

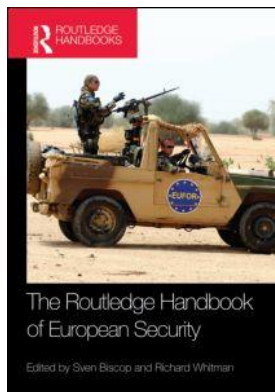
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## THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF EUROPEAN SECURITY

Sven Biscop, Richard G. Whitman

### Realism

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Adrian Hyde-Price

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## 2

# REALISM

## A dissident voice in the study of the CSDP

*Adrian Hyde-Price*

This chapter provides a realist analysis of the European Union's role as an emerging regional and global security actor in what remains, in its essentials, an anarchic and 'Hobbesian' international system. It draws on the rich tradition of realist international theory, from classical realists such as E. H. Carr, Reinhold Niebuhr and Hans Morgenthau, to structural realists such as Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer. Realist theory emphasizes the significance of material and systemic factors as key determinants of international outcomes, and argues that a foreign and security policy that does not recognize the distribution of relative power capabilities in the international system and does not focus on the pursuit of national or (in the case of the EU) common interests is destined to be weak and ineffectual. Realists argue that security and defence policies are the product of a complex interaction of systemic and domestic level factors, along with the perceptions of decision-makers and the strategic culture within which they operate. Having reviewed classical and neorealist approaches to the CSDP, therefore, this chapter concludes by pointing to some of the interesting work being undertaken within 'neoclassical realism', an approach which offers a more fine-grained analytical framework that includes both systemic pressures and national and EU-level factors shaping the evolution of the CSDP.

At the heart of a realist analysis of the EU as an international security actor is the argument that if its member states are serious about the Union becoming an effective and coherent vehicle for collective endeavours to safeguard and enhance common European security interests in an uncertain world, they must shed some of their lingering illusions about the virtue and efficacy of an EU security strategy based primarily on 'soft power' and moral suasion, and develop the political will and military capacity to back up EU diplomacy with coercive instruments when necessary. In his remarkable treatise on political realism, *The Prince*, Niccolò Machiavelli argued that 'princes' (i.e., strategic actors) needed to learn how to act like Chiron the centaur, 'half beast and half man'. Unless they knew 'how to act according to the nature of both', they would be vulnerable to predators and ineffective as political actors.

The allegory of the centaur is one that seems particularly apposite for the EU as it evolves from being a one-dimensional 'civilian power' to a more multifaceted security provider equipped not only with the instruments of declaratory diplomacy and economic statecraft, but also with the means for military and civilian crisis management. As Robert Cooper (one of the principal drafters of the 2003 *European Security Strategy*) has argued, European 'post-modern' states need to 'get used to the idea of double standards':

Among themselves, the postmodern states operate on the basis of laws and open co-operative security. But when dealing with more old-fashioned kinds of states outside the postmodern limits, Europeans need to revert to the rougher methods of an earlier era – force, pre-emptive attack, deception, whatever is necessary for those who still live in the nineteenth-century world of every state for itself.

In the jungle, one must use the laws of the jungle. In this period of peace in Europe, there is a temptation to neglect defences, both physical and psychological. This represents one of the dangers for the postmodern state.

(Cooper, 2003: 61–2)

### **Realism as the dissident voice in the study of the CSDP**

Realism is a multifaceted and sophisticated approach to international politics that has been highly influential in the discipline of international relations (Grieco, 1997). Indeed, for much of the Cold War, it was seen – by both its advocates and critics – as the dominant paradigm in the discipline. It is therefore something of an anomaly that it has had so little impact on the study of European foreign, security and defence policy.

