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Paradoxes of parliamentarization in European security and defence: when politicization and integration undercut parliamentary capital

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ABSTRACT

European security and defence policy has long been an elusive domain for parliaments. However, two recent developments invite a reassessment of this situation. On the one hand, since 2016, the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) has taken on a qualitative step towards further integration. On the other, security and defence issues are becoming more politicized, as shown by the growing polarization of vote at the European Parliament. Studies of parliamentarization have considered both processes (integration and politicization) to be positively correlated with an increase of parliamentary involvement. However, this paper argues that the democracy-enhancing effect of integration and politicization is not straightforward, but depends on the degree and character of these two processes. This point is illustrated by the evolution of supranational parliamentary scrutiny of CSDP, where contrary to the expectations, the recent boost in integration and greater politicization have translated in a relative decline of ‘parliamentary capital’.

KEYWORDS

Common security and defence policy; parliamentarisation; politicisation; parliamentary capital; European parliament

Introduction

Security and defence policies remain challenging areas for parliamentary scrutiny. Common conceptions of security as an ‘exceptional’ (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998), ‘anti-political’ (Aradau 2006) or ‘uncivilized’ domain (Loader and Walker 2007) capture well the extended view that the provision of security is often detrimental to public deliberation and democratic control. Within the EU, security and defence policy is also an area where concerns of executive dominance and de-parliamentarization are particularly pronounced. The combination of intergovernmental decision-making procedures with a growingly complex institutional architecture at the EU level, has made the practical scrutiny of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) a difficult task for National Parliaments (NPs) (Huff 2015; Tonra 2018; Zanon 2010). In turn, for the European Parliament (EP), defence policy has remained the most elusive of all domains. Unlike in other areas of EU external relations, the EP has no formal say in CSDP executive decisions or international agreements, no possibility to scrutinize the financing of military operations, and its access to confidential information remains restricted
Yet two recent developments motivate a reassessment of this picture. The first development is the recent boost in defence policy integration. With the deterioration of the security environment in and around Europe since the mid-2010s, the EU recently reactivated plans for deepening CSDP cooperation. Some of the landmark initiatives include the long-delayed implementation of the Lisbon Treaty provisions on Permanent Structured Cooperation, allowing a group of Member States to enter binding commitments in the development of integrated military capabilities (Council of the EU 2017). Breaking the taboo of the involvement of the European Commission in the military aspects of defence policy, the EU also launched a new European Defence Fund, which could earmark about €1.5 billion/year for defence research and industrial cooperation in the 2021–2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) (European Commission 2018a). In the words of the EU High Representative/Vice-president of the Commission (HR/VP), with these and other measures of the new security and defence package, the ‘building blocks of a European Security and Defence Union are finally there’ (EU HR/VP 2017). Studies on the parliamentarization of the EU have often suggested that the empowerment of the EP is commonly related to advances in European integration. This is because the pooling and delegation of executive powers to the EU tend to create ‘legitimacy gaps’, which have usually been compensated by stronger supranational parliamentary oversight (Rittberger 2006). Following this ‘normative spillover’ thesis (Schimmelfennig 2010), we should expect the recent qualitative step in defence integration to be followed by greater EP involvement.

The second development calling for a reappraisal of the parliamentary scrutiny of CSDP is the gradual politicization of this domain. An overview of the voting results on the EP’s annual reports on the CSDP reveals significantly more polarized positions on security and defence: from 79 per cent support in 2008, to 55 per cent in 2017. Foreign policy and security issues have also figured prominently in the campaigns of rising populist parties, thus being an indication that these issues are becoming more salient to the public (Balfour et al. 2016). Politicization of European and international affairs, understood as the growing salience and polarization surrounding the activity of international institutions, is generally considered as a democracy-enhancing process, given that it fosters public participation and parliamentary control (Kröger and Bellamy 2016; ZüRn 2014). We should therefore expect the recent politicization trends in the CSDP to also foster greater parliamentary scrutiny.

However, as this paper argues, the link between integration/politicization and parliamentarization is not as straightforward as it has often been presented. Integration and politicization are not binary factors, but come in different forms and degrees. Therefore, their impact might also take different shapes. Given its peculiarities, EU security and defence policy provides an ideal case where to assess the impact of different types of integration and politicization on supranational parliamentary involvement. To examine parliamentarization, the paper advances the analytical concept of parliamentary capital, a notion that places the emphasis on the wider context in which parliaments operate, including inter-institutional and inter-parliamentary relations.

