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Convergence Towards a European Strategic Culture?
A Constructivist Framework for Explaining Changing Norms[1]

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Abstract

The article contributes to the debate about the emergence of a European strategic culture to underpin a European Security and Defence Policy. Noting both conceptual and empirical weaknesses in the literature, the paper disaggregates the concept of strategic culture and focuses on four types of norms concerning the means and ends for the use of force. The study argues that national strategic cultures are less resistant to change than commonly thought and that they have been subject to three types of learning pressures since 1989: changing threat perceptions, institutional socialisation, and mediatised crises learning. The combined effect of these mechanisms would be a process of convergence with regard to strategic norms prevalent in current EU countries. If the outlined hypotheses can be substantiated by further research the implications for ESDP are positive, especially if the EU acts cautiously in those cases, which involve norms that are not yet sufficiently shared across countries.

10,999 words (including abstract, bibliography and footnotes)

1.   Introduction

In the intensifying debate about the prospects for a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), the notion of strategic culture is increasingly invoked as shorthand to highlight that national security and defence policies rest on deep-seated norms, beliefs and ideas about the appropriate use of force (Martinsen 2004, Heiselberg 2003, Rynning 2003, Longhurst and Zaborowski 2005). While some authors argue that the differences among national strategic cultures in Europe are large and persistent (Rynning 2003, Lindley-French 2002), others point out dynamics, which may lead to a process of convergence towards a European strategic culture (Howorth 2002, Cornish and Edwards 2001). This debate has not been decided yet, because of a lack of direct empirical evidence about cultural change but also because of unresolved questions regarding the use of strategic culture in applied research. The leading theoretical literature on strategic culture (Gray 1999a, Gray 1999b, Johnston 1995, Johnston 1999) is of limited utility, because it fails to sufficiently disaggregate the notion of strategic culture and provides little guidance on how to empirically analyse strategic culture in a contemporary context.

The paper makes the case for distinguishing four types of strategic norms as interrelated components of a broader strategic culture, which shapes corridors of normal behaviour and illuminates key motives for strategic choice. It argues that some of these norms may be less resistant to change and more widely shared across territorially bounded security communities than commonly assumed. Focusing on the case of Europe after the end of the cold war, the paper argues that all four of these strategic norms are subject to three distinct mechanisms of social learning affecting national elites and societies in varying ways. The paper puts forward a number of hypotheses about the direction of this change and identifies areas of strong convergence, particularly with respect to international authorisation, preferred mode of cooperation and goals for the use of force. This study cannot provide definitive empirical

answers, but makes the case for testing the learning mechanisms and their effects through transnational collaboration on a comparative research design.

2.   The European Strategic Culture Debate

Member states of the European Union (EU) adopted in 2003 the first ever European Security Strategy (ESS). It sets out an analysis of and response to the most salient security threats the Union is facing (European Council 2003), even if some ambiguities and gaps remain (Heisbourg 2004). The intangible of 'European strategic culture' has been introduced into the debate to highlight that the successful implementation of the ESS will depend not just on the creation of the requisite military and civil capabilities, but also on a sufficiently shared pool of norms, beliefs and ideas regarding the means and ends of defence policy. The ESS itself calls for the development of 'a strategic culture, which fosters early, rapid, and when necessary, robust intervention' (European Council 2003, p. 12). European strategic culture in this rudimentary form is depicted as a kind of common mindset to allow the successful implementation of certain types of ESDP actions. Cornish and Edwards define it 'as the institutional confidence and processes to manage and deploy military force as part of the accepted range of legitimate and effective policy instruments, together with general recognition of the EU's legitimacy as an international actor with military capabilities' (Cornish and Edwards 2001, p. 587). This is not to downplay the centrality of member states' policy choices and their implementation for the performance of ESDP given that each member has a veto under the decision-making rules and considering that any military mission of the EU will have to rely on national military contingents. These national policy choices are shaped by collective strategic cultures, which are themselves the results of long and diverse historical experiences. This does not mean that all kinds of divergence between national and European strategic cultures are harmful for the evolution of ESDP given that the EU is in

many respects a different political entity than any of its component parts. Nevertheless, under the current voting rules a successful European strategic culture would need to capture and draw upon similar norms, ideas and practices regarding security and defence policy and the legitimate use of force. This would require a substantial degree of convergence in national strategic norms so that a common platform for action can be found.

Normative convergence can have many faces. We could see, for instance, a trend towards a limited pacific or only self-defence oriented European strategic culture, which would mean that authorisation is protracted, highly dependent on the support of other non-EU countries and the UN, as well as limited to certain types of situations and conflicts. Conversely, we could envisage convergence as the gradual transformation or upgrading of particularly the more pacific or defensive-minded countries towards more activism in the pursuit of their goals, which would entail an expansion of the legitimate ends of ESDP coupled with an increasing lowering of the norms regarding the international legitimisation and domestic authorisation of the use of military force. Finally, convergence may be conceived of as a process that affects all strategic cultures and pushes them towards a kind of median or hybrid set of norms, which are then becoming increasingly institutionalised and internalised. In the current academic discussion (Freedman 2004, pp. 22-23) as well as in the Solana report (European Council 2003), convergence is implicitly conceived of in the sense of upgrading towards 'a more active' strategic culture presented by countries such as France and the UK, which form an attractive core or 'model' of robust strategic cultures for others to follow or at least not to oppose (Everts *et al.* 2004). The question is whether national strategic cultures are converging towards a greater activism in the pursuit of security and value goals, a higher preparedness to use coercive means and accept risks, lower thresholds for the authorisation of force, and a higher acceptance of the European Union as the legitimate vehicle for conduct of defence policies (see below for typology of norms). This would not exclude the possibility

that governments' can disagree over the relative priority of threats (Kirchner and Sperling 2002) or lack the political will to act for overriding domestic reasons, including the ability to finance military operations (Keukeleire 2002).

