualization of the role of the EU in the international arena, but also institutional recalibration within the EU. The dominant position of the Commission in external action, based on its status as financial development aid provider in chief, is challenged by a more assertive Council, which believes that security is prior to development. The proliferation of missions is then a channel through which the security conceptions of the second pillar security proposition become asserted. As such, it marks the realization of the political project advocated by the ‘Solana milieu’ (Kurowska 2008b).

**Money talks**

The general rule is that all expenses, administrative and operational, to which the CFSP activities give rise, are to be charged to the budget of the European Communities. However, there are two exceptions to the general rule as it applies to operational CFSP costs. First, operational costs arising from operations having military and defence implications 15 are not charged to the EC budget. Second, the Council, acting unanimously, can decide that other operational costs specified by it are not to be charged to the EC budget (Scannel 2004: 529). If the latter is the case, the expenditure can either be charged to the member states as common costs in accordance with the gross national product scale, or the Council, acting unanimously, will decide to charge the expenditure on some other basis. Fundamentally, however, it is the Commission that is in charge of the execution of the budget if the Council does not decide to finance a civilian operation from other sources. This allows the Commission direct involvement in shaping the civilian ESDP and has been often resisted by member states who guard the second pillar realm from the EC advances.

The actual practice of financing the EU’s foreign enterprises is still more nuanced and subject to *ad hoc* political arrangements. The activity of CFSP special representatives -

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15 As for the military operations, they are financed according to the ‘Athena’ framework finalised between February 2004 and January 2005. Already in 2002 a preliminary agreement was reached dividing the military operations costs into ‘common’, encompassing those for headquarters (transport, administration, locally hired personnel, shelter, and communication facilities) and costs for the back-up of the armed forces (infrastructure and medical care) and ‘individual’ costs (troops, arms, equipment) to be borne by each Member State involved following the ‘costs lie where they fall’ principle. The Council would decide on a case-by-case basis whether the costs for the transportation of the forces and their accommodation should be funded in common (Missiroli 2006: 50). Athena creates the framework in which it can ‘administer the financing of the common costs of EU operations having military or defence implications’. The mechanism consists of a dedicated non-profit making authority with legal responsibility, open to all EU members (bar Denmark, by virtue of its special status) and other ‘contributing’ States that is set to administer the costs of various missions and operations (including military exercises) related to EU crisis management (Ibid).
Solana’s envoys to regions under EU ‘surveillance’—is financed through various different means. In principle, they fall under the CFSP’s budgetary chapter (as ‘administrative’ expenditure) and the exclusive supervision of the Council. In practice, however, they are often financed in a mixed and improvised way, combining: a) funds formally earmarked for first-pillar regional programmes; b) the Community emergency reserve fund; c) more or less explicit national secondments and contributions (Missiroli 2006: 46). Further, exploratory and fact-finding mission are mostly financed through the Commission. This is because the funding of any operation can only be secured by a Joint Action, approved unanimously by the Council and commonly agreed upon when all the groundwork for a particular mission has already been completed. This tangled and often confusing fuzzy state of affairs adds to the enhanced role of informal efforts to sway negotiations in such a way that enables the realisation of the actor’s projects. The ongoing political entanglements further engender institutional identities based on differentiating one’s practices as compared with the other’s.

The financial realm hence remains a playground of institutional identity building in that it requires active and continuous involvement of the actors. The Commission is hardly passive in this image management contest. Prudent about its competences, it launches initiatives that seek to strengthen its position. In search of becoming a more effective player in crisis management, in 2002 the Commission set up a new financial instrument for short-term actions, the ‘Rapid Reaction Mechanism’ (RRM), and loosened up the rules for using the emergency reserve funds. Some read this move as contributing to a more efficient EU action in international politics by facilitating financing varied, also second-pillar, projects in a flexible manner. With the institutional competition now well entrenched, this initiative was seen by others as an attempt by the Commission to maintain the pace of the development of ESDP. In January 2007, the RRM mechanism was replaced by the Stability Instrument (SI), a new financial mechanism of the Commission. The name itself is clearly reflective of the Commission’s vocabulary, and the SI triggered yet another spell of intense discussion over whether instead of being ad hoc the mechanism could be more steadily involved in financing civilian crisis management within ESDP. It was reported that the response on the Council side was definitively negative, once again bringing up the apprehension to not allow the EC to affect the political control of the second pillar. The financial entanglement between the Council and the Commission further finds its expression on the ground of ESDP operations through procurement policy provisions ordered by the Commission Regulation (EC, EURATOM No 1261/2005 of 20 July 2005). Since ESDP operations are mostly short-term ones, it is crucial to insure rapid procurement in order to have equipment available at

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16 Interview with a member state diplomat, Brussels, 14 November 2005.
17 Interview with a functionary from DGE 9, Secretariat General of the Council of the EU, Turin, 10 February 2007.