The paper proceeds in four steps. Section one sets out the conceptual-theoretical discussion for analysing the relationship between integration and politicization on the
one hand, and parliamentarization on the other. Section two assesses the patterns of integration and politicization observed in the CSDP domain. Section three examines the recent evolution in the EP’s parliamentary capital in the CSDP. The last section concludes by discussing the theoretical and policy implications.

**Unpacking the relationship between integration, politicization and parliamentarization**

Just as a few years ago scholars started to diagnose the ‘end of the permissive consensus’ in European integration, to refer to the mounting politicization of EU institutions and policies (Hooghe and Marks 2009), International Relations scholars have also recently proclaimed that ‘the days of permissive consensus for executive multilateralism are over’ (ZüRn, Binder, and Ecker-Ehrhardt 2012). This greater politicization of international affairs is often related to the furthering of global and regional integration dynamics. As international institutions gain authority in the governance of a wide array of issues, their policies and procedures have also become more salient and often more contested (Ibid.). Both phenomena (integration and politicization) may impact on democratic politics and institutions, including the level of parliamentarization of international affairs, understood as greater involvement of parliaments in scrutinizing and shaping regional and global governance. Although the literature has often assumed a positive correlation between these phenomena, a closer look at the mechanisms linking them suggests a more complex relation. This section discusses the two nexuses (integration/parliamentarization and politicization/parliamentarization) in turn and elaborates on the notion of parliamentary capital as a measure of parliamentarization.

As presented in the literature, the relation between integration and parliamentarization is often assumed to be a positive one. Emerging literature on ‘global parliamentarism’ is premised on the idea that parliaments’ direct involvement in international affairs is a response to globalization patterns and regional integration, which have gradually blurred the distinction between domestic and international politics (Costa, Stavridis, and Dri 2013; Stavridis and Jančič 2016). Accordingly, two thirds of existing inter-parliamentary bodies were created after the late 1980s (Šabic 2008). Also in the security realm, the numerous inter-parliamentary bodies that emerged after the IIWW (e.g. parliamentary assemblies of NATO, WEU, OSCE or Council of Europe) were mostly a response to demands for stronger democratic scrutiny of intergovernmental organizations (Wagner Forthcoming). Research on the parliamentarization of the EU has also established that major upgrades of the EP’s powers were related to advances in integration. Even in the defence domain, Rittberger (2006) uses the case of the failed European Defence Community in the 1950s, which included a remarkably strong parliamentary dimension, to illustrate the importance of the long-established principle of ‘no integration without representation’.

Yet, the described integration/parliamentarization nexus also raises a few caveats. On the one hand, most literature focuses on the effects of formal increases in integration, for example through the introduction of QMV (Rittberger 2012; Schimmelfennig 2010). Less discussed is the parliamentarization of areas where integration proceeds without changing formal decision-making rules. EU foreign policy is one of those areas that, despite its intergovernmental character, has experienced various forms of ‘Brusselization’ (Allen 1998), to the point that CSDP has been depicted as an example of ‘integration without
supranationalisation’ (Fabbrini and Puetter 2016, 488) or even ‘intergovernmental supranationalism’ (Howorth 2012). Recent research on ‘new intergovernmentalism’ captures well the problems of transparency and executive dominance that hybrid forms of integration bring about in areas such as CFSP/CSDP or economic governance (Hillebrandt and Novak 2016). On the other hand, parliamentarization literature has acknowledged that ‘the principle of parliamentary representation is not an uncontested’ (Rosén 2018, 1450). Therefore, for the ‘normative spillover’ to unfold, it is necessary that some actors exert sustained rhetorical pressure (Rittberger and Schimmelfennig 2006) or persuade reluctant actors of the validity of their arguments for increasing parliamentary powers (Rosén 2018).

Politicization and parliamentarization are also assumed to be positively-correlated phenomena. When international institutions’ policies and procedures ‘become salient and controversial on the level of mass politics’ (Ecker-Ehrhardt 2014, 1275), one should expect stronger involvement of political parties and parliamentary oversight. Studies on EU parliamentary scrutiny by NPs also relate the intensity of scrutiny to variables such as parliamentary Euroscepticism and issue salience (Auel, Rozenberg, and Tacea 2015, 300). In EU external relations, for example EU trade policy, growing public salience and polarization of positions have also been identified as crucial variables spurring active involvement by parliaments in Europe at different levels (Jančić 2017; Magnette 2017; Roederer-Rynning and Kallestrup 2017). More generally, integration scholars have considered politicization as a positive development for democracy, as it allows for better representation of citizens’ preferences and thus contributes to mitigate perceptions of a democratic deficit. Politicization is in this sense often identified as the missing link for a well-functioning EU polity (Follesdal and Hix 2006; Kröger and Bellamy 2016; Schmidt 2009).