What is the empirical evidence that convergence of strategic cultures is actually taking place? On the one side of the debate are those who highlight important EU decisions on institutions, policies and capabilities and argue that they are in fact based on growing ideational and cognitive homogeneity (Howorth, 2002; Cornish & Edwards, 2001). On the other side are those who maintain that Europeans still disagree over key issues concerning the analysis of threats and the application of military force, raising the risk that the EU will fail to act effectively when faced with grave threats or crisis (Lindley-French, 2002; Rynning, 2003). A particular strand of the more sceptical position is the edited volume by Longhurst and Zaborowski (2005), which focuses on persistent differences in national strategic cultures to explain the 'Old Europe - New Europe divide' over Iraq. However, both sides of the debate exhibit a certain tendency to treat ideas and norms as self-evident or easily deducible from the behaviour and policies of governments within the EU; instead, they should be studied empirically at the level of both national elites and public on the basis of a unified comparative research design. This has not been done so far with the exception of some smaller studies. Heiselberg (2003) for example investigated the impact of the Kosovo war as a 'formative moment' on the narratives underpinning national strategic cultures in the UK, Sweden and Germany. Howorth has explored how coordinative and communicative discourses may be relevant to understanding the changes in the ideas underpinning ESDP (Howorth 2004). In another work, he has pointed to a number of powerful 'endogenous and exogenous historical forces' (2003, p. 9), most notably the aspirations of Europeans to accomplish political union and the increasing unwillingness of the US to foot the bill for European security free-riding after the end of the cold war. While such an account has its merits when written by an expert

with profound knowledge of the policy area and its evolution, it leaves room for a more rigorous theoretical approach to explaining the key dynamics at play and probe them empirically with an appropriate methodology.

3. Conceptualising and Unpacking Strategic Culture(s)

The intensifying debate about prospects for the emergence of a European strategic culture lacks cohesion because the core concept is contested in the broader theoretical literature. The key point of contention among so-called first and third generation theorists of strategic culture is whether their referent object of study should be used to try 'to understand' (Gray 1999b) or 'to explain' (Johnston 1995) the strategic behaviour of states' in security and defence affairs. Alastair Iain Johnston sees strategic culture as a potentially important independent variable for explaining behaviour, 'as an ideational milieu which limits behavioral choices' (Johnston 1995, p. 46). He argues from a Popperian understanding of social science that theories positing the influence of strategic culture on actions should be 'falsifiable, or at least distinguishable from non-strategic culture variables' (ibid. p. 45) so that their comparative advantage to other theories of strategic choice, such as neorealism, can be ascertained (Glenn *et al.* 2004). To include behaviour in the definition of strategic culture as Colin Gray does, would in Johnston's view overly inflate the notion and thereby deprive it of its explanatory value. Gray in contrast, conceptualises 'culture as context', which comprises and pervades behaviour of political actors, thus 'going all the way down' (Gray 1999a, Gray 1999b). He criticises Johnston's approach for artificially separating what is part of a coherent whole and emphasises that culture is not a causal variable to be used for prediction, but a context that helps us to understand the reasons and motivations of actors.

I follow Gray in so far as ideas, beliefs and norms are not like independent variables used by neorealist theories such as the distribution of power capabilities. Actors do not start with a blank sheet of mind, when they are faced with a problem or an opportunity to act, but draw on

pre-existing and usually stable schemata, beliefs and ideas about the external world and deeply ingrained norms about appropriate behaviour (Checkel 2000, Olsen 2000). They cannot extract themselves and their potential utilitarian considerations from the cultural and social context in which they are embedded and their actions will always reflect this context. Johnston in his reply to Gray (Johnston 1999) effectively acknowledges the weakness of an overly atomistic approach in his earlier writing.

Yet, this does not mean that an explanation of outcomes is not possible as exponents of modernist constructivism have argued (Adler 2002, Risse 2000, Schimmelfennig 2000, Checkel 1998, Katzenstein 1996a). Modernist constructivism does not seek to predict behaviour in a similar way as neorealism does but it can provide 'reasons' for action as Finnemore argues (2003, p. 15). She writes that 'beliefs about legitimate intervention [for instance] constitute certain behavioural possibilities and, in that sense, cause them. Analysis of this type is less directed towards answering the question 'why' than the question 'how', or more specifically 'how possible' (ibid). We are dealing therefore with theories, which can tell us whether the strategic behaviour of collective actor 'a', is possible on the grounds of defending a norm 'y' against violation. Behaviour 'z', which is generally considered inappropriate, could still occur, but would have to be caused by other considerations and would be subject to tensions arising from political actors' awareness of this norm violation. Finnemore argues for instance that the intervention of the United States in Somalia would have been inconceivable without the establishment of new norms in support of humanitarian intervention to help non-Christian, non-white peoples given the lack of strong geo-strategic or economic interests. 'Understanding reasons for action' can therefore be considered as part of the explanation (the 'why-question') and may even be used to analyse future trends if reasons for actions are evaluated in conjunction with countervailing forces. Hence, a better understanding of national strategic cultures in Europe will usually not be sufficient to predict

on its own how a given state will act in the context of ESDP. But these insights could be combined with other empirically informed values of other variables in order to rule out certain types of behaviour as very unlikely and others as possible or even probable given that strategic choice such as military intervention is often 'caused' by a mix of different factors. We can use our findings to map a corridor of 'normal' or 'probable' behaviour of states and integrate them into more comprehensive analyses of strategic choice.

