Article

Cooperation and Conflict
2015, Vol. 50(4) 440–456

DOI: 10.1177/0010836714560033
cac.sagepub.com
SAGE

Renaissance of realism, a new stage of Europeanization, or both? Estonia, Finland and EU foreign policy

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Abstract

The relationship between EU foreign policy and national foreign policies of the member states is changing due to various factors: the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 and subsequent creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS); the economic crisis in Europe; and shifts in the global balance of power. The article explores these new dynamics in light of two cases, Estonia and Finland. It examines why the two countries support further integration in the area of foreign policy and what determines the limits of their support, applying rationalist and constructivist approaches. From a rationalist perspective, Finland and Estonia view the EU and the EEAS as a means to pursue national interests and make diplomacy more cost-effective; these aspects have become more important due to the economic crisis and changes in the international context. At the same time both countries value the EU as a security community and a source of solidarity, which points to the importance of socialization, as conceptualized by constructivists. However, the predominance of national foreign policy identity and an instrumental approach to the EU leaves limited space for deeper socialization, in spite of the new mechanisms of socialization introduced by the EEAS.

Keywords

Constructivism, Estonia, Finland, EU foreign policy, national foreign policy, realism

Introduction: Tracing contradictory trends in European foreign policy[1]

Interaction between the common foreign policy of the European Union and national foreign policies of the member states has been a puzzling topic for scholars of international relations (IR) and European integration (e.g. Baun and Marek, 2013; Carlsnaes et al., 2004; Gross, 2009; Thomas, 2011; Tonra and Christiansen, 2004; Wong and Hill,

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2011). Since foreign policy is traditionally defined as part of the core of national sovereignty, it has been considered more resistant to integration than, for example, trade or agricultural policy. Nonetheless, common foreign policy took 'centre stage' in the integration process over the past two decades (Bickerton, 2011: 121) and made a considerable leap forward with the latest treaty change: the Lisbon Treaty that entered into force in 2009 created something akin to an EU foreign service and foreign minister, namely the European External Action Service (EEAS) headed by the High Representative (HR) of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. One of the main goals of the treaty reform was to make the EU a more unified and visible global player. At the same time, common foreign policy remains an area of intergovernmental decision-making and member states continue to exercise their national foreign policies.

The reform of the EU foreign policy system provoked controversy and heated debates among the member states and EU institutions (Carta, 2012: 145–161; Murdoch, 2012). It coincided with an extraordinarily difficult period inside the EU, as the economic crisis was undermining trust among member states and overall confidence in the integration project. Moreover, it took place in the context of a major shift in the international balance of power, with the rise of new powers in Asia and elsewhere and a relative decline of Europe and the United States. These simultaneous changes underscore the need to review scholarly approaches to the relationship between national and EU foreign policy and conduct new empirical research on the topic.

Against this backdrop, the article explores two cases of member states, Estonia and Finland, addressing the puzzle of why they support further EU foreign policy integration and what determines the limits of their support. Although the two countries' national foreign and security policy traditions and positions on specific EU foreign policy issues differ on many counts (see Haukkala et al., in press), the article shows that they represent a rather similar pattern of Europeanization. The existence of both deep-seated differences and notable similarities between the two cases makes it interesting to bring them together. It is important to note, however, that the purpose of this article is not to offer a systematic comparison of the two cases, but rather to identify and find explanations for the overall approach of the two countries to EU foreign policy and its most recent evolution, the EEAS.

Finland and Estonia are two relatively small, peripheral and new member states that have been firm supporters of a more unified EU foreign policy and a strong EEAS. At the same time, they draw limits as to how far they would wish integration to go; both countries want to maintain national control and intergovernmental decision-making in this area. Their foreign policy elites have been very critical of the way the EEAS functioned in its first years of existence. They also do not expect fast progress towards a more coherent and effective EU foreign policy. There has even been a perception of renationalization (e.g. Tuomioja, 2013). So their support is not explained by a positive assessment or even positive expectations, at least in the short term, towards the EU's performance in this field. Yet aiming for a stronger international role of the EU is a key priority of Finnish and Estonian foreign policies.

Through the case studies, the article aims to contribute to scholarly work on European foreign policy in a broad sense, encompassing the EU and member states and paying particular attention to interaction between the two levels. It highlights the need for new research to take into account recent changes in the EU foreign policy system and in the

broader European and international context. The article also makes a contribution to earlier studies on the Europeanization of Finnish and Estonian foreign policies (Antola, 2005; Berg and Ehin, 2009; Haukkala and Ojanen, 2011; Kasekamp, 2013; Palosaari, 2011; Tiilikainen, 2006). It aims to take a fresh look at the adaptation of Estonia and Finland to the above-mentioned changes and to analyse possible shifts in the motivations and goals behind their positions on EU foreign policy.