However, the politicization/parliamentarization nexus has also blind spots. Some authors have questioned the democracy-enhancing character of politicization. For example, De Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke (2016) argue that politicization of EU affairs may not be a sign of a vibrant democracy, but rather an expression of the EU’s declining legitimacy. Following this line of argument, we might expect politicization to have a different impact on parliamentary involvement at national and EU levels. More specifically, it is unclear why should parliamentary Euroscepticism in the EP lead to more pro-active scrutiny, as it has been found in research on NPs. Quite the reverse, Members of European Parliament (MEPs) contesting the EU polity as a whole might have little incentive to demand further increases in the powers of the EP or contribute to its standing as a serious locus for democratic scrutiny. Moreover, the nature of political cleavages may also affect the possibility of politicization to translate into greater parliamentary involvement. The positive effect of politicization to the ‘democratic reconnection’ in the EU is usually associated with transnational cleavages on the substance of EU policies, for example along a left-right axis, rather than debates on identity and constitutional issues (Bellamy and Kröger 2016, 126–127). For the parliamentarization at the EU level, this is all the more important, since politicization along the so-called integration-demarcation cleavage (Grande and Kriesi 2015) implies a growth in positions more favourable to retain or renationalize competences and hence to keep parliamentary scrutiny at the national level.

In sum, the degree and type of integration and politicization may affect the chances of parliamentarization. In policy areas where institutional developments are not clear cut, and hence the expectations of further parliamentary scrutiny are more contested, we
might expect normative entrepreneurship by parliamentary actors to become particularly
relevant. In turn, this pro-active stance by parliaments will depend on the pattern of
politicization. In that regard, we might expect that politicization of the EU polity, rather
than of the substance of EU policies, will be a weakening factor for scrutiny at EU level.

Finally, for the study of parliamentarization, several concepts have been used, which
include a mixture of formal powers and actual engagement. For example, the literature
has distinguished between parliaments’ ‘capacity and motivation’ (Auel and Christiansen
2015), ‘authority, ability and attitude’ (Born and Hänggi 2005) or different dimensions of
‘parliamentary assertion’ (Roederer-Rynning 2017). However, these concepts tend to
foster analyses that focus on the attributes of parliaments in isolation, rather than how
these qualities compare to and are recognised as such by other relevant actors, including
executive actors and other parliaments in the EU multi-level polity. To that aim, this paper
advances the notion of parliamentary capital to better capture the material and immaterial
resources that constitute an advantage for parliaments in the wider context in which they
operate (Herranz-Surrallés 2014). The concept is inspired by Bourdieu’s notion of capital,
which stands as ‘the resources of different types to which any given actor has access and
that are recognized as relevant in any particular field’ (Sending 2015, 6 based on Bourdieu
1986). The relative strengths of parliamentary actors can be defined using Bourdieu’s basic
sources of capital: material, cultural, social and symbolic. Adapted to the parliamentary
case, material capital refers to the institutional resources and administrative support
available to parliamentarians. Cultural capital is nurtured by the knowledge and expertise
of parliamentarians and supporting bodies. Social capital emerges from networking
abilities and close connections with relevant centres of decision-making. Finally, symbolic
capital somehow relates to the other sources of capital, as it captures the power that
comes from the recognition -often sanctioned by an official or juridical act- of the capital
agents possess, thus conferring them with prestige and legitimacy (Bourdieu 1989, 21). In
the parliamentary realm, symbolic capital refers to the legal and political authority that
a parliament enjoys within the polity.

Methodologically, the study of integration and politicization undertaken in the fol-
lowing section is based on documentary analysis, including voting data of parliamentary
reports over the past three legislative terms (2004 until nowadays). To gain further
insight into the substantive positions held by the different political groups, the study
also examines proposed amendments to crucial reports. The subsequent analysis of the
recent evolution of the EP’s parliamentary capital in security and defence is mostly
based on interviews, background talks and insights gathered through participant obser-
vation in two inter-parliamentary conferences on CFSP/CSDP and one High-Level
Seminar on the parliamentary dimension of defence cooperation.1

**Patterns of integration and politicization of CSDP**

Recent attempts to boost CSDP come after 15 years of relatively low policy and institu-
tional innovation. The latest landmark changes date back from the first half of the 2000s:
the EU launched its first military operations in 2004, created the European Defence
Agency (EDA) to support defence procurement and established the Battle Groups
shortly afterwards. The Treaty of Lisbon included significant new flexibility measures,
such as the Permanent Structured Cooperation and measures for urgent financing of
operations. However, this policy domain has been characterised by a persistent gap between institutional developments and political will, with the result that many of these innovations remained un-implemented or under-used (Cotey 2018, 138ff). It was only with the recent context created by Russia’s invasion of Crimea in 2014, the expansion of Islamic State in the EU’s proximity, US President Trump’s disengagement in NATO or Brexit that prompted a reappraisal of EU security and defence policy.

