The European Union's crisis management operations: Strategic culture in action?

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Abstract: How useful is the concept of strategic culture for understanding when, where and how the European Union uses force? This paper will assess the extent to which agreement among the European Union Member States to conduct Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operations is founded on a top-down approach based on a common strategic culture or alternatively on a bottom-up approach. In the latter case, a decision to deploy troops is based on specific Member States' interests and capabilities. Four military operations will be analysed: Operation EUFOR Althea, EUFOR RD Congo, EUFOR TChad/RCA and Operation Atalanta. Emphasis is placed on whether there has been any form of decision-making based on shared beliefs, attitudes and norms regarding the use of force. The aim is to highlight whether there has been increasing convergence behind the reasoning for the deployment of European Union operations which indicates the extent to which the organisation possesses a European strategic culture.

Keywords: Security/external; institutionalisation; CFSP; political science.

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Introduction

Researching a country's strategic culture is usually a historical process where key moments are identified and analysed to understand how they came to influence security and defence elites' beliefs, attitudes and norms towards the use of force. Rarely does the opportunity arise to study a strategic culture as it is being created. The EU provides this occasion to understand how different strands of thought on when, where and how force is used are institutionalised into the EU's structures and the extent to which ideas are converging. There is no common view concerning whether the EU possesses a strategic culture. Whilst some authors conclude the EU has some form of strategic culture however shallow, (Cornish and Edwards 2005; Meyer 2006; Reis 2009) others do not concur (Baun 2005; Heiselberg 2003; Rynning 2003). Our aim is to add to this debate. In particular, we build on the work done by Meyer (2006) who concentrated on how far different EU Member States' strategic cultures are converging.

The creation of a European strategic culture should be seen as a process – rather than an either/or choice between the absence and presence of a strategic culture. We aim to understand where areas of convergence have occurred, how these have been institutionalised and then how this informs strategic choice. Whilst Biscop and Norheim-Martinsen (2012: 68) emphasise that 'strategic culture – as actorness - is not a question of "either/or", but ought to be treated as a precondition or a set of boundaries within which any actor operates, since culture equals context', we also aim to look at the process by which these boundaries are being constructed. How strong are they – are we looking at a fortress-type structure or rather a Potemkin village in which a façade of a strategic culture is presented?

In other words, to what extent is a decision concerning an EU operation based on a nascent strategic culture? At the 'absence of a strategic culture' end of the spectrum we would expect to see decisions being made based on having the necessary capabilities available combined with the interests of one or several Member States. At the other end, reference to common beliefs, attitudes and norms would form the basis of a decision.

To answer the main question of this paper on how developed the EU's strategic culture is, we focus on four military operations: Operation EUFOR Althea (Bosnia Herzegovina), EUFOR RD Congo; EUFOR TChad/RCA and Operation Atalanta (Somalia). These were chosen firstly, because they were deployed at different times: one in 2004 (until present), one in 2006 and two in 2008 (with Atalanta ongoing). Therefore, we will evaluate whether we can see a development of a strategic culture over time. Secondly, we chose operations in two areas of what can be perceived as the EU's geographical area of interest – in its neighbourhood (Operation EUFOR Althea) and in Africa, where certain Member States have former colonial links. Five operations have taken place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – two military and three civilian – making it a potential candidate for an area of EU interest. We chose the most recent of the military operations due to our concentration on 'the use of force'. TChad/RCA has been the most militarily difficult land operation to date, whilst Atalanta is the EU's first naval operation. It also hones in on two key areas of common European interest: trade and humanitarian engagement. Thus the EU could be progressing on the 'when to use force' dimension of strategic culture. Chad has been the most multilateral military land operation, which could demonstrate the increasing willingness among EU Member States to participate in an operation rather than simply agreeing to it. Atalanta, meanwhile, is working with a large number of partners in the Gulf of Aiden area including NATO and the US Combined Task Force, underlining the concept of effective multilateralism. Therefore, all four operations highlight the core dimensions of a European strategic culture.

It should be stressed that whilst institutionalisation and socialisation, intertwined with policy learning, would be key elements in understanding a developed strategic culture, this has yet to occur within the EU. Therefore, we are analysing bottom-up processes and initial institutionalisation efforts, in particular the European Security Strategy (ESS). This includes the operationalisation of key norms contained within the document regarding the reasoning behind EU military operations. As our findings will demonstrate, the picture is rather mixed but there is a fledgling strategic culture which has come through such processes rather than through an overarching agreement concerning deep-rooted beliefs, attitudes and norms. Thus institutionalisation of lowest common denominator norms, as underlined in the ESS, are still the order of the day where deploying military operations is concerned.

1. A European strategic culture?

A European strategic culture is not replacing national cultures – rather, it should form a separate layer in which there is agreement between the Member States concerning what the EU's interests are, what type of action should be taken in various circumstances and the partners with which the EU should work (see Meyer 2006: 7). This forms a subset of any EU Member State's views on the use of force. Therefore, differences among EU Member States concerning the use of force have to be analysed within the context of the role the EU should play. The question is whether any limits on the use of military force is due to the inability of the Member States to agree on more robust operations or rather whether this is due to a unique European strategic culture which circumscribes acting militarily in certain circumstances. When a strategic culture is being developed, both are likely to be in play.

Meyer (2006: 20) emphasises that strategic culture should be defined as 'comprising the socially transmitted, identity-derived norms, ideas and patterns of behaviour that are shared among the most influential actors and social groups within a given political community, which help to shape a ranked set of options for a community's pursuit of security and defence goals'. In this sense, Meyer highlights the foundations of a security community's reasoning regarding the use of force. However, where do these foundations originate? Combining this with insights from Gray who underlines the historical aspect, we define strategic culture as 'the beliefs, attitudes and norms towards the use of force held by a security community which has had a unique historical experience' (Gray 1999: 51; Chappell 2010: 227). In the context of the EU we are specifically focusing on the extent to which there is an initial convergence of ideas and how these are displayed both politically (through the ESS) and militarily (through our four case studies). If there is a disjuncture between these two elements, then it is questionable as to whether a European strategic culture exists. Politically, documents such as the ESS can be considered 'elements of a strategic narrative intended to justify or "sell" the already maturing idea of CSDP as an inherent and natural part of an evolving EU' (Biscop and Norheim-Martinsen 2012: 76). Indeed, Cornish and Edwards (2005: 810) also stress that the 'Security Strategy can therefore be seen as a vital element in the deeper institutionalization of the ESDP'. This is because such documents underline key normative aspects on which using force are based. At the same time, strategic culture needs to be displayed and thus put into action in order for it to be legitimate. Without this there is no strategic culture.