There are a number of reasons why realism has been marginalized in the study of the EU as an international security actor. To begin with, realists themselves have tended to downplay the significance of institutionalized multilateral cooperation and emphasized instead the problems of achieving ‘cooperation under anarchy’ (Mearsheimer, 1990, 2000; Waltz, 2000). Consequently, ‘realists have not produced comprehensive theory-informed empirical studies of this area’ (Jorgensen, 2004: 38). At the same time, realism is widely perceived to be state-centric; overly preoccupied with hard power (particularly military power); and focused on the ‘high politics’ of national security and grand strategy (Keohane and Nye, 1977: 23–4). Because of this, few in the sub-field of European studies regard it as having much – if anything – to say about an atypical international actor that is not a state, possesses limited coercive power capabilities, is primarily concerned with ‘low politics’ and has a penchant for declaratory diplomacy (Chrysochoou, 2001; Kelstrup and Williams, 2000).

The result is that realism is much misunderstood and widely misrepresented. It is usually portrayed in highly simplistic terms and used as a ‘straw man’ with which to demonstrate the sophistication of other approaches and theories (White, 2004: 11). Moreover, many scholars working on the European Union tend to empathize with the object of their research, and identify with the aims and aspirations of the European integration project (Jorgensen, 2004; Bull, 1982). This has further marginalized the realist voice, which provides a more critical perspective on some of the liberal-idealist assumptions and perspectives underpinning both the official discourse of the EU and the academic study of ‘European’ foreign and security policy.

As the dissident voice in the study of the CSDP, the first task of the realist approach is to cast a critical – albeit sympathetic – eye on the liberal-idealist orthodoxy of European studies, and on the liberal ‘common sense’ that defines the contemporary European *Zeitgeist*. In particular, realists criticize both the reductionism of much liberal-idealist thinking, and the tendency to downplay or overlook the importance of power in the international system (Pijpers, 1990).

In the wake of the *annus mirabilis* of 1989, the belief that Europe – if not the world as a whole – had entered a new era of international peace and cooperation was pervasive (Hyde-Price, 1991). In Europe itself, liberal and idealist understandings of the EU as a ‘civilian’ power committed to ‘civilizing’ international relations as part of a broader transformation of international society were widespread (Maull, 1990, 1993). Armed with ‘soft power’ and

universal normative appeal, the EU was portrayed as a novel and uniquely benign entity in international politics that served as the harbinger of a Kantian *foedus pacificum*. François Duchêne's notion of Europe as 'the first of the world's civilian centres of power' (Duchêne, 1972: 43; Hill, 1990) acquired renewed currency, whilst commentators such as Mark Leonard wrote glowingly about the 'power of weakness', arguing that 'when we stop looking at the world through American eyes, we can see that each element of European "weakness" is in fact a facet of its extraordinary "transformative power"' (Leonard, 2005: 5).

More recently, Ian Manners has argued that by virtue of its historical origins, hybrid polity and political-legal constitution, the EU has emerged as something new and unprecedented – a 'normative power'. The EU is a 'normative power of an ideational nature characterised by common principles and a willingness to disregard Westphalian conventions' (Manners, 2002: 239). Its distinctive role as a 'changer of norms' reflects the fact that it is an ontologically new international actor with a 'different existence', 'different norms' and 'different policies', all of which are part of 'redefining what can be "normal" in international relations' (Manners, 2002: 253). The EU is ontologically distinct because it is 'constructed on a normative basis, and is consequently the first international actor whose role is shaped not by 'what it does or what it says, but what it is' (Manners, 2002: 252).

This is not the place to undertake a detailed critique of these arguments, a task undertaken elsewhere (Hyde-Price, 2007). However, two general points can be made. The first is epistemological: actor-based ontologies that focus on the internal structure and operation of the EU overlook the impact of external, systemic pressures on international actors that are rarely able to impose their domestically determined policy goals on external actors and the surrounding environment. Consequently, realists argue that such actor-based approaches are reductionist in that they seek to 'explain international outcomes through elements and combinations of elements located at national or subnational levels' (Waltz, 1979: 60; Waltz, 1959). Realists thus argue that seeking to understand the CSDP without analysing the nature and dynamics of the international system within which the EU is situated is to miss important influences on foreign and security policy behaviour.

