EUROPEAN STRATEGIC CULTURE IN THE CITIZENS' EYES

Sylvain Paile-Calvo

Summary: *Numerous examples of the use of the term "strategic culture" applied to the European Union can be found in the scientific literature or in political statements. The High Representative and Vice-President of the European Commission himself, Josep Borrell, has stressed the need for the EU to have a "shared strategic culture and empathy". However, this quote is more of a political ambition than an objective reality. Similarly, it is often argued that the EU does not have its own strategic culture, but that only its Member States have one. This contribution proposes to explore the meaning of this term and its reality in the context of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). If the construction or development of such a common strategic culture in Europe is defined as a clear political objective, it seems obvious to all that it can only be built through collective and convergent actions of all CSDP actors in the Union.*

Key words: *European strategic culture, citizens, opinions, Strategic Compass, European Security and Defence College.*

STRATEGIC CULTURE: WHICH IS THE CHICKEN? WHICH IS THE EGG?

In troubled times such as those of the early 2020s, witnessing the war in Ukraine, the growing competition with new power players such as China, the return to a Cold War logic in Africa and other regions of the world, the resurgence of "classic" threats (border security, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, etc.) and the consolidation of new ones (hybrid threats, disinformation, economic warfare, etc.), the search for a cement for European cohesion is a fundamental – if not founding – issue for a common security and defence policy. But one may wonder first why we need a common, or at least shared, strategic culture at European level. What can we, citizens or specialists, expect from it?

The reasons may be linked first, foremost and logically to purely strategic considerations, *i.e.* to define a horizon, a common purpose for collective action. But they are above all multiple and extend to the day-to-day operational management of security and defence, both for the European Union and its Member States.

The questions of objectives, the means to achieve them and the criteria for verifying them are the ambition and the driving force behind the

implementation of the European Strategic Compass[1], in particular, which was adopted in 2022. An intrinsic motivation also lies in the fact that the 27 Member States have 27 different national strategic cultures for acting in security and defence matters, individually. Hence, it would be necessary to have one for collective action.

A more corrective and forward-looking reason is to 'project' the Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) into reality, when it is commonly criticised for being impractical and underused. The need for a common strategic culture is also - and more generally - linked to the necessity to strengthen the capabilities and interoperability of the forces available, as well as to the question of how to achieve the objective of strategic autonomy.

At the operational level, the identification of a common strategic culture would help clarifying and arbitrating the choices to be made in terms of financial instruments for the European security and defence, such as permanent structured cooperation (PSC), the European Defence Fund (EDF) or, more recently, the European Peace Facility (EPF). Arbitration through the filter of strategic culture" would also allow for motivating the choices in terms of missions and operations: where to get involved first, with what type of forces (civilian and/or military) and above all as an alternative or complement to which other security actors, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)?

Finally, without concluding a – by essence – non-exhaustive list, compensating for the gap between the (proven) difficulties of public communication of the CSDP and the expectations is also a strong reason to identify a common cultural base.

The term 'strategic culture(s)', singular or plural, is ubiquitous in the scientific literature and political discourse[2]. A comparative analysis of attempted definitions would require an in-depth study of the literature, but a 'surface' exploration already helps framing the challenges that surround the concept. For Laura Chappell, strategic culture "can be defined as a set of beliefs, attitudes and norms about the use of military force"[3]. The same basic concept is found in other attempts at definitions. For Alessia Brava, Margriet Drent and Graeme P. Herd, it is "a set of beliefs, assumptions, attitudes, norms, worldviews, and patterns of behaviour customary to strategic decision-makers about the policy objectives of war and how best to achieve

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[1] Council of the European Union, "A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence - For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security", adopted on 21 March 2022.

[2] See Emmanuel Macron, 'Initiative for Europe - Emmanuel Macron's speech for a sovereign, united, democratic Europe' (Sorbonne speech), 26 September 2017, https://www.elysee.fr/front/pdf/elysee-module-795-fr.pdf, http://international.blogs.ouest-france.fr/archive/2017/09/29/macron-sorbonne-verbatim-europe-18583.html (accessed 12/02/2023).