The new architecture advanced by the 2016 ‘EU Security and Defence Package’ hinges on three elements, already launched in pilot phase since 2017. The first is a new *European Defence Fund* (EDF), which for the first time allocates sizeable EU funds to promote cooperation in development and procurement of defence equipment. The proposed budget for the next MFF (2021–2027) is €13 billion, which amounts to about 20 per cent of current defence research and development expenditure by EU member states together. The defence portfolio might also be complemented by another €6.5 billion for military mobility, namely the adaptation of EU transport network to military requirements, to be funded from the Connecting Europe Facility (European Commission 2018b, 9). The second component is the *Permanent Structured Cooperation* (PESCO), which represents also a qualitatively different level of integration, since unlike defence cooperation in NATO, commitments on operational objectives and capability development are not only politically but also legally binding (Biscop 2017, 3). For example, some of the commitments entail yearly pledges to increase defence budgets in real terms, dedicate at least 20 per cent of the Defence Budget to capability development and 2 per cent to research and development, or the facilitation of the deploy-ability of forces, including through ‘fast-track political commitment’ (Council of the EU 2017). Finally, the governance of CSDP is complemented by a *Coordinated Annual Review on Defence* (CARD), a biannual mechanism to identify capability gaps through reporting, dialogue and recommendation with each member state. Although CARD is voluntary, full collaboration in the review is of an obligatory nature for PESCO members (Drent, Wilms, and Zandee 2017, 13).

The governance of these new structures turn up the mentioned ‘intergovernmental supranationalist’ (Howorth 2012) aspects of the CSDP another notch. On the one hand, the EDF is, as other EU financial instruments, managed by the European Commission. However, its implementation will be entrusted to the EDA, an intergovernmental agency that reports to the Defence Ministers of the EU member states. A first delegation agreement between the Commission and EDA was already signed in May 2017. On the other hand, PESCO and CARD are intergovernmental mechanisms, but further ‘Brusselised’, since their secretariats are also provided by the EDA, which together with the EEAS and the EU Military Staff, is responsible for assessing the compliance of member states with the commitments made. The Executive Director of the EDA celebrated the decision to upgrade the agency emphasizing its unique institutional position as ‘an intergovernmental agency at the service of Member States while, at the same time, implementing defence-related EU programmes on behalf of the European Commission’ (Domecq 2018, 6). Notably also is that the legal base chosen for the new defence-related funds is industry and research (articles 173, 182 and 283 TFUE) even if the proposals clearly state that the goal is to ‘preserve the EU’s strategic autonomy and meet its current and future security needs’ (European Commission 2018a, 2). The ever more complex mix between intergovernmental and supranational elements is also well
illustrated by the HR/VP’s doubts on which position of the hemicycle should she speak from when presenting the latest CSDP initiatives.3

The EP has traditionally supported the development of CSDP, even foreshadowing some of the latest institutional developments. For example, it promoted the inclusion of a pilot project for funding defence cooperation projects in the annual budgets of 2015 and 2016, and issued resolutions proposing a European Defence Union (European Parliament 2016). Prior to the 2016 security and defence package, annual reports on the implementation of the CSDP also routinely denounced the lack of political will by Member States in meeting defence commitments, the delayed implementation of the instruments of the Lisbon Treaty and insufficient financing of both military and civilian operations. However, support for these positions within parliament has decreased over the past three parliamentary terms (see Figure 1). The change in support cannot be attributed to the political orientation of the rapporteur, since annual reports have always been led by a prominent figure of one of the two main political groups – the European People’s Party (EPP) and the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) – and sometimes even the same rapporteur.

