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**European Strategic Culture revisited:
The Ends and Means
of a Militarised
European Union**



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abstract

This study addresses whether the EU, as an emerging strategic actor, (1) has developed a capacity to formulate common security interests (ends), and (2) can generate the relevant capabilities (means) which it has the resolve to use to defend these common interests. The study employs the concept of strategic culture as a framework for strategic analysis in an attempt to capture the intergovernmental, institutional, formal and informal mechanisms that underpin the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). It first shows how the EU, as a result of an institutionalisation process, has moved from a purely intergovernmental system towards a system of governance in security and defence, then briefly revisits the field of strategic culture studies to argue that strategic culture should be seen as essentially a product of strategic discourse and practice. These two factors are, in turn, traced along four strategic dimensions—the social, the logistical, the technological and the operational—to provide a comprehensive overview of the ESDP. The article concludes that the emergence of a European strategic culture, as an ongoing process, has allowed the EU to leapfrog many of the obstacles inherent to a transnational security polity. The most significant factor in this process has been the establishment of a central institutional capacity, which in key areas has facilitated the emergence of the EU as a strategic actor.

KEYWORDS: EU, strategic culture, actor, governance, security

The Ends and Means of a Militarised European Union

Introduction

50 years after the Treaty of Rome set out a framework for lasting peace through integration on a continent that had fostered two devastating wars in less than 30 years, the EU has developed into a regional institution with military ambitions that extend well beyond the traditional boundaries of Europe. Since the birth of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) in St-Malo in 1998, the Union has carried out increasingly more demanding military operations and has endorsed the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS), which seeks to marry the EU's traditional foreign policy instruments with military force within a "strategic culture that fosters early, rapid and when necessary, robust intervention".¹ With this new dimension comes also a need for a different analytical approach than ones that look upon the EU from a purely integrationist point of view. To study military force in its proper context, we must do so within the framework of a strategic analysis. Accordingly, this study addresses whether the EU, as an emerging *strategic actor*, on the one hand, (1) has developed a capacity to formulate common security interests (ends), and on the other, (2) may generate relevant capabilities (means), which it has the resolve to use to defend these common interests.² The challenge, however, is that the ESDP is essentially an intergovernmental product since it relies on the political will of the member states and depends on capabilities which are state-owned. Yet it relies more and more on a central institutional apparatus,

1 Javier Solana, "A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy" document endorsed by the European Council, Brussels, 11–12 December 2003, p. 11.

2 This definition of a strategic actor reflects the central *ends-means* instrumentality of *strategy* (I discuss this below), and corresponds to Gunnar Sjöstedt's general definition of an *international actor* as one that has the capacity for goal-oriented behaviour towards other international actors. Gunnar Sjöstedt, *The External Role of the European Community* (London: Saxon House, 1977).

which among other tasks coordinates an increasing flow of information between Brussels and the member state capitals, offers independent analyses and policy options, and tends to develop its own *esprit de corps*. These are informal, often non-treaty based processes that need to be accommodated in a strategic analysis of the EU.

This is where the notion of a European *strategic culture* comes in. Since the concept of strategic culture essentially implies a holistic understanding of a strategic actor, choosing this as a framework for strategic analysis will allow for an assessment of the impact of non-material variables, such as norms and identity, upon strategic processes; it will allow the researcher to take both formal and informal cooperation into account; and, most importantly, it caters to the need for a multi-level analysis of a complex international entity such as the EU. However, some eyebrows were no doubt raised in the strategic studies community when the issue of a European strategic culture was first broached. Strategic cultures are traditionally something for states, preferably big ones, to have; and the persistence of diverse national strategic cultures is precisely why the idea of a European strategic culture constitutes to some minds something of a contradiction in terms.³ Yet this article suggests that it is not the idea of a European strategic culture in itself that it is untenable, but a notion of such based solely on convergence between national strategic cultures. Any successful conceptualisation of European strategic culture will have to capture both the intergovernmental and the institutional dynamics that underpin the ESDP.

Accordingly, the first step in this article is to show that the ESDP has been subject to a process of institutionalisation; hence, that the notion of the EU as the mere sum-total of its member states' security interests or capabilities paints a misleading picture of the EU as a strategic actor. Having established the need for a holistic framework for strategic analysis, this article briefly revisits how the field of strategic culture studies has evolved. In line with recent studies that have sought to bring strategic culture studies up to speed by imbuing them with a contemporary understanding of culture, we then move on, carrying forward a notion of strategic culture as essentially a product of strategic *discourse*

3 See Sten Rynning, "The European Union: Towards a Strategic Culture?" *Security Dialogue*, vol. 34, no. 4 (2003): 479–96; and Adrian Hyde Price, "European Security, Strategic Culture and the Use of Force", *European Security*, vol. 13, no. 4 (2004): 323–43. There is an ongoing debate among policymakers and academics on whether the EU has developed or is able to develop a strategic culture. See Paul Cornish and Geoffrey Edwards, "Beyond the EU/NATO Dichotomy: the Beginnings of a European Strategic Culture", *International Affairs*, vol. 77, no. 3 (2001): 587–603; Christoph Meyer, "Theorising European Strategic Culture. Between Convergence and the Persistence of National Diversity", Centre for European Policy Studies: CEPS Working Document no. 204 (2004); Janne Haaland Matlary, "When Soft Power Turns Hard: Is an EU Strategic Culture Possible?" *Security Dialogue*, vol. 37, no. 1 (2006): 105–21; and the special issue of the *Oxford Journal on Good Governance*, vol. 2 (2004).

and *practice*. Changes in these two factors are in the rest of the article traced along four dimensions, taking as a point of departure Sir Michael Howard's approach to strategy.⁴ His clear and very comprehensive approach is preferred to, for example, Colin Gray's unnecessary complicated 16 dimensions of strategy.⁵

First, as part of the *social* dimension, interest formation, or the way that policy is shaped under the ESDP is addressed, focusing specifically on institutional developments since the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty and the extent to which individual agents of power are able to affect this process. The question is whether new institutional structures and the proliferation of EU specialist diplomats, such as the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (HR-CFSP) and his growing team of advisors and special representatives, have eased the constraints exerted on EU decision-making by its 27 veto-wielding member states, and ultimately affected the EU's capacity to conduct a coherent, consistent and efficient security policy. We see that from a strategic culture point of view, one may, for example, treat the landmark ESS as a central source of security discourse. Perhaps more importantly, however, the process by which this document came about, and in which Javier Solana and his team played a significant role, may also indicate a change of practice away from traditional intergovernmental procedures.

Moving on to the second dimension, the *logistical* side of strategy is addressed. These are the institutional procedures and mechanisms that connect security interests with actual capabilities, typically those pertaining to strategic and operational planning, civil-military coordination, and intelligence gathering and processing. Also here, an understanding of what goes on at the institutional level, and particularly of the interface between the member states and Brussels, is of great importance to how one perceives the EU as a strategic actor. For example, a change of practice towards what has been referred to as an emerging EU security culture seems to have laid a better basis for early warning and threat identification by facilitating the flow of classified information between Brussels and member states.

The third dimension, often referred to as the technological dimension, covers European armaments practices and the extent to which there has been a change in the way military *capabilities* are generated in Europe. Contemporary trends towards role specialisation, the integration of forces into transnational corps and cooperation in procurement and production, suggest a change towards greater divergence in nation-

4 Michael Howard, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy", in his *The Causes of Wars* (London: Temple Smith, 1983), p. 101–115.

5 Colin Gray, *Modern Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

al armaments practices and force structures. Although occurring at the national level, these changes have arguably been conditioned by NATO and increasingly so the EU, which has supplied the member states with a normative arena in which more cooperative practices have evolved. A key feature of such a perceived order is that it offers incentives for some states, such as Britain, France and Germany, to change in order to lead, while also rewarding smaller states for developing sought-after niche capabilities.

Finally, revisiting the operations that have been carried out under the ESDP so far, as part of the operational dimension, will shed some light on whether concrete *operational* experience can be transformed into a kind of strategic culture. In fact, operational experience seems to have had an impact on the EU in two ways. First, a steadily expanding list of completed missions has fed into an evolving success discourse, and thus enhanced the EU's confidence to pursue its security and defence policy. Second, challenges posed in theatre seem to have worked as incentives to change existing practices or formalise ad hoc arrangements, as seen for example in the formal establishment of several Lead Nation operational headquarters for crisis management operations. Hence, operational experience would seem to have a decisive impact on the emergence of a European strategic culture. Before moving on to the analysis, however, we need to establish what kind of actor the EU is and how we intend to study it.

The EU and the Institutionalisation of the ESDP

In her account of the pre-history of the ESS, Alison Bayles argues that external factors pushing for a heavier security role for the EU

(...) were coupled with internal EU dynamics that pushed in the direction of a steady increase in ambition and the enhanced institutionalization (or at least coordination) of different dimensions of governance, including some that the founding fathers had never dreamed of bringing into the Community process.⁶

On a number of counts, as this article will show, the institutionalisation of the ESDP has taken the EU beyond a mere framework for the coordination of security policies and joint military action. This sets it apart from an organisation such as NATO. Indeed, one can expect that as a

6 Alyson Bayles, "The European Security Strategy. An Evolutionary History", *SIPRI Policy Paper*, no. 10, February (2005): 4.

certain level of institutionalisation is reached, the institution itself gains an increasingly independent and autonomous role, so that a system of multi-level governance perhaps becomes a more appropriate way to describe how policy-making actually takes place.

In a recent book, Michael E. Smith draws on so-called “new institutionalism” literature to show how the case of EU foreign policy cooperation “demonstrates that institutions can be designed and developed to encourage international cooperation in ways that go beyond transaction-costs approaches, or beyond bargaining”.⁷ International institutions, he argues, can develop “meaningful autonomy, by supplying new ideas and political leadership to help states reach agreement on potentially contentious issues”.⁸ As cooperation expands, institutions tend to develop more or less independent secretariats and bureaucratic structures, which are inhabited by individuals who over time develop an allegiance to the cause, offer specialised information and develop their own ideas, while establishing various channels through which they are able to influence policy-making. Such “moral entrepreneurs” or local agents of change, as Martha Finnemore has argued, are found in both organisations and the people who inhabit them. These are committed individuals who find themselves in a situation in which they are able to project their beliefs onto larger normative structures.⁹ As a result of this gradual process of institutionalisation, Smith argues, the EU has moved towards a system of governance in foreign policy, and the final step was achieved with the Treaty of the European Union and establishing the CFSP, since this prepared the Union for

(...) setting goals, devising specific policies (or norms) to reach them, implementing such policies, providing the necessary resources to carry out the policies, and establishing some form of policy assessment or oversight to ensure that goals are being met and actors are fulfilling their obligations.¹⁰

7 Michael E. Smith, *Europe's Foreign and Security Policy. The Institutionalization of Cooperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 12.

8 Ibid., p. 24.

9 Martha, Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 37.

10 Smith, *Europe's Foreign and Security Policy*, pp. 38–49. These new governance perspectives on the ESDP also coincide with the growing general literature on “security governance”. Elke Krahmman, for example, contends that political control of the use of force has moved from “government to governance”, i.e. that such decisions today are made by a multitude of actors, also non-state ones, with the effect that state control over the use of force has been weakened. Elke Krahmman, “Conceptualising Security and Governance”, *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 38, no. 1 (2003): 5–26.