At the risk of oversimplification, I draw a basic distinction between two approaches: first, theories that view EU foreign policy through the lenses of state-centric instrumental rationality, including realist and liberal intergovernmentalist approaches, and second, constructivist approaches looking at social rationality and processes of socialization and identity-building, and questioning state-centrism. So the relationship between the foreign policies of the EU and member states is addressed below from both rationalist and constructivist perspectives (cf. Keohane, 1989: 158–179; Sjursen, 2003; Smith, 2004). This theoretical framework implicitly addresses different aspects of Europeanization, notably adaptation and policy convergence, national projection, and identity reconstruction (Wong and Hill, 2011: 7). However, rather than engaging in a debate on how to define 'Europeanization' – a concept that suffers from a bewildering variety of usages (see Moumoutzis, 2011) – I structure the analysis according to the two major IR approaches, while drawing parallels with the Europeanization debate throughout the article.

Approaching the topic from different theoretical perspectives seems opportune for several reasons.[2] There is no agreement in the relevant academic literature on a theory of European foreign policymaking and the drivers of foreign policy integration (Andreatta, 2011). Ongoing changes in the international power structures and simultaneous integrative and dis-integrative dynamics in the EU call for an inter-paradigm debate between different strands of IR and European integration studies. The article explores new, contradictory trends in European foreign policy that are not easily explained by any single theoretical approach. On the one hand, one can observe a new stage of institutionalization and interpenetration between national and EU levels but, but on the other, there is a perception of decreased commitment of member states to common foreign policy (Petrov et al., 2012: 8). Recent scholarly literature on policymaking in the field of common foreign and security policy (CFSP) has widely called into question the practical relevance of a dichotomy between intergovernmentalism and supranationalism (see Howorth, 2012 for an overview). And yet, formal intergovernmentalism remains a sine qua non for most member states, and a national, instrumental perspective on CFSP is common in many European capitals (Balfour and Raik, 2013).

The article draws on empirical data consisting of interviews and relevant official documents and speeches. Between May 2012 and March 2013, I conducted 20 interviews with senior diplomats serving in the Finnish and Estonian Ministries for Foreign Affairs (MFAs) (10 in each case). The interviews were semi-structured and anonymous; in order to allow for a more open discussion, no tape recording was used. I made detailed written notes of the interviews, which made it possible to conduct a systematic analysis and to go back to the material at a later stage. In addition, I used as background material numerous more informal discussions with officials of both countries and the EEAS. The analysed documents include recent foreign and security policy strategies and a broad range of other texts indicating the two countries' positions regarding the CFSP and EEAS.

In the following section, I shall examine the positions of Estonia and Finland in light of rationalist approaches, singling out three main motivations to support common foreign policy: using the EU as an instrument to control stronger partners inside the Union; using the EU as a power multiplier in international relations; and making diplomacy more cost-effective. I will then turn to constructivist approaches, looking at the EU as a source of solidarity and an instrument of socialization, but also identifying the limits that the prevalence of national identity imposes on socialization. In conclusion, it is argued that changes in the international context have made realist theory more relevant for analysing European foreign policy. At the same time, the dynamics of integration and the value of a common foreign policy for member states cannot be explained solely by rationalist approaches, but it is necessary to study common institutions and policies through a constructivist lens, looking at processes of socialization and community-building. In spite of the discrepancies between realist and constructivist approaches, both point to the same limit to further integration: the continued predominance of a national perspective on foreign policy.

Renaissance of realism? Controversies of national interest and rationality

The EU as an instrument to control stronger partners

Realist theories of international relations have difficulties explaining European integration and EU foreign policy. However, realism helps to shed light on some recent developments in European foreign policy as well as the strong support of small EU member states such as Finland and Estonia for integration in this field. From a realist perspective, the EU is no more than an arena for power politics (Mearsheimer, 1995). EU foreign policy is characterized as a zero-sum game between national interests and can only reach the lowest common denominator. It cannot challenge member states' core national interests; should it do so, the system will inevitably collapse. The role of smaller member states is limited to playing at the margins, adapting to the preferences of the large ones and making alliances with the latter. For example, in early 2013, Germany played a key role in mobilizing smaller member states to formulate joint positions on reshaping the EEAS. It managed to collect 15 countries, including Finland and Estonia, behind a joint non-paper on further development of the Service, even though some of the positions promoted by Germany (notably its wish to move the European Neighbourhood Policy from the European Commission to the EEAS), were not supported by most of the 15.[3]