To understand how developed a European strategic culture is, it is necessary to gain inspiration from the national strategic culture literature. A strategic culture is generally acquired over a long period of time unless there is a critical juncture out of which a strategic culture takes hold quickly (e.g. German strategic culture – see Chappell 2012; Longhurst 2004). It should be noted that strategic culture 'is not acquired lightly and casually, and neither can it be discarded and replaced promptly at will from a catalogue of alternative strategic cultures' (Gray 2006: 15). What we will show is that a series of events have acted as catalysts for the initial development of a European strategic culture (in particular the end of

the Cold War, the Kosovo War, 9/11 and the Iraq War) rather than there being one juncture underlining an incremental build-up (Longhurst 2004: 20). The EU Member States' reactions to these events within the EU context are themselves embedded into the idea of the EU as a 'peace project' (Biscop and Norheim-Martinsen 2012: 74; Norheim-Martinsen 2011: 517), which necessarily impacts the role it should play. A strategic culture shapes the options available rather than ranking them in order of preference (Gray 1999: 55) and this rules out some options whilst allowing for others. Therefore, ruling out what the EU should not be doing is just as much part of the process as deciding on what it should be doing.

For a European strategic culture to emerge it is necessary that the beliefs, attitudes and norms towards the use of force are institutionalised and socialised. Therefore, common norms are given permanency when they are integrated into institutional structures and embedded into documentation. As Berger (1998: 11-12) underlines, 'formal institutions play a key role in anchoring broader societal beliefs and values and provide context and permanency to them'. Whilst documentation such as the ESS points to the (initial) institutionalisation of a European Strategic Culture based on the initial convergence of common norms, this needs to be far more substantial for a European strategic culture to fully emerge. As will be pointed out, documents such as a proper security strategy and white book which fully spell out the EU's approach to the use of force are required. Furthermore, due to the non-binding nature of such documentation, the socialisation of EU security and defence elites is required. As emphasised by the differences in agreement on operations, socialisation has not yet occurred; therefore, this article does not go into these processes. Instead we focus on the emergence and initial institutionalisation of common ideas and norms related to the EU's use of force.

However, it is important to insert this into an overall picture as to how a European strategic culture might be acquired in order to give context to our findings. Thus the aim of the diagram is to situate the EU's progress in acquiring a strategic culture. As highlighted in Figure 1, we see the acquirement of a strategic culture as a process whereby at the 'lack of a strategic culture' end of the diagram, decisions are made based on capabilities and operations are clearly pushed by one or several Member States. As we progress, the ad hoc nature decreases. First, deploying an operation in a particular geographical area might become an EU priority area or reflect an already existing one, as indicated in the initial institutionalisation stage. Thus decision-making begins to be based on emerging norms rather than an ad hoc approach which results in the deployment of operations based on these emerging norms. Subsequently, policy learning can occur in relation to EU operations or in reaction to external events, which flags up further areas of EU interests, capability gaps and/or gaps in the institutional process. This highlights what types of operations the EU wants to engage in and the actors with which the EU wishes to work. It is here that socialisation comes into play as policy-makers become conditioned by EU norms through working consistently through institutional bodies. These elements build up into a European strategic culture as increasing agreement is found on the EU's role which results in common norms concerning when (not) to use force. This involves EU-specific structures and procedures for the planning and conduct of military operations,

guiding the creation of such policy tools as security strategies[1] and white books which fully institutionalise these norms. Nonetheless, as previously noted, EU security and defence elites have to be socialised into the norms which are expressed within these documents. This then enables a European strategic culture to emerge. It should be noted that due to the article's concentration on initial institutionalisation and emerging norms, latter stages in a European strategic culture's development can only be suggestive, based on how a strategic culture should develop as discussed above.
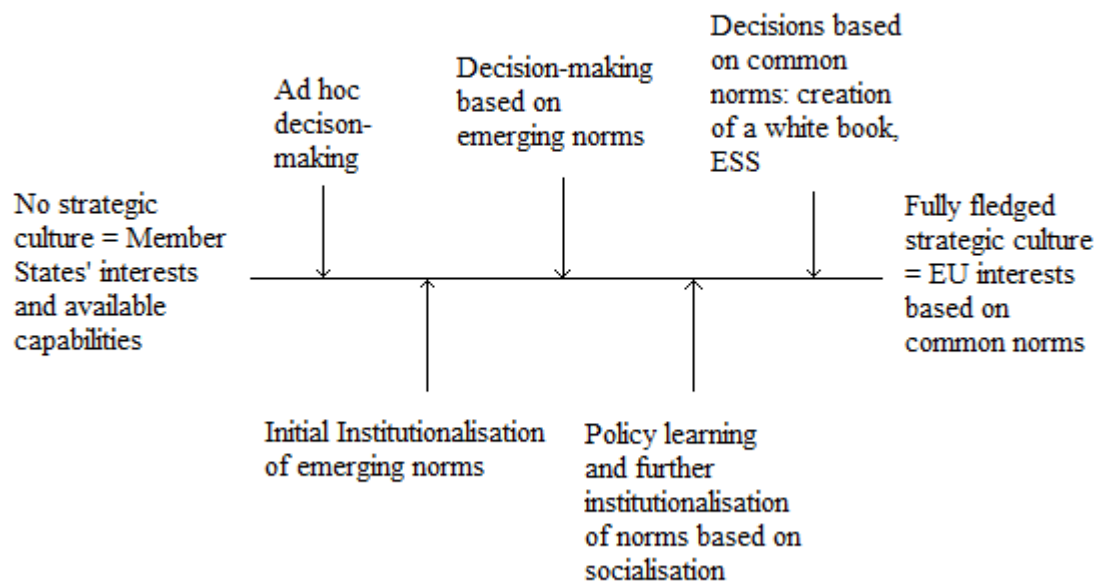

Figure 1: Diagram of the development of a European strategic culture

Whilst the diagram might give the impression that the acquirement of a strategic culture is an ever evolving progression, this is not the case. When a strategic culture is being created, different ideas emerge concerning the use of force. This is clearly highlighted in the Polish case where alternatives to NATO were debated until the NATO path won out from 1992 onwards (see Chappell 2012: 46-7). Thus, ideas have to be established over a period of time to be integrated. In addition, considering that developed strategic cultures can 'bounce back' to previous patterns (Meyer and Zdrada 2006: 42), this is even more the case for developing strategic cultures as ideas and norms have to take hold. Initial reactions to external events do not always become part of a strategic culture in the long run as Europe's reaction to the peace dividend underlines. In this respect the motor for the creation of the ESS was the Iraq crisis. However, the question remains as to the extent to which the document has been operationalised as this fades away into history.