The second general point is that liberal-idealist approaches to the CSDP suffer from a weakness identified by E. H. Carr in *The Twenty Years' Crisis* – 'the almost total neglect of power' (Carr, 2002). Power has a number of different sources and a number of dimensions (economic, military and the 'power to persuade'), as Carr famously argued, but actors are most likely to affect the behaviour of others and shape the international environment if they can deploy a mix of 'hard' and 'soft' power resources. As Hedley Bull noted of the notion of 'civilian power', this was a contradiction in terms because 'the power of influence exerted by the European Community and other such civilian actors was conditional upon a strategic environment provided by the military power of states, which they did not control' (Bull, 1982: 151). Similarly, to speak of the 'power of weakness' or of a 'normative power' rooted in the distinctive hybrid polity and historical origins of the EU is to overlook the extent to which the Union has been effective only when its diplomatic interventions have been backed up by hard power – either in the shape of economic carrots and sticks, or its crisis management capability (Smith, 1998).

### **The realist tradition**

Realism itself is a broad and diverse tradition of thinking about international politics. Generally speaking, one can distinguish between the 'classical realist' tradition of Carr, Morgenthau and Niebuhr, and the 'structural realist' (or 'neorealist') approach of Waltz

and Mearsheimer. More recently, the ‘neoclassical realist’ approach has emerged combining elements of both classical and neorealism as a tool of foreign policy analysis (Rose, 1998; Hyde-Price, 2000). This means that realists working in different traditions will have slightly different approaches to the study of the CSDP. There are, nonetheless, some broad principles that define the realist tradition, and which are relevant to understanding the realist approach to the European integration project.

To begin with, realists focus on what *is*, not what *ought to be*. ‘Political realism’, Hans Morgenthau argued, ‘does not require, nor does it condone, indifference to political ideals and moral principles, but it requires indeed a sharp distinction between the desirable and the possible – between what is desirable everywhere and at all times and what is possible under the concrete circumstances of time and place’ (Morgenthau, 1993: 7). Central to a realist analysis, therefore, is the task of identifying the underlying systemic dynamics, in order to understand both the drivers and impediments of change. By identifying the structural limitations to foreign and security policy, as well as the structural opportunities, different policy options can be determined.

Whilst this ‘realist’ approach to political analysis might seem largely uncontroversial to many, it does differ significantly from critical theory and the more explicitly normative liberal perspectives. Both of these approaches argue that given that ‘all theory serves some one and some purpose’ (as Robert Cox claimed), political analysis should serve the interests of ‘emancipation’ and other normative and political objectives. However, as John Vasquez has written, whenever ‘empirical and normative work are closely tied together as critical theorists like to do, there is always the danger that one’s idea of normative goodness (or political interests) will weigh too heavily in one’s thinking about what is empirically true or theoretically adequate’ (Vasquez, 1998: 384). Similarly, E. H. Carr argued that abstract normative theorizing and political advocacy reflected a preference for ‘the role of the missionary to that of the scientist’ (Carr, 2002: 136).

