ISSN 2335-870X
LITHUANIAN ANNUAL STRATEGIC REVIEW
2025 Volume 23

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Strategic Subcultures and the Worldviews on the Use of Force: The Case of Political and Security Committee of the Council of the EU

Since 2003, with the release of the European Security Strategy, the EU's political elites have continuously looked for ways and means to forge a common EU strategic culture. Both scholars and political elites agree that the EU's strategic culture should be a product of a convergence of Member States' strategic cultures. The research on the strategic culture of the EU has overlooked the theoretical advances of the fourth-generation strategic culture theory. Instead, it has focused on the state level of analysis, as both research approaches might not be appropriate for an organisation with a supranational and intergovernmental decision-making system.
This article proposes to employ a concept of strategic subcultures envisioned by the fourth-generation strategic culture theory and shift the research focus from the state level of analysis to the level of the EU. Drawing on the concept of subcultures, the institutions-based socialisation process and semi-structured interviews with the Ambassadors of the Political and Security Committee of the Council of the European Union, the article develops a model on how to define an EU-level strategic subculture and argues that the Political and Security Committee must be considered as another strategic subculture of the EU next to the Member States.

Keywords
strategic culture, Political and Security Committee, European Union, strategic subculture, Common Security and Defence Policy

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Introduction

The preconditions for the emergence of a strategic culture in the European Union (EU) go back to 2003 when Javier Solana, then High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, presented a draft EU strategy to the European Council and stated that "we need to develop a common strategic culture that fosters early, rapid and, where necessary, robust intervention" (Solanna, 2003, as cited in Rynning, 2003, p. 480). The EU started to develop a security and defence strategy, which went through several stages of transformation to become the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) for Foreign and Security Policy. Although the policy did not explicitly mention strategic culture per se, the persistent theme of Europe's strategic autonomy throughout the EUGS could be translated into just that. The adoption of the EUGS and the actions taken to implement it mark a breakthrough in European security and defence. Several hard power instruments developed by the EU before and after official EUGS adoption have emerged to empower the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and to promote further European integration. This, by definition, directly or indirectly contributes to the development of common EU strategic culture: Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) (Kuokštytė, 2020, p. 30). French President Emmanuel Macron, in his speech of September 2017, once again called on Europe to forge a common strategic culture (Macron, 2017). Officials and the EU agencies nurture the same notion; for example, Josep Borrell, (the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy and Vice-president (HR/VP) of the Commission), during his hearing at the EU Parliament, stated that the EU needs to "learn to speak the language of power" and one of the ways to do that is to develop a shared strategic culture (Committee on Foreign Affairs, 2019). The EU Institute for Security Studies organised a seminar on strategic culture (EU Institute for Security Studies, 2021) and has issued several publications on the same matter (Fiott, 2018, 2020). However, even these measures have not, at least for the time being, contributed to the development of the EU's strategic culture, as the EU Strategic Compass (Council of the European Union, 2022), nineteen years after the European Security Strategy (ESS) was released, is still looking for ways to nurture a common European strategic culture.

As the EU recognises the lack of a common strategic culture, an overall scholarly opinion agrees. Although scholars disagree on whether the EU has or can have a distinctive strategic culture (Biava, 2011; Biehl et al., 2013; Chappell & Petrov, 2014; Cornish & Edwards, 2001, 2005; Howorth, 2002, 2017a, 2017b; Hyde-Price, 2004; Meyer, 2006; Rynning, 2003; Schmidt & Zyla, 2011; Toje, 2009; Zyla, 2011), the overall theme of the research is twofold. First, those scholars who tend to agree on the prospects and potential of a common EU strategic culture argue that only the convergence of different national Member States' strategic cultures would lead to a common EU one (Biehl et al., 2013; Chappell & Petrov, 2014; Howorth, 2002; Meyer, 2006; Mi, 2022). The latest attempt at the research of EU's strategic culture once again lies in the exploration of the convergence status of the national strategic cultures of the Member States; as Xue Mi concludes, "despite the persistent divergence in strategic goals and means, the … countries have shown greater convergence in their perceptions of the strategic environment … " (Mi, 2022, p. 45). Second, scholars tend to focus on a state level of analysis to understand converging traits of the strategic cultures of Member States (Biehl et al., 2013; Hyde-Price, 2004; Matlary, 2006; Meyer, 2006; Mi, 2022; Rynning, 2003) and only a handful envisions that the EU strategic culture shall be something more than just a mere sum of strategic cultures of the Member States (Norheim-Martinsen, 2011; Zyla, 2011). Both themes lead to a sort of stagnation in the research of strategic culture of the EU, because the state level of analysis would lead back to the waiting-for-convergence theme. The convergence of the Member States' strategic cultures will not happen soon, as the theory suggests (Biehl et al., 2013). The release of a Strategic Compass, a detailed EU security strategy, the launch of eleven new missions and operations in the last five years and even a full-scale invasion by Russia against Ukraine have not reinvigorated the scholarly research on the strategic culture of the EU. To overcome this stagnation, the advances in the theory of strategic culture must be taken into consideration and new ways to approach the studies of strategic culture of the EU must be proposed.