[3] Chappell, L. (2009). "Differing Member State Approaches to the Development of the EU Battlegroup Concept: Implications for CSDP", *European Security, 18* (4), 417-439.

them"[4]. Both of these elements imply that culture is both historically-based and future-oriented. At this stage of the exploration, it should be noted that these definitions seem to focus attention on the military use of the concept. In the context of the EU, which is characterized by an original 'comprehensive approach' integrating both civilian and military means in its CSDP 'toolbox', this sectoral definition may be a challenge. At the same time, the limitation of the definition to the military domain certainly also explains why the European Security and Defence College (ESDC), which is not a military institution, aims to strengthen a "European security and defence culture" and not a "strategic culture", which is limited in scope.

Beyond the scientific definition(s), however, it seems from the political discourse that the extension of the concept to areas other than the military domain is commonly accepted. In 2017, in its reflection paper on the future of European defence, the European Commission stressed that a European Defence, as foreseen in Article 42(2) of the Treaty on European Union, "should encourage a stronger alignment of strategic cultures, as well as a common understanding of threats and appropriate responses. It will require joint decision-making and action, as well as greater financial solidarity at European level"[5]. It is interesting to note that the term used by the European Commission in the document is in the plural, thus suggesting that Member States have strategic cultures but that the EU does not (yet) have its own overarching strategic culture. This is supported by the Clingendael report of December 2020[6], which analyses the level of strategic autonomy of the EU. The report clearly identifies the "lack of a common strategic culture" in the EU and the presence of "diverse strategic cultures". Alessia Brava, Margriet Drent and Graeme P. Herd oppose to this view the existence of a real EU strategic culture, arguing that it "is based on a broad vision of security and on a comprehensive, multilateral and internationally legitimised approach to threats. It is operationalised through the use of military and civilian instruments in an integrated manner. Strategic culture is highly contextual - it recognizes complexity, interconnections and trade-offs"[7].

The effectiveness of such a common strategic culture is questionable. Its rationale has been questioned by academics. The authors of the Clingendael report, for example, urge Europe to achieve "mutual

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[4] Brava, A., Drent, M., & Herd, G. P. (2011). "Characterizing the European Union's Strategic Culture: An Analytical Framework", *Journal of Common Market Studies,* *49* (6), 1227-1248. https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/20111110_cscp_artikel_mdrent.pdf

[5] European Commission, "*Reflection Paper on the Future of European Defence*", 7 June 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/reflection-paper-defence_en.pdf (accessed 12 February 2023).

[6] Zandee, D., Deen, B., Kruijver, K., & Stoetman, A. (2020, December). *'European strategic autonomy in security and defence - Now the going gets tough, it's time to get going'*, Clingendael Report, Clingendael Institute. https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/202012/Report_European_ Strategic_Autonomy_December_2020.pdf (accessed 12 February 2023).

[7] Brava, A., Drent, M. & Herd, G. P., *op. cit.*

understanding and convergence of the different national strategic cultures, with a view to promoting a comprehensive European strategic culture" because "the building of a common strategic culture and threat perception is essential to increase European strategic autonomy", *i.e.* the EU's ability to act in its own interest on the international scene. For the authors, it is clear that a common culture that is organically different from national cultures is a condition for achieving this capacity to act: "one of the most important challenges ahead is to redevelop Europe's sense of ownership of its own security, which requires supporting the emergence over time of a European strategic culture". Daniel Fiott[8] also agrees, with regard to the expected impacts of the Strategic Compass initiative, that "depending on the scope and nature of the threat analysis, it may even be possible to observe how far the European Union is from a strategic culture and the EU institutions may have to humbly acknowledge that the Compass will not lead to a full-fledged strategic culture (...). Moreover, there is no guarantee that the Strategic Compass will even lead to a common threat perception or even a strategic culture, although it could pave the way for a better understanding of the kind of security and defence actor the EU should be"[9]. Far from being pessimistic, this perception takes into account the fact that the Strategic Compass is an exclusively forward-looking initiative and does not address the historical criterion that usually steers the concept of "strategic culture".