The growing polarization of vote is also visible in all CSDP-related reports (see Figure 2). In the 6th parliamentary term (2004–2009), defence issues were highly consensual, with an average support of 78 per cent. Support was slightly lower in the 7th parliamentary term (75 per cent), but non-support was largely expressed in terms of abstention (11 per cent). Conversely, in the current parliamentary term, average support has gone down to 67 per cent and the average share of no-votes has doubled to 26 per cent. Data thus show a tendency towards gradual depletion of neutral positions. It is also significant that votes in defence-related dossiers are significantly more contested than other domains within the broad portfolio of topics covered within the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET). As Figure 2 shows, defence-related reports have consistently been more controversial than other matters, ranging from trade policy, sanctions, development, neighbourhood policy, or EU-Russia relations. A comparison of the committee votes on different topics

![Figure 1](image_url). Evolution of support for the annual report on the implementation of CSDP (2008–2017). Source: own elaboration, from AFET reports and EU Vote Watch. The difference between the 2017 Committee and Plenary votes might be related to the low voting turnout in Committee (40 out of 73 MEPs).
during the current parliamentary term reveals that the only topic that presents a similar level of contestation to CSDP is migration. Interestingly, this pattern of politicization is the reverse as the one observed in NPs, where defence issues tend to be significantly more consensual than other fields (Wagner et al. 2018, 546–547).

The observed pattern of politicization has some left vs. right component. On the left, both the European United Left–Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) and the Greens–European Free Alliance (Greens–EFA) have tended to vote cohesively against CSDP reports. Both groups are critical towards initiatives that focus on the build-up of military capabilities. Particularly contentious are debates on the financing of CSDP. The GUE/NGL has long tabled minority opinions in CSDP reports, presenting its opposition to any use of EU funds for military purposes as well as to the inter-governmental fund Athena, for its lack of transparency and parliamentary oversight (e.g. European Parliament 2015, 16). More recently, also a significant number of Socialist MEPs voted against CSDP reports, including several members of the German socialist delegation, which often appear divided by voting simultaneously in favour, against and abstaining. Traditional left-right concerns on the trade-off between military and social spending are relevant to explain some of this opposition. For example, in relation to the 2017 report on the implementation of the CSDP, the Latvian Socialist MEP Andrejs Mamikins, explained: ‘I voted against the report for the following reason. The call to raise national defence budgets to 2% of GDP in the coming decade (...) will jeopardise the efforts of some Member States to improve their social policies (...). Children in Latvia could get around EUR 45 more per day if the military expenses went to households’ (European Parliament 2017b).

Figure 2. Evolution of committee votes on defence and non-defence reports in AFET (2004–2017).

Source: own elaboration, from EP documents’ database and archives. For the 6th and 7th parliamentary terms, data was triangulated with the AFET activity reports for each term. The total number of defence/non-defence reports per term is: 6/96 (6th term), 13/91 (7th term) and 10/109 (8th term).
However, the increase of contestation in the 8th legislative term is also related to an integration vs. demarcation cleavage. Despite their different substantive orientations, parties on the Far Left and the Far Right and/or Eurosceptic groups (together around 30 per cent of the seats in the EP) are strongly opposed to the idea of the EU playing an autonomous role in military affairs. The on-going debate on the new defence initiatives is indicative of this opposition related to constitutional and sovereignty questions. For example, in the 2018 annual report on the implementation of the CSDP, deputies from the GUE/NGL tabled amendments rejecting the inclusion of a new heading on Security and Defence in the next MFF arguing that this ‘violates the provisions laid down in Article 41(2)TEU which states that any expenditure arising from actions having military or defence implications must not be charged to the Union budget’ (European Parliament 2018a, amendment 65). Green and some Socialist MEPs also tabled amendments rejecting the EDF or the inclusion of military mobility in the Connecting Europe Facility due to the lack of legal and political basis for those developments (European Parliament 2018a, Amendment 81, 2018b, Amendments 16, 17). On the other end of the spectrum, MEPs from the ENF and, to a lesser extent the EFDD and ECR, have opposed the idea of an EU common defence policy, rejecting notions such as ‘EU strategic autonomy’ or ‘European solidarity’ (European Parliament 2018a, amendments 22, 27, 28). ENF representatives have been particularly vocal in rejecting EU involvement in security and defence pointing out arguments such as that ‘sovereignty cannot be delegated to the Union without committing the crime of high treason within the framework of the current national institutions’ (European Parliament 2018a, Amendment 86).

In sum, CSDP is taking on a new level of ambition with a battery of initiatives aimed at achieving ‘a fully-fledged European Defence Union by 2025’ (European Commission 2017b). However, integration does not follow the conventional communitarisation path, but a mixture of intergovernmental decision-making and supranational involvement through the ‘back door’ (namely setting up EU defence instruments via other sectoral policies). These developments coincide with a significant growth of contestation on security and defence policy at the EP. While the left-right cleavage is important, politicization has often revolved around the desirability and very legitimacy of EU integration in defence and military matters.

**Towards a decline of the EP’s parliamentary capital in CSDP?**

Following the theoretical discussion, the combination of integration through mixed forms of governance and politicization of the EU polity and its legitimacy is a problematic one for supranational parliamentarization. This section explores the plausibility of this proposition by examining the evolution of the EP’s parliamentary capital in security and defence policy in its four dimensions (material, cultural, social and symbolic).