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[1] The European Security Strategy is not a security strategy in the military sense i.e. it does not set out the EU's position on the use of force although it gives some indications concerning this dimension.

The diagram indicates how we can identify the development of a strategic culture. Beliefs, attitudes and norms towards the use of force can be highlighted through documentation e.g. the European Security Strategy and its update. These can then be built upon through an investigation into why the four identified operations were deployed. In order to compare more systematically, three categories for comparison will be used which all relate to strategic culture (see also Chappell 2012):

- Where force is used – are there geographical areas which have been prioritised by the EU?

- When force is used – this relates to the type of operation which should be sent, in which circumstances and for how long. What are the tasks and what type of military force was sent? What is the situation on the ground i.e. how difficult/risky is the operation? Finally, the duration of the operation also indicates a level of ambition and the EU's direction. Overall, are we seeing specific scenarios in which the EU decides to send force and is the level of EU ambition increasing?

- Multilateralism – does the EU work alone or with other partners – especially NATO and the UN? How important is multilateralism for EU security and defence elites?

It is important to note that we are focusing on the first three stages of the diagram – ad hoc decision-making, initial institutionalisation and decision-making based on common norms. In this respect, if there is no strategic culture then ad hoc decisions will occur. In relation to the ESS, this might imply that certain norms contained within the document have not taken off. In other words, the initial elements of strategic culture have 'bounced back' into ad hoc decision-making. Conversely, decision-making based on common norms implies that the ESS has been more successful in institutionalising those ideas and norms contained within it. This could eventually lead to socialisation processes and eventual deeper institutionalisation of the EU's beliefs, attitudes and norms related to using force.

2. The EU's approach to security and defence

The EU's initial role was to bring peace to the European continent following two devastating world wars. Considering that the Second World War played a role in the development of many European countries' strategic cultures, with Germany creating a strategic culture of 'peace' combining multilateralism with restraints on the use of force, the initial roots of a European strategic culture are not that surprising. However, defence was initially contested as highlighted by the failure of the Pleven Plan in 1954 due to the connection between defence and national sovereignty. Thus European military cooperation took place outside of EU structures – principally within NATO, but also in the now defunct West European Union (WEU). NATO's role was overtly military with its Article Five Guarantee and US central involvement; therefore, NATO does not provide us with the tools to analyse a European strategic culture. However, it can offer the position of the 'other' leading to questions concerning burden-sharing between NATO and the EU in the post-Cold War period. In

relation to the WEU, defence elements were largely left to NATO, although as Bailes and Messervy-Whiting (2011: 3) state, it did 'cement the post-war order'. Nonetheless, it does give an indication as to key CSDP tasks. The institution organised the clearing of mines in the Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf War with the aim of securing the safe passage of ships as well as 'helping enforce UN sanctions, and it also contributed to the humanitarian actions for Kurdish refugees in Northern Iraq' in the case of the latter (Bailes and Messervy-Whiting 2011: 17). Thus the idea of a European organisation conducting civilian humanitarian tasks in concert with the UN gave a clue as to the EU's partial future role. The WEU's role is important in that many of its tasks and functions were subsumed into CSDP including the Petersberg Tasks, the Satellite Centre and the Institute for Security Studies.[2] However, it should be remembered that it was a separate organisation from the EU.[3] Indeed CSDP has successfully striven to go further than the WEU including deploying independent military operations.

Whilst foreign policy came onto the EC's agenda again with the advent of European Political Cooperation (EPC) in 1970, this initiative had rather mixed results and was not focused on adding a defence element (see Alecu de Flers et al 2011: 166). In this respect, the EU's civilian 'peace' element can be emphasised throughout the Cold War, particularly in terms of enlargement as demonstrated by the accession of Greece, Spain and Portugal in the 1980s. Indeed, securing Europe's boundaries can be seen as a theme throughout and even became more critical post-Cold War. As Kirchner (2010: 104) points out, 'rather than the EU or NATO serving as a "firewall" between the stable and unstable states of Eurasia, the expansion of either institution has forced the Western European states to fashion policies addressing the sources of instability within Europe as well as monitoring the network of diffusion mechanisms linking Europe with its periphery'. Therefore the automatic rights extended to any European country to join the EU underlined an EU interest in securing its region, necessitating a range of policy tools up to and including the use of force.

The changed European security environment after the end of the Cold War provided the primary catalyst for the inclusion of a military element within the EU. Whilst the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) had been initiated as part of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, this new instrument did not assist the EU in its ability to deal with the wars in the former Yugoslavia or the human rights abuses such as the massacre at Srebrenica. Additionally, Europe no longer constituted the centre of US threat perceptions which had led to US calls for Europe to share in the security burden, reflecting the EU Member States' desire to become an actor on the world stage (Howorth 2007: 56-57). It was these key events, combined with the UK-French compromise within the St Malo declaration, which led to the

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[2] The Petersberg Tasks originally included humanitarian and rescue tasks, peace-keeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making. The Treaty of Lisbon further extended them and they now also include conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks, joint disarmament operations, military advice and assistance tasks and post-conflict stabilisation tasks. The Institute for Security Studies provides analysis on security, defence and foreign policy. The Satellite Centre provides analysis of data from Earth observation satellites (see European Union External Action 2014).

[3] For more information on the evolution and death of the WEU see Bailes and Messervy-Whiting (2011).

creation of CSDP.[4] Thus, the key aspects of European foreign policy included a balance between Atlanticism (critically CSDP should not duplicate NATO and its Article Five element) and Europeanism, humanitarianism (as underlined by the Balkan wars but also in part some of the tasks undertaken by Member States in the context of the WEU) and an interest in ensuring security in the neighbourhood (highlighted through the EU's traditional emphasis on enlargement), all founded upon the idea of the EU as an institution promoting peace.

Two additional events were to provide further impetuses: 9/11 and the Iraq War. The first brought home the new security threats. The second demonstrated the divergence between the Member States concerning the use of force, underlining that pre-emptive engagement would not form a part of a European strategic culture. Iraq also provided the catalyst for the production of the European Security Strategy (ESS) as Member States strove to overcome their divisions.