For this endeavour, I turn to the fourth generation of strategic culture theory, which suggests an analysis of strategic culture through the concept of competing subcultures (Bloomfield, 2012; Libel, 2016, 2020), as this approach was overlooked by the scholars in previous academic works. I also propose that instead of centring on the state level, the research on the strategic culture of the EU must focus on the

EU (system) level of analysis. This means looking for the EU bodies and institutions – closely working in a CSDP area – with the shared worldviews about the use of force, as the fourth-generation strategic culture theory suggests (Bloomfield, 2012). Finding out if distinct [dominant] subcultures at the EU level do exist next to the Member States would open new prospects for the research on the strategic culture of the EU.

This paper adopts the premise that the EU, having previously employed and continuing to utilise the force (or restrain from it) through its missions and operations, does not approach the security challenges or opportunities with a *tabula rasa* mentality (Meyer, 2006, p. 17). This is contrary to some of the earlier research on the strategic culture of the Union. Instead, decision-makers are influenced by pre-existing *norms*, *attitudes* and *beliefs* concerning the use of force. Hence, their decision-making process is inherently run within the context of some notion of strategic culture[2].

For this article I focus on the Political and Security Committee of the Council of the EU (PSC), because the PSC is an EU-level institution that is a linchpin in the making of CSDP and one of the main preparatory bodies for the Council decisions on the use of force. Drawing on the concept of strategic subcultures envisioned by the fourth generation of strategic culture theory and empirical evidence gathered from semi-structured interviews with the Ambassadors of the PSC, the article attempts to answer the main research question: *does the Political and Security Committee of the Council of the EU have the right attributes to be considered as another strategic subculture of the EU among the Member States?* The PSC represents all Member States and fosters institutions-based socialisation process, dealing with CSDP matters daily, having an agency to influence security and defence policy outcomes, holding tightly knit, shared worldviews on the use of force. The findings of the research suggest that the PSC carries the right attributes to be considered as another strategic subculture of the EU among the Member States.

The article contributes to academic research in three ways. It introduces a concept of subcultures to the research on the strategic

[2] For more of this assumption, see Norheim-Martinsen, P. M. (2011). EU Strategic Culture: When the Means Becomes the End. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 32, No 3, 517–534. https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2011.623055 and Chappell, L., & Petrov, P. (2014). The European Union's crisis management operations: Strategic culture in action? *European Integration Online Papers, 2014–002*, 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1695/2014002.

culture of the EU, a concept previously overlooked by scholars; shifts the level of analysis from the Member States and focuses on the official EU-level institution; and empirically demonstrates the shared worldviews towards the use of force of the Ambassadors of the PSC. First, to give context to the research gap, the literature review on the research of the EU will be presented, and then the theory of strategic culture will be briefly explored. Next, the concept of subcultures at the EU level will be introduced, with justification of why the PSC should be considered a potential candidate for a strategic subculture. Finally, empirical evidence on the shared worldviews of the PSC Ambassadors towards the use of force will be presented. The conclusions will then follow.

1. The research on strategic culture of the EU

The EU's strategic culture as an object of research was introduced in 2001 after the St Malo declaration by UK and French leaders, and it found its wings when the ESS was published in 2003. Scholarly discussions about whether the EU has the traits of a strategic player on the world stage began, and the concept of strategic culture as a utility to analyse the prospect of strategic actorness was introduced. At the time, scholars disagreed on whether the EU could shape its strategic culture. While most of them were optimistic, a handful were not. For example, Sten Rynning, analysing whether the EU has the potential to shape its own strategic culture, concluded that the EU does not have the potential due to a low "strategic sense of purpose and utility of military force" (Rynning, 2003). His reasoning lies in the outlooks of the Member States being too different on when and how the use of force should be utilised. In 2005, Rynning added that the EU is a "successful peace project" and should "leave strategic affairs to those who have the capacity to think and act strategically – such as the US or coalitions of willing European states." (Rynning, 2005, as cited in Biava et al., 2011). Later, Rynning reiterated his concern, adding two more arguments. First, the common outlook for the EU as a security actor is not possible due to the "complex Brussels set-up" and second, Brussels culture does not appeal to Europeans as most of them identify themselves with their respective nation-states (Rynning, 2011).

Hyde-Price also joined sceptics by arguing that the development of an EU strategic culture is hamstrung by diverse geopolitical interests: "heterogeneity and diversity of strategic cultures in Europe"

(Hyde-Price, 2004). Nevertheless, the author argued that the relevance of the EU's CSDP will have to rely on the common strategic culture that fosters coercive military power as an instrument of diplomacy and statecraft. In concert with Hyde-Price, Tardy (2007) delivered the analysis of the ESS concerning the Union's assertiveness on the use of force as an essential attribute of a fully-fledged strategic actor. He came up with the conclusion that the EU is hesitant to utilise hard power as a part of full range strategic options, because of the different views on the utility of force.

