Taking Flight or Crashing Down? European Common Foreign Policy and International Crises

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Taking Flight or Crashing Down? European Common Foreign Policy and International Crises

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ABSTRACT

What was the level of commonality in European foreign policy for recent international crises? This article assesses the level of commonality by conducting a chronological comparative content analysis to bring to light the rhetoric of European powers (United Kingdom, France and Germany) and EU actors. It focuses on the crises between Russia and Georgia in 2008 and the civil war in Libya in 2011. The article argues that states often converged in their positioning on a wide range of issues, even in moments of crisis. However, it also reveals that they remain in control of the timing of their statements and that EU actors were weak. This paper puts forth a novel tool to assess European foreign policy in times of crisis, it provides empirical data on the subject and highlights the importance of different types of issues in the assessment of commonality.

The words of European Union’s (EU) High Representative, Catherine Ashton, in the wake of the 2011 ‘Arab Awakening’ were puzzling: ‘it was like flying an airplane while we are still building the wings and somebody is trying to take the tailfin off at the same time (quoted in Trombetta 2012, 60).’ This seems to illustrate both an ongoing process and the impossibility of forging a common foreign policy for Europe. Since the creation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as the second pillar of the EU in the Maastricht Treaty, the debate has been endless as to whether a common foreign policy for European member states exists or not. This concern has been particularly striking in the study of the European responses to international crises. Some observers pointed to the divided approaches of European powers (Peet 2012) for international crises such as the break-up of Yugoslavia (Saideman 2001, 103–109), the 2003 invasion of Iraq (Chari and Cavatorta 2003; Schneider 2004), the Russia–Georgia war of 2008 (Santopinto 2008), and the recent Arab uprisings (Menon 2011; Devuyst 2012; Bucher et al. 2013). Conversely, other authors pointed to increased information exchange, common values, a consensus-reflex, and an emerging strategic culture bringing European partners closer in several areas (Tonra 2003; Smith 2004; Meyer 2006; Bicchi 2012; Bicchi and Carta 2012). For instance, the European response to the crisis in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2001 has been presented as a success in building
a common approach (Gross 2009, 29–38). The recent literature has addressed the challenge of providing empirical data to assess European foreign policy, but scholars still struggle to grasp this phenomenon, especially in times of crisis. Hence, the question remains: what was the level of commonality in European foreign policy for recent international crises?

The first part of this article provides a brief review of the recent literature on assessing the European common foreign policy and then presents a new way to conceptualize the level of commonality of this policy during international crises. Second, the framework of chronological comparative content analysis, a novel and complementary approach appropriate for this task, is laid out. After presenting the results of the analysis, I discuss what this means for European foreign policy. I argue that European foreign policies often converge on their positioning on a wide range of policy areas, but that states retain control of their timing and that institutional actors at the EU level are weak.

**Literature Review and Conceptualization**

This article tackles the question of how ‘common’ are European foreign policies for security and diplomacy, and leaves aside other areas like economic policies and other questions such as the effectiveness or capabilities of European institutions.

**Empirical Indicators of Commonality**

A common policy is difficult if not impossible to carry out for some authors (Gordon 1997; Hoffmann 2000), while it is already taking flight for others (Tonra 2003; Smith 2004). Observers of this policy often take strong positions about the level of commonality during crises, presenting it as an all or nothing phenomenon. For instance, Timothy Garton Ash wrote in The Guardian (2011) that Libya exposed ‘Europe’s fault lines’ and that divisions between European powers made a ‘mockery of Europe’s pretensions to have a foreign policy.’ In this section, I discuss the level of commonality as an empirical phenomenon to be measured and survey some indicators that have been used for this purpose.

Developing tools for assessing the level of European commonality is important for future research. First, systematic scientific inquiry can overcome the over-the-top rhetoric often employed by the media insofar as it avoids relying on anecdotal accounts. Second, if the ultimate goal is to find the relevant factors influencing the integration of foreign policy, the first inevitable step is to evaluate this integration in order to measure the phenomenon to explain. Two main research areas have developed ways to assess European foreign policy.

The first area focused on institutional developments at the EU level. Smith (2004, 109–114) suggested using four indicators: the number of common actions taken each year, the range of issues discussed at the European level, the range of available instruments, and the consistency between the policies of the European Commission and those of the CFSP. Based on these indicators, he showed that the level of commonality increased in time. This area of the literature also often focuses on military action and power projection capabilities. Seth Jones, in his 2007 book, concluded that security cooperation has been increasing between European states since 1990 by looking at the creation and development of security institutions, the coordinated use of economic sanctions, collaboration between European states in arms production and the establishment of a joint military force. Gross (2009, xi) suggested that the variety of tasks, the geographical range, and increasing number of missions
undertaken under the European Security and Defense Policy illustrate the development and use of common European tools.

The second domain of research focused instead on the socialization of national leaders in a common culture at the European level. Meyer (2006) used opinion surveys and newspapers content to probe for common norms in the public sphere and semi-structured interviews and questionnaires for the elites (2006, 9–10). Meyer found norm convergence on most dimensions, but that differences remained for others (2006, 109–110, 139–164). A number of recent studies (Bicchi 2012; Bicchi and Carta 2012) analyzed the amount, direction, and type of messages sent through the COREU (Correspondance Européenne) system and the new CoOL (Consular Online) one. These authors showed that these systems have led to a ‘thick’ practice of information-sharing, constant consultation among European partners and that information in the system increasingly originates from Brussels, especially since the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS).