This document and its 2008 update emphasises several key attributes of the EU and the way that it perceives security. First, the idea that 'successive enlargements are making a reality of the vision of a united and peaceful continent' (Solana 2003: 1) underlines the peace aspect. At the same time 'Europe should be ready to share in the responsibility for global security and in building a better world' (Solana 2003: 1). Indeed, many of the key threats including inter alia terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure, organised crime, piracy, cyber security, climate change and energy security come from beyond, as well as within, the European neighbourhood. The ESS and its update underline the importance of a global, comprehensive approach to include preventive engagement based on a range of tools to include the use of force. However it is the neighbourhood which is highlighted as an area where the EU must prove itself. It should also be questioned whether the Middle East, Kashmir and the Great Lakes Area of Africa represent a 'Global Vision' or rather that the EU has specific interests in a small number of areas outside of the neighbourhood. Finally, Norheim-Martinsen (2011: 527) points out that 'the idea of a comprehensive approach to security fitted well into the conventional narrative of the European integration process as a project for peace by underlining the military dimension's secondary nature'. This emphasises the link between the EU as a 'peace project', which forms the core of a European strategic culture, and how this is operationalized.

Finally, who are the EU's partners in crisis management? The key phrase is 'effective multilateralism' with a focus on the rule of law which has the UN at its core, although NATO and the transatlantic relationship are also important. Nonetheless, when it comes to policy implications, the question of "in pursuit of what interests" remains. The ESS and its update place emphasis upon the neighbourhood, the Great Lakes area, the Middle East and piracy. However, there is little connection in either the ESS or the Report between the areas which are seen to be "strategic priorities" for the EU or where the EU has interests and the type of

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[4] The St Malo Declaration was a joint Franco-British declaration in 1998 on European defence. Within it, France and the UK agreed that the European Union should have the ability to act autonomously in defence where NATO was not engaged.

operations/missions (whether civilian or military) it might undertake. Nonetheless, these central catalysts do provide a preliminary European strategic culture as highlighted in Table 1.

Categories	Elements of a fledgling strategic culture
Core of a European strategic culture	• The EU as a 'peace project'
Threat perception	• New security threats to include inter alia terrorism, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), state failure, regional conflict and organised crime
When	• Preventive engagement including the use of force based on the Petersberg Tasks • Importance of humanitarianism
Where	• Emphasis on the region but with declared interests in specific locations in Africa, the Middle East and India
Multilateralism	• Effective multilateralism including a balance between Europeanist and Atlanticist visions of security.

Table 1: A European strategic culture?

Further policies are required to activate the foundations of a European strategic culture. As highlighted, strategic premises need to be put into action to avoid becoming a 'Potemkin village' of empty phrases. Although the ESS can be used to justify Member State participation in EU operations (as Germany did in relation to EUFOR RD Congo), it remains in the background of discussions at EU meetings and is not referred to in the PSC because although it is an important common denominator, it is not strong enough to convince others of action (Interviews with Member States' officials, Brussels, 2011 and 2012).[5] However, just because a document is not referenced does not de-legitimise it. The ESS is reflected in the work of the PSC and it is assumed the EU does work within the boundaries of the ESS (Interviews with Member States' officials, Brussels 2011). Whilst it underlines the basic rationale behind EU action, the ESS is not detailed enough to provide a strategic guide to specific action. For this, both an updated ESS as well as a white book are required.

Although the documentation stresses that a strategic culture is emerging, the question still remains: has this been actionalised? CSDP became active in 2003 in terms of operations as well as a declaration in May 2003 that CSDP could fulfil the Petersberg Tasks although shortfalls remained. In terms of military operations, Operation Concordia in FYR Macedonia

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[5] We conducted seven interviews with EU Member State officials and EU officials based in the EEAS and the Council in the period 2009-2012. The choice reflects the actors which are key to understanding a European strategic culture and their relevant institutions.

and Operation Artemis in RD Congo were the first to be deployed. These stressed that whilst CSDP was 'active', its ambitions were low. Artemis was essentially a French led and resourced operation under an EU hat underlining ad hoc decision-making. Meanwhile Concordia was a small operation (400 personnel) which used the Berlin Plus agreement thus emphasising the initial importance of EU-NATO relations.[6] However, operational risks were extremely low and neither operation lasted more than nine months. Thus both gave a clue as to how a European strategic culture might progress in terms of where operations would be deployed (the neighbourhood and Africa), when force was to be used (humanitarian element) and the importance of multilateralism. However, whilst getting CSDP off the ground was clearly essential, these operations demonstrated that the EU was far from being a military actor, with a low tolerance for casualties (see Meyer 2006) and hard military force. The following four sections will analyse in-depth why the EU engaged in Operation EUFOR Althea, EUFOR RD Congo, EUFOR TChad/RCA and Operation Atalanta, as well as the level of ambition and which partners the EU worked with. The aim is to develop our understanding on how (if at all) these operations demonstrate the extent to which the EU has a strategic culture by linking the reasoning behind their deployment with the norms displayed in the ESS.

2.1 Operation EUFOR Althea

Operation EUFOR Althea[7] demonstrated several recurring aspects of the EU's military engagement abroad regarding when, where and how it uses force. It represented the second military deployment in the Western Balkans (where); the second take-over military operation, in a post-conflict society[8] (when); and it worked in close cooperation with NATO from start to finish (multilateralism). It represented the largest CSDP operation to date, starting (in 2004) with 7000 soldiers from 21 Member States (and 5 third states) and engaging with a demanding mandate.

The idea for an operation in Bosnia was articulated as early as December 2002 by the EU Council, but the official decision came only after NATO formally supported it at its Istanbul Summit in June 2004 (Council of the European Union 2004). The circumstances around the launch of Operation EUFOR Althea demonstrate the existence of a collective EU interest. Firstly, this was a period of intense development of the EU crisis management dimension with the majority of the Member States willing to test the newly established crisis management governance arrangements. These included new politico-military committees, expert

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[6] The Berlin Plus agreement allows the EU recourse to NATO's capabilities and assets although only NATO's planning assets are assured (European Union External Action 2014).
[7] Operation EUFOR Althea's mandate included: ensuring compliance with the 1995 Dayton accords; supporting the High Representative/EUSR; assisting the local authorities in mine clearance; assisting the authorities in the control of lower air-space and countering organised crime (Council of the European Union 2004).
[8] The first military operation organised by the EU was 'Concordia' deployed in FYR Macedonia between March and December 2003. This was the first time the EU took over peacekeeping tasks from a pre-existing NATO operation in FYR Macedonia and tested its newly established institutions and standard operating procedures for crisis management (see Petrov 2010).

directorates in the Council Secretariat and standard operating procedures plus new frameworks of inter-organisational partnerships in crisis management (respective EU-NATO and EU-UN agreements). The operational experience in deploying EUFOR Concordia in 2003 contributed to a process of formalisation of previously informal coordination and liaison practices regarding EU-NATO cooperation in crisis management (Petrov 2010).