Despite some scholars' scepticism about the prospects of the EU in developing a common strategic culture, most experts researching the topic were much more optimistic. One of the earliest works on EU strategic culture was delivered by Cornish & Edwards in 2001. They argued that there are many signs that the *gendarmerie* type of strategic culture is developing through socialisation at the institutional arrangements that took shape, and that political-military activities with limited use of military force are the first signs of the matter (Cornish & Edwards, 2001). Although delivering a progress report four years later (Cornish & Edwards, 2005), scientists were less optimistic, albeit promising; they noted that the EU's CSDP project had advanced significantly, but the success of the development lies in finding a unique strategic culture to supplement, not compete, with NATO.

Howorth (2002) concluded that in terms of strategic cultures, the Member States have diverging national interests and could be divided into several cultural groups: allies and neutrals, "Atlantists" and "Europeanists", favouring power projection and territorial defence, large states and small states, weapon system providers and consumers, as well as nuclear and non-nuclear states. In his view, the only way forward for the EU was to overcome those divergent interests and start converging into a unique European strategic culture, or else it would fail. Howorth carefully suggested that this convergence had to take place in Brussels, at the official EU institutions. Ten years later, he concluded that "a distinctive EU approach to international crisis management has picked up both steam and cohesion over the past ten years." (Howorth, 2012, p. 435).

Matlary (2006) found EU strategic culture to be "embryonic and in the process of development" even though it has strategic actorness in military and political terms. He argues that political will is a bottleneck in this regard, as well as differences in understanding the security environment post-9/11 among the Member States. Biava et al. joined

Matlary in their findings and defeat the pessimism that the EU cannot develop its strategic culture by outlining the tools that demonstrate the Union's capability and capacity to act and the political will to use these capabilities to achieve political objectives.

One of the most extensive studies conducted on the strategic culture of the EU was by Meyer (2006). His work marks rare academic attempts to operationalise strategic culture elements, employment of different research methodologies and carriers of strategic culture (elites, media and societies). He analysed the EU's strategic culture in a top-down approach by investigating which features of the four large Member States – France, the UK, Germany and Poland – converged at the EU level. He concluded that the strategic cultures of the analysed states were converging in the areas of the use of military force in humanitarian operations and the acceptability of the EU as a platform for the formulation of a common security and defence policy. This included the reduction of the influence of the US in the security and defence policies of states as well as domestic authorisation requirements. His study found the gradual emergence of an EU strategic culture that supports a model of "cautious Humanitarian Power Europe". (Meyer, 2006, p. 11).

Perhaps the most expansive study on the strategic cultures of the EU Member States was conducted by Biehl et al. (2013). They attempted to operationalise the elements of strategic culture and employ leading scholars of the Member States to make the first attempt to document respective strategic cultures. Biehl et al. argue that the prospects for forming a strategic culture in the EU are bleak due to too many different features of the strategic cultures of EU Member States, and that strategic culture itself would be a weak (albeit necessary) driver for EU countries to cooperate in the security and defence field. Nevertheless, the authors of the edition agree with experts who believe that the convergence of strategic cultures is a prerequisite for the success of a CSDP.

The scholarly quest for convergence/divergence of strategic cultures of the EU Member States was once again analysed but quantitatively rather than qualitatively. Xue Mi compared the national strategic cultures of Germany, Poland and Ireland in three aspects: strategic environment, cooperation patterns, and strategic goals and means. After analysing strategic documents and speeches of key national political figures, findings suggested that countries diverge on strategic goals and means but showed greater convergence in perceiving

strategic environment. The author concluded that the prospects of further developing the EU's strategic culture are "challenging and promising". (Mi, 2022, p. 1).

Norheim-Martinsen (2011) was one of the first scholars to showcase the applicability of a strategic culture concept at the EU level. In contrast to most of the previous research that focuses on a national level of analysis, the article proved that cultural factors (constructivist approach) of strategic culture can be utilised to study not only the EU's strategic culture but also other strategic actors who lack material ones (realist approach). The author analysed ESS as an expression of the EU's strategic culture and found "a quite specific strategic culture … in which consensus on a comprehensive approach to security as a unique European asset, has become a focal point for the fledgling ESDP" (Norheim-Martinsen, 2011, p. 528) and that EU strategic culture supplements national ones instead of replacing them. Schmidt & Zyla (2011) echoes Norheim-Martinsen's approach by highlighting the tension between the national and EU strategic cultures; the variables to determine the strategic culture draw back from national understandings of strategy and may not be applied directly to the EU, as a multilevel decision-making system. Therefore, they concluded that "the European Union's SC [Strategic Culture] is more than just the aggregate of national SCs: it transcends them". (Schmidt & Zyla, 2011, p. 489). The ideas demonstrated by these scholars are significant in the sense that they highlight the inherent differences between the national strategic cultures and the strategic culture of the EU, as it has to bear a different, transcendent character within a negotiated environment.

