

Europarties and EU Foreign Policy: Does the EU Party System Structure CFSP Issues and How?

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Abstract

This paper examines the role and impact of European transnational party politics on EU foreign and security policy through three distinct but complementary perspectives: First, it explores the historical and societal roots of transnational partisan foreign and security policy views in Europe. Second, it assesses whether and how foreign and security policy is structured by the dominant axes of partisan competition on a European level. Third, it delves deeper into the exact role and position of European party families in the foreign and security policymaking process in the EU polity. The results point to the existence of a transnational ideological dimension in the contestation of European foreign policy that is consistent with the dominant axes of partisan competition on a European level (Right-Left and Integration). However, this ideological dimension is mitigated by the small policy stretch between major party families. At the same time, analysis of the activities of Europarties in EU foreign policy making invites a view of transnational party federations not as policymakers akin to national parties, but as entrepreneurial actors who use their coordinating and information exchange-facilitating function between national and supranational levels as opportunities to infuse their preferred values in European foreign policy.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to explore how EU foreign and security policy is contested by European party families¹. This is a difficult test for the capacity of the European party system to offer citizens distinct options on issues of European governance. On the one hand, national foreign policy is generally seen as an issue that is (or ought to be) beyond the scope of partisan competition and political bickering. On the other hand, foreign policy is the issue-area where EU competences are still subject to inter-governmental negotiations. Foreign policy is seen as the last and ultimate prerogative of the nation-state in Europe. However, the increasing willingness of the European Parliament to discuss and influence the discussion (if not the actual policies) in CFSP, despite the latter's enduring character as an intergovernmental policy area (reaffirmed most lately in the Treaty of Lisbon), and the creation of a European 'foreign ministry' (EEAS) and the post of a High Representative for CFSP with footing both in the Commission and the Council (where a partisan dimension coexists with a national one), all point to the question whether and how political party competition on a European level has any bearing on the EU's foreign policy.

This paper approaches the question of the partisan contestation of EU foreign and security policy from three distinct but complementary perspectives: First, it explores the ideological and societal roots of the foreign and security policy preferences of the major party families in Europe. In essence, it seeks to examine 'the past in the present' of varying policy preferences of major party families in Europe, in analogy to the seminal work of Marks and Wilson (2000) on partisan preferences on European integration. The analysis will show that the transnational societal cleavages that gave rise to European party families also serve as roots of different preferences on European foreign and security policy. Second, this paper will delve deeper into the specific positions of European party federations (Europarties) and European Parliament groups. In this way, it will probe whether the dominant axes of party competition on a European level today (Left-Right and Integration) also structure rival policy preferences in foreign and security policy. The results of this analysis point to a consistency in the way the major 'core' party

¹ In this paper I will be using both the term 'party family' and the term 'party federation'. 'Party federation' is essentially interchangeable with 'Europarty', denoting the specific institutional entity of a federation of national parties, like the European People's Party (EPP) or the Party of European Socialists (PES) (see Gagatsek 2009 and Van Hecke 2010). 'Party family' will denote the sum of institutionalized expressions of transnational and supranational cooperation of like-minded parties. For example, when referencing the 'Socialist party family', one would be looking at the Europarty, the European Parliament Group and any other structure of cooperation between Socialist parties in Europe together (von Beyme 1985). 'Party family' will contrast with 'political family', a term I will use when referring to the preferences of, for example, radical Right parties that have similar outlooks but minimal transnational cooperation institutions.

families contest issues of EU foreign and security policy along the Left-Right and Integration axes, thus revealing the ability of the European party system to structure policy issues even in supposedly 'intergovernmental' areas. However, if one takes into account the positions of 'peripheral' political families as well, these results are mitigated, as competition along the Right-Left proves to be much more meager than the one between centre and extremes that energizes the Integration axis. Finally, third, this paper will present how partisan contestation of European foreign policy becomes possible on a European level through practices and institutions that bring together likeminded policymakers from multiple levels and settings for the purpose of exchanging views and coordination. This part will showcase the capacity of Europarties to instill an ideological element in EU foreign policy making through these activities, even though they still fall short of direct influence on policy outcomes.

The analysis of these three aspects of partisan contestation of European foreign policy on a European level (historical roots of foreign policy preferences of party-families, the structuring of policy space by the programmatic activity of Europarties and EP Groups, and the coordination of likeminded policymakers) will cumulatively provide a vivid image of the extent and character of transnational partisan and ideological contestation of an intergovernmental policy area like European foreign and security policy. Appropriately, this paper draws on an eclectic mix of analytical literatures and methods to answer these questions. It positions itself within a strand of literature from International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis that acknowledges the role of political parties in foreign and security policy and sees domestic political identities, alongside societal policy preferences, as important sources of foreign policy positions. It ascribes to the 'past in the present' approach of Gary Marks and his colleagues in establishing the roots of transnational party family preferences on issues of European governance. It seeks to probe whether foreign and security policy can be accommodated in the patterns and dynamics of European party competition as described in the work of scholars like Simon Hix. Finally, it makes a further contribution to the growing literature on Europarties and their role in the EU polity. By looking at European party federations' role in EU foreign and security policy, this paper will make the case in favor of a view of these federations not as policymakers, but as indispensable sources of information and coordination that instill distinct elements in the EU's foreign policy making while seeking, in an entrepreneurial way, to increase their own standing and importance. This paper will combine insights from works on the history and politics of European foreign policy and security, content analysis of European party family documents, and information drawn from semi-structured interviews in Europarty headquarters in Brussels.

'THE PAST IN THE PRESENT' OF PARTISAN CONTESTATION OF EU FOREIGN POLICY: ATLANTICISM-EUROPEANISM AS A FOREIGN POLICY CLEAVAGE AND ITS ROOTS IN EUROPEAN POLITICAL IDENTITIES

Despite its dominance in previous decades, the view that states' foreign policies are largely reducible to inherent human rationality or a nation's relative position in the international distribution of power is today set aside, in favor of more sophisticated views that account for the contestation of foreign policies on material/institutional (contestation between pressure groups and different sections of bureaucracies, the interplay between institutional settings of domestic and international levels etc.)² or ideational grounds (contestation of national identities, of discourses attached to foreign policy etc.)³. In this context, the study of the impact of party politics on foreign policies is a self-evidently important, even though relatively neglected, field of research. In the past 15 years or so, analyses from the field of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) have inquired, among others, into the role of partisan ideologies in foreign policy (Rathbun 2004), the dynamics of coalition government in foreign policy making (Kaarbo and Beasley 2008), the role of parties as conduits of societal interests in foreign policy (Trubowitz 1999), and the interplay between party politics and domestic institutions in foreign policy (Alons 2004).

This paper engages with, and ultimately takes sides in, a pertinent debate about the roots of political parties' foreign policy positions. One side of the debate sees partisan foreign policies streaming from coherent ideological policy sets and partisan profiles, meaning that foreign policy reflects and supports the visions of parties about domestic political, economic and social governance. Such arguments have been made with reference to questions of European foreign policy and security. For example, Rathbun (2004) has made the argument that military interventions in the Balkans in the 1990s were contested by European parties in accordance with their position on the Left-Right axis, while Schuster and Maier (2006) have talked about how ideology informed European governments' positions on the 2003 Iraq invasion. On the other side of the debate are analyses that see foreign policy as effectively disengaged from domestic concerns and see partisan foreign policy as arising from foreign policy-specific ideas institutionalized within parties. Such is the argument of Hofmann (2009) for example, who sees partisan attitudes towards ESDP in the 1990s arising from specific security policy traditions

² Moravcsik (1997) and Putnam (1988) are the best-known examples of a liberal (domestic pressure group) view on foreign policy and of a foreign policy as a function of multi-level politics view respectively.

³ See Barnett (1999), Hopf (2002), Jepperson et al (1996) and Waever (2001) for very influential examples of literature dealing with the ideational contestation of foreign policy.

European parties carry next to their policies on socioeconomic matters. Ozkececi-Taner (2005) takes a middle position in this debate, as she sees the positions of Turkish parties on various foreign policy issues in the 1990s as independent programmatic ideas that are however related to these parties' position along significant cleavages permeating Turkish politics.

