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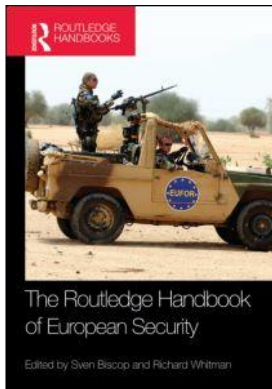

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5
EUROPEAN STRATEGIC CULTURE

Taking stock and looking ahead

Christoph O. Meyer

The rapid evolution of the European Union's security and defence policy since 1999 visible in Treaty amendments, strategy papers, institutional differentiation and carefully delimited missions has always been accompanied by scepticism about its political foundations. To what extent have all these developments been driven by a relatively detached Brussels elite supported by the short-term tactical interests of national leaders, rather than a sustained and deep-rooted convergence of political ideas and norms about the use of force? Will the EU be able and willing to act in times of crisis (Biscop, 2004)? Even at the beginning of the ESDP process, Paul Cornish and Geoffrey Edwards (Cornish and Edwards, 2001) argued that European defence and security policy needed a common strategic culture to function. They defined it as the 'institutional confidence and processes to manage and deploy military force as part of the accepted range of legitimate and effective policy instruments, together with general recognition of the EU's legitimacy as an international actor with military capabilities' (Cornish and Edwards, 2001: 587). Two years later, the European Security Strategy echoed this call for 'a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid and when necessary robust intervention' (European Council, 2003).

Optimists argue that a European strategic culture is emerging through transnational advocacy coalitions for 'Global Power Europe' (Rogers, 2009a) or find evidence of convergence in policy documents as well as the operation of EU committees (Biava, 2011). Sceptics point out that these conceptions already propose *a specific kind* of strategic culture for the EU, closer to the British and French approach to the use of force, and question whether this particular conception is sufficiently shared among other European nations to be supported when difficult decisions need to be taken about how scarce resources are to be spend, how much risk countries are willing to take with their soldiers' and foreign citizens' lives, in alliances with whom and, above all, for what kind of purpose (Meyer, 2006). They highlight the ideational differences and outright incompatibilities between the non-aligned and neutral countries in Europe, those with historically ingrained pacifism and the new members of the EU who are more concerned about their territorial integrity and political independence than the defence and promotion of human rights and international law across the globe (Lindley-French, 2002; Rynning, 2003; Hyde-Price, 2004).

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This chapter aims to examine the empirical evidence in support of and against the emergence of a European strategic culture, looking at the emergence of a Brussels-centred culture and its relationship to partially converging national cultures. It then proceeds to examine the implications of the findings for the future evolution of ESDP, its missions, capabilities and doctrines. It highlights the dynamic and at times discontinuous interplay of ideational and material factors as key determinants of ESDP, but also readily admits the scope for political leadership to shape ideas about the use of force and the role of the EU. However, before proceeding to the empirical part, the chapter will introduce the reader in brief to the argument about what a strategic culture is, how it can be measured, why it matters and how the concept can be used by those interested in understanding and shaping the evolution of security and defence in Europe.

Strategic culture: the concept and its uses

While there have been numerous scholarly attempts to consider cultural factors in warfare and consider 'national ways of war' (Uz Zaman, 2009), the first generation of academic writing using the explicit concept of strategic culture dates back to a report by Jack Snyder on the Soviet Union's nuclear strategy in 1977 for the RAND think tank in the USA (Snyder, 1977) and advanced by Colin Gray subsequently (Gray, 1981). After falling somewhat out of fashion, the concept has experienced a major resurgence in academic writing since the mid- and late 1990s, first with the pioneering work of Alistair Johnston on Chinese strategic culture (Johnston, 1995b) and then substantially advanced by other mainly US-based scholars such as Jeffrey Lantis or Peter Berger. There are close links with the work by Peter Katzenstein and others on security cultures (Katzenstein, 1996; Kirchner and Sperling, 2010) and the wave of writing in international relations employing a modernist constructivist framework (Adler, 1997), focusing on norms in relation to humanitarian intervention (Finnemore, 2003) and a 'Western way of war' (Shaw, 2005). While this is not the place for a full review of the debates about different definitions and uses of strategic culture (Greathouse, 2010), it is relevant to acknowledge one major disagreement among key authors: One strand of thinking sees culture as context, not a variable, and tends to include patterns of behaviour within its definition, while the other sees culture as a cause, either major or minor, of strategic behaviour and excludes actual behaviour from its definition.

