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TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFER IN EU CIVILIAN MISSIONS: BUREAUCRATIC HETERARCHY AND AGENT-DRIVEN OPPORTUNITIES

Paulius Klikūnas

Kaunas University of Technology
K. Donelaičio g. 73, Kaunas, 44249 Kauno m. sav., Lithuania

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Abstract. *This study examines the integration of emerging technologies into EU civilian Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) missions. Using Multi-Level Governance and Principal-Agent theories as initial conceptual frames, the research investigates the complexities of EU governance like bureaucratic heterarchy, and the dynamics of agent-driven opportunities. Based on interviews with European External Action Service (EEAS) staff, EU mission personnel, and EU Ministry of Foreign Affairs representatives, the findings reveal systemic obstacles such as bureaucratic irregularity, information asymmetries and expertise gaps, which hinder effective technological transfer to host countries. Despite strategic frameworks like the Civilian CSDP Compact, technological transfer remains highly uneven and fractured, relying on proactive agents operating under informal mechanisms. The study concludes that empowering proactive agents can help to advance technological integration and enhance the operational impact of civilian CSDP missions, making them more capable to support host countries.*

Keywords: *Civilian CSDP Missions, Multi-Level Governance (MLG), Principal-Agent Theory (PA), Technological Transfer, Proactive Agents, Bureaucratic Heterarchy, EU Governance*

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *Civilinės BSGP misijos, Daugiapakopis valdymas (MLG), Principalo-agento teorija (PA), Technologijų perdavimas, Proaktyvūs agentai, Biurokratinė heterarchija, ES valdymas*

Introduction

The European Union declares intention to be become a worldwide digital leader by 2030. The crucial role of technologies is also starting to appear in the strategic frameworks for EU Civilian CSDP missions. EU civilian CSDP Missions serve as outposts showcasing the EU's capabilities to host countries. With the emphasis on transferring institutional know-how, they provide a relevant case for examining how EU's high-level technology and innovation-related commitments translate into concrete actions and who are key actors driving this process. Because EU decision-making is often incremental and shaped by multiple governance layers, diverse national interests and varying levels of expertise, it is challenging to track down how and to what extent strategic-level priorities get implemented and enabled in recipient countries. Limited access to implementers, particularly in sensitive areas such as the security sector, represents an additional complication for understanding the current state of affairs. This study takes up the task of mapping out and conceptualising how the EU operates within this rapidly changing field, uncovering overlooked yet influential actors and offering insights to enhance policy uptake and implementation in emerging technologies and similar domains. We argue that the EU actorness is best understood as bureaucratic heterarchy, where proactive agents, or so called „champions" can play a critical role in navigating information asymmetries and advancing technological innovation. We examine this proposition drawing

upon interview data from representatives of Ministries of Foreign Affairs of EU countries, the EEAS, and EU civilian CSDP Missions.

This paper draws upon Multi-Level Governance (MLG) and Principal-Agent (PA) theories as a conceptual building blocks. The Multi-Level Governance (MLG) theory is used an initial inspiration to account for EU's complex and overlapping decision-making structures, while the Principal-Agent (PA) theory complements it by highlighting delegation challenges, information asymmetries, and the role of specific (proactive and/or reactive) agents in shaping policy outcomes. By slightly reconfiguring these perspectives and providing a unique conceptual lens, the study contributes to a better understanding of how governance structures and agent dynamics impact policy transfer. Our primary contribution lies in mapping the dynamics of governance and identifying key movers within a particular policy field. We believe that this case study can also be relevant in conceptualizing EU actorness beyond civilian CSDP Missions.

The paper begins by outlining key terms, presenting theoretical foundations and the methodological approach followed by a detailed analysis of the findings. It then evaluates the role of key actors, emphasizing the interplay between proactive and reactive agents – "champions" within a context of fragmented responsibilities and informal mechanisms. Finally, the study offers conclusions and recommendations for fostering technological innovation in recipient countries and improving the effectiveness of civilian CSDP missions.