This paper positions itself close to the view that foreign policy positions of political parties stem from their 'visions of domestic society' (Manow et al 2008), reflecting their historical positioning vis-à-vis social cleavages and their forming around mobilized political identities. Foreign policy is seen here as practically and symbolically underpinning a party's preferences on issues of economic distribution, social values and domestic governance⁴. In this way, cleavages and contestation of foreign policy are nothing more but a reflection in this policy area of the main lines of competition around socioeconomic and value issues. If this is true for nation-states, the question becomes to what extent it also applies to EU-level politics. In order to examine this question in today's context, one needs to account for the various political identities, formed by transnational social cleavages in Europe, represented today in the main European party families, in an exercise that takes a cue from Marks and Wilson's seminal article on transnational ideological attitudes towards European integration (Marks and Wilson 2000).

The main cleavage in European foreign and security policy has concerned since the end of World War II the balance in Europe's security between the USA and Russia, first in the context of Europe's division during the Cold War and then in the context of Europe's position in a globalized world. Key questions that fed into this cleavage included, among others, the role of NATO in European security, the development of independent European capacities for security and defence, the relationship and role of Russia in Europe, and the management of transatlantic relations in a host of political, economic and technical issues with repercussions for global governance. While the nature of the debate on European foreign policy and security has evolved significantly since the Cold War, a common thread remains, structuring over historical eras a more or less defined cleavage on these issues: Those who support an increased role for NATO in European affairs also tend to view Europe and the US as natural allies in global affairs (thus carrying on the understanding of the 'West' after the Cold War), while being suspicious of Russian motives and influence in Europe, are juxtaposed to those who see tension in Europe as emanating from American meddling, who prefer a more emancipated role for Europe in global affairs, and who see Russia as a partner in European security. Ultimately, visions of Europe's place and role in today's world have a lineage to

⁴ These three goals of partisan foreign policy are analogous to Moravcsik's (1997) societal, ideational and republican liberalism.

these historical rival views of Europe's position and security between the US and Russia in the post-War world. This 'Atlanticism-Europeanism' axis (Stahl et al 2004)⁵ is clearly ideological, in the sense that it structures two different extremes (with many nuances in between to be sure) in the way the same issues are seen. For this reason, one can assume that partisan views along this axis have been informed by prior rooting of political parties in other political cleavages that informed their preferences and viewpoints of the world, as well as their preferences about the extent and character of European integration.

The biggest political family today, the centre-right European People's Party (EPP), started off in the 1950s as the most coherent and ideological family but has today become probably the most heterogeneous one. Initially the assembly of Catholic Christian Democratic parties from western Europe, the EPP today comprises Scandinavian conservatives, Mediterranean parties molded after the Gaullist model, and centre-right parties with origins in dissident movements in Central and Eastern Europe⁶. Reflecting the dominance within the family of the German CDU and its own evolution into a mainstream conservative party with catchall appeal (Gagatek 2008: 101; Hix 1996: 315-317; Johansson 1997: 68-72), EPP members have today converged their policy profiles to a 'centre-right' political identity that however leaves lots of room for differentiation among them. In general, the centre-right has steadily moved towards the right in socioeconomic matters over the last 30 years, while it has diluted its original federalist ideas and is now supporting leaner versions of integration in Europe (Marks and Wilson 2000).

EPP's position and movements along the Left-Right and Integration axes has historically reflected also the ways this party family viewed foreign policy issues in Europe. The main political identities represented in the EPP have held since the Cold War an Atlanticist stance in European foreign and security policy. For various reasons and due to different historical trajectories, most party-members of the EPP are very suspicious of Russia's role in European security⁷ and cling to a view of the

⁵ It is important here to explain the meaning of the term 'Europeanism' within the context of European security debates. What Stahl et al (2004) term Europeanism concerns essentially the continuation of the European non-alignment tradition of the Cold War, expressed both by conservatives (e.g. Gaullists) and leftists on various occasions. This should not be conflated with Europeanism as an ideology for stronger European presence in world politics or support for more EU powers. In the context of the Atlanticism-Europeanism axis, Europeanism is the opposite of Atlanticism. But Atlanticists can very well be in favor of more powers for the EU in security policy (i.e. be 'Europeanists' in the second meaning of the term), as we shall see. For this reason, Europeanism in the second meaning can be interchanged with 'integrationism', while Europeanism as a tradition of European security thought can be associated with 'non-alignment'.

⁶ For the course towards cooperation between Christian Democrats and conservatives, see Johansson (1997). For centre-right parties in Central and Eastern Europe, see Marks et al (2006).

⁷ For Scandinavian conservatives' views on Russia during the Cold War see Hassner (1982: 264), Layton-Henry (1982: 16), and Rose (1982: 109-113). For a discussion of the ideological and cultural foundations of German Christian Democracy's opposition to Russia, see Engelmann-Martin (2002).

world where Europe has to stand side by side with America. This is a position that even French Gaullists have slowly been attracted to, especially in the last 10 years⁸. Due to Christian Democrats' and conservatives' strong opposition to Communism, most EPP parties had been supporters of NATO's presence in Europe⁹, a position that has been carried over after the end of the Cold War.

In other words, the EPP's positioning in the centre-right of the Left-Right axis also informs a more or less clear-cut position along the Atlanticism-Europeanism axis. However, and this is particularly interesting, the EPP has followed an analogous course along the Integration axis in defence matters as with its movement in socioeconomic matters. The EPP has carried over the foundational idea of Christian Democratic parties from the Cold War, i.e. that Europe can and should unite not in opposition to, but in conjunction with America's role in the continent (Silvestri 1982). But while Christian Democrats were very federalist in defence and security matters during the Cold War, the enlarged EPP today is much less Euro-enthusiast. Its ideas about Europe's independent foreign and security policy standing leads to disengagement from the US or flirtations with Russia. Centre-right ideology has cued both integrationist and less integrationist positions in security and defence matters over time.

Unlike the EPP, the Socialist party family, united under the banner of the Party of European Socialists (PES) and the Socialist and Democrats group in the European Parliament (S&D), is much more homogeneous (Gagatek 2008: 103; Marks and Wilson 2000: 442). The main political identities represented include labour and social-democratic parties from North and Western Europe, socialist parties from the south, and post-Communist parties from Central and Eastern Europe (Marks and Wilson 2000). Just like with the EPP, and due to the waning of most historical cleavages in Europe, PES members have undergone a process of homogenization.

In foreign and security policy Socialists have occupied a different position on the Atlanticism-Europeanism axis than conservatives. During the Cold War, centre-left parties were at the forefront of efforts to mitigate the consequences of Europe's division, maintain contacts with ruling parties in the Eastern bloc, and bring about détente in relations with Russia (Risse-Kappen 1994). At the same time though, Social Democratic and Socialist parties were anti-Communist (if for nothing else, in order to stave off challenges to their left in national political arenas) (Pasquino 1982: 118-119), and for this reason understood the need for American presence and

⁸ Indeed, the French Gaullists are the most important outlier in this narrative. Once very zealous about French independence and proponents of a united Europe as a counterbalance to the US (Charlot 1982), they have however slowly adapted to more orthodox conservative conceptions about foreign policy and security in Europe (see Shields 1996 and Stahl et al 2004).

⁹ For British and Scandinavian conservatism's Atlanticism, see Berglund and Lindström (1982: 72), Faurby and Kristensen (1982: 87), and Lindström and Wörlund (1988: 268).

security guarantees in Europe¹⁰. This did not always sit well with Social Democracy's pacifist inklings (as evidenced in the 1980s NATO missile crisis). After the end of the Cold War, PES continued to represent this mix of conditional Atlanticism and pro-Westernism. As the 2003 Iraq war crisis showed, European Social Democracy's support for close links between Europe and the US only goes as far as specific ideological understandings about world politics allow (Schuster and Maier 2006). America is seen as a needed partner in the management of world affairs and European security, but is also not exempt from criticism. Same with Russia: Continuing the détente tradition, Social Democrats see it as an inescapable partner in Europe, but not without reservations (Polet 2013).

PES's ideological traditions then inform a much different position on the Atlanticism-Europeanism axis than the EPP's. In essence, a leftist ideological tradition also drags the PES away from Atlanticism (even though not completely to the other extreme, since Social Democrats still see America as an important partner for Europe). This creates *prima facie* expectations that the socioeconomic Left-Right axis absorbs and structures the foreign policy axis as well. At the same time, PES is somewhat removed from the EPP on the Integration axis as well. While it does not want to see Europe break out completely alone in world politics, PES has been much more open to the prospect of Europe developing independent foreign and security policy capabilities as a counterbalance to US power within the Western community. This also reproduces PES' positioning along the Integration axis, where over the years it has become more integrationist than the EPP, especially when it comes to social and environmental regulations (Gagatek 2008: 87; Marks and Wilson 2000: 447-448)¹¹. Just like with the EPP, domestic-European ideological concerns are reflected in foreign policy preferences as well.

