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European Union flags in front of the Berlaymont building, headquarters of the European Community.

OPERATION ARTEMIS AND JAVIER SOLANA: EU PROSPECTS FOR A STRONGER COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

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Introduction

After decades of discussion and considerable “Euro-skepticism,” many European Union (EU) leaders and other observers maintain that the European Union has begun to assert itself as a meaningful actor in foreign and security policy. The EU now oversees peacekeeping and observer operations in Bosnia and Georgia; it has completed operations in Macedonia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC); and it has played a lead diplomatic role in negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program.¹ Important foreign policy differences remain, however, among its members – especially with respect to the use of force and the ongoing political crisis in Iraq. In addition, the French and Dutch rejection of the proposed European Union Constitution in the summer of 2005, and the United Kingdom’s cancellation of its own referendum on this question, raise new challenges to Europe’s integrative efforts.

At the same time, recent observers of these events suggest that the failed referendums had little to do with Europe’s ambitions for a more unified European foreign

and security policy, but, rather, were rooted in domestic economic issues, including a backlash against liberal immigration policies, the potential of additional “outsourcing” of labour, and the ongoing challenge of relatively high unemployment levels.² In contrast, European public opinion polls still suggest strong support for a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP),

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In June 2003, EU High Representative Javier Solana arrives in Entebbe, welcomed by Colonel Louis-Michel Testaud and Colonel Eric de Stabenrath of the EU Stabilization Force.

and the European Union's High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, continues to be an active promoter of Europe's role in global security. Thus, on security matters, the European Union remains ambitious in striving toward common positions.

Much research has been devoted to the cooperation and integration witnessed in the European Union in recent years. Despite the array of theoretical and analytical approaches used to examine this evolution, very little research has been devoted to the potential role and impact of the EU's High Representative for CFSP. This scholarly void may, in part, be explained by the institutionally ambiguous role held by the High Representative, whose political authority and representative role can be both difficult to identify and challenging to research.³ This relative dearth of analysis on the High Representative's leadership may also be attributed to international relations scholars' general reluctance to examine specific individuals in foreign policymaking.⁴ Javier Solana, NATO's secretary general from 1995 to 1999, has served as the EU's High Representative for CFSP since 1999. Although Solana has generated widespread media and journalistic attention while at the EU, very little research has assessed his leadership record.⁵

The case study that follows provides an assessment of the European Union's decision-making process that eventually resulted in *Operation Artemis* – the European Union's peacekeeping deployment to the DRC in 2003. *Operation Artemis* was the first EU mission that took place outside of NATO assistance, and its troops engaged in combat soon after its deployment.⁶ Within the study, special emphasis is devoted to Solana's leadership and efforts in promoting a CFSP on the DRC. Such an emphasis fills a void in the existing literature on EU foreign policy research, but also has policy relevance – in that this focus addresses the EU's ability to identify a CFSP, and to act as an independent organization in security matters.

We first discuss the institutional role of the High Representative for CFSP in the European Union, and then provide a brief background of the legal and political context of the mission. We then assess more specifically the EU's decision-making process and Solana's role in the eventual deployment decision, which has implications for future EU interventions. Broadly, this case examines the EU's ability to act toward a common foreign and security policy in an operation that Solana himself

referred to as “EU military progress.”⁷ The findings suggest that Solana’s personal impact on EU’s foreign policy coordination cannot be neglected; yet, *Operation Artemis* stemmed primarily from France’s willingness to exercise leadership within the European Union for the deployment.

The EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy

The position of the EU’s High Representative for CFSP was created at the EU’s summit, held in Amsterdam in June 1997. Article 18 of the Treaty calls for a High Representative to assist the EU to speak with one voice. The High Representative would assist in “formulation, preparation and implementation of policy decisions, and when appropriate, and acting on behalf of the Council at the request of the presidency, through conducting political dialogue with third parties.”⁸ An individual was not appointed to this position until June 1999, when Solana, NATO’s acting secretary general and former foreign minister of Spain, accepted the position. Solana came to the EU in October 1999 with impressive leadership credentials, arriving only months after NATO’s prolonged yet successful bombing campaign against Slobodan Milosevic. Solana was inducted formally as the EU’s High Representative for CFSP on 18 October 1999.⁹

