Debating Humanitarian Military Interventions in the European Public Sphere

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Cathleen Kantner is Professor and Head of Department of International Relations and European Integration, Institute of Social Science, University of Stuttgart. E-mail: cathleen.kantner@sowi.uni-stuttgart.de.

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Abstract
What kind of democracy might fit the developing Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) given the political developments and the evolution of public debate on security and defence issues over the last twenty years? Different model-designs for a more democratic European Union (EU) in general and a democratized Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in particular have been proposed. This paper contributes to answering this question by investigating whether and in which ways Europeans were included in a transnational European debate on humanitarian military interventions after the Cold War (1990-2005/2006). The paper analyses a full sample of 108,677 newspaper articles published in the leading conservative and liberal newspapers of six EU member states, and the US as a comparative case. It demonstrates that the ‘national’ arenas of political communication are thematically intertwined and allow ordinary citizens to make up their minds about common European issues in this highly controversial and normatively particularly sensitive realm. Transnational political communication is currently not satisfyingly fed into representative democratic institutions. However, ‘hermetic communicative borders’ between national publics are non-existent and are a poor excuse for a lack of political will to democratise the EU – one way or the other.

Keywords
Introduction

Security and defence have long been considered areas with strong executive powers and comparatively weak democratic checks and balances. In this sense, there have been always tensions between security policies on the one hand and democratic accountability, public debate and protection of individual rights on the other. In the post-national context of the developing Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP\(^1\)), these problems are multiplied by the additional obstacles posed by a transnational citizenry and the multi-level character of the European Union (EU) decision-making system (Kantner and Liberatore 2006). However, with the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty (2009), the democratic question becomes more urgent in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)/CSDP also since CSDP is moving beyond pure intergovernmentalism (Sjursen 2007, 2012). This paper will contribute to answering the question of what kind of democracy might fit the EU especially in the realm of CSDP, by investigating whether and in which ways Europeans were included in a transnational European debate on humanitarian military interventions via the mass media after the Cold War (1990-2005/2006).

Is there a democratic deficit in CFSP? Shortly after the establishment of the Maastricht Treaty and the German constitutional court decision on this treaty, the former constitutional judge Dieter Grimm (1995) argued that from a legal point of view there was no democratic deficit in the second and third pillars as long as they were purely intergovernmental in their organisational outline. It has always been absolutely legitimate for governments to enter international contracts with far-reaching consequences, to join international organisations and to act within military alliances in the name of their people as long as each government held a veto in all questions and did not submit itself to majority rule in international institutions.\(^2\) However, some citizens and parliamentarians felt a democratic deficit in the second pillar, especially since the EU gradually started to engage also in military and civilian missions abroad.\(^3\) Since the Lisbon Treaty formally abolished the pillar construction and also substantially assimilated the former second pillar (ESDP) into more ‘normal’ EU politics (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008: 62), this ‘felt democratic deficit’, as I would like to call it, gradually also becomes a legal one.

\(^*\) This study presents results of the project ‘In search of a new role in world politics. The common European foreign, security and defence policies (CFSP/ESDP) in the light of identity-debates in the member states’ mass media’, a unique, large-scale, comparative, quantitative and qualitative media-content analysis carried out at the Freie Universität Berlin and directed by Dr. Cathleen Kantner and Prof. Dr. Thomas Risse. For the generous funding of this project, we are grateful to the German Research Foundation (DFG, contract no. RI 798/8) and the European Commission’s Sixth Framework Programme, within which this study was supported as part of RECON (Reconstituting Democracy in Europe, Integrated FP6-Project, contract no. CIT4-CT-2006-028698. Host institution: ARENA, University of Oslo, Norway). The FAZIT foundation kindly provided the article set of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. My special thanks goes to my colleagues Amelie Kutter and Andreas Hildebrandt, who with astonishing creativity developed and refined the corpus-linguistic methods that generated the data analysed in this paper. I also wish to thank Jana Katharina Grabowsky for providing the Dutch data as well as Joshua Rogers and Barty Begley for the language editing.

\(^1\) Until the Lisbon Treaty (2009), CSDP was named European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP).

\(^2\) Grimm (1995) acknowledged, however, that there was a democratic deficit in the first pillar, into which majority voting in the Council had been introduced with Maastricht.