An overall analysis of the literature reviewed on the research of EU's strategic culture carries several common themes and shortcomings. First, the overarching theme of most of the research is that a convergence of national strategic cultures of the Member States of the Union is a prerequisite for a common strategic culture of the EU to be developed, as the majority of scholars agree on the matter. The same expectation or waiting-for-convergence is observed at the level of the political elites and practitioners of the EU, as some examples have been provided in the introduction of this article. Although that is a valid expectation, the strategic culture theory suggests that this will not happen soon. Scholars agree (Biehl et al., 2013; Burns & Eltham, 2014; Duffield, 1999; Gray, 1999; Johnston, 1998) that there has to be either a huge exogenous shock to the Union or it will take a very long time for the convergence to occur, as national strategic cultures rarely change

(as the change at the state level is a prerequisite for convergence). If they change, those changes happen very slowly because widely shared attitudes or beliefs are deeply ingrained in cognitive schemas, and they are not easily replaced by different cultural material. The concept of subcultures offers a potential solution to the waiting-for-convergence issue. While the idea that strategic culture encompasses strategic subcultures within a given security environment is somewhat acknowledged by scholars, none of the analysed research on EU strategic culture fully utilises this concept as envisioned and implied by a midrange fourth-generation strategic culture theory. Instead, scholars and practitioners, in their anticipation of convergence, often fall into the same 'over-continuity' trap as described by Bloomfield (2012), leading to a stagnation in strategic culture research.

The second shortfall within the research on the strategic culture of the EU is a selected level of analysis, as most of the research reviewed investigates EU strategic cultures at the state level. The works by Biehl et al. (2013), Meyer (2006) and Mi (2022) are just a few examples of the case on the matter. Although explicitly not focused on specific states, several authors reviewed implied such a level of analysis. Hyde-Price (2004) noted the "diversity of strategic cultures in Europe", Rynning (2003) stressed "too different outlooks of Member States", and Matlary (2006) found "differences in understanding the security environment" among the Member States. This type of reasoning is expected as the theory of strategic culture employs material variables such as shared history, geographical position and borders attributed to a nation-state and ideational variables such as threat perception, norms, attitudes and beliefs on the use of force to states' political elites. However, this level of analysis may not be appropriate for an organisation with a multilevel decision-making system, as Schmidt & Zyla (2011) and Norheim-Martinsen (2011) have argued. The convergence of strategic cultures cannot occur in an isolated environment where nation-states indeed are. The cognitive schemas of the elites have to be analysed at the level where decisions on security and defence policy are taken, and where political elites are exposed to the distinct European way of thinking daily – that is, at the official EU institutions level.

2. The way forward

To overcome the identified weaknesses in the research on the strategic culture of the EU, I propose several ways forward. First, to solve the waiting-for-convergence issue, the research on strategic culture must consider employing the concept of strategic subcultures. Second, to properly capture the ideational worldviews that comprise the strategic culture of the EU, requires looking for such a subculture among the official EU institutions. Thus, the PSC was selected as the best candidate for such a test. Finally, empirical evidence was collected to unveil the worldviews of the PSC and understand if the PSC, as a security community, carries shared worldviews on the use of force. First, to understand the concept of strategic subcultures, strategic culture theory needs to be presented.

2.1. The overview of the theory of strategic culture

Unsurprisingly, the research on the strategic culture of the EU is not homogenous because the strategic culture theory follows the same pattern. The study of the EU's strategic culture is diverse and reflects the complexity of the strategic culture theory itself. Ongoing scholarly debates have left the definition of strategic culture and its key variables unresolved. The different approaches to the concepts of strategic culture have divided the development of the theory in to four distinct generations (Johnston, 1999; Libel, 2016; Uz Zaman, 2009). Despite the differences in epistemological approaches among the generations, the theory has been employed to examine how states' attitudes and beliefs towards the use of force influence their strategic behaviour. The origins of strategic culture as a concept can be traced to the mid-twentieth century, when Jack Snyder introduced it in his 1977 study of Soviet strategic thinking. Snyder argued that Soviet approaches to nuclear strategy were shaped by a deeply ingrained set of beliefs, attitudes and behavioural patterns that constituted a culture rather than mere policy (Snyder, 1977, p. V). Snyder also envisioned roles of organisations ("Culture is perpetuated not only by individuals but also by organisations" (Snyder, 1977, p. 9)) and subcultures ("a strategic subculture will be defined as a subsection of the broader strategic community with reasonably distinct beliefs and attitudes on strategic issues …" (Snyder, 1977, p. 10)) within given strategic communities, the insights that have proved to be foundational for

subsequent research of fourth-generation theorists. Colin Gray later expanded upon Snyder's work by identifying sources of strategic culture, such as historical experience, political values and geography (Gray, 1981). Together, Snyder and Gray are regarded as the first generation of strategic culture theorists, whose work established a connection between cultural patterns and decisions regarding military or nuclear force.

The second generation of strategic culture theorists (Klein, 1988) in the 1980s examined how strategic culture shapes strategy and policymaking, focusing on hegemonic powers and distinguishing culture from state behaviour, but faced criticism for failing to clearly define the connection between the two (Johnston, 1995; Toje, 2009). Later, in the 1990s, Iain Johnston categorised strategic culture research into three generations, positioning himself as a third-generation theorist (Johnston, 1995)[3]. He criticised earlier generations for their vague and tautological definitions of strategic culture, what could be summed up in this quote: "… a concept of strategic culture that comprises so extensive a portfolio of ingredients, and is so influential upon behaviour, that it can explain nothing because it purports to explain everything" (Johnston, 1998, as cited in Gray, 1999, p. 54). Johnston proposed a falsifiable framework, treating strategic culture as an ideational context (independent variable) that constrains a state's strategic behaviour (dependent variable). He also argued (Johnston, 1998) that culture alone could not explain strategic decisions and that intervening variables were required to activate cultural influences. Johnston's theory developments fixed the first generation's weakness of over-determinism.