The biggest increase in EP’s material capital (institutional and administrative resources) in security and defence policy dates back from the 6th parliamentary term (2004–2009). The EP created a new Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE) within AFET, composed by 35 MEPs and assisted by a secretariat of 8 staff members. The EP also established a Policy Department within the Directorate General for External Policies (EXPO) to provide expert support for AFET and SEDE. However, since then, institutional and administrative resources have remained largely unchanged despite the intensification of EU defence-related activity. If anything, institutional resources have decreased, since AFET/SEDE have been significantly
downsized over the past three parliamentary terms, from 86/35 MEPs to 73/30. Moreover, as a sub-committee, SEDE is significantly constrained, for example as regards the number of own-initiative reports it can deal with (a maximum of five each parliamentary term). With the acceleration of EU initiatives in CSDP, including defence-related legislative reports, the idea of upgrading SEDE into a full committee, which was already debated during the 6th parliamentary term (cf. Barbé and Herranz-Surrallés 2008, 100–101), has re-gained some momentum. However, the necessary political will to pull out this institutional change has so far been lacking (Interview, European Parliament, Brussels, March 2018). The growing contestation of security and defence policy plays a part in this lack of drive, since the creation of a Defence Committee is opposed on both parliamentary ends, either because of national sovereignty considerations or concerns about a drift towards the ‘militarisation’ of the EU.

The relative weakening of institutional capacity is reflected in the fact that some of the key legislative dossiers of the EU Security and Defence Package are being dealt with by other sectoral committees than AFET/SEDE. For example, recent legislative reports on the European Defence Industrial Development Programme, the European Defence Fund, or Military Mobility as part of the Connecting Europe Facility have been assigned to the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE). The decision to allocate these reports to ITRE was taken on procedural grounds, namely the fact that the legal basis indicated in the Commission proposals on this subject is industry and research. However, this generated some inter-committee rivalries given the controversy surrounding the Commission’s choice of legal basis (Interview, European Parliament, March 2018). Although AFET will still submit opinions in those reports and a SEDE representative can attend the trilogue meetings, the leadership of sectoral committees in defence reports might limit the EP’s ability to oversee defence policy coherently and from a political point of view, thus being placed at further disadvantage vis-à-vis the Council and Commission.

The evolution of the EP’s cultural capital (knowledge and expertise) presents some contradictory trends. On the one hand, in recent years, the EP has made significant effort to boost its in-house expertise. In 2013, the EP launched the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), a ‘think tank’ that provides research for MEPs and produces a variety of studies and policy papers. It includes for example a ‘Council Oversight Unit’ (ECOS) where CSDP is one the main topics. Therefore, the EP is now better positioned vis-à-vis other institutions, such as the Commission, which has long had an in-house policy think tank, the Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA) since 1989 and upgraded into European Political Strategy Centre (EPSC) by the Juncker’s Commission. Figure 3 shows the drastic growth in the number of supporting analyses on security and defence, generated internally, by the Policy Department or the EPRS, or externally commissioned for SEDE.

On the other hand, however, security and defence know-how by MEPs seems to have decreased. In the words of a prominent MEP, ‘there are currently no more than 15 people in SEDE who are really into the job’ (Intervention under Chatham House rules, Amsterdam, March 2016). This might be explained by the high turnover in the Sub-committee, with half of its members being newly elected MEPs and only one third having served in SEDE before. Therefore, there are few MEPs with extensive experience in legislative dossiers. According to interviews, many MEPs within SEDE are more concerned with strategic and foreign policy debates rather than scrutiny of technical details. This is observed also in the
fact that Joint Consultation Meetings (JCM), quarterly meetings between representatives of AFET/SEDE, the Political and Security Committee (PSC) and Commission to discuss CFPS/CSDP matters, including financing, are not fully exploited by MEPs as a chance for scrutiny. Similarly, expertise on financial instruments of EU external action is generally lacking, something that reduces the potential of the Strategic Dialogues with the Commission and European External Action Service (EEAS) to monitor the different instruments (Interview, European Parliament, Brussels, March 2018).