There is a strong basis for arguing, therefore, that a strategic analysis of the EU must move beyond the notion of the Union as merely the sum-total of its member states' security interests or capabilities. I certainly would not claim that certain member states have not played a decisive role in episodes that, either in a positive or negative direction, have shaped the ESDP. In addition to this, however, EU institutions are conceived to play an important role as facilitators and agenda setters or norm producers, a role through which they have the capacity to affect member state policies and identities. However, when relating ideational factors such as culture, norms and identity to a framework for strategic analysis, it is essential this framework be able to accommodate such variables. The natural thing to do would be to look at existing strategic literature, from which the concept of *strategic culture* emerges as an appropriate starting point. We shall move on, therefore, to revisit briefly how the concept has evolved from a tool to explain state behaviour towards its current reappraisal in the European and transatlantic security debates.

Revisiting Strategic Culture – Towards a Framework for Strategic Analysis

The term *strategic culture* was first coined by Jack Snyder in a 1977 RAND Corporation research report.¹¹ Starting from a criticism of the rational actor models of the time, he questioned the predominant assumption that the Soviet Union would share the nuclear strategic thinking of the USA. Rather, Snyder argued, “it is useful to look at the Soviet approach to strategic thinking as a unique ‘strategic culture’”.¹² Strategic cultures are the product of each state's unique historical experience, which is reaffirmed and sustained as new generations of policy-makers are socialised into a particular way of thinking. Similar ideas were supported by a number of scholars in the late 1970s and early 1980s, who agreed that variables, such as historical experience, political culture and geography, do act as constraints on strategic thinking.¹³ Keeping in mind the political climate at the time, however, it seems clear, as Snyder sums it up, “that some of the early American literature on strategic culture exaggerated past US-Soviet differences, and exag-

11 Jack Snyder, “The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations”, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, R-2154-AF (1977).

12 Ibid., p. 4.

13 See e.g. Colin Gray, “National Styles in Strategy: The American Example”, *International Security*, vol. 6, no. 2 (1981): 21–47; Carnes Lord, “American Strategic Culture”, *Comparative Strategy*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1985): 269–93; or Richard Pipes, “Why the Soviet Union Thinks It Could Fight and Win a Nuclear War”, *Commentary*, no. 1 (1977): 21–34.

gerated the likelihood that such differences would persist in the future".¹⁴

Similar criticisms have been made in the contemporary transatlantic security debate. Especially since the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the subsequent US war on terror, practitioners and academics have alluded to growing differences in the way the security environment is perceived on either side of the Atlantic.¹⁵ The resulting stereotyping of Europe as weak and the USA as strong has, however, helped obscure questions, such as whether comparisons between two such vastly different entities are even feasible, whether US standards represent sensible yardsticks against which to measure European power, or whether transatlantic differences are rooted simply in material preconditions or in more fundamental differences of identity or culture. As a timely reminder, therefore, one should bear in mind that the concept of strategic culture, despite some of its later uses, was originally intended as a tool to explain the persistence of the way that a given strategic community thinks and acts: it was not intended as a comparative tool.

As a reaction to the inherent danger of ending up with "caricatures of culture", a second generation of strategic culture scholars, working in the late 1980s, was more sceptical to the feasibility of studying culture.¹⁶ Writing in a postmodernist/critical tradition, these scholars focused on the role of discourse in national strategies, and observed the differences between what policymakers say and what they do.¹⁷ Indeed, strategic culture was not expected to have much effect on behaviour. Similar sentiments are mirrored in the recent debate about a European strategic culture; some scholars remain sceptical of the actual impact of an EU strategic culture, since it is deemed to be reflected mostly in rhetoric.¹⁸ Also, whereas some tend to downplay the importance of "symbolic victories" such as the 2001 Laeken Council, at which the ESDP was declared operational,¹⁹ others conclude more favourably.²⁰ The point is that there might be a considerable gap between the usually

14 Jack Snyder, "The Concept of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor" in *Strategic Power USA/USSR*, ed. Carl G. Jacobsen (London: Basingstoke, 1990), p. 3.

15 The most notorious account of these differences is offered in Robert Kagan, "Power and Weakness – Why the United States and Europe See the World Differently", *Policy Review*, June/July, no. 113 (2002). The debate has also been running hot outside academic circles via numerous articles and commentaries in outlets such as *Le Monde* and *New York Times*.

16 The "generation" typology is borrowed from a seminal article by Alistair Iain Johnston, who presents the field of strategic culture studies as having evolved in three distinct generations. Alistair Iain Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture", *International Security*, vol. 19, no. 4 (1995). Johnston's own contribution to the field has, however, been heavily criticised. See below.

17 See Bradley S. Klein, "Hegemony and Strategic Culture: American Power Projection and Alliance Defence Politics", *Review of International Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1988); and David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).

18 See e.g. Rynning, "The European Union: Towards a Strategic Culture?"

up-beat tone of EU declarations and actual improvements, material or otherwise, in strategic capacity.²¹ We see, therefore, that to establish a researchable concept of strategic culture, one should avoid relying on variables that may leave a misleading impression of a given strategic culture: one should instead account for both the role of discourse and practice in a strategic community. Finally, we must decide how we expect culture to relate to change, or a lack thereof, in strategic behaviour.

With regard to change, a third generation of strategic culture studies was marked by a debate between those who wanted to push strategic culture studies in a neo-positivist scientific direction and those who argued for a holistic understanding of the concept. The former camp set out to produce a falsifiable theory of culture, which could be pitted against other alternative explanations.²² Iain Alastair Johnston, who fathered the generation approach to the evolution of strategic culture studies, defined strategic culture as the “limited, ranked set of strategic preference that is consistent across the objects of analysis and persistent across time”.²³ If rankings are not consistent, then a strategic culture cannot be said to exist at that certain time. Johnston’s attempt to produce a methodologically rigorous definition of strategic culture was met with heavy criticism, however, and resulted in a lengthy discussion between Johnston and Colin Gray, who argued that strategic behaviour must irrevocably be part of strategic culture, since culture represents the context for *all* human behaviour.²⁴

However, rather than discarding strategic culture altogether as too unwieldy a concept on which to base strategic research, one might also conclude that it is the option of approaching strategic culture from within a traditional, neo-positivist epistemology that is not particularly useful. Alternatively, rather than treating strategic culture as an independent variable that may or may not cause changes in strategic behaviour, one may approach strategic culture from within an interpretivist epistemology, and accept that culture, as a constitutive concept, consists of a number of interrelated factors that merely make some actions

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- 19 See Simon Duke, “CESDP and the EU Response to 11 September: Identifying the Weakest Link”, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, vol. 7, no. 2 (2002): 153–69; and Julian Lindley-French, “In the Shade of Locarno: Why European Defence Is Failing”, *International Affairs*, vol. 78, no. 4 (2002): 789–812.
 - 20 See Charles Cogan, *The Third Option: The Emancipation of European Defense, 1989–2000* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001); Gilles Andréani et al., *Europe’s Military Revolution* (London: Centre for European Reform, 2001); and Jolyon Howorth, “The CESDP and the Forging of a European Security Culture?” *Politique Européenne*, no. 8 (2002).
 - 21 Christopher Hill has referred to this as a capability-expectations gap. See Hill, “The Capability-Expectations Gap, or Conceptualising Europe’s International Role.” *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 31, no. 3 (1993): 305–28.
 - 22 See, for example, Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine Between the Wars* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997); and Jeffrey Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint During World War II* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995).
 - 23 Johnston, “Thinking About Strategic Culture”: 48.

possible and others not.²⁵ Insofar as we accept that ideas, values, norms, identity, behaviour *et cetera*, all have a bearing on a strategic community, we should also accept that not all of these factors are suitable for scientific research. Kerry Longhurst, for example, distinguishes between the unobservable and observable components of strategic culture:

The “unobservable” aspects of strategic culture are the core values that form the “foundational elements” of the strategic culture, giving it its basal quality and characteristics. (...) Stemming from this core are the actual observable manifestations of the strategic culture – “the self-regulating policies and practices” which give active meaning to the foundational elements by relating and promoting them to the external environment.²⁶

Whereas “foundational elements” may represent an important component of strategic culture, we see that its unobservable nature make it prone to the same kind of over-determinism with which earlier strategic culture studies have been charged. Ole Waever shares similar concerns in his writings on security communities, in which he argues that the origins of peaceful Europe seem terribly over-determined, and that “thus, a study of ‘security communities’ should not focus on origins but try to grasp the clashing social forces that uphold and undermine ‘expectations of non-war’”.²⁷ Such clashing social forces are, in turn, revealed in what Longhurst refers to as observable “policies” and “practices”.²⁸

This insight is exploited in full by Iver Neumann and Henrikki Heikka, who in an article on Nordic strategic cultures adopt a concept of culture as a product of the dynamic interplay between *discourse* and *practice*.²⁹ By doing so, they bring strategic studies up to speed by imbuing it with a contemporary understanding of culture. One should note, however, that adopting the term “discourse” here does not imply

24 See Colin Gray, “Strategic Culture as Context: the First Generation of Theory Strikes Back”, *Review of International Studies*, no. 25 (1999): 49–69, and Johnston and Gray’s subsequent replies and replies to replies.

25 An interpretivist epistemology is consistent with the objective of *understanding* rather than the traditional neo-positivist aim of *explaining*, to use Martin Hollis and Steve Smith’s words from their *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). Also, the notion of culture as a constitutive concept, which can be studied by tracing social processes and structures, follows the line of established norms for scientific research. See, for example, Alexander Wendt, “On Constitution and Causation in International Relations”, *Review of International Relations*, no. 24, special issue (1998): 101–17.

26 Kerry Longhurst, “Strategic Culture” in *Military Sociology. The Richness of a Discipline*, eds Gerhard Kümmel and Andreas D. Prüfert (Baden Baden: Nomos, 2000), p. 305.

27 Ole Waever, “Insecurity, Security and Asecurity in the West European Non-War Community”, in *Security Communities*, eds Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 71 and 75.

having chosen a specific theory or method, but refers simply to its standard meaning, i.e. a system for the formation of statements. Nonetheless, discourse is considered to represent something more than empty words; it may to a certain degree be used instrumentally in the sense that repeating a statement may often enhance a sense of common identity or cause.³⁰ The term “practice”, in turn, refers to socially recognised forms of activity, whether these be implicit or explicit, which set it apart, for example, from *behaviour* in general.³¹ Finally, the relationship between discourse and practice is dynamic in the sense that the two are subject to a process of mutual constitution:

[D]iscourse is being, while practice is the becoming from which discourses result and to which they eventually succumb. Conversely, discourses are the precarious fixities that precipitate from human practice and from which further practice arises.³²

Also, such a concept of culture is dynamic in the sense that it opens for “an understanding of change rather than stasis as the ‘normal’ state of affairs”.³³ Indeed, the massive and rapid changes to the post-Cold War security environment have highlighted, as Colin Gray remarks, a central feature of strategic culture which is as “an expression of generally successful adaptation to challenge”.³⁴ Hence, the emergence of a European strategic culture would be reflected in changes in strategic discourse and practice within the EU context. The final step before arriving at a framework for strategic analysis, therefore, is to decide what is, indeed, considered to be strategic in the present complex security environment.