Secondly, the EU remained engaged in the Balkans from the very beginning of the disintegration of former Yugoslavia, which endured a number of low points from the fiasco with handling the Bosnian War to the inability to offer an alternative to the NATO airstrikes in Kosovo. Still, the EU remained actively engaged in the long-term political and economic reconstruction of the region by combining crisis management tools with offering a pre-accession perspective for the whole Western Balkans region on the basis of the Thessaloniki agenda (European Council 2003). By the early 2000s, the EU was determined to rebuild its credibility in the region and to develop itself as a meaningful international crisis management actor.

Thus, Operation EUFOR Althea came into existence during a period when the EU was making its first steps in crisis management and some operational experience was already available. Additionally, the Balkans represented a region in which the EU invested considerable diplomatic and economic resources from the beginning of the 1990s, demonstrating that the region had a considerable strategic importance. This is confirmed by the importance given to peace and stability in the neighbourhood in the ESS. Officials in Brussels admit that such strategic considerations exist and are important in committing EU resources to military operations abroad. However, they also add that Member States' interests are still part of the equation, in the sense that it is not an 'either/or' issue but both aspects need to be taken into account (Interviews with Member States' officials, Brussels, June 2011). An indication that such interests play a role in Operation EUFOR Althea is evident from the internal EU debate in 2008-2009 on whether the operation should continue. The differences in interests were represented by Finland, France, and Spain (arguing for withdrawal) and Austria, the Netherlands, Slovakia and the UK supporting its continued presence (Keohane 2009: 219). At that time the operation strength was restructured (between 1700 and 2000 troops, including reserves) and had an amended mandate comprising of non-executive capacity-building and training tasks, which points to a compromise rather than a consensus between the two groups. As of 2012, it is comprised of an even smaller force - 600 soldiers and reserve troops (EU Council Secretariat 2012). While the operation remains deployed in Bosnia, which expresses the EU collective interest to retain a presence in a strategically important region, its current mandate also expresses Member State interests and the related compromise.

Finally, Operation EUFOR Althea represents the only operation to date in which the EU and NATO can cooperate in the context of the Berlin Plus Agreement. Due to the continuing conflict between Cyprus and Turkey over the recognition of the northern part of the island, any future operation under 'Berlin Plus' is currently impossible (as either state threatens to veto it). Thus, Operation EUFOR Althea remains the only possibility for formal cooperation between the EU and NATO in military operations. Whilst this underlines the proclaimed (in

the ESS) value of multilateralism, it also reveals particular interests among the Member States - e.g. the UK and the Netherlands - in keeping the trans-Atlantic relationship alive.

Overall Operation EUFOR Althea was an operation deployed in a region which represented a specific priority for the EU. It also followed an established trajectory, as it took over from and closely coordinated with NATO in a largely stabilised security situation on the ground. Undoubtedly, in many aspects it was an expression of a collective EU interest - to demonstrate effective military capacity in guaranteeing the security in the Western Balkans, to reinforce the transatlantic relationship after the political rift over the war in Iraq and to establish itself as a meaningful security actor in the region. However, the operation also exposed divisions among the Member States with the resultant compromise of scaling down its personnel and operational tasks. Currently, the EU preserves its military presence in Bosnia by keeping Operation EUFOR Althea alive for as long as possible to maintain an open channel of cooperation with NATO (Interview with a Member State's official, June 2011).

2.2 EUFOR RD Congo

Regarding 'where' the EU decides to use force - if the Balkans was a clear-cut case of a region having strategic importance for the EU, the African continent represented a much more ambivalent case. By 2012, thirteen operations had been deployed to Africa. Although this represents the largest number of operations/missions deployed by the EU in a single continent (it has deployed nine operations in Europe to date), it is difficult to claim that the EU has demonstrated collective interest behind its interventions in Africa. The record is rather mixed - individual Member States (notably Belgium and France) have often initiated the launch of particular operations/missions and eventually managed to represent them as European by embedding them in the CSDP framework.

EUFOR RD Congo was based on an invitation by the UN to assist its mission (MONUC) in DR Congo (DRC) during the presidential elections in the DRC, scheduled for August 2006. However, the fact that the head of the UN Peacekeeping Department, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, was French fuelled speculations, particularly among German officials, that this was a French initiative (Alecu de Flers et al 2011: 174). Once the EU decided to support this request, the UN Security Council authorised the operation by Resolution 1671 on 25 April 2006. This was followed by an official decision by the Council of the EU, which spelt out its mandate: to support MONUC in its stabilising role during the election process by means of deterrence, protection of civilians, airport protection, and evacuation (Council of the European Union 2006). In the decision to support the UN call, two dominant factors played a role - the previous experience of the EU in the DRC with EUFOR Artemis[9] and France's ability to quickly offer relevant planning, command and conduct capabilities. Regarding the former, the

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[9] After Operation Concordia, 'Artemis' was the second military operation of the EU, deployed this time in sub-Saharan Africa (DR Congo). It was the first operation which the EU deployed on its own, i.e. not using NATO assets and capabilities. It served to pacify Bunia, the capital of the Ituri region and in doing so, it provided time for the UN to reinforce its pre-existing military mission in Ituri.

EU successfully applied the modalities of the Framework Nation scenario[10] for military operations since 2003. With regards to the latter, France was the undoubted leader in making such an operation successful; however, Paris asked Germany to take the lead this time in providing the Operational Headquarters in Potsdam. Additionally, it was important that CSDP was seen to be European rather than French (Interview with an EU Official, Brussels, 2009; Alecu de Flers et al 2011: 174-5). Thus the idea was to Europeanise African operations, though evidently France wanted to retain the capacity to influence them. In the case of EUFOR RD Congo, France was aware that Germany did not have the same capacity to execute the operation and a compromise was reached between the two concerning contributions, particularly as Germany also had caveats (Alecu de Flers et al 2011: 174-5).