Second, realism is a social and political theory that emphasizes the role of social collectivities in history, particularly that of ‘conflict groups’. Robert Gilpin notes that a core assumption is ‘that the essence of social reality is the group. The building blocks and ultimate units of social and political life’, he continues, ‘are not the individuals of liberal thought nor the classes of Marxism’. Rather, it is ‘what Ralf Dahrendorf has called “conflict groups”’, which ‘is another way of saying that in a world of scarce resources and conflict over the distribution of those resources, human beings confront one another ultimately as members of groups, and not as isolated individuals’ (Gilpin, 1986: 305). This is an approach which has some overlap with historical materialism, and more congenially, the communitarian – rather than cosmopolitan – traditions of political theory. Realists would also argue that the most important – and successful – conflict groups since early modern Europe have been states, and that despite regular announcements of the withering away of the state, states remain key actors in international politics. As Reinhold Niebuhr argued, the modern nation-state is ‘the human group of strongest social cohesion, of most undisputed central authority and of most clearly defined membership’. Since the seventeenth century, therefore, it has been ‘the most absolute of all human associations’ (Niebuhr, 2005: 56). Consequently, the realist approach to the CSDP is one that focuses particular attention on the interests and preferences of member states, rather than ascribing significant agential capabilities to intergovernmental institutions (Pedersen, 1998). As Waltz notes, ‘states set the scene in which they, along with nonstate actors, stage their dramas or carry on their humdrum affairs. Though they may choose to interfere little in the affairs of nonstate actors for long periods of time, states nevertheless set the terms of the intercourse’ (Waltz, 1979: 94).

A second key realist principle is that conflict groups operate in a context of anarchy, in the sense of an absence of a central authority able to ensure compliance. In this context, the international system may not necessarily be ‘Hobbesian’ in the sense of experiencing a constant ‘war of all against all’, but it is certainly prone to varying degrees of competition, rivalry, insecurity and fear, and exhibits a constant and ineluctable jostling for status, power and influence amongst its major units (Wolfers, 1962; Waltz, 1986, 1995). As Kenneth Waltz has argued, although the international system ‘is not entirely without institutions and orderly procedures’, and despite the fact that international politics are ‘flecked with particles of government and alloyed with elements of community’, the existence of these elements of cooperation and institutionalization ‘does not alter and should not obscure that principle by which a society is ordered’ (Waltz, 1979: 114–15). In the context of an international system that remains essentially anarchic, ‘hierarchical elements’ established within international structures (such as the EU) ‘limit and restrain the exercise of sovereignty but only in ways strongly conditioned by the anarchy of the larger system’ (1979: 115).

The third defining characteristic of the realist approach is its materialist ontology. Material factors such as land, resources and geography are regarded as the key determinants of the social world, and material factors such as economic resources or military capabilities are seen as the key determinants of power. Realists do not deny that ideas and values can influence behaviour, but they regard material factors as the primary determinants of social relations, and ideas as intervening variables. State behaviour (and consequently the CSDP) ‘is largely shaped by the *material* structure of the international system’, John Mearsheimer has argued. ‘The distribution of material capabilities among states is the key factor for understanding world politics. For realists, some level of security competition between great powers is inevitable because of the material structure of the international system’ (Mearsheimer, 2000: 436).

Finally, realists are wary of both power and military force. They are wary of power, especially concentrations of power, because of the temptations it produces in an anarchic international order. Realists take to heart Lord Acton’s adage that ‘power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely’. Consequently, realists tend to focus on the balance of power in the international system as the primary determinant of peaceful relations between states – rather than international organizations and multilateral institutions. Realists are also generally sceptical about the efficacy of coercive military force, particularly as an instrument of military intervention or ‘milieu shaping’. This may appear counter-intuitive to those more versed in the ‘straw man’ realism frequently portrayed by its detractors, who paint a caricature of realists as muscle-bound Ramboes in love with the smell of napalm in the morning. However, given that many realists do give great attention to the use of military force, they also tend to be more aware of its limitations and shortcomings. It is not surprising therefore that realists like Niebuhr, Morgenthau and Waltz came out in opposition to the Vietnam War, and more recently, realists like Waltz, Mearsheimer, Walt and Gilpin opposed the 2003 Iraq War. Thus whilst realists recognize the pervasive role of coercive military power in international politics, and the need for all serious strategic actors to acquire a robust military capability, they are sceptical of the benefits of humanitarian military intervention, and dismissive of suggestions that war can ever be ‘humane’ (Coker, 2001).

