**A More Martial Europe? Permissive Consensus or Robust Support for CSDP**

**Kaija Schilde**

**Boston University**

**Stephanie Anderson**

**University of Wyoming**

**Andrew Garner**

**University of Wyoming**

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# Introduction

When it comes to European public opinion over defense and—in particular—European Union defense policy—there is a severe disconnect between public opinion polling and political discourse. In Robert Kagan’s­ article written before the Iraq War, he alludes to the famous book on relationship advice[[1]](#footnote-1), arguing that America was from Ma­­rs and Europe from Venus. Like men, Kagan characterized the United States as more violent with “Americans generally favor[ing] policies of coercion rather than persuasion, emphasizing punitive sanctions over inducements to better behavior, the stick over the carrot.” Being very powerful, the US could work alone. Being weaker, Kagan characterized Europeans as “generally favor[ing] peaceful responses to problems, preferring negotiation, diplomacy, and persuasion to coercion. They are quicker to appeal to international law, international conventions, and international opinion to adjudicate disputes. They try to use commercial and economic ties to bind nations together.” [[2]](#footnote-2)

These assertions have become conventional wisdom embraced by a host of academics, journalists and politicians. Barry Posen (2004) confirmed that “(m)ost states in the EU have unmartial publics—the use of force is distasteful to most citizens.” Whereas the American public has the stomach for warfare, Europe has not because “voters across Europe are beginning to resemble the Germans in their attitudes toward the military. They are becoming more cautious, inward looking and reluctant to use force.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

Policymakers, academics, and politicians agree: defense and security in Europe is on the decline, partly because the average European does not understand high politics or the implications of the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), is wary of the use of force and hard power, and is against the military spending necessary to create a credible force. The impact on European power—both national and EU—is allegedly devastating. The usual prescriptions for reinvigorating European defense include transforming public opinion, that is, convincing Europeans that a robust security and defense policy is worthwhile and not a threat to national sovereignty. Politicians must “ […] educate public opinion on security and defense issues…Parliaments must explain that Europe's future position in the world was at stake if its common foreign, security and defense policy stagnated,”[[4]](#footnote-4) and “convince public opinion that the stagnation of Europe would inevitably lead to its marginalisation.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

Crashing the party of this conventional wisdom are the European public opinion polls indicating consistently high levels of support for an EU Common Security and Defense Policy. In fact, no other policy domain is as enduring and popular as the idea of pooling national sovereignty over defense policy. While polls show support for a common defense policy as between 65-75%, any evidence of pro-CSDP public opinion is often dismissed as merely “permissive consent” (Tournier 2004, Wagner 2005), rather than robust support. The idea of a permissive consensus in high politics is a deeply embedded notion, going back to original explanations of the relationship between EU politics and public opinion (Lindberg and Scheingold 1970, 41-42), but is also the core of general comparative and American assumptions about public nonattitudes over high politics or foreign policy (Converse 1964, 1970: Shapiro and Page 1988, 213). Individuals give shallow and uninformed ‘consent’ over foreign policy issues because it is the ‘hardest’ area of public policy to understand, compared to more accessible and ‘easy’ areas such as welfare or education (Carmines and Stimson 1980).

The question remains: is this individual support shallow and ignorant, or enduring and well-formed? We contest prior assumptions about permissive consensus and drill down into public opinion polls to demonstrate that the European publics are 1) knowledgeable and sophisticated in their support for a CSDP, and 2) have coherent preferences over the use of force at the European level. We also test the degree to which 1) Europeans prefer hard or soft power collective security instruments, 2) the costs of military spending attenuates support for CSDP, and whether 3) the US and EU publics differ in their security preferences. Finally, we conclude with further hypotheses about external threats from outside of Europe (including Russia, US, immigration, terrorism, new security threats) possibly driving individual support for CSDP.

This paper reflects a research agenda to clarify the individual, social, and national correlates for support of a collective European foreign, defense, and security policy. Extant research (Schoen 2008, Foucault et. al. 2009, Peters 2011) has found important predictors of support in national identities, utilitarian versus ideational correlates, and dimensions of strategic culture. Our research indicates that individuals who support a more robust European presence in the world understand very well what they mean by this support: they are well-educated, high-information citizens who do not necessarily shun the robust use of force under certain conditions, including protecting their societies from asymmetric threats such as terrorism and failed states. If so, individuals might favor more robust European defense, but with variation on the specifics: they might favor collective defense institutions or interventions based on their assessment of specific conflicts, cost/benefit calculations, or even constructed aspects of European prestige or competition vis a vis the US. These correlates of support demonstrate that the conventional wisdom that Europeans are turning inward, away from global affairs, favor only multilateral foreign policy solutions, and abhor the use of force in security and defense is empirically unsubstantiated.

**Passivist Europe: let us count the ways/assumptions**

There is not just one null hypothesis in this study, but multiple causal assumptions about the linkages between European public opinion and the creation of security and defense institutions at the European level. We provide a partial discussion of conventional assumptions (italicized) about Europeans and force: Europeans are generally characterized as averse to the use of force. This assertion is based on two underlying premises: 1) Europeans often do not support specific military interventions and 2) Europeans prefer soft power projection to hard power projection.