\(^3\) See Wagner (2005, 2007) for an extended discussion of the democratic deficit in ESDP.
This paper starts from the presumption that an informed public is a crucial precondition for all mechanisms of democratic control in general (Habermas 1996) as well as with respect to CFSP/CSDP in particular (Born and Hänggi 2004; Kantner and Liberatore 2006; Wagner 2006, 2007). Therefore, it is a crucial question whether ordinary citizens have access on an everyday basis to news on the complex and ethically controversial issues of security and defence, such as military humanitarian interventions. Do the national media arenas enable ordinary citizens in the different member states to make up their minds upon common European security and defence issues? That is, is transnational political communication taking place? Informed citizens who hold more or less well-reasoned views on European external security issues would be the demos of a democratic foreign, security and defence policy in the European Union.

The paper proceeds as follows: section two presents three possibilities of how to democratise CFSP/CSDP: an intergovernmental ‘audit democracy’; a ‘federal multinational democracy’; and a ‘regional cosmopolitan democracy’ (Eriksen and Fossum 2007, 2012; Sjursen 2007, 2012). It summarises the expectations of three different models of European democracy as regards the relevant constituencies and the location of public debate and democratic political participation. Then, the concepts of transnational political communication and a European public sphere will be introduced in order to prepare the reader for the concepts used for the empirical analysis of the intervention debate.

The third section discusses step by step the results of the empirical analysis. I shall describe the sequence charts of 16 years of media coverage on humanitarian military interventions and compare the ‘national’ issue cycles. Finally, phases of convergence and divergence between countries will be identified over time. The data presented derive from an extensive quantitative content analysis. The empirical investigation comprises a continuous time period of 16 years (January 1990 – March 2006) of news coverage and commentary on humanitarian military interventions in six European countries, which either were or became EU members during the period under investigation. The United States (US) is included as a comparative case. The texts investigated encompass a cleaned full-sample of newspaper articles that reported and commented on military actions in terms of ‘humanitarian military interventions’ (N = 108 677). In this way, the investigation provides a unique continuous longitudinal examination of the attention given in the different countries to the issue of humanitarian military interventions, allowing for a systematic comparison of seven countries over a time period of sixteen years.

The last section will conclude that:

1. The quality newspapers fulfil their democratic duty. They report on the important common issues such as, in my example, humanitarian military interventions and give ordinary citizens the chance to build informed opinions about it. The national media debates are, moreover, transnationally interlinked and feature European and transatlantic debates on humanitarian military interventions.

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4 Ordinary citizens use the national media to be informed about politics regardless of on which level of the ‘European multi-level system’ the decision is taken. Therefore the search for a European public sphere becomes a search for transnational inter-linkages between national media arenas (Eder and Kantner 2000, 2002; Risse 2010; van de Steeg 2006).
2. This has profound implications for the prospects of democracy with respect to foreign, security and defence policies: In the national newspapers, ordinary people find a lot of material with which to become informed and to critically build up their opinions on issues of humanitarian military interventions. The ‘national’ arenas of political communication are thematically intertwined and allow also for transnational – European, transatlantic and global – communication flows. The communicative preconditions for all three models of European democracy articulated by Erik Oddvar Eriksen and John Erik Fossum (2007, 2012) are therefore given.

3. However, which model we, the Europeans, will choose to strive for and implement in our common political project is and remains an intrinsically political question.

Public Debate and the democratising of CFSP / CSDP

Models for a European democracy: Three possibilities

Eriksen and Fossum (2007) propose three models of democracy for the European Union (EU) which imply different roles for public political communication. (1) The EU might be envisioned as ‘delegated democracy’ (ibid. 11-13, 28) or ‘audit democracy’ (for the CFSP see: Sjursen 2007, 2012) in which the member states decide on European issues in a dominantly intergovernmental manner or delegate powers to specialist agencies and independent regulatory commissions at the European level. Democracy is considered a national feature and therefore also processes of political communication and public opinion formation are not expected to transcend national borders. The constituency as well as the processes of political legitimation reside within the confines of the member states. Some would even go so far as to speak of clearly separate national public spheres, each seeing CFSP issues from a specific national perspective. However, this claim can only be seriously understood as idealistic exaggeration, since obviously modern national public spheres are not at all homogeneous but marked by severe conflicts; public deliberation does not at all lead to consensus but rather ‘coordinated dissent’ regarding the most important political opinions towards the controversial political issues; elections show the distribution of public positions towards different policy packages; and different democratic political systems have developed different ways to accommodate the views and interests of the political opposition (Eder and Kantner 2000).