The second major question is how we can use strategic culture in applied research. Most definitions of strategic culture are quite broad and loose in so far as they incorporate references to beliefs, ideas, attitudes, world-views, collective memories, as well as practices, habits, traditions, or patterns of behaviour (Johnston 1995, Gray 1999a, Martinsen 2004, Heiselberg 2003, Longhurst 2004). Returning briefly to the debate between Gray and Johnston whether practices or behaviour can belong to such a definition, it would seem to me overly scholastic and nonsensical to re-define the meaning of a commonly used term such as culture in a way that deprives it of a key semantic component. The conceptual disadvantages of a broad definition of strategic culture can be overcome by focusing on specific normative, cognitive or ideational components to realise our modified explanatory aspirations, and to avoid over determining outcomes along the lines of national essentialism ('The Germans cannot but act as Germans'). Having reviewed a number of definitions of strategic culture put forward not only by Gray and Johnston, but also by Martinsen (2003) and Longhurst (2004), I propose to define strategic culture as *comprising the socially transmitted, identity-derived norms, ideas, and patterns of behaviour that are shared among a broad majority of actors and social groups within a given security community, which help to shape a ranked set of options for a community's pursuit of security and defence goals*. The distinguishing features of this definition are threefold: Firstly, it makes explicit reference to norms in order to connect with the sociological institutionalist writing of authors such as Katzenstein, Finnemore, or

Checkel. Secondly, the definition reflects an understanding that norms, ideas and practices are not isolated variables, but should be rather seen as interrelated elements of and derived from an overarching identity narratives of a given community in its relation to the outside world. Finally, this definition highlights that strategic culture can be quite heterogeneous and contested within societies in just the same way as national identity narratives are. We are thus faced with a majoritarian conception of culture in the sense of a national framework culture, which can be subject to both internal and external forces of contestation and change.

The real problem with the concept of strategic culture is not so much one of definition than one of empirical application. At the aggregate level strategic culture is simply too broad a notion to explain much; it needs to be 'unpacked' into its most important normative, ideational and behavioural components. Given the difficulties of analysing all aspects of strategic culture simultaneously, I suggest to focus on what Katzenstein has called constitutive and regulative norms as the most persistent and most deeply rooted aspects of national strategic cultures. Katzenstein conceptualises norms as social facts, which define standards of appropriate behaviour and express actors' identities (Katzenstein, 1996a, p. 19). Norms in this sense are arguably the least volatile components of strategic culture. They do not change easily in different situations, but are deeply ingrained, identity-derived collective expectations of what is appropriate behaviour.

Table 1: Scalable Norms on the Means and Ends of the Use of Force

Strategic Norms	Degree of Activism in the Use of Force			
	Lower			**Higher**
Goals for the Use of Force	Defence against immediate attack on home territory	Defending groups/nationals abroad against security threats	Promoting Values, Beliefs or Ideas abroad	Extra-territorial expansion of political and/or cultural control
The Way in which Force Used	Reactive, proportionate	Activist, low in-group & low out-group casualties	Activist, low in-group & high out-group casualties	Aggressive, disproportionate towards in- and out groups
Preferred Mode of Cooperation	Neutrality (non-interference)	Cooperation on the basis of laws, treaties and rules	Cooperation of choice among preferred partners	Unilateralism (Preference for acting alone)
Threshold for Domestic & International Authorisation	High Domestic High International	High Domestic Low International	Low Domestic High International	Low Domestic, Low International

Hence, in order to better describe the normative components of strategic culture, I propose a conceptual framework with four main scalable norms, which can take different values in different national settings (see Table 1 above). For instance, countries such as Finland or Ireland tend to consider the use of military force only in very restricted circumstances if used for the defence against immediate attacks on the home-territory, but not for the military defence of foreign peoples against direct threats abroad nor for the promotion of particular beliefs and value abroad. France and Britain in contrast are quite prepared to consider the use of force as legitimate to defend certain values and beliefs. The second dimension concerns the way in which force is used. At one end of the spectrum, the use of force is fundamentally to be avoided and only used as a last resort and with maximum restraint in the event of a direct attack. Some of these views can be found in Austria and parts of contemporary Germany. One can also distinguish between states, who go out of their way to protect their own forces from losses, but have little problems on inflicting maximum harm on 'enemies', while others, such

as Nazi-Germany or Imperial Japan accepted the sacrifice of millions of their own as well as of foreign citizens to promote certain belief-systems or territorial expansion. Thirdly, the use of force may be conditioned by beliefs about how the state survives in international affairs, namely whether the use of force should be conditioned by rules and laws of military alliances or supranational organisations, or whether this very step would bring it into harms way. The latter belief is particularly strong in Sweden and Ireland, while the former can be found in Germany (with a European vocation) and Britain (with a US linkage). Finally, one can analyse the degree to which the legitimacy of the use of force depends on high or low thresholds of domestic and/or international authorisation. For instance, there are those countries, such as Germany, which traditionally demanded a very high degree of both domestic (parliamentarian and public opinion) and international assent (from peers and the UN) before the use of force can be considered legitimate, whereas American and French strategic cultures provide the President as the commander-in-chief with substantially more domestic and international leeway.

The focus on strategic norms along the scale of activism as suggested by Heiselberg (2003, pp. 12-13) has the added advantage of doing away with the overly rigid dichotomies used in much of the literature on strategic culture. Sten Rynning speaks of a 'strong' and a 'weak' European strategic culture, where the latter would allow the EU to prevail in zero-sum conflict situations, in which opposing actors need to be defeated rather than persuaded to change their views, interests and behaviour (2003, p. 484). In my view 'weak' or 'strong' are in my too crude and moreover normatively biased measurements to make a distinction. Moreover, such a single dichotomy between weak and strong does not adequately reflect the potential for incoherence within a give strategic cultures, arising from contradictions and trade-offs between different norms, such as, for instance, norms regarding cooperation within an particular alliance expanding its scope and norms concerning the use of force for territorial

defence only. Howorth (2002, p. 89) uses at least six dichotomies to highlight differences between national security cultures in Europe (allied/neutral, Atlanticist/Europeanists, power projection/territorial defence, nuclear/non-nuclear military/civilian instruments, large/small states, weapons providers/consumers). Yet, not all of these criteria, especially the last two, can be linked clearly to norms, ideas or beliefs as cultural components. The present approach of focusing on different norms as spanning continuums allows researchers not only locate distinct national strategic cultures according to different normative dimensions, but also be more open to changes arising from forces of change.