The High Representative’s role was articulated and expanded upon further at the Helsinki European Council meeting in December 1999. In revised form, the position was supposed to assist the EU presidency in coordinating the Council; to assist the Council in the creation of policy options; and to assist in the implementation of EU foreign and security policy decisions of the Council, the EU Commission, and the member states. Besides these activities, the High Representative was charged with overseeing the Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit (PPEWU). The PPEWU would be staffed by personnel contributions from EU member states, who would assist the High Representative in identifying crises, policy options, and issues of importance in which there was a need for EU policy coordination and cooperation.¹⁰ In short, the position allowed the High Representative considerable flexibility in defining his role and political responsibilities. At the same time, analysts concur that the position is still vague in terms of *who* the High Representative actually represents, which implies clear limitations on his political influence and administrative authority. The High Representative was charged to work with the President of the Council of Ministers (who rotates every six months), the Council of Ministers itself, and the European Commission, who also had its own Commissioner for External Relations.¹¹

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In many respects, Solana was an ideal selection for this position, given his previous leadership and diplomatic experiences. As NATO secretary general, Solana gained much experience in political negotiation and diplomacy among the NATO allies, and at an organization that provides little formal legal authority to the secretary general. Moreover, as Spain’s foreign minister, Solana served during that country’s six-month presidency of the European Council of Ministers, which heightened his international and regional visibility.¹²

As the EU’s High Representative, prior to *Operation Artemis*, Solana has been credited with a number of diplomatic achievements. Solana was a central negotiator for the EU during the Macedonian crisis in 2001, when ethnic-Albanian rebels and the Macedonian government clashed over constitutional questions. This crisis was averted with the deployment of NATO troops to the region, coupled with a weapons exchange program that was agreed upon by the warring factions.¹³ Journalists also credit Solana with assisting in the negotiations to end the Church of the Nativity Crisis in 2002, which involved the exile of 13 Palestinian militants to Cyprus.¹⁴ In addition, observers maintain that Solana was helpful in encouraging Turkey to support the “Berlin Plus” agreement made at the EU Summit in Copenhagen during December 2002, which allowed EU member states to use NATO assets in EU peacekeeping missions.¹⁵ Additionally, Solana was at the centre, if not the main architect, of the agreement between Serb and Montenegro leaders not to separate into independent states in March 2002.¹⁶

While Solana accrued these many diplomatic successes, other evidence suggests that he was left on the diplomatic sidelines during the months leading up to *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, as political differences among EU members were wide and pronounced. By one account, Solana was “irrelevant” to EU leaders, in what was arguably the most important international issue of the fall and winter of 2002-2003. Solana was not consulted as EU members formed and eventually announced their positions on Iraq and American military action.¹⁷ Thus, prior to *Artemis*, Solana’s diplomatic record within the EU had a number of successes, but his influence appears to have been marginalized among EU member states in the months before *Artemis*.

Legal and Political Background on Operation Artemis

The Democratic Republic of Congo’s second war was initiated in August 1998, when Rwandan and Ugandan forces, in cooperation with Congolese rebels, waged an attack on DRC leader Laurent-Désiré Kabila. This violence soon generated additional foreign military

responses from Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Chad, Libya, and Sudan. Given the willingness of so many states to intervene, coupled with the widespread atrocities taking place, the conflict threatened much of Central and Southern Africa.¹⁸

The United Nations first became involved in a peacekeeping deployment to the DRC on 6 August 1999, when the UN Security Council authorized 90 peacekeepers to assist in promoting the Lusaka peace agreement that was reached among most of the warring factions. Yet, as the violence continued, with the Lusaka Agreement in shambles, the UN Security Council expanded the mission on 24 February 2000, with the addition of approximately 6000 military personnel and observers. Before the European Union's engagement in June 2003, the UN peacekeeping presence was expanded again in the same year to include approximately 8700 peacekeepers, as violence continued to destabilize much of the country and threatened the region.¹⁹ Thus, prior to the EU's peacekeeping intervention, UN forces already had a considerable presence in the DRC – although such a presence did little to stave off the violence.