### **Classical realism and the CSDP**

Building on these basic tenets of the realist tradition, classical realism suggests a number of distinct perspectives on the CSDP. Given the moral and ethical preoccupations of classical realists such as Carr, Niebuhr and Morgenthau, many of these perspectives focus on the balance to be struck between power and morality, virtue and necessity.

The first is that classical realists have long been sceptical of claims made on the basis of 'universal principles'. 'Political realism', Hans Morgenthau argued, 'refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe' (Morgenthau, 1993: 13). All international actors tend to argue that their actions and policies accord with 'universal' values and principles, and are not simply the pursuit of naked self-interest. The EU is no exception in this regard, insisting that its security and defence policies are based on universal values and serve the common good of humankind (EU, 2003; Prodi, 2000; Aggestam, 2004). Liberal-idealist conceptions of the EU as a 'civilian' or 'normative' power are explicitly grounded on these sorts of cosmopolitan norms that claim to transcend the particularist claims of discrete political communities. However, as E. H. Carr noted, clothing one's 'own interest in the guise of a universal interest for the purpose of imposing it on the rest of the world' is nothing new. He quotes Dicey to the effect that 'Men come easily to believe that arrangements agreeable to themselves are beneficial to others' (Carr, 2002: 71). Pointing to the crucial role played by power relations in constructions of moral and political claims, Carr argued that 'Theories of social morality are always the product of a dominant group which identifies itself with the community as a whole, and which possesses facilities denied to subordinate groups or individuals for imposing its view of life on the community' (Carr, 2002: 74). 'The exposure of the real basis of the professedly abstract principles commonly invoked in international politics', Carr noted, 'is the most damning and most convincing part of the realist indictment of utopianism' (Carr, 2002: 80).

Following from this critique of the particularist interests lurking behind professedly 'universal principles', realists also argue that foreign and security policy should be focused explicitly on the pursuit of vital interests, and not on quixotic moral crusades. In an anarchic international system composed of a plurality of discrete political communities, there are inevitably a plethora of different national conceptions of the *summum bonum* and how to achieve it. This generates different national interests, and an ineluctable degree of security competition and rivalry. Rather than pursuing a moralistic and crusading foreign policy defined rhetorically in terms of 'universal principles' which seeks to reshape the world in a liberal, European image, realists argue that the EU should accept the existence of rival interests and seek to manage conflicts and disagreements on the basis of reciprocity, compromise and quiet diplomacy. In other words, the EU needs to eschew what Morgenthau termed 'moralism in foreign policy'. Instead, the EU should think and act as a 'calculator' not a 'crusader', to use David Clinton's striking phrase. 'Thinking in terms of national interests – of balancing power and commitments', he has written, forces policy-makers 'to be calculators rather than crusaders' (Clinton, 1994: 259).

Acting and thinking as a calculator rather than a crusader is a way of avoiding two very different dangers. On the one hand, it is a way of avoiding the danger of unintended outcomes, which is particularly prevalent given the degree of unpredictability inherent in an anarchic international system. In a strategic context in which other actors will be pursuing divergent goals, good intentions are no guarantee of good outcomes – as Tony Blair found to great cost in Iraq. 'How often', Morgenthau warned, 'have statesmen been motivated by the desire to improve the world, and ended up by making it worse? And how often have they sought one goal, and ended by achieving something they neither expected nor desired?' (Morgenthau, 1993: 6). On the other hand, it is also a way of avoiding the danger of acting as a high-minded, principled 'ethical' actor rather than focusing on the common economic and strategic interests of its member states. As Machiavelli noted, 'the fact is a man who wants to act virtuously in every way necessarily comes to grief among so many who are not virtuous' (Machiavelli, 1961: 91).