The most cited definition of strategy, although appearing in a number of translations, is the one offered by Carl von Clausewitz: “The

28 “Policies” and “practices” can be classified as what Michael Mann refers to as “harder facts” in his “Authoritarian and Liberal Militarism: A Contribution from Comparative and Historical Sociology”, in *International Theory: Post-Positivism and Beyond*, eds Smith, Booth, and Zaleski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 222.

29 Iver B. Neumann and Henrikki Heikka, “Grand Strategy, Strategic Culture, Practice. The Social Roots of Nordic Defence”, *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 40, no. 1 (2005): 5–23. They, in turn, adopt Ann Swidler’s concept of culture. See her “What Anchors Cultural Practices”, in *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, eds Theodore M. Schatzki, Karin Knorr Cetina and Eike von Savigny (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 74–92, p. 76.

30 See, for example, Thomas Risse’s “Let’s Argue! Communicative Action in World Politics”, *International Organization* vol. 54, no. 1 (2000): 71–82; or Frank Schimelfenning, “The Double Puzzle of EU Enlargement. Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Decision to Expand to the East”, *ARENA Centre for European Studies Working Paper*, no. 15 (1999).

31 See Theodore Schatzki, “Practice Mind-Ed Orders”, in *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*, eds Theodore M. Schatzki, Karin Knorr Cetina, and Eike von Savigny, (London: Routledge, 2001): 42–55.

use of engagements for the object of the war”.³⁵ Initially, this definition may appear outdated and too narrow for the kind of challenges that a contemporary security environment poses. Colin Gray argues, however, that Clausewitz’s original definition easily lends itself to “expansion of domain so as to encompass policy instruments other than the military”.³⁶ He goes on to argue that

[t]he cardinal virtue of the Clausewitzian definition of strategy is that it separates those things that must be separated. Anyone who reads, understands and accepts the Clausewitzian definition will never be confused about what is strategic and what is not. (...) Armed forces in action, indeed any instrument of power in action, is the realm of tactics. Strategy, in contrast, seeks to direct and relate the use of those instruments to policy goals. Clausewitz, therefore, is crystal-clear in distinguishing between action and effect and between instrument and objective.³⁷

The essence of strategy, therefore, boils down to a question of the extent to which any instruments of power – military or non-military – further a strategic actor’s perceived interests. Military power is not strategic *per se*. It is the linking of military power to political purpose that is strategic. Hence, Europe’s focus on *soft power* and non-military capabilities is not necessarily less strategic than the manifestly more militaristic approach demonstrated, for example, by the USA. What matters in strategic terms is whether the EU, as a *strategic actor*, (1) has a capacity to formulate common security interests (ends), and (2) may generate relevant capabilities (means), which it has the resolve to use to defend these common interests.³⁸ These general criteria rely, in turn, on a number of processes, some of which have been neglected as various factors, such as technology, warfare and international relations in general, have changed over the years. Sir Michael Howard offers a refreshingly clear overview of these processes in his essay *The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy*.³⁹

32 Ibid.

33 Neumann and Heikka, “Grand Strategy, Strategic Culture, Practice. The Social Roots of Nordic Defence”: 119.

34 Gray, “Strategic Culture as Context”: 65.

35 Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (1832; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 128.

36 Colin Gray, *Modern Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 17.

37 Ibid. Basil Liddell-Hart also claims that Clausewitz has been consistently misinterpreted as encouraging the subordination of politics to the object of war. Strategy should be interpreted rather as “the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfil the ends of policy”. Basil Liddell-Hart, *Strategy: the Indirect Approach* (London: Faber, 1967), p. 335.

38 See note no. 2.

The first of his four dimensions looks into how people and groups interact, thus giving strategy a social underpinning. The second dimension covers the logistical processes that support and give active meaning to strategy. The third deals with technology, comparative advantage and actual capabilities and the way they relate to challenges posed by a constantly changing security environment. Finally, the fourth dimension deals with actual operations and how the experience from these reflects back on the other dimensions. Taken together, these four dimensions ensure not only a clear, but also a very comprehensive treatment of the essential elements of strategy. Accordingly, the rest of the article traces the emergence of a European strategic culture along these four dimensions, starting with the social.

Strategic Decision-Making in a Multi-Level Actor

Clausewitz described war as “a remarkable trinity” composed of its political objective, its operational instruments, and of the popular passions, the social forces it expressed. Howard refers to this last component as the *social* dimension of strategy, or the attitude of the people on whose commitment the other dimensions of strategy ultimately depend.⁴⁰ Traditionally, strategy has been an elite enterprise, the responsibility of a privileged group of generals and high-level policymakers within the state. During the Cold War, their authority was rarely questioned, and the imminent nature of a single, existential threat produced a high level of consensus behind national security and defence policies. Only during the rare cases of outright war, such as in Vietnam, did the masses stir and challenge the authority of their political elites. Taking a more recent example, the popular uproar against the war in Iraq reinforces the notion that, in times of crisis, the success of strategic decisions ultimately depends on their compatibility with the masses. For the most part, however, strategy has been a prerogative of the few. Previous studies of strategic culture have, therefore, focused predominantly on national elites.⁴¹

With the end of the Cold War, the situation has changed. The removal of a single overarching threat has opened up for more political debate about defence and security matters, and the notion of “wars of choice” rather than by necessity has highlighted the need for decisions about the use of force to be compatible with international norms, which

39 Michael Howard, “The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy”, in *The Causes of Wars* (London: Temple Smith, 1983), p. 101–115.

40 Ibid.

41 Theo Farrell, “Strategic Culture and American Empire”, *SAIS Review of International Affairs*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2005).

find support in a broader public sphere. Furthermore, general trends towards the internationalisation of the military and the shift in national strategies from alliance *adaptation* to alliance *integration* have pushed towards a more active role for international institutions.⁴² A contemporary study of European strategic culture must, therefore, capture the influence of various actors within a wider notion of an international security polity. To grasp not only the formal mechanisms of intergovernmental decision-making, but also informal channels of influence, one would, therefore, be better off approaching the EU as a system of governance. A central question is the extent to which different sub-actors' influence on the policy-making process has become institutionalised, and how this process has affected the EU's capacity to launch independent initiatives and coordinate (read: *change*) national policies. As such, the social dimension of strategy relates to the first criterion for a strategic actor: the capacity to formulate common security interests.

The European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), as part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), is carried out by the Council. As a main rule, decisions have to be made unanimously (TEU art. 23.1), so in effect each member state has a veto. The 27 member states acting through the Council have often proved to be the bottleneck in the Union's security policy.⁴³ However, attempts to modify the unanimity rule, Simon Nuttall concludes, have only marginally improved the efficiency and consistency of the CFSP.⁴⁴ The most significant revision of voting procedures was the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty, which opened up for Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) once a "common strategy" has been adopted (TEU art. 23.2). However, Common strategies as a policy instrument have been used rarely and, in the words of Javier Solana, "tend to be too broadly defined, lacking clear priorities and vague because they are written for public consumption".⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the Union has displayed a consistent and efficient policy towards, for example, the Western Balkans without the initial adoption of a common strategy. This suggests, on the one hand, the futility of enforcement mechanisms such as QMV in cases in which a consensus is clearly lacking, Iraq being the most obvious example. On the other, it points towards an alternative *practice* for coordinating member state policies, which eases the formal constraints exerted on EU foreign policy-

42 For an overview of these trends, see for example Janne Haaland Matlary and Øyvind Østerud, eds *Mot et avnasjonalisert forsvar?* [Towards Denationalised Defence?] (Oslo: Abstrakt Forlag, 2005); or Anthony Forster, *Armed Forces and Society in Europe* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2006).

43 The Union's security policy is complicated further by the fact that it cuts through all the three pillars of the EU. I return to the issue of inter-pillar coordination below.

44 Simon Nuttall, *European Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

45 International Crisis Group, "EU Crisis Response Capability", *ICG Issues Report*, vol. 2 (2001): 34.

making by its voting procedures, at least in areas in which the member states want the EU to have an impact. In fact, though the number of member states has increased, decision-making has improved on the whole under the CFSP.

This is partly due to institutional developments since the late 1990s, which have been targeted directly at improving the basis for harmonising member states' views. The Political and Security Committee (PSC) was set up in 2001 as a preparatory body for the Council and consists of one ambassadorial level representative from each member state. Having access to all the information, proposals and initiatives relating to a given issue, the PSC proposes to the Council the overall strategic response, which in effect represents a compromise in which all of the 27 capitals have had their say. Also, once a "joint action" (TEU art. 23.2), another instrument introduced by the Amsterdam Treaty authorising a civilian or military crisis management operation, has been adopted, the PSC exercises full political and strategic control of the operation. Accordingly, it is often referred to as the linchpin of the CFSP/ESDP.

Another Council body, which has deep roots in the member states, is the Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit (Policy Unit), which was established together with the post of High Representative for the CFSP (HR-CFSP) on the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty in October 1999. Despite being placed within the Secretariat, which is supposed to be neutral, the Policy Unit, together with the joint Situation Centre (SitCen), which was set up within the Policy Unit but was separated out in 2001, are the most politicised parts of the CFSP institutions. It is staffed by one diplomat from each member state and was, as head of the SitCen, William Shapcott, describes it

intended as a nucleus of support for Solana, of policy-oriented officials with links to their national diplomatic services who could supply him with information, with advice – both inputs from those countries but also independent advice as they developed their own contacts working on his behalf.⁴⁶

A current concern is that some of the new member states have tended to send diplomats without the seniority needed to ensure the direct contact with and trust in the member states that are required for information to run freely between Brussels and the national capitals.⁴⁷ Another concern is the increase in workload due to the enlargement process and

⁴⁶ William Shapcott, "Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Select Committee on the European Union", London: House of Lords, evidence heard on 3 November, 2004.

⁴⁷ Interview with diplomat in the Policy Unit, May 2006.

the expansion of issues that are dealt with under the CFSP. When an EU Minister for Foreign Affairs was proposed in the Constitutional Treaty, some envisioned an expanded Policy Unit which would form the core of a service reminiscent of a national Foreign Office. To date, however, it has been decided to keep the unit small, so that it may retain its most important role, which is to work as the hub of a network with direct contacts within the member states. However, although the Policy Unit has the competency to propose policy options on its own initiative – and thus may play an independent role as an agenda-setter – it has neither the authority nor capacity for strategic leadership.