*A General Aversion to the Use of Force*

In a striking example of the Mars/Venus phenomenon, the German Marshall Fund’s annual *Transatlantic Trends* survey documents that—in 2013—most Europeans oppose the use of force: 31% of Europeans think that force is sometimes necessary to obtain justice, compared to 68% of Americans.[[6]](#footnote-6) These figures have been consistent for years and are reflected in the European Defence Agency’s warning in 2006:

[Europe] may become more cautious about military intervention. The “CNN effect” and associated casualty aversion are already familiar. Military operations will be subject to ever-increasing scrutiny by elected officials, media and populations. Governments and societies increasingly concerned for internal security and social cohesion may be even more hesitant to undertake potentially controversial interventions abroad – in particular interventions in regions from where large numbers of immigrants have come.[[7]](#footnote-7)

This has become such as truism that public opinion polls or empirical evidence is not cited in support of it, as when the Deutsche Welle claimed: “Even if more active engagement is in everyone's interests, the problem, of course, is convincing the European people - skeptical of any kind of foreign intervention at the best of times.”[[8]](#footnote-8)

*Limited Support for Military Intervention*

Much of the support for the above view comes from opinion polls based on specific military interventions. For example, the 2013 GMF poll also found that Europeans were overwhelmingly against any possible intervention in Syria, at over 70% (although 62% of Americans were also against intervention). Reviewing these results, Judy Dempsey claimed: “If Europeans are not prepared to have the use of force at their disposal, then their diplomatic efforts—at both EU and national level—will be undermined. Moreover, if Europeans are not even prepared to act over the use of chemical weapons in Syria, what can they do to prevent other countries from using them?” When European publics demonstrate opposition to a particular military intervention (even if their rate of opposition closely tracks the US publics’), the assumption is that they are against national and European security and defense.

*A Preference for Soft Power over Hard Power*

Europeans are averse to the use of force and do not support military intervention because of their status as a civilian power with a preference for using carrots rather than sticks in their security policy. In a 2006 German Marshall Fund poll, although 76 percent wanted the European Union to exert strong leadership in world affairs, 79 percent believed the European Union should emphasize its economic power and not rely on its military power when dealing with international problems outside Europe, while 46 percent believed the European Union should strengthen its military power in order to play a larger role in the world. [[9]](#footnote-9) Furthermore, 87 percent of Europeans agree with the statement “economic power is more important in world affairs than military power.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

The idea of civilian power Europe goes back to Francois Duchene (1972), but has long been part of the identity rhetoric of Europe especially embraced by many German and Nordic scholars. Pekka Sivonen (1990) and Dieter Senghaas (1992) argued that European peace should be secured through the creation of 'a network of institutionalized rules for internal and international state behavior' (1990). David Allen and Michael Smith made the case that the EU was so impotent militarily that it could only be considered a civilian power (1998).

During the Iraq War, the advent of Joseph Nye’s book *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* gave a new meaning and impetus to the 2003 European Security Strategy. Daniel Keohane, a security specialist at the London-based Center for European Reform, explained that while “The US rates, analyzes and solves problems very much in military terms, … Europe prides itself in using a whole range of means, including aid, economic incentives and civilian police forces.”[[11]](#footnote-11) Defining soft power in terms of a state’s values and not military might, one EU minister explained, “this is Europe’s answer to the Americans. … This is about how we combine all our ‘soft power’ -- the diplomatic, economic, trade and security instruments – and, at the very end, the threat of the use of force. That is some achievement for the Europeans to agree on.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

Are these assumptions correct?

At odds with these assessments is that Europeans have participated in numerous interventions since 2003 whether in the guise of CSDP missions, NATO missions, or national forces. Europeans have fought in former Yugoslavia, Iraq and Afghanistan. For example, the EU provided 9.000 troops to support a UN mission to Lebanon.[[13]](#footnote-13) The EU has launched more than thirty CSDP missions to date. In a response to the question “who will die for Europe”, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fisher replied, “European soldiers are facing danger in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Kosovo. […] They are there as members of national contingents, but they are serving a wider interest - Europe's. There is a soul, [… t]here is a sprit. And people die for Europe, and have died."[[14]](#footnote-14) Gilles Polin was the first soldier to die for Europe in a CSDP mission in EUFOR-Tchad in 2008. Nevertheless, “Despite a general European public ‘shyness’ toward casualties, soldiers appear to be seeking service in these operations as adventure or escape from otherwise routine duties at home.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

When asked specifically about support for a common security and defense policy, public opinion in the EU has remained extremely high and extremely steady for the period from 1992 to 2014 at around 70 percent. What explains CSDP and the consistent high support for European security and defense if indeed the Europeans are averse to the use of force?

**Permissive Consensus only?**

The conventional wisdom discounts the European participation in NATO and UN missions as examples of national rather than European use of force. Europeans prefer national defense to European defense. Moreover, support for CSDP falters when cost is mentioned. Clearly, there is confusin among the public as to what EU defense would entail. As a result, despite the ‘permissive consensus’, politicians must work hard to convince Europeans of the importance of the EU being active in the world lest it be marginalized.