After the Cold War period and the introduction of a third-generation strategic culture theory, scholars shifted their focus towards exploring the strategic cultures of various nations. Research began to explore the UK and French (Hyde-Price, 2004; Meyer, 2006), German (Duffield, 1999; Hoffmann & Longhurst, 1999; Hyde-Price, 2004; Tappe & Doeser, 2021), and Polish (Doeser, 2018; Meyer, 2006) strategic cultures. To fill the gap in research on the strategic culture of smaller countries, a study of 28 European countries (27 EU countries plus Turkey) was conducted in 2013 (Biehl et al., 2013). This attempt was based on the third-generation theory and gathered the experts on the respective nations' strategic cultures. A literature review of this period

[3] The evolution of the theory of strategic culture in three generations was conceptualised by Johnston (1995), and the fourth-generation classification was added by Libel (2016).

reveals a sense of stagnation in the study of strategic culture. The scholars disagreed on whether strategic culture should be separated from strategic behaviour; Johnston (1999) argued for the former, and Gray (1999) for the latter. However, a notable breakthrough occurred when the fourth generation of scholars built on the foundations laid by the first and third generations of research and suggested using a concept of subcultures.

2.2. Subculture as a core of fourth-generation strategic culture theory

The fourth generation of strategic culture scholars further developed the influence of subcultures on the development of strategic culture into the theoretical framework, as it was implied by Snyder in 1977. This concept also facilitated the understanding of mechanisms behind the change of strategic cultures over time (Bloomfield, 2012; Lantis, 2014; Libel, 2016, 2020; Poore, 2003) and overcame the theoretical weaknesses of earlier generations of the theory. Alan Bloomfield proposed a model where different domestic groups – subcultures – compete over the dominance of policymaking and delivering their worldviews as their favoured world vision. He also proposed that if two or more subcultures are observed within a country, then not only the hindsight policy change could be explained, but monitoring the domestic debates, the upcoming policy change could also be foreseen (Bloomfield, 2012). With this explanation, Bloomfield solved the *too-coherent* and *too-much-continuity* problems observed in the theoretical debate of Johnston and Gray. Bloomfield eloquently described the concept of subcultures:

> *… if a certain policy has been in place for decades, we can assume that a particular subculture has been dominant … but there are likely to be other subcultures – currently subordinate, and so of only limited influence but still 'waiting the wings' so to speak, or latent and therefore only held by a very small, marginalised minority with virtually no influence – and one of these may one day become dominant, changing that state's strategic policy profoundly.*

Although the concept of strategic subcultures was introduced more than ten years ago, empirical studies have not been so prominent yet, apart from Libel (2016). He analysed Israel's security policy and

identified that three different subcultures were competing inside the Israeli Defence Force to shape Israel's strategic thinking in terms of the use of force. Several other scientists applied the concept of strategic subcultures to explain the change and continuity of strategic culture in some Asia-Pacific nations. For example, Burns & Eltham (2014) analysed Australia's strategic culture and found that competition among several strategic subcultures, namely "defender-regionalists" and "reformer-globalists", constrains the function of policymaking in a country. Analysing Japan's strategic culture, Oros (2014) found three coexisting strategic subcultures competing. Although these scholars utilised the concept of subcultures, the deeper theoretical analysis on definition, constitution and emergence of subcultures is not found.

2.3. Subculture and the EU level of analysis

The employment of the concept of strategic subcultures is promising, as the EU bears distinct national strategic cultures of Member States that compete over the dominance in the security and defence policy field. Moreover, Bloomfield (2012, p. 453) argues that competing subcultures must be more evident in a community with different ethnic groups or multinational states, providing Anglo/Quebecois Canada as an example. The dominance of distinct national strategic cultures of the EU was demonstrated in academic literature, as scholarly consensus suggests that the EU's CSDP has been significantly influenced by the prominent involvement of France and the UK. This was before the formal departure of the UK from the EU in 2020, as both had an incentive that their national strategic culture to be replicated at the level of the EU (Rieker, 2006a, b, as cited in Biava et al., 2011, p. 1232). Although recognised as an influential participant, Germany has traditionally assumed a secondary role in policy formulation. This trio, often referred to as the "Big Three", was perceived as an informal governing body within EU security and defence policymaking, where other Member States tend to align their positions with the decisions taken by this core group (Bunde, 2021; Freedman, 2004; Järvenpää et al., 2019). The intergovernmental nature of decision-making in the CSDP field constrained these countries from fully extrapolating and dominating security policymaking (Meyer, 2006), demonstrated by the French example of attempting to influence CSDP through President Macron's initiatives (Kuokštytė, 2020). However, the concept is still valid as it allows scholars to shift their focus (but not lose it) from

the convergence of national strategic cultures to the determination of subcultures within the EU, therefore giving the theory of strategic culture the explanatory power as it has been for years. By establishing the dominant strategic subculture and its worldviews, following the fourth-generation theory, a strategic culture of the EU could be observed and utilised in further studies or used as a utility to explain strategic behaviour.