Despite all these reflections – while pushing the reasoning to the limit– the EU's strategic culture is a reality, even in the case of a zero sum. The fact that only its Member States have strategic cultures and that the EU itself does not have one is already enough to characterise a strategic culture. Not a satisfactory culture, in the eyes of the advocates of European integration, but a culture of its own.

This raises the question of the legitimacy, or the 'ownership', of this European strategic culture if it is to be shared by the greatest number. Is it first and foremost the product of citizen support, *i.e.* of a convergence of perceptions or of the convergence of actions? For both seem to be components of the scientific framing of the concept. So, who between the two is the chicken and who the egg?

1. Citizens' perceptions of threats and solutions.

Since it is methodologically difficult and even untenable, from the point of view of exhaustiveness, to pinpoint exactly what the perceptions on security and defence of the citizens – whether national or European – are, recourse must be made to the most approximate instruments. In the absence

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[8] Fiott, D. (2020, July 16). "*Uncharted Territory? Towards a common threat analysis and a Strategic Compass for EU security and defence*", EU ISS, Brief, p. 7. Retrieved February 12, 2023, from https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief%2016%20Strategic%20Compass_0.pdf
[9] *Idem.*

of any major conclusive scientific study on these aspects, largescale surveys– in particular Eurobarometers – provide an idea of what citizens consider to be part of their security and defence in terms of threats and solutions.

The aim is to deduce in a scientific manner whether or not there is a convergence of perceptions that would underpin the idea of a strategic culture.

a. Threat perceptions

The Standard Eurobarometer No. 526, based on a field survey of 26,580 European citizens between April and May 2022, is entitled "The Major Challenges of our Time – The EU in 2022"[10]. It is therefore, in every possible way, a relevant instrument for collecting data on citizens' perceptions which shall form the foundations of a Union's common strategic culture. However, its level of granularity in the study does not allow for detailing these perceptions in terms of the origins of the threats – such as the feeling towards a particular country – or a type of weapon or technology – such as the threat related to nuclear weapons or autonomous lethal weapons systems. Similarly, the results obtained cannot be taken as a generality, as they may vary from one Member State to another and priorities may be formulated in radically different ways. The instrument, however, thanks to the method used and its scope, must be taken as the most relevant to capture the general mood of European citizens.

The first observation is that Europeans seem to be looking in the same direction in terms of their perceptions of threats to their security and defence. This is illustrated by the sense of central importance of the threats posed by the war in Ukraine. For 84% of the inquired Europeans, the invasion of Ukraine is a threat to the security of the EU and for 77% it is a threat to the security of their country[11]. It should be noted that, with the exception of Austria, the so-called "neutral" countries are among the countries with the highest rates. Similarly, 8 out of 10 people believe that the EU is defending the European values when opposing the Russian invasion of Ukraine[12]. In terms of the possible consequences of this war, Europeans seem to fear the same threats: in 10 Member States, the fear of a nuclear war as a consequence of the war in Ukraine comes as the first concern. In 24 countries, it is in the top 3 fears (out of 5), which proves that the 'historical' threats are still prevalent[13].

Apart from the war in Ukraine, European citizens' perceptions of the threats to their security and defence appear to be equally, if not more, convergent. Between 90% and 92% of respondents consider terrorism,

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[10] Link: https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2694 (accessed 12/02/2023).
[11] Question QC6.
[12] Question QC6.3.
[13] Question QC5.

organised crime, protection of the EU's borders, natural or man-made disasters and cybercrime to be "important" to "very important" threats[14]. Disparities between Member States, if any, are relatively small.