The liberal party family is the third biggest party family, united under the banner of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)¹². Despite its size, ALDE comprises parties of varying origins, reflecting the historical cleavage inside European liberalism between national-liberalism and social-liberalism (Bardi 2004: 20; Smith 1988)¹³. Social-liberals come much closer to Social Democrats when they seek stronger regulation of the economy, while national-liberals are committed to an unfettered functioning of the market and a lean design of the EU (Marks and Wilson 2000: 448-449). This divergence essentially forces ALDE to the centre of the

¹⁰ For example, see Bellers (1979) for the German SPD and Gillespie (1996) for the Spanish Socialists.

¹¹ See for example the changing defense policy of the Netherlands after 1994, when PvdA came to power (Stahl et al 2004: 421).

¹² Until 2012 ALDE was the name only of the liberal EP Group. The party-federation called itself European Liberal, Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR), until it decided to assume the name of the Group.

¹³ Marks and Wilson (2000: 448) use the terms 'liberal-conservatism' and 'liberal-radicalism' respectively that are a bit awkward in my opinion. See also the discussion in Kirchner (1988).

socioeconomic Left-Right, while it also creates internal rifts on the family's position along the Integration axis, where it also ends up holding the centre in terms of voting records in the Parliament (Noury 2002: 49-50). Having said that, ALDE has managed to carve out a position as the party family most committed to issues of personal freedom and privacy, as well as trying to appropriate the federalist tag that at the time seems pretty unattractive to be considered by either the EPP or the PES (Frantz 2013).

The internal tension between national and social liberalism has been expressed in foreign and security policy as well. Historically liberal parties, and especially national-liberal ones, have been very Atlanticist, while social-liberal parties had found themselves at odds with the US during the Cold War. At the same time, liberal parties were also at the forefront of détente, trying to present themselves as more pragmatic in dealing with the Soviet Union than conservatives¹⁴. After the Cold War, liberals have tried to differentiate themselves from the two big party families by stressing moderation, originality of proposals and their ability to see both the US and Russia as important partners of Europe. This would seem to position the liberals on the centre of the Atlanticism-Europeanism axis as an analogy to their position along the Left-Right axis, yet recent stress of ALDE on Europe's independent foreign policy capacity is somewhat removed from the family's overall centrist position along the Integration axis. Despite its modest size, determining ALDE's exact position relatively to EPP and PES along the foreign policy cleavage is decisive in establishing whether, at its core, the European party system structures coherently foreign policy issues as it does socioeconomic ones.

THE EUROPEAN PARTY SYSTEM AND EUROPEAN FOREIGN POLICY AND SECURITY: DIMENSIONS OF COMPETITION AND PATTERNS OF OPPOSITION

To this day, scholarship on the European party system has confidently asserted that competition between political parties on the European level is consistent along an ideological axis (Gabel and Hix 2004; Manow et al 2008; Noury 2002). What meaning this competition exactly has is contested between different models of conceptualization: A simple 'regulation model' posits that the European party system revolves around a socioeconomic Left-Right axis of competition, while the study group around Marks combines a pro-and anti-integration dimension with an axis uniting socioeconomic Left-Right and value-ideological Authoritarian-Libertarian dimensions (Hooghe et al 2002; Marks and Wilson 2002). Gabel and Hix (2004) also include the pro-and anti-integration dimension as an orthogonal axis to

¹⁴ See generally Kirchner (1988) and Steed (1982). For the German FDP see Glatzeder (1980).

the Left-Right, but see these in a more dynamic interrelationship with the possibility of producing different combinations on the two axes¹⁵.

An important point is the question of European integration as an issue of partisan competition. While in socioeconomic matters it may be unproblematic to assume the prevalence of a classical 'regulation' Left-Right pattern of competition (due to de facto supranational competences of the EU in this area), in foreign policy issues it is more appropriate to include the question of increased EU competences as a complement to the question of the direction of EU foreign policy as such (Ladrech 2007: 954-955). Because development of EU competences in foreign policy is still an ongoing process, and because EU foreign policy cuts across specific national preferences, I consider this question to be an important element of the different foreign policy profiles of European party families. In this way I accept the close connection between positions on the ideological and Integration axes, like Marks and his associates do, but take a more agnostic position as to the possibility of combinations and consider different ideological sets possible in a historical perspective. While discussing foreign policy preferences of a specific point in time the two dimensions of competition could be seen as complementary, and so collapsing in a joint axis, it is important to remember that these dimensions can produce different outcomes in the future as they have in the past¹⁶. For the same reason, I think that a more textured understanding of the axes of European party system would be more appropriate for analytical reasons, and so I am conscious that Left-Right absorbs, along with socioeconomic policies, ideological/lifestyle attitudes and older cleavages like religion (Mair and Thomassen 2008: 13)¹⁷.

The direction and meaning of party competition on the European level is by and large determined by interactions between the three main party families, Christian Democrat/Conservatives, Socialists and Liberals. The foreign policy positions of these three party families, the 'nucleus of the [European] party system', are crucial in determining the direction of party competition (Bardi 2004: 21-23; Hix 1996: 324; Noury 2002: 54-55). At the same time, it is important to note how foreign

¹⁵ For a short discussion of the different models, see Steenbergen and Marks (2004).

¹⁶ See the discussion in Gabel and Hix (2004: 107-112).

¹⁷ This means that I am also tacitly collapsing Hoogh et al's (2002) GAL/TAN 'new politics' axis into the Left-Right. While a thorough analysis of policy space in European party systems would require a two-dimensional mapping with both Left-Right and GAL/TAN (Kriesi et al 2006), for the purposes of my argument it makes sense to include questions of values, social issues etc. in the Left-Right axis. To the extent that the GAL/TAN axis absorbs older issues like religion/denomination that have had significant impact on European foreign policy (see for example the analysis of the feud in the CDU in the 1960s between Gaullists and Atlanticists as a confessional divide between Catholics and Protestants (Granieri 2003)), and that it reinforces the interplay between socioeconomic Left-Right and Integration, collapsing the two axes in one Left-Right enriches our understanding of the ideological contestation of European foreign policy without confusing things (as would happen if we had to deal with three axes of competition).

policy is structured by party families with smaller degree of institutionalized supranational cooperation beyond this 'nucleus'. More specifically, I will expand into a study of what I call the 'expanded nucleus' of the party system (including party families with independent presence as EP Groups and some basic organization in party federations, like Eurosceptic conservatives to the right of EPP and Greens to the left of PES), as well as of the 'periphery' of the European party system, comprising of radical, Eurosceptic and populist forces of the right and left with presence in the European Parliament, little or no transnational cooperation but very vocal activism in national arenas¹⁸.

I have chosen to focus on the policies the big three party families support in three foreign policy issues that make up the essence of the Atlanticism-Europeanism axis in today's context: European security policy and more specifically EU-NATO relations, transatlantic relations and EU-US cooperation globally, and EU-Russia relations. The question then becomes whether this axis of foreign policy contestation coincides with the dimensions of competition as determined by European party families' 'domestic' preferences about the EU, i.e. if Atlanticism-Europeanism becomes absorbed in a consistent fashion in the Right-Left axis; and if the Integration axis is also reflected in the contestation by Europarties of the EU's independent foreign policy capacity in these issues in conjunction with their preferences on the extent and depth of European integration.

In the previous section we established the social and ideological roots of foreign policy preferences along the Atlanticism-Europeanism axis in various cleavages running through European politics and borders, much like Marks and Wilson had done about party families' European policies. We also detected primary evidence

¹⁸ The inability of radicals, populists and extremists of the right to organize effectively on a supranational level has been analyzed in Minkenberg and Perrineau (2007). Currently (legislative period 2009-2014) there is a 'Europe for Freedom and Democracy' group to the right of the nationalist-conservatives in the European Parliament, but it is dominated by the British Eurosceptic UKIP party. MEPs from parties further to the right of EFD sit as Non-Inscribed. Some Eurosceptic transnational party federations have been recognized and received funding in the last few years, but their actual activities are miniscule. All this contrasts with the very important role radical and populist parties of the right play in more and more national political arenas, as well as with the fact that there are important ideological and historical ties between some of them. While one cannot speak of a formal party-federation of the radical right on a European level, one can speak of a loose political family of an authoritarian, radical right and Eurosceptic predisposition. On the far left the situation is different in that there exists a long-standing EP Group (GUE/EGL) that comprises radical, communists and populist leftist parties. However this Group lacks a credible Europarty equivalent that would coordinate national parties and provide opportunities for centralized campaigning, programmatic production etc. The Party of European Left only comprises some of the parties represented in GUE/EGL, making this Group a place for ad hoc legislative coordination rather than the nucleus of an institutionalized party federation. However, as with the radical right, we can talk of a significant political family of populists, radicals and Eurosceptics of the left with important transnational ties and similarities and presence in many national arenas. For a discussion of the far left political family and its various components, see March (2011).

that pointed to the fact that the socioeconomic Right-Left has historically absorbed consistently the Atlanticism-Europeanism axis, with Atlanticism receding as one moves from right to left. Finally, much like Marks et al, we saw that party families' support for independent European capability in the field of foreign and security policy (the Integration axis) is filtered through these families' specific ideological vision about the content and purposes of European foreign policy, but, as Gabel and Hix had rightly pointed out, there was no permanent relation between Right and Left and support for more or less integration in foreign and security policy. Instead, Integration has historically cut across Left-Right / Atlanticism-Europeanism creating a political space within which party families move according to wider circumstances, creating different combinations of partisan visions of European foreign and security policy.