In terms of social capital (closeness to centres of decision-making) the evolution presents also a mixed picture. Through the work of SEDE, MEPs have acquired access to a wide range of decision-makers. The Sub-committee holds bi-monthly meetings with participation of high-ranking officials charged with CSDP matters in the EEAS and Council, as well as relevant Commission DGs, NATO personnel and representatives and experts of third countries. SEDE has also a close contact with the EDA, something that might become even more relevant as the Agency assumes greater role in the implementation of the EU Defence Package. SEDE is also making regular use of ad hoc delegations to military operations headquarters, as a chance to talk to several responsible people, including the mission commanders (Interview, European Parliament, March 2018). However, the growing politicization of security and defence has impacted on the centrality of SEDE. From the beginning of the 8th parliamentary term in 2014, the chairwoman of SEDE has been Anna Elżbieta Fotyga, a Polish MEP from the ECR, a group that has tended to vote against the proposed CSDP reports. This affects the political leadership of SEDE, since it places the chair in a marginal position in inter-institutional dialogue, particularly in a context where EU institutions are pushing an ambitious CSDP agenda. In the words of an MEP, in reference to the EP’s relations with other institutions, ‘Parliament is not the strongest partner it was; support for CSDP will have to come from somewhere else’ (Intervention under Chatham House rules, Amsterdam, March 2016). Moreover, with ITRE assuming the leadership in the scrutiny of key defence instruments, SEDE might also lose centrality in the inter-institutional game. The same goes for the position of the EP as a counterpart of NPs, since at national level, the new dossiers are mostly dealt with by defence committees.

Finally, and closely connected to the developments in other dimensions of parliamentary capital, the EP has recently been less assertive in cultivating its symbolic capital (legal and political authority). CSDP was an area where the EP had long concentrated its

![Figure 3. Supporting analyses on security and defence (1999–2018).](source: database of European Parliament Think Tank [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/search.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/search.html) (last accessed: October 2018). *Data on the 8th parliamentary term includes expertise items until October 2018.)*
demands for stronger oversight, seeking recognition via political facts and inter-institutional agreements (IIAs). During the 6th and 7th parliamentary terms, the EP undertook several important steps in upgrading the role of the EP in inter-institutional relations. First, the IIA of 2006 on budgetary aspects established the already mentioned Joint Committee Meetings, allowing the EP to scrutinize the financing of CSDP civilian operations. In the 6th parliamentary term, the chairman of SEDE, Karl von Wogau, pledged to discuss the evolution of CSDP operations in each meeting of SEDE, and to issue own-initiative reports symbolically ‘authorizing’ important CSDP military operations, despite its lack of a formal prerogative to do so (Barbé and Herranz-Surrallés 2008, 91). The Treaty of Lisbon did not increase the EP’s powers in CFSP/CSDP, but it formally recognised the EP’s right to be consulted and informed on CFSP and CSDP matters (art. 36 TEU). Accordingly, the EP also pressed for the recognition of its scrutiny rights in a Declaration of Political Accountability adopted by the HR/VP in 2010. For example, the Declaration contained the commitment of the HR to continue providing confidential information on CSDP military operations, including their financing, via the EP Special Committee established in the IIA of 2002 concerning access to sensitive in the field of security and defence, and even to revise this IIA to upgrade MEPs access’ to classified information.

By comparison, during the 8th parliamentary term, the EP remained rather silent on the need to improve scrutiny procedures. The latest annual reports on CSDP focus more on institutional debates, advocating stronger supranational elements in the EU security and defence policy, in the hope this will trigger parliamentarization by itself, rather than actively seeking reassurance of its prerogatives. For example, the 2017 annual report on the implementation of the CSDP proposed the establishment of a Directorate-General for defence within the Commission (DG Defence) (European Parliament 2017c, 11), something that would make it easier to justify setting up a full Defence Committee, even if MEPs are divided on this issue. When it comes to the scrutiny of CSDP operations, the EP has concentrated on the implementation rather than cultivating ways for influencing decisions at an earlier stage (Interview, European Parliament, March 2013). On the question of access to confidential information, the negotiations for upgrading the IIA of 2002 initiated over the 7th parliamentary term have not been dealt with as a political priority and are still ongoing.

Finally, the moderation of the EP’s claims of authority in CSDP is also observed in inter-parliamentary relations. In the previous parliamentary period, the EP strived to play a central role in the newly established Inter-Parliamentary Conference (IPC) on CFSP/CSDP, something that became a major point of friction with NPs (Herranz-Surrallés 2014). Conversely, in recent years the EP seems to have accommodated to a less prominent position in this conference. Despite the formal co-presidency between the EP and NPs, the established practice has been that the Presidency parliament takes the leadership in setting the agenda and in deciding over procedural issues such as whether to adopt final conclusions (Interviews, European Parliament, National Parliament, October 2018). AFET has also recently abandoned the practice of fixed biannual Interparliamentary Committee Meetings with NPs, in favour of more ad hoc inter-parliamentary contacts. For better or worse, therefore, the EP also plays a less assertive role in the wider parliamentary field of security and defence.
Conclusion

