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SOLVING THE RUBIK'S CUBE OF EUROPEAN SECURITY STRATEGY

Strategic Culture in the European External Action
Service

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Abstract

A rapidly changing, increasingly complex and contentious global security environment has led to the European Union re-assessing its role as a strategic actor through the drafting of 2016's new security strategy: the European Global Strategy. The new strategy has furthermore been followed by a number of initiatives to strengthen the military dimension of the EU. In the midst of this are the High Representative of Foreign and Security Policy and the diplomatic service of the EU – the European External Action Service – supporting the High Representative in her task to bring consistency to the foreign and security policy of the EU.

These new developments entail new empirical material, which warrants for new systematic inquiry into the EU as a strategic actor. The present thesis engages in that endeavour through the theoretical framework of strategic culture, applying it on the European External Action Service. In its coordinative role to overbridge the three-dimensional foreign and security policy institutional structures – a bureaucratic Rubik's cube – the EEAS may prove an important piece in the puzzle of the EU's strategic culture.

The present study argues that the EU strategic community now is at a critical juncture, at which it is susceptible to alterations in its strategic culture. Consequently, elements of a distinctive shared strategic culture are emerging within the EEAS, characterised mainly by a three-dimensional – Rubik's cube-like – integrated approach to conflicts and crises that takes into consideration time, geography and the thematic issue at stake. This integrated approach is considered distinctive to the EU, as the EU can draw on a unique range of capacities at its disposal. Finally, this thesis offers the conceptualisation of the EEAS as a physically embodied epistemic community, which due to its expertise on security and defence and control over knowledge and information is well-positioned to be the engine room of European strategic culture.

List of Abbreviations

<u>Abbreviation</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
<i>Organisations/Institutions</i>	
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
EDA	European Defence Agency
EEAS	European External Action Service
EU	European Union
EUMC	European Union Military Committee
EUMS	European Union Military Staff
ISIL/Da'esh	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
Nato	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
<i>Other</i>	
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
HR/VP	High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission
MS	Member States (of the European Union)
PESCO	Permanent Structured Cooperation

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1. Introduction

1.1. State of Play

Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free. The violence of the first half of the 20th Century has given way to a period of peace and stability unprecedented in European history.¹

The opening words of the European Security Strategy of 2003, drafted by the EU's then High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, draw a stark contrast to that of last years' depiction of the world in the EU's new security strategy:

We live in times of existential crisis, within and beyond the European Union. [...] To the east, the European security order has been violated, while terrorism and violence plague North Africa and the Middle East, as well as Europe itself.²

The Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (the Global Strategy/the EUGS) , drafted by the incumbent High Representative Federica Mogherini, suggests that the EU now operates in a rapidly changing and more contentious global security environment than before. In response, a process of re-assessing the European Union's strategic role in the world has been set in motion through the drafting of the new security strategy, followed by a number of initiatives to deepen European defence cooperation and strengthen the European defence industry. This calls for new systematic study of the European Union as a strategic actor, and this master's thesis will accordingly explore strategic culture within the EU in general and in the European External Action Service in particular. Strategic culture in the context of this study is the theoretical notion that members of a given strategic community (in this case the EU) share beliefs and ideals about strategy, emanating from its unique geography, historical experiences and internal political and social conditions, generating distinctive strategic preferences and expectations about strategic behaviour with regard to security and defence. Furthermore, the present thesis partly draws on the theoretical notion of epistemic communities as complementary to strategic culture, in order to improve the understanding of the External Action Service's role in the wider EU institutional structures and as a potential generator of strategic culture.

¹ High Representative and the EU (December 2003), *A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy*, p. 1. *Primary sources will be referred to by footnotes.*

² High Representative and Vice-President and the EU (June 2016), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, p. 13. Henceforth referred to as *The Global Strategy*.

One of the main challenges in previous studies on strategic culture in the EU has been where within a strategic community to look for such a culture. Facing issues of incoherency in EU external policy, the Lisbon Treaty abolished the pillar structure and widened the mandate of the EU's High Representative for foreign and security policy (HR/VP), making the holder of that office both Vice-President of the (European) Commission and permanent Chair of the Foreign Affairs Council. The intention was to address incoherency by overbridging the institutional divide between the supranational and the intergovernmental levels, thus strengthening the HR/VP's mandate of ensuring the consistency and coordination of the EU's external action. To that end, a new institutional body dubbed the European External Action Service (the EEAS/the External Action Service/the Service) was established in 2010 to serve the HR/VP in carrying out his or her task of ensuring consistency and coordination.³ In its mission, the External Action Service Action Service was set to be institutionally autonomous and to serve the HR/VP in his or her roles on all levels. In order to ensure that institutional autonomy, its staff was determined to comprise officials from the entire European bureaucratic spectrum: from the supranational (the Commission), the intergovernmental (the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union) and the national levels (national administrations). The EEAS furthermore assumed permanent chairmanship of the working groups and committees in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) structures. This was the first transnational diplomatic service, serving the interests of a regional multilateral organisation, and became operational in 2010 after a decision of the European Council.⁴ The European External Action Service is the case in this study of EU strategic culture. The autonomous and coordinative nature of the EEAS' role in its mission to bring coherence to EU foreign and security policy makes it a potential engine of, and thus crucial case in the study of, EU strategic culture. This master's thesis relies on the empirical material of sixteen semi-structured interviews with officials in the EEAS, as well as the qualitative content analysis of a select number official documents related to strategy, security and defence, published in the past year.

³ Article 27(3), *Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community*, signed at Lisbon, 13 December 2007.

⁴ European Council, 2010/427/EU: *Council Decision of 26 July 2010 establishing the organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service*.

1.2. Research Aim

The recent initiatives on increased security and defence cooperation in the EU reiterates the importance of mapping and understanding strategic culture within the EU. The case of the European External Action Service could prove an important piece in that puzzle. The aim of this thesis is consequently to explore:

- to what extent there is a distinctive, shared strategic culture within the EEAS and
- what characterises strategic culture within the EEAS

Exploring this inquiry entails a further set of questions that relate to the strategic culture concept: when, where, how and why should the EU act in order to pursue its external interests and ensure its security objectives?

1.3. Outline of the Thesis

This master's thesis starts off in chapter 2 by reviewing previous research on the European Union as a global, security and strategic actor, and on the EEAS in order to disentangle the research puzzle and this study's contribution to those fields of research. In the third chapter, the theoretical origins and various strands of strategic culture are accounted for and discussed in order to establish the points of departure and theoretical framework for the present thesis, and how it operationally shapes the gathering and the analysis of the empirical material. The notion of epistemic communities will also be presented in chapter 3. In chapter 4 the methodological approach, of which 16 semi-structured interviews and qualitative content analysis are the cornerstones, is outlined. In chapter 5 the empirical findings are presented and analysed, and subsequently discussed further in chapter 6. Chapter 7 finally offers a conclusion and suggestions for future research.

2. Previous Research

2.1. Previous Research on the EU as a Global Actor and Strategic Player

A key question in the academic debate on the EU as a global actor is the nature of its actions in international politics. This is closely connected to strategic culture, and provides important perspectives on strategic preferences and the means a strategic actor employs in order to achieve its security objectives. François Duchêne (1972) offered the idea of the EU as a civilian power using non-military means, such as economic instruments. This was debunked by Hedley Bull (1982), who found that the notion disregarded the role of military power, and Bull conversely argued that the EU should improve its security and defence capacities. Ian Manners found that the EU rather was “a promoter of norms” (2002, p. 236), and that the EU’s activity internationally was mainly characterised by the diffusion of norms and values. Pachecho Pardo (2012, p. 2) furthermore argues that the EU is in fact a normal power, seeking to obtain its security objectives like any other actor. Christopher Hill (1993, pp. 315-318) identified a capability-expectations gap, finding that the EU – despite having much potential – lacked the capabilities to answer to the high expectations on its role as a global actor.

At the core of the strategic culture concept are attitudes to the use of force. The military dimension in relation to other capabilities is thus significant to the notion of strategic culture. Jolyon Howorth (2002, p. 1) contends that the EU, while not being a distinctive military actor, abandoned its role as an exclusively civilian actor with the launch of the CSDP. The European Defence Agency (EDA), established in 2004 to assist the development of military capabilities for crisis management and to strengthen European military industry, was another significant innovation. (Cornish & Edwards 2004, p. 805). The Lisbon Treaty furthermore strengthened institutional infrastructure to support military cooperation by making it permanent (Biava *et. al.* 2011, p. 1235) through such instances as the EU Military Staff (EUMS) and the EU Military Committee (EUMC). For some authors, deepening military cooperation through permanent institutional structures within the EU provides evidence of political will to have the capacity and capabilities to act against strategic threats. Accordingly, these authors have argued that EU is moving away being a distinctively civilian or normative security actor towards a more normal power.

Moreover, some authors have focused on whether the EU is a strategic actor and – if it is – what kind of a strategic actor it is – when, where and how does it act? These questions are connected to the nature of the EU's global behaviour, and at the same time an important tenet in strategic culture.

Cornish and Edwards outline a number of central issues akin to the notion of a strategic culture for the EU as a security actor. First of all, what scope should the EU have as global security actor. The Atlanticist-Europeanist divide between EU Member States constitutes a fundamental concern in European security, which leads to some uncertainty and ambiguity regarding who should do what (Cornish & Edwards 2001, p. 589). The core issue here lies in what the division of labour should look like between the EU and Nato. Should the EU acquire military capabilities to partially or entirely replace Nato as the guarantor of the security of the European continent, or should the EU merely supplement the responsibilities undertaken by Nato?

Howorth (2002, p. 22) notes, relating to the use of force notion in strategic culture, that a central question in the EU's military capacity build-up is the issue of whether there is to emerge an intervention culture, when should the EU intervene in crises and when should it act autonomously? While some may regard European security responsibility as a zero-sum game, Cornish and Edwards (2004, pp. 815 & 819) in a progress report following their 2001 article found that the EU benefited from a convalescent and constructive relationship with Nato. In a common 2002 declaration the EU and Nato set out the principles for their relationship to one-another, and manifested the idea that they were two different kinds of security actors, complementing each other (Cornish & Edwards 2004, p. 816). Furthermore, the Naples agreement of 2003 acknowledged that the EU ought to have some autonomous capacities, but embedded it within the pre-existing European security architecture shepherded by Nato. (Cornish & Edwards 2004, p. 812). Howorth (2002, p. 27) contemplated that a new transatlantic link ought to find a new balance in which the EU would merit autonomous capability as a security player by proving at least regional crisis management leadership. Strategic autonomy is a central tenet in understanding strategic culture, and is in the case of the EU closely related to Nato. Strategic autonomy and the relationship with Nato will thus be explored further in the analytical framework of this thesis.

Some observers have contended that there is no satisfactory reason to dismiss the idea of a European strategic culture (Cornish & Edwards 2001, p. 588). Some have even estimated that there are prospects – or even a necessity – for the emergence of a shared European strategic culture through socialisation processes within the CFSP and CSDP structures (Howorth 2002, p. 5). Others have been less optimistic, contending that as the EU is not a state but an intergovernmental forum for bargaining, it would be unable to forge a strategic culture that adds up to more than the sum of its parts. The argument has been that the wide range of different strategic cultures throughout the EU and a lack of general accord among Member States on the means and ends in EU security policy indicate such an inability, and some have rejected the idea that centralisation could overbridge differences as such an effort would lack legitimacy (Biava *et.al.* 2011, pp. 1230-1233). Nevertheless, game-changing innovations like the cross-institutional External Action Service provide instances that could prove more susceptible than other institutional bodies to a socialisation process that generates a shared strategic culture, which is worth exploring.