As realist theory would presume, the Lisbon Treaty and establishment of the EEAS did not change the intergovernmental nature of EU foreign policy (Piris, 2010: 260). The three largest member states, whose foreign policy resources and international posture is far above the rest, dominate agenda-setting and the definition of common positions and actions (Lehne, 2012). They have privileged access to EU institutions, notably the EEAS and the High Representative, which raised concern among smaller countries about a 'directoire' of the big three (Balfour and Raik, 2013). Since the large member states do not actually agree on many things and are selective in using the EU for the advancement of their national interests, EU foreign policy tends to be focused on a limited number of priorities and niche areas where common action brings gains to the large member states. At the same time the

Union has difficulties formulating a joint position on many acute international crises. The cautious role of the first High Representative Catherine Ashton as the new 'face' and 'voice' of EU external relations and the emphasis that she placed on consulting the largest member states can be interpreted as being in line with a realist reading.

Since realism claims that institutions do not alter state preferences, it does not expect EU membership as such to make states more cooperative or less selfish. However, it does offer a conceptualization of the value of strong common institutions for relatively weaker states. According to Grieco (1997: 185), institutions can offer value added especially to weaker states due to the 'voice opportunities' that they provide in relation to stronger partners and adversaries. Hence, inside the EU, common institutions are a means to mitigate domination by stronger partners. Since dominance of big states is a constant concern for the smaller ones, the latter look towards common institutions as an 'instrument to control the large ones', as a seasoned Estonian diplomat formulated a key function of a strong EEAS.[4]

Finland and Estonia have been supporters of a strong European Commission as a friend of small member states that constrains the dominance of the large. Their support for a strong EEAS follows a similar logic, although the perceived special nature of foreign policy implies that they want decision-making in this field to remain intergovernmental. At the same time, both countries expect a stronger leadership role and initiative from the EEAS, for example in EU–Russia relations. If EU foreign policy leadership does not come from Brussels, it tends to come from Paris, London and Berlin, which are less likely to be sympathetic to the concerns of small peripheral member states. Leadership from Brussels is not seen to imply giving away decision-making power to the EU level, but is defined as a proactive role of the EEAS in proposing policies, coordinating and persuading national capitals and steering the process of intergovernmental negotiation. In this context, 'institutionalized debate' is to guarantee equal opportunities for all member states to express their views and concerns.[5]

Realist theory explains the rationale for small states to support strong institutions, but does not give much hope for the possibility of EU institutions actually achieving a strong leadership role, since the EU decision-making process is seen as dominated by competing national interests. Neoliberal institutionalist theory offers a more hopeful perspective, pointing to the possibility that common institutions and norms help states realize the benefits of cooperation and constrain the pursuit of self-interest (Keohane, 1989). Liberal intergovernmentalism allows for a more nuanced approach to the EU bargaining process and the role of common institutions in setting the conditions that enable member states to go beyond zero-sum games and reach outcomes that are more than the lowest common denominator (Moravcsik, 1993). A common limitation of these approaches is that they share the assumption of instrumental rationality, state-centrism and the perception of national interest as something predetermined to interaction between states. An alternative, constructivist perspective discussed below examines special intra-EU dynamics at the interconnected levels of institutions, interests and identities.

Change of global order and the EU as a power multiplier

The relevance of a realist perspective on EU foreign policy has increased due to the rapid transformation of global power structures to which Europe struggles to adapt. The EU as

an entity is arguably not ready to act as one of the poles in the emerging multipolar system (Toje, 2010: 189) and is better understood as a small or medium power (Toje, 2011). Nonetheless, the wish of member states to use the EU as a power multiplier in international relations has always been one of the drivers of CFSP. It is highlighted by a strand of Europeanization studies that focuses on the rational projection of national preferences and interests to the EU level with the goal to use the EU as a 'cover' or 'umbrella' against adversaries and a means for increasing national influence on the global scale (Wong and Hill, 2011: 7). In recent years, the relative weakening of Europe's global position has increased the (potential) importance of the EU as a power multiplier and a vehicle for advancing national foreign policy priorities. To quote a key document of Finnish EU Policy, 'the Union's external activities should be based on the understanding that if the European countries choose to act individually or as a limited group of Member States, they will wield far less international influence than could be achieved through concerted EU-level action' (Prime Minister's Office, 2013b: 55). The same document exposes Finland's instrumental approach to the EU as a means by which to promote national goals.