To overcome the second shortfall with the research on the strategic culture of the EU, we turn to Norheim-Martinsen's (2011) suggestion that EU strategic culture supplements national strategic cultures and Schmidt & Zyla's (2011) conclusion that EU strategic culture transcends them. These conclusions draw our attention to the level of analysis problem and carefully suggest that the research on the strategic culture of the EU has to be shifted from the state level to a system or supranational level – that is, the EU level of analysis. Most of the research reviewed analyses the strategic cultures within a national setting and classical nation-based strategic environment, where the material and ideational variables are resistant to change, hence the slow (if at all) convergence process between the EU Member States. Analysing the EU strategic culture at the national level is looking at the differences in countries' histories, geographies and perceptions of threats, and that will not change soon. By analysing the strategic culture's ideational variables at the EU level, it is possible to ignore national particularities and take a look at the commonalities among the states or, in the words of Laura Chappell and Petar Petrov (2014, p. 4), these "have to be analysed within the context of the role the EU should play". The EU level is where all the Member States' political elites meet, interact, discuss and decide on various CSDP issues frequently, which in turn becomes a favourable arena for socialisation and shared worldviews to appear.

Meyer (2006) suggested that a change [or development, *note by the author*] of strategic culture over time is possible "through a constant stream of similar, or a repetition of the same kind of discrepant information …". He defined several mechanisms of this gradual change: the emergency of new ideational coalitions, mediatised learning from humanitarian crises and institution-based socialisation process. If it is assumed that the EU strategic culture is represented in one of its strategic subcultures – or "ideational coalitions" – then the convergence of the worldviews on the use of force by different Member States has to occur at EU-based institutions or bodies through the institution-based

socialisation process. For such ideational coalition to be regarded as a strategic subculture, according to Libel (2016, p. 4), it has to have a "distinct identity, constructed by an elite group's worldview". I argue that the more converged or shared worldviews on the use of force an elite group holds, the more persuasive the subculture is and the more agency a subculture would have to impact security and defence policy.

Following this logic, it is therefore suggested that the EU-level ideational coalition should have these attributes to be considered as a subculture of the EU:

1) The EU institution or a body has to have representatives from all Member States of the EU so that every Member State has an opportunity to participate in a learning and socialisation process.

2) It has to deal with CSDP matters frequently with the incentive to influence security and defence policy, so that a constant stream of information is maintained.

3) It has to hold shared worldviews on the use of force, so it has more agency in shaping security and defence policy outcomes.

In the next section, the case of PSC is briefly presented, among other bodies, to be considered as one of the EU strategic subcultures and to lay out the arguments about the case.

2.4. The case of the Political and Security Committee

Following the attributes of a potential strategic subculture, I assume that the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER), PSC, European External Action Service (EEAS) and the EU Military Committee (EUMC) have the potential to be considered a strategic subculture of the EU. All bodies have representatives from all Member States and deal frequently with CSDP matters. The shared worldviews towards the use of force have to be empirically established. In this study, I have selected the PSC as the best candidate for such an exercise and lay out my argument for selection below.

Several factors put the PSC on a candidate list for such an analysis. First, the PSC is an official EU body based in Brussels, comprised of diplomats from each Member State at the ambassador level and chaired by the representative from EEAS. Second, the PSC plays a "central role in the area of CFSP and CSDP" (Rehrl, 2021, p. 2) and is considered a "linchpin" in CSDP decision-making by academia (Duke, 2005; Michalski & Danielson, 2020). The PSC is the primary body that deals with CSDP matters, and its role is officially institutionalised through

the Lisbon Treaty. The PSC meetings occur at least twice, sometimes three times a week. The academic analysis of the functioning and socialisation levels of the PSC covers a broad timespan from the very inception of the PSC to this day (Comstock, 2012; Danielson, 2022; Duke, 2005; Howorth, 2010, 2012; Maurer & Wright, 2021; Meyer, 2006; Michalski & Danielson, 2020). Moreover, previous scholarly studies on decision-making in the CSDP showcased that the Council of Ministers (or the European Council in some cases), being the decision-maker for the EU military missions and operations – hence for the use of force – relies on the preparatory bodies. Most of the decisions are taken in advance as the Council, a high-level political body, has to solve many questions quickly during the meetings. The technical preparation of the documents goes to PSC (in some cases to COREPER as PSC, in a way, is a subordinate agency), which is translated into policy options (Howorth, 2012). Within the realm of EU missions and operations, the PSC exercises a privilege as the primary institution responsible for organising the monthly Foreign Affairs Council and preparing decisions at the political level (Maurer & Wright, 2021). Although the ultimate decision-making rests within the Council, the PSC is taking the lead on CSDP in their own hands, as the ministers at the Council formally adopt what has been agreed by the PSC in advance (Cross, 2011). Notably, the PSC has demonstrated its capacity to influence Member States and successfully persuade them to modify their initial positions on security and defence matters in various instances (Cross, 2011; Howorth, 2010; Meyer, 2006) which in turn demonstrates the agency of the PSC to influence security and defence policy outcomes. What has been left from the focus of scholars is the shared worldviews on the use of force of the PSC, and this gap is to be solved with the following empirical evidence.