In this section I will present the contemporary state of partisan competition along the Left-Right and Integration axes on foreign and security policy, with reference to Europarty and European Parliament Group positions on transatlantic relations and global governance, the role of NATO in European security, and relations with Russia, and see whether the patterns we detected in the previous section does indeed apply to pressing contemporary political debates¹⁹. Important questions are: a) What is the exact relation between the Big 3 political families' positioning along the Atlanticism-Europeanism axis in these three issue-clusters today? Are their positions internally coherent and do they still align in accordance with their position along Right-Left? b) How does Atlanticism-Europeanism align with Right-Left beyond the 'nucleus' of the European party system? Is Atlanticism stronger to the right of the EPP and does it decrease to the left of the PES? c) Finally, how do European party families align along the Integration axis on foreign and security

¹⁹ The works by Hix and others on the patterns and direction of competition in the European party system focus largely, for a variety of reasons, on interactions in the European Parliament. Here I have decided to map the space of competition in European foreign policy by looking at programmatic declarations emanating both from the European Parliament and the European party federations as such. There are two reasons for this: First, as intergovernmental policies, CFSP and CSDP become subjects of discussion in the Parliament almost exclusively when some resolution with little practical significance is up for vote. Instead of looking at what parliamentary groups in a supranational institution vote in foreign policy, it makes more sense to look at the programmatic positions of European party federations whose internal structure replicates the intergovernmental character of policymaking in EU foreign policy. Second, EP Group positions are not dissociated from Europarty positions. If anything, Group positions are bound by the manifestoes Europarties formulate ahead of each European election. While in socioeconomic matters, where there is great integration and the Parliament is a co-legislator, one can assume that it is the expertise and dominance of Groups that feeds positions and ideas into party federation positions, one can equally assume that in an intergovernmental field it is party federations, with access to heads of state and government and leaders of national oppositions, that determine the overall policy profile of a party-family. In practice of course Europarties and Groups interact in multiple ways in all types of policymaking (see the discussion in Van Hecke 2010: 404) – which is still reason enough to collapse Europarty and Group declarations in a joint analysis of the dimensions of partisan competition on European foreign policy.

policy based on their contemporary positions? Our historical exploration showed that, in the European party system's core, the integration axis relates to the Right-Left / Atlanticism-Europeanism consistently. If one expands the analysis to the rest of the European party system, does the Integration axis overlay or cut across the ideological axis?

a) Left-Right and Atlanticism/Europeanism

Do European party family foreign and security policy preferences align today analogously with their positioning on the Right-Left axis and its historical equivalents on the Atlanticism/Europeanism axis? The evidence shows that there is indeed a slight polarization between EPP's Atlanticism and PES's Europeanism, with the Liberals occupying the proverbial middle ground. However, the actual policy distance between the three core party families is pretty small. The policy stretch in the European party system is increased if one takes into account the families of the 'expanded nucleus' of the party system, the nationalist-conservatives to the right of the EPP and the Greens to the left of PES. Taken together, the European party system's ideological axis of competition does seem to absorb foreign policy issues in a consistent way, with Atlanticism receding as one moves from Right to Left.

The three core party families have today converged to a basic set of understandings in foreign and security policy that may be said to constitute the 'national interest' of the EU. All three see the presence of NATO in Europe as necessary, acknowledge that relations and ties with the US are very important as Europe tries to influence world affairs, accept that Europe has to promote some distinct values and norms in the international scene (environment, human rights, multilateralism), understand that the dialogue with Russia is difficult but necessary due to a host of issues of common interest between the two sides (EPP 2009: 32; Scharping and Wiersma 2003: 2), and promote a more effective and assertive representation of the EU internationally. This set of common assumptions creates a very narrow space within which the Big 3 differentiate with each other, but still their differences align them along the Atlanticism-Europeanism axis in accordance with their alignment along the Right-Left axis.

Conservatives and Christian Democrats are the most energetic in their support for a close transatlantic link. Indeed, as the party itself admits, the transatlantic relation is not a means but a goal in itself²⁰, as it not only ensures European security and prosperity but also serves as a powerful symbol of Europe's identification with

²⁰ 'The European Union needs a firm and deeply rooted transatlantic relationship in a context of mutual respect and understanding. *The transatlantic relationship is an end in itself in terms of defending the West's common values.* It also forms an essential tool for *ensuring that the European Union's voice is heard* in the world and for influencing global choices' (EPP Group 2009: 6, emphasis added).

a Western community of values. European security policy's main goal should be to maintain NATO's presence in Europe. The EPP sees world affairs through a distinctly 'Western' prism, seeing new global powers as competitors to the US and Europe, who then must close ranks to face up to the challenge together. This competition is both a matter of prosperity but also of values, with the EPP stressing the difference between the West and the 'Rest' in issues of democracy, rule of law and functioning of the market²¹. Finally, the EPP is the most outspoken and antagonistic party family towards Russia. Reflecting an almost Cold War-like mentality, the EPP sees Russia as a threat and competitor of European interests and values in Eastern Europe. The family's association with outspoken anti-Russian politicians in Ukraine, Georgia and Belarus intensifies this feeling, and the EPP is the most outspoken about forcefully promoting issues of human rights in Russia against the objections of the regime there²².

The main dynamic within the core of the European party system on foreign policy seems to be the opposition between the EPP on the one hand and ALDE and PES on the other. Liberals and Socialists express an Atlanticism much more qualified than the one of the EPP. Especially for PES, America is a needed partner for Europe, but the US cannot be trusted to be in accordance with European interests and values all the time²³. Especially during the Bush presidency, PES was particularly assertive towards the US, and it is in moments like this that Europe's foreign policy capacity is presented as a potential counterweight to the US (much to the opposite of the EPP's understanding of the EU developing defence capabilities as an enhancement, not an opposition, to NATO). While the transatlantic link is the normative reference point of EPP's foreign policy, PES lays more emphasis on multilateralism, while it also sees new global powers in a less menacing and ideological light than the EPP (PES Council 2007: 18). The Liberals on the other hand can be seen as more Atlanticist than the Socialists, but their rationale is much more practical and much less

²¹ In the EPP Group's 'Ten Priorities' document of 2009, strengthening the transatlantic link is presented first, as a foundational part of a 'Europe of values' (EPP Group 2009). The EPP promotes aggressively the prospect of a transatlantic market between the US and the EU (EPP 2009: 32). The EPP also sees in emerging powers not only a geopolitical threat or competition, but also a potential rival to the established norms of international politics and markets, with the rise of state capitalist, semi-authoritarian or authoritarian modes of government. (EPP-ED Resolution 2008; EPP 2009).

²² 'The EU's zone of peace, democracy, security and respect for the rule of law, human rights and the territorial integrity of each country must spread outside the EU, to countries in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus...A partnership must include an open and critical dialogue on the development of democracy and the rule of law in Russia and, furthermore, the relationship of Russia with Eastern Europe and the Caucasus' (EPP 2009: 32). Also see the EPP's support for the stationing of anti-ballistic missiles in Eastern Europe (EPP-ED Resolution 2008).