Berlin was initially unwilling to commit capabilities as Africa was not one of its core strategic priorities and Germany has restrictions on the use of force. However, France kept up the pressure, and when Chirac made the request to Merkel during the latter's first Franco-German summit, it became hard for Merkel to refuse. This was bound up with suggestions that Germany should prove its crisis management credentials and uphold its commitment to multilateralism (Alecu de Flers et al 2011: 174; Interview with an EU Official, Brussels, 2009). However, Germany posed a number of conditions - the operation had to be restricted to the territory of Kinshasa, where only 100 German troops were stationed, it had to be deployed for only four months and had to be low risk (Alecu de Flers et al 2011: 175; Gross 2009: 150). Once France and Germany reached agreement on the modalities of the operation, the rest of the Member States also supported the decision for its launch. From these considerations it could appear that EUFOR RD Congo was deployed in a region where the EU has demonstrated interest. However, the operation was inspired and supported by certain Member States' interest rather than a particularly defined EU collective one. This is particularly the case considering that even the Framework Nation, Germany, supported the operation politically but was not enthusiastic about participating (Alecu de Flers et al 2011: 174).

Turning to 'when' the EU uses force - the operation came into existence in the context of the protracted civil war and inter-state conflict occurring in the DRC since the early 1990s. These conflicts had been mediated by the international community since 1999, which eventually led to the signing of a number of peace agreements and the introduction of a 'transition-to-a-peace' process through the establishment of an International Committee to Assist the Transition (CIAT). An important step in this process was the planning and conduct of the presidential elections in the DRC in 2006. However, as different militia groups regularly challenged the peace process, the UN considered reinforcing its capacity to provide deterrence by force, relying on military cooperation with the EU. Thus the EU operation was

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[10] The Framework Nation scenario refers to a particular modality for the operational command of military missions led by the EU. In contrast to the Berlin Plus Scenario in which the EU borrows assets and capabilities from NATO (i.e. using NATO's Headquarters for the operational Command and Control of EU military operation), the Framework Nation Scenario relies on command capabilities provided by the EU Member States themselves: there are five designated national Headquarters (in UK, France, Germany, Italy and Greece) which can be used on a case by case basis whenever NATO does not want to be involved (subject to decision by the Council of Ministers). For more on these modalities see Petrov (2007).

going to transpire in a challenging environment in which high-end military deterrence was most probable.

Concerning 'how' force is used - EUFOR RD Congo was another operation conducted in close cooperation with the UN, demonstrating consistency of the EU approach to crisis management by adherence to the ESS principle of multilateralism. However, cooperation with MONUC proved to be very difficult in practice, posing challenges to the successful execution of certain operational tasks (Major 2008: 27-32). The different chains of command and different responsibilities on the ground led to coordination difficulties between the respective Force commanders, leading to cumbersome interaction between EUFOR and MONUC (Major 2009: 317).

In summary, despite the number of operations/missions deployed in Africa, the EU did not display a clear-cut collective interest. Rather, certain Member States managed to upload their preferences onto the EU level with France being especially active in this respect. Indeed, when France and Belgium suggested extending the operation, Germany strongly disagreed, insisting on departure according to the initially agreed deadline (Major 2009: 316). The operation was deployed in a demanding security situation requiring serious military force committed for a sufficient period. Yet the level of ambition proved to be rather low. Cooperation with the UN was a central feature and although it was not without frictions, it proved viable for the fulfilment of the operation's mandate. Overall, the level of ambition of the operation was not high, Member States' preferences mattered and the EU opted for a familiar scenario, tested in the Balkans and the DRC in 2003. Thus one would hardly discern elements of European strategic culture present in this particular case.

2.3 EUFOR TChad/RCA

EUFOR Tchad was organised and deployed in March 2008 and lasted one year. It was a bridging operation in support of the UN mission to the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT). Its mandate was to protect civilians, refugees and displaced persons, to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid, guarantee the security of UN personnel and protect UN facilities, installations, and equipment (Council of the European Union 2007). The operation was based on UN Security Council Resolution 1778 which spelled out the above mentioned operational goals. EUFOR Tchad/RCA was smaller in number than Operation EUFOR Althea but still represented a formidable force (3700 troops), which made it the largest military operation deployed in Africa by 2008.

This operation stemmed from the ambition of the then French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner to contribute to the international humanitarian effort in Darfur. However, for both operational and political reasons (too costly, logistically difficult, and avoiding overlap with an upcoming UN-AU mission in Sudan), France opted for an operation in neighbouring Eastern Chad, where around 400,000 people had fled and found temporary asylum (Helly 2009b; Mattelaer 2008). The situation in Chad was further complicated by frequent attacks from Sudanese, Central African Republic, Janjaneed and Chadian paramilitary groups against displaced persons, refugees and humanitarian personnel. Chad's President Déby (allegedly

supported by Paris), was concerned about the rebel attacks against the government and heavily lobbied for a UN Security Council Resolution to authorise the use of force against the rebels (Interview with a Member State's official, Brussels, 2011). All this meant that the situation on the ground was demanding and necessitated robust military operation.

Initial planning proposals were made in May 2007 and France provided the main planning capacity at Centre de Planification et de Conduite des Opérations for the development of the Crisis Management Concept and later the Operation Plan. The French explicitly demonstrated their ambition to organise this operation and put forth a lot of effort to convince sceptical European and Chadian diplomatic circles of the need for it (Interview with a Member State official, Brussels, 2011). Kouchner dispatched a special advisor to tour Member States' capitals and gain support across Europe. This was combined with the work of the French diplomatic machinery in Brussels in convincing relevant EU officials that the operation would not be a 'Europeanised' French one and that it would be neutral and impartial (Helly 2009b; Interview with a Member State official, Brussels, June 2011). In addition, the EU Military Staff (EUMS) sent a fact-finding mission to Chad, led by General David Leakey (Head of the EUMS at the time), to assess the feasibility of the operation. The conclusion of this visit was that the EU involvement in the region would bring added value and that the operation was needed (Interview with a Member State official, Brussels, 2011). Still, national caveats prevailed (mostly by the UK and Germany) and it was eventually defined as a 'bridging' operation, short in duration and having a limited mandate. Reportedly this was indicative of strong concerns in London and Berlin regarding the actual motives of France in insisting on an operation in Chad (Interview with Member States' officials, Brussels, 2011).