1. Context and Concepts

We use this section to provide some contextual background for this research project, clarify key terms and define the scope of the work. For the purposes of this paper, Industry 4.0 refers to the ongoing trend of digitalization and automation in the security sector and encompasses Cyber-Physical Systems (CPS), the Internet of Things, AI, Big Data and other similar technologies (Nosalska et al., 2020; Oesterreich & Teuteberg, 2016). We use "Industry 4.0" interchangeably with the term of emerging technologies and key enabling technologies (KETs). Our domain of analysing the uptake of such technologies relates to civilian CSDP missions, which are engaged in supporting security sector reforms in host countries in order to fight crime more effectively. Here, the *security sector* is a broad term and includes all security-related national governmental structures and organisations that have a mandate to protect their citizens from violence and crime (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2016; USAID, 2009). For integrating KETs into the context of EU Civilian CSDP Missions, we use the 2023 CSDP Civilian Compact (Council of the European Union, 2023) as a reference point. Adopted by the EU, this strategic framework and political commitment aims to enhance the effectiveness and responsiveness of civilian missions under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). This document is particularly significant for the purposes of our research as it marks the first instance, where besides other expected deliverables (such as promotion and protection of human rights, systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective and others), technologies were explicitly incorporated into the framework for civilian CSDP Missions: "*to follow a more systematic approach towards technological innovation for civilian CSDP (EEAS, 2023)*. The document also outlines plans for close collaboration between the EEAS, European Commission services, and Member States to strategize and allocate resources for emerging technologies and to enhance digital support for civilian CSDP missions. Policy transfer refers to the process by which policies, administrative arrangements or governance practices are adopted from one political or institutional setting and implemented into another (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996). In the context of EU civilian CSDP missions, policy transfer involves translating EU-level strategic priorities mentioned in Civilian CSDP Compact of 2023 —such as security sector reform (SSR), rule of law, and the domain of technologies—into practical deliverables within host countries where the missions are present. This process is inherently complex as it requires the alignment of multiple actors, including the European Commission, EEAS (CPCC, SecDefPol, PCM), Member States, CSDP Missions and host-country institutions. In order to make sense of this complexity, we now turn to the theoretical discussion and lay out the main conceptual frames of this paper.

2. Theoretical Framework

Understanding the challenges of knowledge transfer in EU civilian CSDP missions requires a theoretical lens that accounts for the complex nature of decision-making and implementation. While managerial theories of agile governance (Batista et al., 2022) or institutional budgeting approaches (Jones & McCaffery, 1994) could provide insights into micro-level project coordination and resource allocation issues, they have less to say about structural complexities, delegation dynamics, frictions and power asymmetries that define the fragmented system of EU governance. Instead we draw on Multi-Level Governance (MLG) and Principal-Agent (PA) theories as initial analytical building blocks to explore to what extent emerging technologies are integrated into civilian CSDP missions and transferred to recipient countries.

According to Hooghe and Marks (2001), the MLG theory focuses on the intricacies of delegation and collaboration across EU governance levels, involving diverse actors ranging from subnational entities to EU institutions. It can be approached as a "*mean coordinated action by the European Union, the Member States and local and regional authorities, based on partnership and aimed at drawing up and implementing EU policies*" (The Committee of the Regions, 2009). In the context of KET uptake and transfer within civilian CSDP Missions, this multi-actor structure includes the Political and Security Committee (PSC) that oversees political control and strategic direction for Civilian CSDP Missions, acting as a bridge between member states and operational activities. Also, one needs to mention the Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM) that provides detailed advice on civilian crisis management, supporting PSC decision-making. Furthermore, we have the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), composed of foreign ministers, that makes overarching decisions on CSDP missions, while the European External Action Service (EEAS) (European Union, 2011) ensures operational coordination.

Within the institutional framework of the EEAS, the Policy and Coordination Mission Unit (PCM), Security and Defence Policy Directorate (SecDefPol), and Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) focus on supporting EU Member States in planning and managing CSDP missions. Here, the PCM ensures coordination within the EEAS, bridging civilian and military dimensions through strategic reviews of civilian CSDP missions. SecDefPol provides strategic direction and policy development, while CPCC is responsible for operational planning and the day-to-day management of missions. The European Commission plays a complementary role, contributing through financial oversight, development assistance, and logistical support for missions (Klok, 2023). Given this intricate web of actors in play, the MLG seems to provide a useful initial impetus for mapping out the functioning of these institutions, but it also arguably puts too much emphasis on the vertical levels of governance. At the same time, it is necessary to include more individual role and responsibility-driven perspectives in order to capture further nuances of EU governance dynamics in CSDP missions.

2.1 Understanding the roles using PA Theory

Hooghe & Marks (2001) indicate that the MLG framework can be effectively supplemented with the PA theory, delineating the complexity of roles and responsibilities within the EU governance structures. This initial suggestion is taken up by T. Delreux & J. Adriaensen (2017), who utilize PA to analyze political relationships within the European Union, highlighting the dynamics of delegation and discretion among various political actors, while Niemann & Plank (2019) examine the dynamics between principals (e.g., parliaments) and agents (e.g., agencies), highlighting the need for understanding agent autonomy. A number of other scholars also use PA to understand the processes of EU external action. For example, Dijkstra (2017) explores the delegation of foreign policy functions from member states to the European External Action Service (EEAS). Kostanyan (2016) is also working on the topic, while adding the European Commission as a horizontal principal vis-à-vis the EEAS.