The specific conditions in the DRC that generated the momentum for the EU's intervention took place in May 2003, when Ugandan troops located in the northeastern province of Ituri and its capital city, Bunia, departed the region. Their exit created a void in political power, which was then followed by violence between the Hema and Lendu ethnic groups. The humanitarian conditions deteriorated rapidly, and the violence resulted in the creation of approximately

7000 refugees. In addition, by the time the EU peacekeepers arrived, there had been approximately 430 deaths. Although 700 UN peacekeepers, mostly from Uruguay, were positioned near Bunia, these troops did not have the military skills necessary to prevent the violence.²⁰ At the time of this violence, Pope John Paul II referred to the conditions as “profoundly disturbing.” Carla Del Ponte, the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, noted: “From what we know,” the violence “could be a genocide.”²¹

These events eventually prompted a UN Security Council decision on 30 May 2003, which endorsed an additional intervention to the DRC. Acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the Security Council authorized a military deployment to Bunia, in which the peacekeepers were authorized to assist in stabilizing the conditions in that country, to secure its airport, and to assist and protect the displaced persons located in the surrounding refugee camps. This peacekeeping force was authorized until 1 September 2003.²² The UN Security Council's decision was followed by the European Union's formal approval to implement UN Security Resolution 1484. Initial EU approval for the mission came on 5 June through a joint action by the European Council, which was then formally approved on 12 June 2003.²³ This mission was the EU's first in which EU peacekeepers operated independently from NATO and its military assets. The mission lasted until 1 September, when additional United Nations peacekeepers deployed to the region and the EU transferred leadership of the mission back to a much larger UN peacekeeping force.

Operation Artemis and the European Union

Although UN Secretary General Kofi Annan made the first public call for a peacekeeping force to Bunia, France was the initial country to agree to the mission. As early as 13 May 2003, two weeks before the UN Security Council Resolution 1484, and nearly a month before the European Union's formal decision to endorse the mission, France accepted the call for assistance and agreed to serve as the mission leader. Once the UN Security Council approved Resolution 1484, additional evidence suggests that France played the central diplomatic role within the European Union to cultivate support for an EU endorsement.²⁴

Organizationally and militarily, France also played the central role. French General Jean-Paul Thonier was named *Artemis* force commander in Bunia. The operational commander was French General Bruno Neveux, who led from his headquarters in Paris. France also deployed nine troops on 20 May 2003 to Bunia to assess the ground conditions, prior to the passage of Resolution 1484. In addition, France deployed a second advance contingency of troops, on 6 June 2003, to initiate preparations to *secure*, and later to *use*, Bunia's airport.²⁵



The Democratic Republic of the Congo. Bunia is located in the north-eastern corner of the nation.



Javier Solana meets the local population in the refugee camp in Bunia.

In addition, France provided 1000 of the approximately 1800 troops committed to the mission. It also provided the main air strike capabilities, which were utilized only days into the operation. Sweden contributed approximately 80 Special Forces troops, who cooperated with the French in Bunia, and who became involved in combat early in the operation. Other Europeans who sent troops included the United Kingdom, which sent approximately 90 members of support personnel to Bunia and Uganda. The UK troops consisted primarily of engineers, medics, and staff officers.²⁶ The Belgians sent approximately 48 medical and logistical personnel, who were then stationed primarily in Uganda, to help with transportation.²⁷

In addition, Germany provided approximately 350 troops, who remained stationed in Uganda, and who provided medical and logistical assistance to the main peacekeeping force. These troops were not deployed to Bunia.²⁸ Other European states that provided assistance at the Headquarters in Paris were Austria, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain, although the national numbers were quite small.²⁹

Given that the majority of the EU's commitment was from a single member state, it seems a stretch to suggest that the operation will set a precedent for future EU intervention. Most other EU states, with the exception of Sweden, the United Kingdom,

and, to a lesser extent, Belgium, were not willing to take any serious military risks in the DRC, and they kept their troops at a distance from the violence. Although these states have different military capabilities, the wide variation in troop and military contributions to the operation suggests quite different cost/benefit determinations from EU members on the national security interests at stake in the DRC. Germany, which originally questioned EU endorsement of *Artemis*, later changed its view upon diplomatic pressure from France and the UK. German Foreign Minister Joscha Fischer indicated that since France and the United Kingdom actively sought EU endorsement for *Operation Artemis*, Germany was more willing to back the mission.³⁰ However, even after it agreed to endorse *Artemis* within the EU, it remained reluctant to identify precisely how it would contribute militarily to the mission.³¹