Not all types of threat are investigated by the Eurobarometer, however. The use of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, is not addressed in the survey except through the peculiarity of the war in Ukraine, although it is clearly defined as a 'strategic threat' by the European Union in the Strategic Compass[15], alongside terrorism, climate change and hybrid threats.

b. Perceptions of solutions

The first finding of this Eurobarometer, unsurprisingly in the given geopolitical context, is that 'defence and security' is seen as the top priority area for EU action[16], for 34% of respondents and in 12 of the 27 Member States. In 6 Member States, including Bulgaria, it is the second and in 8 the third. Support for the EU's common security and defence policy even reached 81% at European level, *i.e.* 6 points more than the common foreign policy, which is supposed to provide a framework for it, and, above all, exceeded two-thirds of respondents in all EU countries[17]. This despite the fact that, from the point of view of the European treaties, this is not a competence of the Union but an exclusive competence of its Member States. Moreover, in a rather stable manner compared to the results of September-October 2021, 31% of all respondents share the view that security and defence policy should be managed at least mainly at EU level[18].

Prospectively, 85% of Europeans surveyed believe that cooperation in the field of defence should be strengthened at EU level, compared to 10% who oppose this idea[19]. Logically, 73% of the respondents believe that the defence budget should be increased in the EU, compared to 20%[20]. It should be noted that the "neutral" Member States, with the exception of Austria, are among the most likely to support these proposals, above the EU averages. Bulgaria is the country before the last with only 54% of favorable answers.

In terms of CSDP missions, Europeans once again express a desire for more cohesion. 93% of the citizens polled believe that the EU Member States should act together to defend the territory of the Union. 93% that this collective action should make it possible to carry out humanitarian missions within Europe, 90% to repatriate EU citizens in conflict zones and 88% to participate in United Nations peacekeeping missions[21]. Putting these in

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[14] Question QC1.

[15] Council of the European Union, "*A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence*", adopted on 21 March 2022.

[16] Question QC8.

[17] Question QC14.

[18] Question QC11.10.

[19] Question QC6.

[20] *Idem.*

[21] Question QC2.

historical perspective, these are 'classics' of the CSDP missions as they correspond to the so-called "Petersberg missions"[22]. This demonstrates the approval – or at least the acknowledgement – by the citizens of what has been the historical core of the European defence policy. It is worth noting here again that the traditionally 'neutral' countries of the EU are, with the exception of Austria, among the countries most in favour of the 'Europeanisation' of these missions.

To conclude on the EU's security-related missions, it should be pointed out that the Eurobarometer 526 proposed to explore citizens' perceptions of non-traditional CSDP areas that cover 'security' in the broad sense. For instance, 88% of the respondents believe that cyber security in the EU should be strengthened[23], 92% that Member States should act together to respond to the refugee crisis in Europe and 92% that such collective action is necessary to deal with a major pandemic[24].

'Zooming in' on the perception of the EU's security and defence solutions to the war in Ukraine, 59% of the respondents in April-May 2022 were satisfied with the Union's responses to the invasion[25]. This figure fell to 54% in the Special Eurobarometer 531 entitled "Key challenges of our time – Autumn 2022"[26], a few months – and a little more practice – later. In the detail of the measures taken by the Union, the level of support ranges from 70% (from "strongly agree" to "somewhat agree") for measures "to finance the purchase and delivery of military equipment to Ukraine" to 93% for the "provision of humanitarian aid to people affected by the war"[27]. In between these two rates are the "reception in the EU of people fleeing the war", the "imposition of economic sanctions on the Russian government, companies and personalities" and the "banning of Russian state-owned media in the EU".

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[22] These missions were established by the Petersberg Declaration, adopted as conclusions of the Western European Union (WEU) Ministerial Council in June 1992. The EU countries decided to make military units from their conventional forces available to the WEU, but also to NATO and the European Union for the following objectives:

       • humanitarian missions or evacuation of nationals;
       • conflict prevention and peacekeeping missions;
       • combat force missions for crisis management, including peacemaking operations;
       • joint actions on disarmament;
       • military advice and assistance;
       • post-conflict stabilisation operations.