*Europeans prefer national defense to European defense*

Jan Techau explained that

Europeans are not per se unwilling to use force to achieve political goals. *They only seem to be unwilling to do so in the framework of the EU*. The perceived absence of a shared threat, the differences in strategic culture, the institutional weaknesses, the lack of resources, the lack of ambition and trust, and the fact that, with NATO, a better alternative is at hand for the management of Europe’s hard power concerns, make it unlikely that the EU will become a relevant military operator any time soon. The structural, political impediments to more cohesive defense cooperation go so deep that economic pressure alone will not be enough of an incentive to unite their military activities within CSDP.[[16]](#footnote-16)

This conventional wisdom conflates two dimensions of support: First, that support for national security policy will be greater than or prior to support for European security policy (when, alternately, an individual might *prefer* European to National policy), and second, that support for European security policy is predicated on the use of force in *specific out-of-area interventions* (when, alternately, an individual might support CSDP but not want it used for out-of-area expeditionary force).

However, there is a deep tension between surveys capturing a European reluctance to use force towards military interventions and an apparent enthusiasm on the part of Europeans to organize defense supranationally. In 2011, 65% of Europeans preferred defense and security to be at a supranational rather than national level. The Eurobarometer question was vaguely worded though, as it did not specify whether individuals meant the EU or NATO.[[17]](#footnote-17) However, a 2001 one-time Eurobarometer poll posed this specific question: UN, NATO, EU, or national defense? It specifically queried individual preferences about what level of governance “best addressed defense threats,” not softer concepts such as security or peacebuilding. The results were startling. When asked to choose what organizations would best address defense, Europeans overwhelmingly chose the EU, over NATO and national defense (see Figure 1). With 43% support, there was no majority choosing the EU over other levels, but it is a strong plurality, with almost double those supporting the status quos of National Governments (24%) and NATO (17%).

**Figure 1: European public opinion on which level of governance best addresses defense threats (Source: 2001 Special Eurobarometer on Security and Defense)**

*Even when Europeans support CSDP, they do not support the necessary spending to finance it.*

Whatever the public support for EU defense, Europeans are unwilling to pay for it. All countries, that have been both EU and NATO members since 1986, have significantly reduced their defense spending since the end of the Cold War.[[18]](#footnote-18) To address the issue, NATO governments agreed informally to keep defense expenditures at, at least, two per cent. At a NATO defense ministers meeting in June 2005, General James Jones, the US’s most senior soldier in Europe, expressed his disapproval: “Sadly for the alliance most nations are slipping behind the so-called gentleman's agreement at (Nato's 2002 summit in) Prague. … The 2 per cent floor is becoming a ceiling."[[19]](#footnote-19) By 2013, NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen sounded the alarm noting that when added together, the European decrease in defense spending added up to $45 billion, the same as Germany’s entire military budget.

Why would Europeans support added spending for the EU on top of national defense and NATO? Public support for an ESDP drops significantly once asked whether they are willing to pay for it. In 2004, although 71 percent of Europeans wanted the EU to become a superpower like the U.S., 47 percent of the 71 percent withdrew their support if that ambition meant an increase in military spending.[[20]](#footnote-20) European politicians are very concerned. The UK Parliament hosted a two-day seminar on “Building a secure Europe in a better world: Parliamentary responsibility and action in shaping public opinion on security and defence.” As WEU Assembly President Jean-Pierre Masseret (France, Socialist group), explained, national parliaments “must address the security concerns of European citizens and at the same time educate public opinion on security and defense issues. Parliaments must explain that Europe's future position in the world was at stake if its common foreign, security and defense policy stagnated.” He even suggested that *Eurobarometer* ask a new question in its polls: “how much more are you prepared to pay for your security?”[[21]](#footnote-21) Rob de Wijk, director of the Clingendael Institute in The Hague, argued that parliamentarians needed to “convince public opinion that the stagnation of Europe would inevitably lead to its marginalisation.”[[22]](#footnote-22)

*When Europeans say they support the EU security and defense, they don’t understand*

If the recent GMFUS poll and pundits are correct, there has been a radical shift in public opinion from a decade ago, when Eurobarometer polls (Eurobarometer 54.1 in 2001 and national public opinion surveys) indicated that European publics were generally supportive of defense policies, and that this support extended from national to European defense, as well.[[23]](#footnote-23) Only 6% of Europeans perceived no value to the military, and 70% favored common EU defense. There are large national differences in this support, however, with Britain and Scandinavian countries lower in support than the others. Overall, over 40% of Europeans consider military integration to be central to the European project: 37% would like to see an EU rapid reaction force be added to existing national capabilities, while 20% would like to see a full integration of forces at the expense of national militaries.[[24]](#footnote-24)

Scholars who have reviewed this data have concluded that the results indicate ambivalence and indifference on the part of Europeans toward common defense, because the positive respondents are not always clear majorities, and conclude that there is a “gap between the vague desire for a European defense and making such a policy operational,” because of a lack of real knowledge about what ESDP and CSDP actually are.[[25]](#footnote-25) A more recent study (Foucault et al 2014), attenuates the 77% support for CSDP in 2007 as “conceal[ing] the fact that the definition of ESDP remains very much in flux. For some, ESDP is associated to European unification and identity. For others, ESDP is primarily a civilian crisis management tool for peacekeeping g purposes. For others still, ESDP is a means to balance US power with military capabilities.”[[26]](#footnote-26) Because ESDP/CSDP might mean different things to different people, this is supposed to weaken its public meaning.