In this case, it is difficult to provide direct evidence of American influence, but it is clear that France actively sought European Union endorsement for the operation, even though the United Nations Security Council had already approved of a mission. France could have begun the operation with full international legal backing as early as 30 May 2003, yet it used another week of diplomatic activity before it gained EU support within the EU's Political and Security Committee. In part, France's actions via the European Union may be explained by a desire to gain additional military and diplomatic support from other states. At the same time, it is important to note that France's willingness to deploy troops came only two months after *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, which France, Germany, and a number of other EU member-states had opposed vehemently. Such a show of EU cooperation in *Operation Artemis* may have resulted, in part, as a demonstration of European solidarity after the intense differences it had experienced earlier with the United States.

EU leaders also emphasized *Artemis's* independence from NATO, recognizing the Europeans' own ability to deploy troops rapidly and separate from NATO.

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French defense minister Michèle Alliot-Marie noted that *Artemis* was a “forceful symbol and military model example.” She added: “The EU has a genuine military operational capacity at its disposal.”³² France has historically been the most aggressive advocate for a separate EU military capability, independent of NATO and the United States, and France’s actions in *Artemis* squares closely with their long-standing positions taken within NATO.³³ Greek defence minister Yinnos Papantoniou similarly suggested that the European Union has established a new niche in regional military capabilities with *Operation Artemis*, due to its autonomy from NATO.³⁴ In sum, the evidence presented herein suggests that French leadership, which occurred within the context of “political balancing” against the US in Iraq, was a crucial factor in shaping the European Union’s decision to approve of *Operation Artemis*. Without assertive leadership from France and the ostensibly perceived need to demonstrate Europe’s independence from the United States, it seems unlikely that the mission would have been approved in Brussels.

Javier Solana and the DRC

As the High Representative for CFSP, Javier Solana was at the centre of the decision-making process for *Operation Artemis*, which eventually resulted in the EU’s intervention. First, before the UN Security Council had indicated its support for a new peacekeeping operation, Solana immediately became the “diplomatic surrogate” for Kofi Annan to the European Union. At a meeting of the EU defence ministers on 19 May 2003, Solana presented Annan’s request. In this respect, Solana was clearly a player in the process. In addition, at the conclusion of the defence ministers’ meeting, Solana was given the responsibility of drafting a reaction to Annan from the EU, which was an explicit call by EU leaders to determine if the operation was a real policy option.³⁵

In another capacity, before the EU had agreed to endorse the operation, Solana’s office led the European diplomatic effort to pave the way for the EU’s eventual deployment.

Solana also used his assistant, Aldo Ajello, to initiate diplomatic overtures with Uganda, Rwanda, and the DRC.³⁶ Once the operation began, Solana was also in contact with the leaders from the DRC, Rwanda, and Uganda, travelling to meet the presidents in their capitals during mid-July 1999. He also went to Bunia, which was followed by a trip to the United Nations Security Council in New York for a briefing on the mission.³⁷ These actions again suggest that EU member states wanted Solana to assume a diplomatic leadership position, and to play a representative role on behalf of the EU to the UN Security Council. At a minimum, his diplomatic relevance suggests that Solana was mandated at least a symbolic role for the EU, because of his sojourns to both Africa and New York.

At the same time, the degree of Solana’s effect during the decision-making and planning stages of the operation must not be overstated. As an institutional “agenda setter,” it is difficult to credit Solana with shaping EU member-states’ interest in *African* security. To be sure, institutionally, EU members had previously considered *African* security as a developing strategic interest for its members. Ulriksen and colleagues note that at the Franco-British summit in Le Touquet in February 2003, both states called for a “proactive EU role in peacekeeping and conflict prevention in Africa.”



Another shot of Javier Solana visiting the refugee camp in Bunia.