Third, classical realists do not advocate an amoral or immoral approach to security and defence policy, nor are they indifferent to human suffering and injustice. 'No political realism which emphasises the inevitability and necessity of a social struggle', Reinhold Niebuhr argued, 'can absolve individuals of the obligation to check their own egoism, to comprehend the interests of others and thus to enlarge the areas of cooperation' (Niebuhr, 2005: 180). The realist approach to international politics does not involve a brutal and self-serving *realpolitik*, but rather a hard-headed foreign and security policy based on an understanding of the structural constraints imposed on political agency in an anarchic international system. As we have seen, Morgenthau argued that political realism required a 'sharp distinction between the desirable and the possible' in order to understand 'what is possible under the concrete circumstances of time and place' (1993: 7). 'Realism', he argued, 'maintains that universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states in their abstract universal formulation, but that they must be filtered through the concrete circumstances of time and place' (Morgenthau, 1993: 12).

The realist approach to international security thus involves identifying the parameters within which political agency can be effective, seeking 'to detect and understand the forces that determine political relations among nations, and to comprehend the ways in which those forces act upon each other and upon international political relations and institutions' (Morgenthau, 1993: 17). 'What Morgenthau and many other realists have in common', Robert Gilpin has written,

is a belief that ethical and political behaviour will fail unless it takes into account the actual practice of states and teachings of sound theory. It is this dual commitment, to practice and theory, that sets realism apart from both idealism and the abstract theorizing that characterizes so much of the contemporary study of international relations.

(Gilpin, 1986: 320)

In terms of the CSDP, therefore, the classical realist tradition has much to offer. Classical realism embodies a distinctive philosophical disposition coupled with some key assumptions about the nature of international politics. Classical realists are aware of the element of *tragedy* inherent in an anarchic self-help system, and emphasize the need to distinguish between what is *desirable* and what is *achievable*, given the structural constraints and opportunities of the international system. Classical realism also emphasizes the need to avoid 'moralism' in security policy, and to distinguish between core security objectives and second-order normative concerns (such as human rights and democracy promotion). The implication of this for the CSDP is that EU member states – which determine the goals and means of EU security policy – must match their aspirations to their capabilities, and base their security policy on a hard-headed calculation of the balance of power and competing conceptions of the *summum bonum*.

Whilst this realist perspective might be anathema to liberal-idealists in academia, it does resonate in some parts of the policy community. 'We are moving towards a multipolar world', Finnish Foreign Minister Alex Stubb has argued, 'where you have a set of eight to ten nation states which are taking a bigger role in world affairs, the likes of Turkey and Brazil and the likes of China and Russia and India and a few others.' In this context, 'We need to pick our fights better', he argues, adding that 'for too long we have been preaching, paternalising the rest of the world. Now it's time to take a new approach' (Castle, 2010). For the EU member states, this means recognizing and respecting rival views of the *summum bonum* outside of the Union, and acting as a 'calculator not a crusader'. It also means distinguishing between vital



strategic interests and pursuing second-order normative concerns when structural opportunities present themselves. 'Politics', Niebuhr observed, 'will, to the end of history, be an area where conscience and power meet, where ethical and coercive factors of human life will interpenetrate and work out their tentative and uneasy compromises' (Niebuhr, 2005: 4).

### Waltz's Copernican revolution

As a tradition of thought, realism is at one and the same time a *philosophical mood or disposition*; a form of practical knowledge concerned with the principles of statecraft; and a social scientific research paradigm. Whereas classical realism is primarily a philosophical mood and a form of practical knowledge, structural realism is essentially a form of what Michael Oakeshott termed 'scientific knowledge' or *scientia*. Practical knowledge is concerned with how we can affect and change the world in order to meet our needs and desires. Scientific knowledge, on the other hand, seeks to understand the world 'in respect of its independence of our hopes and desires, preferences and ambitions'. It involves 'constructing and exploring a rational world of related concepts to which every image recognised as a relevant "fact" ... is given a place and an interpretation'. *Scientia*, or this 'impulse for rational understanding', 'exists only where this impulse is cultivated for its own sake unhindered by the intrusion of desire for power or prosperity' (Oakeshott, 1991: 505–6).