My own perspective tends to side with the second strand. Here, strategic culture is seen as a causal factor of relatively high permanence, which has practical implications for explaining decisions about future military capabilities, the initiation and sustainability of military operations and the conditions under which dominant elites will perceive threats and opportunities. It is of particular value as a compass in situations of high uncertainty and crises when political actors tend most strongly to rely on their conventional analytical prisms and the instruments they trust, rather than question the adequacy of their pre-existing worldviews and beliefs about what works. The second function casts strategic culture as an annotated roadmap for accumulative and medium-term choices about the trajectory of a given political community, providing it not only with a sense of orientation and direction, but also with an understanding of which roads may be the least risky and quickest for getting from A to B. However, strategic cultures should not be confused with official strategy and planning papers, but operate at several higher levels of generality and may easily contradict some of the official analysis and make it redundant once real decisions have to be taken to put it in practice. Culture is much more powerful than paper, even though the paper itself is part of the discourse, which constitutes, reaffirms and occasionally also challenges the pre-existing culture.

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What is strategic culture? First, I define it as the *socially transmitted, identity-derived norms, ideas, and habits of mind 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.* This definition makes explicit reference to norms in order to allow for a more nuanced description of different components of culture, which may at times contradict each other. Norms refer not just to notions of morality, about 'what is right', but also to beliefs about what 'works' in security and defence affairs (Farrell, 2005). In this sense, norms are closely related to ideas, defined as deeply ingrained views and perceptions of a political entity's proper role in the world, its perception of how states interact in international affairs and how security is achieved. Second, the definition reflects an understanding that norms, ideas and practices are not isolated variables, but should be rather seen as elements of and derived from an overarching identity narrative of a given community as it relates to the outside world. Third, this definition highlights how strategic culture can be quite heterogeneous and contested within societies in just the same way that national identity narratives are. Norms within the context of strategic culture can be conceptualized as beliefs about what is appropriate or legitimate or just in relation to the goals, ends and modalities concerning the use of force. And finally, habits of the mind can be broadly understood as cognitively internalized ways of discussing (societies), deciding (political actors) and doing things (armed forces) in matters of security and defence. These are mental constructs, which are acquired through experiences of success and reinforced through constant repetition as regularly occurs in any given policy field, but particularly in the realm of defence with its emphasis on doctrines, training and manoeuvres.

The value of strategic culture lies in its relative permanence over time, although this does not suggest that strategic culture is either monolithic or immutable. In fact, the very idea of the emergence of a European strategic culture is premised on processes of learning, socialization, peer pressure and advocacy at the level of elites and even whole societies, which would allow for the destabilization of existing norms, the introduction of new norms and ideas and their subsequent affirmation and internalization through practice and experience. Cultural change at the highest level of community identity narratives usually requires major crises such as military defeat to take place, whereas other forms of more gradual change in some normative domains may occur more gradually through the force of learning from minor failures or institutional socialization, as well as advocacy coalition and norm entrepreneurs. Studying changes in cultures is crucial to the debate about whether a European strategic culture is emerging among EU officials, key national representatives and senior offices on the one hand and those at the level of broader national elites, rank-and-file military personnel and public attitudes on the other.

In contrast to tanks, satellites and military personnel, strategic culture and its ideational component are more difficult to count and measure, which makes agreeing on how 'European' or 'common' the strategic culture is and how much convergence has occurred among European nations extraordinary difficult. There is no single agreed method of how to empirically analyse culture, but one can distinguish between those who draw on their understanding of historical experiences and actual behaviour to describe a given culture and those who use a range of empirical methods to inductively arrive at what it looks like and how it is changing by, for instance, analysing different official and non-official texts and discourses, conducting interviews and surveys among elite actors and taking major trends in public opinion into account. However, a first step to measure strategic culture is to unpack it a little more: it has been suggested that we should look at four types of norms regarding defence policy: (i) goals for which the use of force is considered legitimate, e.g. territorial

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defence, defence of human rights, pre-emptive action or cultural and territorial expansion; (ii) the degree to which force has to be domestically and internationally authorized in order to be considered legitimate, e.g. with or without UN mandate, peer support, parliamentary approval or consent of constitutional courts; (iii) the way in which force can be used, in particular, the tolerance to risks arising for a country's own and foreign troops and civilians; and finally, (iv) norms relating to the way in which a state should cooperate with other states and/or alliances, covering the spectrum from neutrality, acting within and through the European Union or together with the United States.