**Robust Support? European Public Opinion in Context**

However, a direct empirical test of the permissive consensus hypothesis has never been applied to public support for CSDP. Is individual support for CSDP an epiphenomenal and fleeting result of the Eurobarometer survey, and a case of shallow attachments or permissive consensus? One way of testing the strength of CSDP support is to see what citizens say when costs are framed into their support. However, it is important to ask this question in a comparative context, as well, as there may be no polity that ‘chooses security’ when framed against costs or other public policy options (guns vs butter). Another way of looking at the issue of a permissive consensus is whether support for CSDP reflects a lack of real knowledge. In order to test whether respondents who support CSDP are generally knowledgeable about European politics, we can test whether they are high or low information citizens and consume more information about the EU than other respondents.

Is support for CSDP amongst Europeans really a case of “permissive consensus”, as indicated by previous studies? If individuals balk at the costs of defense, or know little about the institutions and policies at the core of CSDP, does this mean that support is shallow and uninformed? Are the Europeans really that different in their support for security and defense as public policy than other publics? Recent scholarship (Foucault and Irondelle 2010) has provided some perspective on the last question, and the answer is no…Europeans are really not that different—at least from Americans—in their preferences and perceptions of security policy. Looking at GMFUS surveys over different points in time, they concluded “Europeans and Americans follow the same evolution in their perceived or possible threats but with a different intensity for immigration issues (+25 per cent in Europe) and terrorism (–17 per cent in the US)”.[[27]](#footnote-27)

The questions remain, then, as to 1) who supports collective European defense (at the individual level), and 2) what determines this support? Or, put differently, under what conditions do Europeans support CSDP? Who is more likely to support CSDP, what factors make individuals lean towards supporting CSDP, and what do they mean by CSDP when they support it? In terms of answering the question of *who* in Europe supports CSDP, there is some extant research. Socio-demographic and economic variables usually predict an individual’s support for EU policies, but this is not the case with CSDP, where the most powerful predictor found has been national identity (Schoen 2008, Foucault and Irondelle 2009; Peters 2013). If you live in the UK, you are less likely to support CSDP; if you live in Germany, you are more likely to support it. Less robust predictors of support for CSDP include fear of security threats such as nontraditional and transnational threats (Foucault and Irondelle 2009) and terrorism (Ray and Johnston 2007). Some models have found linkages between individual utilitarian assessment of low national capabilities (Schoen 2008) or defense spending (Carruba and Singh 2004) and a support for supranational defense. Generally lacking are any hypotheses linking cultural or identity directly to CSDP support, though Foucault et al (2009) find that different social representations of security can be linked to levels of support for CSDP, helping explain why support for CSDP can mean different things to different people.

# Hypotheses and Research Design

We developed a study based on four hypotheses:

**H1) Individuals supporting CSDP are aware of EU policy, knowledgeable about politics and current events, and are not reacting in simplistic ways to the survey prompts.**

**H2) Individuals supporting CSDP have an internally coherent idea of what CSDP means.**

**H3: When Europeans prefer EU security policy to national security policy, they also intend for it to be an arm of hard power, not just soft power.**

**H4) European support for CSDP will not be significantly affected by cost considerations (i.e. they will not automatically support “butter” over “guns”)**

In order to evaluate hypothesis 1, we used the questions asked over 13 years of the Eurobarometer public opinion survey and standardized in the Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File. The dependent variable of the model was question 339, measuring support for policy areas that should be handled at the national or European level.[[28]](#footnote-28) The independent variables reflecting knowledge about the EU were captured from a range of questions that reflect both objective and subjective political knowledge. They include objective variables reflecting level of education, interest in politics, and interest in EU affairs. They also include subjective (self reported) variables capturing knowledge about EU politics and whether the individual is an opinion leader or follower.[[29]](#footnote-29) The models were estimated with logistic regression and all independent variables were significant at p < .05 significance level.

In order to understand hypotheses two and three, we created a model based on the 2000 Special Eurobarometer for Security and Defense, which probed individuals about CSDP with more granularity.[[30]](#footnote-30) For the dependent variable measuring support for CSDP, we used question 129, which asked whether or not “[t]he European Union member states should have a common defence and security policy”.[[31]](#footnote-31) At the top level of the results, 65.6% were for, 17.4% against, 11% didn’t know, and 6% were from European countries outside of the EU, such as Norway, and this question was not relevant to them. This model used a separate question (Q56), about what the role of the future EU army should be, to construct the independent variables and factor analysis. [[32]](#footnote-32) Hypothesis two tests the internal coherence of clusters of responses, further evaluating the null hypothesis of permissive consensus. Hypothesis three evaluates the responses by sorting them into categories of soft and hard power, to see what respondents think the content of CSDP should be, and the prevalence of each category of power.