Applying PA theory for civilian CSDP Missions, we sought to map out all the principals and agents mentioned in previous sections (see Figure 1). Also, we introduce the concept of an intermediary principal-agent, that according to Tallberg (2002), Hooghe & Marks (2001) is an entity that simultaneously acts as a principal by delegating authority to lower-level agents and as an agent by receiving directives from higher-level principals. We start this mapping exercise with EU citizens that can be regarded as the ultimate principals, delegating decision-making powers to member states' representatives in government (including Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs)) and different EU bodies (Dijkstra, 2017; Hooghe & Marks, 2001). Going further we identified several intermediary principal-agents, which acts as both a principal and an agent. One of those is the European Commission serves as the agent for both EU entities and EU citizens, but since it controls financial resources, it impacts the CSDP missions as well. Delving further, within the context of the EU Council, the composition of the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) consists of foreign ministers of EU member states delegated from national MFAs, who are both agents and intermediary principals, overseeing EU foreign policy. Additionally, within the Council of the EU, bodies such as the Political and Security Committee (PSC) (typically senior diplomats from their respective MFAs) and CIVCOM (also experts seconded from the MFAs of Member States), even not being formally part of FAC, have the intermediary principal status for political guidance of Civilian CSDP Missions by providing advice and recommendations to FAC. Going down another set of steps, the EEAS acts as a "service" and its internal entities function as agents of the EU member states and their collective decision-making bodies such as the PSC and the FAC. Member states delegate authority to these agents, who are tasked with translating political directives into coherent strategies and operational actions. PCM, being part of the EEAS, serves as yet another intermediary principal-agent, ensuring that the principals' goals are consistently applied across various services. Thus, they are responsible for strategic reviews of the CSDP Mission. SecDefPol acts as an agent, providing policy guidance aligned with strategic directives and as a principal since the provided Strategic review documentation is obligatory for execution within EEAS and for the missions. Directly accountable for mission implementation, CPCC acts as the operational-level agent responsible for executing civilian CSDP missions and as the principal for the Head of such missions. Furthermore, we identify civilian CSDP Missions as the ultimate internal "doers" or agents. While CSDP Missions themselves operate as agents for the EEAS and its sub-departments, they also follow political directives provided by the PSC and CIVCOM, sometimes directly, sometimes through CPCC. Lastly, host countries are designated as external (non-EU) agents since they have to proceed with specific reforms as a prerequisite for receiving incentives from the EU. This bouquet of PA roles and responsibilities already anticipates multiple potential tensions and gaps in implementing policy agenda.

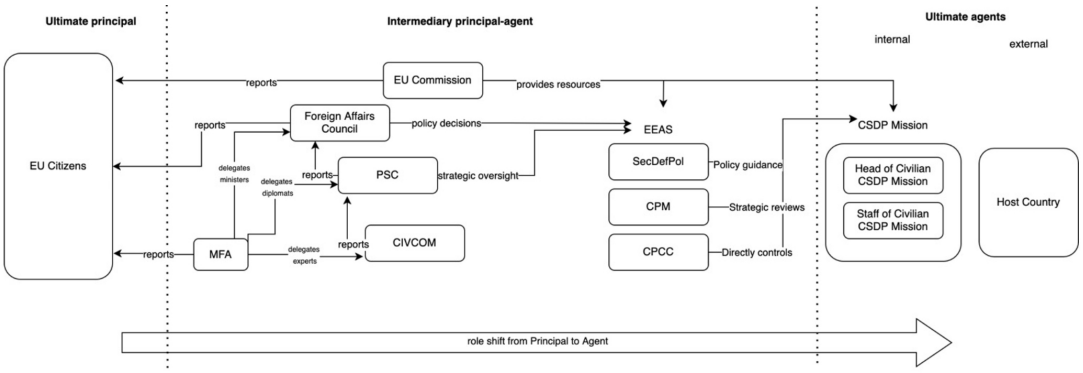

Figure 1. *PA roles and responsibilities (created by author)*

Given the revealed complexity of EU governance structure, the excessive length of task management ladders with many intermediary "duals", and the highly fractured interest in civilian CSDP missions among Member states, we revisit the MLG framework and argue that its rather structured and hierarchical delegation of authority across different levels of governance is quite optimistic and simplistic in the context of the European Union. Instead, we loosen its core assumptions of levels proposing that such a governance structure is better understood as a bureaucratic heterarchy, where authority is distributed across multiple levels and institutions without such a clear and consistent hierarchical order (Halberstam et al., 2009). Approached as a structure with segmented and often relatively equal policy opportunities at multiple levels, heterarchy gives a qualitatively different chance to advance or stall new policy agenda. It not only falls in line with EU's cultural inclination towards unanimity (Schulz & Konig, 2000) and the principles of collegiality (Craig, 2021), but also organically meshes with the core Principal-Agent dilemma of aligning the interests and information levels of relevant actors.

If such policy, as in the case of technological uptake in civilian CSDP missions, requires speciality knowledge and resources, policy advancement can painstakingly slow and limited as there are many potential stalling (veto) players (G. Tsebelis, 2010) or unexpectedly fast if proactive agents turn into policy entrepreneurs within inert bureaucratic structures (A. Lašas, 2010). As per Beckert (1999), Panagopoulos (2013), such proactive agents within organizations can influence institutional change through their strategic choices and actions. Therefore, because of the large number of intermediary "duals", which combine both principal and agent roles and the requirement for specialty knowledge, one needs to take into account the levels of entrepreneurship and anti-entrepreneurship of principals and agents. Noting these complications of actorship, we argue that there are three analytical dimensions for understanding the nature of EU actorness in civilian CSDP missions: EU's heterarchical structure, its long and winding list of PA roles and responsibilities, and the varying levels of actor motivation (interest in policy advancement or stalling).