(2) Emphasising supranational trends, the EU might alternatively be conceptualised as a ‘federal democracy’ (Eriksen and Fossum 2007: 16f., 28) or more precisely a ‘federal multinational democracy’ (Sjursen 2007, 2012). In this second model, democracy would be practiced on both the national and the European level. This would call for a European public sphere and – in the eyes of the authors – also for a ‘thick’, nation-like collective European identity. Because foreign, security and defence policy are core state functions, a federal multinational democracy, i.e. a nation-state-like EU, would locate decision-making power on these issues at the European level, and thereby presuppose (and create) a European constituency (Sjursen 2007, 2012). Moreover, communitarians who believe that in the nation state a ‘thick’ collective identity finally

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5 Only in the latest version of the RECON models has this insistence on a ‘thick’ collective identity been given up (Eriksen and Fossum 2012: 26).
helps to generate consensus also regarding the most controversial issue of the use of military force would even expect a ‘kind of automatic “rallying around the flag”’ and at the same time doubt this could ever be the case beyond the nation (Sjursen 2007, 2012: 150). A European public sphere would – some still expect – lead to consensus or at least some kind of convergence in public opinion. Considering the discussion on the post-heroic society that argues that already in the nation state people are no longer willing to die or see soldiers die in battle for patriotic aims, this constitutes an unrealistically high hurdle (Luttwak 1995, 1996; for the EU, see Wagner 2004). After a decade of research on the European public sphere and the politicization of EU politics, it became common knowledge that public discourse in whatever arena – national or European – does not lead to consensual harmony but rather ‘coordinated dissent’, the differentiation of a spectrum of opinions and political forces (for example: Eder and Kantner 2000, 2002; Kantner 2004: Ch. 3.3, 4.3; Risse 2010: Ch. 6, 7; van de Steeg 2006; Zürn 2006; Zürn et al. 2007, 2008). The homogeneous vision of ‘the national public sphere’ sketched by those who argue that a European public sphere would not be possible is undercomplex and idealized. Any political discussion is about conflicting interests, contradictions and incompatible visions of the good life. With the help of democratic procedures, we try to deal with our differences in a peaceful way. Moreover, any real discussion – of course even inside the nation state – involves different perspectives on the problem in question as well as concepts in need of clarification. The ‘language games’ constituted by different natural languages are not incommensurable. We can start to communicate with each other if we want to. Whether we do so – of course – remains an empirical question (Kantner 2004).

(3) Another vision for the reconstitution of democracy beyond the nation state would be a ‘cosmopolitan democracy’ (Eriksen and Fossum 2007: 22-24, 28) or a ‘regional cosmopolitan democracy’ (Sjursen 2007, 2012) resting on multi-level governance mechanisms. With respect to the communicative preconditions of transnational democracy (Kantner 2004; Risse 2010), under conditions of a multi-national citizenry this model, like the ‘federal democracy’ just discussed, would call for intensive transnational European communication, but it would also include the views and interests of affected third parties of other regions or states – the relevant constituency would therefore be a regional and global one (Sjursen 2007, 2012). Some authors would even expect public deliberation – in the third model – to play an even more important role than formal representation (Crum and Fossum 2009).

How to conceive of a European public sphere in CSFP/CSDP?

Lively public debates are the fundamental ingredient for democratic politics on the input-side of the political process. The development of a transnational European public sphere is therefore a precondition for overcoming the often criticised ‘democratic deficit’ with respect to CFSP/CSDP (Born and Hänggi 2004; Kantner and Liberatore 2006; Wagner 2006, 2007). Independently of which institutional model of democracy will be chosen, without public involvement it would be doomed to fail. An intergovernmental ‘audit democracy’, a ‘federal multinational democracy’, as well as a ‘regional cosmopolitan democracy’ (Eriksen and Fossum 2007, 2012; Sjursen 2007, 2012)

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6 The process of ‘going through the hermeneutic circle’ differs even in the situation of ‘radical interpretation’ only in degree not in quality from what is at the base of all human communication (Kantner 2004: Ch. 4; Tietz 2002). Discourse and also identity discourses are not bound to the borders of language or national culture.
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depend in different ways on an informed public and each model proposes the institutionalisation of channels to give public reason a regular and legally binding influence on and control over foreign, security and defence policies.

Until recently, however, the literature on European public spheres tended to hold that transnational European communication encounters almost insurmountable obstacles, arguments that have been repeated again and again since the Maastricht Crisis7 (see, for example: Gerhards 2001; Graf von Kielmansegg 1996; Grimm 1995). Most scholars held that for the time being the lack of ability of ordinary citizens to communicate across national borders – due to the diversity of languages, media systems and civic traditions – was at the root of the impossibility of seriously democratising the European Union.

Yet, in the process of transnationalisation of economic, legal, political and cultural interactions, formerly unknown degrees of intensity, density and continuity of affectedness by decisions taken in other countries become part of ordinary political life (Kantner 2004: Ch. 5; Risse 2010; Zürn 2006). In this constellation, it becomes even more likely that political communication is no longer limited according to ‘arbitrary’ national borders but rather by the horizons of problem-perceptions that – if actors know what they are doing and experiencing – may follow in their tendencies the interaction radius of the problems at stake.