4.   How Do Strategic Norms Change? Outlining Three Learning Mechanisms

It is true that the scientific appeal of the notion of strategic culture and their underpinning norms is linked to their relative resilience vis-à-vis the forces of history. Kerry Longhurst for instance argues that strategic cultures 'arise gradually over time, through a unique and protracted historical process. Strategic culture is persistent over time, tending to outlast the era of its original inception, although it is not a permanent or static feature. It is shaped and influenced by formative periods and can alter, either fundamentally or piecemeal, at critical junctures in that collective's experiences' (Longhurst 2004). One would not be surprised therefore that strategic norms can change over three centuries at a global scale as Martha Finnemore (2003) argued by focusing on interventions to collect debts, for humanitarian reasons or to safeguard peace and order. But since this study is interested in changes over a shorter time frame and in a smaller part of the world, differences between the strategic cultures of countries are important, and so are the forces that may explain how these cultures change vis-à-vis each other. Generally, cognitive frameworks of a political community in international and security affairs are established through complex socialisation processes, most dramatically in the societal interpretations and identity transformations in the aftermaths of defeats in war as epitomised by the cases of Germany and Japan (Hondrich 1992,

Katzenstein 1996a). The key question is whether we can identify also other mechanisms, events or long-term developments that can alter the underlying norms and ideas in a similar, perhaps more gradual way, than the direct experience of full blown war sweeping the home territory. The following section will set out three learning mechanisms and their impact on one or more of the four types of strategic norms. It will also explore briefly the factors, which may help to explain which European countries are likely to be affected most strongly by these pressures. The three mechanisms may not be powerful enough to change the overarching security narratives or defence identities of a given country in the short term, but they can make them less stable and open new avenues for policy-makers. The theoretical framework has been informed by exploratory empirical research mainly through practitioner interviews and content analysis on four country cases (Britain, Germany, France, and Poland) but will need to be investigated much more extensively by future comparative research and collaboration.

4.1 Learning Through Changing Threat Perceptions: The Impact of the Demise and Transformation of the Soviet Union

Early realists saw the lust for power as a basic human condition and a powerful psychological explanation of military strategy (Morgenthau 1948), whereas later realist thinking focused on fear for one's own survival in a dangerous environment as an even more powerful factor (Waltz 1979). Stephen M. Walt captured this new emphasis in realist thought when he studied how threat perceptions come about and in doing so ventured into the ideational territory of social constructivism (Walt 1996). Threat perceptions of a given security community regarding another state, organisation, or social group, can arise from a wide range of different factors. Not counting the experience of direct attack, threat perceptions are themselves linked to perceptions regarding (i) incompatibilities between societal and political values, ideas and norms, (ii) communications and activities of hostile intent, (iii) and the capability to actually

inflict harm on a significant level. All of these factors can reinforce or neutralise each other. In periods of high ideological polarisation between states, enemy capabilities can be massively overestimated as research on the 'missile gap' demonstrates. Societal perceptions of shared norms and values of other countries and groups make processes of enemy-image building much more difficult and underpin theories of democratic peace. Thirdly, without the realisation of hostile intent even the persistence of substantial military capabilities does not seem to fuel sufficiently high threat perceptions. Contrary to some realist predictions (Mearsheimer 1990), inter-state rivalry has not re-surfaced in Europe after the end of the cold war, because ideational incompatibilities and hostile intent are absent. Fears of the Soviet Union and later on the Russian federation eased so dramatically after 1989 not because the Red Army had vanished over night, but because a new leadership and political reforms had dramatically weakened perceptions of hostile intent and increased awareness of common values and norms.

Strategic norms are not independent of changing threat perceptions; they can be influenced and are often sustained by lingering fear of foreign others. If the perception of being threatened grips the national consciousness over a prolonged period of time, strategic thinking and norms will adapt to provide a cognitive shield against these fears. The stronger the fears of a particular threat, the stronger and more resilient protective norms are likely to be. The exploratory research indicates that primarily norms concerning the goals and modes of cooperation for the use of force are affected. Depending on the type of threat normative adaptation can take different forms such as a strong commitment to territorial defence as the overriding purpose for the military, or a strong attachment to military alliances as the only protection against a vastly more powerful enemy. If the factors, which have given rise to these threat perceptions disappear or change rapidly, the dominant normative shields will not vanish immediately, but will become increasingly hollow and more vulnerable to external events and

crisis. A given security community's threat perceptions are thus in the medium term a powerful vector of learning at both the elite and the societal level, thereby contributing to changes in strategic cultures.

This is what has been happening in Europe since 1989. For much of the cold war period most European societies and elites were continuously afraid of the Soviet Union. The dramatic easing of fear among European states vis-à-vis the potential enemy in the East after 1989, has had a profound impact particularly on those national communities in the West with a relatively recent historical experience of the Red Army such as Germany, Austria and Finland. In the case of Germany, the cold war mindset led to a normative preference for strong Atlantic and multilateralist orientations and territorial defence based on conscription, whereas Finland and Austria saw different forms of neutrality as the best form of protection against the fears of a powerful and dangerous neighbour. The primary impact of the end of the cold war on Germany strategic culture concerned the norm of exclusively prioritising territorial defence, but took some time to materialise. Despite the radically changed security environment, it took more than 12 years until the country's defence minister downgraded territorial defence from the status of the most important task of the armed force to 'an important task' (Giegerich 2004). Despite this shift, the German government defends the need for conscription even if long-term force planning is no longer based on this requirement.

Other European countries less captured by the cold war mindset and fears such as France and Italy have found it much easier to move away from conscription and the premium placed on territorial defence. This observation is only partly true for many Central and Eastern European states and the Baltic States, mainly because their threat perceptions of the Russian Federation did not alter as radically as those of their counterparts in the West. NATO membership as a means of neutralising hostile capabilities is still a relatively recent experience, as are memories of hostile intent and actions on the part of Russia especially before, but also after

1989. Central and Eastern European countries such as Poland also see much more clearly incompatibilities between European values and norms problems and the state of Russia, increasingly prone to political authoritarianism, ingrained corruption and state control of strategic market assets.