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the onset of operations. Many missions were nevertheless forced to delay considerably their work due to procurement problems.18

**The Commission turns the table in court and politics**

As early as 1999, the legal service of the Community interpreted the principles of competence in the Treaty on the European Union as following first of all the pre-eminence of community interests. It thereby considered CFSP to be complementary to first pillar activities: “les relations Communauté-PESC au sein de l'Union sont gouvernées par le principe de prééminence et de non-parallélisme” (European Commission Legal Service 1999: 5). This has become the basis for defending Community competences in lawsuits. In the action brought against the Council before the EU Court of Justice (ECJ) in February 2005 (Case C-91/05), the Commission argued that actions taken by the Council to combat the spread of small arms infringe on Community competences under article 47 of TEU19 since they affect Community powers in the field of developmental aid. Relating to the Council’s contribution to the implementation of projects in the framework of the ‘ECOWAS Moratorium on the Import, Export and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons’, the Commission stated specifically that the EC’s Cotonou agreement covers actions against the spread of light weapons and that a regional programme for supporting West Africa in this aim had already been concluded under EC competences. Therefore, the Commission seeks ‘annulment for lack of competence’ based on Article 47 TEU, since ‘the impugned CFSP decision […] affects the Community powers in the field of development aid’.20

The judgment in the case was handed down on 29 May 2008 and it is being subject to thorough scrutiny.21 The case itself is indicative of the Commission’s attempts to roll back the Council’s infringements of its competences and it illustrates how the struggle over the meaning of security/development nexus features at the core of the Council and Commission’s institutional identity-building processes.

The Commission, meanwhile, has realised that while legal action is significant, it may not be the most efficient weapon in the political struggle with the Council as the latter

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19 Article 47 of TEU reads as follows: Subject to the provisions amending the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community with a view to establishing the European Community, the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community and the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community, and to these final provisions, nothing in this Treaty shall affect the Treaties establishing the European Communities or the subsequent Treaties and Acts modifying or supplementing them.
20 Action brought on 21 February 2005 by the European Commission against the Council of the EU, OJ C 115, 14.05.2005, 10.
21 I fail to engage in a thorough discussion here although the interpretation of the judgment is yet to prove crucial for this ambiguous situation. For a substantial analysis of the judgment and its possible implications see: van Vooren 2009.
operates according to largely un-codified practices. This learning process has resulted in the seizure of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as the embodiment of the Commission’s conceptual stance on how best to project order and security to the EU’s periphery. A comprehensive attempt to emulate the robust ESDP venture, the ENP is a way for the Commission to upgrade its profile in the field of external policy, i.e., it is the realisation of a certain political project. The objective of the ENP as articulated by the Commission is characteristically for the EU to act coherently and efficiently in the world by integrating related components from all three pillars (Communication from the Commission 2004: 6).

To conclude, ESDP’s major performers have successfully managed to introduce ‘new vocabularies’ to the EU’s security repertoire and to establish novel practices of ‘doing’ security by the EU. This ideational ‘takeoff’ about the EU’s security role would have never translated into tangible policy initiatives if it had not been for skilful agency that, by endowing the EU with a new sense of mission and establishing some organising principles of doing ESDP, bestowed meanings on new scenarios. Facilitated institutionally by a number of assisting bodies, this political endeavour encountered resistance in the EU system of governance.

The contest over ESDP mobilises and reflects the Community and the CFSP pillars functioning according to differing working philosophies. This has to do not only with the fact that the Commission is a supranational body while CFSP is an intergovernmental policy, but also with the increasingly diverging ideational principles sustaining their institutional identity. The two institutional entities hold disparate standpoints on best practices in crisis management. Their policies and channels of implementation accordingly reveal contrasting beliefs about the image of the EU as an international actor, including dissimilar security conceptions. Although they essentially agree on what is to be achieved to make the world a better place – the usual ‘European’ values of democracy, rule of law, etc. apply – they nonetheless characteristically diverge on the matter of best strategies, means and practices to reach the ideal state.