Why should debates on European or international issues not also be intertwined and interlinked (e.g. via common experiences of problematic situations, via press agencies, journalistic interaction, policy cooperation and civil society networks) so that people in different countries can develop their opinions about the same events and issues? If it is true that the ‘public consists of all those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences systematically cared for’ (Dewey 1927: 15f.), local, national and transnational political communications develop according to the same problem-focused logic.

Hence, we can speak of a transnational political communication to the degree that (Eder and Kantner 2000: 81; Kantner 2004: 130-162):

- the same transnational issues are discussed
- at the same time and
- under similar aspects of relevance, that is with a similar framing but not necessarily with the same opinions.8

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7 Already, the Maastricht Treaty (Treaty on European Union, TEU, 1992, in force by 1993) encountered severe difficulties in the ratification process. In Denmark, the treaty was rejected by a referendum in 1992. A French referendum approved the treaty by a narrow margin. In Germany, the Constitutional Court was called on to decide whether the Treaty would undermine the democracy-principle of the German constitution. The decision was in favour of the treaty, but interpreted it in a rather intergovernmentalist way. In the UK, a government crisis broke out over the British opt-out from developing social provisions in the Treaty.

8 Other authors added further criteria to the list, such as ‘cross-national mutual citation’ or ‘mutual recognition as legitimate speakers’ (Risse 2002a, 2002b; 2010; Tobler 2002; van de Steeg 2002a, 2002b). For a response to these proposals, see Eder and Kantner (2002). We argued that mutual citation and the publication of media content from abroad is hard to study because of hidden processes of transnational inter-media agenda setting (e.g. journalists ‘sharing ideas’ from other sources without citing; reliance on
Knowing that most authors use the concepts interchangeably, I distinguish between transnational European ‘political communication’ and a full-fledged ‘European public sphere’ (Kantner 2004: 56-59). While ‘political communication’ refers to informal and formal debates and discourses about political issues taking place in everyday life or in public arenas like political meetings and conventions and most importantly in the mass media, a full-fledged ‘European public sphere’ would focus on the political procedures and institutions that link political communication systematically to political decision-making procedures. Political communication can exert informal influences on political decision-making; only formal democratic procedures, such as the mechanisms of representative democracy, neo-corporatism and participatory democracy, give citizens a real and legally guarantied voice in policy-making.

‘Same topics at the same time’ can be operationalised by empirically comparing the issue cycles in different public arenas. In transnational political debates, bilateral, transnational and international issues, institutions and politicians are likely to be frequent objects of debates: their visibility in the media corresponds to the degree of supra-nationalisation (della Porta and Caiani 2006; Koopmans and Erbe 2004). Especially in regard to this expectation, media debates on war and peace are a ‘tough case’ for the development of transnational European public communication. On the one hand, ‘Europe’ here competes directly with member states as traditional security actors who might insist on their national sovereignty and, on the other hand, it rivals the Western-transatlantic security relationship with the US and other NATO members.

‘Same aspects of relevance’ can be operationalised by comparing the interpretation of the issue, the frames, across different arenas. The focus of this paper will be on the first

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9 The formula ‘the same topics at the same time under similar aspects of relevance’ goes back to Habermas (1998: 160). However, Habermas demanded the whole set of ‘ingredients’ of a ‘complete’ transnational public sphere with strong civil society organisations and political parties organised on a European scale, a common political culture and so on. That he – in the respective article – does not distinguish between transnational communication and a full-fledged public sphere leads him to helplessly accept Grimm’s (1995) pessimistic evaluation.

10 In the following, I will refer to issues rather than ‘the coverage of this and that event’. An event is a particular instance of something happening (e.g. an international crisis event or a NATO summit). It is not the same as an issue, a controversial social problem, which constitutes a broader topical structure, encompassing several events as belonging together. Issues compete with each other on the public agenda. The attention paid to issues has a kind of life-cycle, the issue attention cycle or the issue cycle for short (Downs 1972: 38).

11 This has been confirmed by other studies: Media visibility of EU politics has increased in all member states throughout the last decades, though levels of coverage vary among countries and media segments (Gleissner and De Vreese 2005; Kevin 2003; Machill et al. 2006; Semetko et al. 2000: 130). On TV, European issues are still rare, but when they are featured they get more space than other international news and are prominently placed (Peter et al. 2003: 321).