The second dimension of change concerned preferences for different modes of defence cooperation. Given that new perceptions of a territorial attack from a powerful state have yet to emerge in Europe after 1989, normative preferences for military alliances and US protection have weakened considerably and gradually call into question the nature of the relationship of European countries to the US and its institutional embodiment NATO. From the perspective of many West European countries, the US is no longer indispensable as a security provider and thus as a shield against fear. The surprising resilience of NATO despite the disappearance of its main enemy testifies to the resilience of strategic norms and their power to sustain large institutional structures in search of a purpose. However, the erosion of the strategic norms regarding security cooperation has continued and been accelerated over the last six years through instances of crisis learning in Kosovo and Iraq as outlined in more detail in the third mechanism. The more momentous change emanates, however, from shifts in US foreign and security policy brought about by a new republican administration and the watershed event of the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Towers on 9/11. The United States' national security strategy of 2002 (Bush 2002) claims authority for military action anywhere to pre-empt terrorist security threats. Multilateral institutions, international treaties and human rights law were disregarded and key European allies as well as NATO were sidelined in the decision-making process regarding the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. European antipathy to US foreign policy went so far that a majority of 53 percent of Europeans regarded its former protector and ally as 'a threat to world peace' according to a survey conducted shortly after the US-led invasion of Iraq (European

Commission 2003, p. 81). This phenomenon extended even to those countries, whose governments had supported the military mission (UK 55 percent and Spain 61 percent respectively). Only in Italy and Germany did a majority of citizens not share this assessment indicating that strategic norms regarding the US as a preferred partner in security matters are still influential. Central and Eastern European countries were not surveyed, but other surveys demonstrate that they show less antipathy to US foreign policy (EOS Gallup 2004).

Finally, the question arises whether the events September 11th and the Madrid terrorist attack of 11 March have created new, powerful, and continuous threat perceptions vis-à-vis fundamentalist terrorism, which could support a more activist interpretation for the use of force to pre-empt threats as witnessed in the US. Survey data from 2002 show that despite the genuine shock and the outpouring of solidarity, Europeans felt much less affected by and vulnerable to al-Qaeda style of terrorism than the US (Worldviews 2002). Another survey shows that differences in threat perceptions among European countries are striking: In October 2003, 76 percent of citizens in Spain and the UK were afraid of terrorist attacks, while only 6 percent of the Finns and 10 percent of Austrians shared this assessment (European Commission 2003, p. 74). At the time of writing, it is unclear whether new forms of network terrorism can lead to changes in strategic norms, which match threat perceptions vis-à-vis the former USSR in strength and continuity.

4.2 Learning Through Institutions: Socialising Effects of ESDP structures and committees

The second learning mechanism arises from the ability of institutions and decision-shaping structures created at the supranational level to affect the norms held by delegated national officials through processes of social influence. Experiments in the field of social psychology have shown that groups, whether strongly institutionalised or ad-hoc, are in principle able to shift individual cognitions, feelings, and behaviour (Avermaet 2001, Pennington *et al.* 1999,

Smith and Mackie 2000). Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957) established that individuals experience physiologically measurable stress when they discover that their attitudes, ideas and beliefs are inconsistent with what they perceive as the dominant norms of the group and will often take steps to resolve this inconsistency by changing their attitudes and perceptions. This process is called normative influence. Alternatively, individuals may change their views because they believe or are persuaded that the group's dominant norms better reflect reality or are more appropriate, which is usually referred to as informational influence.

Theorists of regional integration have drawn on, adapted and applied these insights to argue that the participation of national civil servants in EU institutions and committees can set in motion socialisation dynamics, which can overcome gaps in mutual trust and world views among national representative, thereby weakening the ideational influence of their ministries in the capitals. Neo-functionalist have called this process 'actor socialisation', 'cultivated spill-over', 'engrenage', or 'cognitive Europeanization' (Schmitter 2003, Lindberg 1971, p. 284, Lindberg and Scheingold 1970, p. 119). They focus primarily on the impact of the numerous EU level committees, task forces and working groups, which are woven together by complex systems of consultation, coordination and information exchange. Europeanising social influence increases with intensity and length of exposure and varies across different types of committees as well as between policy fields (Trondal and Veggeland 2000, Hooghe 1998). We would expect to find strong social influence within committees and institutions, which meet frequently and extensively, whose members are based in Brussels and/or are delegated permanently, which are put in charge of new policy initiatives and where group size, shared professional background and confidentiality allow for intimate discussions (cf. Checkel 2000).

The new European structures for decision-making in the field of security and defence meet many of these criteria for normative and informational influence and are considered capable to bring about a convergence in strategic thinking (Howorth 2002, Cornish and Edwards 2001, Martinsen 2003). The case for convergence through institutionally induced learning rests, firstly, on the Office of the High Representative (OHR) and its support structures set-up under new provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty (1997) and headed currently by Javier Solana. The second institutional innovation was in 2000 the setting up of the Political and Security Committee (PSC or COPS), the European Military Committee (EUMC), and the European Military Staff (EUMS) as catalysts for the evolution of ESDP. The PSC is the most senior committee and consists of officials from member states' foreign offices at the rank of ambassadors, who are permanently placed in Brussels and meet at least twice a week to work for a full day on a heavy agenda. The largest and most capable member states as well as the institutional actors such as the Council Presidency and the Office of the High Representative wield considerable influence on shaping information flows, opinion papers, and agendas of these committees and many of the most sensitive issues are discussed over lunch or in more restricted settings. Interviews the authors conducted with PSC ambassadors and other high civil servants in the summer of 2004 show that this key committee has managed to develop an *esprit de corps,* a group-identity and common thinking revolving around the shared commitment to pioneering a ESDP, a high-level of mutual trust and an intimate understanding of each others positions.