Conceptually, whereas the Commission inhabits the world of ‘civilian power Europe’, even if modified in accordance with the changing historical conditions, the Solana milieu has ventured to make the EU a ‘militarised civilian power’. Believing such a transformation is the proper response to the exigencies of a globalised world, Solana, as the personification of EU foreign policy, represents the new trend of the EU’s ‘coming of age’ and its shedding of the clothing of a civilian power only. He generally advocates an approach according to which the security situation has to be stabilized before major long-term development assistance can be initiated. He further favours high-profile political action, which should generate substantial even if cursory political capital with immediate impact in a particular environment. Because of
the large publicity they generate, military and civilian missions have become the cutting edge of ESDP, its essence and, simultaneously, a vehicle for implementing ‘militarised civilian power’. This notion was codified in the ESS – a manifesto of Solana’s vision of the international security role of the EU. In this context, member states constitute an enabling and accommodating if at times contending audience to the ESDP enterprise. Despite differing positions on security issues and the repeated curbing of the Solana milieu on contentious questions, they still exhibit far-reaching reliance on the Council Secretariat and extensive willingness to delegate as they approve of its pursuits.

A significant contestant to the ESDP venture, the EC seeks emulation through such initiatives as the ENP, the result being the consolidation of institutional identities involved. A historical background to this institutional struggle is instructive here. It brings out how the Solana milieu builds its position via contesting the principles at the heart of the Community identity. Cris Shore furnishes an important study of the EC institutional identity, or, in his vocabulary, political culture (2000: 132-145). Historically, the EC has grown to cherish certain concepts constitutive of its ethos, namely its legalism, the legacy of its supranational aspirations and its wide-ranging functions. As Shore argues, they provide the rationale for virtually everything it does (Ibid, 132). Profoundly legalistic in its nature, the EC seeks legitimacy by always providing a legal basis for its action. It further treasures its much-acclaimed status of supragovernmetalty, seen as symbolising the originality of the EU governance. A potent term in the EC self-definition, supranationality together with *aquis communautaire* seems endowed with special meaning as the embodiment of the EU, which the EC represents. The third characteristic in the EC’s identity is the complex array of functions it performs. The Treaties give the EC three specific powers and duties: to initiate the process and act as a ‘motor’ for European integration, to act as ‘guardian of the Treaties’ and ‘enforcer of Community law’, and to implement Community policies (Ibid, 142).

This basis has granted the EC a powerful position in the EU governance system, hardly constrained to a technical function. The development of ESDP instigated by the ‘Solana milieu’ has dealt a heavy blow to this posture, not only in terms of formal reshuffle but also vis-à-vis the EC’s ideals. Vitally, the construction of the policy has only narrowly and in the most formal dimension relied on legal means. In contrast to the EC Treaty, which endows the Commission with very specific competences confined to what has been delegated to it by the member states, the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) regulating the second pillar’s competences and broadly sketching CFSP’s objectives (art. 11) hardly circumscribes political action. Whereas the Commission is obliged to justify its proceedings by indicating the correct, and only exceptionally multiply, legal basis, the CFSP pillar’s only constraint is article 47 of TEU, which protects the Commission’s competences. This can be traced back to the early days of creating the CFSP’s predecessor bodies, considered as an
international law tool rather than regular institutions requiring legal demarcation. ESDP performers explicitly foreground the pragmatic character of their project whose priority they see in its effectiveness, not necessarily synonymous with legal purity. The EC, in contrast, seems to underestimate the political aspect of this foreign to its character phenomenon. This finds its expression in comments amounting to the formulations that until any decision is ratified, it is not valid. Obviously true as this remains, it reveals conspicuous disregard for political dimension. Along these lines, the inherent politicisation of the CFSP pillar is viewed with derision by the EC as contributing little to furthering the EU project at large. Instead, the ESDP’s performance and in particular ESDP operations are seen as ‘toys of the member states’ and ‘drops in the ocean’ as compared to the EC long-term endeavours.