We considered the following division between soft and hard power in the model:

Hard Power/unilateralism/military power:

* Defending the territory of the European Union
* Intervening in conflicts at the borders of the European Union
* Intervening in conflicts in other parts of the world
* Taking part in peace-keeping missions outside the E.U., *without* the U.N.'s agreement

Soft Power/multilateralism/civilian power:

* Guaranteeing peace in the European Union
* Repatriating Europeans who are in areas where there is a conflict
* Intervening in case of natural, ecological or nuclear disaster in Europe
* Intervening in other parts of the world (natural, ecol. or nuclear disaster, famine, or cleaning minefields)
* Taking part in peace-keeping mission outside the E.U., *decided by the U.N*. (UN troops)
* Defending Human Rights
* Carrying out humanitarian missions
* Defending the economic interests of the European Union
* Symbolising a European identity

In order to evaluate hypothesis four, we intend to construct a model of support for CSDP with preferences over defense spending versus other fiscal categories, both within Europe and as a comparison to the US. Currently we provide descriptive statistics about the European public.

# Results

Hypothesis 1 tested the degree to which individuals who support CSDP are knowledgeable about politics and EU policies. We expected that individuals supporting CSDP are knowledgeable about the EU, and are not reacting in simplistic ways to the survey prompts. When they support CSDP, they know what they are supporting.

We first tested this hypothesis by looking at levels of political knowledge and engagement. Figure 2 shows the predicted percent supporting CSDP for levels of political knowledge/engagement. Each model used logistic regression to create the predicted percentages for each level of political knowledge/engagement. As Table 2 shows, support for common defense and security policy is strongest among those who are most interested, feel the most informed, and rank highest on the leadership index. Across all three models, citizens who scored lowest on the knowledge and engagement measures were predicted to show about 42-44% support for European determined security policy while those scoring highest had predicted support levels around 56-60%. Moreover, support for common defense and security policy is also strongest among those with the highest level of education (data not shown).[[33]](#footnote-33) Knowledge about the EU was a stronger predictor of support for CSDP than even degrees of European identity (European only or European with national identity).

**Figure 2: Predicted Support for CSDP, by Level of Political Knowledge and Engagement**

Another method for estimating the distribution/degree of certainty and uncertainty amongst individuals in a population is to measure the degree of “don’t knows” in response to a particular policy domain compared to other policy domains. If the permissive consensus hypothesis was correct, where there is both uncertainty combined with shallow support for an area of high politics, one would expect to find a low level of individuals responding with “Don’t Know” rather than “Yes” (Zaller 1992). This is in contrast to more salient and controversial ‘low’ policies such as welfare or education, where individual support for a policy would be deeper and clearer, indicated by fewer “Don’t Know” responses. Put simply, if the permissive consensus hypothesis is correct, then there should be greater instances of “non-attitudes” (Converse 1970), indicated by the percent of people responding “Don’t Know”. In fact, the percent of “Don’t Know” responses for the security variable (CPSECUR) was actually lower than the percent for most of the other EU domain variables. Out of the 19 EU domain variables, 12 had higher levels of “Don’t Know” responses.[[34]](#footnote-34)

Hypothesis two is closely related to hypothesis one. If individuals support a policy such as CSDP, they should have stable preferences over the content of CSDP policy. We expected the preferences to be stable and group into clusters of results that align with different preferences over the use of military power at the EU level. Table 1 shows the percent of respondents who mentioned each item as being an appropriate role for an EU army, from the highest percent of mentions to the lowest. The second column is the percent among those who oppose a CSDP[[35]](#footnote-35) while the last column is the percent among those who support a CSDP. At the most basic level, those who oppose an EU army also do not think there should be an EU army, but both responses for and against CSDP seem to understand the real implications of military force. Respondents both against and for CSDP seem to explain the role of a theoretical EU army as one that would be an entity fulfilling conventional or hard military power roles, as well as softer humanitarian or human rights functions. It does not appear from Table 1 that respondents take a soft or idealistic stance towards the role of power at the common European level.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Common Defense (Q29) | |
| Q56 Role of EU Army | Oppose | Support |
| Defend Territory | 54.10% | 75.90% |
| Guarantee EU Peace | 51.40% | 69.40% |
| Disasters in Europe | 50.90% | 62.70% |
| Human Rights | 42.80% | 54.20% |
| Border Conflicts | 37.10% | 50.50% |
| Humanitarian | 38.50% | 50.20% |
| Repatriation | 29.70% | 42.90% |
| Disasters in World | 32.10% | 40.40% |
| Peace-keeping – UN | 30.70% | 39.60% |
| Economic Interests | 15.40% | 24.90% |
| Symbolize EU Identity | 10.70% | 21.60% |
| World Conflicts | 13.90% | 19.70% |
| Peace-keeping - non-UN | 10.70% | 16.80% |
| *Don't Know* | 5.77% | 2.44% |
| *Should not be EU Army* | 10.50% | 1.61% |

Note: Eurobarometer 54.1 (2000). Results are statistically significant at p < 0.001 for all differences of proportions.