²³ As European Socialists put it succinctly, 'we are not indifferent to who governs America' (PES Report 2007: 129). Also: 'Due mainly to the geographical position, historical and cultural traditions and domestic pressures, the EU and the US do not necessarily share the same strategic vision on international relations' (ibid: 99).

ideological than the one of the EPP²⁴. ALDE also accepts the need of the transatlantic link, but is much more willing to stand up to America when issues of particular concern to the Liberals (such as privacy and human rights within the context of anti-terrorism policies) are affected. Finally, when it comes to Russia, PES²⁵ and ALDE²⁶ stress pragmatism and striking a balance between interests and values in EU-Russia relations, promoting the idea that engagement with Russia can be more effective than antagonism. While PES's policy positions seem more stable over time, the Liberals' middle position in the ideological axis creates interesting changes in the tone and outlook of their positions. Indeed, at times ALDE has expressed particularly pro-Russian positions (ELDR 2008) as well as criticized vocally the state of human rights in Russia (ALDE 2011), and it has accepted a multilateral vision of world politics while acknowledging the importance of the transatlantic relationship²⁷.

The policy stretch in the European party system on foreign and security policy issues is increased if one includes the party families on either side of the Big 3 'core'. To the left there are the Greens and to the right are the nationalists of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), made up principally of the Tories and Eurosceptic conservative parties from Central and Eastern Europe. These two party families are not as developed institutionally as the Big 3 (especially ECR is little more than a European Parliament group representing what would normally be the right-wing fringes of the EPP); however they represent important national parties and streams of thought in European politics. Their inclusion in this analysis further vindicates the importance of the socioeconomic Right-Left as a structuring axis of the Atlanticism-Europeanism cleavage: The ECR parties are even more

²⁴[A] sustainable and peaceful world order requires the constant cooperation of the EU and the US' (ELDR Resolution 2006: 1), but '[T]he United States must come to terms with its present, acknowledging that there is no such thing as a unipolar world...The United States should allay fears that she acts primarily to achieve dominance and should move to a more integrationist view of the twenty-first century world' (Graf Lambsdorff 2007). Also see ALDE Resolution (2008: 1).

²⁵ See PES Report (2007: 116-117) and Scharping and Wiersma (2003: 4). The PES was much less enthusiastic about the stationing of missile systems in Eastern Europe than the EPP, and instead focused on the prospects of arms control in Europe (PES Group 2004: 3; PES Resolution 2008: 4). In 2008 it called on the EU and US to 'appeal' to Russia to respect Georgian sovereignty and called 'on all parties' to pursue peaceful resolution (PES Resolution 2008: 7).

²⁶ In the words of a policy adviser, ELDR sees no reason for 'a priori suspicion' and 'should Russia make improvements, the EU should swiftly assess the situation and keep a door open for the country' (Frantz 2012).

²⁷ 'The ELDR views the US as a natural partner, yet that does not exclude increased cooperation with other centres of power. [...] Liberal parties stress human rights and benefits of free trade, and generally do not fear new influences and developments, whether they happen in our vicinity or further away' (Frantz 2012). The Liberals seem here far less willing to see EU relations with rising powers in an ideological way than e.g. the EPP. ALDE also sees great value in the proposed EU-USA free trade agreement, but, unlike the EPP, does not consider that America is the only indispensable partner for Europe (Frantz 2013).

pronouncedly Atlanticist and pro-NATO than the EPP. Parties in this family are very suspicious of any European security policy that can jeopardize the presence of NATO in Europe or its effective functioning. The Greens on the other hand are even more daring than the Socialists in entertaining ideas of a European Sonderweg outside of American tutelage in security and defence and in favor of international multipolarism, as well as calling for principled but not outright antagonistic relations with Russia for the sake of lesser tension in Europe.

In all, looking at the 'expanded nucleus' of the European party system, the differences between Right and Left in how European foreign and security policy is seen become more palatable. Party families are aligned along Atlanticism-Europeanism analogously with their alignment along Right-Left, even though the differences among the Big 3 concern emphasis and nuance of mostly commonly shared basic views on European foreign policy. For this reason we can say that the ideological Right-Left plays a modest to strong role in structuring foreign policy alternatives along the Atlanticism-Europeanism cleavage within the European party system's 'expanded nucleus'.

b) The Integration axis and European foreign policy

A survey of European party family positions of foreign and security policy reveals an interesting and varied image as regards the role of the Integration axis in structuring foreign policy alternatives. The first observation is that, inside the 'expanded nucleus' of the European party system, the Integration axis is coterminous with the ideological axis, reflecting not just Europarty ideological stances on foreign policy but a family's overall attitude towards European integration. This in turn is in accordance with a view that sees partisan foreign policies arising from parties' views and visions of domestic governance.

Indeed, it is difficult not to make the connection between Europarty prior attitudes and inclinations towards European integration and their specific positions on how much the EU should acquire an independent standing on international affairs. For the sovereigntists of ECR for example, an opposition to the development of a really integrated EU foreign policy goes in hand in hand with their Euroscepticism and their idea that nation-states should be free to look out for the best deals and their interests in world affairs outside of the constraints of EU membership. For the Greens on the other hand, who have accepted the need for more integration and have flirted with federalism, having Europe develop an active and state-like foreign policy internationally would be a powerful symbolic underpinning for their vision of European integration as well.

Again, matters are far more nuanced in the 'nucleus' of the European party system. All of the Big 3 party families support in principle that Europe should 'speak with one voice' in global affairs (ELDR 2008; EPP 2009: 30-31; PES Group 2004: 6).

They all supported the creation of the EEAS and the post of the High Representative for Foreign Policy, inscribed in the Lisbon Treaty. However, the image becomes more varied if one looks harder into each party family's justification and vision for Europe's foreign policy. The EPP, for example, is adamant that Europe's increased defence and security capacities are part of a better cooperation with NATO and burden-sharing within the context of the Western alliance, not a step towards the creation of a more emancipated Europe (EPP-ED Resolution 2008: 4)²⁸. The EPP becomes an outspoken supporter for Europe standing up only when it talks about EU-Russia relations.

The PES on the other hand considers the creation of a more independent Europe in world affairs a healthy addition for the Western alliance and the world²⁹, in the sense that the EU would be able to influence, obstruct or substitute America when it strays away from what PES considers acceptable policies and values like the environment, international criminal justice and multilateralism (PES Group 2004: 8; PES Resolution 2008: 6). In this way, PES' Europeanism in foreign policy acquires a more assertive character (PES Resolution 2008: 5)³⁰. The Liberals become positioned in the middle of the integration continuum more by virtue of their aggregation of divergent policy preferences rather than a coherent policy image. Having become the outspoken supporters of a more integrated Europe in recent years, ALDE is clearly closer to PES in seeing Europe's international standing as a needed complement of Europe's 'domestic integration' and a way for the EU to play an independent role in international affairs, vis-à-vis Russia or emergent powers for example. At the same time, ALDE also stresses the importance of the transatlantic link, even though again it seems to be closer to PES than the EPP in thinking that an integrated European foreign policy's goal should not be the preservation of the

²⁸ 'The strengthening of NATO requires greater European defence effectiveness, which remains vital for discussions on security' (EPP Group 2009: 7). 'As far military matters are concerned, the most obvious duplication is not between the NATO and EU headquarters but between our own national armies' (EPP 2009: 34). The emphasis the EPP lays on lean and 'smart' integration of Europe's military capacities as complement of the Western alliance is a nice example of how the conservative mindset of integration informs strategic visions in defence as well.

²⁹ 'By making more progress at the operational level and extending its actions to new regions of the world, the EU has revealed its ambitions to become a worldwide actor on the international scene. The EU has begun to develop a 'strategic autonomy' for its security strategy, namely the ability to carry out operations within its scope independently of other actors' (PES Report 2007: 91). In the midst of the Iraq War and the War on Terror, the Socialists were even more outspoken: 'First and foremost we want the EU to have a credible military option additional to the other foreign policy instruments available...In this way the EU could become a civilian superpower that operates differently from the US because the element of soft power will be dominant' (PES Group 2004: 5).

³⁰ It is important to note however that even the PES accepts that Europe's independence in the world stage cannot materialize in the area of defence and security, given today's economic situation. In this respect, NATO remains indispensable (Polet 2013).

transatlantic link at any cost but a way to put the two partners on more equal footing³¹.

In this way, the Integration axis overlays the ideological Left-Right in the core of the European party system in foreign policy as well, with integrationism increasing as a self-standing purpose of European foreign policy as one moves from the Right/Atlanticism to the Left/Europeanism. As with the ideological axis, one can see the EPP, ALDE and PES align coherently from leaner to more 'political' integration in foreign policy, while the true opposition dynamic seems to be again the pitting of the more Euro-timid EPP against the more Euro-assertive ALDE and PES. In this way, European party families promote a vision of EU foreign policy integration that goes hand in hand with their visions about European integration in the socioeconomic sphere: Atlanticism and reluctance for independent European foreign policy standing decreases as one moves away from Euroscepticism (in the case of ECR) and market-based integration (in the case of EPP) and towards support for a more integrated and enabled EU, all the way to the Greens. Indeed, the PES has acknowledged that the EU's foreign policy independence is an important practical and symbolical complement of a 'political Europe', which since the 1990s has become the rallying cry for parties of the centre-left, Greens and social-liberals³².