This distinct juxtaposition of the EC legalism versus the CFSP/ESDP politicisation looms large in the institutional discourses. Not surprisingly, the two bodies attach different meanings to these concepts and see contradictory implications of their application. Evocatively, while the EC appreciates its legalistic culture as a licence to rightful action, in the second pillar it is associated with hindering and diluting worthy initiatives, on occasion deliberately. The ‘Solana milieu’ links this legalism to the technical and administrative nature of the EC activity, a conception, which amounts to the denial of the EC political impact in third countries, despite its long-term involvement there. In contrast, the political flexibility of the second pillar is acclaimed as facilitating swift action and providing for the high political profile of the pillar’s undertakings, promptly delivering on what the EC is incapable of. This breeds resentment in the Commission that views its projects as inducing systemic changes in fragile communities. Politicisation is construed here as a major obstacle to the effective EU performance on the ground.

The meanings attached to supra- versus inter-governmentality further illustrate ideational differentiation across pillars. The robust unfolding of ESDP resists the necessity of supranationality for an effective design and implementation of an EU policy. In fact, formal intergovernmentality seems to have been a sine qua non condition of the policy, allowing the member states a sense of control and thus generating their willingness to engage. With ESDP’s portrayal as a success story, one of the constituting blocks of the EC’s institutional ethos—the significance of supragovernmetality for furthering the EU project—is brought into question. As Shore concludes, “the Commission functionaries see themselves in grand political terms as ‘policy makers’, ‘innovators’, ‘intellectuals’ and ‘architects’ of the new European order whom the Treaties had proclaimed ‘custodians of the European interest’ (2000:145). The label ‘Community’ for designating first pillar activities is distinctive here.

23 Interview with a desk officer in Relex, EC, Brussels, April 2006.
24 Ibid.
25 Interview with the EC representative to the CIVCOM, Brussels, 24 November 2005.

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ESDP’s stardom clearly disrupts this established picture, particularly so as the realm of the CFSP is excluded from the EC supervision, common in other areas. Bitterness lingers on in the EU system of governance.

**Conclusion: framing the EU's security**

This sketch of the policy setting where the EU’s security framing is produced derives from a broader analysis where I drew on the frame reflection as outlined by Schon and Rein (1994:xiii). Empirically, it facilitated looking into the ways in which politico-institutional actors make sense of their political and social realities and how they collectively (via their institutions) put forward particular views of the specific issues they are engaging. It allowed to refocus on the consistently overlooked, dense and dynamic arrangements between actors involved in constituting particular security framings. This illustrates how, contrary to established arguments that ‘doing’ security is necessarily a matter of evoking ‘extraordinary measures’ that take security beyond the realm of normal politics (Buzan et al. 1998; Wæver 1997), a claim that makes security inherently apolitical, security is about daily political dealings fuelled by distinct institutional identities. Thus security is a product of politics. The policy design and implementation can hardly be conceived as outcomes of lucidly planned strategies however. Similarly, seeing security as a self-referential concept is analytically futile. If we aim to grasp what security is, we are ill-advised to commence by applying conceptual definitions (Wæver 1995); we should instead come up with the contextual understanding that underpins and governs the field. As regards the EU’s security policies, this brings to the fore the highly political setting of forging security policies. Here the importance of the (institutional) actors, who to varying extents author this process, and their figurations come into sharp relief.

Quite commonsensical as it may seem, I have arrived at this insight over time, shifting from a deductive perspective of the Copenhagen School of security studies that delineated my initial analysis to the focus on security practices that nudged me towards the Bourdieu-inspired Paris School of security studies (see for instance Bigo 2000, 2001). The EU’s security framing illustrates that taking a more political-sociological approach to analyse how bureaucratic actors construct security through their routine practices of categorization and definition is better suited for grasping the EU’s security dynamics. It focuses on how different discourses are appropriated, mobilised, diffused and defused in sometimes unanticipated ways. The suitable mode of inquiry here is therefore to trace the processes by means of which discourses become sedimented in institutional structures, budgets and decision-making; to trace institutional knowledge, devices and discursive practices in order to understand particular framings; and to explore the relations among security agencies, their
status, roles, activities and institutional settings. This demands an empirical investigation of security practices to figure out what the plan for their set up might have been.

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