Increased uncertainty about Europe's global geopolitical and geo-economic leverage exacerbates specific concerns of north-eastern EU member states about regional security and stability. Both global geo-economy and regional security are highlighted by a realist claim that the key objectives of the EU for its member states include, first, to pursue Europe's economic interests in the context of the global economy, and second, to shape the regional environment (Hyde-Price, 2008: 31). The latter aspect is highly relevant for both Estonia and Finland where an anxious debate has taken place about Russia's efforts to step up its military capacity especially in its western military district (Forss et al., 2011). In 2014, concern about regional security has sharply increased in both countries due to the Ukraine crisis, reviving debate about the trans-atlantic alliance and the EU as key components of national security strategies.

The reorientation of US foreign policy, with the declared 'pivot to Asia' and decrease in the attention and resources devoted to Europe, has been a cause of concern, especially for Estonia, but also for Finland. For Estonia, the US remains the most important security ally and NATO continues to be *the* provider of hard security guarantees. However, membership of the EU also belongs to the core of the national security concept (Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010). Concern about the redefinition of US priorities has made the EU relatively more important for national security, even though the latter is incapable of ensuring hard, military security. A strong push from the US towards the EU to build up a stronger common foreign and security policy has contributed to the readjustment of Estonian positions. Commitment to the EU's common foreign and security policy has become 'a tool to engage the United States in Europe's regional security order' (Rynning, 2011: 27) and an important part of efforts to be a good transatlantic partner.

In spite of its policy of military non-alliance and a national system of territorial defence, Finland shares with Estonia the wish to maintain a strong US commitment to European security. It is a strong supporter of the common security and defence policy of the EU and considers that changes in the international environment require closer and broader cooperation with partners including the Nordic and Baltic countries, the EU and NATO. The remnants of military non-alliance – an ever-more hollow concept

considering Finland's close ties with the EU and NATO – persist in the position that deeper cooperation in the EU framework should not aim at common defence (Prime Minister's Office, 2013a).

With reference to global changes, Finland and Estonia have emphasized strategic partnerships with global powers as a key priority for EU foreign policy, while expressing disappointment with the achievements so far. IR realism states that especially weaker states seek to build alliances with partners in order to balance against adversaries that are unfriendly or threatening. Accordingly, the EU 'buttress' has become an indispensable part of the relationship of the Baltic states and Finland to Russia, in spite of the perceived weakness of CFSP in general and the EU's Russia policy in particular. At the same time, a renewed emphasis by both Finland and Estonia on bilateral relations with Russia could be observed prior to the Ukraine crisis. The 'renationalization' was not a sign of decreased support for the EU's Russia policy, but had to do with awareness of the limits of EU policy and frustration with the way diverging bilateral interests of member states kept taking priority over attempts to strengthen a common strategy.[6]

Likewise, partnership with Asia has not been left in the EU's hands only. Adjusting their national priorities to the global rebalancing, both countries have upgraded their attention to and diplomatic representation in Asia (Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011; Sierla, 2009: 37). While Finnish foreign policy has traditionally had a more global outreach, Estonia has been expanding its outlook beyond the key priorities of Europe, the United States, and Russia and post-Soviet space only in recent years. In the debate on a national strategy towards Asia, Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet (2012) underlined the need to utilize EU policy towards Asia as a tool to reach national foreign policy and economic goals in the region, in line with the realist idea of the EU serving as an instrument to pursue economic interests. Finnish diplomats have highlighted the importance of the EU in safeguarding common norms and a level playing field for economic and trade relations with Asian countries.[7]

Obviously the concept of the EU as a power multiplier reaches its limits as soon as national interests conflict and the EU is unable to act, which is often the case. So, a realist account of global and European dynamics offers an explanation for the need for a stronger common foreign policy, but it also helps to explain why it is so difficult to reach.

Economic rationale for foreign policy integration

A new issue that has surfaced in the debate on European foreign policy integration in recent years is rational cost-effectiveness. Cost-saving considerations used to play a marginal role among the drivers of foreign policy integration (Smith, 2004: 101), but they have become a considerable factor pushing the member states to act jointly and pool and share resources. The change is caused by domestic budgetary constraints and austerity measures that have led to significant cuts suffered by the foreign services of most European countries over recent years (see Balfour and Raik, 2013 for an overview).

The Estonian and Finnish MFAs have targeted the cuts differently. In the case of Estonia, the dramatic fall of GDP during the financial crisis (by 4 per cent in 2008 and a further 14 per cent in 2009)[8] caused extensive budget cuts in the public service. The operational budget of the MFA shrank in four consecutive years, from 38 million in 2008

to 32 million in 2011, and recovered only slightly in 2012. The ministry reduced salaries, allowances and the number of staff. In Finland, the MFA has to cut its yearly operational budget (211 million in 2012) by €13 million in 2012–2016. Finland is managing the cuts above all by reducing its network of diplomatic missions abroad: it closed 10 representations in 2009–2013. Estonia, quite amazingly, managed to open new diplomatic missions (to Israel in 2009, Egypt 2010, Kazakhstan 2012 and India 2013) in spite of the budget cuts, following the perceived need to adapt to the global rebalancing of power.