These findings indicate not only a growing acceptance for the EU as a framework for defence cooperation at the level of high officials, but also underline the power of such committees to exert conformity pressures on newcomers to support the overall thrust of ESDP. A number of officials from the old member states emphasised how cautious and indeed 'well behaved' the new members were. Conversely, representative from these new countries in the PSC realised

that they would be cast in the role of the isolated trouble-maker if they did not fall in line with the ways of operation, the use of language, and the overall thrust of ESDP. Of particular importance is normative influence with the policies and principles already agreed by the committee as one official from a new member state joining in 2004 said: 'We have found out that you cannot just come with new ideas and proposals for change, they will just be dismissed as not-constructive. You always have to build on the language already agreed and seek to develop it in an evolutionary way' (interview, September 2004, Brussels). The most notable effect of institutional socialisation was that the new member states dropped very quickly their serious objections against the EU as the appropriate framework for wide reaching defence cooperation in general and on issues such as the solidarity clause, battlegroups, or the defence agency in particular.

But the PSC and its satellite committees do not only exert strong conformity pressures on new member states to accept the EU as the preferred mode for security cooperation, they are also supporting this new strategic norm by virtue of being platform and stimulus to real learning or mutual 'education' as another ambassador called it. Delegates from new member states acknowledged that persuasion through facts and strength of argument was taking place. 'We can draw on the European reservoir of ideas to devise our own approach. Being part of the PSC sometimes makes you realise that their approach is actually better than what we considered as our national interest' (interview, September 2004, Brussels). Persuasion can also take place through information overload as particularly smaller member states find it difficult to digest and shape the massive paper flow originating from Policy Unit, SITCEN, Commission, and the Presidency with their limited administrative resources and expertise. They also struggle to influence the agenda setting and opinion shaping within the ESDP structures because of their lack of military capabilities and real experience in missions as the main determinants of influence in hard security debates. One frequent focus for persuasion is

when influential PSC members, particularly the one from the UK, strive to convince the strongly US/NATO oriented member states that ESDP missions and capability goals are compatible with NATO and their obligations within it. Learning effects within these committees are then mediated to foreign and defence ministries as well as to military organisations of both old and new member states, some of which were initially very sceptical of attempts to pursue defence policy in a European context.

One example of such multi-level influence affecting not only the new and the smaller member states was the role of ESDP structures in the production of the European Security Strategy, and thereby in re-defining goals for the use of force. According to my interviews, it was PSC ambassadors who came up with the idea for the European Security Strategy, sold it successfully to their Foreign Ministers (including the UK!), who then asked Solana to draft it. It was prepared within a small circle of high civil servants around Solana with some input from the PSC, discussed with external experts at three seminars, and finalised by the PSC in the formation of Political Directors. ESDP structures and actors had therefore had a key impact on the formulation of a document, which represents a substantial shift away from the 'civil power' *leitbild* towards a Union that aims to develop autonomy in defence matters and considers the use of military force a legitimate option to tackle security threats. The ESS represents a departure in strategic thinking for the NATO oriented countries, who had previously resisted giving the EU a strong role in security and defence (the UK), as well as for those pacific and self-defence minded countries (Germany, Austria, Sweden), who had difficulties in signing up to a more activist use of force for the purpose of counteracting threats and defending human rights. ESDP structures can be also used proactively even by smaller countries. Sweden, for instance, has used the new institutions to re-shape the country's strategic doctrine by exporting its strong preferences for a multi-lateral rule-based order to the EU level and importing notions of using military force for humanitarian purposes

as well as watering down its neutrality attachment within a new European defence policy framework.

4.3 Mediatised Crises as Impetus to Societal Learning: Western Interventions from Bosnia to Iraq

Threat perceptions and institutional socialisation do not usually bring about changes over the short term as societies respond rather slowly to changes in strategic thinking at the elite level. While elites can engage in moral advocacy they are under normal circumstances not able to single-handedly transform collectively held strategic norms. Yet, changes in national strategic cultures as well as the norms and narratives underpinning them can and do occur, either very gradually to the forces described above or more rapidly through events and crises, which act as 'formative moments' (Ringmar 1996, p. 85, Heiselberg 2003, p. 8) for the revision and reinterpretation of collective memory and beliefs. Existing cognitive schemata can be challenged either through a constant stream of similar, or a repetition of the same kind of discrepant information, or it can occur through the accumulated, high intensity exposure to such information. The direct experience of war can be one of the strongest causes of societal learning. It has the potential to challenge in fundamental ways deeply ingrained collective beliefs and identities (Hondrich 1992). Lessons learnt from violent conflict within and between states can run very deep in societies, especially when considering the effects of shattering defeats rather than those of dramatic victories as the examples of Japanese and German societies amply illustrate (Katzenstein 1996b, Hondrich 1992). The question is whether crises learning can also occur in cases where societies are not directly affected by attacks. In order to effectively challenge societal strategic norms without the direct experience of warfare, humanitarian and security crises need to be publicised and framed appropriately by the news media to overcome public awareness thresholds and to create empathy for the

victims of such violence. This kind of mechanism can be called mediatised crises learning and can affect all four of the strategic norms outlined in the previous section.

After the end of the cold war, European societies and governments were confronted with new kinds of violent conflicts and crises. As frozen conflicts began to thaw in the absence of the disciplining effect of superpower rivalry, war did not come to an end, but suddenly took place on a smaller scale elsewhere, including the EU's immediate neighbourhood. West European societies were largely unprepared not only to the fact that interethnic violence, mass rape and concentration camps could take place in their backyard, but were also shocked by the level and immediacy of exposure to pictures of shelling, barbed wire fences, and gruelling accounts of rape victims. This raised painful memories in many European countries of Nazi *Lebensraumpolitik* and notions of ethnic superiority that promulgated the extermination of other ethnicities or religious groups. Especially the German society was torn apart between the norm of never sending soldiers 'out of area' again - in Kosovo even without a UN resolution - and its moral mission to prevent 'a second Auschwitz' as German Foreign Minister Joseph Fischer framed it. But also the Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lind reacted to the media coverage by re-framing this normative tension to that the goals for the use of force trump authorisation concerns: 'Let us now add to the insights, Never again Auschwitz!, Never again a Cold War! and Never again Srebrenica! and one more: Never again Kosovo! But what is the most important is for these painful experience for Europe to be turned into political action (sic)' (quoted by Heiselberg 2003, p. 18). The Bosnia experience of European impotence to prevent the massacre of Srebrenica was widely interpreted in Europe as a moment of collective shame and led also to heated discussions in Britain over the obligation to use military force to prevent atrocities (Meyer 2004). The thesis is therefore that the outbreak of violent ethnic conflicts in the Balkans supported by high level of media exposure challenged the more reactive and territorial defence-oriented national security cultures and