12 Some authors have introduced benchmarks for the visibility of the contributions to a topic or another content element (a frame, an actor). Gamson (1992: 197), for example, holds that an issue is visible, if it reaches a 10 percent share of coverage.

13 A frame is defined as a ‘scheme of interpretation’ (Goffman 1974) or an ‘interpretative package’ (Gamson and Modigliani 1989: 2f.) by which people organise experiences and information in meaningful ways and which guides their actions. Frames serve as a communicative device for selecting, emphasizing and presenting an event, a situation or an issue in a social context (Entman 1993: 52; Reese et al. 2001; Renfordt 2007: 6). In public debates, various frames are offered by different speakers and groups and
Transnationally intertwined debates on humanitarian military interventions?

Can ordinary citizens inform themselves in the national media about such complex and ethically controversial issues of security and defence as military humanitarian interventions? Are the debates in different national arenas transnationally interconnected? Is transnational communication taking place, allowing ordinary citizens in different member states to make up their minds upon common European security and defence issues?

Our empirical investigation at Freie Universität Berlin comprises a continuous time period of 16 years (January 1990 – March 2006) of news coverage and commentary on humanitarian military interventions in six European countries, which either were or became EU members during the period under investigation. The European countries were chosen in order to cover the range of diverse positions in foreign, security and defence policy preferences prevalent in the EU. Small and large countries, with both post-neutral and Atlanticist foreign policy traditions and pro-European and EU-sceptic policies were included. The choice fell on Austria (AU), France (FR), Germany (GER), Ireland (IR), the Netherlands (NL) and the United Kingdom (UK). The United States (US) was included as a comparative case. For all the countries under study, a centre-left and a centre-right national quality newspaper was included in the study. The data presented in this paper was drawn from a cleaned full-sample (N = 489 508) of all relevant newspaper articles on wars and interventions. The articles addressing humanitarian military interventions, that is ‘just wars’ where a neutral third party (a state or a multinational alliance) intervenes in an already ongoing armed conflict in order to protect civilians from severe and massive human rights abuses, were determined by applying advanced corpus-linguistic methods (Kantner et al. 2011; Kutter and Kantner 2011, forthcoming) resting on extensive qualitative-hermeneutic procedures of the identification of the semantic field ‘humanitarian military interventions’. Starting from a list of intervention-related keywords used in the sampling strategies, we qualitatively scanned their word environment with the WordSmith software, creating country-specific lists of typical phrases and they compete with each other. Therefore, framing effects are difficult to assess. No single speaker or medium has the power to hegemonically project ‘its framing’ on the society members – framing is a collective, constructivist activity (Baumgartner and Mahoney 2008).

14 The sampling procedure did not include any EU or CSDP keywords in order to avoid sampling on the dependent variable.

15 A new member state, Poland, was to be included, but data was not available in time. The analysis of the Polish case therefore remains a task for further research.

16 There is one exception: For Ireland only one paper was available. The selected broadsheets are Der Standard and Die Presse for Austria; Le Monde and Le Figaro (1997-2006) / Les Echos (1993-1996) for France; Süddeutsche Zeitung and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung for Germany; The Irish Times for Ireland; NRC Handelsblad and De Volkskrant for The Netherlands; Guardian and The Times for The United Kingdom; and New York Times and The Washington Post for the US.

collocations unambiguously belonging to the semantic field of humanitarian military interventions. These were particular specifications of ‘troops’ (e.g. ‘UN troops’, ‘blue helmet’), ‘force’ (e.g. ‘monitoring force’), ‘forces’ (e.g. ‘contribute forces’, KFOR, ISAF), ‘missions’ (e.g. ‘military mission’, ‘peace-keeping’), ‘strikes’ (e.g. ‘NATO air strikes’), ‘operation’, ‘action’, etc. The selected search-words and word-clusters in all possible grammatical forms were applied in a text-mining procedure to retrieve all those articles from the full text-corpus in which at least one of the search-words and word-clusters was mentioned. Altogether the sample on humanitarian military interventions encompasses 108,677 articles.

Figure 1 displays the sequence charts of the issue cycles of newspaper articles referring to humanitarian interventions. Newspaper articles using the specific wording for humanitarian military interventions make up about 20 percent of all articles on wars and interventions in France, the UK and the US, 25 percent in Germany, and almost 30 percent in the Netherlands, Ireland and Austria.

At first sight, however, the intervention issue cycles are hard to interpret. There are no clear-cut long-term trends or seasonal patterns visible. Rather, one can identify four waves of higher quantitative levels and several peaks: 1990/1991 (Iraq / Kuwait), autumn 1992 to autumn 1996 (Balkan crises, African conflicts), 1999/2000 (Kosovo), 9/11 to 2004 (Afghanistan, Iraq War).