European strategic culture(s): compatibility and convergence

A coherent and deep European strategic culture would need to capture and draw upon similar norms, ideas and practices regarding security and defence policy and the legitimate use of force. If we go back to our generic definition of strategic culture, the key question for whether one can speak of a *European* strategic culture is, first, *whether there is an identifiable set of norms, beliefs and habits of mind regarding the use of force shared by the relevant political actors and societies*, and second, *whether the hierarchy and interpretation of these norms is derived from a sufficiently shared identity narrative of a European security community.*

The first problem here is how you define the circle of relevant political actors and societies. Strictly speaking, decision-making on ESDP matters relies on the unanimity rule so that all 27 national governments wield a formal veto on all operations and they all have varying degrees of say. De facto, however, the number of member states with the relevant interests, capabilities and experience which have shaped the course of ESDP together with the political actors in the EU central institutions is limited, while the rest tended to acquiesce, even if not all necessarily agreed with each and every mission or some of the wording in strategy documents. So only a limited number of member states are de facto shaping and participating in European security and defence policies, although this observation does not preclude the possibility that individual countries may raise concern in particular cases when vital national interests are affected such as Greece and Cyprus over relations to Turkey, the Baltic States over security issues relating to Russia and so forth. With this caveat in mind, it may make sense to look at degree of ideational convergence and commonality among the Big Three, plus Sweden, the Netherlands, Italy and Poland.

If one focuses on central institutions it is probably easiest to identify elements of an emerging European strategic culture in the discourses, both written and oral, which have emanated from the Council Secretariat under the previous High Representative Javier Solana (Howorth, 2007). The EU has experienced a rapid growth of personnel active in the broad area of security and defence policy, most importantly within the Council Secretariat through the strengthening of the HR Policy Unit and the EU Joint Situation Centre (SITCEN). In addition, we have seen the creation of regularly meeting committees composed of national ambassadors permanently based in Brussels, who have developed a common *esprit de corps* and a commitment to making ESDP a success. The socialization and cultivation effects arising from these structures, especially the PSC, the EUMC and the EUMS, have already been well studied and are likely to continue (Howorth, 2004; Duke, 2005; Juncos and Pomorska, 2006; Howorth, 2010; Biava, 2011). Hopes have been expressed that the new provisions for the double-hatted High Representative and the building of the new External Action Service would give an impetus to convergence in perceptions, strategies and actions (Whitman and Juncos, 2009). Yes, these have not materialized yet, as member states gave the important HR position to the political lightweight Catherine Ashton, who visibly struggled to make good

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and timely judgements and to express a strategic vision for the EU in foreign affairs during the first two years of her tenure (Howorth, 2010).

As James Rogers shows, key staff in the secretariat together with a limited number of actors in some national ministries, think tanks and academia formed a transnational discourse coalition in favour of making Europe 'more capable, more active, more coherent' as well as more 'global' (Biscop, 2009b; Rogers, 2009a). A European Union which does not shy away from using force abroad in pursuit of both altruistic goals relating to the mitigation of humanitarian disasters under UN auspices as well as for conventional self-interested purposes such as eliminating training-grounds for terrorist groups, securing trade and energy supplies, deterring potentially belligerent authoritarian regimes and soft-balancing of rapidly arming global powers such as China. Optimists can point to relatively consistent if not always very specific themes in the official discourse such as the emphasis on civilian as well as military means, its preference for broader international legitimacy through 'effective multilateralism' and support for international law and the downplaying of 'power' for its own sake.

This discourse has significant appeal across the EU's institutions, partly because it remains vague in key respects such as its relationship to the USA and NATO and questions of prioritization of goals and means. We also need to be careful not to mistake the rhetoric in official documents, even if they are labelled strategies, for those actual shared ideas, beliefs and deeply rooted habits of mind among the relevant actors and emerging habits of practice. An analysis of the 23 CSDP operations carried out since 2003 shows a clear preference for civilian over military means, a preference for close cooperation with UN and NATO, aversion to military risk through limited mandates in terms of scope and time as well as a divergence between the doctrinal commitment to prevention and the actual preoccupation with post-conflict stabilization missions (Biava, 2011). It is arguable that the antipathy to coercion varies somewhat between the EU Commission and the Council Secretariat, but on the whole the EU is more reluctant than for example either France or Britain to back up demands and policies with coercive means and prefers to work with positive incentives. What is generally true of the EU's behaviour in external affairs, is particularly true for the domain of using force, as Matlary argues when stating that the EU's strategic culture is incapable of 'coercive diplomacy' (Matlary, 2006).