This range of missions served as a reference for the EU in framing its CSDP missions until the 2010s.
[23] Question QC9.1.
[24] Question QC2.
[25] Question QC.3.
[26] Special Eurobarometer 531 entitled "Key Challenges of our Time - Autumn 2022", survey conducted between 12 October and 7 November 2022, Question QC.2. Report: https://data.europa.eu/data/datasets/s2892_98_1_sp531_eng?locale=en (consulted: 20/02/2023).
[27] Question QC.4.

2. Building a European strategic culture (ongoing).
a. Expectations.

Neither Eurobarometers 526, 531 nor their predecessors directly studied the transition from citizens' perceptions or opinions to the formation of a common culture on strategic security and defence. They did not, for example, ask questions about the sense of reality or belonging to a strategic culture that would be common to the EU. Such a question would itself be very – if not "too" – technical for the format of a Eurobarometer and would first require producing an exhaustive definition of the term "common strategic culture". The emergence of a European strategic culture is nevertheless perceptible and readable in the Eurobarometer 526. This is true both in terms of identifying threats and formulating solutions, but also in the scaling of values. The European Union, through its security and defence policy, shall defend its citizens' values. This is particularly highlighted in the opinion, which is generally spreading – reaching the level of 8 out of 10 respondents and increasing in all but 3 Member States compared to 2021 – that the EU's voice carries weight in the world[28]. It is also, more negatively, a likely corollary of the times and of its active involvement in the war in Ukraine to observe that the Union is less associated with the value of 'peace' by citizens in 2022 than it was in 2021[29].

The opinion polls, therefore, show that citizens have broadly similar and – above all – significant expectations *vis-à-vis* the European Union as regards a vision and cohesion of its security and defence policy. This convergence of citizens' opinions is in principle a driving force of a common culture of the EU's strategic role in ensuring security and defence, but these opinions do not specify any guidelines for the implementation of a security and defence policy. As such, it is not possible to know whether the practical choices that have been made until now, which will be discussed in the next section, effectively match citizens' expectations. The aspirations expressed via the Eurobarometer may just as well be a sign of assent to the political decisions taken in the framework of the CSDP as demands for a rebalancing towards other conceptions of European security and defence.

b. Achievements.

The European Union's Strategic Compass[30] presented above is the most important retrospective and prospective evidence of a European strategic culture in the making. 'Retrospective' because it is the result of the organic and historical growth of this culture, which exists even in (or even 'in spite of') the absence of political consensus. 'Prospective' because the Compass aims at "guiding the necessary development of the EU's security

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[28] Question QC7.1.
[29] Question QC10.
[30] *Op. cit.*

and defence agenda for the next ten years" (J. Borrell)[31]. It will therefore be not only at the heart but also one of the foundations on which the EU's CSDP in this challenging era for international security. Moreover, the document that had been initially drawn up had to be amended at the last moment and its adoption postponed in order to incorporate the first lessons learnt from the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Strategic Compass, therefore and from the moment of its adoption, is the means found by the Union to be in step with history and to ensure its relevance *vis-à-vis* the expectations of its citizens.

In its style, too, the Compass contrasts with the EU's previous strategic documents. The terms used are more direct – *i.e.* "we will", "we must", etc.) and the commitments more concrete. There are also significant differences in the contents. Whereas the first EU strategies, in 2003[32] and 2008[33], could be criticised for not including a definition of the Union's interests or, in 2016[34], for not containing any concrete commitment to developing capacities for action, the Strategic Compass makes up for these shortcomings and establishes also milestones for monitoring the fulfilment of these commitments in implementation. The first part of the document analyses "the world we are facing" and the strategic threats which, in the light of the perceptions expressed in the Eurobarometers in particular, speak to citizens and not just to security and defence technicians, *i.e.* a context of armed aggression, illegal annexations, fragile states, authoritarian regimes that feed threats such as terrorism, radicalism, organized crime, hybrid threats, cyber-attacks, instrumentalization of immigration, proliferation and challenges to arms control, themselves possibly exacerbated by financial instability and economic and social inequalities.