Matlary (2006, pp. 115-118) argues that the EU has the potential of transcending national strategic cultures and build a European strategic culture based on the concept of human security, which would correspond to the responsibility-to-protect principle, (the shared responsibility of the international community to intervene when a state fails to protect its civilian population). Consequently, the EU should engage in international crisis management whenever a government is unable to protect its civilian population. For Matlary, the responsibility-to-protect concept perfectly weds human security and human rights with military power. Accordingly, Matlary (2006, p. 106) argues that this is the way in which the EU as a security player must be understood: as wanting to use force for good purposes, an understanding that is attached notion of the EU as a civilian actor and normative actor at heart. It also relates closely to the idea that legitimacy is key for intervention in the new international order that the EU seeks to establish. Legitimacy when intervening should not only be derived from ethical pleas such as the protection of civilians, but should – as laid down in the European Security Strategy of 2003 – be multilaterally anchored in international law through the UN (Matlary 2006, pp. 113-115; Biava *et.al.* 2011, pp. 1234-1235). Acting legitimately according to international law would engender certain consequences for the EU's strategic autonomy, and for its intervention culture or attitude to the use of force. This approach would mean that the EU ultimately is strategically dependent upon the United

Nations or, in certain scenarios, on Nato. In sum, Matlary argues that the EU's strategic behaviour depends upon a security policy that is de-territorialized and de-nationalized. Its strategic behaviour thus hinges upon humanitarian and democratic ideals that require that its security actions benefit human rights and security for individuals, rather than on EU interests (Matlary 2006, pp. 108-109).

2.2. The European External Action Service in Previous Research

Since its establishment, the European External Action Service has received a great amount of scholarly attention. There is arguably good reason for putting the EEAS at the centre of attention in any study of EU foreign policy considering its unique role in the wider institutional structure. As put by scholar Rebecca Adler-Nissen (2015, p. 17), the European External Action Service is perhaps the most important invention since the introduction of a common currency in 1999. Much of the scholarly attention directed towards the External Action Service has, as noted by Juncos and Pomorska (2014, p. 302), revolved around the political circumstances surrounding the creation of the Service, as well as around its performance and functioning within the legal system of the EU. However, more recently, a number of scholars have turned their attention to exploring the mind-sets within the EEAS and the role of the Service within the wider EU institutional framework.

Studying the EEAS as an administrative space, Thomas Henökl (2014, p. 467) finds that the Service since its creation has developed a technical expertise, action capacities and resources, which have meant an increase in bureaucratic autonomy for the External Action Service, while Member States gradually are transferring core state powers to the EU. This, argues Henökl, has contributed considerably to an enhanced administrative capacity-building in the EU. This underlines the centrality of the EEAS as and its growing capacity to bring consistency to foreign and security policy in the EU, making it a potential hub for a shared European strategic culture.

On the other hand, some previous literature finds evidence of a fragmented organisation. Juncos and Pomorska (2014, pp. 315-316) purport that there is a lack of an *Esprit de Corps* within the EEAS. They argue that their findings point to the lack of strong internal leadership, clear goals or good communication to convey those goals to the staff. There are no good training arrangements that could help weld the staff together, which – keeping in mind the diverse backgrounds of Service officials – has led to a low level of mutual trust within the

organisation. Similarly, Thomas Henökl finds that the diverse composition of staff from different layers of European bureaucracy and the lack of clearly defined EU interests have led to conflicting institutional logics (2015, pp. 687-688), which has resulted in great behavioural ambiguity within the EEAS. Henökl argues that officials follow different logics and political signals depending on the source of their recruitment to diverging expectations and ambiguous organisational goals (Henökl 2015, pp. 700-701). The lack of an *Esprit de Corps* and conflicting institutional logics constitute major challenges to the emergence of a shared strategic culture. Henökl furthermore concludes that the Service is the product of competing interests and an outgoing process of negotiation and contestation. If the outgoing process is no more than the sum of its parts and the EEAS itself is characterised by a lack of cohesiveness, this suggests the unlikelihood of a distinct and shared strategic culture.

Conversely however, Henökl (2015, pp. 700-701), finds that the hybridity of the EEAS and its natural internalising of conflicts may ultimately lead to positive feedback effects in the development of a common organisational culture. Juncos and Pomorska also concede that given the young age of the organisation, an *Esprit de Corps* may emerge in time. Important developments in the defence realm and through the drafting process of a new security strategy recently provide significant new information, and could serve as important sources of a shared sense of *raison d'être* and strategic culture.

Aggestam and Johansson (2017), in examining EU leadership in foreign policy similarly find there is a gap in the perception of the High Representative's role between Member States and officials in the External Action Service. Whereas MS generally think of the HR/VP's role as representative, EEAS officials find the HR/VP plays a key role in initiating and delivering on proposals, as well as a brokering role to achieve compromise. Moreover, Rebecca Adler-Nissen (2014, pp. 679-681) frames the diplomatic corps as a social field in which the EEAS as a newcomer poses not a material but a symbolic challenge to the incumbents of that field, national foreign services. In the struggle between the External Action Service and national diplomatic services, Adler-Nissen argues that the prospective success of the EEAS to exercise any authority in the diplomatic field lies in its ability to obtain recognition of its officials as 'genuine diplomats', and to accumulate symbolic power. The accumulation of symbolic power can thus be understood as a means through which a shared strategic culture could emerge. If the EEAS as the engine in EU foreign and security policy can accumulate symbolic

power, it would gain legitimacy and be more effective in its mission to enhance coherency through a shared understanding and vision for the EU as a strategic player.

Finally, Rebecca Adler-Nissen (2015) has deplored the descriptive nature of many studies on the External Action Service and the entailing under-theorisation of such an important foreign policy innovation and unique institutional instance in the EU, calling for further theorisation of the EEAS, something that the present thesis will partly address.

2.3. Research Gaps

Much of the research on strategic culture within the EU predates the Lisbon Treaty, which introduced the innovations of the double-hatting of the HR/VP and the EEAS, which could prove crucial to the forging of an EU strategic culture. A complex foreign and security and external policy structure within the EU with competence scattered across the three dimensions of European bureaucracy – what might be referred to as a bureaucratic Rubik’s cube puzzle – has made it difficult to know where within the to look for strategic culture. The attempt to overbridge the institutional divide and to bring coherency to its external action through the HR/VPs mandate and the EEAS, thus has the potential of the generating a shared strategic culture.

The main contribution of this thesis is thus to the literature on the EU as a strategic player and strategic culture literature on the EU, by exploring whether any distinctive, shared strategic culture is emerging within the External Action Service, – and if so – what characterises it. In doing this, this thesis draws on important themes explored previously in the study of the EU as a strategic player. Such themes are strategic autonomy, attitudes to the use of force, the nature of the EU as an international player and the drivers of its actions. Thereby, this thesis furthermore attempts to contribute to shedding some light on the nature of the EU as a global actor in general. Furthermore, this thesis will also attempt to partly contribute to previous literature on the EEAS by looking at new empirical material that has emerged in the past year in the form of strategic documents and defence initiatives, in order to try to understand what that means for the development of the EEAS. To that end, attempting to contribute to the theorisation of the EEAS, the present study will offer the conceptualisation of the EEAS as an epistemic community.

3. Theoretical Points of Departure: Strategic Culture as Analytical Framework

This thesis takes its theoretical points of departure in the concept of strategic culture. For the purpose of exploring and characterising the strategic culture(s) of the European External Action Service, it is deemed necessary – given the diverse conceptual and operational spectrum that has been typical for studies that have utilised the concept – to clarify where this thesis stands theoretically. The notion of epistemic communities will serve as complementary to the strategic culture concept, by conceptualising the institutional role of the EEAS, and the concept will also be accounted for further down in this chapter.

In the context of this thesis, strategic culture is defined as an integrated system of shared beliefs, ideals, norms and ideas of the members of a given strategic community, emanating from its unique geography, historical experiences and internal political and social conditions, generating distinctive strategic preferences and expectations about strategic behaviour with regard to security and defence.

A strategic community – in this case the EU – can be thought of as a geographically based community that shares unique historical experiences and engages in a collective endeavour to promote its own security. This chapter will outline and discuss the theoretical origins and different orientations of the strategic culture concept, elucidating on the function of the concept in this thesis and how it shapes the analytical framework and by extension also the operational aspects of gathering and analysing the empirical material.

3.1. Theoretical Origins of the Strategic Culture Concept

The notion of strategic culture originates in the Cold War setting of the 1970s. Initially, the theory was a state-centric approach that sought to capture the identity and preferences of states regarding security and defence and the use of force in particular. Emerging in a Cold War context characterised by a bipolar dynamic where balance of power and deterrence were central concepts, strategic culture originally alluded to nuclear strategy (Biehl *et. al.* 2013, p. 9). At the time, Jack Snyder defined strategic culture as:

the sum of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, patterns of habitual behavior that members of a national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation and share with each other with regard to nuclear strategy (Snyder 1977, p. 8).

Snyder thus imagined that historical processes forged the worldview of national strategic communities and that this in turn shaped policy preferences. This novel understanding of strategic behaviour challenged – at the time – predominant theories that tended to rely on the assumption that such strategic behaviour was rational and that interests and preferences were shaped by material factors. In contrast, the cultural approach emphasises a complex environment that shapes interests and preferences characterised by non-objectivity rather than rationality. Strategic culture as a concept can thus help explain why different strategic communities respond differently to the same global security environment, and why preferences within such communities are relatively stable over time (Lock 2010, p. 689). However, the concept does not necessarily imply a total rejection of materialism and rationality, but unlike previous conceptions it constrains the function of those tenets to being only part of the explanation for strategic thinking and choices (see for example Johnston 1995, p. 35).

3.2. Conceptual Evolution: Towards a Theoretical Framework

The present study finds that the great utility of the strategic culture concept lies first and foremost in its transcendence of material and rational notions, allowing for a more complex and sophisticated understanding of how strategic behaviour is influenced by norms and ideas. However, strategic culture as a concept has also at times been disposed to all-embracing approaches as the lack of theoretical stringency has led to operational ineptitude. The strategic culture concept has developed over the years, and those engaged in the practice of applying this theoretical framework usually distinguish between three different strands or generations of thought.

Culture in general – and strategic culture in particular – are contested concepts, difficult to grasp and define. But at its core, culture is something that helps us interpret the world, something that endows people with assumptions regarding the world, affecting their behaviour. A most rudimentary and opaque but yet helpful definition, as put by first generation strategic culture scholar Colin Gray is to think of culture as the ideals of a community, manifested through its ideas and behaviour (Gray 2007, p. 8). Culture is, again as argued by Gray (1999, p. 51) relatively stable conceptions – ideas, attitudes, traditions – habits of mind and preferred *modus operandi* that are socially transmitted among – and reproduced by – individuals within a strategic community. It is in that sense the members of

such a community that through their interpretations of history, geography and ideals are the carriers of culture, but at the same time also the makers of culture. While culture is relatively stable, it is not permanent but the subject of gradual change. Normally that process would occur bit by bit, through changing material factors and the new interpretations of those factors, in a constant contestation of old conceptions. Rapid and radical change, however, may lead to a critical juncture, at which new collective experiences fundamentally alter the strategic culture of a strategic community. Strategic culture is thus not monolithic, but constantly subject to contestation. Accordingly, an assumption of this study is that strategic culture within a strategic community may be fragmented and is constantly contested, even resulting in sub-cultures. However, some thoughts and ideas are likely to emerge as predominant. Ideas that are more widespread throughout a strategic community or held by individuals in key positions with wider networks and more influence should emerge as predominant and thus characterise a community's strategic culture.