US and British newspapers have the highest quantity of such articles, which is due to their specific journalistic styles: these newspapers simply publish much more articles per day than other papers. On average, the two US papers together ran 185 articles on interventions each month. The maximum was reached in October 2001, when the invasion of Afghanistan began (Adamec 2003: 529). In the two British papers, about 117 articles on interventions were printed each month.

German, French and Irish papers also covered humanitarian military interventions extensively, although with somewhat lower absolute numbers of articles. On average, 88 (GER), 62 (FR), 50 (NL) and 48 (IR) articles on interventions were printed per month. The Austrian press referred to interventions least often. The two Austrian newspapers published only 24 articles per month on interventions. Since the Iraq War was in many countries termed in terms of ‘ordinary war’ and not in terms of a military intervention for humanitarian reasons, March 2003 is not the month with the maximum coverage, except for Ireland and the UK. Instead, April 1999 takes centre-stage for most countries. In the German and Austrian newspapers, there were no articles on humanitarian military interventions in some months.

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18 For this procedure, we used the software package SPSS Clementine. Available at: <http://www.spss.com/de/clementine/> (last accessed 10 November 2008).
19 Only one paper was available for Ireland.
20 The maximum months are: April 1999 (GER, NL, AU, FR, IR), October 2001 (US) and March 2003 (IR, UK).
21 No articles on humanitarian military interventions could be identified in November 1991 (GER) and December 1992, January 1993 and April 1993 (AU). The minimum values for NL (January – March 1990) and FR (May 1990) are also close to zero. In the English-speaking countries, the numbers do not fall so dramatically. The minimum months were February 1990 (UK), May 1990 (US) and February 1997 (IR).
Figure 1: Issue cycle ‘humanitarian military interventions’ (abs. numbers).
Notes: N = 108,677, intervention sub-sample, method used: corpus-linguistic frequency analysis, data aggregated on a monthly basis. Period of investigation: Jan. 1990 – Mar. 2006 (195 months). Because of missing months, three countries include fewer months: AU 163, IR 166, GER 182.

Simultaneous peaks in several countries were triggered by important international conflicts: Besides crisis events such as April 1999 (diplomatic and military activities regarding Kosovo) and October 2001 (diplomatic and military activities regarding Afghanistan) another group of conflicts – mainly in Africa – also lead to simultaneous peaks (Figure 1): Somalia 1992/1993 and 1995 (Arnold 2008b: 331-38), the genocide in Rwanda 1994 (Twagilimana 2007: xxxii-xxxv), and the civil war in Sierra Leone in the late 1990s (Arnold 2008a: 320-25; Fyle 2006).

Even if the curves at first sight do not seem harmonious, all curves correlate extremely significantly with each other, ranging from slightly more than .70 (AU/US, AU/UK, NL/UK, NL/US) to values around .80 among the continental European countries and .90 between the Irish and the British papers, as well as between the US and the UK (see Table 2). This is an indicator for synchronous debates about the normative justification (or lack of normative justification) of some military conflicts as interventions for a humanitarian purpose.22

Not only the visible common peaks of the issue cycles but the intense as well as extremely correlated intensity of discussion about humanitarian military interventions in the different countries indicate that from the end of the Cold War there was a broad international debate on violent crises events in the European and US-American newspapers. People could make up their opinions about the same international security issues at the same time and under a very specific framing as ‘humanitarian military intervention’. This discussion was certainly not restricted to a European community of communication. It is surely part of Western if not global news coverage, attention cycles, and discourse.

22 However, the inter-correlation is somewhat lower than among the overall issue cycles on both ‘wars’ and ‘interventions’ (Kantner 2009: sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2), which indicates slightly more cross-national differences, or more precisely, more transatlantic differences as soon as we focus not just on the conflicts as such but on their normative dimension as ‘humanitarian interventions’.
Table 1: Bivariate correlations of the issue cycles ‘humanitarian military interventions’ (Pearson's coefficients).

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** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Notes: The table displays Pearson's correlation coefficients. Period of investigation: Jan. 1990 – Mar. 2006, 195 months. Because of missing months, for three countries fewer months are included (AU 163, IR 166, GER 182).

Since one might expect that transnational communication would lead to convergence – here with regard to levels of attention – it is interesting to ask, whether there are processes of convergence or divergence if we compare the curves. Because no convergence towards a fixed value can be expected and newspapers have different average numbers of articles per day, I chose to calculate Sigma convergence measures. This is the variation of all issue cycles from their common mean (\( \sigma = \text{standard deviation/mean} \)). If the values of this coefficient move towards zero, dispersion decreases. Values larger than one indicate that the standard deviation in the respective months was greater than the mean. The coefficients multiplied by 100 can be read as deviation from the mean in percent. The two graphs in Figure 2 show the results of the convergence analysis first for all countries under study (Model 1) then for the EU countries only (Model 2). Decreasing values of the \( \sigma \)-convergence measure indicate convergence, while increasing values indicate divergence.