initiated a process of societal learning in a number of member states towards a more active role in security and defence (Heiselberg 2003). The mobilisation of public opinion through the news media was also a major factor to prompt political leaders to consider and actually use military force in new circumstances such as the NATO interventions in Bosnia in 1995 and Kosovo of 1999. The Bosnia and Kosovo case prompted also profound changes in the norms governing the authorisation of force in the more pacific countries. In Germany, the Federal Constitutional Court was called-upon to clarify whether using German troops abroad in interventions could be legal. The answer of the Court and vigorous societal debates over the obligation to protect paved the way for German military contributions to Kosovo and Afghanistan.

The conflict over Kosovo was not only significant in extending the scope for the use of force to counteract human rights violations and ethnic cleansing, but it brought also a lesson for norms relating to the way in which force is used. It emerges from surveys many Europeans societies would have preferred a different kind of military campaign to the one the NATO pursued. The US was under considerable criticism for targeting of bridges and other infrastructure in Serbia, which led to many civilian deaths, rather than engaging the Serb forces directly with ground troops and accepting the risk of more casualties among NATO forces. Media coverage also focused on the lack of European military capacities, its dependence on US intelligence and its limited influence on US decision-making on how the air campaign was to be conducted. However, the case demonstrates also persistent intra-European differences regarding norms on the means defence policy. While German and partly also French media commentators would demand an end of the bombing campaign without the use of ground troops and a return to diplomacy, left-of-centre newspapers in Britain like the Guardian called for deployment of grounds troops as the only effective means to end the violence, even if this meant substantially higher numbers of own casualties (Meyer 2004).

The main ideational impact of the invasion of Iraq was at the societal level to increase support for a European role in defence policy and to weaken support for cooperation with the United States as the Transatlantic Trends study of 2004 demonstrates (EOS Gallup 2004). In contrast to the invasion targeted at removing the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the US-led invasion of Iraq found very little support among Europeans (European Commission 2003). One key reason was the lack of a second United Nations' Security Council (UNSC) resolution, which would have shifted opinion substantially in favour of the invasion in most European countries (Worldviews 2002, EOS Gallup 2004, p. 13). Iraq has thus reinforced the centrality of international authorisation for the use of force and demonstrated that the violation of one norm can impact also on the preference for a particular mode of defence cooperation. The normative repercussions of going to war against a majority in the UNSC were further reinforced by the US strategy of assembling coalitions of the willing with considerable pressure and financial incentives and thereby dividing Europeans against themselves. This deepened the post-cold war lesson in substantial parts of societal public opinion particularly in Western Europe that the US could no longer be trusted to listen to European concerns and act in their security interests. Furthermore, the Iraq crises did not de-legitimise the case for humanitarian intervention, but can be seen as undermining public acceptance of the use of force to avert military threats given the apparent failure to find any weapons of mass destruction. Even though the outcome of the transition process in Iraq is not clear at the time of writing, the experience of widespread insurgency and sectarian warfare in the aftermath is unlikely to have shifted European strategic norms at the societal level towards a more activist interpretation of the use of force for the pursuit of freedom.

5. Combined Trends of Normative Convergence and their Implications

The previous section looked at the impact of three learning mechanisms on strategic norms and specified, which type(s) of the four norms would be most affected and in what way. What

has been missing is a combined assessment of these changes in the light of the convergence thesis. This final section aims to do that by advancing four hypotheses about the extent and direction of the convergence process, which will need to be validated by further longitudinal and comparative research. The appropriate methodology will vary with the different learning mechanism, for instance, public discourse analysis and surveys for analysing mediatised crisis learning, participant observation and qualitative interviews for institutional socialisation, and self-report questionnaires backed up by interviews and surveys for the analysis of changing threat perceptions.

Table 2: Overview of Learning Mechanisms and Their Expected Impact

Vectors of change	Causal mechanism	Affected Norms	Direction of Impact	Intervening Variables for Impact
Threat Perceptions	Demise of perceptions of Soviet threat after 1989, reinforced by US foreign policy shifts	Goals for the Use of Force Preferred Mode of Cooperation	Downgrading of exclusive commitment to territorial defence Weakened attachment to NATO / the US	Former front-line states in the West
Institutional socialisation	Socialisation effects arising from the creation of Brussels based ESDP structures and committees	Preferred Mode of Cooperation Goals for the Use of Force	Strengthening of trust in EU as defence actor, weakening of neutrality doctrines Expansion of legitimacy for the use of force for security and humanitarian ends	Representatives from smaller, neutral and newly acceded countries Countries with strong US/NATO attachment
Mediatised crisis learning	Crises leading to Western Interventions in the cases of: a) Bosnia b) Kosovo c) Iraq	Goals for the Use of Force Authorisation Way in which force is used Preferred Mode of Cooperation	Cases a) & b) expanded legitimacy for use of force to protect ethnic groups from violence Cases a) & b) lowered domestic thresholds for authorisation of force Case b) strengthened norms regarding restraint of force against civilian targets Cases b) & c) rising support for EU as preferred defence cooperation framework	Formerly pacific or neutral countries with formerly high authorisation thresholds Western European countries with formerly strong attachment to the US/NATO