Although a number of classical realists were concerned to go beyond philosophic mood and policy advice in order to develop 'scientific knowledge', it is only really with the publication of Kenneth Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* (1979) that realism acquired the theoretical sophistication and analytical tools for explaining – rather than simply describing – international politics. Waltz's great achievement was in developing a parsimonious and deductive theory that established neorealism as a distinctive research paradigm able to generate cumulative knowledge (Vasquez, 1998: 39). In doing so, he produced a 'Copernican revolution' in international political theory by 'showing how much of states' actions and interactions, and how much of the outcomes their actions and interactions produce, can be explained by forces that operate at the level of the system, rather than at the level of the units' (Waltz, 1979: 69).

Neorealism has two defining characteristics. First, it is explicitly parsimonious and elegant, in the sense that it simplifies and abstracts reality in order to focus on a limited number of key variables. 'Explanatory power', Waltz argued, 'is gained by moving away from "reality", not staying close to it. A full description would be of least explanatory power, an elegant theory, of most' (Waltz, 1979: 9). Second, it is 'systemic' in that it seeks explanations for international outcomes at the level of the international system, rather than at that of individual actors. Waltz recognized that state behaviour (and therefore the behaviour of collective international actors like the EU) was self-evidently a consequence of both systemic pressures and domestic political preferences, but argued that his theory of international politics was a parsimonious one which focused on the systemic level because this was the least understood, and the one about which there were most misconceptions (Waltz, 1979: 174).

Neorealism therefore focuses on one key variable: the distribution of relative power capabilities. It does not aspire to explain specific security policy decision-making processes of individual states or of the CSDP, but rather seeks to explain recurrent patterns of behaviour over time. It does so by addressing two separate but related questions: (a) how the structural distribution of relative power capabilities 'shapes and shoves' the behaviour of the units in the system; and (b) how structural, or system-level, factors influence the nature and composition of units, i.e., how their domestic structures are shaped by systemic ('third image') factors – or what is sometimes called 'second image reversed' (Gourevitch, 1978).

## Neorealism and the CSDP

A neorealist perspective on the CSDP is clearly one that abstracts and simplifies a complex reality, as one would expect of a parsimonious theory. Nonetheless, it does help focus attention on some of the key features of the EU as a strategic actor.

To begin with, neorealist analyses of the origins and emergence of the CSDP focus on the structural opportunities and constraints generated by global and regional distribution of relative power capabilities. Here, two developments have been crucial to the ESDP/CSDP initiative: the preponderance of US power globally ('unipolarity'), which meant that the USA could afford to pay less attention to the concerns of its European allies and devote less time to alliance management, leading to European perceptions that it was a capricious and unreliable partner (Mearsheimer, 2001: 391; Kagan, 2003; Mowle, 2004); and balanced multipolarity in Europe, which created the permissive conditions for regional cooperation to address shared concerns (Hyde-Price, 2007: 69–71). The CSDP is thus the product of the conflux of two systemic pressures: global unipolarity and regional multipolarity (Posen, 2004(a): 5–17; Posen, 2004(b): 33–8; Treacher, 2004: 49–66).

The CSDP can therefore be seen as the response of EU member states to the uncertainties of US security policy in the context of global unipolarity. As realism would predict, the process has been driven by the 'Big Three', and remains firmly inter-governmental (Grieco, 1993; Missiroli, 2001: 177–96). It is a collective instrument for developing a common security policy and a crisis management capability, as defined by the Petersberg tasks and the European Security Strategy. The CSDP provides an institutional and procedural framework for common security cooperation, primarily in order to collectively shape the Union's external milieu, using limited military coercion to back up its diplomacy where necessary. As a result of the structural pressures emanating from global unipolarity and balanced multipolarity in Europe, the EU is clearly beginning to develop the institutions and procedures to act as a 'centaur', and is ineluctably moving beyond the one-dimensional reflexes of a 'civilian' or 'normative' power.