The indicators and tools that have been deployed have their limitations. Institutional indicators often focused on the creation of common tools more than on how these instruments are used during crises. European states may not share a common approach in times of crisis even if they have invested in a common military force. Also, institutional development can make the structure more complicated and dilute responsibilities (see Carta 2013), paradoxically making a common outcome more difficult to reach. The socialization literature focused more on day-to-day interactions than on times of crises. For example, elites may agree on the general norms of how to use force, but not on how to use it in a specific instance when state interests matter considerably. The study of media, opinion polls, and interviews may reveal a wish for more commonality and actors might see more commonality than there actually is. As Meyer himself remarks (2006, 19), norms are sometimes violated and are not sufficient to explain foreign policy outcomes. Both institutional and socialization indicators appear incomplete as they often point in the same direction of greater commonality. This is surprising considering the difficult process of building a common foreign policy for several countries and the widely divergent assessment of observers who see a divided Europe.

In the next section, I offer a new way to conceptualize foreign policy commonality. I then present a complementary method, chronological comparative content analysis, which makes a significant contribution to the toolkit for evaluating European foreign policy.

**The Level of Commonality**

The confluence of European powers on common policies during international crises, what I call commonality, can be analyzed through four traits.

First, a common policy entails similar stated positions by the member states. The rhetoric of actors during a crisis can provide clues about this level of convergence. I define rhetoric as the manifest content expressed by political actors in public statements that conveys information about their decisions and the justifications behind them. The highest degree of convergence is when states announce the same policy positions and employ the same justifications to support them. A lower degree would be when states arrive at the same positions for different reasons. A policy is divergent when states adopt different policies, and it is highly divergent when, in their justifications, they oppose the justifications of the other states.
Second, the level of commonality can also be assessed according to the timing of the states’ positioning. A long delay — weeks — for the adoption of a common position suggests that commonality was harder to reach than if European states had converged in only a few days. The supreme degree of commonality would be coordination between states that led them to announce their positions on the same day to make it clear that they genuinely stand together on the issue. Timing is also useful as it can show which state initiated a position. If the common European position is due to its convergence on a position adopted by the United States at an earlier date, this would suggest that convergence may not have its source in European politics.

A third way to assess foreign policy commonality is to look for the level of institutionalization in policy coordination. The most recent leap forward in foreign policy coordination was the Lisbon treaty. Implemented in 2009, it centralized European diplomacy around the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR) who was to be assisted by the EEAS. However, the significance of this institutional development for foreign policy commonality has been contentious (Babayan 2010; Carta 2013). A high level of institutionalization can be understood as a process in which institutional leaders, like the EU HR, can advocate positions early on and persuade national leaders to accept their views as the events unfold. Weaker institutional leaders are more likely to speak after European powers have already stated their positions and to stick to the minimal consensus among states. Weak institutions in time of crisis remain silent as to avoid controversial issues and leave states to manage the crisis on their own. In this case, institutions are more instruments for states than a force for increased commonality.

Finally, the level of commonality can also be assessed regarding its extent across policy issues. It is possible that there is a high degree of commonality on some issues, but not on others. Convergence may be harder on newly emerging issues or because a specific issue requires committing and coordinating resources. The wider the range of issues with a high level of commonality on the three other components of commonality, the higher the extent of commonality.

The general question of the level of commonality can be disaggregated in four questions. On the similarity of positioning, what was the level of convergence in the positions of European powers? On the matter of timing, when did they announce their positions? When did EU institutional leaders announce their positions, what positions did they initiate, and did European powers align? Finally, how did the level of commonality vary from one policy issue to the other? The next section details a method that makes it possible to pursue simultaneously these questions and explains how it is applied to two international crises in this article.

**Chronological Comparative Content Analysis**

In this article, I provide a chronological comparative content analysis (CCCA) for France, Germany, and the United Kingdom as well as for the EU Council or the EU HR regarding the 2008 Russia–Georgia war and the 2011 Libyan civil war. These three powers are at the core of EU policy-making, but they also are major security actors within NATO and the UN. This triangle is often seen to be at the center of Europe’s disunity dramas, but also, in the case of France and Germany, to have a central role in the construction of a more integrated Europe. Focusing on powerful EU states is particularly interesting for commonality
as these actors are more ‘shapers’ than ‘takers’ when it comes to European foreign policy (Alecu de Flers and Müller 2012, 23). I also included the United States in the analysis as a control to verify whether European commonality was the product of the alignment on the United States’ positions.

An international crisis is a process ‘characterized by higher levels of perceived intensity,’ which often has ‘important implications for the stability of some system or subsystem (or pattern of relationship) in international politics (Young 1968, 9–15).’ The intense and often unpredictable moments of crisis produce a great number of declarations by foreign policy-makers in a short period of time and their response to the events under stress is a good test to find out whether a common approach prevails or not. Crises make coordinating foreign policies more important, but also more difficult (Börzel, Risse, and Dandashly 2015, 142).