Against the backdrop of austerity, the EEAS is a possible means to manage cuts and 'do more with less'. From the viewpoint of economic rationality, the EEAS is a service provider that has to prove that member states get value for the money that they invest in it – as noted by one Estonian diplomat, 'the EEAS is there to serve the MFAs and not vice versa'.[9] The value added of the EEAS is seen to originate mainly from the work of EU delegations that coordinate member states' actions in third countries, provide reporting and can assist with the organization of visits to countries where there is no national mission. Both Estonia and Finland also expect EU delegations to assume some consular tasks such as assisting EU citizens who are in trouble abroad. Their national diplomatic networks are considerably smaller than that of the EEAS: in 2013, Estonia had 46 missions abroad, Finland 92 and the EEAS 139.

Estonian and Finnish diplomats emphasize that the EEAS does not reduce the need for a national foreign service and cannot take over any of its traditional functions. At the same time, Finland has shown somewhat more interest in rationalizing its foreign service by making use of EU delegations. For example, in 2013 it opened a diplomatic mission to Colombia in the premises of an EU delegation and may consider other co-locations in future as a means to cut practical costs. The logic of such arrangements is not driven by the existence of the EEAS or by principled support for closer integration, but by pure economic considerations and national pressure to make savings.[10]

The trend towards burden-sharing conceals a fundamental tension between the logic of efficiency that motivates member states to utilize the EEAS and the logic of sovereignty that determines the intergovernmental nature of EU foreign policy and the pursuit of national interests through the EU. The EEAS holds out a new possibility to enhance cost-effectiveness of European diplomacy, with potentially major implications for the division of labour between the EU and national levels. Member states' interest in utilizing the new service is motivated by the *national* imperative to make savings and pursued in the framework of *intergovernmental* cooperation. National MFAs are in an uncomfortable position, trying to use the EEAS to strengthen their capacity and compensate for reduced resources, while not allowing the EEAS to be used as an argument or tool to weaken national structures and control. This is in line with liberal intergovernmentalist theory that expects member states to support integration to the extent that it strengthens national executive capacity (Moravcsik, 1993). Yet ultimately the logic of sovereignty and the logic of efficiency clash, since the path of burden-sharing logically leads towards greater centralization and further cuts to national structures in favour of common EU institutions. Pure economic rationality would favour a federal foreign and security policy with centralized structures and responsibilities. Realist and liberal theories take the nation state and national sovereignty for granted, but there is little rationality in fixing such points of departure; an alternative understanding of the state as a contingent social

construct can open up a whole new horizon to envisage different ways to organize European diplomacy or the institution of diplomacy in general (Adler-Nissen, 2013; Bátora, 2005).

Beyond instrumental rationality: Institutions and (the limits of) socialization

Europeanization, learning and solidarity

The shared assumptions of realist and liberal approaches concerning instrumental rationality, state-centrism and national interests as pre-defined before entering international contacts imply a rather limited scope for a common European foreign policy and have difficulty explaining the 'transformative character of the CFSP' (Sjursen, 2003: 49). They reject the possibility that there would be 'endogenous mechanisms at work within EU institutions that lead member states to pursue foreign policies they otherwise might not adopt' (Smith, 2011: 217). By contrast, constructivist approaches offer tools to conceptualize the processes of socialization that are at play in EU foreign policymaking, having a constitutive effect on the interests and identities of states (e.g. Checkel, 2005). Institutions are seen to contribute to the formulation of communities based on trust and common identity; hence deepening integration creates a push towards 'harmonization of a national and European identity' in EU member states (Aggestam, 2004: 85).

A constructivist approach also highlights the nature of the EU as a community where member states adhere to shared norms, substantive as well as procedural. Drawing on sociological institutionalism, Smith (2004) argues that institutions have a key role in shaping interests and creating shared norms. This approach contrasts instrumental rationality, which follows the logic of consequentiality, with socially constructed rationality that is driven by the logic of appropriateness. Defining institutions as a link between rationalism and constructivism, Smith (2004: 103) claims that institutions have an important role to play in fostering the logic of appropriateness on what he sees as a continuum of social rationality and instrumental rationality. EU foreign policymaking takes place through a complex and multilayered institutional framework, and the participation of member states in that network not only conditions their behaviour, but also shapes their identities.