Amidst this scepticism, the force generation process went ahead and all planning documents were duly prepared in close coordination between the French Operational Headquarters and the political-military structures in Brussels (Mattelaer 2008; Helly 2009b). Initially, however, very few Member States were ready to contribute troops and assets, with only France, Ireland and Poland declaring explicit support. With the adoption of the Concept of Operation and the start of the force generation conference (November 2007), it became clear that France had to provide most of the troops, logistical assets and tactical air transportation (Helly 2009b). Eventually, other Member States contributed forces (Belgium, Sweden, Austria and Ireland) and capabilities (Italy - field hospital), but France provided most of the command and control capacities, including the Operational Headquarters, the deputy Operation Commander and most of the staff in the Force Headquarters.

EUFOR Tchad/RCA was an operation conducted in close cooperation with the UN involving the EUMS and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). However, the EUMS-DPKO coordination was not without tensions. From the very start the DPKO was sceptical of the need for a CSDP operation in Eastern Chad and for a long time it remained unclear how to achieve a smooth transition between the outgoing EUFOR Tchad/RCA and the incoming UN MINURCAT. Eventually this was achieved on the basis of a successful re-hatting of some EUFOR troops (Polish, Irish, French, Finish, Austrian and Croatian), who remained on the ground until the end of 2009. Overall, coordination between the EU and the UN gradually improved, leading to awareness of identified lessons (Interview with a Member State's official, Brussels, 2011; Helly 2009b).

Overall, EUFOR Tchad/RCA reveals several characteristics regarding the leading questions in this analysis. Regarding 'where' operations are deployed, Africa has remained strongly within the EU crisis management radar. However, France has been the main protagonist for this, which has fuelled growing scepticism among the rest of the Member States as to its true motives. The delays in the force generation process and the disproportionate contributions made by France underline a stronger individual interest in the operation. In this respect the decision to deploy operations in Africa can hardly be related to a long-term, strategic EU interest. Regarding 'when' force is used, EUFOR Tchad/RCA gave early signs for a bigger ambition than before. However, this was watered down by a number of national caveats leading to a narrow mandate, restrained duration, and modest policy outcomes. On the question of 'how' the EU uses force, the cooperation with the UN was at the forefront and although this was not without problems, the operation demonstrated improvement in their partnership in crisis management. In short, the case of EUFOR Tchad/RCA demonstrated that all the key elements of European strategic culture were quite weak. Although other elements could be observed - i.e. multilateralism - the overall process was still in its initial stage of development.

2.4 Operation Atalanta

Representing the EU's first naval endeavour, Operation Atalanta began in November 2008 and is still ongoing. Its aim is to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia, encompassing the Gulf of Aiden, Red Sea and Somalia's southern coastal region as well as the Seychelles area (European Union External Action 2012: 3). Piracy in the area is a result of the unstable situation in Somalia and economic and social hardships suffered by its population combined with an initial reaction from the Somalis against 'the illegal presence of foreign vessels in the country's territorial waters' (Helly 2009a: 392; see also House of Lords 2010b: 50). By the end of 2008, over 130 incidents had been reported, representing a 75% increase from the previous year, with pirates beginning to take hostages and to demand ransoms. Their operational range also increased (Germond and Smith 2009: 579). The operation was originally advocated by France due to the hijacking of a French ship in 2008. Also France held the EU presidency from July to December 2008 which allowed it to pursue the idea of organising the first EU maritime operation as an added dimension to CSDP.

The reasoning behind the EU's agreement to deploy Operation Atalanta had little to do with its location although Africa is on the EU's radar where its security interests are concerned (see Germond and Smith 2009: 578-9). Rather, EU Member States emphasised three factors: The first, advocated by Germany and Sweden, was a humanitarian concern which related to the World Food Programme's (WFP) convoys taking food aid to Somalia which were targeted by pirates (Interview with a Member State Official, Brussels, 2011). The second was related to hostage taking; Estonia and Greece were interested in conducting the operation for this reason (Interview with a Member State Official, Brussels, 2012). The final reason was an economic concern with a report stating that 'about 25,000 ships transited the area every year, principally through the Gulf of Aden, representing around 25 per cent of global trade' (House

of Lords 2010a: 10). The other route – around the Cape of Good Hope – implies huge extra costs although this has to be placed in the context of increasing insurance premiums. As underlined by Germond and Smith (2009: 580), insurance costs rose from US$900 to US$9000 in one year. It was this economic cost that convinced the British to participate. Piracy is also mentioned in the ESS and was highlighted as a key security threat in the 2008 update, emphasising its incorporation in the EU's threat perception. Additionally, Germond and Smith (2009: 583) point out that 'the advocates of an ESDP naval mission framed this option as not just a measured response to a known threat, but also as an opportunity to increase the EU's scope of action and spread European/EU values'. This certainly connects with arguments made in the European Parliament and the Commission as well as the French utilising opportunities to extend the reach of CSDP.

The reasons underlined above can be seen in the operational objectives and mandate for Atalanta. It stipulates that the EU operation should deter, prevent and repress piracy and armed robbery as well as monitor fishing off the coast of Somalia, protect African Union in Somalia AMISOM and WFP ships, as well as other vulnerable vessels in the area on a case by case basis (European Union External Action 2012: 2). Thus intelligence gathering, monitoring, boarding ships and using force if necessary in addition to detaining any suspects, form part of the operation. Overall the mission comprises approximately 1400 personnel, 4-7 surface combat vessels and 2-3 Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircrafts (MPRAs) (European Union External Action 2012: 3). Protecting WFP ships is the main task of the operation, above protecting commercial shipping (see Riddervold 2011: 397). Economic interests were never spelt out within the mandate (Interview with a Member State Official, Brussels, 2011). Hence, we can see that 'European' norms including a humanitarian dimension were emphasised above those of economic interests.

Concerning 'when' the EU uses force, Germond and Smith (2009: 573) underline that, 'the operation goes well beyond the traditional Petersberg-type ESDP tasks' as Atalanta 'exercises a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence on the high seas and within another state's territorial waters in order to protect the EU's and its Member States' interests in addition to protecting the population of the state in question through the delivery of humanitarian aid'. However, the EU is not using offensive force and so whilst it might indicate a new departure, it is not within the realm of high intensity operations. Interestingly, the operation has been expanded to include attacking pirates' skiffs and equipment located on the coast of Somalia, representing lessons learnt from the original mandate (Interview with a Member State Official, Brussels, 2012). There were originally concerns among some Member States such as Italy, Ireland, Spain and Sweden regarding the impact on hostages, casualties as well as the legal basis, which were alleviated through further research (Interview with a Member State Official, Brussels, 2012). This emphasises the importance of the humanitarian aspect of European strategic culture whilst representing a step change regarding the use of force.