The two crises under study are good cases to test the level of commonality as they happened at the doorstep of Europe and provoked rapid and major reactions in London, Paris and Berlin. First, these crises have been depicted as moments of division and failure of a common approach for European powers (Santopinto 2008; Garton Ash 2011; Menon 2011; Devuyst 2012; Bucher et al. 2013). They therefore constitute a hard case for a high level of commonality. Second, while the Russia–Georgia crisis was an interstate war that grew from a secessionist conflict and the Libyan case was a civil war that provoked outside intervention, both crises raised issues of stability and security for European countries. The Russia–Georgia war of 2008 had the destabilizing potential of spreading organized crime through Europe (Whitman and Wolff 2010, 13), while the 2011 Libyan crisis brought the danger of a massive exodus of refugees across the Mediterranean (Santini and Varvelli 2011; Dandashly 2014, 39). Third, comparing these two crises provides an event before and one after the Lisbon Treaty, as the Libya crisis occurred just after the EEAS entered in service. While the HR might not have been ready to play a leading role, Libya can be seen as a first test as to whether more developed European institutions can bring the foreign policies of European powers closer together.

The CCCA method makes it possible to reconstruct the chronological sequence of declarations and facilitates an in-depth qualitative comparison. It provides clues on all four aspects of commonality by bringing to light the similarity of positions, the timing, the level of institutionalization and differences across issues. CCCA is conducted in five main steps.

(1) Official declarations are selected according to different criteria that specify the sources, timeframe, and type of documents appropriate for the study. These declarations are then retrieved from official archives.

(2) The retrieved files are then imported into a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (sometimes referred to as CAQDAS). In this process, variables are associated with each imported document, so that the analysts can easily find information like the date of the announcement, the author of the declaration, and the crisis that it deals with.

(3) The third step consists in creating a codebook. The codebook should include a wide range of issues of interest, it should provide for clear rules as to what is to be coded and how. The goal of the codebook is to facilitate the identification of all key positions related to a given crisis.

(4) The fourth step is an iterative process whereby the documents are coded and the codebook is refined. Coding consists in associating the codes to segments of text.
As the coding progresses, coders can identify issues that were not in the codebook or that are specific to a crisis. They can then create a new code in the codebook or modify the definition of an existing one, and then go back to code it accordingly in the declarations.

(5) Finally, positions are extracted from the coding, by looking at the issues that policy-makers have emphasized the most or have given justifications for. Key positions, precise stances that the actors take, are identified according to various criteria the researcher selects. The software makes it easy to retrieve segments of text and to identify the date where each actor was the first to adopt a given position.

Below I detail how these steps were conducted for the current study.

(1) Hundred and ninety-seven official declarations were retrieved from official online websites of the relevant agencies. The files consisted in all the official statements, speeches, and interviews heads of state and foreign ministers for the four countries gave, as well as the declarations the presidency of the EU Council before 2009 and the HR after 2009 made relating to the crises under study. The analysis focuses on the beginning of the crises as moments when rapidly unfolding events put European countries to the test and when intense diplomatic positioning occurred on the international scene. The timeframe for the analysis is from 7 August to 26 August 2008 for the Russia–Georgia crisis and 15 February to 18 March 2011 for Libya, ending when NATO took over military operations.

(2) The files were imported in the QDA Miner software. The documents were categorized according to four main variables: the date of the declaration, the crisis that it is about, the institutional source of the document (e.g. French foreign ministry), and the country that it represents.

(3) The author created the codebook based on the literature and discussions with colleagues; it consisted of 36 codes. For more details about the codes and rules of the coding manual, see the Appendix.

(4) Two coders worked on the codebook and the first test coding to minimize subjectivity. Some codes were identified as specific to the crisis under study. For instance in the Libyan case, a code ‘must go’ was created to identify all segments of text where the speakers demand that Gaddafi leaves his position of authority. In total, 4884 segments of text were coded.

(5) The criterion for identifying ‘key’ positions was that all three European powers took a stance on a given issue. Other issues on which two powers or less announced their positions were also considered and are discussed, but do not appear in Tables 1 and 2 as key positions. The result section presents the positions that were found in the analysis and illustrates how the justifications for them can be easily retrieved and analyzed for in-depth qualitative analysis.

CCCA is a transparent method as far as the coded documents, the coding rules, and identified key positions are explicit and can be contested. It also relies on a systematic and encompassing study of the statements made in a crisis. This method has its limitations — it does not reveal the diplomatic negotiations and a priori coordination behind the curtains — but it still provides answers for the research puzzle. It is particularly useful to compare the responses of different states across time.
Results

Russia–Georgia war

In August 2008, the armed forces of Georgia and Russia clashed over the contested province of South Ossetia. The crisis abated after an agreement credited to French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who was at that time also president of the European Council, led to a ceasefire. Table 1 presents the results of the chronological content analysis for five key positions taken by the European powers during the crisis.

Table 1 shows that France took the lead for most key positions at the beginning of the crisis (bold indicates first European power to speak). Germany waited until the European Council announced its positions on the three issues of Georgia’s territorial integrity, the need for humanitarian assistance, and the demand for the Russian troops to withdraw before publicly declaring its support for all these positions. It could have been a way for Germany to leave the spotlight to the French double-hated president. However, our analysis also reveals that for some key positions, neither France nor the United Kingdom waited for consensus in the EU Council to announce their positions. France, not the US, initiated three out of the five key positions. British leaders announced a position before the American leaders only once, and Germany did not.