The first generation of strategic culture thinking parallels that of Snyder's original thought. Snyder primarily concerned himself with explaining American and Soviet nuclear strategy (Snyder 1977). Accordingly, scholars adhering to this school often attribute differences in strategic culture to deeply rooted historical experiences and geography (Gray 2007, p. 15). The first generation was conceptually troubled by its wide definition and attribution of the shaping of strategic culture to a myriad of factors. While this author agrees that historical experiences and geography, along with inner social and political conditions, are indeed important factors in shaping strategic culture, a theoretical dilemma – as pointed out by third generation scholar Iain Johnston (1995) – in the early scholarly work of first generation scholars was a tendency to ascribe any given strategic behaviour to strategic culture, aligning behaviour and culture in a way that made explaining cases where behaviour was not consistent with strategic culture practically impossible. The first generation has however been defended and these deterministic and mechanic characteristics have been revised in favour of a plausible approach by clarifying that strategic culture only tends to lead to certain behaviour and admitting that strategic culture only is part of – or sometimes not at all – part of the explanation for strategic behaviour (see for example Gray 2007, p. 5). This author agrees that attributing all strategic behaviour to strategic culture is not plausible. Culture is but one dimension of strategy, and other factors – such as technology or instrumental capacity – which need to be considered if attempting to establish a causal relation with strategic

behaviour and culture. In order to try and avoid resorting to simplistic arguments of historical experiences that may have influenced strategic thinking of the respondents in this study, historical aspects will only be pointed to in case mentioned by respondents themselves.

The second strategic culture generation literature emerged in the mid-1980's. This strand draws on critical schools such as post-structuralists, and integrates a social constructivist perspective into the concept (Lock 2010, pp. 695-696). Bradley Klein, a key figure in second generation scholarship, defined the concept as establishing "widely available orientations to violence and to ways in which the state can legitimately use violence against putative enemies" (Klein 1988, p. 136). Klein thus pointed to two kinds of strategy: declaratory and operational. Declaratory strategy was thought as a way for the elite to culturally justify before the public its true interests in fighting wars, which were reflected in operational strategy (Klein 1988, p. 138). The instrumentality of declaratory strategy to justify operational strategy, and thus the interests of decision-makers, implies that decision-makers can consciously foster strategic culture and are not themselves affected by it. However, culture is not mainly a conscious phenomenon, but rather subconscious. Strategic culture is thus acquired mainly through subconscious processes through which individuals are taught collective ideals regarding security that they interpret and which are manifested in their ideas and habitual behaviour. But in on-going contestation between different interpretations of the same ideals, conscious efforts to convince others of the superiority of one interpretation or best practice over another can also contribute to the manifestation and even change of strategic culture. Through the empirical material of this thesis, official documents and anonymous interviews with EEAS officials, it might be able to partly address the issue of declaratory and operational strategy considering that the official documents can be accessed by the public and the interviews are anonymous and potentially more representative of 'real motives'.

The third generation of strategic culture literature appeared in the 1990s. The approach provided by this strand focused more on the relation between ideas as independent variables and their effect on particular strategic decisions as dependent variables (Johnston 1995, p. 41). These studies tended to focus on cases where structural-materialist interests could not explain a strategic choice. Another thing that sets the third generation apart from the others is that instead of referring to history as the determinant for cultural values, it stresses the impact of

practice and more recent experience. This study draws on the idea that recent experience also can be significant in the shaping of strategic culture, but will not employ the independent-dependent approach, which is useful and advisable in other kinds of studies.

This author would like to make a case for the ideational aspects of strategic culture. Arguably, strategic culture is a socially constructed context that shapes how individuals involved in strategy think regarding security and defence. Accordingly, strategic culture provides a framework for strategic action, but does not provide explicit guidelines for strategic action in any given situation. In that sense strategic culture neither fully prescribes strategic behaviour nor can it be disjoint from behaviour. In the present study it is a context, or a prism through which a given situation is refracted in the process of strategic action. To put it in social science terms, strategic culture is an intervening variable for strategic behaviour. Events or material circumstances are thus interdependent variables, and the interpretation of those events and circumstances shapes strategic culture, which affects strategic preferences and behaviour as dependent variables.

To reiterate the theoretical assumptions of the present study, strategic culture is the notion of widely shared ideals, beliefs, norms and ideas of members of a strategic community regarding security and defence. These stem from members' interpretation of historical experiences, geography and inner political and social conditions, that through a mainly subconscious interpretative process shapes their preferences regarding security and defence. Members of a strategic community are thus the carriers of strategic culture, but in the constant contestation process also the makers of it. Strategic culture, while relatively stable over time, is constantly contested and changes gradually with new experiences and conditions and the interpretation of those. In periods of rapid and radical change, a strategic community is more susceptible to alteration in its strategic culture. Strategic culture is thus not monolithic, and can even comprise sub-cultures, while some ideas emerge as predominant.

3.3. Epistemic Communities

As a complementary theoretical approach, this thesis draws on the notion of epistemic communities. Both strategic culture and epistemic communities encapsulate the notion of a set of shared beliefs within a given community that provide a foundation for the shaping of preferences or behaviour. In that sense, the two concepts cognitively overlap. The notion of epistemic communities, however, has significant added value for the purpose of this thesis.

Peter M. Haas (1992, p. 3) defined an epistemic community as “a network of professionals with recognised expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area.” Haas explains that through control over knowledge and information, an epistemic community is in an advantageous position to diffuse new ideas in international policy coordination, which can lead to new patterns of behaviour. This is done by articulating cause-and-effect relationships in complex political environments, helping decision-makers identify and frame problems and interests, as well as proposing specific policy solutions (Haas 1992, pp. 2-3). While strategic culture is the main framework of this thesis, by helping understand to what extent there is a shared, distinctive culture in the EU strategic community, and what that means for the EU as a strategic and security player, the conceptualisation of the EEAS as an epistemic community can contribute to the understanding of its role in the EU foreign and security policy institutional structures and in the shaping of a strategic culture.

3.4. Operationalising the Strategic Culture Concept

One of the issues encountered by many scholars concerned with the strategic culture has been how to operationalise the concept and thus utilising it for well-defined and structured analysis. Another problem when examining the strategic culture of the EU consists of identifying where to look within the block and whom to talk to, as foreign and security policy is a cross-institutional and multi-levelled competence.

Security and defence in the EU thus crosses the entire institutional spectrum from the national to the intergovernmental and supranational levels. The European External Action Service represents an excellent instance in the EU strategic community, by trying to bridge all those administrative levels through its unique composition of officials, tasked coordinating EU foreign and security policy and bringing continuity and consistency to the EU’s external action.

The literature review informs the operationalisation of the strategic culture concept in this study. The empirical investigation and analysis will contain four dimensions that seek to inform and enlighten further understanding of EU strategic culture. Below follows a presentation of how the theoretical underpinnings laid out above are operationalised in this study. The themes and questions below provide an operational framework for the gathering and analysis of empirical material.

3.4.1. Worldview and Security Thinking

Strategic culture is acquired through the interpretation of historic experiences, geography, social and political context. A starting point for any study of strategic culture should thus be to explore how individuals within a strategic community interpret the world and in what terms they think about security. To clarify how the present thesis attempts to avoid an all-embracing approach that some early work on strategic culture entailed, the analysis of how various factors such as historical experiences have shaped strategic culture within the EEAS, this is only done in reference to factors mentioned by the respondents or in the documents themselves, thus connecting the analytical understanding of the source of certain traits to the empirical material. This paper takes its first operational starting point in the interpretations of the world and in how the security concept is conceived. Core questions with regard to those issues concern the perceived challenges and threats to the EU in the security and defence realm, and how security as a concept should be framed.

- How is the global security environment interpreted, and what characterises it?
- Which are the perceived security challenges and threats to the EU?
- How is the security concept framed?

3.4.2. Level of Ambition

What then entails a specific worldview is the level of ambition for the EU as a security player. This second dimension of the paper's operational approach to strategic culture explores the understanding of what the EU substantially endeavours in the security and defence realm in terms of interests, priorities and objectives. Level of ambition includes both thematic and geographic priorities. This section addresses the question of what role the EU plays and should play regionally and globally, to what extent should it aim to be a security provider? Feeding into the discussion regarding what security role the EU plays is also the matter of for whom the EU provides security.

- Which are the EU's security interests and objectives?
- What are the priorities of the EU in the security and defence realm?
- What is the EU's role as a security actor in Europe, the wider region and globally?
- For whom does the EU provide security?

3.4.3. Scope of Action

Subsequently, the study explores the preferred *modus operandi* of the EU, how it should respond to challenges and threats. What measures and instruments ought to be employed in order to pursue European interests and attain EU security objectives? These questions are essential to the understanding of what a European strategic culture might consist. Secondly, another dimension to be explored in relation to this is to what extent the EU can act autonomously. Where and when can it act independently, and how does it interact with other security players? In order to understand its scope of action it is necessary to understand how other security players are understood, who is regarded as a partner and who is an adversary.

- What instruments are appropriate for pursuing and attaining EU security interests and objectives?
- What is the distinctive approach of the EU?
- Where and when can the EU act autonomously?
- How should the EU relate to other actors in the global security environment?

3.4.4. The Role of the EEAS

Lastly, this thesis also explores the perceived role of the External Action Service in helping the EU pursue its interests and achieve its security objectives. Does the EEAS provide leadership by initiating policy, or is its role rather to facilitate compromises among other players in order to find a common point of view? How does the EEAS work to incorporate the various institutions and players included in security and defence policy-making, what does its functioning and working methods mean for this process and strategic culture?

- What is the External Action Service's specific role in the wider EU institutional structure?
- To what extent do respondents find the mandate of the HR/VP and EEAS appropriate for helping to pursue its interests and achieve its security objectives?

These are the themes and questions that operationally guides the gathering and analysis of empirical material. For more insight into how interviews were performed, the interview guide is available in the annex.

4. Method and Research Design

4.1. Research Design

This master's thesis is a single case study examining the strategic culture of one particular organisation within the institutional EU structure: the EU's diplomatic service, the European External Action Service. The study is carried out by an idiographic approach, meaning that it engages in the specificities of the case of the EEAS and does not seek to generalise further than the EU case (Bryman 2012, p. 69). The uniqueness of the EEAS as an organisation lies in the particularity of its mission and in its specific context of operation, within the EU's institutional structure, which makes it a case worth investigating in its own right. This study explores the character of strategic thinking among EEAS officials in order to discern to what extent a distinctive shared strategic culture has developed within the organisation. For the purpose of this thesis, sixteen semi-structured interviews with EEAS officials were carried out between March and July 2017. Furthermore, the study utilises a number of official documents and statements from the HR/VP and the EEAS from between June 2016 and June 2017 with regard to security, defence and strategy.

4.2. Semi-structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews method allows for a thematically designed interview format where emphasis is put on the perspective of the interviewee and the interviewer is left some leeway to pose follow-up questions, as well as to change the order of the questions depending on how the interview plays out. If the respondent finds something important that is not included initially by the interviewer and wishes to go further into that subject, the semi-structured format grants greater liberty for including these thoughts than does the structured interviewing format (Bryman 2012, p. 470). This flexible approach is ideal for the purpose of this thesis, as it is concerned with the way in which the interlocutors frame and understand the issues and events at stake under the conceptual umbrella of strategic culture. The nature of semi-structured interviews means that while the same main questions are asked each respondent, focus may vary and answers will thus not be mutually exclusive. Furthermore, the respondents have a double-function. First and foremost they were interviewed as respondents, putting their perceptions and ideas of the EU as a strategic actor at the centre of the study. But as they are professional with an extensive knowledge and expertise on the issues examined in this thesis, they must also be regarded as informants (Searing 1994, pp. 405-406).

Nevertheless, they will be referred to as respondents throughout the text. The themes and questions reflect the operationalisation outlined in chapter 3, and can be found in the interview guide in the appendix.