Although it promotes concepts that are accessible to all because they have been made "popular" by politics, such as "strategic autonomy", "mutual assistance" between Member States or "solidarity", the Compass remains a technical document that guides the Union's security and defence policy. However, in its drafting, it succeeds in conveying messages that make it credible to the citizens and thus create a form of accountability to them. The second chapter – entitled "Acting" – is by essence very technical but underlines the need for the Union to be credible in its security and defence and to act flexibly and robustly, as necessary. The third part – entitled "Providing Security" – emphasises the need for the Union to learn from past events – notably Ukraine – and to demonstrate its ability to cope autonomously with today's challenges. It must also sustain and strengthen its

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[31] *Idem*, Foreword by J. Borrell.

[32] European Council, "*European Security Strategy - A secure Europe in a better world*", December 2003.

[33] European Union, "*Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy - Providing Security in a Changing World*", 11 December 2008.

[34] European Union, "*Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe - A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*", 14 November 2016.

'comprehensive approach' to security, enabling it to act on threats such as climate disasters, and be a model of values in its missions. For instance, the Strategic Compass sets out in this same chapter the objective for the Union to work towards a world free of weapons of mass destruction. In the fourth chapter - entitled "Investing" -, the document urges the Union to ensure the "coherence" of Member States' actions in the field of security and defence while ensuring the EU is globally competitive. In the fifth chapter - titled "Working in Partnership"- the Strategic Compass calls for the Union to become a full player in Europe's defence and to effectively develop military assistance partnerships to ensure this protection.

Even if it is not in itself the common strategic culture, as Daniel Fiott prefigured[35], the Strategic Compass can play a decisive role in its formation because, as Nicole Koenig states, "the threat analysis and the Strategic Compass must be reviewed and updated at the beginning of each new institutional cycle. It is only through repeated interactions and discussions that a common security and defence culture can gradually emerge"[36]. Hence, it is both a result and a cornerstone of a common strategic acculturation in the sense that it is anchored in a reality that is both objectified by events and subjectivized - in the sense of legitimization - by the perceptions of citizens. It answers to the need, as posited by Josep Borrell, to "learn to speak the language of power"[37].

If the Compass is the substance of a common strategic culture, the Union already has several media to disseminate it to its actors. The European Security and Defence College (ESDC), integrated into the structure of the European External Action Service (EEAS), was founded in 2005 by a Council Joint Action[38] which, at the time, already included as a primary objective for the College "to contribute to strengthening the European security culture" (Article 3) in the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Successive revisions of the College's founding act in 2008[39], 2013[40], 2016[41] and 2020[42] simply added "defence" to "security" in 2013. Although the original Article 3 and its subsequent revisions do not

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[35] *Op. cit.*

[36] Koenig, N. (2020, July). "*The EU's Strategic compass for security and defence: Just another paper?*", Policy Paper, Jacques Delors Centre.

[37] Borrell, J. (2020, July). "*Europe must learn quickly to speak the language of power*", interview, European Journal of International Law (EJIL) and the International Journal of Constitutional Law (ICON).

[38] *Council Joint Action 2005/575/CFSP of 18 July 2005 establishing a European Security and Defence College* (ESDC).

[39] Council Joint Action 2008/550/CFSP of 23 June 2008 establishing a European Security and Defence College (ESDC) and repealing Joint Action 2005/575/CFSP.

[40] Council Decision 2013/189/CFSP of 22 April 2013 establishing a European Security and Defence College (ESDC) and repealing Joint Action 2008/550/CFSP.

[41] Council Decision (CFSP) 2016/2382 of 21 December 2016 establishing a European Security and Defence College (ESDC) and repealing Decision 2013/189/CFSP.