Looking to the future, structural realism would suggest that Europe's major powers will continue jealously to guard their sovereign rights to pursue their own foreign and security policy priorities (Menon, 2004: 632). Consequently, the CSDP is likely to remain firmly intergovernmental, with cooperation in the second pillar limited to a set of 'second order' concerns agreed on the basis of the lowest common denominator (Waltz, 1979: 170). At the same time, the CSDP is likely to be driven by the EU's largest powers and those with significant crisis management capabilities (Smith, 2005: 757–73; Aliboni, 2005: 1–16; Lindley-French, 2002: 810–11). This was the case with the Contact Group and the Western Balkans in the 1990s, and was evident in terms of the role of the 'EU3' (France, Germany and Britain) in negotiating with Iran on its uranium enrichment programme (Allen and Smith, 2004: 97; Everts, 2004; Bowen and Kidd, 2004: 257–76; Gow, 1997; and Denza, 2005: 289–312).

Finally, a neorealist analysis would suggest that given the changed structural distribution of relative power capabilities following the demise of Cold War bipolarity, there are strong systemic incentives for the further development of the EU as a 'centaur'. Facing more pressing problems in Asia and the Middle East, the USA is focusing less on, and reducing its military commitment to, Europe, thereby generating further 'continental drift' in transatlantic relations. Consequently, there are strong structural pressures for EU member states to provide themselves with options for autonomous military and civilian crisis management. At the same time, EU member states are likely to pursue a variety of strategies towards America, from balancing to bandwaggoning. The divisions between 'old' and 'new' Europe that emerged

during the Iraq crisis of 2002–3 are suggestive of the patterns of relations that could emerge, with some states allying with the USA and others pursuing a *Kleineuropa* ('small Europe') option of integration between a select group of 'core' states (Stahl *et al.*, 2004: 417–42). This is likely to perpetuate a continuing ambiguity in relations between the CSDP and NATO.

### **Beyond parsimony: the promise of neoclassical realism**

As an explicitly parsimonious theory, neorealism can shed light on the systemic pressures affecting states and on the structural opportunities and constraints shaping the development of the CSDP. However, as Waltz notes, 'it cannot tell us just how, and how effectively, the units of a system will respond to those pressures and possibilities' (Waltz, 1979: 71). This is clearly a major limitation when it comes to understanding the CSDP. In order to gain greater theoretical traction on the development of the EU as a strategic actor, it is necessary to consider both systemic pressures and a range of variables at national and EU level (Finel, 2001).

For this reason, recent moves to develop a new research programme within the framework of 'neoclassical realism' hold considerable promise for a more fine-grained and nuanced realist analysis of the CSDP. Neoclassical realism combines the central insight of structural realism – namely the primacy of systemic factors in determining international outcomes – with an explicit recognition that a distinctive theory of foreign policy analysis requires an appreciation of the significance of domestic level factors (Rose, 1998). It builds on the complex relationship between state and society found in classical realism without sacrificing the central insight of neorealism about the constraints of international politics and the casual primacy of the international system. Seeking to address the limitations of parsimony identified by Waltz above, neoclassical realism uses the internal characteristics of states as a guide to unit responses to international constraints, and posits an intervening variable for elite perceptions of systemic variables (Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro, 2009: 12–13). Although this involves a move away from elegance and parsimony, when seeking to address complex empirical puzzles such as the CSDP, parsimony must be balanced against explanatory power. Consequently, neoclassical realism is explicitly not mono-casual in approach, but includes domestic-level variables such as regime type, decision-making processes, state–society relations and strategic culture (Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro, 2009: 23).

As a tool of analysis for thinking theoretically about the evolution of the CSDP, therefore, neoclassical realism offers a way of combining the richness of the classical realist tradition with the theoretical rigour of Waltzian neorealism. Although no major studies have yet emerged that utilize this approach, it offers one of the promising avenues of investigation for more fine-grained realist analyses of the fledgling European 'centaur'.