We can clearly observe a process of convergence from autumn 1991 to March 1999 and – at a slower pace – increasing divergence from March 1999 on. Both trends are clearer for Model 2 (EU only) than for the Model 1 (which includes the US). The minimum variation (42 percent deviation from the mean) was reached in April 1999 at the height of the Kosovo War. The maximum variation (123 percent deviation from the mean) was reached in September 1992, when developments in Bosnia coincided with momentous domestic events in France and the UK. Variation displays a marked peak in January 1990, when UN Resolution 771 was passed with the aim of ensuring humanitarian aid delivery in Bosnia. Overall, the average variation was 74 percent deviation from the mean.

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23 For the advantages of the Sigma-convergence measures that do not assume convergence towards a postulated value, but instead calculate whether the variation from the common mean decreases over time, see Higgins et al. (2003). Studies using Sigma-convergence measures are common in econometrics because they allow the assessment of dynamic processes of convergence and divergence without assuming a fixed standard value to which different time series should converge (see, for example: Barro et al. 1991; Dreger and Kholodilin 2007).

24 The immediate time after the fall of the Berlin Wall also saw the gradual breakdown of the USSR. Early in 1990 Soviet troops occupied Baku (Azerbaijan) under a state of emergency decree issued by Mikhail Gorbachev. Violent confrontations occurred. Hence, the West could not be sure how peacefully the transformation in the East – especially in the multi-ethnic states – would proceed.
Figure 2: σ-convergence of the issue cycles ‘humanitarian military interventions’.
Notes: The graph displays sequence charts of the deviation measure. Low values indicate less deviation, high values more deviation from the common mean. N = 489 508, n = 108 677. Data aggregated on a monthly basis. Period of investigation: Jan. 1990 – Mar. 2006 (195 months). Because of missing months, three countries include fewer months: AU 163, IR 166, GER 182.

Excluding the US from the convergence measure, the average level of variation is more than 10 percent less (62 percent deviation from the mean). Excluding the US, the minimum variation (34 percent deviation from the mean) was reached in March 1999, during NATO’s intervention in Kosovo, and the maximum variation (139 percent deviation from the mean) was also reached (as in the EU) in September 1992. The EU convergence curve also includes three significant outliers: a negative peak in October 1990 (Rwanda) and two positive peaks in April 1991 (Iraq) and in September 1992 (Bosnia). Only the last peak is also significant for the σ-convergence curve that includes the US.

The high bivariate correlations between the levels of attention to humanitarian military interventions in the different countries under study and the differentiated findings regarding phases of convergence and divergence between the issue cycles show clearly that the debates on humanitarian military interventions in different national media arenas are transnationally interconnected. Continental Europeans


26 In April 1991, Iraqi forces succeeded in crushing the series of uprisings following military defeat in the Gulf War and international action was taken to address the developing refugee crisis (Ghareeb and Dougherty 2004: xviii). However, in spring 1991 the situation in Yugoslavia began to escalate as well.
discuss ‘the same issues at the same time’. US-American and British media follow to a somewhat lesser degree the same issue attention cycle.

Are these issues also discussed under the same ‘aspects of relevance’? Are they ‘framed’ similarly? Our project team investigated several different dimensions of framing. In her recent qualitative study, Swantje Renfordt (2011) used a sub-sample of the articles on humanitarian military interventions (n = 5,850). She investigated the ‘social validity’ of the norms of international law on the use of force in the debates on humanitarian military interventions, providing more qualitative analysis of the debates. She finds that legal framing is the most frequent frame in the debate27 – on both sides of the Atlantic. Of all crisis episodes between January 1990 and December 2005, the Iraq Wars (peaks in 1998 and 2002/03) and the Yugoslavian Wars (1992/1993, 1995, 1998/99), which proved crucial for the debate in general, were also most intensively discussed under legal frames. They differ, however, in that they are marked by two different variants: Human-rights-focused aspects are dominant during the 1990s, while procedural aspects focusing on multilateral decision-making within the UN are dominant from 2000 and especially with regard to the Iraq War in 2003. The US media focus more on the human motives while the European media put the procedural aspect of multilateral legitimation centre stage: ‘never without the UN’ (Renfordt 2011: 205). However, national differences prove barely significant if tested in detailed regression analysis.