The *official* “driver” of the CFSP is the member state holding the Council Presidency, which is responsible for implementing decisions and represents the EU in all matters of its external policy (TEU art. 18). However, this last point is only partly true, since a major part of the Union’s external portfolio, including matters of direct relevance to its overall security policy, comes under the Commissioner for External Relations, a post currently held by Benita Ferrero-Waldner. Accordingly, the Union effectively has two – three if you count Solana – foreign ministers, one of which changes every six months. Such a system is hardly suitable for ensuring a consistent and forward-thinking strategic approach, but it has been pointed out that the rotating presidency has other advantages. Some have argued that the current arrangement is an important mechanism for bringing different issues to the forefront.⁴⁸ Having short terms may also infuse the Presidency with energy and pace, as there is always pressure to solve important issues before one’s term runs out and prestige in getting this done. The 2001 Swedish Presidency, for example, played an instrumental role in getting civilian crisis management on the table, but the entrepreneurial spirit of the initial years of the ESDP may also have given greater room for individual member states to set the agenda. However, recent years have instead been marked by difficulties keeping up with a steadily growing range of issues. To ensure some degree of continuity in policy, *troikas* comprising the incumbent and incoming Presidencies and the HR-CFSP are routinely set up. The Policy Unit also plays an important role in having the Presidency stick to the agenda, or, as one diplomat remarked: “Should long-term planning be left to the Presidency, which may follow its own national agenda? Is that the way to harmonise views? No!”⁴⁹

An additional point of concern has been that the smaller member states lack the resolve to deal with major crises.⁵⁰ This, in combination

48 Alfred van Staden et al., “Towards a European Strategic Concept”, *Clingendael Institute working paper* (2000): 12.

49 Interview with diplomat in the Policy Unit, May 2003.

50 van Staden et al., “Towards a European Strategic Concept”: 12.

with the growing difficulties of reaching agreements within a community of 27, has reinvigorated the old idea of an EU *directoire*, consisting of Britain, France and Germany. Notably, the EU-3 has taken the lead on Iran, although Solana was eventually taken on board. As was remarked, however, with regard to possible trade concessions in return for Iran abolishing its nuclear programme: it is not up to the EU-3 to give away what belongs to 27. Member states, such as Italy and Spain, and perhaps also an aspiring power like Poland, would be loath to see a formal *directoire* model established without them, and the smaller member states would not approve of being reduced to passive bystanders, even if the bigger member states would *de facto* control the CFSP.⁵¹

Moreover, in regions such as the Western Balkans, Solana has played a rather major role, as he has in institutional developments under the CFSP. His influence on EU policy is considerable by virtue of the fact that he is also the Secretary-General of the Council Secretariat and has the Policy Unit, the SitCen, and the EU Military Staff (EUMS) report directly to him; he is the head of the newly established European Defence Agency (EDA); and he is, as former NATO Secretary-General, trusted and respected in most European capitals and therefore given considerable leeway to act on behalf of the Union on a number of issues. Also, Solana gets a lot of publicity, as he answers the media's need for a single EU face and voice in matters of foreign policy. This has undoubtedly helped consolidate Solana's presence and weight in the political landscape. Most importantly, however, Solana knows that the member states hold the key to the CFSP and he is in a position to facilitate and even push for agreement when the political climate is favourable. As Head of the EU SitCen, William Shapcott, describes the process of establishing an EU intelligence capability:

Indeed, he [Solana] was shown a paper fairly soon after he arrived that suggested setting up some sort of mechanism, and he said, 'No, we really need to wait for the Member States to come forward with ideas in this area.' (...) By 2001, around the time of 9/11, a number of Member States approached Solana to say, 'We would like to go one step further. We would like to start sharing more sensitive information. We would like to see an attempt made to undertake common assessments of particularly critical issues in terms of the Union's foreign policy'. Several Member States made this approach. Solana thought that

51 For a discussion of the *directoire* model, see Per M. Norheim-Martinsen, "Who Speaks for Europe while We Wait for the EU Foreign Minister?" *EU Consent Network Working Paper*, January (2007) (online 16 Jul 2007).

the time had come and he decided to give the Situation Centre, which had existed as a sort of empty shell until then, a particular intelligence assessment function, and we set about establishing which Member States would like to participate and were prepared to send information.⁵²

Shappcott offers a rare insider's view into EU foreign policy-making, which gives us some insight in what goes on behind the scenes in the Council. His account suggests that individual agency does indeed play a role in this process. People like Solana and other Council officials can at different stages facilitate agreement, create trust, suggest solutions and thus ease the member states' inherent reluctance to surrender control over foreign and security policy matters. Solana's rather unique role as an entrusted overseer of the CFSP has also placed him in a position to help the EU extend its influence by seizing opportunities, as he did, for example, by taking the lead on the Ukraine in 2004, and by using every opportunity to produce statements that reinforce and sustain a specific EU security *discourse*. Further to this last point, Solana and his team were instrumental in the process that eventually led to the adoption of the European Security Strategy (ESS), presented at the Council meeting in Brussels on 12 December 2003 and subsequently adopted by the member states.⁵³

The ESS was a milestone not only as a source of a common security *discourse*, but also because of the way it came about, which in many ways is representative of the informal policy-making *practice* that had emerged. In terms of its written content, the ESS was instantly followed by a trail of analyses, routinely comparing it with the US National Security Strategy (NSS) published in September 2002.⁵⁴ Within the context of the low-point in transatlantic relations at which the ESS was launched, commentators differed whether it was to be taken as a sign of reconciliation or continued transatlantic drift, and invariably concluded that the US and Europe agreed on the threats, but parted ways on the means to tackle them. In this context, however, arguably some aspects were lost in analyses of the ESS, as it was often treated, as Alyson Bayles remarked, "almost in the style of literary criticism, divorced from its historical, institutional and short-term political context".⁵⁵

52 Shappcott, "Minutes of Evidence ...".

53 Solana, "A Secure Europe in a Better World ...".

54 Comparisons were also made with the 1999 NATO Strategic Concept. See for example Simon Duke, "The European Security Strategy in a Comparative Framework: Does It Make for Secure Alliances in a Better World?" *European Foreign Affairs Review*, vol. 9 (2004): 459–81.

55 Bayles, "The European Security Strategy ...": 1.

First, the fact that the ESS was the Union's first comprehensive strategy document should not lead to the conclusion that the ESDP was conceived and developed in a strategic void. What there was agreement on in St-Malo in 1998 was the need to tackle the *means*, which at the time were – and still are – Europe's most pressing strategic concern. Where, when and for what purposes those means would be put to use was left undecided for the moment, but then again, any such formulation of interests would have been premature and would potentially have held the EU hostage to promises it could not keep. In this initial period, therefore, building capabilities was the most sensible strategic objective. This process, however, was not, nor could it have been, totally detached from some vision of the political interests those means would serve – or more correctly *how* they best would be served. It has been argued over the years that a distinctive European approach to security has emerged which is characterised by a broad, multidimensional or *comprehensive* notion of security.⁵⁶ Such an approach has a focus on conflict prevention through dialogue, cooperation and partnership, and prefers economic, political and cultural instruments to military force. Though mirrored in early EU documents, such as the Stability Pact for Central and Eastern Europe, adopted in May 1994, this comprehensive approach can also be observed in current EU policies such as the Stability and Association Processes (SAP) in the Balkans and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership programme (EMP). These policies have been administered more or less ad hoc, however, with the Commission in the driver's seat and without the necessary means to deal with the situation if conflict prevention failed and a crisis emerged in one of these regions. Hence, the ESDP was the move that sought to make the EU's approach truly comprehensive. It did not replace other instruments or represent a move away from civilian power to military power, as has been suggested.⁵⁷ By extension, the ESS should be viewed rather as a timely attempt to see all of the Union's policy instruments as parts of a wider strategic vision. In fact, the comprehensive approach to security, although somewhat lost in the narrow military focus caused

56 See Sven Biscop, "The European Security Strategy. Implementing a Distinctive Approach to Security", Royal Defence College (IRSD-KHID), paper no. 82, March (2004). A similar view is offered by Schneckener who argues that the EU from the mid-90s, and especially since 1999, has been reforming its structures and building capabilities for conflict prevention and crisis management. Ulrich Schneckener, "Theory and Practice of European Crisis Management: Test Case Macedonia", *European Yearbook of Minority Issues*, vol. 1, no. 2001/02 (2002).

57 The EU's move into the military sphere led to a principal debate about whether it could still be seen as a civilian power. See K. Smith, "The End of Civilian Power EU: A Welcome Demise or a Cause for Concern?" *International Spectator*, vol. xxxv, no. 2 (2000); S. Stavridis, "Militarising the EU: the Concept of Civilian Power Revisited." *International Spectator*, vol. xxxvi, no. 4 (2001); and R. Whitman, *From Civilian Power to Superpower? The International Identity of the European Union* (London: Macmillan, 1998).

by the inevitable comparisons with the NSS, was communicated with remarkable clarity throughout the ESS.

Also, the ESS was produced and agreed to surprisingly quickly; it was also clearer, shorter and refreshingly free from the bureaucratic lingo that one might expect from the EU, with its record of “constructive ambiguity”.⁵⁸ This would not have been possible without the institutional capacity that had been built over recent years. When Solana was mandated to produce a “European Strategy Concept” in May 2003 at a meeting of EU Foreign Ministers at Rhodes, the member states avoided the usual Council procedure of leaving the task to an Intergovernmental Conference (IGC). At the time, the member states had gradually grown accustomed to receiving strategic advice from Solana and the Policy Unit in the form of Policy Option Papers (POPs), so that by 2003 they were, as Alison Bayles sums it up, “familiar with the idea of ‘strategies’, and they were looking (more and more exclusively) to Solana and his team to produce them”.⁵⁹ In the process that ensued, the next significant step being the presentation of the first version of the document entitled “A Secure Europe in a Better World” at the Thessaloniki Council on 20 June, a host of parties were consulted, including academics and practitioners in Europe and beyond, while the drafting was kept under close control by a small team of Solana’s associates. After a run-up, in which the member states and the Commission were heavily involved, the final document was adopted without difficulty at the Council meeting in Brussels on 12 December 2003. What stands out from these events is the novelty and, indeed, efficiency of the process, which rather than being intergovernmental in nature reinforces the notion of policy by *governance*. Key elements in this process were, according to Bayles:

(...) the confidence placed by the EU members in Solana and his team; the self-restraint shown by states when they refrained from quibbling before the June ‘welcome’ and publication of his text, or from prolonging and over-complicating the phase of intergovernmental redrafting; and the novel and rather successful use made of intellectual resources in the European (and partner countries’) security research community.⁶⁰

58 Francois Heisbourg, “Europe’s Strategic Ambitions: The Limits of Ambiguity” *Survival*, vol. 42, no. 2 (2000): 5–15.

59 Bayles, “The European Security Strategy ...”: 8. See her paper for a detailed account of the procedural history of the ESS.

60 Bayles, “The European Security Strategy ...”: 5.

And she goes on to conclude that “these features point to a more *operational* and *cohesive* approach by national policy actors, but also to a new (and more collective) *presentational awareness* – in Brussels and the relevant capitals”.⁶¹ As such, the process by which the ESS came about points towards a change of *practice*, which can also be observed in the general EU policy-making process, in which different sub-actors beyond those who make the formal decisions, i.e. the member states, take part. This change of practice has helped consolidate an EU security *discourse*, which suggests that elements of a European strategic culture are, indeed, taking root. This, in turn, has affected the EU’s capacity to formulate common security interests, although the EU’s capacity to act strategically is still very much constrained by the intergovernmental procedures of the Council. Nevertheless, the analysis shows that institutions and the people who inhabit them do matter, and as we move on we shall see that they play an even greater role in the logistical dimension.