[42] Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/1515 of 19 October 2020 establishing a European Security and Defence College and repealing Decision (CFSP) 2016/2382.

detail how the College is supposed to contribute to the construction of a European security and defence culture – which is equivalent to European "strategic culture", as noted above – the other objectives listed give particular importance to commonly accepted culture-related terms and concepts such as "promoting better understanding", "competent personnel (familiar with the Union's policies, institutions and procedures in the field of the CFSP)", "partnerships" and "relationships". Its mission, as set out in Article 2, gives more detail on this priority, *i.e.* the College is established to "provide training". Therefore, the College is statutorily and at the very least, a medium for this strategic culture under construction.

The European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) was established in 2002[43] to contribute to the "development of strategic thinking" by providing analysis on foreign, security and defence policy issues and to organise debates for contributing to EU policy formulation. As the Union's think-tank on security and defence issues, it disseminates studies and publications by leading experts and contributes to the training courses offered by the ESDC and, thereby, the EUISS promotes a common security culture in the EU and has become a key medium for informing and explaining its CSDP.

Other actions or actors carry the information and messages of CSDP while keeping, as they should, a critical eye on its development and perspectives, such as, first and foremost the EU Member States and their institutes of higher education in security and defence. As much as the Strategic Compass, the ESDC, the EUISS and other EU bodies, these actors participate in the construction, deconstruction and mutation of what forms (or does not form) the strategic culture of the European Union.

Conclusions

The European Union's common strategic culture is not an observable fact and is not embodied in any concrete or symbolic measure. The concept, *i.e.* the framework and the objective, can be defined but it is not possible, in a cosmopolitan Union with different – and sometimes even opposing – histories, to determine its content. A strategic culture is needed to guide concrete choices that are the subject of policies. Therefore, it is supposed to "show North", but is not supposed to "be the North".

To become a "culture" and "common", it must also be shared by as many people as possible and not be imposed by a European security and defence 'technocracy'. 'Shared' but not 'universal'; It is in this sense that it does not request consensus on the substance for existing. It is not, while extrapolating, because all EU Member States or citizens do not define the

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[43] Council Joint Action of 20 July 2001 on the establishment of a European Union Institute for Security Studies (2001/554/CFSP), amended by Council Decision 2014/75/CFSP of 10 February 2014 on the European Union Institute for Security Studies.

framework of EU-NATO relations in the same way that CSDP cannot exist. With this in mind, the EU's common strategic culture effectively has a solid foundation: the expectations of the Union's citizens. Here again, not unanimous or unconditional support, but genuine support for the European idea of security and defence and for a vision – whether modest or "power-centered" – of the EU's place in international security. The Eurobarometers, as analysed, make it possible to identify such a convergence of expectations.

On the other – more 'technical' – hand, the Union is progressively equipping itself with the strategic instruments necessary to make these aspirations a reality. In this respect, the Strategic Compass, without carrying out a Copernican revolution of the CSDP, demonstrates the ambition to do more and better, in particular with regard to the international security context and the criticisms that may have been expressed toward the cohesion of the actions of the Member States, with or without the Union.

The European Union's common strategic culture thus seems to have two driving forces: a citizen one and a political one. It is necessarily the product of both convergences of perceptions and of actions. These drivers are not new insofar as citizen support for a CSDP is rather regular and sustained and as the undertakings to develop a European defence can be dated back to the beginnings of European construction. What was sorely lacking was a transmission belt rather than eventually knowing which of the egg (*i.e.* the convergence of citizens' expectations) or the chicken (*i.e.* the convergence of actions) should come first.

If the Strategic Compass is, as expected, practically implemented as it itself foresees it, it can become the first form of 'accountability' of political authorities – Brussels and capitals alike – to citizens' expectations *vis-à-vis* European security and defence. And, by matching 'expectations' with 'actions', it will help identify the contents of a common strategic culture.

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