ECPAD photo A4BA4B94-E321-4BBE-8F9B-3FB5C48DDC56

At Le Touquet, France and the UK issued a joint declaration urging African leaders to be more mindful of human rights and democracy, and they also noted “our constant concern” for conflict prevention and peace in Africa.³⁸ In addition, the European Union had previously called for a resolution to end the violence in Ituri in December 2002.³⁹ Yet on Solana’s specific role in promoting collective values and shared norms regarding African strategic interests for the EU, it is noteworthy that, in the two months preceding the deployment to Bunia, in Solana’s four major addresses, he made no reference to a larger role for the EU in providing African security. In April 2003, and in May 2003, as the war in Iraq dominated international headlines, Solana directed most of his political efforts towards healing the acute rift that had developed between the United States and Europe.⁴⁰ Even in an address given to the Institute for European Affairs in Dublin on 21 May 2003, Solana did not raise the issue of Bunia specifically, nor did he suggest a long-term interest for EU CFSP in African security and peacekeeping. The majority of his discussion focused upon the EU’s role in the Balkans, and upon his perception of shared security concerns between the US and Europe.⁴¹ Although the crisis in Bunia developed quite rapidly – largely due to Uganda’s rapid withdrawal of troops in early May 2003 – the evidence is clear that in public, Solana made no attempt to highlight African security challenges, and reaffirmed that the DRC was not on the EU’s “CFSP public radar” at the time.

Most of the evidence suggests that Solana’s role came only after France had committed itself to lead the operation, and after Kofi Annan then specifically appealed to Solana to build support among EU defence ministers. Moreover, unlike other journalistic assessments of his previous leadership roles in Macedonia, Yugoslavia, and during the Church of the Nativity Crisis, in this case media pundits did not credit Solana as being a central negotiator or diplomat in resolving differences among EU members. Certainly, the possibility exists that Solana played a quiet, unreported, and less visible role in coaxing cooperation among the Europeans, but no journalistic evidence suggests that such an interpretation is accurate. Solana was not institutionally “irrelevant,” but also does not appear to have been a central player in identifying EU interests in Africa.

Conclusion

The findings presented in this case study point to the dominant role played by France in orchestrating EU intervention. Moreover, the differing relative contributions provided by EU member states to

“EU leaders also emphasized Artemis’s independence from NATO...”

Operation Artemis and the influence of American foreign policy which encouraged EU cooperation (albeit as a balancer to the United States) also played a role in the mission. As an institutional leader, it is evident that Javier Solana became an important diplomatic conduit for EU member-states when the issue was first discussed. Solana appears to have been a key information provider for the EU, when the defence ministers tasked him with studying the possibility of a deployment. He also became a key diplomatic contact for the EU to African leaders and to the United Nations. In this regard, Solana’s role cannot be neglected. In the final analysis, however, France’s assertive leadership was the most important factor in explaining the EU’s peacekeeping presence in Bunia.

The evidence that has been presented here suggests that Javier Solana will continue to face difficult challenges in identifying a common foreign and security policy for the European Union. With respect to *Operation Artemis*, his influence was shaped largely by French foreign policy, once that nation agreed to lead the deployment, abetted by a European distaste of US foreign policy in Iraq. Although the EU’s ambitions for a stronger voice in security affairs remains, this case demonstrates the many challenges involved in establishing a “common” foreign and security policy for Europe. When this case is placed alongside the ongoing low defence spending levels witnessed across Europe, it seems fair to remain skeptical of the European Union and Javier Solana’s ability to yield significant diplomatic weight on international security matters.⁴²

The case also demonstrates the EU’s irregular interests in African security, given that no EU peacekeeping operations have been deployed to Africa since *Artemis*, despite the ongoing instability in the DRC, Chad, Sudan, and elsewhere. Although the public support for advancing international human rights remains high across Europe, the reality is that Europe’s common foreign and security policy will be determined by the interests of the most powerful states within the European Union.

“In the final analysis, however, France’s assertive leadership was the most important factor in explaining the EU’s peacekeeping presence in Bunia.”



NOTES

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5. For an exception, see Rory Keane, "The Solana Process in Serbia and Montenegro: coherence in EU foreign policy," in *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (2004), pp. 491-508; For an assessment of his leadership as NATO's secretary general, see Ryan C. Hendrickson, *Diplomacy and War at NATO: The Secretary General and Military Action After the Cold War* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2006).
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10. Salmon and Alistair, *Toward a European Army*, pp. 88-89.
11. Smith, *Europe's Foreign and Security Policy*, and Salmon and Alistair, *Toward a European Army*.
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22. S/Res/1484 (2003).
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