From this perspective, one should look at the nature of the integration process and the experience of participating in that process as drivers of the support and commitment of Estonia and Finland to a common foreign policy. Existing studies suggest that EU accession of both countries was followed by a strong degree of foreign policy adaptation (Haukkala and Ojanen, 2011; Kasekamp, 2013; Tiilikainen, 2006). Not only have they adopted new issues on the agenda due to EU membership, such as development cooperation in the case of Estonia, or the Wider Europe Initiative for Eastern Europe and Central Asia of Finland that mirrors increased EU activity towards the region; the way they define pre-existing, 'core' national priorities, such as relations with Russia and the US, has been shaped by their EU membership (Haukkala et al., in press; Lehti, 2007). This is where one of the limits of realist and liberal intergovernmentalist approaches is reached: they fail to account for the strong degree of foreign policy adaptation. Institutions such

as the EU do not merely constrain state behaviour and encourage cooperation, they can also bring about more fundamental identity change, which shapes the perceptions of what member states 'can do with their foreign policies' (Hill and Wong, 2011: 224).

Both Finland and Estonia are keen to underline their commitment to be constructive member states of the EU. This is not to be explained solely by rational justifications such as increased security and economic gains, but by socialization to the EU's institutional framework and community. Constructiveness is underlined by diplomats of both countries as a recipe for success in the EU machinery that they have learned from experience. Some Finnish diplomats expressed the view that Finland has been too diligent in playing by the rules and could be more selfish and proactive in promoting its national interests, as many other member states do.[11] The 'model pupil' role has been criticized along similar lines in Estonia, although even critics acknowledge that such a role is not necessarily harmful for national interest and has improved Estonia's image in the EU (Kross, 2012).

Socialization through common institutions can produce political solidarity among the member states, which can be an important source of empowerment and a shield against hostile outsiders. Member states are expected to show political solidarity towards a fellow member state in crisis situations, as happened during the Bronze Soldier crisis between Estonia and Russia in spring 2007 (Brüggemann and Kasekamp, 2009: 58). Hence, although the EU cannot provide hard security guarantees, it can produce something more ambiguous – solidarity – which may pre-empt threats and translate into concrete support when need be. For Finland, a solidarity-based conception of security was an essential motivation to support the creation of CFSP back in the late 1990s (Haukkala and Ojanen, 2011). The Lisbon Treaty with its solidarity clause and mutual assistance clause is seen to 'bolster the character of the Union as a security community' (Prime Minister's Office, 2013a: 12). For Estonia, the Bronze Soldier crisis was a transformative experience that proved that 'political solidarity inside the EU is not just empty words' (Lepassaar, 2011).

An understanding of the importance of constructiveness and solidarity has been replicated in supportive attitudes towards a strong EEAS. Estonian and Finnish diplomats have characterized their national positions towards the EEAS and the High Representative as belonging to the most constructive ones in comparison to other member states. A strong Union with strong common institutions is seen to enhance the security of member states. Constructiveness, especially in hard times, is expected to pay off in terms of ability to shape common policies inside the EU and get backing from the institutions and fellow member states in relation to outsiders.

Early years of the EEAS: From mistrust towards a stronger community?

From the viewpoint of member states' commitment to a common foreign policy, the first couple of years of the EEAS were disruptive. The start-up phase of the new EEAS has been broadly criticized by the member states as chaotic and frustrating. The transition period created a 'vacuum' in the level of institutionalization of common foreign policy (Missiroli, 2010: 342), which may partly explain the renationalization tendencies mentioned above. Information-sharing between Brussels and national capitals was

insufficient, the Council meetings especially at the level of foreign ministers were badly prepared, and the new possibilities that the Lisbon Treaty created for agenda-setting and leadership by the HR and EEAS were under-utilized. The attitudes of member states towards the EEAS were plagued by lack of trust and ownership.

Nonetheless, the EEAS also created new mechanisms of socialization whose longer-term effects are yet to be seen. Even before the creation of the CFSP, EU foreign policy-making was characterized by a strong degree of elite socialization, with a norm of consensus and 'coordination reflex' shared by national diplomats involved in the work of common institutions (Glarbo, 1999; Wong and Hill, 2011). Participation in CFSP institutions has functioned as a rather successful tool for the socialization of national diplomats into the EU framework. The EEAS added a new mechanism of rotation of staff between national foreign ministries and the EU: national diplomats are to constitute at least one-third of all EEAS diplomatic staff (Council of the European Union, 2010). There are expectations that the EEAS rotation system will contribute to the strengthening of a European foreign policy identity and the emergence of a supranational diplomatic class. This could balance the intergovernmentalism of common foreign policy by strengthening a European mindset and a habit of considering broader European interests among national diplomats (Cross, 2011).