Overall, the three European powers adopted a very similar rhetoric on most of the key positions. All three declared their support for Georgia’s territorial integrity, expressed concerns for the humanitarian situation, and demanded the withdrawal of Russian troops, which was part of the six-point peace plan. The European countries agreed on all these matters, and often used the same words to announce their position. The rhetoric emphasized the ceasefire as a way to help the population in a difficult humanitarian situation. For instance, compare the following statements:

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner:

Fighting absolutely needs to stop and we can bring the help of the European Union to these people who are at our doorstep and extend a hand. (translated from French, Kouchner 2008a)

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown:

What we must do now is ensure that it’s a lasting ceasefire, and that there is humanitarian aid, which we are prepared to provide for those who are casualties of what has been a terrible set of events. (Brown 2008b)

German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier:

Firstly, we focused on how we could quickly and effectively deliver humanitarian aid. Secondly, we agreed that the EU must continue to play a key role in the stabilization of the region. (Steinmeier 2008)

The end of the military conflict was understood as a way to allow humanitarian aid to reach the population. European powers also reaffirmed their support for the candidacy of Georgia

Table 1. Key positions and timing for Russia–Georgia crisis, August 2008.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Support Georgia’s territorial integrity</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>EU Council</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Concerns for humanitarian assistance</td>
<td>Aug. 8</td>
<td>Aug. 15</td>
<td>Aug. 11</td>
<td>Aug. 11</td>
<td>Aug. 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Georgia still considered for NATO</td>
<td>Aug. 18</td>
<td>Aug. 15</td>
<td>Aug. 21</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Aug. 15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to NATO during the crisis. The German Chancellor restated her country’s position on the matter: ‘We said that Georgia and Ukraine will become members of NATO (Merkel 2008).’ On the same issue, the French foreign minister declared that France shared the same ‘attitude’ (Kouchner 2008c). The British PM Gordon Brown stated ‘… as one of the people arguing very strongly for Georgia and Ukraine to come into NATO. I feel quite strongly that we were right, what we did there (2008c).’ While it is impossible to be certain of the three leaders’ intentions with regard to Georgia’s accession to NATO, the reiteration of this position during the crisis by the three European powers indicates a strong support for Georgia.

The main difference between the three countries was the timing and extent of condemnation of Russian actions. As early as 11 August, the British Prime Minister declared that there was ‘no justification’ for Russia’s ‘aggression against Georgia’ which could ‘threaten the stability of the entire region and risk a humanitarian catastrophe (Brown 2008a):’ On the same day, French Foreign Minister Kouchner (2008b) instead said ‘I am not here to condemn, I am here to propose a solution to stop the hostilities’ and avoided a question on the possible interference of Russia in Georgia’s sovereign affairs. Later, on 15 August, German Chancellor Merkel added her voice to the British Prime Minister’s one, declaring that ‘some of Russia’s actions’ were ‘inappropriate’ (2008). However, German condemnation remained rather mild, as the German Foreign Minister refused to ‘blame one side or the other’ a few days later (Steimeiner 2008). France also employed the rhetoric of condemnation, attributing the blame to both sides. President Sarkozy, for instance, blamed both the Georgian intervention in South Ossetia and the disproportionate Russian response (2008). Therefore, Germany and France did not attribute unequivocal blame to Russia, which was the US–UK common position.

As for the European institutions, the EU Council made few statements during the crisis and avoided sensitive matters like the condemnation of Russia and the enlargement of NATO. The Council made vague statements demanding the end of violence and stated on 13 August, after an extraordinary meeting, that it ‘welcomed the agreement subscribed to by the parties on the basis of the mediation efforts carried out by the Union (EU Council 2008).’ The Council usually spoke after two out of the three powers announced their position and did so only to declare that it agreed with the negotiations that had already occurred.

In short, there was an almost complete convergence of views of the European powers during the Russia–Georgia crisis, with France taking the lead. The main difference between the countries’ positions was a matter of nuance, with the United Kingdom going a little further in its condemnation of Russia and speaking out earlier in the crisis on this.

**Libyan civil war**

Following the popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, riots in Benghazi in February 2011 triggered a civil war between the Libyan regime of Muammar Gaddafi and a coalition of opponents. In response, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) voted resolutions 1970 and 1973 which authorized the subsequent North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military operation to ensure a no-fly zone over Libya (Koenig 2011, 2–3).

On the condemnation of the Libyan regime, the demands for accountability and referral to the International Criminal Court, the matters of sanctions and the request to Gaddafi to leave his position of authority, the European powers saw eye to eye. Table 2 shows that France was the main leader again, with the United Kingdom also playing an important role.
France has taken the lead for four positions on which both European states and the US acted as followers, and the UK announced support for the intervention before the United States publicly and explicitly did.

All three states employed a rhetoric where notions of accountability, international law, the defense of human rights, cooperation at the UN and in the EU, condemnation of the regime, and the imposition of sanctions were closely intertwined. These themes were also found in the rhetoric of the HR:

This morning too, the message is clear: we condemn the grave human rights violations committed in Libya. The violence and repression must stop. Those responsible must be held to account. This is not just the EU’s position. It is the view of the international community and its highest authority: the UN Security Council. (Ashton 2011b)

France made it clear that ‘Gaddafi had to go’ because of systematic and unacceptable violence against the Libyan people (Sarkozy 2011). David Cameron stated that ‘this is an illegitimate regime that has lost the consent of its people. My message to Colonel Gaddafi is simple: go now (2011).’ The German Foreign Minister announced his country’s position later: ‘The dictator Gaddafi must go (Westerwelle 2011a).’