Switching to the national level we must distinguish between strategic cultures of a country as a whole and military cultures. They are related but distinct. In fact, convergence pressures are most visible when looking at the transformation processes that have affected Europe's militaries and their relationships to the societies in which they are embedded (Forster, 2006; Mérand, 2008). One argument is that national strategic cultures are changing through intensified transnational links and interactions among national militaries, affecting particularly but not only the higher echelons (King, 2006; Mérand, 2008; Koivula, 2009). This is due to both intensified training exercises as well as interactions on military missions. The total number of European troops deployed on operations abroad rose from 39,000 in 1995 to just over 71,000 in 2007 (Giegerich and Nicoll, 2008). Mérand argues that gradual and accumulative effect of both training and operations is the deprioritization of the central military norm of patriotism – dying for one's country (Mérand, 2003, 2008). The emergence of transnational military links is reinforced by a strong pan-European trend towards a professionalization of the armed services (Giegerich and Nicoll, 2008), including a dramatic shift away from conscription and towards all-volunteer forces. After Belgium and the Netherlands made the start in the mid-1990s, they were followed, *inter alia*, by France (2001), Spain (2002), Italy (2006), Poland (2008) and Sweden (2009). Even Germany, one of the last notable EU countries to still hold on to conscription at least legally, decided to suspend it from March 2011

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onwards – a momentous step towards a professionalization of the armed forces. These trends support Anthony King's argument that 'a more common, though not unified European military culture may become more discernible' (King, 2006: 273). This shift towards the expeditionary model and more professionalization does not necessarily equate to 'better warfighting' given stagnant or falling levels of defence spending. Tommi Koivula argues that the emergent EU military ethos is *not* geared towards high-intensity combat situations and emphasizes instead the mastery of a broader range of civilian skills (Koivula, 2009). This would tally with the argument made by Martin Shaw (2005) that Western societies are becoming increasingly risk-averse regarding the use of force and the 'culture of constraint' pervading EU institutions.

If we want to look at the strategic rather than military cultures of some of the most relevant countries, we can draw on two comparative studies of strategic cultures in the EU by single authors (Giegerich, 2006; Meyer, 2006) and one multi-authored project which investigated security rather than strategic cultures of key countries, including European ones (Kirchner and Sperling, 2010). Both Meyer and Giegerich found that the Big Three had become more similar to each other or more compatible in some respects, even though Giegerich hesitates to see this growing similarity as an indicator of a more deep-rooted, long-term convergence of cultures. In the following, I will attempt to elaborate on areas both of compatibility and incompatibility across the four dimensions concerning the use of force between Germany, France, Britain and Poland.

Probably the most publicized area of normative incompatibility concerns the Franco-British problem of how to relate to the United States in security and defence matters. It is this single issue, 'our Mount Everest' as a British diplomat called it, which has overshadowed the high degree of Anglo-French compatibility across many of the key dimensions concerning the use of force. Both countries have a relatively high degree of risk tolerance, both agree essentially on the importance of the UN and the legitimate goals for the use of force. However, the question of political and military autonomy from the USA remains divisive, especially at the level of experts and decision-makers. British officials find the French deep-rooted concern with independence from the USA 'bizarre' (interview, September 2004), especially when they see it as getting in the way of what British decision-makers frame as pragmatic and best solutions. 'Why should we not follow the leadership of a country on whose capabilities we depend and whose values we share?' (interview, September 2005). Conversely, many of the French interviewees characterize the relationship of the UK to the USA as one of 'servant and master' (interviews, September 2004). There is little equivalence in the UK to the anti-hegemonic instinct among the French policy community and public opinion.

Yet the salience of the issue is declining in the eyes of British public opinion as attachment to the USA has weakened. In the case of France, a generational change is under way as younger members of the security and defence policy community are gradually moving into positions of power, less influenced by Gaullist attitudes to the USA and in favour of finding a common ground for cooperation. The coming to power of President Sarkozy and his decision to take France back into the military command structure of NATO epitomizes this shift, even though the election of a Democratic US president will have also helped in selling this highly symbolic step to the wider French political elites and public opinion. In sum, incompatibility on this issue between Britain and France is still high, but the gap is closing, especially at the level of British public opinion and to a somewhat lesser degree among elites.