Table 1. Interviews overview

Interview	Date	Location
Interview 1	2017-03-28	Brussels
Interview 2	2017-03-28	Brussels
Interview 3	2017-03-29	Brussels
Interview 4	2017-03-29	Brussels
Interview 5	2017-03-30	Brussels
Interview 6	2017-03-30	Brussels
Interview 7	2017-03-31	Brussels
Interview 8	2017-04-07	By phone
Interview 9	2017-04-24	By phone
Interview 10	2017-05-04	By phone
Interview 11	2017-05-05	By phone
Interview 12	2017-05-05	By phone
Interview 13	2017-05-05	By phone
Interview 14	2017-05-11	By phone
Interview 15	2017-06-07	By phone
Interview 16	2017-07-14	Brussels

Half of the interviews were conducted in person in Brussels, and half per telephone. Most respondents agreed to be recorded, granted the guarantee of anonymity, but some did not agree to this, and as their views were only taken as notes they may not be as extensively present in the analysis as the others. The composition of the respondents was, in no particular order, 4 Swedish, 2 Italian, 2 Dutch, 1 British, 1 Polish, 1 Spanish, 1 Austrian, 1 Greek, 1 Portuguese, 1 Finnish and 1 Estonian official. 10 of the respondents worked in the Political Affairs branch, 4 in the General Affairs/Strategic branch and 2 in the CSDP and Crisis Response branch. 3 had backgrounds from only national administrations prior to working in

the EEAS, 3 from the intergovernmental level only, 3 from the supranational level only, 3 from national administrations and the intergovernmental level, 3 from national administrations and the supranational level, and 1 from all three levels.

4.3. Qualitative Content Analysis

The second source of data used for this project as a complement to the first is an assortment of official documents issued by the External Action Service. Documents as a source of empirical material can perhaps to some extent be regarded as a representation of the realities of a certain organisation and may help uncover its culture or ethos. However, these must be looked upon critically as they to some extent may represent another – distinct – level of reality (Bryman 2012, pp. 554-555). The documents authored by the EEAS are written by rhetorical design and with a purpose to both convey a message to third parties and people within the EU as well as to –as might be the case of the European Global Strategy – accommodate other institutions or players within the EU such as the Member States. This means that these documents most likely have multiple functions, in that they in part may be likened to what the second generation of strategic culture thought denoted as ‘declaratory’ versus ‘operational’ strategy, and in that they are for the sake of justifying ones means and ends while the second reflects actual interests and objectives. However, in diplomacy and foreign policy, conveying a message to third parties is not an unimportant business that may have tangible political consequences. Simply put, these documents ought to be looked at through critical glasses and not necessarily as merely representing the reality of strategic thought within the EEAS. One of the strengths of this thesis is that it does not entirely rely on either written material or interviews, but that both complement each other.

4.4. Sampling

For the purpose of this thesis, two different samples were made. The first sample consisted of EEAS officials as interviewees, and the second sample of a number official documents issued by the European External Action Service.

In sampling the interviewees, this study relied mainly on the principle of *purposive sampling*. To a certain extent it also utilised the *snowball sampling* principle, in that a few individuals proposed by those sampled through the principle of purposive sampling were interviewed (Bryman 2012, pp. 424-425). However, all individuals interviewed for the study corresponded to the sampling criteria determined *a priori*, which will be outlined below in this section.

The principle of purposive sampling does not hinge upon random sampling based on probability, but stipulates that participants should be selected on the basis of the aim of the research questions (Bryman 2012, pp. 416-419). Endeavouring to explore the character of strategic culture within the case of the European External Action Service, the lowest common denominator for all interlocutors was that they were all officials of the EEAS at the time of interviewing. Also exploring to what extent there is a shared strategic culture within the organisation, the sampling process abides by the principle of maximum variation, in order to include as wide a range of individuals relevant to the research questions as possible, differing on key characteristics so that as many perspectives as possible are incorporated (Bryman 2012, p. 416 & 418).

Key characteristics established in previous research, were identified as 1) nationality, 2) professional background and 3) division within the EEAS. This provides two levels of sampling for the interviews in addition to the criterion that respondents be officials of the EEAS. Firstly, a sample of context was done with regard to which division respondents are part of. The sample strived towards maximum variation with regards to where in the External Action Service respondents work. The EEAS can be said to consist of three branches (or four including administration, which was not included). Firstly, there are the geographical and thematic issues (dealing with specific countries and regions, as well as specific thematic issues), constituting what in the present thesis is referred to as Political Affairs. Secondly, there is the CSDP and Crisis Response branch of the Service (dealing explicitly with security policy, crisis management, civilian planning and conduct capability). The last branch is more diverse, and includes divisions working with more overarching perspectives, such as strategic planning and policy coordination, and is here referred to as the General Affairs/Strategic branch. The three categories outlined above formed the basis for context sampling within the EEAS case. Secondly, the study strived for samples within the three contexts of maximum variation with regard to nationality and professional background.

The second sample made for this thesis regards the documents of the qualitative content analysis. For the purpose of the study, a large number of official strategic documents issued by the EEAS between the 28th of June 2016 (launching day of the Global Strategy) and June 2017 are evaluated. The documents are of various natures, ranging from press statements and speeches to strategic documents. The documents have been read selectively, and those that

have been considered as relevant for the study of strategy have been selected, in accordance with the operational questions outlined in the theory chapter. Some documents were assigned to be of greater value for the study, especially explicit strategic documents. One key document underpinning this thesis is *The European Union Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy* (the European Global Strategy/the Global Strategy/the EUGS). The European Global Strategy is a document drafted by the High Representative/Vice President, and the successor of 2003's European Security Strategy. The EUGS was authored by consulting a wide array of players, from the Member State governments and Parliaments to universities, think tanks and civil society actors. It is a document that addresses a broad number of issues with regard to foreign policy and strategy. It was presented to and welcomed by the European Council in June 2016. A second key document is the *Implementation Plan on Security and Defence*, set to operationalise the EUGS and outline a new level of ambition for the EU. It was presented by the HR/VP and welcomed by the European Council in November 2016. In June 2017, a year after the presentation of the EUGS, a follow-up was published entitled *From Shared Vision to Common Action: Implementing the EU Global Strategy Year 1*. Other significant documents were, the European Commission's (of which the High Representative is a member and Vice-President) *European Defence Action Plan: Towards a European Defence Fund*, presented in November 2016. The action plan foresees a more integrated European defence industry with collective investments in research and technology. Lastly, an *EU-NATO Joint Declaration* from July 2016 is a significant document in this study. All of the documents that are regarded as useful are listed in the bibliography under primary sources.

4.5. Analytical Approach

This is an interpretative study that utilises an abductive analytical approach. Accordingly, emphasis is put on understanding human interpretation of the world and behaviour in a specific social context. It also implies acknowledging that the social world is a construction that is produced through social interaction and constantly revised (Bryman 2012, pp. 28-33). In the analysis, the answers of respondents and the documents will be presented and analysed simultaneously in order to demonstrate the gathered picture of the empirical material.

4.6. Validity and Reliability

In the context of qualitative research, validity is generally thought of as actually, observing, identifying or measuring what you say you are (Mason 1996, p. 24). The EU institutional

framework is complex, and there are actors in all layers of its bureaucracy involved in foreign, security and defence policy. One could argue that as these domains are Member State competencies – unless one broadens the security concept to comprise such fields as trade and development, which are supranational competencies – those should be the objects of study with regard to strategic culture. This author will not oppose that there is a valid point in that argument, and studies relating to strategic culture have been made for example of the Political and Security Committee. However, while MS ultimately control decisions in these policy areas, the External Action Service is tasked with ensuring consistency and assumes a coordinative role. As demonstrated in the previous literature section, there is evidence that the EEAS exercises some leadership as a policy initiator and facilitator. In combination with its unique composition of staff from all layers of EU bureaucracy – including MS – the European External Action Service by its role and mission represents an excellent object of study regarding EU strategic culture. Accordingly, there is internal validity for this study, but also a degree of external validity. The External Action Service is in a way a floating organ somewhere in-between – or even transcendent of – all bureaucratic layers within the EU. Its head, the HR/VP, whom it serves, is a representative for the EU regarding foreign and security policy externally. But the HR/VP is similarly part of the Commission, and Chair of the Foreign Affairs Council, part of the Council of the EU and where Member States partake to make decisions on the basis of unanimity. The EEAS thus has to accommodate all these layers, and can therefore not be regarded as a European organ such as the Commission that only represents supranational interests. In sum, any notion of strategic culture within the EEAS should to a degree represent strategic culture within the EU. At the same time, the great complexity of the EU system warrants this study to be cautious in how far it can really be generalised to the entire EU strategic community. Nevertheless, the study cannot be generalised beyond the European Union. Being a qualitative study with a relatively small sample necessitates caution (Bryman 2012, p. 390) in how far the findings in this thesis can be generalised in the context of the EU.

Reliability is tricky in qualitative studies. It is difficult to recreate the exact same conditions as the ones in this study as social context changes as time goes by. In order to meet the reliability requirements to the greatest extent possible, this author endeavours to be as transparent as possible by providing a list of the empirical material used, both in terms of documents and interviews.

5. Analysis

5.1. Worldview and the Security Concept

The empirical findings regarding the interpretation of the world within the EEAS point to three broadly shared traits. The current global security environment is seen as rapidly changing and unpredictable, and its nature more contentious than previously. This rapid change and a perceived increased number of threats seem to constitute a critical juncture, at which the EU strategic community is susceptible to alterations in its strategic culture.

Moreover, the global security environment is regarded as highly complex and marked by interdependence, which along with the notion of more contentiousness has led to a shared understanding of a holistic approach to security.

5.1.1. A Rapidly Changing and Increasingly Contentious Global Security Environment

A notion conspicuously shared by respondents is the sense of a global security environment that in recent years is changing rapidly. Furthermore, it is perceived as less hospitable, or even more contentious due to the large number of severe crises and conflicts in the vicinity of the EU.⁵ To demonstrate this rapid change and contentiousness, two officials recall that while the European Security Strategy (2003) depicted the Neighbourhood as “a circle of friends”, the areas surrounding the EU are now sometimes said to have turned into “a ring of fire”.⁶ The same sentiment, which seems almost apocalyptic, is also reflected in for example the European Global Strategy:

We live in times of existential crisis, within and beyond the European Union. [...] To the east, the European security order has been violated, while terrorism and violence plague North Africa and the Middle East, as well as Europe itself. Economic growth is yet to outpace demography in parts of Africa, security tensions in Asia are mounting, while climate change causes further disruption.⁷

The sentiment of a transformed and less hospitable world where some of the most severe conflicts and crises are raging in the immediate vicinity of the EU leaves its mark on the general interpretation of security within the EEAS, and on EU security priorities and interests.

⁵ Interviews 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 14.

⁶ Interviews 1 and 4.

⁷ *The Global Strategy* (2016), p. 13.

5.1.2. Increased Complexity and Interdependence

A second central element in the worldviews displayed by respondents is a global security environment marked by a high degree of complexity. Respondents generally express an understanding of today's security agenda as shaped by interdependence between peoples and political entities. Furthermore, issues that traditionally have been thought of as separate political portfolios, are now viewed as interconnected.⁸ This idea is manifested in the Global Strategy, stating that 'we will invest in win-win situations, and move beyond the illusion that international politics can be a zero-sum game.'⁹

This idea of a higher level of complexity in the global security environment is closely linked to the notion of a nexus between the internal and external dimensions, that are closely linked and difficult to distinguish from one another. There is a deep recognition among respondents that the security and stability of the EU rest upon the security and stability of others, especially those areas in the immediate surroundings of the European Union.¹⁰ One respondent encapsulates this by citing the words that have been echoed by a number of European leaders, and most recently by the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn: "Either we export stability, or we import instability".¹¹ The same idea is echoed in the EUGS and the new level of ambition: "Internal and external security are ever more intertwined: our security at home depends on peace beyond our borders."¹²

5.1.3. A Holistic Approach to Security

The perception of an increasingly complex global security environment has furthermore led to a shared broad understanding of the security concept within the Service. There is view that security threats and challenges need to be considered from different angles, and that there are several dimensions that need to be interlinked and addressed in order to establish peace and security.¹³ This is not least reflected in the approach taken by the Global Strategy, which incorporates a long list of thematic issues that have not always been associated with security, including the likes of cyber and energy security, migration, economy and development and so

⁸ Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14.