Based on the discussion above, we put up two broad propositions for test. First, we argue that the concept of bureaucratic heterarchy is a superior conceptual frame in the analysis of the dynamics of technological uptake into civilian CSDP missions. Second, we assert the relevance of motivational factor in EU policy making. In particular, we insist on the important role of bureaucratic/policy entrepreneurs as the agents of change or stasis. Before considering evidence for such propositions, we turn to the discussion of methods used in this research endeavour.

3. Research methods

This section is subdivided into two parts. The first one overviews data collection approaches and methods, while the second deals with the selection of participants.

3.1 Data collection

The questionnaire development involved a broad literature review on policy dynamics and relevant theoretical issues with the focus on institutional complexity, actor roles, and decision-making asymmetries. Additionally, prior studies on EU external action specifics provided insight into key challenges and actors involved in technology transfer. The interview questions were designed to directly address the study's main objectives. To begin with, we sought to map out the primary actors and their roles. Questions regarding technological advisors, monitors, and mentors aimed to clarify the presence and function of actors within CSDP missions. Next, we pursued the issues surrounding institutional and operational opportunities and barriers. Queries on the challenges of seconding or contracting technological experts explore recruitment and expertise gaps in missions. Finally, we wanted to evaluate strategic integration and policy alignment vis-à-vis the 2023 CSDP Compact, i.e. the extent to which policy developments can be traced to practical implementation.

Data was collected using a semi-structured expert interview method, a qualitative research technique involving prepared, but at the same time open-ended conversations to comprehensively explore participants' experiences (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). This method can offer valuable insights from research participants, namely provide an opportunity to reveal more nuanced perspectives, experiences and perceptions of the respondents on the technology transfer into civilian CSDP missions and related challenges. The questions were intentionally designed in such a way that the subjects would not feel cornered to share information they do not want to share, but instead would be guided by questions as gateways for more in-depth discussion. Due to the potential sensitivity of the issues discussed, it was decided to anonymize interviewee identities so that the participants would speak more openly and would feel free to bring up more controversial topics. The coding scheme was developed to systematically analyze interview responses by categorizing data into key thematic areas, including governance structures, technological engagement, and agent behavior within the CSDP missions. Codes were assigned based on institutional roles (EEAS, CPCC, PCM, SecDefPol, MFAs, and MS). A university Research Ethics Committee approved the implementation of this scientific research by protocol No. M4-2024-19 of November 28, 2024.

3.2 Participants

For this study, 12 experts who met the selection criteria—being directly involved in the strategic planning and implementation of civilian CSDP missions—were identified and invited to participate through personal contacts, all of whom agreed to take part in the research. It included staff who are or recently were EEAS representatives, namely 4 from CPCC who directly oversee the running of missions (CPCC1, CPCC2, CPCC3, CPCC4), 1 from PCM (Peace, Crisis Management Directorate), who carry out strategic reviews of the Missions and lead the EU civilian CSDP missions, 1 from SecDefPol (SEC1), who coordinate and develop strategies and policies, 2 Heads of Civilian CSDP Missions who lead the missions (HOM1, HOM2), 2 Mission staff members (MS1, MS2) who are related to the technological domain, and 2 Ministry of Foreign Affairs representatives who have or had roles representing their countries in different relevant formats - Political, Security Committee, CIVCOM, etc (MFA1, MFA2).

The majority of interviews were conducted in Belgium at the European External Action Service (EEAS). Additional interviews with participants such as EU Mission members and representatives from Ministries of Foreign Affairs were conducted online, as these individuals were physically located in various regions across Africa, Asia, and Europe.

4. Results

The results section is structured on key themes covered during the interview process. Some subsections are more closely aligned with the exploration of substantive policy dynamics from agenda setting to its implementation, while others focus on key actors and their roles. In all cases, the underlying issue of the technological transfer in EU civilian CSDP missions acts as the thematic red thread weaving through the entire section.

4.1 Objectives and Strategies

We began many interviews focusing on the objectives of CSDP missions. Surprisingly, respondents highlighted a persistent lack of clarity in the objectives of civilian CSDP missions. For example, CPCC3 stated that "EU Member States don't have the capability or willingness for proper strategic dialogue," leaving the missions' purpose ambiguous. S/he added that EEAS focuses on short-term priorities dictated by Member States within a 6 to 18-month timeframe. CPCC4 echoed these points by referring to the absence of a shared vision.

Divergent priorities further complicate mission objectives in general. PCM1 noted that France and Belgium view civilian missions as stabilizing forces for Commission projects, while Sweden and Ireland prioritize long-term goals. HOM2 remarked that "the lack of a common vision impacts missions on the ground," citing Somalia's anti-piracy efforts as an example. SEC1 summarized the issue, asking whether these missions are "just a political signal or aimed at achieving substance."