**Table 1: Percent Supporting Roles of EU Army, by Support for CSDP**

In a similar test to the results of Table 1, we tried to understand better whether these more granular preferences about the role of a European military would have any coherent cleavages within the respondent population. We conducted a factor analysis of the distribution of responses to question 56, in order to understand if respondents’ multiple preferences formed a coherent or random response to the prompt. The results in Table 2 document the clusters of responses (bolded). If individuals held incoherent preferences about European defense as a policy domain, we would expect them to have random clusters of ideas about what an EU army would possibly do. Instead, we see that there are three main clusters of individual responses within the public. One factor or cluster of responses is more preferential to internal, geopolitical or classical defense definitions of the role of an EU army, another cluster of responses is more characteristic of external or extraterritorial roles of an army, while another segment of the European public responded with aspects of an EU army that have no direct connection to military power, such as European identity and Economic strength.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Role of EU Army | Internal | External | Nondefense | Uniqueness |
| Defend Territory | **0.620** | -0.094 | 0.181 | 0.574 |
| Border Conflicts | **0.541** | 0.221 | 0.214 | 0.612 |
| Guarantee EU Peace | **0.619** | -0.093 | 0.294 | 0.521 |
| Repatriation | **0.538** | 0.269 | 0.259 | 0.571 |
| Disasters in Europe | **0.702** | 0.228 | 0.057 | 0.452 |
| Humanitarian | **0.540** | 0.325 | 0.179 | 0.570 |
| World Conflicts | 0.014 | **0.704** | 0.170 | 0.475 |
| Peace-Keeping - non-UN | 0.009 | **0.668** | 0.283 | 0.474 |
| Disasters in World | 0.458 | **0.589** | 0.001 | 0.443 |
| Peace-Keeping - UN | 0.468 | **0.518** | 0.073 | 0.508 |
| Human Rights | 0.420 | 0.155 | 0.378 | 0.657 |
| Economic Interests | 0.146 | 0.115 | **0.802** | 0.322 |
| Symbolize EU Identity | 0.113 | 0.147 | **0.797** | 0.330 |

**Table 2: Factor analysis of EU army role**

Hypothesis three expands upon the findings of the first two hypotheses, where we found informed individual responses towards CSDP, clear understandings that defense implies traditional hard power elements, as well as a degree of internal coherence amongst individual responses over what an EU army would possibly do. Hypothesis three predicts that there could be more support across the European population for hard rather than soft power functions at the EU level. As table 3 shows, both hard and soft power variables are strongly related to support for CSDP, with “hard power” having a slightly stronger effect than “soft power”.[[36]](#footnote-36) The coefficients for both variables are statistically significant at greater than the 0.001 significance level. Moreover, “hard power” is strongly correlated with “soft power” (r = 0.613), indicating that responses to the two scales are driven by largely the same underlying factors.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Support CSDP |
| Hard Power | 1.173\*\*\* |
|  | (0.108) |
| Soft Power | 0.80\*\*\* |
|  | (0.100) |
| European Pride | 0.515\*\*\* |
|  | (0.026) |
| Constant | -0.281 |
|  | (0.059) |
|  |  |
| Log-likelihood | -6266.39 |
| Chi-square | 0.000 |
| N = | 13179 |

**Table 3: Effect of Hard and Soft Power on Support for CSDP**

The last hypothesis relates to the costs of European defense. Generally, Europeans are characterizes as less supportive than Americans over defense policies at the national level, and this assumption extends to European support over defense policies at the European or collective level. Hypothesis four expects the opposite. While no public is ever keen on military over domestic spending, interesting comparative data can help clarify the degree to which a given population might be particularly hesitant to spend on defense. Comparisons to defense spending preferences can be between publics (such as between the US and EU), over time (such as EU public preferences over time) or between issue areas (such as between defense or other fiscal spending). In this draft paper, we have accessed and evaluated top-level data on defense versus other fiscal categories at one point in time. Later versions of this study will evaluate respondent level data and comparisons between the US and EU. Table 4 demonstrates European public preferences over fiscal spending overall, and then fiscal spending specifically on defense. Cell entries are the percent of respondents supporting each level of government spending. The second column shows the percentages for responses to Q35 about overall spending while the last column shows the percentages for responses to Q36A about defense spending.[[37]](#footnote-37) As the table shows, there is greater support for reducing government spending overall for debt-reduction purposes than there is for reducing defense spending. The European public overall supports increasing or maintaining current defense spending over increasing or maintaining other (domestic economic) spending. And the European public also prefers to decrease other fiscal spending before decreasing defense expenditures. We hope that further analyses will uncover some additional mechanisms in this relationship, as well as a comparison between publics across the Atlantic.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | EU |  | USA |  |
|  | Overall | Defense | Overall | Defense |
| Increase | 16 | 17 | 17 | 19 |
| Maintain | 29 | 46 | 19 | 45 |
| Decrease | 50 | 34 | 61 | 34 |

**Table 4: 2011 EU & US Public Opinion over Overall Fiscal Spending and Defense Spending (Source: German Marshall Fund Transatlantic Trends 2011)**

# Discussion

Our findings provide empirical support for the first three hypotheses outlined earlier and provide tentative and suggestive evidence in favor of Hypothesis 4. Individuals who support CSDP are indeed knowledgeable about politics and EU policies (Hypothesis 1). In fact, it is precisely among the most informed, interested, and engaged citizens that we find the strongest support for CSDP. We also found that levels of “non-attitudes”, manifested as “Don’t Know” responses, were not higher for CSDP than for most other EU domain areas.