3. Methodology

This paper draws on the fourth-generation theoretical concept of strategic culture to set out ideational variables. Strategic culture is defined as *a set of semi-permanent elite norms, attitudes, and beliefs socialised into a distinctive mode of thinking about the use of force* (Libel, 2016; Zyla, 2011). As the worldviews of a strategic subculture must be as close as possible to the ideational aspect of a strategic culture of a given security community, the strategic subculture's analysis should be conducted utilising the same ideational variables. Given the definition of a strategic

culture, the worldviews of the PSC in this research are operationalised through a *set of norms, attitudes and beliefs of the Ambassadors of the PSC.* Scholars do not agree on how these ideational variables of strategic culture should be operationalised; however, similarities appear. For example, Meyer (2006) unpacks ideational elements through *Goals of the use of force, How the force is used, the Preferred mode of cooperation and the Threshold for domestic and international authorisation.* Zyla (2011) views normative variables of strategic culture through the analysis of the elite's *norms* in terms of nature and interpretation of threats, *attitudes* to the use of force, i.e. under what conditions the force is used and *values* attached to international cooperation and the rule of law (Zyla, 2011, p. 679–670). These ideational variables are then grouped in a continuum where on one side of the scale, there are more defensive worldviews, and more offensive ones on the other. This article follows suit and adopts the following operationalisation of the shared worldviews: *Norms* cover the goals for the use of force as well as a threshold for domestic and international authorisation. These norms reflect the EU's normative values concerning the purpose for which the use of force is considered legitimate and how many authorisation requirements there are to overcome before the force is used. *Attitudes to the use of force* encapsulate how the force is used, i.e. when the force is authorised and how active or restrained the force should be used in a military operation or a campaign. *Beliefs* reflect a common interpretation of threats the EU faces and how the EU survives or acts in the international system, i.e. whether it chooses to maintain the autonomy of action, align or affiliate itself with other countries or alliances, or act unilaterally. The operationalisation of the ideational variables of the shared worldviews on the use of force and the expected observation outcomes are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: **Operationalisation of variables. Developed by author, based on Meyer (2006) and Zyla (2011).**

Cultural Variables	Values Dimensions	Expected Observations Defensive <----------> Offensive			
Norms	**Goals for the use of force**	Territorial defence, reaction to immediate threat	Humanitarian intervention	Self-serving intervention	Territorial and political expansionism and conquest
	Authorisation requirements	High domestic[4], high international	High domestic, low international	Low domestic, high international	Low domestic, low international
Attitudes	**The way the force is used**	Defensive, restrained and highly proportionate	Proportionate, low to moderate risk tolerance regarding own and foreign casualties	Disproportionate, moderate risk tolerance vis-à-vis own, high-risk *tolerance* vis-à-vis foreign casualties	Offensive, highly disproportionate, high level of risk tolerance regarding both own and foreign casualties
Beliefs	**Interpretation of threats**	Military threats: Conventional force, nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction		Non-military threats: Terrorism, migration, cyber, organised crime, climate change, demographic change, failed/failing states	
	Survival or action in an international system	Autonomy of action with no specific affiliation	Affiliation with alliances/ organisations	Affiliation with particular states	Unilateralism (offensive)

To understand the worldviews of the PSC and how similar those worldviews are, semi-structured interviews with the Ambassadors of the PSC were conducted between December 2023 and May 2024. The empirical evidence is based on 12 interviews out of 28 members of the PSC (including the Chair of the PSC, who is a representative of the EEAS). Ambassadors chose to be interviewed only on a confidentiality basis, so the evidence will not list which countries' Ambassadors chose to participate. The study recognises the limitation that not all the Ambassadors of already a small community took part. Still, the geographical representation covering all the EU regions (Scandinavian and Baltic states, Central and Southern Europe, Balkan region, as well as one of the largest CSDP countries) and the time served at the PSC ranging from only one year to almost four years, mitigates

[4] *Domestic* in the context of the EU means that the authorisation for the use of force has to be acquired from EU institutions, for example the European Council or the European Parliament.

this limitation to some extent, making the results more consistent. Semi-structured interviews consisted of five open-ended questions designed in line with the value dimensions provided in Table 1 to reveal Ambassadors' worldviews on the use of force within the EU's CSDP setting. The results are then interpreted within an interpretivist epistemological approach.

4. Findings

The empirical part of the research examines the worldviews on the use of force among the Ambassadors of the PSC, with the primary aim of assessing the extent to which these worldviews are commonly held. The findings suggest significant alignment in all three valued dimensions – the *norms*, *attitudes* and *beliefs* regarding the use of force.