Implementing a Comprehensive Security Policy

While there has been much focus on capabilities and operations in analyses of the ESDP, few seem to fully appreciate the importance of those practices that are essential to the maintenance and functioning of these other elements over time: or those strategic practices that link the overall policy objectives with the instruments at hand, such as procedures for strategic and operational planning, civil-military coordination, and intelligence gathering and processing. The claim, that “logistical factors have been ignored by ninety-nine military historians out of a hundred”, seems still to be valid.⁶² One should bear in mind, however, that new security challenges, particularly the advent of international terrorism as a major threat, have fundamentally changed the logistical parameters that were recognised at the height of the Cold War. On the national level, this can be observed, for example, in a horizontal extension of security cooperation.⁶³ Whereas ministries of defence used to be more or less exclusively responsible for a state’s security and defence policy, the move towards military force as essentially a foreign policy tool to be used outside a state’s own territory has shifted some of these responsibilities over to foreign offices. Also, new threats, such as organised crime and terrorism, have elevated the security role of the police and judiciary. These developments have had a particular impact upon the EU, where the division of labour has followed the fuzzy boundaries

61 Ibid.

62 Howard, “The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy”, p. 102.

63 Forster, *Armed Forces and Society in Europe*, p. 8.

between crisis management and conflict prevention, which the Council and the Commission are responsible for respectively. This divide has major implications for how and the extent to which tasks and responsibilities are being coordinated. The need for transnational cooperation to counter so-called borderless threats has, on the other hand, highlighted the potential within the EU system to coordinate national efforts. In this respect, institutional practices have developed in Brussels that support and facilitate such a coordinative role. Indeed, a certain institutional capacity or “culture of coordination” appeared to be a central goal for Solana upon his appointment as HR-CFSP, when he called for a “strong in-house strategic culture” to be developed.⁶⁴ We shall move on, therefore, to assess the emergence of various sub-cultures on the institutional level and how these impact on the EU’s ability and resolve to act in accordance with its security interests.

One of the most decisive steps towards a European strategic culture was arguably the introduction of a *military culture* in the EU, which not only meant that people had to get used to the sight of uniformed personnel moving about the Justus Lipsius building, they also had to interact with them at different levels. An EU aspiring to a comprehensive security approach implies that civilian and military branches should be integrated, or at the very least well coordinated. One of the early steps taken was to co-locate all crisis management elements in the Korthenberg building to establish a secure environment for them, as well as provide the physical preconditions for more interaction between the different branches.⁶⁵ Formally, civilian and military elements are coordinated in the PSC, which provides an overall strategic assessment in a crisis situation and exercises full political control over all operations. It receives advice from and instructs the European Union Military Committee (EUMC) and the Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM) and thus provides a minimum level of coordination in the sense that in it the organisational outputs of the two branches are merged. It is a striking feature of the EU’s crisis management framework, however, that there is no clear hierarchy of civilian and military sub-units that correspond to each other and interact – at least not in a formalised manner – at lower levels. There is no civilian equivalent to the European Union Military Staff (EUMS), which operates under the direction of and reports to the EUMC, since CIVCOM is

64 Solana has stressed this point in his internal speeches and pep talks, according to a senior CFSP Official (Interview, May 2003).

65 Part of this co-location exercise included splitting up the Council Secretariat, moving those Directorates dealing with CFSP/ESDP matters in the larger DG-E (Directorate for External Relations and Politico-Military Affairs) over to the Korthenberg Building. Incidentally, and perhaps symbolically significant, this implied moving them further away from the Commission’s premises.

formally attached to COREPER, French acronym for Committee of Permanent Representatives. People normally just refer to COREPER (same as in Nato)

On the civilian side, tasks are loosely divided functionally and geographically between the Policy Unit and the DG-E, whereas the EUMS has remained somewhat to the side of these structures. Although people in the Council Secretariat are keen to point out that working relations have improved, interview data indicate that military personnel engage less in interaction with other units than do civilian personnel. This may be due in part to shorter rotation periods for the military which make it harder to build strong, personal working relationships with people outside their unit. Another explanation is the different strategic and operational planning structures on the civilian and the military sides, which imply some divergence in the scope of their respective activities.

On the civilian side, both strategic and operational planning are conducted within DG-E. On the military side, however, strategic planning is left to the EUMS, while for operational planning one currently has two, soon three, options: there is NATO-SHAPE, access to which was secured by the so-called "Berlin plus" agreement in 2002⁶⁶; there are currently three national headquarters (Britain, France, Germany) and two in the making (Italy and Greece), capable of running autonomous EU operations; and an EU Operations Centre (OpCen) is currently being established at the Korthenberg premises in Brussels. OpCen will be operational in early 2007 and will be placed within the newly established Civil-Military Cell as part of the EUMS. As the name of the cell suggests, it is meant to improve civil-military coordination by undertaking strategic contingency planning for scenarios which require a joint response, and by generating the capacity to both plan and run (hence the OpCen) autonomous EU operations. The OpCen will only *assist* in coordinating civilian operations, however, and it will only be capable of low-risk military operations, which inevitably begs the question why it is being established, given the obvious lack of suitable premises in the middle of Brussels and the fact that the EU is perfectly able to run civilian and military operations separately through existing arrangements.⁶⁷ Bearing in mind that a similar proposal in 2003 for an

66 Berlin plus is based on the decision of the NATO summits in Berlin in 1996 and Washington in 1999. Its four elements (§10 of the 1999 Washington Summit Declaration) are: assured access to NATO planning facilities; presumption of availability of capabilities and common assets; NATO European command options for EU-led operations; and adaptation of NATO defence planning system to incorporate forces for EU operations. These were agreed on by the NAC meeting on 13 December 2002. EU-NATO relations are discussed in more depth below.

67 It is, therefore, also a question of whether the member states, hard-pressed on military spending as they are, should spend huge amounts of Euros on a capability that the EU has already covered. What the EU lacks is a *joint* capability, but the OpCen far from fulfils such an ambition, given its low-risk limitations.

EU operations HQ to be set up in the Brussels suburb of Tervuren was heavily opposed by Britain and subsequently scrapped on the grounds that it was an unnecessary duplication of existing structures, one might ask whether it is the desire to go *autonomous* or the potential for going *joint* that has spurred the sudden change of heart. To be truly joint, however, the OpCen would need to extend its focus well beyond the walls of the Korthenberg building.

Despite the overlapping tasks between the Council and the Commission on the civilian side, there is a well documented lack of coordination between the two both in Brussels and in theatre. Informal coordination has worked reasonably well at times, as seemed to be the general case under the leadership of Solana and the former Commissioner for External Relations, Chris Patten, but reportedly less well with Ferrero-Waldner. As pointed out by the International Crisis Group, therefore, a long term solution is needed to ensure greater coherence between the Union's conflict preventive instruments, i.e. trade, aid and diplomacy, and its crisis management instruments.⁶⁸ The current arrangement allows for a merger of views at the political level, but at the working level the only *formal* point of contact is the Commission official present at the Committee meetings in the Council. In terms of coordination on the ground, a particularly telling illustration of the problems one may run into can be observed in the EU's international policing in Bosnia, branches of which embody different approaches, time spans, decisionmaking structures, mandates, structures, etc. The EU Police Mission (EUPM), launched in January 2003 and which answers to the Council, has a small mentoring and advisory role, but no executive powers. Executive responsibilities are generally in the hands of the Bosnian police, but EUFOR, the EU's military component in the country since December 2004, may engage in gendarmerie-type operations. Complicating the situation further, the Bosnian police also receive advice and guidance from police and justice experts employed by the Commission under the Stabilisation and Association Processes (SAP). In addition come initiatives under the external dimension of Justice and Home Affairs (JHA), which target issues such as corruption, organised crime and border control.⁶⁹ The generally lacking clear division of labour between the Commission and the Council has created some tension, as reflected in a statement by a Commission official, who said there was a lack of awareness and understanding of the Commission's long-term commit-

68 International Crisis Group, "EU Crisis Response Capabilities: An Update", *ICG Issues Briefing Paper*, vol. 29 (2002).

69 For a more detailed account of the EU's operations in Bosnia, see Per M. Norheim-Martinsen, "Operation EUFOR in BiH: Europe's Backyard Reclaimed", third Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee, *The Western Balkans: Session 2004-05: HC 87-II*, House of Commons (2005).

ment in the Western Balkans now that the Council wanted to play an active part in the region.⁷⁰ Indications of an ongoing turf-battle are also mirrored in a statement by a Council official, who said there was a lack of control, assessment and follow-up measures once the Commission had allocated money to a country, and that the institutional set-up would have to change.⁷¹

Apart from bureaucratic quibbling, some of the early concerns about infusing the EU with a military culture via the Council may have been justified in part insofar as this has led towards a gradual “second pillarization” of the Union’s security policy, both in terms of changes in *discourse* and *practice* towards a heavier role for the Council, and a greater focus on crisis management and military force. Responsibilities have shifted from the Commission to the Council, such as in civil protection (one of four priority areas for civilian crisis management identified at the Feira Council in 2000), which has not only caused Commission resentment, but also spurred some principal concerns. Removing responsibilities from the Commission implies removing policies from the European Parliament’s scrutiny, and implies taking away the financial certainty that stems from inclusion in the community budget. Another example of this shift of weight is the ESS, which was essentially a Council product, although it drew support from the Commission and “quite successfully integrated actions carried out or to be carried out by all the different EU organs”.⁷² At the same time, various statements suggest that cooperation has generally improved and that “contacts between the various bits of the Secretariat and the Commission are much more intense than they were”.⁷³ In sum, however, the EU still does not quite amount to what a EUMS officer referred to in his brief as a “culture of coordination”, the objective of which is to have effective coordination “built into” the culture rather than just being “bolted on”.⁷⁴

Part of the problem has been a lack of discretion in sharing sensitive information between different EU organs and between Brussels and the national capitals. Well timed threat assessments which form the basis for strategic decisions are based mainly on intelligence from the member states, and the flow of intelligence relies on mutual trust in the information being kept confidential. Charles Grant draws particular attention to the importance of such a *security culture* to the sharing of intelligence material among the member states.⁷⁵ In this regard, co-

70 Interview with Commission official, May 2003.

71 Interview with CFSP official, May 2003.

72 Bayles, “The European Security Strategy ...”: 10.

73 Shappcott, “Minutes of Evidence ...”

74 Interview with EUMS official, May 2006.

75 Charles Grant, “Intimate Relations: Can Britain Play a Leading Role in European Defence, and Keep Its Special Links to US Intelligence?” *Centre for European Reform Working Paper*, May (2000).

locating all crisis management elements in the Korthenberg building has, at the very least, provided the physical and attitudinal preconditions for increased security measures among the personnel involved. Introducing measures such as secure lines of communication, data protection and access control, has represented a major shift in working environment, at least for the civilians. As a result, there has been a change in the signals that the EU projects to the outside world. This, in turn, has laid the basis for some real progress in the way the EU obtains and processes intelligence.

Since being separated out from the Policy Unit in 2001, the EU Situation Centre (SitCen) has developed away, largely, from the public eye, which may seem rather surprising for an EU all too keen to provide evidence of its successes. However, as intelligence goes, a certain level of secrecy is undoubtedly necessary and this may indicate that elements of an *intelligence culture* have taken root in Brussels. The SitCen is staffed 24 hours a day and draws a range of skills, civilian and military, into one unit. Its job, by producing assessment reports on internal and external threats, is to aid EU policy-making. Although the scope of its work has inevitably shifted towards anti-terrorist activities, SitCen reports are supposed to cover “the broad range of internal security and survey the fields of activity of services in the areas of intelligence, security, investigation, border surveillance and crisis management”.⁷⁶ The SitCen does not carry out intelligence operations on its own, but bases its reports on information shared by the member states, which also provide analytical expertise through staff secondments.⁷⁷ The character of the information shared has, as head of the SitCen, William Shapcott describes, evolved from information from national diplomatic channels to gradual access to more sensitive intelligence data. Indeed, it is now known that since 2002 the SitCen has cooperated with the secretive Club of Berne, a network consisting of the heads of the external intelligence services of the old EU-15 plus Norway and Switzerland.⁷⁸ It also cooperates with a group, established by the Club of Berne in September 2001, called the Counter-Terrorism Group (CTG), which is tasked with coordinating the anti-terrorist activities of the 17 participating states’ internal security services. After the bombs went off in Madrid on 11 March 2004, it was decided at a meeting of the Club of Berne on 21 April that the CTG

76 Dutch Presidency Note to the Informal Meeting of the JHA Council, October 2004, unpublished doc no: 12685/04. Quoted in “EU: ‘Anti-Terrorism’ Legitimises Sweeping New ‘Internal Security’ Complex”, *Statewatch Bulletin*, 14 May 2004.