Resource allocation was identified as a major challenge. CPCC1 criticized the establishment of three new missions without additional funds, stating that "funds were taken from other missions" and lamenting the Council's lack of financial responsibility. Despite this, missions continue to be launched without adequate budget adjustments and without sufficient regard to key priorities stated in the 2023 CSDP Compact.

4.2 Technology as a topic

Respondents agreed that technologies are engaged in CSDP missions only in a limited capacity. CPCC3 criticized the delayed technological commitments outlined in the CSDP Compact, stating: "In 2026, nobody will care about the compact because something new might be available in 2027. So it's too late." SEC1 acknowledged the lack of responsibility within CSDP structures, explaining that "strategy informs processes, but the solution provider is not in CSDP or SecDefPol, so we cannot write such a document." This view clashed with CPCC representatives, who insisted that SecDefPol should lead the technological strategy. CPCC1 noted that technological transfer for the host countries are often overlooked because "diplomats and MFA's representatives lack knowledge of the subject." SEC1 largely agreed this assessment arguing that technological decisions are often uninformed due to insufficient expertise.

4.3 Technological expertise

According to a number of interviewees, technological expertise within CSDP missions is constrained by systemic challenges. A significant issue is the lack of qualified experts provided by Member States. CPCC1 stated that "EU MS don't give good experts because they are better paid at home." CPCC2 largely agreed pointing out that vacancies for seconded positions often remain unfilled for over a year. SEC1 and CPCC4 also supported this position, noting the difficulty of finding individuals proficient in both policy and technology. On their part, HOM2, PCM, and SEC1 observed that secondment practices fail to attract skilled technological experts, yet Member States resist adopting contractor-based solutions.

Continuing with the topic, CPCC1, CPCC2 explained that host countries such as Ukraine and Moldova often have more advanced capacities in areas like cybersecurity, limiting the EU's added value. SEC1 and CPCC2 noted this imbalance as well, while CPCC1 reported internal resistance to tools like AI and OSINT. MS2 described staff reactions as dismissive, stating that "they looked at me as if I was trying to sell magic." In turn, CPCC2 highlighted how even basic topics like cybersecurity are misunderstood by decision makers, such as conflating cybersecurity with general internet activities.

The value of specialized teams of technological experts and visiting experts were mentioned by CPCC representatives. Also, HOM1 and HOM2 highlighted such visits as effective short-term solutions, particularly in Moldova, where deployments last three to six months. However, CPCC2 noted that such approaches fail to address long-term needs as strategic topics like cyber strategy development in Moldova require sustained presence, but are overlooked because of the lack of long-term planning.

4.4 Key Actors and Their Roles

4.4.1 EU Member States

Member States shape CSDP missions, though their levels of involvement and influence vary. CPCC4, CPCC3, MFA1, HOM1, and SEC1 agreed that political actors such as CIVCOM and PSC, who represent

Member States, often have "very limited understanding of technologies", hampering mission progress and the adoption of innovative solutions. As example of this, MS1 claimed to have presented an Austrian initiative to the member states and CPCC for "an algorithm to predict crisis developments based on an EU Horizon project". Even though it was EU project "ready to be deployed", it received no interest. Additionally, CPCC3 noted that pushing new initiatives requires "somebody with high enough status to put it on the agenda" to ensure Member State backing.

However, the backing can take place even outside EU institutional framework, but have impact on CSDP missions. For example, CPCC2 recalled a situation when the Netherlands had a bilateral agreement with Moldova, where €4 million were allocated to the Moldova mission's project cell funds directly for the support of reforms, while Moldova's internal mission budget was just €1.2 million for two years. CPCC2 explained that this lump sum "investment" enabled the Netherlands to "signal to Moldova" (show that Netherlands are important actors) and thus shape CSDP Mission's mandate.

In turn, CPCC4 pointed out disparities among Member States, using Austria as an example of setting a precedent by transferring funds directly to EU missions, but "still not being players (important actors) compared to others". MS1 emphasized that larger states like Germany, Poland, France, and Italy hold greater influence than countries like Austria. MFA1 supported this view, stating that PCM is politically driven by France, which focuses on "military planning" while seeking to "limit how much others know."

4.4.2 Individual initiative

In addition to the size of the state, the importance of personal drive was also emphasized by interviewees. The Austrian MFA representative was highlighted as an example of a proactive actor within the CSDP framework. CPCC1 described him/her as demonstrating that "the most effective way to bring something new" is through a proactive representative from a Member State, where substantive progress can be achieved during informal meetings in informal settings (like restaurants) after working hours .

MFA1 credited the same Austrian MFA representative for successfully introducing technological topics into the recent version of the civilian CSDP Compact through the CIVCOM delegate. This was achieved by gathering "input from the experts," presenting it logically, and ensuring no resistance from decision-makers. According to MFA1, this success reflected the broader reality that the "CSDP world is just a sum of ambitions of different actors." However, CPCC1 observed that while the representative promoted the topic effectively, Austria, the home country of the above-mentioned individual, ultimately did not second personnel to the initiative. As noted by CPCC1, "someone saying that it is needed is not enough; they should be ready to second".