The European powers’ most consequential agreement was the will to impose sanctions against Gaddafi and his relatives, leading the EU to impose stricter sanctions than the UNSC resolution had called for (Koenig 2011, 11). The EU HR first declared that the EU had been ‘looking at the possibility of restrictive measures’ on 25 February (Ashton 2011a), suggesting that the European institutions had to wait until there was broad agreement to state a position clearly in favor of sanctions, which it did on 27 February.

As the crisis went on, two disagreements surfaced. The first was on the recognition of the Transitional National Council (TNC) and the other on military intervention.

In a joint letter to the EU Council presidency on 10 March, President Sarkozy and Prime Minister Cameron supported the TNC, the main group representing the consolidated opposition to Gaddafi in Libya (Sarkozy and Cameron 2011). In the period under study, Germany did not add its voice to the support of the TNC. It merely expressed, later on, that it saw the TNC as an ‘important interlocutor’ (Westerwelle 2011b). This disagreement was rather mild as it concerns the level of support and recognition to be given to the TNC and not its legitimacy.

The main divergence between the European powers, as illustrated by the abstaining of Germany on the vote of UNSC Resolution 1973, was on the issue of intervention. At the beginning of the crisis, European leaders seemed reticent to engage in military operations in Libya. The only option discussed was a NATO-led intervention backed by the United States, but even that was excluded in the rhetoric employed. For instance, the French Foreign Minister declared on 2 March:

Table 2. Key positions and timing for Libyan crisis, February–March 2011.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>EU HR</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Gaddafi should be referred to the ICC</td>
<td>Feb. 25</td>
<td>Feb. 28</td>
<td>Feb. 28</td>
<td>Feb. 27</td>
<td>Feb. 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Gaddafi must leave</td>
<td>Feb. 25</td>
<td>Mar. 1</td>
<td>Feb. 28</td>
<td>Mar. 11</td>
<td>Feb. 26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Should we go further and prepare a military intervention? We do not think so in the actual context. I demand that you think about the consequences of such an intervention of NATO in Libya: it could bring together against the north of the Mediterranean the Arab public opinions and people. (Translated from French, Juppé 2011)

A few days later, the positions shifted dramatically, the United Kingdom and France supporting a UNSC Resolution authorizing a military operation to impose a no-fly zone over Libya. This no-fly zone was seen as a way to stop the advance of Gaddafi’s forces, to protect the civilian population and it was legitimized by the support of the UN and the Arab League. Germany not only disagreed, but put forth arguments that ran counter to the Franco-British rhetoric. There were three main German arguments against intervention. First, participating in the no-fly zone was walking into a military conflict that might get out of hand and require more from Germany. As Minister Westerwelle said, ‘We do not want to start going down some slippery slope leading eventually to German soldiers being involved in a war in Libya (Westerwelle 2011b).’ Second, the no-fly zone might not be effective in stopping Gaddafi (Westerwelle 2011b, 2011c). Finally, and perhaps the strongest point made, was that there were going to be civilian casualties: ‘there’s no such thing as a “surgical intervention.” Every military operation claims civilian victims (Westerwelle 2011d).’

This last argument strongly suggested that the means allied powers employed in Libya were morally wrong and ran directly against the pretensions of the other states to act in order to protect the civilian population.

However, the German Foreign Minister seemed to compensate in a policy statement he made on 18 March after its country abstained from supporting Resolution 1973. He was eager, for instance, to present Germany as ‘one of the first countries’ to impose sanctions and condemn Gaddafi. This quote illustrates well this sentiment of guilt that ran through the Foreign Minister’s speech.

It’s not as if Germany weren’t prepared to assume international responsibility. Germany is shoulderling responsibility. For example, 7000 German soldiers are involved in Bundeswehr missions abroad. [...] Also today, especially today in the light of the terrible news from Afghanistan, I would like to once more express this thanks to the Bundeswehr. (Westerwelle 2011d)

This attitude seemed to reflect an acute German realization of the pressure bearing on its leaders to follow the position of other Western allies.³

The EU HR issued many statements during the crisis (18 in total) and while she never spoke first, she was not always the last to speak either. Catherine Ashton mentioned the TNC just to declare that she had a meeting with them — according to her the purpose of this meeting was ‘to gather information’ — and she spoke of the no-fly zone only to say that it was being ‘discussed’, taking no stand on the matter (2011c).

To summarize the Libya crisis, the three powers broadly agreed on five out of six key positions. Germany did not take a position on the TNC and significantly disagreed over the issue of the intervention, using a very different rhetoric from France and the United Kingdom. The EU institutions were instrumental in imposing sanctions only after the three powers had agreed on them and avoided the important issue of intervention.

**Discussion**

**The four components of commonality**

The analysis reveals that the level of position convergence was high. During the two crises, disagreements were rare and minor, with the only major exception being the case of military
intervention in Libya. The three powers expressed their positions in the same words and supported them with similar justifications. Issues like the condemnation of Russian actions and the support for the TNC are the only other instances when the language was slightly different.

States did not necessarily wait for their partners and seem to have announced their position when they thought best. They rarely announced positions on the same day, but most of the time, it did not take weeks either for them to reach a common position. Positioning is usually a matter of a few days (about 2–6). This suggests that European states retained a degree of autonomy that allowed them to speak for themselves when they saw fit, without necessarily consulting their European partners before doing so. Other studies of the Libyan crisis confirmed the lack of coordination found in the current study. Thus, the analysis reveals that European foreign policy was more a sum of the foreign policies of close partners than an *a priori* ‘all for one and one for all.’