77 As regards own sources of information, the EU has its own satellite centre in Tórrejon in Spain, which, as Kori Schake points out, allows the EU to replicate and validate the basis for US assessments on which it has relied so far. Kori Schake, *Constructive Duplication: Reducing EU Reliance on US Military Assets*, report (London, Centre for European Reform 2002), p. 28.

78 See press release published by the Swiss Federal Department of Justice and Police, 28 April 2004.

should on terrorist matters act as the interface between the EU and the internal security services.⁷⁹ The idea, originating in a paper prepared by Solana on how to implement the European Council Declaration on Combating Terrorism, was that “the group [CTG] should have a small presence in Brussels imbedded within the Situation Centre, and that we would therefore be able to fuse inputs from internal and external services”.⁸⁰

Accordingly, the SitCen has made significant progress in bridging the artificial divide between external and internal security. It is placed within the CFSP structures, but reports to and advises the Justice and Home Affairs Council about possible action to take, while cooperating with representatives from the Commission, Europol, Eurojust, the European Border Agency (EBA), the Police Chief’s Task Force, *et cetera*. Anecdotal evidence suggests that SitCen’s *joint* capacity, combined with its increasing access to valuable information and trust in its ability to operate confidentially, has earned SitCen quite a reputation with the member states. As is often the case with the national services, however, the SitCen is perhaps “caught in a situation of doing a lot of really concrete work, not being able for operational reasons to make a big issue out of it, and, therefore, being exposed a little bit to people who assume, because they cannot see it, that there is nothing happening”.⁸¹

Despite a lack of open sources that can confirm the strategic importance of this intelligence capacity, it seems reasonable to conclude that the way that it has evolved has included a change of *practice* on the national level in terms of how and the extent to which intelligence material is shared. The independent intelligence unit in the SitCen has also undoubtedly enhanced the EU’s capacity to perform early warning and independent threat assessments, which, in turn, provide a stronger basis for strategic decisions. Other Brussels-based capacities, such as the Military Staff and the different parts of DG-E, have also strengthened the notion of an institutionalised strategic culture, which is underpinned by a number of *sub-cultures* that directly or indirectly affect how the EU conducts its security and defence policy. This shows that the institutional level is important to our understanding of the EU as a strategic actor, also because certain elements of European strategic culture appear to originate *top-down*, which shows that the notion of an ESDP controlled purely by the member states needs to be modified. As we shall move on to see, however, processes at the capabilities end, on the other hand, very much rely on a *bottom-up* approach.

79 The security services of the 10 accession states joined the CTG on 1 May 2004, but were not included in the original Club of Berne.

80 Shappcott, “Minutes of Evidence ...”

81 *Ibid.*

The Capability Question – What Gap to Fill?

A reoccurring theme in the contemporary European security debate is the shortfalls in crucial military capabilities in Europe, often referred to in the context of a growing transatlantic capability gap. However, although the economic and technological gap is very much a real one, and one to date that undoubtedly represents a liability for the EU, one should not uncritically accept that the status of the US armed forces is the yardstick against which it is necessary or even sensible to measure European capabilities. Nonetheless, capabilities are very much a question of technological superiority, a decisive factor in the outcome of wars.⁸² This seems to confirm the notion of a transatlantic gap. Yet recent conflicts show that while technological superiority can be an important factor in the early phase of a military operation, other capabilities become decisive in later phases. Comparative advantage is not obtained simply through technological innovation, but becomes a matter of having the right kind of capabilities, including non-military ones, to deal with a multitude of challenges, of which the actual fighting is but one. A “capability” is not an objective entity that can be readily compared without regard to the strategic interests it serves, or more correctly, how one thinks these interests are best served. In other words, a purely quantitative approach which compares military hardware and budgets without regard to strategic cultural context is of limited value to our understanding of the EU as a strategic actor.

In fact, transatlantic comparisons of capabilities will make sense only if the EU wants to use force *in the same way* as the United States; or if it wants to develop similar military capabilities *to influence* US policy. The former objective is mirrored in concerns about the growing lack of interoperability between US and European armed forces. This is a problem for the continued viability of the transatlantic relationship, but strictly speaking, only in operations which involve both sides. The US has chosen to operate outside of NATO both in Afghanistan and Iraq, while gradually leaving NATO operations in the Balkans to the EU (SFOR was taken over by the EU in 2004 and KFOR is a hot runner-up for another EU take-over). Interoperability has, therefore, become more of a national concern for those European states that wish to take part in coalitions of the willing – and able. There are also concerns whether Europe will lose influence on US policy-making if disparities in military strength continue to grow. This has been the traditional British view. However, one commentator has questioned “whether Europe should try to simply produce smaller versions of what the US possesses just to keep the US happy”, and argues that Europe

82 Howard, “The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy”, p. 104.

seems strategically confused, caught between the desire to please the Americans, yet unsure about where they are headed.⁸³ As regards Europe's actual influence on US policy-making, a US attack on Iran seems to have been stalled, at least for the moment, by offering an alternative to force. As such, the EU can also extend its influence in Washington D.C. by developing some complementary capabilities, although a strict division of labour which involves the Americans doing the war-fighting and the Europeans clearing up the mess once peace is restored is hardly a viable option for either side.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, there seems to be a growing understanding that Europe will need to develop its own range of capabilities in line with its evolving strategic aspirations. There is a need, therefore, for a more Eurocentric approach to this question.

Europe is not weak militarily. The problem is that military resources are dispersed across 25 member states, all with their respective doctrines, structures and cultures. Simple as the point may be, enhancing EU capabilities is not about creating an EU force with EU soldiers waiting in barracks outside Brussels. Rather the European capability conundrum hinges on the availability of relevant personnel and hardware, interoperability, rapid reaction, and equal standards with regard to the tasks the EU is expected to carry out. As regards these tasks, the EU set the initial objective of the ESDP to be the ability to carry out the so-called Petersberg tasks, which were identified at the 1992 Western European Union (WEU) summit in Bonn. These tasks, which include "humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks, and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking", are described in terms of function and not distinguished by the level or type of force required for each of them.⁸⁵ This has complicated the analysis of what is implied by operations on the "low" and "high" end of the scale.⁸⁶ Some operations at the low end, i.e. "humanitarian and rescue tasks", may require more sophisticated military resources, more manpower, a heavier CIMIC (Civil-Military Coordination) element and a longer term commitment than "peacemaking" at the high end. It does not make immediate sense, therefore, to say that the EU is ready to take on tasks at the

83 Lindley-French, "The Capabilities Development Process Post-September 11".

84 It has been argued that the EU should build on existing strengths to consolidate a "European Way of War". Steven Everts et al. *A European Way of War* (London: Centre for European Reform, 2004).

85 The European Convention on the Constitutional Treaty for the EU proposed an expansion of the Petersberg tasks to include "institution building" and "support for third countries in combating terrorism". As such, the expanded version is more sensitive to civilian crisis management. The expansion was hardly necessary though, since the Petersberg tasks were never to be seen as a conclusive list of ESDP operations and were seen to incorporate civilian crisis management tasks already.

86 van Staden et al., "Towards a European Strategic Concept": 8.

low end but not the high end, nor is it particularly useful to set specific force levels for each of the tasks.

Accordingly, the *practice* of identifying Headline Goals, conceived at the Helsinki Council summit in December 1999, has been of only limited value in terms of defining the EU's "level of operationality". The original Helsinki Headline Goals (HHG) set the target date for establishing a Rapid Reaction Force (RRF), somewhat arbitrarily capped at 60,000 troops, with appropriate naval and air support, to be deployed within 60 days and sustained in theatre for up to 12 months. In 2001, at a Capabilities Improvement Conference (CIC) in Brussels, the member states identified a substantial range of forces available to meet the HHG, including 100,000 troops, 400 combat aircraft and 100 naval elements. Most of these forces were, however, already pledged to NATO under its parallel Defence Capabilities Initiative (DCI), launched at the NATO summit in Washington in April 1999, or to the UN. Moreover, no additional capabilities were created, and to this date crucial shortfalls remain in strategic lift and tactical transport, and in the areas referred to as C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance). The shortfalls took some of the zest out of the Laeken Council in December 2001, which declared the ESDP operational for *some* Petersberg tasks. The declaration, nevertheless, implied an important change of *discourse* away from the negative and paralyzing focus on Europe's supposed military limitations. Despite the little real progress made in terms of increasing defence budgets or filling crucial gaps in the force catalogue, the mere notion that the ESDP was now operational, that a first goal had been reached, seemed to, as we shall see, foster some deeper, structural changes within the member states.

Nevertheless, the capability shortfalls which persist clearly illustrate some of the limitations of a *bottom-up* approach to defence cooperation, as filling the gaps is left entirely in the hands of the member states. The European Capabilities Action Plan (ECAP), presented at the 2001 Conference, established a set of guiding principles to increase the effectiveness of capability efforts, including better coordination between member states and with NATO, but compliance has relied wholly on monitoring and peer pressure, whereas appropriate incentives or rewards seem to be lacking. Although the EU has not been able to lead the capabilities enhancement process *top-down*, however, one should not underestimate the role that it has played in facilitating some real and potentially significant changes in the way the member states think about the structure and use of their armed forces. Contemporary developments point towards more cooperative national *practices*, which includes examples of role specialisation by small states who develop niche

capabilities which can be plugged into command structures provided by a handful of lead nations; integration of forces into transnational corps; and elements of cooperation in procurement and production. Whereas trends towards greater integration of Europe's armed forces can be attributed partly to an international demand for forces for international operations, as well as budgetary pressures on the national level (as long as one cannot spend more, one should at the very least spend smarter)⁸⁷, they are simultaneously conditioned by the fact that the EU has supplied the member states with an appropriate normative arena in which more collective practices can evolve.

Notably, once the idea of an EU Rapid Reaction capability had taken root, the new Headline Goals, which set 2010 as the new target date, were considerably more to the point. They called for a heavier commitment from the member states (although still a voluntary process), and gave the impression of greater trust in distinctly "European" resources, including an expanded focus on civilian capabilities.⁸⁸ At the military end, the member states were called upon to form 13 self-sustained multinational Battle Groups (BG) each of 1,500 troops, to be deployed in theatre within 5–10 days. The first BG was declared operational in 2005 and the goal is to have 2 BGs permanently available by 2007. Drawing upon past experience with the Eurocorps, which has an integrated command structure and a common HQ in Strasbourg, the EU Battle Group concept will be based on a high level of coherence and integration between forces, and will typically consist of troops from 3–4 member or associated states. For example, a Nordic BG is being established between Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Ireland and Norway.