It seems then that, just like with the ideological axis, the effect of the integration axis is enhanced if one includes the ECR and the Greens, with the Big 3 accepting some basic values while being differentiated in a consistent manner within a narrow policy space. As Marks and Wilson (2000) claimed, and as Marks et al analyzed on various occasions, European party families' support for European integration is a function of their positioning along the main ideological axis of an issue area. Same with foreign policy: Atlanticism and right-wing timidity towards an empowered and bureaucratic EU inform an opposition to an overtly 'political' and independent EU foreign policy, while integrationism and left-wing support for a strong regulatory EU underpin a support for a 'political' and independent presence of the EU in world affairs. Looking at the 'expanded nucleus' of the European party system, the Integration axis seems to overlay (or reinforce) the ideological axis.

³¹ 'ELDR sees ESDP and NATO policy as complementary, without the former being systematically subservient to the latter. ELDR considers that the undeniable, but generally unacknowledged competition between the two could be detrimental to the effectiveness of their respective policies[...]' (ELDR Resolution 2006: 1). ELDR is open to a 'fully-fledged European army' (ELDR Resolution 2006: 1; Frantz 2012) and sees increased European capabilities as a way to 'strengthen Europe's position in NATO' (ELDR Resolution 2003: 1). It even sees the EU becoming member of the UN and taking a place in the Security Council.

³² 'The European Defence Policy constitutes an important dimension of European integration and contributes to the construction of a citizen's Europe. The ESDP should convey a strong image of Europe to the European citizens. They will identify more easily with a Europe capable of dealing efficiently with the responsibilities it has in building a world of peace, stability and security' (PES Council 2007: 17).

However, when it comes to the question of integration, the picture would be more complete if one included the array of Eurosceptics to the right and left of the expanded core of the European party system. With weak transnational organizational links but vocal presence in the European Parliament and national arenas, right and left wing Eurosceptics, far-right nationalists and populists and radical leftists are united in a common foreign policy vision and a shared aversion to increased EU capacities in world affairs and security. As was shown elsewhere, the foreign policy thought of European radicals presents, for various reasons, some interesting commonalities: anti-Americanism, opposition to Europe's international normative activism, opposition to NATO's presence in Europe, and a soft touch on Russia (Chryssogelos 2011). This similarity of the extremes upsets the validity of the ideological axis beyond the 'expanded nucleus' of the European party system. Instead, radicals of both ends of the political spectrum intensify the strength of the Integration axis, as they oppose, by virtue of their ideological preferences, the very essence and foundations of EU foreign policy. They invariably condemn the 'militarism' of EU security policy and its association with NATO, they oppose Europe's international normative activity and reject notions of 'Western' solidarity or the need for Europe to 'speak with one voice' in the world. Despite their limited impact on the day-to-day functioning of the institutional apparatus in Brussels, radicals of the right and left are formidable spoilers of the ideological game of the extended European party system, especially by constituting radical anti-integration outliers in multiple national arenas. This in turn serves as a painful reminder to actors of European foreign policy that foreign policy still is the prerogative of member-state governments that increasingly have to function under the severe pressure of anti-integrationist, anti-militarist, anti-American and anti-interventionist populists at home.

c) Conclusion: The European policy space in foreign and security policy

The analysis of European party families' positions on European foreign and security policy raises some significant conclusions, some comforting and others alarming: First, especially for the Big 3 party families, prior ideological traditions, identities and preferences on 'domestic' European governance play a big role in their positioning along the main foreign policy axis of Atlanticism-Europeanism, even when in recent years there has been a significant policy convergence between them. The analysis here vindicates the 'past in the present' view in foreign and security policy, with party ideologies and social cleavages determining the relative position of parties along the ideological axis and their attitude towards European integration in the foreign policy field as well. Second, the effect of the Left-Right becomes accentuated if one expands the analysis to include the 'expanded nucleus' of the European party system, sovereigntist conservatives and Greens. With them in

the picture, the effects of the Right-Left and Integration axis in structuring different views along Atlanticism-Europeanism, as well as the reinforcing relations between the two axes, become more striking. Third, analysis of the positions of party families reveals not only their relative positioning along the collapsed ideological/integration axis in foreign policy, but also more specific opposition dynamics: While the EPP makes the US an integral part of its foreign policy conceptions, Socialists and Liberals measure how much the US satisfies their core foreign policy preferences and then evaluate the significance of EU-US relations. While enlisting the support of the US is desirable, it is definitely not a goal in its own right. Issues of global justice, environmental concerns and individual liberties dominate the discourse of the PES, while the Liberals focus on individual liberties and privacy, with the environment gaining in importance.

All of the above augur well for the ability of the European party system to offer distinct policy options to voters on issues of European foreign policy, as well as for the ability of party competition to absorb the integration axis into ideological discussions. This positive assessment though is mitigated by the fourth conclusion of the above analysis: The Integration axis becomes abruptly energized and cuts across the ideological axis when one takes into account radicals of the left and right in the analysis. With them in the picture, the expanded core of the European party system would seem to be pitted against the extremes in the basic issues and foundations of EU foreign policy. This upsets the congruence of the Left-Right and Integration axes and creates a centre v.s. extremes opposition as the key dynamic of European politics. Given the nuanced differences between the party families of the nucleus and the moderate polarization between party families of the expanded nucleus, the intense opposition of radicals to European foreign and security policy as such threatens to overshadow whatever transnational ideological debate on a European level about foreign and security policy exists today. Given the vocal presence of radicals in multiple national scenes and the fact that CFSP maintains its intergovernmental character, the Integration axis ends up affecting debate on European foreign policy much more than what the meager institutional presence of radicals on a European level would suggest.

POLICYMAKING OR COORDINATION?: THE FOREIGN POLICY ACTIVITIES OF EUROPARTIES

a) Transnational Party Federations in the EU Polity: Constituted Strategic Actors

The role of Europarties in EU politics is as yet relatively understudied, even though this should change as transnational party federations see their prerogatives increase. Yet, there still remains the pertinent analytical question of how to

conceptualize the role and activities of Europarties in the EU political system³³. An obvious path would be to draw analogies with national parties and try to evaluate the extent to which Europarties perform basic functions of policymaking, representation and interest promotion that parties on a national level perform. However, this would be a less than fruitful approach, for a variety of reasons (Van Hecke 2010). It essentially overlooks both the unique nature of the European political system, which unites supranational, state-like features and intergovernmental parameters; and the institutional structure of Europarties as such, which remain 'indirect parties' in the sense that their very existence depends on the assent and cooperation of their constitutive national member-parties. Indeed, Europarties as hard tangible institutions remain little more than middle-sized offices in Brussels, drops in a sea of lobbying companies, consultancies, societal and regional representations, and a host of other actors engaged in EU policymaking. To look for direct policy influence in European politics, and particularly in the field of foreign policy, may be an unfair threshold for their capacities, as well as divert research from other interesting analytical questions.

I prefer to build on an alternative viewpoint of Europarties that stresses their unique position in multi-level political systems and their character as *transnational* actors, situated between the *national* and *supranational* levels (Deschouwer 2006; Van Hecke 2010). According to this viewpoint, Europarties occupy a position that both constrains what they can do and endows them with unique capacities in influencing politics above the national level. As federations of national parties with presence in different institutional settings (Council, Parliament etc.), transnational party federations are well positioned to play the role of link between supranational and intergovernmental politics, as well as to find opportunities to infuse policymaking with their own distinct preferences (Johansson 2002). Especially when discussing European foreign and security policy, this stress on Europarties' transnational character ties in intriguingly with the Transnational Relations literature (Risse-Kappen 1994) and other approaches from IR and FPA that focus on the role of non-state actors operating in and across multiple levels of policymaking. By embracing this more refined view of Europarties, and for the purposes of a discussion pertaining to foreign policy and world politics, one can conceptualize transnational party federations as emerging actors influencing the activities of a significant player on the international stage like the EU.