⁹ *The Global Strategy* (2016) 9, p. 4.

¹⁰ Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14.

¹¹ Interview 2.

¹² *The Global Strategy* (2016) p. 7.

¹³ Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15 and 16.

on.¹⁴ The acknowledgement that security must be approached in a ‘global’ fashion – not only in the geographical sense, but also in a comprehensive sense – by integrating issues and dimensions rather than merely approaching security in the strict, traditional sense, through hard power and the use of force, is justified by advocating a coherent approach to everything in the EU’s external action, and linking it to the internal dimension.¹⁵

Several respondents for example emphasised the need to integrate development as a vital component in security thinking (the security-development nexus).¹⁶ This has been echoed in a range of documents and by the HR/VP on numerous occasions, contending that there can be no development without security and no security without development.¹⁷ Additionally, there is a growing sense and recognition that while soft power is and remains important, there is a need for backing it up with hard power instruments, an area that is perhaps not typical for the EU. One respondent makes the following observation:

[T]here’s a growing awareness for the need of the EU and a strong, more integrated and cohesive security and defence policy and also a more active and decisive foreign policy. A foreign policy and security policy that is not only based on soft power – as it has been for many years – but the need [for it] to be backed up also with some hard power.¹⁸

This stance is supported by the Global Strategy, where the train of thought is that soft and hard power are both indispensable and are not mutually exclusive. The EUGS manifests that “[f]or Europe, soft and hard power go hand in hand.”¹⁹ In today’s unstable world there is a need for the EU to enhance its credibility on hard power as this is something that the European Union often has been said to lack.²⁰ Yet, values remain a cornerstone in the EU’s external action, and are regarded as fully compatible with hard power: “We will be guided by clear principles. These stem as much from a realistic assessment of the current strategic environment as from an idealistic aspiration to advance a better world. Principled pragmatism will guide our external action in the years ahead.”²¹

¹⁴ *The Global Strategy* (2016).

¹⁵ HR/VP (June 2017) *From Shared Vision to Common Action: Implementing the EU Global Strategy Year 1*, p.12.

¹⁶ Interviews 5, 11, 12 and 15.

¹⁷ Mogherini, Federica (Dakar, Senegal, 2016-12-05), *Discours de Federica Mogherini au Forum International sur la Paix et la Sécurité en Afrique*.

¹⁸ Interview 5.

¹⁹ *The Global Strategy* (2016), p. 4.

²⁰ *Ibid.* (2016), pp. 4 and 44.

²¹ *The Global Strategy* (2016), p. 8.

5.2. Level of Ambition: Threats and Challenges, Priorities and Objectives: a Strategic Outlook

The new level of ambition endeavours to strengthen the EU as a security provider both in terms of soft and hard power. This part of the analysis points to that strategically speaking the EU's main security interests are considered to lie in its wider region, and that the EU is regarded as an essentially regional security provider. In its vicinity, the EU is thought to be able provide security in a holistic manner, while its contribution to security beyond the 'wider region' is considered to lie first and foremost in its economic power through trade and aid, and in some contexts in political influence for example through a mediator role. There is now more emphasis on 'EU interests', which are thought to be served by providing security to others, something which is seen as a top priority considering the unstable situation in the Neighbourhood. The new level of ambition to be a more efficient security provider globally, seeks to reinforce the security of the EU itself and its citizens, but also to safeguard a rules-based global order.

As indicated earlier on in this thesis, the EU's security and defence priorities have been formulated in several documents in the past year. The initiatives recently taken in the security and defence realm are meant to make full use of the EU's potential in the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty.²² First of all, the Global Strategy establishes five priorities for EU external action :1) the security of the EU; 2) resilience in the East and South; 3) an integrated approach to conflicts; 4) cooperative regional orders and 5) global governance for the 21st century.²³ The Implementation Plan on Security and Defence furthermore sets out a new level of ambition with three main priorities for the EU regarding security and defence: a) responding to external conflicts and crises; b) building the capacities of partners, and c) protecting the Union and its citizens.²⁴

5.2.1. Providing Security, Stability and Resilience to the Wider Region

The logic displayed by many respondents largely corresponds to the priorities determined by the new level of ambition. The widespread instability in the areas surrounding Europe, both in the immediate Neighbourhood and the 'wider region', is regarded as a paramount security

²² Mogherini, Federica (Brussels, 2016-09-05), *EU Ambassadors Conference 'Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe'*. *Opening remarks by Mogherini*; Interview 5.

²³ *The Global Strategy* (2016), pp. 9-10.

²⁴ HR/VP and the EU (November 2016) *Implementation Plan on Security and Defence*, pp. 9-17.

challenge for the EU,²⁵ notably the conflicts in Syria and Libya, but also Yemen. Most respondents accordingly emphasise the essential priority and urgent necessity of stabilising the wider Neighbourhood by addressing the root causes of conflict through capacity-building and resilience in the EU's partners.²⁶ The notion of resilience derives from the context of an increasingly rapidly changing global security environment, and entails the objective of providing states and societies with the capacity of sustaining development, good governance and ensuring security even under great social, political, economic or environmental pressure.²⁷ One respondent defines resilience as “not only [being] about preventing failed states, but also failed societies. That societies should be self-sufficient, strong and sustainable, economic systems and ecological systems, which is one of the big issues in the south.”²⁸ One official, however, disagreed with the way in which events in the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods have left footprints on the Global Strategy, something that the respondent argued has been done at the cost of sacrificing strategic longevity.²⁹

Two challenges often mentioned by respondents with regard to the unstable situation in the Neighbourhood that represent tangible examples of the close interconnection of the internal and external dimensions.³⁰, especially in relation to the South, are migration and terrorism. In light of the large increase of migrants arriving at the shores of the EU since 2015 as a direct result of conflict and instability in the Neighbourhood – notably in Syria – migration has become a top priority.³¹ One respondent, however, objected to the framing of migration as a security issue, arguing that it does not correspond to long-time priorities.³² Nevertheless there appears to be a largely shared understanding for the need of addressing migration as a security issue because of the link to the deteriorated security situation in parts of the Southern Neighbourhood and its social and political impact domestically in Europe. But also because of the need to address international crime and poor humanitarian conditions, as well as the many

²⁵ Interviews 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 14.

²⁶ Interviews 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14.

²⁷ HR/VP (2017-06-07), *A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's external action*, pp. 2-3.

²⁸ Interview 4.

²⁹ Interview 15.

³⁰ Interviews 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11 and 12; or see for example Mogherini, Federica (Brussels, 2016-09-02), *Federica Mogherini remarks at press point following first day at Gymnich meeting*.

³¹ Interviews 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14 and 16.

³² Interview 15.

deaths resulting from the smuggling of migrants in the Mediterranean.³³ One respondent furthermore notes that the migration wave has contributed to a shifting political landscape in Europe and domestically in individual Member States, where populists and restrictive views on migration have gained substantial influence over the political agenda. These inner political ramifications threaten the power of some European leaders, compelling them take action in one way or another. Terrorism is similarly strongly linked to the unstable situation in the Southern Neighbourhood and ISIL/Da'esh wreaking havoc in the region.³⁴ Addressing terrorism is imperative to the EU considering the wave of terrorist attacks across Europe in the past two years, many of them connected to ISIL/Da'esh. "This is of utmost importance [...] given that European citizens feel perhaps less secure after the wave of terrorist attacks."³⁵ The migration and terrorism challenges thus provide tangible examples of the close interconnection of the internal and external dimensions.³⁶

5.2.2. In the Interest of EU Citizens, to the Benefit of All?

The idea of an internal-external security nexus seems to have played down any stigma regarding in whose interest the European Union acts on the global stage. As mentioned above, protecting the EU and its citizens has been declared as one of the main security priorities for the EU, something which is underlined by EEAS officials.³⁷ Some point out that there has always been a European interest, but as security has risen to the top of EU citizens' concerns, prioritising EU security seems more legitimate. Engaging externally is accordingly now said to best be justified by accentuating the security benefits for the EU and its citizens. But respondents emphasise that security for EU citizens cannot be achieved without building security and stability for others, and thus argue that self-interest and the interests of others cannot be separated.

Accordingly, the objective of creating stability and resilience in the wider Neighbourhood is also thought to serve the security of the EU and EU citizens.³⁸ The notion of an

³³ See for example HR/VP and the EU (June 2017) *From Shared Vision to Common Action: Implementing the EU Global Strategy. Year 1* pp. 26-28; Interview 4.

³⁴ Interview 4.

³⁵ Interview 12.

³⁶ Interviews 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11 and 12; or see for example Mogherini, Federica (Brussels, 2016-09-02), *Federica Mogherini remarks at press point following first day at Gymnich meeting*.

³⁷ *Implementation Plan on Security and Defence* (2016), p. 10; Interviews 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 16.

³⁸ Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14.

interdependent world with a growing intertwining of the internal and external dimensions have had important implications on the interpretation of strategic priorities.

5.2.3. Reviewing a Challenged World Order; Facing Modern Security Threats

An important priority for the EU, stated in the EUGS, is a rules-based world order with foundations in multilateralism and the UN system. Increasingly, there is a recognition of the need for reformation of that system in order to better reflect the modern world.³⁹ If addressing instability in the wider region is an acute priority, then – one respondent explains – a rules-based multilateral system is a broader priority, envisaged to handle instability globally in the long-term perspective.⁴⁰ Linked to this is the idea of cooperative regional orders, and deepened security cooperation with other multilateral regional organisations, which is regarded as important in building a stable world. The most prominent organisation in that regard is the African Union, which many respondents find could be a key to enhanced security in Africa. Another example mentioned is increased EU-ASEAN security cooperation, in which the EU promotes strengthened regional security capabilities for ASEAN in both traditional and non-traditional areas.⁴¹ One respondent argues that there on part of the UN is a growing acceptance that regional organisations may take on more responsibility as the capacity and resources of the UN are limited. In that way, an order could emerge, where global responsibility is shared among regions under the UN umbrella.⁴² The EUGS reinforces this idea by underlining that this was the fundament upon which the EU itself built its own peace and development. The EUGS furthermore suggests that regional cooperation may take various forms, depending on the specific context. That context includes bilateral, global, inter-regional and sub-regional players.⁴³

Regarding bilateral players, several respondents note that China lately has come out in defence of the liberal economic order, proving itself a prospective important partner in the future, not only as necessitated by its material size and capacity, but potentially also as a like-minded actor.⁴⁴ Simultaneously, there is a concession that problems in the South China Sea remain a hurdle, as it challenges not only the rules-based order but also key EU interests,

³⁹ Interview 3 and 7.

⁴⁰ Interview 10.

⁴¹ Interviews 1, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 15; see also the EU and ASEAN (Bangkok, Thailand, 13-14 October 2016), *Bangkok Declaration on Promoting an ASEAN-EU Global Partnership for Shared Strategic Goals*.

⁴² Interview 7.

⁴³ *The Global Strategy* (2016)

⁴⁴ Interviews 4, 9, 12.

considering the enormous trade flows that go through those waters.⁴⁵ The uncertain relations with the new Trump administration in the United States, which has come out in favour of economic protectionism and as sceptical towards globalisation and multilateralism, pose a challenge as the US now is thought to be digressing from the free trade agenda that has long united US and EU interests, as well as from the EU's priority in a rules-based global order that was also pursued by the previous US administration.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, the US remains the most important security partner of the EU *par excellence*, considering the historical and cultural depth of that relationship and the long-standing values and interests that the EU and the US will share also in the future.⁴⁷ Canada – another important and close partner due to cultural and historical ties – is now seen as becoming an even more important partner in advocating the multilateralist agenda.