Our findings also provide empirical evidence that individuals who support CSDP also have a coherent and stable understanding of what CSDP means (Hypothesis 2). Attitudes about common defense and the role of an EU army tend to group together along similar dimensions, indicating that citizens are able to connect their attitudes about these policy areas. Factor analysis, moreover, demonstrates that attitudes about the role of an EU army cluster into three largely internally coherent clusters of attitudes (internal, external, and non-defense).

When citizens support CSDP, our results indicate that they understand that such support includes both hard and soft power (Hypothesis 3). In fact, hard power considerations were actually stronger predictors of support for CSDP than were soft power considerations, though the difference is slight. At the very least, support for CSDP is not dominated by soft power considerations, and citizens base their support on hard power considerations as much as soft power ones.

Finally, such support for CSDP, including both hard and soft power considerations, is not contrary to attitudes about spending trade-offs (Hypothesis 4). Results from the Transatlantic Trends Survey (2012) demonstrates that the European public is actually more supportive of maintaining defense spending than they are of maintaining other types of spending as a way to reduce government debt. While these results are tentative, they do suggest that European citizens are not intrinsically opposed to funding defense efforts for CSDP efforts. Earlier (2006) polls documenting a reduction of support for CSDP when framed against cost considerations should be considered normal and consistent with all populations, rather than considered an exceptional feature of European public opinion or evidence of shallow or weak permissive consensus over CSDP. Support for all policies always fall when framed by costs. European individuals are no different.

In sum, the findings presented above provide empirical support for the notion of a European citizenry whose support for CSDP is based on knowledge about the consequences and costs of such policies, as well as an understanding about the role of hard and soft power in such policy. These results provide less support for the permissive consensus hypothesis and suggests that while CSDP has robust support among the European public, there may be less support among the political leadership to follow through with such policies.

# Implications and Conclusion

There are a number of implications that emerge from our findings. The first is that the conventional wisdom about European preferences for security and defense, and for European security and defense, are logically conflated and possibly even fatally flawed. An individual preference against specific extraterritorial military interventions cannot be generalized as a preference against defense, hard power, or the general use of force. And when Europeans are asked about their preferences for CSDP, they have educated and coherent preferences. The more a person knows about politics and EU policy, the more likely they are to support CSDP. The more educated a person is, the more likely they are to support CSDP. There may be a logic to CSDP—particularly about pooling and sharing defense burdens—that resonates amongst the public with little persuasion. Europe may very well be turning inward, losing its foreign policy influence, and diminishing its role in security and defense, but if this is the case, is not because of the public will, but of elites benefitting from the defense status quo such as national bureaucrats and interest groups. The public does not need to be blamed or educated about European defense, it may be elites who need to update their learning curve.

An additional implication emerges: it is possible that Europeans may be more supportive of the use of force at the European level than the national level. More negative responses to the use of force and interventions may be capturing this preference, if they are framed at the national rather than the EU level. Recall that one survey captured a vast majority of the public preferring EU-level defense to national defense. Conventional wisdoms seem to assume national defense preferences and then surmise that any negative polling results mean a loss of support for European defense efforts. Also, when it comes to spending preferences, the conventional wisdom that Europeans enjoy their butter over guns—allowing the US to subsidize their security with no concerns—appears shaky at best. While they may be spending objectively less on defense than Americans, it appears that most Europeans are not content with the status quo, nor have they become used to spending less on the military as a matter of principle. Europeans are not so different from Americans or others when it comes to defense preferences. And there is no evidence that European norms or preferences have fundamentally changed into primarily soft of civilian power norms. Why the rhetoric is so different from this reality is an open and fascinating question. The idea that Europeans are evolving on a soft/civilian power path may have normative value on its own as an exceptionalist narrative, but it is one with dubious foundations.

This study has clarified the nature of individual support for CSDP, but it has not yet clarified why and under what conditions individuals support CSDP. We think there are two possible mechanisms at work that are mutually constitutive. The first is that there may be a latent European identification amongst the European public supportive of CSDP. It is not an identification well-captured by extant public opinion polls, because those questions have historically framed European identity as either layered with national identity or contrasted with it (i.e., are you European, national, or both?).