Of what consists the role of a transnational actor in a multi-level political system in issue areas with international dimensions? While opportunities for direct influence on policymaking may exist, these should be rare in a context where supranational dimensions cut across intergovernmental ones. As political and

³³ See generally Bardi (2002, 2004), Ladrech (2006) and Lightfoot (2006).

ideological actors, Europarties can best hope to, and are best seen as influencing the policymaking process, trying to identify 'points of entry' in the EU polity that allow them to feed their own preferences and viewpoints. However, the specific features of Europarties and the EU political system mean that they are positioned to go beyond simple normative, NGO-like influencing from *outside* the political process. In a thickly institutionalized context, Europarties serve as important facilitators, if not *inside* the policymaking process, then definitely *between* different institutions, actors and levels of policymaking. With their capacity to bring together actors from different institutional settings and to serve as hubs for exchange of information that would otherwise flow with difficulty between levels (especially in foreign policy that is still seen as a very sensitive issue-area), one would do best to broadly see Europarties' activities as falling under the designation of *coordination*: Coordination not in the sense of direct influencing and careful choreographing of multiple actors, but more in the sense of diffuse spreading of policy ideas across levels and the seeking of loose homogeneity in the ways likeminded actors approach specific foreign policy issues.

Coordination captures the dual reality of Europarties' position in the EU polity, i.e. that of heavily constituted actors (in both the legal and the political sense) with significant capacity to adapt to and influence their environment. From an IR point of view, transnational party federations can be seen as falling under the analytical scope of constructivist approaches that stress the dual nature of political actors as both constituted by their social environment and capable of engaging with it and effecting change (Dessler 1989). This is a looser analytical framework that enriches our view of the role of party politics on a European level and goes beyond the instinctive tendency to draw analogies between national party politics and Euro-level developments. At the same time, 'strategy' has to be understood not only in the sense of Europarties seeking entry points in the policymaking process for the infusion of their own foreign policy ideas, but also as a self-aware activity of Europarties seeking to increase their own prerogatives. This dimension can be analytically captured by the concept of 'political entrepreneurship'³⁴, whereby Europarties seek to highlight and increase the added value of their coordination activities as a way to enhance their own standing. In this sense, Europarties' strategic calculation consists of them very consciously 'knowing their place', in the sense that they refrain from seeking unrealistic policymaking prerogatives and instead adapt to the institutional imperatives of the arenas they function in. The more they perform their role well and the more that role is seen as useful by national and supranational actors, the more Europarties can hope to see their own

³⁴ On political entrepreneurship generally, see among others Mintrom (1997), Mintrom and Vergari (1996), and Sheingate (2003).

policy ideas find their way into policy outputs, which in turn reflects back on their own importance and standing in the EU polity. In essence, one should expect to find Europarties actively pushing a tradeoff on other actors, by forcing them to concede policy influence in order to gain recourse to the transnational federations' coordinating and facilitating activities.

b) Europarties in European Foreign and Security Policy Processes Today

The concrete activities and ambitions of Europarties with regards to foreign policy can be deciphered through a content analysis of party documentation only to some extent. Here I offer an analytical transcript of interviews I conducted in the three main European party federations with party cadres responsible for the CFSP domain (Anonymous 2013, Frantz 2013, Polet 2013). Semi-structured interviews allow research to go beyond formally described policy processes and content, and can reveal undergoing dynamics and challenges in the ways party federations view their own prerogatives and seek to expand them.

The most obvious instrument Europarties have in their hands to coordinate member-party positions on foreign policy and promote their own preferences are specialist ministerial meetings of likeminded foreign ministers (as well as ministers of defence, trade and other areas with international dimensions). However, Europarties face various challenges in setting up those, especially when it comes to foreign affairs. First, the success of any ministerial meeting hinges on the number of ministers each party family has in any constellation of the Council of the EU. It would make little sense to call a meeting with, say, five people in the room. Even a major party family like the PES had a problem fulfilling this criterion, which of course affected all minister meetings, during some lean years in 2010-11. The EPP on the other hand faces a peculiar challenge when it comes to the foreign affairs ministerial meetings: Because EPP parties are usually the biggest partners in governing coalitions, usually a prestigious ministry like the one of foreign affairs is given to junior partners in the coalition. The numerical criterion is of course a major challenge for the smaller family, ALDE, which explains why foreign affairs ministerial meetings have been attempted sparsely and on an ad hoc basis. ALDE tries to compensate by creating structures where not only national actors, but also MEPs and member party experts are invited to discuss foreign policy.

There are other specific challenges that come with organizing foreign affairs ministerial meetings. One is the heavy schedule of foreign ministers, who travel much more often than other ministers, thus making coordination difficult. Another challenge is the nature of their portfolio: Interviewees at EPP and PES made reference to the unique nature of foreign affairs meetings. They tend to be the most 'closed' and 'private' among ministerial meetings, they issue no statements and they take place with only the ministers present (as the EPP interviewee stated, even

when Catherine Ashton participated, she did so with only one assistant present). This would create the impression that the Europarty willingness to summon likeminded foreign ministers would run against both their schedules and their instincts, but actually the exact opposite is the case.

All persons contacted affirmed that the experience of ministerial meetings on Foreign Affairs has been overwhelmingly positive and that the meetings, when held, have been a success. The ministers have particularly valued the opportunity to discuss foreign policy issues in an informal setting, alone, without the presence of secretaries and staff. This in turn has made Europarties particularly sought after as facilitators and organizers of such meetings. As the EPP interviewee mentioned, foreign ministers actively lobby the party to organize meetings, which is very striking given the otherwise full schedule of foreign ministers that makes the organization of these meetings a challenge for Europarties. The interviewees (particularly those from the EPP and PES) identified this 'information and views exchange' aspect as the biggest added value of the ministerial meetings: Ministerial meetings on foreign affairs create an environment where ideologically likeminded ministers can exchange views on issues of world affairs outside of the protocol and processes of diplomacy. This makes Europarties an important alternative stage for the conduct of foreign policy, one that is not only parallel to the existing EU structures (the Council) but also has a significance on its own, to the extent that national ministers can exchange views and information in a smaller circle defined by ideological congruence.

The chairmanship of the ministerial meetings is particularly important. Both EPP and PES interviewees acknowledged the paramount role of the chairs of the ministerial meetings, who provide continuity and the political impetus for the continuation of these meetings. The PES meetings are currently chaired by the Luxembourgian foreign minister, while the EPP meetings have a joint chair made up of a representative of the EPP Group (Elmar Brok throughout the existence of the meetings) and a national foreign minister (first Italy's Franco Frattini and currently Portugal's Paulo Portas). With the EPP party represented in the meetings by its International Secretary (currently Nicolas Briec) and on rare and significant occasions by its President Wilfried Martens, this allows for all three pillars of the EPP family (party, group and members) to be represented in the meeting and contribute to discussions and coordination.

The question remains what, if any, is the influence of Europarties on these discussions beyond the provision of facilities and logistics for the staging of meetings of national officials. Cadres in Europarties were asked about the 'independent agenda effect' of their respective party on the meetings of ministers it organizes. Their role lies primarily in organizing the agenda of these meetings according to the agenda of the Council – in other words, the meetings have a

preparatory function ahead of Council sessions. However, the Europarties have exhibited the ability to react to events and seize the opportunity to make their own coordinating mechanisms relevant in the event of international events of importance. PES, for example, has called ministerial meetings on issue areas with international dimensions that it feels particularly committed to (e.g. trade), while the EPP responded to the EU's decision to call an extraordinary foreign affairs council meeting due to the Libya crisis by staging a ministerial meeting beforehand. Beyond this though, Europarties are wedded to the schedule and agenda of the Council, which is a shrewd strategy since it further highlights their own added value as conduits for coordination and exchange of views in an otherwise strict diplomatic setting.

Indeed, the best way to see the EPP and the PES' role in European foreign policy is not as independent actors who aggressively try to 'ideologize' foreign policy making, but rather as strategic actors who act as hubs between national, European and partisan spheres of politics, serving as resources in this net of policymaking for actors with multiple attachments (organizational, national, ideological), in the process enhancing their own importance. In this way, Europarties can be seen as valuable actors of European foreign policy due to their ability to trade their importance as providers of mechanisms of information and coordination for their willingness to promote specific ideological positions within the overall frame of European foreign policy. Yondec Polet spoke about the PES' ability to provide to national ministers a perspective from the 'partisan channel', as opposed to the 'diplomatic channel'. PES would provide Socialist ministers information and viewpoints as received by PES associate parties in countries of interest to the EU (for example Egypt). In this way a double dynamic develops: The PES is able to introduce in the discussions of its foreign ministers the perspectives of its affiliated parties, while national ministers receive information from local actors in the European periphery that would not be readily available to national services.