Moreover, a challenge – strongly connected to the international rules regime – mentioned by several respondents, is the recent assertiveness and sometimes even hostility of Russia,⁴⁸ particularly in view of the Russian annexation of Crimea and involvement in Eastern Ukraine, but also Russian activity other parts of the Neighbourhood such as in the Syrian conflict. Two respondents assert that Russia is now a general, structural threat. They expect that Russia will regard the EU's engagement with any third country in the EU-Russian common Neighbourhood, including parts of the Middle East, as a threat to Russian interests, and that Russia in those scenarios is likely to engage in destabilising activities.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, Russia remains an important interlocutor on a number of global dossiers, notably Iran.⁵⁰ A number of respondents find that with another political leadership, Russia could be a prospective partner.⁵¹ In close relation to the situation in Ukraine, but also to the threat of ISIL/Da'esh, cyber security and hybrid threats have emerged as important priorities,⁵² that is the mix overt and covert of conventional and non-conventional measures in combination, such as through

⁴⁵ Interviews 5 and 12.

⁴⁶ Interview 3.

⁴⁷ Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 16.

⁴⁸ Interviews 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 12, 14 and 16.

⁴⁹ Interviews 2 and 5.

⁵⁰ HR/VP (2016), *CFSP Report – Our priorities in 2016*.

⁵¹ Interviews 1 and 4.

⁵² European External Action Service (2015), *Food-for-thought paper “Countering Hybrid Threats”*; Interviews 6, 9, 10, 11 and 12.

economic pressure, proxy armed groups and disinformation, to obscure the situation and try to control the narrative of a conflict.⁵³

5.2.4. A Regional or Global Security Player?

The Global Strategy sets out an ambitious role for Europe in the world. The EUGS clearly states that the EU has global ambitions. HR/VP Mogherini has even on occasion referred to the EU as a superpower, although mainly attributing this to its economic might, as a development and Foreign Direct Investment contributor as well as its aggregated diplomatic network.⁵⁴ The wider region around Europe is accentuated as a priority geographically and by several respondents referred to as the EU's sphere of strategic interest. The wider region is generally defined as stretching from Central Asia in the East, over the Levant or Fertile Crescent in the Middle East, to Northern Africa or even the Sahel in the South. The formulation in the EUGS is that it is in the EU's interest to build resilience from Central Asia to Central Africa.⁵⁵

To what extent the EU is regarded as a global or a regional player remains ambivalent among EEAS officials. A number of diplomats point out that it depends on how the EU is defined. If the amalgam of capacities and global presence of the individual Member States is the frame of reference, then the EU can be conceived of as a global security player. But as for the activities undertaken collectively by the EU, respondents tend to regard the EU as a regional security player, especially in terms of being able to provide hard security. Beyond its own region, the EU is thought to be able to provide some security through soft power tools such as economic measures (trade, aid or sanctions) or mediation (a prime example being Iran). One respondent expressed this in the following terms:⁵⁶ “the further away from the European core, the more of a trading power is the European Union.”⁵⁷ The EU is consequently regarded as an essentially regional security player, able of providing both hard and soft security to its wider region in a holistic approach. Furthermore, views reflect that it has global ambitions and

⁵³ European External Action Service (2015), *Food-for-thought paper “Countering Hybrid Threats”*, pp. 2-3.

⁵⁴ Mogherini, Federica (Stockholm, 2016-10-10), *Speech by Federica Mogherini at the public seminar “EU as a global actor”*.

⁵⁵ Interviews 3, 5, 12; *European Global Strategy* (2016), p. 23.

⁵⁶ Interviews 1 and 11.

⁵⁷ Interview 1, author's translation.

tendencies beyond its own region,⁵⁸ but that influence is seen as mainly restricted to economic and political means.

5.3. Scope of Action

The analysis in this section points to the view that to be a more efficient security provider, the EU seeks to strengthen all of its capabilities, but most notably its military capability as this has long been the most neglected instrument. Still, the EU is said to be reluctant to use force and is thought only to do so as part of a holistic approach at certain stages of conflict. The holistic, integrated approach – drawing on a wide array of instruments –, is regarded as the distinctive and unique approach of the EU as a security provider, and thus seems to constitute a significant component in the EEAS’ distinctive and shared strategic culture. Furthermore, it appears that the EU seeks operational strategic autonomy as a security provider in order to strengthen a rules-based order, while in its essence remaining a cooperative player seeking as broad political support as possible in order to act legitimately. This cooperative nature seems to be at the essence of the EU’s strategic culture.

5.3.1. Strategic Autonomy

The Global Strategy manifests the idea that in order to promote the interests of the European Union: “Europeans must be equipped [...] to act autonomously if and when necessary.”⁵⁹ In order to be able to do so, and to be able to protect the EU and its citizens by living up to commitments to mutual assistance and solidarity, defence cooperation must become the norm, underpinned by a solid European defence industry.⁶⁰ The idea is thus to strengthen European defence capacity both in terms of collective defence and by acting beyond the EU’s borders. However, as defence remains a national competence, that capacity can be disposed in any forum Member States see fit, including for example Nato.

Seemingly in dissonance with the notion of strategic autonomy, the EUGS equally stresses that this to a large extent can be achieved only through a global rules-based system and multilateralism. This is a view that to some extent is reflected in the responses of respondents. The Global Strategy goes on to affirm that “we know that [the common interests of our citizens, as well as our principles and values] are best served when we are not alone. And they

⁵⁸ Interviews 3 and 12.

⁵⁹ *The Global Strategy* (2016), pp. 4 and 19.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* (2016), pp. 11 and 14.

are best served in an international system based on rules and on multilateralism”, of which the United Nations is the core.⁶¹ The HR/VP has commented on the issue in the following way:

there is no contradiction between more strategic autonomy and our commitment to our long-term partners [...] strategic autonomy means first and foremost the ability to be a reliable partner, to care about our own security, to care about the security of our region, for which we are called to take more responsibility in our own interest⁶²

Due to the nature and priorities of the European Union itself, but also because of the distinctiveness of its place in world politics, the United Nations is thus an important frame of reference for the EU. The EU’s outspoken ambition to strengthen a rules-based world order based on multilateralism with the UN as its fundament thus has significant implications for the strategic autonomy of the EU. The UN is regarded as one of the EU’s most important partners, and the EU seeks to work within the UN framework, and in the case of operations to work on the basis of a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution.⁶³ One of the areas in which the EU declares to use its so far un-deployed Battlegroups is in bridging UN peacekeeping missions. It appears that the objective of strategic autonomy is perhaps more about the operational aspects, as put by one official.⁶⁴ The EU endeavours to be an efficient security provider in order to strengthen a rules-based order, and thus remains a quintessentially cooperative partner that seeks wide political support in order to be able to act legitimately. As the US has vowed to be less engaged worldwide and the UNSC is sometimes blocked, the EU sees the need for being able to carry out operations when there is no interest on the part of the US and the UN. Some respondents pictured that the EU could potentially act without any support in case its close strategic interests are threatened, such as in the Balkans.⁶⁵ A picture emerges however, by which the EU is considered an essentially cooperative partner, seeking to do things with partners on all levels as much as possible. This appears to be a distinctive and largely shared feature of strategic culture in the EEAS.

5.3.2. Reaffirming Transatlanticism or Bolstering EU Capacity?

Regarding the transatlantic link and its impact on the EU’s strategic autonomy,

⁶¹ *The Global Strategy* (2016), pp. 4 and 8; the EU (2016-09-16), *The EU at the United Nations*.

⁶² Mogherini, Federica (Brussels, 2016-11-10), *Opening speech by HR/VP Federica Mogherini at the 2016 EDA Conference*.

⁶³ Interviews 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 15.

⁶⁴ Interview 5.

⁶⁵ Interview 3.

one of three important initiatives in the security and defence field in the past year was the joint declaration with Nato on July 8th 2016.⁶⁶ The initiative was described by HR/VP Mogherini as a veritable turning point in the EU-Nato relationship as well as for European defence, and as having established the first joint agenda between the two organisations.⁶⁷ The Nato declaration envisions deepened cooperation between the two organisations in security and defence. The ambition is to create an approach where EU and Nato capabilities can complement each other, avoiding duplication. In the process of reinforcing EU-Nato cooperation the HR/VP has reiterated that Nato remains the cornerstone of European defence.⁶⁸ This is confirmed by many respondents, who find Nato to be the EU's most important partner (notwithstanding the US).⁶⁹ So while the EU may not seek to be a defence alliance in the traditional sense that Nato is, the HR/VP contends that both organisations are indispensable for peace and security in the region. The conclusion drawn is that these two rather different security players have capabilities that can complement each other when addressing new and old issues of the modern security agenda and thus reinforce security and peace.⁷⁰ As neither the EU nor Nato any longer face only conventional threats but hybrid threats, the EU forum can together with Nato contribute to the collective defence of Europe regarding new types of threats, while Nato seems to remain forum for responding to conventional threats. A close link can be drawn to the initiative to better integrate the European defence industry. A defence industry that draws on the economy of scale that the EU single market is strengthens Member State capabilities, which may be used in different fora. MS capabilities can thus be used in an EU context and in a Nato context of collective defence, or even in a UN context, in a mutually reinforcing manner. That way it also potentially contributes to enhancing the ability of supporting a rules-based order.

5.3.3. The Use of Force

One of the key questions in strategic culture is the use of force for strategic purposes. The vast majority of respondents seem to view the use of force as a tool that should be used sparsely. This has, as discussed in the section above, been further emphasised by failures in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. “[O]ver the last years there’s less and less appetite to participate

⁶⁶ The EU and Nato (Warsaw, July 2016) *Join NATO-EU Declaration*.

⁶⁷ Mogherini, Federica (Brussels, 2016-11-21), *Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the Future of EU-NATO Cooperation conference*.

⁶⁸ See for example Federica Mogherini (2016-11-09), “Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the annual NATO – Industry forum”, Brussels.

⁶⁹ Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15 and 16.

⁷⁰ Interview 11.

in really big military operations, as we've seen for example in Afghanistan or Iraq.”⁷¹ Furthermore, respondents indicate that such a tool should only ever be used as a supplement to other tools in a holistic approach, and that military means never in their own right can constitute the solution to a crisis or conflict. This is repeatedly iterated by the HR/VP in relation to on-going military conflicts. So while the military instrument is being strengthened and the EUGS states that “the idea that Europe is an exclusively ‘civilian power’ does not do justice to an evolving reality”, it seems the military instrument will only be used at a certain stage of a conflict cycle that requires de-escalation, and even the reluctantly, as one of several crucial parts in an integrated approach.⁷² One respondent summarised the approach as such:

[t]he EU is [...] in our DNA is a project of peace, so I think there is a difficulty – I think many of our policy objectives are to promote peace – so I think there is an awareness that you need to use more... Develop the security and defence dimension, but when it comes to actually use force or actually be an actor and a participant in military conflict, I don't think we're there and I don't think we want to be there.⁷³

This attitude to the use of force as not the primary instrument to ensure security, but rather as part of a holistic approach, seems to be a distinctive and shared characteristic of strategic culture within the EEAS.

5.3.4. A Renewed Impetus for European Defence Cooperation

“This year, we meet at a crucial juncture for our work towards a stronger Europe of defence”,⁷⁴ Federica Mogherini iterated in November 2016. Alongside above-mentioned priorities come internal or structural priorities, also widely emphasised,⁷⁵ that serve the purpose of enhancing internal cohesiveness and capacity-building with regard to defence in order to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world with both more and new security challenges. That work has gained impetus over the last year through initiatives to strengthen the defence and crisis management dimensions. As mentioned in the introduction, the initiatives aim at capacity building through the strengthening of the European defence industry,⁷⁶ as well as deepening of defence cooperation. The integration of the defence

⁷¹ Interview 9.

⁷² Interviews 9, 10, 11.

⁷³ Interview 10.

⁷⁴ Mogherini, Federica (Brussels, 2016-11-10), *Opening speech by HR/VP Federica Mogherini at the 2016 EDA Conference*.