CPCC3 noted the Austrian MFA representative's leadership in the "Innovation in Cluster 6" initiative, which focused on raising awareness and providing practical examples of technological applications for the EU member states. However, SEC1 remarked that Cluster 6 would likely "die of natural causes" because the mentioned Austrian MFA representative, who had driven the effort, left the position and no longer led the cluster.

4.4.3 EEAS

The EEAS and its internal Units (CPCC, PCM and SecDefPol) were consistently described as limited in their capacity to effectively operate in the context of CSDP missions. SEC1 stated that overall, the EEAS is "not a player". This view was supported by MFA1 and HOM2, who noted that "EU Member States do not allow them to address core issues, like looking into illegal migration from Somalia." MFA1 characterized the EEAS as "a service, not an institution," lacking financial resources and authority necessary to drive significant initiatives. SEC1 emphasized that the "biggest internal problem is the lack of knowledge on technologies," further limiting EEAS's ability to propose or implement innovative solutions. MFA1 also criticized the lack of internal coordination within the EEAS, pointing out that "PCM, CPCC, and

SecDefPol only realized at a conference how little they knew about each other's work on managing data."

Furthermore, MFA2 added that while CPCC has minimal power, it still resists external input from different entities outside EEAS, remarking that "nobody wants new players" when Member States bilaterally assist host countries. CPCC1 highlighted different leadership priorities within the EEAS, between managing directors for CPCC and SecDefPol. According to CPCC1, the director overseeing SecDefPol and PCM is "not interested in the civilian CSDP component," focusing instead on military missions.

Reflecting on technological uptake, CPCC1 and HOM1 noted that new ideas rarely emerge from within the CPCC, with strategic proposals primarily expected from PCM and SecDefPol. However, CPCC1 and PCM1 stated that this is unlikely due to a lack of expertise and understanding of CSDP dynamics. PCM1 explained that "if a technological expert were present in PCM, topics would be deployed quickly, but currently no one has the expertise to take it forward." MFA1 supported this view, stating that even when technological needs are identified in host countries, "nobody in EEAS understands technology, and there is no transfer of knowledge back to headquarters." CPCC1 added that even though strategic reviews within the PSC present opportunities to introduce new elements to mission mandates but noted that these proposals for new requirements "have to be fed earlier" as groundwork during the preparation phase.

4.4.4 European Commission

The European Commission's role as the financial driver of missions was underlined by MFA1, who described it as the "wallet" for CSDP operations. CPCC4 also emphasized the importance of the Commission's financial power, stating: "If you want to be an important player, you need money, and the Commission has the money". CPCC2 criticized the inflexibility of Commission instruments such as the Rapid Response Pillar (EU, 2025) noting that "funds are committed for years with limited flexibility". PCM1 pointed to the lack of clarity in responsibilities while providing support to host countries between the EEAS civilian Missions and the Commission projects, leading to inefficiencies in delivery.

4.4.5 Missions and Local Counterparts

Moving the focus to the recipient non-EU countries, CPCC1 and CPCC2 highlighted challenges in technological capacities, noting that e.g. in the Moldova mission, it is "difficult to get capacities in technological areas, such as in cyber". Thus the Missions often act as intermediaries, for example connecting EU agencies like Cert EU and ENISA with Moldova's government.

PCM1 pointed out that missions can propose changes to profiles or introduce technological roles to Member States, either directly or through CPCC. CPCC1 explained that there is a possibility to include staff with specific profiles to the civilian missions as long as the overall number of staff does not change, but the interest in limited: "when numbers don't change, Member States are not so interested." However, discussing the same issue, HOM1 provided a specific example when a new officer with the profile in digital transformation was attracted to the Ukrainian mission. However, HOM1 also noted a diminishing role for Heads of Mission, stating that CPCC has begun "micromanaging" and "censoring everything," limiting their direct access to political bodies like the PSC. Despite these challenges, HOM1 acknowledged that even though PCM are doing the mission reviews, missions still play a key role during the strategic review process by preparing host countries and introducing innovative ideas to be considered during the reviews.

Regarding the role of local counterparts, CPCC3 emphasized their importance in pushing the EU to include technologies on the "menu" (making it a support option). This observation was also supported by HOM2. In turn, CPCC3 noted that not missions are equal, but missions in Moldova and Ukraine are particularly effective at advocating for technological advancements, describing that their request for technological support has more chance of success due to the overall interest of the member states.

4.4.6 Entrepreneurship in action

We conclude the results section with the systemic description of two specific scenarios, revealed by the interviewees as discussed above (see Figure 2). They demonstrate how policy entrepreneurship works within the examined EU policy area and how difficult it is to make a substantive and lasting difference in technological transfer vis-a-vis recipient countries.