A similar 'influence-for-information' tradeoff is discernible in the ways the EPP influences the viewpoints of conservative foreign ministers. In many ways, the EPP seems more assertive than the PES. Not only does the EPP, similar to the PES, provide a 'partisan channel' in the information-sharing activities of national ministers during their meetings, but it also actively tries to promote distinct EPP views to foreign ministers as they conduct national and European foreign policy. In the case of serving as linkage with non-EU parties in the European periphery, the EPP has been very receptive to the positions of such actors as Georgian President Saakashvili or Ukrainian ex-Prime Minister Yulia Timoshenko. Their positions are channeled as information provided to national foreign ministers when discussing Eastern Partnership issues, but also the EPP seeks to make these positions echoed in the activities of conservative foreign ministers towards relevant countries. The EPP,

for example, tried and managed to have affiliated foreign ministers raise the issue of Timoshenko's incarceration during their visits to Ukraine for the Euro 2012 Football Championships. Obviously, EPP's ideological activism would not have been so successful if national ministers, pursuing their national mandates, did not see an added value in the overall framework of coordination and information-exchange provided by the EPP, hence being willing to engage in this tradeoff with the party. Indeed, according to the EPP interviewee, and similar to the PES, the party is a valuable source of information about 'situation on the ground', which at the same time serves as a source of ideologically coloured foreign policy positions.

Despite its lack of institutional mechanisms for coordination on a ministerial level, ALDE also performs this double-track tradeoff between information and political influence in the field of foreign policy. This has to do with the fact that the main arena for discussion and coordination on foreign policy in ALDE is the party's congress, and the related fact that ALDE is the only major Europarty where non-EU parties are full and equal members. In this way, the very institutional nature of ALDE and the processes used for discussion of foreign policy are clearly linked, since the party's main organ (its congress) is made up also of members from countries in the EU's periphery and with foreign and security policy interest. The institutional structure of ALDE then, even though it lacks the foreign policy-specific mechanisms for coordination of other Europarties, favors the incorporation of likeminded partisan views from outside the EU in foreign policy discussions within the party that serve both as an impetus for the formulation of liberal stances on foreign policy issues and as sources of information for national and European foreign policy making.

Ministerial meetings also provide the opportunity for like-minded actors from national and supranational levels to come together in a setting that is less rigid than the official meetings of the Council. This concerns particularly the ability of Europarties to act as hosts of meetings where national ministers meet with relevant Commissioners, thus allowing for an exchange of views and information. The PES understandably has privileged access to Catherine Ashton, but the EPP also has currently members of the family in external action portfolios, such as the current Commissioner for international development and aid. Also, Michel Barnier, an ex-foreign minister and currently responsible for the internal market, a portfolio with repercussions for defence, is very present. This raises the EPP's standing as a source of specialized information for national ministers who can gain access to the Commission's expertise. Finally, ALDE also serves as the setting where liberal national actors can meet with likeminded Commissioners.

Europarty ministerial meetings ahead of foreign affairs Council sessions have an important impact on the workings of the Council itself. Both the EPP and PES seek to facilitate the formulation of common positions of likeminded ministers before the

meetings, or at the very least to anticipate the expression of differences in a prior stage than the Council itself. The Europarties can then legitimately expect that 'their' positions will be raised in the Council by a coordinated bloc of likeminded ministers. Interviewees were very careful not to speak of direct policy influence on the workings of the Council though, and preferred to stress 'coordination' as their main function, with common partisan positions arising as a welcome side effect. One can assume though that, at the very least, partisan ministerial meetings smooth out the proceedings of the Council itself, having created opportunities for discussion in a relaxed setting and having formulated common ideological approaches among groups of ministers to issues discussed later on in plenary.

Ministerial meetings are only one of the institutionalized instruments of coordination and information-exchange that Europarties use in foreign policy. The PES has a Foreign Policy Network that brings together representatives from all member-parties (both from government and opposition) and from different institutional settings (national and European). The role of the Network is to supplant the ministerial meetings when these cannot be held due to low numbers of participants. The EPP has specialized 'foreign minister seminars', where the family's foreign ministers get together with foreign policy experts of member-parties from the EU and affiliated members from outside the EU. This creates a unique opportunity for national policymakers from the EU to exchange views and get into contact with actors from outside the Union. The value of these meetings is particularly high for the Eastern Partnership. The EPP Expert Group on Foreign Affairs is an initiative that has been running only for one year (since 2012) and it brings together EPP actors from multiple organs of the EU, as well as other international organizations in Europe, in order to exchange views on the family's foreign policy positions. Finally, and interestingly, the EPP's Working Group 3, concerned with membership of the Europarty, has intriguing foreign policy dimensions. Gaining membership or associated status to the EPP is a painstaking process that hinges not only on the EPP evaluating a party-candidate's policy profile and organizational capacities, but also on its evaluation of a country's overall character as a democratic polity. To the extent that candidacy evaluations require Working Group members to undertake study visits to states in the EU's periphery (e.g. FYROM), its workings can be seen as an opportunity for the EPP to increase its own expertise and information reservoir about the political situation in Europe's surroundings (Western Balkans, Belarus etc.).

Representatives of all three major political families acknowledged that there exist important differences between them in foreign policy issues. These differences concern both differences of preferences on specific issues (for example the PES is much more supportive of enlargement than the EPP), as well as differences of emphasis (for example the EPP lays a qualitatively different emphasis on human

rights in the EU's foreign policy towards the Eastern neighborhood). However, this policy competition takes place in a diffuse way, with different partisan preferences on EU foreign policy being distilled through various channels of coordination and communication. In this landscape, one should not expect policy competition between Europarties to be akin to the competition of national centralized political parties. Yondec Polet's description of the role of partisan identity in EU foreign policy is revelatory. Polet acknowledged how important it is for PES that the two most important actors of EU foreign policy – Ashton and Enlargement Commissioner Fuele – belong to the Socialist family, especially as resources for information in the party's coordination work. When asked though if this means that there is a direct influence of PES on EU policymaking, Polet responded negatively. Ashton and Fuele promoted positions close to the preferences of the PES (even against the will of most member-states) by virtue of the fact that they were socialists, not because the PES dictates their positions³⁵. In the same spirit, the EPP interviewee stated clearly that the ambition of the ministerial meetings is not to influence the decisions of the Council, but rather to increase coordination between Ministers (even though he acknowledged that the EPP has de facto leverage when it has the majority in the Council).

According to Polet, the PES is not seeking to 'influence policy', but to serve as 'added value' to governments. Instead of being a decision-maker, the PES is simply responding to an ever-growing need for coordination between foreign policy actors. ALDE advisor Frantz is equally careful in assessing the prospects for Europarties to directly influence policy in the future, and instead focuses on their coordinating role and their ability to respond to existing needs of government and national parties for information and contacts with other actors. However, he also pointed out that, while ministers and politicians change as time goes by, Europarties can serve as stable repositories of expertise and coordination in foreign policy. Indeed, Frantz makes the very interesting point that the Europarties' coordination role allows them to have access to information that would not otherwise be available to them, given the secretive nature of foreign policy. He remains very sanguine though about the prospects of Europarties to establish themselves as the first 'port of call' for national actors seeking information and coordination.

These statements shed light on the self-awareness and pragmatism of Europarties, but also on the channels through which partisan influence is being exerted on European foreign policy. This is a function of the effectiveness and capacities of policy networks constructed around partisan attachments, with

³⁵ This may also serve as a first response to the question raised by Van Hecke (2010: 405): 'Relationships between transnational party federations and 'their' commissioners have obviously become more visible over the years, but this does not necessarily mean that the work of the Commissioners has become more partisan'.

policymakers and political actors exchanging information for institutional support. In the flows of these resources between different members of these networks, Europarties find opportunities to promote some of their positions and to infuse policies with distinct ideological strains. According to Yonnec Polet, party affiliation creates 'opportunities for ideological coordination' and facilitates the conduct of intergovernmental politics. It is the capacity of Europarties to act as resources for national and European foreign policy making that allows them to exploit access points in the policymaking process and to promote their positions. Rather than partisan actors promoting monolithically commonly accepted partisan positions across national and European levels of foreign policy making (a prospect that is bound to remain untenable far beyond the foreseeable future), the partisan influence cuts across national and institutional attachments, with its strength highly dependent on the political and institutional resources of the Europarties. In this respect, political and institutional power of European party families within the European political system does not mean direct match with policy outputs, however its absence significantly hinders the capabilities of Europarties to promote their positions. It is inside this limited framework that the nature of European partisan competition over foreign policy must be understood.

CONCLUSION

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