⁷⁵ Interviews 1, 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12.

⁷⁶ European Commission (November 2016), *European Defence Action Plan*.

industry is an effort to “provide the capabilities needed for missions in the modern world”.⁷⁷ The reasoning behind the need for integration is that “Europe spends a lot, collectively, on defence, but does it very inefficiently, because it’s split up into all these balkanised bits and pieces.”⁷⁸ Making use of the economy of scale that the single market provides would consequently make investments and the industry more efficient.⁷⁹

The deepening of the military dimension mainly consists of three components. Firstly, on the military strategic level a command structure to run non-executive military operations centrally from Brussels, rather than on the ground, was established within the EEAS in June 2017. It also seeks to better coordinate and integrate civilian and military operations.⁸⁰ Secondly, a Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) initiative is meant to serve the purpose of making cooperation the norm in defence, calling upon willing MS to make clear commitments⁸¹ by pulling military efforts together on a permanent basis as provisioned in articles 42(6) and 46 of the Lisbon Treaty.⁸² An annual review on defence has also been suggested for more transparency and better collective foresight.⁸³ Furthermore, the EU seeks to be able to provide a rapid response in crisis situations. This relates mainly to the EU Battlegroups that were established in 2005, but have never been used. Proposals that are under construction in the EEAS are said to aim at equipping the EU with better rapid response through the deployability of the battlegroups, where one obstacle has been the financing mechanism. A scenario where the battlegroups are thought to be used is in bridging UN peacekeeping missions before they become operational, even in difficult environments.⁸⁴ These efforts seem to relate closely to the perceived need of engaging in regional and global security in order to ensure the security of the EU itself and its citizens, by making

⁷⁷ Interview 3.

⁷⁸ Interview 4. See also for example: Mogherini, Federica (Brussels, 2016-11-09), *Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the annual NATO – Industry forum*.

⁷⁹ See for example Mogherini, Federica (Munich, 2017-02-18), *Speech by Federica Mogherini at the Munich Security Conference*; Interview 5.

⁸⁰ Mogherini, Federica (Brussels 2017-03-06) *Remarks by Federica Mogherini following the joint meeting of Foreign Affairs and Defence Ministers at the Foreign Affairs Council*; Interviews 3

⁸¹ Interviews 1, 3, 5, 9 and 14

⁸² The EU (signed at Lisbon, 13 December 2007), *Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community*.

⁸³ *Implementation Plan on Security and Defence* (2016), p. 22

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* (2016), pp. 27-28; Mogherini, Federica (Brussels, 2016-11-14), *Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council* Interviews 3 and 12.

strengthening the hard power dimension of the EU, thus making it more complete as a security provider.

5.3.5. An Integrated Approach

A central strategic priority in the European Global Strategy is an integrated approach to conflicts and crises. The EUGS declares that:

Implementing a multi-dimensional approach through the use of all available policies and instruments aimed at conflict prevention, management and resolution is essential. [...]The EU will therefore pursue a multi-phased approach, acting at all stages of the conflict cycle. [...] Conflicts such as those in Syria and Libya often erupt locally, but the national, regional and global overlay they acquire is what makes them so complex. The EU will therefore pursue a multi-level approach to conflicts acting at the local, national, regional and global levels. Finally, none of these conflicts can be solved by the EU alone. We will pursue a multi-lateral approach engaging all those players present in a conflict and necessary for its resolution.⁸⁵

Respondents appear to share a sentiment that the European Union clearly has the capacity of engaging in security in a distinctively unique manner, drawing on a wide range of capabilities and use them in a holistic or integrated approach.⁸⁶ One European diplomat expressed it in the following terms:

[N]o solution to crises is possible with military means only, but it is also true that without the military instrument, no solution is possible. In order to be more effective the EU has to be able to rely also on [the] harder security elements of its toolbox. And at the same time, it has to be able to use the other, softer elements of the toolbox in a more conscious and a more integrated way.⁸⁷

This builds on the idea of a holistic approach to security where hard and soft power go together, based on the interpretation of the global security environment as highly complex. The idea of an integrated approach is that there are several dimensions and angles from which conflicts must be resolved: geographically including local, regional and global players; time regarding all the phases of the conflict; and instrument-wise tending to all thematic issues such as physical security, economic aspects etc. One respondent likened this multi-dimensional approach to a Rubik's cube.⁸⁸

In the discussion of the EU's integrated approach, some respondents mention experiences that have demonstrated the need of such a holistic approach in conflict and crisis management, and that have shown how the absence of tools to build strong societies post conflict can lead

⁸⁵ *The Global Strategy* (2016), pp. 28-29.

⁸⁶ Interviews 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15.

⁸⁷ Interview 3.

⁸⁸ Interview 6.

to precarious situations where conflicts may re-escalate and even worsen. The most notable examples brought up are the US interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan post-9/11. One respondent says:

[Why did] the United States, [with their] extremely powerful military, fail in Iraq? Why was it such a spectacular failure that has brought so much suffering and disruption to the region? They're a singularity effect militarily, but in terms of rebuilding a society, in terms of understanding the Iraqi society and try and to facilitate the growth of the democratic Iraq out of the ashes of the Saddam regime, they were complete failures – and here I think Europe has a track-record.⁸⁹

These experiences, while only some EU Member States were involved directly in Iraq war – as Nato members – and only some involved directly in the war in Afghanistan, has come to constitute an important collective memory and lesson in modern security. Namely, the collective memory that the exceptional military might of the United States was not enough to win those wars, and the lesson that in order to create true peace and stability one needs to engage in a comprehensive fashion for the long-haul. Of course, the EU also has first-hand experience in the Afghan case *per se* through its civilian police mission to the country between 2007 and 2016. Furthermore, an important and formative moment in the common EU consciousness seems to have been the intervention in Libya in 2011 that led to the killing of former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi and threw Libya into a still on-going turmoil.⁹⁰

Several respondents point to the idea of addressing the root-causes of conflicts,⁹¹ that the EU's approach and distinctive role could allow for it to play a decisive role in fundamentally resolving conflicts and thereby promote peace and stability. This is what sets the EU apart as a strategic player, its unique range of instruments and distinctive approach to security, from other strategic actors, and thus appears to constitute a central characteristic of strategic culture in the EEAS.

It is also important to underline that it is the capacity of the EU highlighted by many respondents. Collectively the EU and its Member States possess a considerable amount and variety of resources in its aggregated diplomatic network, military resources and so on, but for these resources to be effective and truly make a difference, they ought to be pooled to a greater extent than at present. Increased effectiveness is something constantly referred to by

⁸⁹ Interview 4.

⁹⁰ See for example HR/VP (2016-08-18), Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on Syria and the situation in Aleppo.

⁹¹ Interviews 3, 7, 8, 11 and 16; *The Global Strategy* (2016).

respondents, various documents and the HR/VP herself. With regard to this, one respondent also concluded that while the EU do some important things beyond its immediate vicinity, the EU's approach is less holistic the further away you get.⁹²

5.4. The Role of the EEAS in the Wider Institutional Structure: the Source of a Shared Strategic Culture?

The respondents generally find that the role of the External Action Service in the EU foreign and security policy structures is dual. In its coordinative role, the EEAS first of all plays the role of facilitator, trying to build consensus among Member States and the Commission and thereby ensure cohesiveness. Secondly, the EEAS has a pro-active role as initiator of policy.⁹³ While ownership of security and defence remains with the Member States, the EEAS as a centralised source of expertise develops concrete proposals on basis of the political direction given by the Council. As the pen-holder for proposals, the EEAS can 'define the ground' in the process of trying to forge consensus,⁹⁴ and even exercise influence and sometimes push the envelope in trying to get support from the intergovernmental and supranational levels. Respondents generally find that the double-hatted mandate of the HR/VP, while hard to fully exercise due to its heavy work burden, is appropriate for the objective of bringing coherency to EU foreign and security policy. One respondent expresses that HR/VP Mogherini plays her role well in bringing all the bureaucratic layers together and facilitating the instruments needed for a comprehensive approach.⁹⁵ Another official adds that she has been prudent on where she can push the envelope and knowing when she can only find a lowest common denominator among Member States.⁹⁶ Similarly, as the permanent chair of committees and working groups within the CFSP/CSDP structures, there is ample room for the EEAS as the agenda-setter to bring consistency. As both facilitator and initiator, the EEAS is – again – well positioned to be the engine room of EU strategic culture. It should be noted, however, that some respondents did not see any emerging shared strategic culture, while others saw it developing gradually.

As a final remark, this study has not been able to establish any particular differences between respondents based on the sampling criteria: branch of the EEAS, nationality and professional

⁹² Interview 11.

⁹³ Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

⁹⁴ Interviews 5 and 9.

⁹⁵ Interview 6.

⁹⁶ Interview 4.

background. Two respondents stood out, the first by opposing the EUGS' analysis and identification of security problems, as well as key priorities and policy solutions. The second contended there was no shared analysis and thus no shared solutions. However, none of the sampling criteria traits unite these two. This indicates the emergence of a shared strategic culture. But cautiousness is warranted due to the relatively small sample and the underrepresentation of for example officials from Eastern Member States.

6. Discussion

This chapter reiterates and develops upon the most important findings regarding strategic culture within the EEAS. Furthermore, the discussion will relate to this study's contribution to the wider research field regarding the EU as a global actor, as well as the more narrow field regarding the EEAS' institutional role.

6.1. European Challenges Warranting a European Strategy

The sense of a rapidly changing and increasingly complex and contentious world provides important common ground for how the External Action Service interprets its mission. Establishing within such a young organisation the idea that its role within the wider institutional EU framework is to be the facilitator, and to some extent leader in the process of endowing the EU with the appropriate instruments to face the tasks at hand in a new and distraught world could prove momentous in the shaping of the EEAS' strategic culture. As noted in the analysis, the establishment of the Service in December 2010 meant that the start-up phase of the External Action Service coincided with the events of the Arab spring in 2011 and the ousting of several autocratic leaders in the Middle East. One respondent expressed that an initially positive and inspiring sentiment quickly turned into uneasiness as events turned sour and resulted in anarchy and war.⁹⁷ The large increase in people seeking refuge in Europe along with harrowing terrorist attacks in several European countries – “or at the heart of Europe”⁹⁸ – are phenomena connected to those conflicts and provide flagrant examples of how events in the external security environment have a great effect on internal stability. These developments along with Russian assertiveness in the East, granted the EU's specific geographical position in a region where it is surrounded by great instability, seem to have reinforced the sense of a complex, uncertain and more and more contentious global security environment, especially in the immediate vicinity of the EU. The internal and external appear a blurred line in an interdependent and globalised world.

It is in these circumstances that the External Action Service has been established, in a context where the EU has been compelled to conduct a foreign policy increasingly governed by a sense of crisis and confrontation. The events surrounding the EEAS' creation seem to provide a sense of purpose, emanating from an awareness of the necessity of addressing the

⁹⁷ Interview 4.

⁹⁸ *Implementing the EU Global Strategy* (2017), p. 9.

challenges at hand. The European Global Strategy conveys this sentiment by declaring that the EU – in a more contested world – will “be guided by a strong sense of responsibility”.⁹⁹ This also, and importantly, coincides with renewed political will on the part of Member States, giving impetus on security and defence cooperation through the proposals that are now being developed. The political will seems to be strongly linked to migration and terrorism in Europe, warranting for the EU to also act externally to address the root-causes of these issues in the Neighbourhood. In short, radical events in the EU’s wider Neighbourhood that have had domestic political ramifications constitute a period of rapid change and an increasingly contentious global security environment, which seems to have placed the EU at a critical juncture, at which it is more susceptible to alterations in its strategic culture. The process of re-assessing the EU’s strategic position and role as well as recent political will of Member States to deepen defence cooperation are signs of that susceptibility. The common nature of the challenges posed to the EU thus seem to warrant for a European approach to address them in a structured and strategic manner.