On the institutional dimension of commonality, the EU never led on any key position and did not take a position on the most sensitive issues: the condemnation of Russia’s actions, the status of the TNC, and the intervention in Libya. This very limited role supports a view of the EU as a mere tool for states.

Finally, the analysis revealed the wide extent of European commonality. The next section further discusses European commonality on various issues.

**European commonality across issues**

The analysis brings to light a hierarchy of issues in European powers’ levels of commonality (see Table 3).

At the highest level, European powers easily agreed on matters of legal commitments, humanitarian assistance, and the promotion of peace. On this consensus, the powers’ positions always fully converged within less than 5 days and the European representatives spoke early. This was the case when expressing concerns about the need for humanitarian assistance in South Ossetia and referring the Gaddafi regime to the ICC.

At a lower level, the states under examination sometimes had different justifications when it came to issues of declarative or coercive diplomacy, although they usually reached common ground. For instance, they varied on the extent of condemnation of Russian actions and in their support for the TNC in Libya. The timing of convergence took a little longer (up to 6 days). The EU institutions mostly avoided these issues or waited for a consensus. The case of sanctions against Gaddafi illustrates this dynamic well.

Finally, at an even lower level, on issues of security actions, namely the intervention in Libya to impose a no-fly zone, there were important disagreements between the three states,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue types</th>
<th>Positioning</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Role of institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Law, peace and assistance</td>
<td>The position of states almost always converge</td>
<td>Five days or less separate the statements</td>
<td>The EU takes a stance early on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Declaratory and coercive diplomacy</td>
<td>States’ positions converge, but often rest on different justifications</td>
<td>From a few days to about a week separate the statements</td>
<td>The EU waits for a consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Security actions</td>
<td>States are more likely to have different positions and justifications</td>
<td>There is pressure to announce a position within a few days</td>
<td>The EU is silent, the issues are left to the states or discussed in NATO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
both in positioning and justifications. The timing was short for positioning, possibly because leaders give such matters considerable importance. The EU HR avoided this question entirely, which suggests that another organization such as NATO might be more appropriate for these kinds of issues.

The analysis has showed that France initiated several positions before the United States, that the UK sometimes spoke before the US and that German leaders took positions and employed justifications counter to the US stance. These clues suggest that there is more autonomy for European powers than merely responding to pressure coming from across the Atlantic.5

Conclusion

This article should be seen as a step forward on the path to provide empirical data on European foreign policy, contributing to the theoretical debates that often assume that a common policy is impossible, imminent, or already taking place without strong empirical foundations. CCCA is a powerful tool to assess European common foreign policy.

First, by systematically analyzing the sequence of declarations during two international crises, it was able, on the one hand, to capture the convergence of positioning, the close timing of this positioning and the wide extent of commonality across issues. On the other, it showed the tensions and disagreements that occurred, the autonomy of timings as well as the weakness of European institutions. The analysis suggests that even during intense moments of crisis, there is a high level of commonality among European powers. Indeed, even on the issue of intervention that has attracted a lot of attention, the UK and France were against intervening in the beginning of the crisis and later, Germany seemed to try to compensate for its divergent position.

Second, the analysis has brought to light how commonality can vary across issues. CCCA is particularly good at bringing to light issues like declarative and coercive diplomacy that are often neglected. Legitimacy matters on the world stage and it is a resource both states and contestation movements prize. While further research is necessary to confirm the template of variation across issues in Table 3, it is a useful starting point. It highlights how scholars should pay attention to the fact that focusing on different kinds of issues, even during crises, can bias the argument in favor or against commonality. Ironically, the recent dramatic condemnation of disunity some commentators made could be the sign of a hope that European powers would unite. In any case, the analysis shows that it is better to identify a specific policy area at a given time to assess commonality, as it may be misleading to label entire crises as supposedly revealing division or unity.

The overarching goal of the research program advanced in this article is a comprehensive and systematic study of European powers’ common foreign policy during international crises, which should perhaps not be studied as taking flight or crashing down, but as distinct planes flying together.

Official Declarations Cited

Ashton C. 2011a. ‘Remarks by EU HR Catherine Ashton at the end of the Informal Meeting of Defence Ministers in Budapest’. EU High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (EU HR), February 25.
Ashton C. 2011c. ‘Main Remarks by High Representative Catherine Ashton upon Arrival at the Extraordinary Foreign Affairs Council Meeting on Libya and Southern Neighbourhood’. EU HR, March 10.
Brown G. 2008a. ‘PM calls for Russian ceasefire’. 10 Downing Street, August 11.
Kouchner B. 2008c. ‘Conférence de presse du Ministre des Affaires étrangères et Européennes’ MAE, August 18.
Merkel A. 2008. ‘Preserving the Territorial Integrity of Georgia’ Chancellor of Germany, August 15.
Westerwelle G. 2011c. ‘Stepping up the political pressure on Gaddafi’s regime Federal Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle in an interview with Deutschlandfunk on the current situation in Libya’. FFO, March 17.

Notes
1. The declarations were retrieved from the official websites of: Élysée, Ministère des Affaires étrangères (France), Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 10 Downing Street, Federal Foreign
Office of Germany (English version), Federal Government of Germany (English version), EU Council, EAS, and for the United States, State Department and the White House.


3. This finding is consistent with Adler-Nissen and Pouliot (2014, 903) who wrote about Germany’s overcompensation for its abstention for its abstention.