At the same time, the EU has built successfully on its lead nation principle, which was first put to use in operation "Artemis" in Congo in 2003: France acted as lead nation. By encouraging a handful of member states to develop certain "leadership capabilities" (only France and Britain and possibly Germany are able to take on such responsibilities today, while Italy, Spain and possibly Greece are potential future candidates), the EU has taken a step towards formalising some *role specialisation* between the member states. Admittedly, these developments reflect some trends that started after the end of the Cold War and have evolved since, though not necessarily at the same speed or in the same direction all across Europe. In a comprehensive volume on recent devel-

87 Antonio Missiroli has pointed out four clusters of problems that make an increase in military spending in Europe highly unlikely, which leaves it only with the choice of spending smarter. Antonio Missiroli, "Ploughshares into Swords? Euros for European Defence", *European Foreign Affairs Review*, vol. 8, no. 1 (2002).

88 Although significant ground was covered on the civilian side in response to the old Helsinki Headline Goals, and important new goals have been set for 2010, I shall not cover these developments in depth, since the most important shortfalls and problems remain on the military side.

opments in Europe's armed forces, Anthony Forster argues that these today can be put into three main categories.⁸⁹ In the first category, the British and French armed forces have as their main function an *Expeditionary Warfare* role, focusing principally on deployment outside national boundaries. These developments, Forster argues, represent "the most striking characteristic of trends in Europe since the late 1990s".⁹⁰ The decisions by the EU and NATO to establish an EU Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) and a NATO Response Force (NRF), he goes on to argue, were instrumental in this regard. The French and UK governments also see developing an expeditionary warfare capability "as an important means to increase the amount of influence they have within these organisations".⁹¹ The largest category, however, consists of states adhering to a *Territorial Defence* model, typically favoured by the post-communist states plus Finland, Sweden and Norway. These states' military forces remain organised around the principal task of protecting home territory and have until very recently retained conscription and relatively heavy armoured formations. However, trends point towards the abolition of conscription in many of the post-communist states. In addition, in states like Norway and Sweden which are likely to retain conscription for some time to come, semi-professional forces are being established for international operations.⁹² This shift towards professionalisation is a key feature of the third category, consisting of states that have adopted a *Late Modern model*, including Denmark, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. These states retain a dual mission for their armed forces, "providing what might be termed a 'residual Territorial Defence function', but in parallel a commitment to provide a significant contribution as a proportion of overall force size to international peacekeeping".⁹³ Some states in this category, such as Belgium, have gradually shifted more of their weight towards the latter role, tailor-making their forces to cater specifically to international operations.⁹⁴

A key insight offered in Forster's book is that the way the European states structure their armed forces neither moves in the same direction nor consolidates around an ideal form. Rather, contemporary trends, albeit slowly, point towards a new division of labour involving smaller states developing niche capabilities that can be plugged into the force

89 Forster, *Armed Forces and Society in Europe*.

90 Ibid, p. 47.

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid, pp. 53–57.

93 Ibid, p. 62.

94 Staal Ulriksen, "Det militære Europa" [The Military Europe], in *En annerledes supermakt? Sikkerhets- og forsvarspolitikken i EU* [A Different Superpower? The European Security and Defence Policy], eds Staal Ulriksen and Pernille Rieker (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2003), p. 157.

structures of a handful of lead nations. Although a concern for national survival may not have given way fully to a “post-modern defence”, trends nevertheless reflect a major and ongoing evolution in European military thinking. One explanation for this is the existence of an evolving European norms system, within which NATO but increasingly so the EU have induced changes on the national level.⁹⁵ A key feature of this system is that it offers incentives for some states, such as Britain, France, Germany and Italy, to change in order to *lead*, while rewarding smaller states for developing key capabilities for international operations, which increase their *influence* within the system.⁹⁶ As such, the emergence of a European strategic culture can be seen to be reflected in some divergence between European force trends rather than in a convergence of national practices, as one might expect intuitively. One key problem remains, however, as there appear to be limited incentives for changing to more collective practices on the capability *acquisition* side (i.e., *procurements* + *production*), which inevitably leads to continued inefficient spending and the unnecessary duplication of assets by the member states.

A recent *top-down* attempt by the EU to facilitate a more collective European capability acquisition process was the establishment of the European Defence Agency (EDA) by the European Council on 12 July 2004. One key challenge for this new agency has been to work against protectionist national regimes. A potentially significant step was made with the adoption of a voluntary code of conduct for defence procurement on 1 July 2006. The aim of the code is to open up the defence market to competing defence companies by encouraging transparency when governments award contracts; and also to open up the supply chain by ensuring cross-border competition between defence companies and market access for non-defence suppliers that produce dual-use parts (e.g. toilets and doors for frigates). There are no enforcement mechanisms, however, which means that compliance with the code relies on peer pressure and monitoring by the EDA. Moreover, although the code may bring about smarter defence spending, it does not address essential shortfalls in capabilities that the Europeans need to carry out even the least demanding crisis management tasks. It has been suggested that the EU through a common EU fund organise joint procurement of assets along the line of NATO’s AWACS fleet.⁹⁷ But it is neither likely that such a fund would receive much patronage, given the current state

95 Forster, *Armed Forces and Society in Europe*, pp. 137–170.

96 A similar idea is presented by Janne Haaland Matlary, who argues that there are incentives for EU member states to “pool” sovereignty in the security and defence field on the logic of two-level games. Matlary, “When Soft Power Turns Hard”.

97 Klaus Naumann, “Europe’s Military Ambitions”, Centre for European Reform, June/July Bulletin (2000).

of the European defence budget, nor is the EDA's €22.3 million budget meant to cover procurements. Another option mentioned is concerted procurement with state ownership of assets that may be used in both national and EU operations. This is the case, for example, with the A400M heavy transport aircraft. Eight countries are buying 196 aircraft, with Luxembourg agreeing to buy one only, which can be taken as a sign that some of the smaller states are gearing up to the idea of contributing to a common resource pool, even though this is not necessarily in line with purely national capability demands.

Finally, by promoting collaborative defence research the EDA may play a role in avoiding some of the massive duplication that still exists in research and development (R&D). EDA projects have been initiated that address, for example, current Command, Control and Communications (C3) shortfalls. These are capabilities that have typically hampered interoperability, as armies often operate different radio systems that do not communicate with each other. With joint R&D, such problems can be avoided in the future, and linking R&D to concerted procurement may create economies of scale.⁹⁸ The EDA may, however, only serve as a catalyst for increased collaboration between the member states, which first and foremost need to ease up on their protectionist regimes to create a more competitive defence market. There are signs, however, that the European defence industry has begun to consolidate, with several multinational mergers in recent years (e.g. the merger of DASA with Aerospatiale-Matra to form EADS in 2000). Other signs point towards greater incentives for shifting production and procurement patterns from a national focus, both because purely nationally focused defence industries can hardly be sustained with the current force levels, and because the trends towards role specialisation naturally foster a more specialised and internationally focused defence industry, at least in the smaller states.

Despite the remaining shortfalls, there are signs that a distinctly European strategic culture is emerging also at the capabilities end. This is reflected partly in a change in *practices* on the national level, which points in the direction of increased divergence between force structures across Europe. These practices converge, however, on the international level insofar as they result overall in a more collective process, or a move towards a more diverse yet complementary capability structure. This tendency towards some role specialisation between lead nations and niche capability providers relies much, one could argue, on the existence of the normative and institutional context provided by NATO and increasingly so by the EU, a key characteristic of which is the different incentives such an order would offer to various states. One may, howev-

98 Schake, "Constructive Duplication", p. 32.

er, question the impact of such initiatives as the Helsinki Headline Goals on these developments, since they have, for the most part, been related to capabilities that already existed. Yet the mere exercise of setting goals and declaring success once they have been reached has undoubtedly helped move the *discourse* surrounding European capability issues away from the paralyzing focus on a supposed, ever-widening transatlantic gap. This change in discourse seems, in turn, to have reflected back on the capability process in terms of more specific goal-setting, as seen in the 2010 Headline Goals, as well as greater trust in Europe's own resources. If we return briefly to our second criterion for a strategic actor then, the EU has not only become a likely, if not preferred institution through which the EU member states can channel their military capabilities. It has also developed into a strategic actor with a resolve to use military force in various operations, either with recourse to NATO assets, or, as we shall see, a tendency to act alone.

Operational Experience – Learning from Failure or Failing to Learn?

Under the ESDP, the Union has to this date (2006) carried out 13 civilian and military crisis management operations.⁹⁹ Despite the relative modesty of these ventures, compared to the scale of and attention given to the ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, they have nevertheless left the EU with a steadily growing operational portfolio. Yet few seem to have been interested in how this operational experience has reflected back on the EU, or whether concrete operational experience can be transformed into a kind of strategic culture. As we shall move on to see, operational experience seems to have had an impact on the EU in two ways. First, a steadily expanding list of completed missions has fed into a success discourse, and thus enhanced the EU's confidence to pursue its security and defence policy. Secondly, challenges in theatre have worked as incentives to change existing practices or formalise ad hoc arrangements. The rest of the article offers a breakdown of military operations under the ESDP up to 2006, showing how these

99 These include the EUPM in Bosnia (2003 to present); operation Concordia in Macedonia (2003); operation Artemis in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (2003); EUPOL Proxima (police mission) in Macedonia (2003 to present); EUJUST THEMIS (rule of law mission) in Georgia (2004–2005); EUFOR Althea in Bosnia (2004 to present); EUPOL Kinshasa (police mission) in DRC (2004 to present); EUJUST Lex (rule of law mission) in Iraq (2005–2006); EUSEC (security sector reform) in DRC; EU Support AMIS II (military and police support elements) in Darfur (2005 to present); AMM (Aceh Monitoring Mission) (2005–2006); COPPS (EUPOL Coordination Office for Palestinian Police Support); the EU BAM Rafah (EU border Assistance Mission in Rafah) both within the territory of the Palestinian Authority (2005–2006); and EUFOR RD Congo (2006).

two forms of operational feedback have affected strategic developments in the EU.

Despite the fanfare with which it was launched, the EU's first military operation in Macedonia (Concordia) was comparatively small, involving only 400 troops. Deployment was, nevertheless, delayed for a whole year because access to crucial NATO assets had been blocked because of long-standing Turkish-Greek tensions over Cyprus. When the Berlin plus agreement was finally secured with NATO in March 2003, however, the path was cleared for a successful EU military debut, not least in terms of breaking the psychological barrier of "going operational". On the more practical side, Concordia used NATO-SHAPE as operations HQ, as provided for by Berlin plus. An EU presence within SHAPE was secured via the establishment of a European Union Staff Group (EUSG), which consisted initially of nine officers, as well as the double-hatting of the roles of DSACEUR and EU Operation Commander. Although a temporary arrangement at the time, the EUSG was kept on for "lessons learned" after Concordia ended in December 2003, in anticipation of an EU takeover of NATO's operation SFOR in Bosnia.