Scenario 1 (solid lines) contains five distinct action steps. To begin with, we see the national CIVCOM delegate from Austria, advocating for the inclusion of technological topics in strategic documentation (Step 1). The CIVCOM expert then advises the national PSC representative to advance the topic further (Step 2). Although the PSC representative lacks technological expertise, s/he holds a key political role and directs the SecDefPol unit of EEAS to take action (Step 3). Consequently, SecDefPol incorporates the technological priorities into the draft of the Civilian CSDP Compact 2023, which is then submitted to the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) for approval (Step 4). In turn, the FAC endorses the document, as it aligns with the recommendations of CIVCOM and PSC (Step 5). However, without a concrete plan for implementation from the MFAs, the commitment remains on paper only, demonstrating that mere acknowledgment of the need is insufficient without tangible secondment efforts. As a result, the high-level policy fails to translate into actionable measures within the EEAS and CSDP missions on the ground.

Scenario 2 (dotted lines) follows a very different route, circumventing all of the EU external action-related bureaucracy. A member state (Netherlands) bypasses the traditional EU decision-making structures by providing financial resources directly to a recipient country (Moldova), which are then allocated for distribution within the CSDP Moldova Mission (Step 1). This amount is nearly three times the mission's budget and thus ends up significantly shaping its activities. As the host country works closely with the CSDP Mission, this substantial funding begins to influence the mission's priorities and scope over time (Step 2). The impact becomes evident when both the CSDP Mission and the host country reports their progress to the EEAS during the Mission's Strategic Review process and through daily operations (Step 3).

Together with other interview data, these two scenarios provide an impulse to reconceptualize the dynamics of EU external action within CSDP missions. We turn to this reconceptualization in the next section.

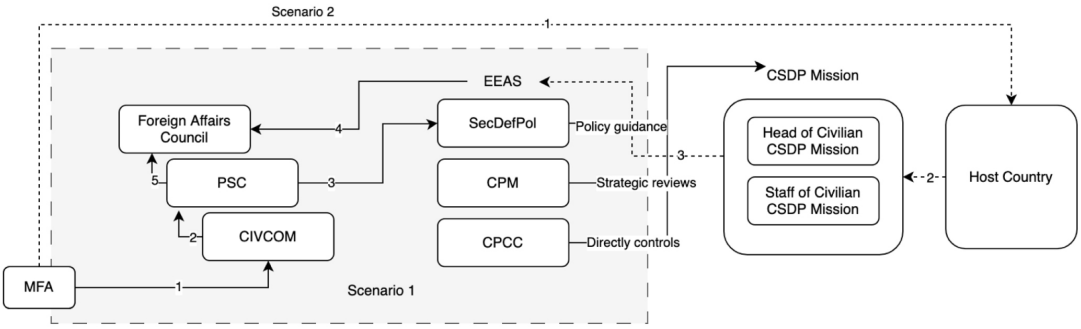

Figure 2. *Two scenarios of policy entrepreneurship in CSDP missions (created by author)*

5. Discussion

The results discussed above points us in two directions. First, we need to reconsider the actual nature of EU decision-making vis-à-vis its CSDP missions. A related second, it is necessary to evaluate the role of individual agents within the EU bureaucratic structure. These two topics are explored in greater detail next.

5.1 Bureaucratic heterarchy

The findings provide some support to proposition that EU governance in civilian CSDP missions is best understood as a bureaucratic heterarchy rather than a multi-level-based governance framework. Here, the traditional dispersion of authority across various decision-making levels is challenged with overlapping roles among institutions such as the EEAS (PCM, SecDefPol, CPCC) and the European Commission. The observed inequalities among Member States also challenge clear hierarchies. The European Commission seems to act as both agent and principal, wielding significant influence as the financial driver of missions, while PSC and CIVCOM, intermediaries between principals and agents, often lack the technical expertise to guide initiatives. Decision-making relies on informal mechanisms, exemplified by the Austrian MFA representative, who advanced technological priorities through personal advocacy and informal channels talking to diplomats in restaurants. Divergent Member State priorities further complicate governance and exemplifies the fragmentation of EU actorness. For instance, France and Belgium focus on short-term stabilization, while Sweden and Ireland seem to prioritize long-term goals. States like the Netherlands use bilateral agreements, such as with Moldova, to directly shape mission mandates, highlighting the unevenness of EU agenda setting and implementation process. This also demonstrates ongoing competition in shaping policies illustrating the non-hierarchical and often negotiated nature of governance within the EU. In addition, challenges of accountability and transparency persist with information asymmetry and fragmentation within EEAS entities stalling technological initiatives, limiting coordination, and signaling the presence of the more flexible heterarchical governance model. This fluid system, while complex and sometimes unpredictable, provides opportunities for agents like civilian CSDP missions to drive (or stall) change, if key stakeholders and financial resources are aligned.