In relation to multilateralism, it is important to note that the operation implements several UN Security Council resolutions including 1814, 1816, 1838 (2008) as well as 1897 (see House of Lords 2010a: 8). The EU is not the only actor in the area. With the US-led Combined Maritime Forces (CTF-151), NATO and 9 other countries with operations in the area including China, India and Russia, it is 'a laboratory for international military naval

coordination' (Helly 2009a: 39). Whilst McGivern (2010: 3) points to the potential of a 'beauty contest' between the EU and NATO, Atalanta is able to coordinate with NATO and other actors with the permission of the PSC and monthly coordination meetings are held in addition to meetings at sea and Northwood. The latter is the OHQ for both Atalanta and NATO's Ocean Shield. In regards to communication, the EU OHQ runs MERCURY – which provides secure communication in relation to anti-piracy information for forces operating in EU, NATO and CTF operations. Added to this is the Shared Awareness and Deconfliction group which includes meetings in Bahrain between EU, NATO and CTF actors as well as independently operating nations such as Russia and China, the Seychelles, Interpol and merchant shipping (Muratore 2010: 100-1). This assists coordination and ensures that duplication is minimised. Indeed, coordination between Atalanta, NATO and the CTF has been described as 'excellent' (Interview with a Member State Official, Brussels, 2012).

Overall, Atalanta demonstrates that the EU is capable of strategic thinking. We concur with Germond and Smith (2009: 576) that Atalanta directly, rather than indirectly (due to location for example), serves EU Member States' interests. The EU decided to combat a multifarious problem (linked with humanitarian concerns, security as well as trade interests) with an operation which is concerned with guarding WFP aid deliveries and preventing pirate attacks rather than the offensive use of force and has been successful in conducting this (European Union External Action 2012: 3; European Union Naval Force Somalia 2014; House of Lords 2010b: 4-5). This has been done in the context of effective multilateralism through UN Security Council mandates and cooperating with other operations in the area. As Riddervold (2011: 400) points out, 'military means were established to uphold global law as part of a law enforcement operation'. Therefore, Atalanta underlines that a European strategic culture is potentially emerging.

Conclusion

Considering all four military operations explored above, determining the extent to which the EU possesses a European strategic culture is rather complex. The key factor appears to be 'where' the operation occurs. Whilst scaling up the EU's level of ambition as seen with EUFOR Tchad/RCA does not seem to be problematic on an ideational level, its location certainly is, and as with EUFOR RD Congo, reflected French rather than EU interests. Although Atalanta is also based in Africa, the focus on piracy meant it encompassed European interests. Meanwhile, Operation EUFOR Althea highlights that action in the Balkans was an uncontroversial EU interest, particularly as it had been emphasised as an EU priority. However, it has not been completely free of Member State interests as demonstrated by the negotiations regarding the extension of its mandate. This partly reflected the Member States' sensitivity regarding Atlanticism, particularly considering that Operation EUFOR Althea utilises the Berlin-Plus agreement. Meanwhile, effective multilateralism is key to the EU's approach, as all CSDP operations adhere to a relevant UN Security Council resolution and many rely on close cooperation with international actors. This also stresses that the EU's role is not to become a military power à la NATO but rather to develop a more civil-military

role to complement it as well as to pursue independent operations in areas of EU interest. Militarily it might appear that there is only an increase on the when force is used dimension as demonstrated by EUFOR TChad/RCA due to French tutelage. However, it should be noted that countries with a traditionally civilian or pacifist view on the use of force have been participating (e.g. Ireland and Austria). Thus an increase in this dimension does not appear to be problematic.

Although certain characteristics of an EU approach to security and defence have been highlighted by action on the ground, other areas have not stood up to empirical examination. Whilst the new security threats, the importance of humanitarianism, an emphasis on the region, effective multilateralism and the balance between Europeanism and Atlanticism have been stressed, questions remain whether these may expand to include areas outside of Europe. Operations in Africa are a testing ground for extending the number of tasks the EU can undertake, underlining that a strategic culture is developing over time in this one particular aspect. However, the core rationale of engaging in Africa has to be questioned unless it deals with a key threat, as Atalanta demonstrates. It appears that France has been successful in uploading its interests to the EU level and pressurises other Member States to participate in operations which encompass its area of interest. Whilst deploying operations in a region based on one or more Member States' interests can eventually lead to the area being classified as an EU interest, this has yet to occur. Therefore, increasing agreement on the EU's role in Africa has not been forthcoming.

Where does this leave a European strategic culture? Certainly CSDP has gone beyond ad hoc decision-making but is not yet at the stage of cementing these emerging norms into a more concrete white book or security strategy. In the case of Operation EUFOR Althea and Atalanta, it appears that decision-making is based on emerging norms concerning the importance of the EU's role in the region or in combating a key security threat, whilst in the two military land operations in Africa, we see that only certain areas correspond to initial institutionalisation as underlined above. Whilst working with the UN connects with the norm of multilateralism and the number of military operations/civilian missions in Africa point to some underlying EU interest, it is not clear how far this extends. Thus CSDP operations are based in part on the norms expressed within the ESS. This, in turn, is based partly on recent historical experience which Europe has collectively experienced and partly on the role it was playing in the context of the WEU, which in turn has shaped CSDP. However, these emerging norms still need to be socialised as they can spill-back into ad hoc decision-making as highlighted above.

Therefore, the results we have obtained point to the need for further research, particularly in the context of the suggestive diagram indicating the development of a European strategic culture. The first dimension pertains to policy-learning from operations as well as issues of legitimacy which are intertwined with the success of an operation. The second dimension would incorporate civilian operations to ascertain where EU interests really lie, in particular in Africa. This indicates whether we are expecting too much from a European strategic culture. If this is focused on civilian elements (which in turn emphasises the EU's role as a peace project), this does not make it any less valid. However, the various military operations (as well as military capability initiatives at the EU level), point to a desire among some

Member States (in particular France) to advance the EU's role in the military dimension. Thus, the EU does have a fledgling strategic culture based on an emphasis on regional security and combating piracy, with a developing military ambition to undertake more complex tasks, in line with the EU's effective multilateralism. How far this military ambition will develop beyond those countries with lower restrictions on the use of force will depend on future threats which Europe faces.

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