The second most important area of normative incompatibility is between France and Britain on the one hand and Germany, and, with some minor qualifications, Poland, on the other, regarding modes of war fighting. The deployment of ground troops in the case

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Table 5.1 Convergence progress across norms

Horizontal perspective	
Broadly compatible	• De-prioritization of territorial defence and agreement on humanitarian intervention, including peace-making. • Agreement on stronger role for EU but without ceding sovereignty. • Agreement on desirability of UN authorization. • General preference for civilian over military instruments.
Incompatible, but possible medium-term convergence	• Use of force for tackling short-term security threats. • Relationship to NATO and the USA (among publics). • Parliamentary approval for use of force/domestic authorization thresholds. • European defence as step towards deeper political integration.
Broadly incompatible	• Use of force for democracy promotion and economic interests. • Relationship to the USA (especially among elites). • Use of force with high risk of casualties against enemy forces.

Source: Meyer 2006.

of Kosovo was assessed in Germany quite differently from how it was assessed in the other three countries, as German commentators advocated a return to diplomacy in reaction to pictures of civilian casualties from NATO bombing. More so than decision-makers and experts, German public opinion is very concerned not to cause foreign casualties, be they military or civilian, and thus shies away from all kinds of military missions which would involve the high end of using force. Interestingly, in German strategic culture, foreign casualties can be as difficult to digest as their own casualties since they raise the trauma of guilt and self-induced downfall. We can see this sensitivity played out in the public inquiry and resignations of the German defence minister over the involvement of German officers in ordering a US airstrike on a Taliban-hijacked petrol vehicle in September 2009 in Kunduz, Afghanistan, which killed 91, most of them civilians from nearby villages.

In contrast, Polish citizens voice a high readiness to die for their country, defending national independence and pride, but also, somewhat contradictorily, a very low degree of tolerance for their own casualties, as witnessed in the case of the Iraq occupation, because they raise the trauma of all-out war and defeat in World War II. The difference between Germany and Poland regarding risk tolerance is not only the much greater pacifist impulse and ideational underpinning, but also the high level of German domestic and international authorization required. The combination of both factors makes Germany an awkward partner to work with in security and defence matters from the British and French perspective, even though domestic authorization has also become more difficult in these countries.

The third major area of normative incompatibility concerns the question of whether security and defence should no longer be primarily concerned with defending the home country, but directed to other purposes. Both Germany and Poland are more attached to this goal than the permanent members of the UN Security Council, Britain and France, but have also taken steps towards developing a more flexible and capable professional army by suspending conscription, although strained resources will severely limit this transformation in the German case. Apart from the cleavage on the issue of territorial defence, substantial differences emerge between Germany and the other three countries regarding the pre-emptive use of force to tackle threats. German elites as well as decision-makers are highly sceptical

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of using force for any purpose other than for humanitarian reasons and against an immediate attack by a clearly identifiable enemy. The German centre-right government's abstention from the UN-authorized operation to protect civilians rising up against the Gaddafi regime in spring 2011 illustrates the widespread concern about the use of force to promote de facto regime change and the risks such operations entail (König, 2011). Another illustrative example is the resignation of German President Horst Köhler on 31 May 2010 after facing strong criticism from across the political spectrum for suggesting in an interview that German troops in Afghanistan were defending German economic interests as well, rather than using the standard argument of foregrounding a humanitarian justification of rebuilding a war-torn society mandated by the UN.

The fourth area of normative/ideational incompatibility is the question of building European defence as part of the political unification process, which may involve the ceding of some political autonomy in military and defence matters. This last area is important because it relates to whether conflicts between norms can be resolved by reference to an overarching identity narrative shared among members of a single community. There is broad support among both decision-makers and publics in most countries for a European Union that has an important role in also protecting its citizens militarily. While military means are not ruled out, the main preference is for the EU as a 'soft power', which promotes peace primarily through non-coercive means. Only a very small minority of decision-makers as well as members of the public say that defence should be solely a matter for national governments.

Beyond the conception of the EU as being active in providing security and promoting peace, the contention begins. While there is considerable support among citizens for using a kind of European army to 'defend European rights and undertake humanitarian missions', support among decision-makers and the public in Britain is considerably lower than in the other three countries. At the same time, support among British experts and decision-makers for the EU to advance its 'economic, political and security interest' with all available instruments, including the military, is considerably higher than average. I would argue that these cross-national differences, especially the stance of the UK and Poland, can at least in part be attributed to incompatibilities between the two countries' national identity conceptions and their perception of the EU.