This means that also with regard to the framing dimension, national differences are much smaller than imagined in much of the scholarly debate that laments the lack of a European public sphere. An issue of global scope can very well provoke transnationally intertwined debates on a scope beyond the EU – good news for the advocates of a ‘(regional) cosmopolitan democracy’?

Conclusions: What kind of transnational democracy?

Lively public debates are a fundamental ingredient for democratic politics on the input-side of the political process. The development of a transnational European public sphere is therefore a precondition for overcoming the often criticised ‘democratic deficit’ with respect to CFSP/CSDP (Born and Hänggi 2004; Kantner and Liberatore 2006; Wagner 2006, 2007). Independently of which institutional model of democracy you choose, without public involvement it will be doomed to fail. An intergovernmental ‘audit democracy’, a ‘federal multinational democracy’, as well as a ‘regional cosmopolitan democracy’ (Eriksen and Fossum 2007, 2012; Sjursen 2007, 2012) depend in different ways on an informed public, and each model proposes the institutionalisation of channels to give public reason a regular and legally binding influence on and control over foreign, security and defence policies.

For the prospects of democracy in the EU and in CSDP in particular, this has important implications: the communicative infrastructure for democratic opinion formation – be it national, European or even global – is given as long as the national

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27 Legal framing trumped framing in terms of interests, identity or universalist principles (Renfordt 2011: 203).
Debating humanitarian military interventions in the European public sphere

media report the issues at stake freely and according to a sufficient journalistic standard.28

1. ‘Audit democracy’: Political communication on humanitarian military interventions takes place in national media arenas. Moreover, the procedural channels of citizens’ influence on foreign, security and defence are established at the national level – yet, to different degrees.29 However, it is a fiction that there exist hermetically closed ‘national discourses’ on important issues of common interest (Eder and Kantner 2000, 2002). The problem-pressure of – in the studied case – international crisis events is simply too strong and no EU member state is able to tackle them alone so that these issues have to be handled in cooperation. This is mirrored in the public debate.

2. ‘Federal multinational democracy’: Do the national media inform a transnational public about complex and ethically controversial issues of security and defence, such as military humanitarian interventions? Can ordinary citizens in different member states make up their minds upon common European security and defence issues? Yes, in the national media, transnational, transatlantic and European debates on humanitarian military interventions do occur. If transnational political communication is conceptualised as thematically intertwined communication about the same issues at the same time under similar frames of relevance, the preconditions for an institutionally guarantied transnational public sphere with respect to important security issues are met. This could be proved by the comparison of the issue cycles of seven countries on questions of humanitarian military interventions from 1990 to 2006. These issue cycles were over such a long time so highly correlated that that this cannot be dismissed as accident.

However, such a transnational European public is not to be mistaken as a harmonious gospel choir. On the contrary! It depends on and is marked by conflict, dissent and verbal battles – as is any pluralistic public sphere:

The Europeanization of domestic politics and the politicization of EU affairs are not only inevitable but also desirable from a democratic point of view. The coming fights over Europe will no longer be whether or not one supports European integration, but which type of EU one prefers, including which policy alternatives. In this sense, the EU is about to become a ‘normal’ part of domestic politics in the member states.

(Risse 2010: 244f.)

The central question remains how it can be ensured that transnational European political communication systematically pours into decision-making on the European level as citizens’ input and how the European public can be strengthened as an instance of democratic control.

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28 Our selection of countries (which included only stable democracies) and newspapers (which included only broadsheets with a high reputation) presumes that the demanding standards of the quality of public communication are met in our study. However, this is not the case in every media sector and many countries.

29 The degrees of parliamentary control over foreign and security policies and the use of military force in particular vary strongly between the EU member states (Wagner 2006, 2007).
3. ‘Regional cosmopolitan democracy’: The same holds true for even wider horizons. As the comparative case of the U.S. in this study shows, global problem-pressure stimulates global transnational communication. However, on a transatlantic or even global scale, it is even more difficult to imagine mechanisms of representative democracy, neo-corporatism or participatory democracy that give ordinary citizens (not just professional politicians and lobbyists or self-selected activists) influence on foreign, security and defence politics that are undertaken in their name or affect them.

This study shows that intensive reflection on humanitarian military interventions takes place and contributes to public awareness of important international issues. What is lacking, however, are institutional solutions that channel citizens’ opinions in transnational procedures of political will formation (Habermas 1996). The communicative preconditions for all three models of European democracy are met. This does not predetermine, however, how ‘we Europeans’ will organise our common political life. This is and will remain an intrinsically political question.
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Technical appendix

Table 2: Sample characteristics.

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