Both Estonia and Finland have defined the promotion of national diplomats to the EEAS as an important national priority. At the same time diplomats in both countries, but especially Finland, considered that their country had been relatively weak and too timid in lobbying for its candidates. This was explained by cultural differences and experience; the old and Southern member states were perceived as more bold and skilled in promoting their cause in the EU machinery. There was also some concern in the MFAs that the people who move to the EEAS become too 'Brusselized' and might not return, not least because of the better material benefits of EU jobs, but also greater prestige; so some of the best diplomats would be 'lost' to the EEAS. Even so, the Estonian MFA considered that having good Estonian diplomats in the EEAS might be even more important than getting them back to the ministry.[12] On the other hand, individual diplomats who considered moving to EU posts expected that return to the home organization might involve difficulties such as lack of attractive career openings and re-adaptation problems.

Another socializing aspect of the EEAS is the new role of EU delegations on the ground. With the Lisbon Treaty, the delegations became responsible for coordinating member states' embassies in third countries (a task that was previously carried out by the member state acting as a rotating presidency). As noted above, Finland and Estonia have been strongly supportive of the delegations in their new capacity. The new role of the delegations is perceived to strengthen the orientation of national activity towards the EU in external countries. For example, Estonia appreciates the work of the EU delegation to Moscow, not because it would reduce the need for national diplomatic representation, but because it is seen to strengthen coordination of member states' activities. The diplomatic staff of the EU delegation to Russia includes an Estonian national, which has both symbolic and practical value for Estonia. As a concrete example of value added, Estonia was pleased with the participation of the head of the EU delegation in a hearing in the Russian Duma on the human rights situation in the EU, which took place in May 2012.

Thanks to common representation of the EU in the hearing, accusations directed at Estonia were given an adequate response by the Union.[13]

Prevalence of national identity

Beneath the emphasis of Estonia and Finland on a strong EEAS being in the national interest, there are suspicions that it might slip beyond control, be misused by other member states, or simply fail to deliver. The commitment to be constructive towards the EEAS does not undo a distance between national and EU foreign policy. There is the perceived danger that the EEAS would develop its own identity and agenda and remain detached from national foreign policy structures. The number of national diplomats moving from MFAs to the EEAS and back is inevitably small: both Estonia and Finland sent seven national diplomats to the EEAS by June 2013 (European External Action Service, 2013: 19). Furthermore, from a national perspective, the socialization effect might be too strong on the individual level. As one Finnish diplomat noted, the 'Brussels perspective' is narrow in its own way.[14] There is much evidence of the Europeanizing impact of Brussels experience at the individual level, be it in the service of national representations or the EU. However, there is no straightforward link between the socialization of individual diplomats into the EU framework, which concerns a limited number of individuals, and an EU orientation at the level of national foreign policy (see Chelotti, 2013: 1069).

The emphasis of Estonian and Finnish diplomats on constructive behaviour, as described above, can be seen as a form of 'thin' socialization and 'conscious role playing' (Checkel, 2005) rather than deeper ideational change. Both countries have adjusted their foreign policy to membership of the larger club, but there is also evidence to suggest that national identity prevails as the primary framework for defining and practising foreign policy. In defining and redefining their national priorities, both countries display a tendency to portray these as something defined on the national level and from a national perspective that is distinct from the political and policy processes of the EU. Support for EU foreign policy is seen as something that stems from and should serve national interests.

In the interviews conducted for this study, several diplomats of both countries expressed scepticism about the prospect that further foreign policy integration would change national foreign policy identity. It was also noted that common foreign policy may have reached the limits of the 'spirit of cooperation' which has proved to be not that strong after all.[15] The fact that diplomats deny the prospect of a common identity does not mean, of course, that identity shift does not or will not take place. However, it shows the current mindset of foreign policy elites as firmly seated in the national perspective as the dominant framework for defining foreign policy interests, while a broader European viewpoint is subordinated to the national one. EU membership has shaped the content of national interests, but it has not undermined the centrality of the national perspective. This is in line with some earlier studies of Europeanization, concluding for example that 'legitimization of foreign policy action still takes place primarily at the level of the nation-state' (Aggestam, 2004: 97). The EU's international identity has to be seen as complementary to national identities (Carta, 2012: 25). Altogether, it seems far from

certain, but also too early to judge whether the EEAS will contribute to a stronger sense of shared foreign policy identity among member states.