In the case of Germany, support for ESDP is to a large extent driven by the positive vision of the EU as a political entity that can supplement Germany's fragile national identity and through which power can be exercised without risking the pitfalls of the country's past. For the French elites, the European project also has considerable ideational resonance, not least in the area of defence affairs, where French armed forces had for decades been somewhat isolated by virtue of staying outside of the NATO military structure. For Britain, however, discussing the finality of European defence, as with European integration more broadly, remains a highly controversial issue.

On the one hand, we can find considerable support for the vision of the EU as a global superpower pursuing its political and economic interests in a toned-down kind of neo-colonialism. However, British respondents were considerably more sceptical about the statement that the EU is a community of values that should use its means for the promotion of human rights and democracy across the world. British decision-makers predominantly have a vision of the EU as a kind of toolbox, which offers persuasive instruments to make other countries improve their capabilities as well as material instruments to advance the island's hard interests, but not as an entity that has its own values and takes decisions that may contradict British preferences. While the British public is generally, if only moderately, in support of building ESDP, it is less convinced about its purposes, especially if the enterprise is framed as diminishing the

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independence of British defence policy, the primacy of NATO and the standing of the British armed forces. The instinctive scepticism towards building European defence is most salient within the Conservative party.

For Poland, European political union and integrated defence are intrinsically problematic because of a historically rooted lack of trust in key neighbours that hinders the country from considering itself as a full part of a European security and political community. The election of Donald Tusk as Poland's prime minister in November 2007 has shifted policy towards a greater engagement with the EU, but one must doubt how quickly this will impact on the level of trust among Polish elites and publics in their neighbours. The decision by the new US administration to shelve missile defence in Eastern Europe may only reawaken fears of abandonment, even if it may benefit the EU, rather than NATO.

Conclusion

We are left with the picture of a European strategic culture like a thinly stretched hourglass. We find at the top institutional level relatively high and growing coherence and convergence of shared ideas about nature and hierarchy of threats that need to be addressed and the utility of the EU. At the bottom operational level of using force, we can witness national militaries deployed on a range of carefully delimited and legitimized multi-national missions and regularly training together within both EU and NATO contexts. These missions generally reflect and solidify the emerging strategic consensus, although they are often more limited in scope and less focused on prevention than one would have expected when reading the strategy documents. On the other hand, we must note a considerable degree of diversity and incompatibility among national political elites as well as the publics. Only a small set of norms is fully shared among key countries, without even considering some of the more fundamental concerns of non-aligned countries such as Austria and Ireland. In so far as role conceptions and identities are concerned, broad support for the EU as a global actor with a commitment to promoting humanitarian causes and peace exists, but there is currently no consensus on the promotion of democracy and *realpolitik* interests through coercive means.

These findings would best match the role model of a rather risk-averse Humanitarian Power Europe, rather than the vision of Global Power Europe. If different norms clash in a challenging case such as Iraq in 2003 or more recently in Libya in 2011, it remains extraordinarily difficult to reach a common European decision on priorities of response given that the underlying identity narratives remain quite stable and continue to raise compatibility problems. At the same time, many of the convergence pressures are likely to endure, such as increasingly common threat perceptions among Brussels-based elites and beyond; transnational advocacy coalitions and media pressure in favour of humanitarian interventions; further increasing cost pressures on national armed forces to transform and Europeanize; training for and deployment on common missions; institutional socialization through the External Action Service. Divergence forces are on balance weaker, but could arise, *inter alia*, from an unexpected crisis that overtaxes the EU's ability to agree and act, drastic changes in US leadership and foreign policy towards unilaterism, changing behaviour of Russia towards its 'near abroad', a confrontation between the British government and the EU over the repatriation of powers or deeper integration and the wider repercussions from a Eurozone crisis spilling over to the EU system as a whole. On balance, time is on the side of those who want to turn the EU into a fully-fledged security actor, but they are well advised not to overestimate progress and the permissive public consensus on European defence, to exercise great caution in selecting the missions undertaken and, finally, to develop the EU's ability

to implement and take credit for preventive action. In this sense, research on a European strategic culture is neither inherently optimistic nor pessimistic about the EU as a security actor, but can act as socio-political reality check on Europeans' ability to think alike about the uses of force.

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