Greater parliamentarization is often mentioned as a necessary remedy to redress the rising domestic contestation and ‘executive drift’ that have emerged in the context of recent crises. By problematizing the relation between integration/politicization and parliamentary capital, this paper aimed to contribute to the discussion on the effects of contextual institutional and political factors on the chances of further parliamentarization. The paper argued that the democracy-enhancing effect of integration and politicization depends on the degree and character of these two process and suggested that sometimes we might even observe a negative correlation. First, hybrid forms of integration without formal supranationalization are difficult to seize as opportunities for further parliamentarization at EU level and hence tend to reinforce the advantage of executive actors. Second, politicization that revolves around sovereignty and constitutional questions may increase parliamentarization at the national level but it is likely to undermine supranational parliamentarization.

The empirical analysis found support for the abovementioned propositions. Contrary to the recent increases in the formal and informal powers of the EP in several aspects of external relations (Rosén and Raube 2018), the latest trends in integration and politicization in the specific area of CSDP are rather undercutting the EP’s relative parliamentary capital. Hybrid integration patterns and growing contestation of the CSDP dossiers have so far undermined the EP’s ability to upgrade its institutional structures, cultivate its expertise and closeness to relevant decision-makers, as well as increase its standing and prestige vis-à-vis other institutions and NPs. At a moment when security and defence policy starts having strong distributional implications (as much as €20 billion planned for the next MFF), politicization trends might well intensify during the next parliamentary term. The challenge is therefore to ‘normalize politicization’ (Kröger and Bellamy 2016) also at the European level, in order that contestation translates into both stronger transnational debates and more active supranational parliamentary scrutiny, regardless of MEPs’ preferences on the desirability of further integration. This might require also demanding clear lines of delegation and accountability at the EU level to prevent that political responsibility becomes diluted in the ever more hybrid CSDP governance system.

Finally, the observed developments are also a reminder that the empowerment of parliaments is not a linear process. Although the EP has generally proven successful in gradually increasing its powers over time, its parliamentary capital cannot be taken for granted, particularly in areas where this empowerment is based on informal dynamics. CSDP furnishes one of those examples of an area where the EP had traditionally relied on cultivating its parliamentary capital to compensate for its weak treaty prerogatives. The observed decline in parliamentary capital has thus a particularly damaging effect on the quality of supranational parliamentary oversight of the CSDP when it is most needed. Looking at the wider multi-level parliamentary field, the relative loss of EP’s parliamentary capital in CSDP may contribute to prevent the re-occurrence of new episodes of friction between parliamentary levels. However, this also means that NPs are now also under stronger pressure to scrutinize, and ensure sufficient public support for, current plans towards a Defence Union in a particularly critical moment for EU integration.
Notes

1. Interviews for this paper include two members of the EP secretariat (Brussels, 23.03.2018 and telephonic interview, 15.10.2018) and two heads of delegation of national parliaments participating in the IPC on CFSP/CSDP (Vienna, 11/12.10.2018). The findings also draw on interviews conducted for previous studies, mainly Barbé and Herranz-Surrallés (2008) and Herranz-Surrallés (2014), personal observations during two meetings of the IPCs on CFSP/ CSDP (Rome, 6/7.11.2014 and Vienna, 11/12.10.2018) as well as a high-level seminar on ‘The Parliamentary Dimension of Defence Cooperation’ organized during the Netherlands Presidency of the Council of the EU (Amsterdam, 15/16.03.2016).

2. Own calculation from EDA (2017). The annual amount that EU member states invest in Defence R&D is €8.8 billion (2016 data). However, the comparison fares less well if equipment procurement is also included (€33 billion annually).

3. In a debate at the European Parliament (2017a) to talk about the latest developments in CSDP, Mogherini asked to speak from her seat as part of the Council, rather her usual seat as Vice-President of the Commission, but during her speech she said she should probably be talking from the other side of the room.

4. The three groups generally included in the Far Right and/or Eurosceptic orientation are European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) and Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF).

Acknowledgement

I am also grateful to thank Shelly Tsui (CERIM, Maastricht University) for assistance in the pilot phase of collecting voting data, thanks to the support of the Jean Monnet Network PACO (Parliamentary Cooperation and Diplomacy in Europe and Beyond). My thanks go also to Christopher Lord, Christine Neuhold, Florian Trauner and the editors of JEI for detailed comments on earlier versions of this piece. The paper falls within the collaborative project EU-NormCon (Normative contestation in Europe: Implications for the EU in a changing global order) funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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