5.2 Proactive vs. reactive

The interview data highlights the driving role of proactive agents (entrepreneurs) in introducing policy innovations and reactionary agents (anti-entrepreneurs) in hindering progress. Though limited in scope, this finding seems to align with PA Theory. The case of the Austrian MFA representative or anti-entrepreneurship by skeptical member states or EEAS bureaucrats can clearly impact the success of civilian CSDP missions. Proactive agents can drive innovation and align stakeholders, while reactionary agents have opportunities to hinder progress through passivity or resistance to change. The Austrian MFA representative exemplified the influence of proactive engagement, successfully integrating technological priorities into the CSDP Compact and leading initiatives like Innovation Cluster 6. Proactive agents also include the Heads of Missions, who have the ability to "calibrate" staff job descriptions to introduce innovation discreetly or prepare host countries for strategic review processes, thereby increasing the likelihood of new topics being incorporated into the subsequent EU support "menu".

In contrast, reactionary sceptical agents, particularly within EEAS, were noted for their lack of expertise and resistance to innovation as the potential of technological tools was not properly understood by them or ignored due to the "military planning" mindset and/or different agenda of PCM drivers. Furthermore, timely support was lacking due to the lack of clarity about bureaucratic mandates and responsibilities.

Once Member State representatives with their own short-term goals are added into the picture, the long-term strategy of the CSDP missions gets significantly obscured and increasingly reminds of the proposed framework of bureaucratic heterarchy.

Systemic barriers, including institutional resistance, resource constraints, and fragmented coordination, further limit opportunities for policy entrepreneurship and enhance opportunities for anti-entrepreneurship. Despite these challenges, some proactive agents demonstrated their ability to navigate institutional constraints, showing that success depends not only on assigning roles but also on the quality and initiative of the agents involved. Empowering skilled proactive agents is essential for advancing mission objectives and overcoming bureaucratic inertia.

6. Conclusions

This study focused on assessing to what extent current EU organizational structures, its operational rules and expertise are able to take up technological priorities and what that tells us about the nature of EU actorness. The findings demonstrate that the EU governance, particularly in the context civilian CSDP missions is more fluid, flat and opportunistic rather than structured, hierarchical and consistently multi-layered. Our study finds that the practical implementation of policies is shaped less by formal governance levels and more by competing priorities and resource constraints. Informal mechanisms and individual actors can play critical roles in advancing (or stalling) initiatives.

From a PA theory perspective, the research highlights significant issues related to delegation, accountability, and agency autonomy. The classic PA assumption of principals controlling agents through delegation mechanisms is challenged in the civilian CSDP framework, where intermediary actors—such as PSC, CIVCOM, EEAS, and the European Commission—simultaneously act as both principals and agents. The study illustrates that expertise gaps and divergent priorities among Member States create a system where agents often operate with significant discretion, shaping policy implementation. Additionally, the study finds that bureaucratic entrepreneurs can play a pivotal role in advancing technological adoption, while reactionary anti-entrepreneurs act as gatekeepers, stalling progress due to bureaucratic inertia, limited expertise or competing policy objectives.

In terms of policy recommendations, this research suggests that the effectiveness of technological transfer in civilian CSDP missions is closely linked to the ability to strengthen coordination mechanisms within all actors as well as to enhance technological expertise within decision-making bodies. Finally, recognizing and supporting the role of bureaucratic entrepreneurs could improve the agility and responsiveness of EU governance.

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Paulius Klikūnas

TECHNOLOGIJŲ PERDAVIMAS ES CIVILINĖSE MISIJOSE: BIUROKRATINĖ HETERARCHIJA IR Į AGENTUS ORIENTUOTOS GALIMYBĖS

Anotacija. *Šiame tyrime nagrinėjamas naujųjų technologijų integravimas į ES civilines bendrosios saugumo ir gynybos politikos (BSGP) misijas. Naudojant daugiapakopio valdymo ir užsakovo, ir agento teorijas kaip pradinius konceptualius rėmus. Tyrime nagrinėjamas ES valdymo sudėtingumas, pavyzdžiui, biurokratinė heterarchija ir agentų valdomų galimybių dinamika. Remiantis interviu su Europos išorės veiksmų tarnybos (EIVT) darbuotojais, ES misijų darbuotojais ir ES užsienio reikalų ministerijos atstovais, išvadose atskleidžiamos sisteminės kliūtys, tokios kaip biurokratinis netolygumas, informacijos asimetrija ir kompetencijos spragos, kurios trukdo veiksmingai perduoti technologijas priimančiosioms šalims. Nepaisant strateginių sistemų, tokių kaip Civilinės BSGP susitarimas, technologijų perdavimas tebėra labai netolygus ir fragmentiškas, priklausantis nuo aktyvių subjektų, veikiančių pagal neformalius mechanizmus. Tyrime daroma išvada, kad iniciatyvių subjektų įgalinimas gali padėti paspartinti technologinę integraciją ir padidinti civilinių BSGP misijų operatyvinį poveikį, kad jie galėtų geriau remti priimančiąsias šalis.*

Paulius Klikūnas, PhD student at Kaunas University of Technology
E-mail: Paulius.klikunas@ktu.lt

Paulius Klikūnas, Kauno technologijos universiteto doktorantas
El. Paštas : Paulius.klikunas@ktu.lt