Conclusion: National continuities, European prospects for change

In a sense, recognition of the limits of a common European identity and persistent attachment of EU states to national sovereignty brings us back to square one: IR realism and its emphasis on state-centrism and national interest as the starting point of the current analysis. Adherence to state sovereignty appears as the main obstacle to deepening foreign policy integration from both realist and constructivist perspectives, the difference being that only constructivism sees this constraint as contingent and open to change. This finding is in line with the argument made by some IR scholars that constructivist methodology can be compatible with empirical realism (Barkin, 2003; Griffiths, 2011: 17). As long as member states continue to support EU foreign policy on instrumental grounds, to the extent that it is justified by national interests and benefits, the prospect of a more profound identity change and shift of loyalty to the EU level seems dim. Herein lies a fundamental contradiction in the positions of Estonia and Finland: what both countries expect and need from the EU is a shield provided by political solidarity and membership of a security community; and yet the predominance of national identities and interests sets rather restrictive limits on the nature of the EU as a security community. There is limited space in their national foreign policy discourse to go beyond the national perspective and define European interest as 'ours'.

In a realist reading, Finnish and Estonian support for common foreign policy can be explained by the value added that strong common institutions provide for relatively weaker states in their relations with stronger partners and adversaries. This perspective has gained new relevance due to the vulnerability caused by shifts in the global balance of power and, more recently, by the Ukraine crisis. It has been reflected in the Finnish and Estonian debates about changes in the commitment of the US to European security, about Russia as a (perceived) threat and about the need to adjust to the rise of Asia. The EU, and more specifically the European External Action Service, has a place in these discussions as an instrument to deal with the changing international environment. National austerity and cuts to foreign services have brought a further dimension of cost-effectiveness into calculations about the added value of the EEAS. Finland has shown more interest than Estonia in seeking new burden-sharing solutions, but both countries have been keen to support especially the EU delegations as a useful extension to the national diplomatic network. However, from a realist perspective, EU foreign policy is bound to remain intergovernmental, dominated by the strongest member states and vulnerable to competing national interests; hence its value for small and peripheral member states such as Estonia and Finland should not be overestimated.

A constructivist perspective on EU foreign policy accounts for the importance of strong common institutions not only as a means of alliance-building, but also as a mechanism for building a foreign policy community and a sense of solidarity that can provide a more durable basis for common policy than rationalist cost-benefit calculations. Strong common institutions that function as a mechanism of socialization matter, especially for

smaller and more vulnerable member states that need the solidarity, empowerment and shield provided by the EU. Along these lines, one of the reasons for Estonia and Finland to support strong common institutions, including a strong EEAS, is that these contribute to the EU as a security community and a source of solidarity. Furthermore, the socializing effect of common institutions can increase the ability of the EU to articulate and implement a common foreign policy. The new system of rotation between national and EU foreign services that has been launched together with the EEAS has created an additional mechanism of socialization. However, in light of the cases of Estonia and Finland, this new element might not change the nature of socialization as something complementary to, but not challenging the predominance of a national perspective.

This article has briefly examined important new dynamics in European foreign policymaking, focusing on two country cases and probing different theoretical approaches. The above analysis, although limited to the two cases, points to broader trends and indicates avenues for further research on the changing relationship between national and EU foreign policy. Firstly, it remains to be seen whether the changing global balance of power and relative decline of Europe will push member states closer together in the global arena and reinforce EU foreign policy – which might be expected from a realist perspective. Another trend to be followed is the new relevance of cost-effectiveness: domestic pressures to cut foreign policy budgets may drive member states to make better use of the EU's diplomatic network. Thirdly, drawing on a constructivist reading of Europeanization, it will be important to investigate the longer-term implications of the new processes of socialization and interpenetration between national and EU foreign policymaking set off by the creation of the EEAS.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Notes

1. The interviews used in the empirical analysis of this article were mostly conducted in the framework of the joint project of the European Policy Centre and the Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 'The European External Action Service and National Diplomacies', led by Rosa Balfour and the author during 2012–2013. My warm thanks to all the participants in the project for fruitful discussions and cooperation. I am also grateful to the Estonian and Finnish diplomats who dedicated some of their time for the interviews.
2. See Haukkala (2008: 29–41) on the virtues and pitfalls of multicausal accounts.
3. Author interviews, March 2013, Brussels and Helsinki.
4. Author interview, June 2012, Tallinn.
5. Author interview, June 2012, Tallinn.
6. Author interviews, June 2012, Helsinki, and August 2012, Tallinn.
7. Author interview, December 2012, Helsinki.
8. Official data by Statistics Estonia at www.stat.ee/29958 (accessed 11 March 2014).
9. Author interview, November 2012, Tallinn.
10. Author interviews, May and December 2012, Helsinki.
11. Author interviews, May and June 2012, Helsinki.
12. Author interviews, June and November 2012, Tallinn.

13. Author interviews, August 2012, Tallinn.
14. Author interview, June 2012, Helsinki.
15. Author interview, August 2012, Tallinn.

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