6.2. The Integrated Approach: the Rubik’s Cube of European Security Strategy

An increased number of threats in the EU’s Neighbourhood, both in terms of types and frequency, has demonstrated the need of being capable of responding to complex situations where an adversary employs a hybridity of means, and to conflicts at any phase of their cycle, be it prevention, de-escalation, or stability and resilience building.

The cases of Iraq and Afghanistan have also shown that sheer military force can lead to greater instability in the long-term, and that the use of force thus must be integrated in certain stages of conflict as part of a holistic approach to security. Increasing complexity in the global security environment however entails the view that security is more than hard power. This has led to a dual intellectual movement regarding the use of force. In contrast to classical security, the holistic approach of the EU does not emphasise hard power specifically, but conceptualises it as one of several central components. In that sense, conceptually there is now less emphasis on hard power. On the other hand, the EU has been described as a ‘military dwarf’, and consequently needs to acquire better military capabilities in order to supplement the rest of its instruments. In that sense, there is currently an emphasis on more hard power and deepening of the military dimension, especially with regard to the

⁹⁹ *The Global Strategy* (2016), p. 8.

ISIL/Da'esh threat. But conceptually, hard power remains merely one of several components in the holistic approach to security, and force seems to only be an option that can be used reluctantly to prevent the escalation of a crisis or protect a civilian population. A shared and perhaps distinctive feature of the EEAS' strategic culture is thus its reluctant attitude to the use of force, still regarding it as necessary but only as one part of a holistic solution.

To face the diverse nature of modern threats and challenges, the EU must thus have access to a wide and deep toolbox of instruments and more sophisticated solutions to provide long-term security. The EU, it is argued, has the unique capacity of a wide array of instruments that may be employed in a holistic approach. The EU – with a large toolbox at its disposal – has the unique capacity to provide the sophistication required to create long-term stability and peace. There is a vision to do so through an integrated approach to conflicts and crises, by employing all the different tools at the disposal of the EU. This integrated approach is the EU's distinctive approach to security, and is the central characteristic of an emerging shared strategic culture within the EEAS.

The EU has itself sustained historical experiences reflecting such a need, and it is in fact the *raison d'être* of its origins. The US intervention in Europe during World War II provided a positive experience of international actors providing physical security on the continent. This was combined with economic measures – the Marshall plan. This experience seems to have shaped the understanding of how peace should be built, along with the EU's access to a uniquely wide array of instruments. It is thought that security must be addressed fundamentally by looking at the multiple dimensions of security, much like solving a Rubik's cube of conflict – time, geography and thematic issue – from all angles possible and integrating those dimensions. Building stability requires addressing root causes by a combination of hard and soft power tools, and the EU is thought to be the sole strategic player in possession of that key, or keychain, to get the allegory right.

Meanwhile, the broader long-term objective is a rules-based world order based on the principle of multilateralism, with the UN as its cornerstone, in combination with integrated regional blocks that – similar to the EU – can tend to their respective regional security concerns. This closely relates to the idea of building security by internalising conflict, which perfectly reflects the way in which the European Union has contributed to peace and stability on the European continent. The fact that the EU seeks as broad a cooperation as possible in its

approach to security reveals a second central characteristic in its strategic culture to which this thesis would like to point: its cooperative and legitimacy-seeking nature.

6.3. The EU as a Global Actor

One of the most disputed issues regarding the EU as an international player is the nature of its role. While the EU is a demonstratively cooperative security player seeking multilateral solutions and striving towards a rules-based world order, recent events have stressed the importance of being capable of underpinning the fundamentals of such an order. The current efforts made to enhance the EU's capabilities in the defence field and thereby strengthening its credibility as a security provider are steps in the endeavour of closing the infamous capability-expectations gap. Nevertheless, the EU also displays civilian and normative characteristics in its employment of for example economic means and by seeking to diffuse values in the form of regional orders and a rules-based global order among other things. But based on the present investigation, they do not stand out as distinctive traits in the EU's actorness. Rather, they form a whole in the strategic integrated approach. What seems distinctive for the EU is the strive to enhance its capabilities in order to reinforce the cornerstones of a liberal world order: multilateralism and an international law regime. The EU thus reiterates its role as defender of the liberal order, which is perhaps even more important after Trump's ascendancy to power in the US. In doing so, the EU seeks to cooperate with as many partners as possible on all levels in order to generate legitimacy for its actions. These conclusions to some extent correspond to Matlary's arguments for a European strategic culture based on international law, the principle of the responsibility to protect and human security.

6.4. The European External Action Service as an Epistemic Community: the Engine Room of EU Strategic Culture at a Critical Juncture?

The critical juncture at which the EU strategic community is more susceptible to changes in its strategic culture than before coincides with the establishment period of the External Action Service, at which the EEAS – as argued by Adler-Nissen (2014) – as a newcomer in the social field of diplomacy tries to establish itself among the incumbents of that field (the national diplomatic services) by accumulating symbolic power. As argued throughout the text, the specific mandate of the HR/VP to ensure consistency in EU foreign and security policy entails a unique role for her and her supporting organisation, the EEAS. Officials in the EEAS found

that while overbridging the three institutional dimensions (the bureaucratic Rubik's cube if you will) by coordinating and facilitating consensus is the core mission, this also entails an initiator role in which the EEAS due to its expertise is the pen-holder that 'defines the ground' in developing policy mandated by the Council. These findings confirm those of Aggestam and Johansson in the self-perception of the EEAS' role. This generally shared understanding of the EEAS role as dual, being both facilitator and initiator, and a sentiment that Federica Mogherini has increased efforts to really bring cohesion across the institutional spectrum, indicate an on-going development of an *Esprit de Corps*, which Juncos and Pomorska in their article from 2014 found to be lacking.

EU decision-makers in foreign and security policy have in the current period of rapid change faced uncertainty and great complexity in the global security environment. For the first time ever, decision-makers responsible for security and defence have had access to a professional transnational expert community in the shape of the EEAS, for technical expertise in the common policy endeavour in which the EEAS and decision-makers partake of increasing coherency and consistency in foreign and security policy. The findings of the present thesis indicate the emergence of some traits of a shared strategic culture, in which EEAS officials display a generally shared understanding of the causes and effects in the global security environment. Based on that shared understanding, they identify a common set of security problems facing the EU and propose policy solutions to that problem. The EEAS thus displays key characteristics of an epistemic community. The establishment period of the EEAS coincides with a critical juncture at which the EU strategic culture is more susceptible to change, thus providing an opportunity for a problem defining and policy solutions to those problems. The conceptualisation of the External Action Service as an epistemic community thus offers an understanding for how it, through its shared professional expertise and authoritative stance on foreign and security issues, and through its control over knowledge and information – reinforced by the critical juncture at which the EU strategic community currently finds itself – may work as the engine room of EU strategic culture, by diffusing its shared ideas to the EU strategic community and thus shaping strategic preferences and policy. Perhaps the prospective success of that hinges upon whether the EEAS in this process is able to gain symbolic power and establish itself as incumbents in the diplomatic social field.

7. Conclusion

This master's thesis set out to investigate to what extent there is a distinctive and shared strategic culture within the EU's diplomatic service, the European External Action Service, and what characterises such a culture. In doing so it applied strategic culture as an analytical framework, and also partly drawing on the theory of epistemic communities. Relying on sixteen semi-structured interviews with EEAS officials and a qualitative content analysis of official documents from the EEAS, the present study supports that elements of a distinctive shared strategic culture are emerging within the organisation. These elements of a shared strategic culture are emerging in a period where the global security environment is rapidly changing and marked by great complexity and more contentiousness, especially in the EU's wider region. This has led to a critical juncture for EU strategic culture, at which it is more susceptible to change. This coincides with the establishment phase of the EEAS, which through its expertise and authoritative position regarding security issues has assisted decision-makers in problem-defining and finding policy solutions to those problems, and thus as an engine room for strategic culture has been able to diffuse its shared knowledge and help shape strategic culture in the EU strategic community.

The distinctive characteristics of an emerging shared European strategic culture are a holistic integrated approach to conflicts and crises, through which the EU seeks to approach the security issues that it faces by addressing – much like a Rubik's cube – three dimensions in resolving conflict: time, geography and thematic issue. In the integrated approach, the use of force is one of several central components, and is deemed necessary only at certain phases of a conflict cycle as part of a more holistic approach. The integrated approach is furthermore inherently cooperative, and in broader objective terms the EU seeks to reinforce a liberal global order based on multilateralism and an international law regime. Accordingly, a second distinctive trait of strategic culture within the EEAS is the cooperative nature of the EU as a security player. That furthermore reveals the EU as a liberal global actor.

This study has partly relied on 16 semi-structured interviews, which has served as a first investigation into European strategic culture by examining the EEAS. It remains limited however, and a larger-scale study based on a larger number of structured interviews could better establish an overview of strategic preferences within the EEAS, and thus draw more certain conclusions. Moreover, this study has focused on the ideational aspects of strategic

culture, and it would be recommended to also look more on strategic behaviour in future studies. This is especially important now, as this author has argued that the EU is currently at a critical juncture, and that the many initiatives in the past year makes it a quickly moving target. Follow-up studies would consequently be beneficial. Lastly, this thesis introduces the notion of conceptualising the EEAS as an epistemic community, something which future studies could develop upon in order to create a better understanding of the EEAS functioning within the EU institutional structures.

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Appendix

Appendix I. Interview Guide: English

Question 1)
<i>What would you say are the main priorities of the EU in the security and defence realm?</i>
Question 2)
<i>What – in your opinion – is the distinctive contribution of the EU as a security actor?</i>
Question 3)
<i>What instruments would you say are appropriate for achieving EU security objectives and pursuing its interests?</i>
Question 4)
<i>To what extent is the EU – in your opinion – a regional or a global security actor?</i>
Question 5)
<i>Is the aim of EU security and defence policy – in your view – mainly to provide security for EU citizens, or rather for a common good?</i>
Question 6)
<i>Which players should be the EU's main partners with regard to security and defence?</i>
Question 7)
<i>When and where should the EU – if at all – act autonomously?</i>
Question 8)
<i>How would you describe the role of the EEAS in achieving EU security objectives?</i>
Question 9)
<i>How do you view the current mandate of the HR/VP and its appropriateness to help achieve EU security objectives and pursue EU interests?</i>
Question 10)
<i>Would you say that there is a strategic culture emerging within the EEAS?</i>

Appendix II. Interview Guide: Swedish

Fråga 1)
<i>Vilka skulle du säga är EUs främsta prioriteringar vad gäller säkerhet och försvar?</i>
Fråga 2)
<i>Vad – skulle du säga – utmärker EU som säkerhetsaktör?</i>
Fråga 3)
<i>Vilka verktyg eller medel anser du vara adekvata för att tillgodose EUs säkerhetsintressen och uppnå dess mål?</i>
Fråga 4)
<i>I vilken utsträckning är EU – enligt din uppfattning – en regional eller global säkerhetsaktör?</i>
Fråga 5)
<i>Är syftet med EUs säkerhets- och försvarspolitik – enligt din mening – att tillgodose EU-medborgares säkerhet eller snarare att verka för en global allmännytta?</i>
Fråga 6)
<i>Vilka aktörer bör – enligt din mening – vara EUs huvudsakliga samarbetspartners inom säkerhet och försvar?</i>
Fråga 7)
<i>När och var borde EU – om alls – såsom du ser det – agera självständigt?</i>
Fråga 8)
<i>Hur skulle du beskriva EUs roll vad gäller att tillgodose EUs säkerhetsintressen och uppnå dess mål?</i>
Fråga 9)
<i>Hur ser du på HR/VPs nuvarande mandat och hur pass ändamålsenligt är det för att uppnå EUs säkerhetsmål?</i>
Fråga 10)
<i>Skulle du säga att en strategisk kultur håller på att växa fram inom EEAS?</i>