The second is that this proto-European identity is activated and driven by threats from outside of Europe. There are certain kinds of threats—of many origins but from outside of Europe—that provoke a default support for a common European security and defense policy. These threats may take different forms, from reactions to the US (competition) to reactions to immigrants and instability outside Europe or Russian geopolitical developments. If true, this could help explain why support for CSDP is so consistent and robust: it may be driven by a succession of threats—from different sources at different points in time—that create logical preferences prioritizing European security responses and solutions. We intend to test these additional hypotheses of identity and external threats in our ongoing research project.

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    **Appendix**

    **Table A: Logistic Regression Models for European Determined Security Policy**

    |  |  |  |  |  |
    | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
    |  | Education | Interest | Feel Informed | Opinion Leader |
    |  |  |  |  |  |
    | Knowledge | 0.054\*\*\* | 0.183\*\*\* | 0.233\*\*\* | 0.178\*\*\* |
    |  | (0.006) | (0.038) | (0.025) | (0.023) |
    |  |  |  |  |  |
    | Closeness to Party | -0.040\*\*\* | -0.004 | -0.134\*\*\* | -0.017\*\* |
    |  | (0.009) | (0.017) | (0.052) | (0.009) |
    |  |  |  |  |  |
    | Constant | -0.047 | -0.261\*\* | 0.176 | -0.191\*\*\* |
    |  | (0.081) | (0.125) | (0.207) | (0.070) |
    |  |  |  |  |  |
    | N = | 139,357 | 48,124 | 68,492 | 127,727 |
    | Log-likelihood | -96017.47 | -33179,14 | -46712.47 | -88055.4 |
    | Proportional Reduction of Error | 6.80% | 5.93% | 10.37% | 6.56% |

    **Table B: Comparison of “Don’t Know” Responses across 19 EU Domains**

    |  |  |
    | --- | --- |
    | *Policy* | *Don't Know* |
    | Drugs | 3.81% |
    | Unemployment | 4.02% |
    | Environment | 4.05% |
    | Welfare | 4.23% |
    | Education | 4.45% |
    | WorSec | 4.53% |
    | **Security** | **5.34%** |
    | Immigration | 5.62% |
    | Science | 6.57% |
    | Curr | 6.68% |
    | Pasyl | 6.82% |
    | Culture | 6.91% |
    | Third | 7.25% |
    | Press | 7.64% |
    | Industr | 8.52% |
    | ForPol | 8.62% |
    | VA Tax | 10.04% |
    | DataP | 12.77% |
    | Worker | 13.32% |

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29. Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File. Independent variables: EDUC, POLINT, ECFINFO, OLI. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Eurobarometer 54.1: Building Europe and the European Union, The European Parliament, Public Safety, and Defense Policy, November- December 2000 (ICPSR 3209) [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Specifically: “What is your opinion on each of the following statements? Please tell me for each proposal, whether you are for it or against it. (ROTATE)-The European Union member states should have a common defence and security policy” [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. 1. Defending the territory of the European Union; 2. Intervening in conflicts at the borders of the European Union; 3. Intervening in conflicts in other parts of the world; 4. Repatriating Europeans who are in areas where there is a conflict; 5. Intervening in case of natural, ecological or nuclear disaster in Europe; 6. Interv. in oth. parts of the world (nat., ecol. or nucl. disast., or combat. famine, or cleaning minefields); 7. Guaranteeing peace in the European Union; 8. Taking part in peace-keeping missions outside the E.U., decided by the U.N. (UN troops); 9. Taking part in peace-keeping missions outside the E.U., without the U.N.'s agreement; 10. Defending Human Rights; 11. Carrying out humanitarian missions; 12. Defending the economic interests of the European Union; 13. Symbolising a European identity; 14. There shouldn't be a European army (SPONTANEOUS). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Mannheim Eurobarometer Trend File. Dependent Variable – CPSECUR. Independent Variables – POLINT, OLI, ECFINFO, and EDUC (not shown). Coefficients were statistically significant at greater than the .05 significance level, even after controls for party affiliation (CLOSEPTY) and feelings of identification with Europe versus nation (FEEL) were added to the model. Because the responses in the Mannheim survey are clustered by nation and year, the models used clustered standard errors for country-year to avoid inflating the statistical significance of the coefficients. The sample sizes for these models ranged from N=48,124 to N=127,727, depending on the number of years each question was asked across the dataset. Table A in the appendix provides the logistic regression results for each of these four models. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. The percent for CPSECUR was 5.34 percent, compared to CPWORKER which had the highest rate of non-response (13.3 percent) and CPDRUGS which had the lowest rate ((3.81 percent). See Table B in the appendix for a full comparison of non-response rates across all 19 EU domain variables. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Measured by Eurobarometer 54.1, Question 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. “Hard power” is an index created from V294, V295, V296, and V302. “Soft power” is an index created from V300, V297, V298, V299, V301, V303, V304, V305, and V306. Each variable was then scaled to range from 0-1, allowing more direct comparison of the coefficients in the model. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Question wording: Q35: “These days, some governments are cutting spending to reduce their debt. Other governments are maintain or increasing their spending to stimulate economic growth. What is your view?”; Q36A: “And how about defense spending? Do you think the [COUNTRY] government should increase defense spending, keep defense spending at the current level, or decrease defense spending?” [↑](#footnote-ref-37)