In the meantime, the EU launched its first autonomous operation (Artemis) in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on 12 June 2003. Although again not a very demanding operation, either in terms of duration (4 months) or force numbers (1,300 military personnel), the symbolical value of launching a second operation – with due emphasis on the word "autonomous" – the same year as Concordia, was considerable, especially for some of the member states. The operation was carried out with France acting as Framework Nation, which meant that the EU operations HQ was located in Paris, and the force consisted of predominantly French troops. The Framework Nation option appeared to be a typical UN solution though, and one that the EU had not discussed openly before. Indeed, seeing how well the operation turned out, disregarding the fact that it was concentrated in a comparatively small geographic area, Bunia, and did not face major military opposition, could lead one to question what all the fuss was about the Berlin plus agreement. Sceptics would argue that Althea could just as well have been carried out as a French operation with a UN mandate, as in Côte d'Ivoire (2003), but it soon became clear that neither France nor Britain would miss out on the opportunity to kick start the ESDP. Artemis was a chance to tick off another two "firsts" on the missions complete list – i.e. acting autonomously and on the African continent – when the member states were still recovering from the Iraq debacle. To be fair, however, the decision to launch a military operation on the African continent was not as arbitrary, or indeed surprising, as some would have it; the Commission had led a consistent policy towards the Great Lakes Re-

gion for years, and the EU's commitments in the area has been reinforced by subsequent ESDP operations as well as by establishing the post of an EU Special Representative for the Great Lakes region. Furthermore, the framework nation option, which appeared to be an ad hoc solution at the time, gave the EU confidence to pursue the idea of establishing several national operations headquarters, on which it could rely to lead future ESDP operations instead of having to use NATO-SHAPE.¹⁰⁰

In the DRC, a second autonomous operation (EUFOR RD Congo) supporting the UN's MONUC mission in conjunction with the Congolese elections was launched on 30 July 2006 with Germany acting as Lead Nation. The operation, involving some 2,000 troops, was led from Potsdam and was terminated after four months, in December 2006. Again, the operation could arguably have been carried out within the framework of the existing UN mission in the DRC or, indeed, using NATO-SHAPE as operations HQ, since relying on existing resources would have been cheaper and would have involved less risk if the situation had escalated (the EU operations HQ in Potsdam required a staff of some 400 people, compared to the 19 officers that currently make up the EUSG at SHAPE). But then again, a second autonomous mission in DRC served to consolidate the EU's military presence on the African continent (alone and without NATO support), while offering Germany a chance to strengthen its role as a Lead Nation within the ESDP, as France had done three years before.

Returning to the Balkans, the symbolical effects of the EU taking over NATO's SFOR operation in Bosnia in December 2004 were considerable, given Europe's failure to avoid the atrocities that had marked the latter half of the 1990s. Moreover, operation EUFOR Althea was the first real test case for the EU in three respects: it was its first military operation of some size, involving 7–9,000 troops; it was a practical test of EU-NATO relations; and it was the EU's first joint crisis management operation (the EUPM had already been running since January 2003). In terms of the practicalities of taking over the operation, the EU fulfilled the objective of a "seamless transition" from SFOR to EUFOR, although the transfer implied little more than changing the badge on the soldiers' uniforms. EU-NATO relations would, however, first be put to the test if there were a major escalation in the conflict, when availability of crucial NATO assets and the speed with which they were provided would represent the yardsticks. As regards the actual running of the operation and using NATO-

100 Indeed, it has been argued that operation Artemis will set a precedent for future EU autonomous operations Staale Ulriksen et al., "Operation Artemis: The Shape of Things to Come?" *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 11, no. 3 (2004): 508–25.

SHAPE as EU operations headquarters, working relations were reportedly fine on the strategic level, whereas politically EU-NATO relations have cooled considerably. After an initial honeymoon, in which the urgency of enlargement and reaching an agreement on Berlin plus made political discussions possible, old adversaries seem to have retreated to their original positions. The EU Political and Security Committee (PSC) and the North Atlantic Council (NAC), which are tasked with the political direction of EU-NATO relations, are supposed to meet every month, but, in fact, only met on a couple of occasions during 2005–06. Also, the chance to take cooperation a step further was forfeited, as a call to assist the African Union (AU) with strategic airlifts in Darfur in the spring of 2005 emerged as a virtual “beauty contest” between the two organisations – it ended up with the EU transporting only a small part of the force and NATO taking care of the rest.

Hence, as the EU has gained more operational experience and confidence – which may, however, not necessarily be rooted in real progress in strategic capacity, since operational challenges have so far been limited – it appears that it will pursue autonomy rather than a strengthened strategic partnership with NATO. Two years into operation Althea and six years after Berlin plus was secured, it is the EU that appears hesitant to pursue any further strategic relations with NATO. The message from SHAPE – that the EU got a great deal when it secured access to an operations headquarters “at the cost of 19 people” – seems to have been lost on some people in Brussels, who regard Berlin plus as an interim arrangement until the Union secures a capacity of its own.¹⁰¹ Or, as an EU officer based at SHAPE, put it: “In Brussels they are more interested in counting missions; how they are carried out does not earn political points”.¹⁰² Moreover, the prospective EU takeover of NATO operation KFOR in Kosovo is very likely to be an autonomous EU operation outside Berlin plus. This would not only involve unnecessarily duplicating the command structure, which is already on the ground (were there an EU autonomous operation elsewhere, one would need to set up a new command structure in any case), but also, given the political climate, for example this would deny a prospective EU police force access to KFOR intelligence. One could, however, see the wish to go autonomous in Kosovo as a sign that the EU sees within its other command options under way a great-

101 These sentiments were shared by both EU and NATO officials consulted at SHAPE in May 2006, whereas EUMS and other Council officials seemed generally uninterested in discussing current or future EU-NATO relations. Somewhat surprisingly, contacts between the EUMS and the EUSG at SHAPE appear to be virtually nonexistent.

102 Interview with EUSG representative, May 2006.

er potential for better civil-military coordination. In Bosnia, the civilian and military elements report to separate chains of command. This would also currently be the case for an autonomous EU operation, but coordination would then be a matter for the PSC alone; in Berlin plus operations one has the added complication of the PSC-NAC channel.

It seems, therefore, that operational experience has had a significant impact on an emerging European strategic culture. This is reflected both in the sense that the dominant *discourse* seems very much to be building up below a growing feeling of success, and in the sense that going autonomous, including building specifically EU capabilities rather than relying on NATO, seems to have become an objective in its own right. Engaging in operations has been a way for the EU to show that it is rising to the task and to prove that it can manage on its own. Moreover, the symbolical value of almost all the ESDP operations has been significant, framed as they have been in a historical context; i.e. the return to the Balkans that the rest of Europe had so shamefully watched go to ruin less than ten years before; the responsibility taken in Africa, a continent marked by Europe's colonial legacy; and on a more general note, Europe taking care of its own destiny 50 years after its last devastating war, at a time when the Americans have their hands full in other parts of the world. The practical value of these operations is, however, questionable in that the EU's gradually awakening quest for autonomy has, for example, led to a proliferation of operational HQs for international operations (NATO-SHAPE, the Lead Nations HQs and now the OpCen), which may seem an unnecessarily costly duplication of capabilities in light of the untapped potentials in the Berlin plus framework. This dynamism between a gradually evolving success discourse and a corresponding confidence to pursue new operational practices is, however, typical of the rather pragmatic or ad hoc manner that has characterised the ESDP from the very start.

Conclusion

Since its birth at St-Malo in 1998, the ESDP has developed in fits and starts. It took some time before the Berlin plus agreement finally allowed the EU to "go operational" in 2003, but since then the EU seems to have gained confidence with every new step it has taken. Although some progress have been made, especially in terms of developing a central institutional capacity, arguably the most important development has been the change in discourse that has accompanied a feeling of success, which has grown as goals have been met at the capabilities end and

new “firsts” have been ticked off on the missions complete list. It is arguably this change in the way policymakers on all levels think and act that explains the fact that an organisation, which in 2003 could or would not engage in a mini military operation in Macedonia without help from NATO, is planning to run a much more demanding operation in Kosovo on its own. It is also arguably due to this new dynamic in the EU that the British did not oppose establishing the new OpCen last year, although it had dismissed an almost identical proposal (the Tervuren option) only four years ago.

Observing these changes in discourse and practice, therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that a European strategic culture has emerged. Yet whether it fosters “early, rapid and when necessary, robust intervention” is questionable. However, it would be misleading to think of a European strategic culture as an end state. Rather it is an ongoing process, which has allowed the EU, without significant changes in voting procedures and without having efficient enforcement mechanisms, to leapfrog many of the obstacles inherent to a transnational security polity, such as the absence of permanent and consistent political leadership, the slowness of a decision-making system in which all member states effectively retain a right of veto, and the continuous duplication of nationally owned capabilities. Against all odds, one might say, the EU has developed into a kind of strategic actor, since it retains both the political will and central institutional capacity to identify and agree on some common security interests; and it has developed into an institution through which the member states are willing to channel their capabilities for international operations, and has carried out evermore demanding operations in accordance with priority areas set out in the European Security Strategy.

As this article has argued, perhaps the most significant factor in this process has been the establishment of a central institutional capacity. At times when the ESDP has seemed bogged down by member state differences, such as during the Iraq war, the process has been kept running at the EU level by seeking consensus on less contentious issues and by upholding the political dialogue within the PSC and the Policy Unit. In the absence of a centralised political leadership, the member states have also started to look more and more to Solana and his team to provide them with political advice. When the member states commissioned Solana to produce the European Security Strategy, which they adopted only seven months later, the novelty of the *process* by which it came about was more significant than its impact as a source of common security discourse. The growing confidence in central EU institutions, however, also undoubtedly relies on the quality of the services they provide.

The different ESDP units under the Council have proved a considerable logistical resource for the member states to draw on. The joint SitCen, for example, has developed a unique capacity for threat analysis and early warning, has integrated internal and external security aspects and caters to both military and civilian needs. The member states have, in turn, been more willing to share sensitive information, which suggests that some kind of intelligence culture, as observed in the changing practices for intelligence sharing on the national level, has emerged as an integral part of a European strategic culture. This, in turn, has strengthened the basis for strategic decision-making and for a shared European security discourse to evolve.

Changes on the national level are also evident on the capabilities side, where the ESDP has represented something of a window of opportunity for the member states. The option of channelling contributions to international operations through the EU has offered different incentives for different states to restructure their armed forces. Trends towards reorienting national forces for international operations, including abolishing conscription and the move towards lighter and more manoeuvrable units, have admittedly been evident for some time. Yet by encouraging a handful of the member states to develop “leadership capabilities”, the EU has taken a significant step towards formalising some role specialisation, within which the smaller states can also be granted influence if they choose to develop sought-after niche capabilities that can be plugged into larger force structures. However, crucial capability shortfalls remain, and the capabilities enhancement process is still very much hampered by inefficient spending, a fragmented European defence industry and the unnecessary duplication of assets between the member states. It is still too early to say whether the European Defence Agency will have a significant impact on this process.

Finally, as the EU has become active on the ground, operational experience has naturally had a more decisive impact on an emerging strategic culture. On the one hand, specific operational needs have fostered ad hoc solutions and new strategic practices, such as the Framework Nation option used in operation Artemis, which in turn has been developed further to add to the EU’s command options. On the other hand, carrying out 13 ESDP operations to date has, as argued above, fuelled a growing sense of success, especially in Brussels. It is a paradox, however, that this sense of success has in many respects not been accompanied by any real progress in strategic capacity. Both amongst its member states and in terms of the message it projects to the outside world, the EU has had a hard time disproving the legacy of Europe’s violent past and, more recently, its failure to deal with crises in its own neighbourhood. Those

who are eager to prove the EU's worth by seeking short-term political gains by taking on evermore demanding tasks would be wise, however, not to let this new-found confidence trump the potentially devastating effects on both the ESDP project and on those on the receiving end if a situation again escalated beyond what Europe can manage on its own.

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