4. Koenig (2011, 10) reports that EU members were displeased for not having been consulted before the French recognition of the TNC. Also, when the strikes began in Libya, France’s immediately began the operations on the ground without warning their allies, which angered Washington and London (Clarke 2011, 4).

5. For more on US-European alignments, see Paquin and Beauregard (2015).

Acknowledgements

I am thankful to Ece Ozlem Atikcan, Francesco Cavatorta, Jonathan Paquin and the anonymous referees for their helpful comments in improving this article.

Disclosure statement

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References


Appendix

Taking flight or crashing down? European common foreign policy and international crises

Codebook
Philippe Beauregard
December 3, 2013
Updated : October 7, 2015
Department of Political Science
Laval University
## General rules

**Coding by themes**  
If a general sentence is about only one theme, the entire sentence is coded according to the corresponding code. If not, each part of the sentence or expression is coded according to the corresponding code.

**Code zero**  
All sections of declarations not related to the crisis under study are coded 000 Irrelevant

**Code separation**  
A code stops when it meets another code not related to the current one or a segment of text relating to a different subject. General insignificant sentences such as “I think you’ll understand that.” do not end the code.

**Non-temporal Coding**  
Text segments are coded no matter what verb tense the sentence is written in.

**Neutral coding**  
Texts segments are coded no matter the form of the sentence (interrogative or negative).

**Extended coding**  
When the declaration discusses a regional or more general matter that is outside of the crisis in question, it is coded if it appears in a section relevant to the coding.

**Content coding**  
Titles, journalists’ questions and declarations of other officials are not included in the coding. They are coded 000 Irrelevant.

**Inclusive coding**  
Codes are mutually inclusive and may overlap. For instance, a sentence discussing a general theme may be coded in Multilateralism as well as other themes.

**Coding answers**  
Answers to questions that are clearly asked about a code are coded according to the corresponding code, even if this code is not mentioned in the answer.

## Codebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Keywords/Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Irrelevant</td>
<td>All segment of text not related to the crisis under study or questions from journalists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>000</td>
<td>Irrelevant</td>
<td>All segment of text not related to the crisis under study or questions from journalists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>Any mention of elections or democracy in a country, or reform toward elections at the most general level. Keywords: electoral reform, fair elections, democratic values, democratic development, greater openness, dialogue, inclusive process/functioning, representative government, broad-based government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>Any mention of elections or democracy in a country, or reform toward elections at the most general level. Keywords: electoral reform, fair elections, democratic values, democratic development, greater openness, dialogue, inclusive process/functioning, representative government, broad-based government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>Self-determination</td>
<td>Any mention to give to a people the right to choose its government, or give a voice or participation in the way it is ruled. Any desire to respect the will of a people or its aspirations. Keywords: It’s up to X people, aspirations/will of the People, self-government, participation, right to choose, give a voice to X people, have a say in their government, respond to the political desires/wishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>Freedom &amp; Human rights</td>
<td>Any mention of political freedoms or fundamental human rights. Keywords: political freedom, freedom/right to assembly/speech/peacefully assemble/expression, universal human rights, fundamental rights, protect the rights, the right of the people to, free societies, liberty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>Minority and Women Rights</td>
<td>Any mention of the rights of a specific group such as women or religious and ethnic groups. Keywords: minority rights, religious rights, women rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>Open Media</td>
<td>Any mention of the freedom of the press, of the necessity of open media without censorship, demands of not blocking access to communications. Any mention of acts committed against journalists. Keywords: attacks on journalists/reporters, block communications, news media censorship, social media, freedom of press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>International Law</td>
<td>Any mention of international law, with the exception of UN resolutions. Keywords: international law/norms/obligations, International criminal court, legal basis, Treaty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Relations</td>
<td>Any mention of cooperation with more than two countries, inside international organizations or not, or of demands addressed to many actors. Keywords: EU, NATO, UN, G8, P5, Secretary General, international community, like-minded partners, cooperation/collaboration with our allies, consensus, coalition, talking to other countries, with others, talking to all parties, urge all parties, Kofi Annan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201</td>
<td>Multilateralism</td>
<td>Any mention of cooperation with more than two countries, inside international organizations or not, or of demands addressed to many actors. Keywords: EU, NATO, UN, G8, P5, Secretary General, international community, like-minded partners, cooperation/collaboration with our allies, consensus, coalition, talking to other countries, with others, talking to all parties, urge all parties, Kofi Annan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>202</td>
<td>Unilateralism</td>
<td>Any mention of the will to act alone, independently of other countries. Keywords: unilaterally if necessary, alone if we must, act on our own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>203</td>
<td>Partnership</td>
<td>Any mention of a special relationship or partnership with another country or people. Any mention of a discussion or meeting with another country or its leaders. Not coded when there is more than two countries (Multilateralism). Keywords: special relationship, always been close to X country, partner with, committed to working with, friends with, solidarity with, talking with X country, we are in touch/contact with, had a meeting with X leader, a common position with X country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106 : International Law</td>
<td>Any mention of international law, with the exception of UN resolutions. Keywords: international law/norms/obligations, International criminal court, legal basis, Treaty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 : Relations</td>
<td>Any mention of a UN Resolution. Keywords: security council resolution, UN resolution, implementation resolution, 1970, 1973</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>204 : UN Resolutions</td>
<td>Any mention of UN Resolutions and any mention of a UN resolution. Keywords: security council resolution, UN resolution, implementation resolution, 1970, 1973</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>205 : NATO</td>
<td>Any mention of NATO or NATO-related actors or organisations. Keywords: NATO, NAC, NRC, transatlantic alliance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>206 : EU</td>
<td>Any mention of the European Union or its institutions and representatives. Keywords: EU/UE, European Union, European Council, Javier Solana, European High Representative, group of 27/25, European Commission</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 : Economy</td>
<td>Any mention of elements about the economy of a country or the international economic system. Keywords: economic reforms, open economy, financial stability/security, financing, open to business, banking reforms, open markets, banking sector, economic opportunities, WTO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 : Condemnation</td>
<td>Any explicit condemnation of a leader, a group or of some actions and behavior. Keywords: unacceptable behavior, we strongly condemn, bloodthirsty dictator, reckless regime, outrageous abuse, tyranny, appalling, grave crimes, against his own people, iron fist, violation, intimidating, disproportionate force, outlaw, nasty things, irresponsible behavior, cold-blooded killers, hateful ideology, fanatics, carnage, slaughter of the innocents, wrong, hideous, oppressive, indignation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401 : Condemn</td>
<td>Any mention that a government or the people close to it must be held accountable, be responsible or imputable for their actions. Keywords: be held accountable, be criminally responsible for, will face justice for, cannot act with impunity, carry serious consequences, be referred to the ICC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>402 : Accountability</td>
<td>Any mention of the will to impose or the announcement of the imposition of sanctions. Keywords: sanctions, arms embargo, assets freeze, blocus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 : Approbation</td>
<td>Explicit recognition of a group or a government, or of the legitimacy of its actions, needs or interests, or enunciation of the conditions necessary for recognition. Keywords: conditions, we recognize the legitimacy of, the legitimate grievances, address the legitimate needs and interests, legitimately demanding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501 : Legitimacy</td>
<td>Any mention of help whether it is moral or humanitarian help. Any mention of the humanitarian situation in a country or the need to protect the civilians. Keywords: humanitarian aid, assistance to those in need, protect civilians, medical needs, donating to charitable organizations, assistance, provide help, accompany the people of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>502 : Assistance</td>
<td>Any mention of support to a government, a group or a people, but not to their actions. Keywords: support, stand with/by the people of, with the support of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 : Security</td>
<td>Any mention of stability, call for calm and order, call for restraint, all demands for pacifism and non-violence. Any mention of instability, the chaotic nature of a situation or of violence occurring. Keywords: restraint, calm, stability, peaceful transition, orderly transition, order, regional stability, violence, regret loss of life, volatile situation, instability, chaos, turmoil, looting, prison breaks, destabilizing, havoc, fear, fluid situation, unrest, situation eruptive, ceasefire, peacekeepers, war, attacks, fighting, fire rockets, shelling, destructions, erupt, insurgency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>601 : Stability</td>
<td>Any mention of security as a principle. Keywords: Security (excluding civil security or security forces)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Keywords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>603</td>
<td>Intervention Any mention of the will or the decision to intervene militarily in another state.</td>
<td>intervention, must intervene, take military actions, deployment, to get a force in X country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>604</td>
<td>Terrorism Any mention of the problem of terrorism.</td>
<td>terrorists organizations/groups, terrorism, Al-Qaeda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>605</td>
<td>Military - positive Any positive mention, such as congratulations or positive remarks toward a behavior of the military or security forces of a country.</td>
<td>we commend the security forces/army, army is a respected institution, restraint by the army, legitimate armed forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>606</td>
<td>Military - negative Any negative remarks or condemnation of the military or security forces of a country or of their behavior.</td>
<td>we condemn the security forces/army, the use of violence by the security forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Specific Positions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>701</td>
<td>Self-interest Any mention of the interests of the country that made the declaration.</td>
<td>Germany's/France's/Britain's interests, our own interests, our own security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>702</td>
<td>Non-interference Any mention of the principle of non-interference.</td>
<td>non-interference, do not interfere in another country, free of foreign interference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>703</td>
<td>R2P</td>
<td>Any mention of the Responsibility to Protect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>704</td>
<td>Antiamericanism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>705</td>
<td>Iran Negative Any negative remarks concerning Iran.</td>
<td>denial of human dignity in Iran, not a phony election like in Iran, Iran is a state sponsoring terrorism, Iran needs to stop, Iran is financing Hezbollah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Other codes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>801</td>
<td>Change Any expression of a desire for change or mention of the changing or transitional situation.</td>
<td>transition to, reforms, change, move to/toward, chart a new path, amend/revise the constitution, transformation, revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>802</td>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>Any expression of a desire of something to be done quickly or right now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Keywords: right now, immediately, accelerate the pace, faster, expeditiously, urgency, speedy, swiftly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>803</td>
<td>Corruption Any mention of the problem of corruption.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Crisis specific</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>905</td>
<td>Libya 2011 – Must go Any mention that Gaddafi needs to leave his office.</td>
<td>must go, must leave, lost legitimacy/confidence to lead, has to quit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>906</td>
<td>Libya 2011 – No-fly zone Any mention of the no-fly zone over Libya.</td>
<td>no fly zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>907</td>
<td>Russia/Georgia 2008 – Territorial Integrity Any mention of preserving the territorial integrity or the sovereignty of Georgia.</td>
<td>territorial integrity, sovereignty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>