1. Effects on Goals for the Use of Force: Converging Attitudes on Humanitarian Intervention abroad: Because of fading threat perceptions regarding direct attacks from an ideationally hostile superpower, the trend towards a de-prioritisation of territorial defence is expected to continue, particularly in countries such as Germany and Finland, which had felt most vulnerable to Soviet attacks over decades. Mediatised crises involving interethnic violence in the Balkans have filled this psychological breathing space and instigated over time a consensus that the use military means abroad can be legitimate for the purpose of protecting

vulnerable ethnic groups against attacks and thereby defending European values. This new consensus has been put into practice in Congo with the small-scale Artemis operation, which was hardly contested by public opinion. The socio-psychological effects of the Iraq conflict may not have fully matured yet, but point to a de-legitimization of the use of force for the promotion of democracy and freedom, particularly in those countries, which were not part of the US-led invasion force. The Madrid 4/11 attacks did not equal the 9/11 attacks in the US in terms of their impact on collective strategic norms in Europe regarding the pre-emptive use of force. Even at the elite level, the inclusion of military means to avert security threats remains extremely contested, and the final wording of the ESS suggest a strong preference to use only non-military means for dealing with non-immediate threats.

2. The way in which force is used: Minimal consensus on restraint vis-à-vis foreign civilians. Crises learning in the case of US-led interventions in Kosovo and Iraq has solidified a European consensus concerning norms about the way force can be used, namely with maximum restraint against civilian targets and a preference to exhaust non-military means first. In Kosovo one could see, however, also the persistence of considerable normative differences among those European countries with considerable combat experience (Britain and France) and those without (Germany, Austria) on the use of ground troops and the acceptability of own casualties to reach the ultimate objectives. So far, EU military missions have not yet been a serious test of the degree to which different countries would support the initiation and continuation of combat operations with high casualties on both sides. Yet, participation of EU troops in out-of-area mission can be a stimulus to learning in this area, when overly restrictive and unclear rules of engagement hamper effective and coherent action of multi-national forces on the ground. According to studies of NATO and the Bundeswehr this has been case in March 2004 when KFOR was unable to counteract Albanian attacks on

the Serb minority population in Kosovo in March 2004 (Carstens 2004). Whether such failures are an indication of persistent differences in strategic norms or whether they will lead to learning beyond expert circles is unclear.

3. Effects on the Authorisation of Force: Solidifying Consensus on Multilateralism and International Law: Changes in threat perceptions after the cold war and the effects of mediatised crisis learning have solidified the consensus on the thresholds for international authorisation, either through international law or the United Nations Security Council. This can be partly seen as a counterbalancing of the extended interpretation of norms regarding humanitarian intervention and steps taken by some countries to lower their domestic thresholds to allow for out-of-area missions in the first place. With regard to the domestic authorisation of the use force, a genuine process of convergence from both ends of the scale seems to be under way as constitutional caveats concerning the use of force are being lowered in some countries, while those states with very low thresholds (commander-in-chief model) move towards a greater oversight role for parliaments. There is also discernible pressure from some elite actors to strengthen European level accountability mechanisms, especially the powers of the European Parliament to scrutinise the High Representative.

4. Effects on the Preferred Mode of Defence Cooperation: **Fading Attachment to Neutrality as well as to NATO.** The decline of the Soviet threat has weakened European societies' attachment to neutrality as well as to defence cooperation through the US/NATO. While substantial ideational differences over this issue remain at the elite level, a considerable alienation from the US as the only or preferred ally has set in at the societal level. The common meeting ground for these opposing trends is the growing support for the European

Union as an actors in security and defence matters, which has been brought about through the combined impact of institutional socialisation and the negative experience of European influence on US decision-making and action in the cases of Kosovo and Iraq. Moreover, European defence cooperation provides neutral countries such as Sweden and Finland with a normatively accepted outlet for pursuing the defence of values outside the framework of a military alliance. One would expect the process of destabilisation and re-framing of neutrality norms to extend eventually also to those countries such as Austria and Ireland, where neutrality is firmly embedded in national identity narratives.

These four hypotheses of outcomes are clearly preliminary until more comprehensive and detailed empirical data regarding processes of normative changes becomes available. Yet, if the causal mechanism and their effects can be confirmed, the contribution to the convergence debate is clear. Normative convergence is most notable in the de-prioritisation of territorial defence, the legitimacy of intervention for humanitarian ends, international authorisation by the UN, and a growing attachment to the EU as the appropriate framework for defence cooperation. Differences remain in the area of using force abroad to pre-empt security threats to the home territory, attachment to the US/NATO context, and, most notably, the acceptability of casualties arising from the way in which force is used. The second important finding is that normative convergence affects particularly but not only the more pacific, neutral or defensive strategic cultures. British and French strategic cultures are also under adaptation pressure with regard to the preferred mode of cooperation through crisis learning, the demise of the Soviet threat, and to a lesser degree institutional socialisation. Convergence is thus not simply the process of approximating the British or the French strategic mind-set, but a process of hybridisation of strategic cultures, a gradual ironing out of differences.

The implications for ESDP and its ideational framework the European Security Strategy are both positive and negative. They are positive in so far as the overall drive towards closer European cooperation in defence matters enjoys broad societal support and at the elite level there has been an easing of principled concerns particularly in the new member states over using the EU as an important if not preferred framework for security cooperation. In addition, learning mechanisms have solidified a broad commitment to a strong role for the UN and multilateralism as well as an emphasis on wielding non-military means more effectively. The normative foundations for the pre-emptive use of force seem still fragile, as does the basis for a common approach to the way in which force is used if the risk of casualties is high. Especially, the last factor remains the Achilles heel of the ESDP and would require additional learning at the level of military organisations and national publics. This kind of learning could only arise from experiences with missions of national troops in hostile settings, most notably in Bosnia, Kosovo or Afghanistan. In sum, there is much reason for the EU and individual states to be very careful about the missions and goals they want to undertake in order to avoid the risk of political fall-out and public backlash. Erring on the side of caution may be difficult in the face of strong public calls for action and the dynamism of unfolding events, but it may be crucial for building up confidence that the EU can be effective once it decides to act.

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