4.1. Norms on goals for the use of force and authorisation requirements

To understand Ambassadors' normative values towards the goals for the use of force, a question was asked to describe the security situation or conditions in the EU's neighbourhood under which the use of force within the CSDP setting would be justified. Answering this question, Ambassadors demonstrated similar values and shared norms on the use of force, encapsulating several such goals: *training and capacity building of foreign armed forces*, *projecting security and stability* in the EU neighbourhood and *defensive operations to counter direct security threats* to the EU. The most prominent shared goal among the Ambassadors was to use EU military missions to train, mentor and build the capacity of a foreign military force to empower the country in a security crisis. Interviewee 3 (March 2024) described this goal in an overarching way: "We are there to train the country in trouble, to build up its military or security forces to be able to take control over territories, get it back from the terrorists or fight back the attack of the terrorists, etc.". The second most shared goal for the use of force among the Ambassadors was the projection of security and stability in the EU neighbourhood: "[the] EU should always focus on stabilisation in the neighbourhood, project security and stability. … Also, the EU should always act with a comprehensive approach, meaning that the military part is only one of the tools and should not be a priority" (Interviewee 6, April 2024). The third common norm regarding the goals for the use

of force was the defensive operation to counter direct security threat, or as Interviewee 7 (April 2024) put it "defensive executive task". Many of the Ambassadors provided a recently launched military operation, 'Aspides', as a perfect example of such a task, stressing the importance of the non-offensive nature of CSDP. The EUNAVFOR Aspides is a recently launched military and executive operation to protect commercial shipping in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf against aerial attacks by Houthi rebels. EU militaries operate within UN Security Council Resolution 2272 under the defensive mandate to protect vessels from drone and missile attacks without the right to attack Houthis themselves (Press and Information Team – EUNAVFOR Operation Aspides, 2024). Interviewee 12 (April 2024) described the normative values about the goals for the use of force in a very descriptive way:

> *CSDP missions and operations … goal was always to stabilise, to deescalate, and they have not had any offensive postures. … Operation ASPIDES in the Red Sea is doing exactly that. They are just defending maritime shipping against attacks from the Houthi rebels by drones and missiles. However, this operation, of course, is not a solution to the conflict, but it is able to protect interests in the Red Sea and that's what I also expect in the future. The EU will not enforce military solutions to conflicts, and the EU will have a role in de-escalating conflicts, until we get a political solution.*

Another normative value dimension where PSC demonstrated a full alignment is the authorisation requirements for the use of force in terms of both domestic and international approval. At the international system level, Ambassadors were unanimous in their answers that the EU should always act within the rule of law and that a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution is a "must have" prerequisite for any executive military operation. Interviewee 6 (April 2024) said: "[the] EU must always operate within the UNSC resolution. The EU project was built on the rule of law and the rules-based order, so the operations must be carried out only within the established rules". In addition to the UNSC resolution, Ambassadors envisioned other authorisation options with strict compliance with the international rule of law, such as the consent or a request of a state: i.e. "with the UNSC resolution, it is much easier for the EU to launch a mission, but it is possible to do so with a request from a country" (Interviewee 1, December 2023).

In addition, only two Ambassadors mentioned that the EU has to be ready to act without the UNSC resolution, because of the current situation in the UNSC: "That [acting without UNSC resolution] could be envisioned, taking into account that the UN right now is hampered by divisions in SC" (Interviewee 8, May 2024). Interviewee 9 (May 2024) also stated that "[the] UN to some extent has become quite paralysed, especially the Security Council. So if it's reasonable use of force and defensive, then the EU should be able to use it within its right". The overall agreement on the authorisation requirement is evident in the answers of the Ambassadors of the PSC, and this implies that the PSC shares very similar norms on the international authorisation for the use of force.

The domestic approval requirement at the EU level could be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, following Article 42.4 of the Lisbon Treaty (European Union, 2012), the decision to launch a military operation is made at the Council level on a consensus basis. That means that all Member States must be on board for the EU to use the force. That is already an obstacle and requires a high threshold of authorisation for military action to be taken. A good example is the case of Operation Aspides. Before launching an EU mission, the request to join the US-led military operation Prosperity Guardian to defend the freedom of navigation in the Red Sea was rejected by several nations at the PSC on the grounds of an offensive mandate it carries (Interview 6 April 2024). On the other hand, all the Ambassadors were comfortable with the current authorisation requirements of a unanimous agreement at the Council of Ministers (or European Council in more sensitive cases). Although Ambassadors were not explicitly asked whether the threshold of unanimity at the ministerial level is enough, none of the interviewees suggested any other forms of authorisation, e.g. European Parliament or Commission involvement in the decision-making process. Interpreting this strictly from the EU institutions' or bodies' point of view, this could be considered a low domestic threshold for the authorisation to use the force. On the whole, the research demonstrates that normative values in terms of goals for the use of force and domestic and international authorisation requirements are closely shared among the Ambassadors. The most prominently shared goal is the use of EU military missions to train, mentor and build foreign military forces' capacity to take problem-solving into their own hands. In addition, Ambassadors highlighted the need for the EU to focus on stabilising neighbouring regions through a blend of military and non-military

measures. The third common norm is defensive operations to counter direct security threats. The recently launched Operation Aspides was used as an example by many Ambassadors to demonstrate a shared normative value towards defensive operations to counter direct security threats, highlighting a unified approach on the role of military means as primarily defensive and protective rather than offensive. In addition, Ambassadors displayed full normative alignment towards authorisation requirements for the use of force, both domestically and internationally. At the international level, they unanimously agreed that the EU should always operate within the rule of law, with a UNSC resolution being a prerequisite for any executive military operation. Some Ambassadors acknowledged the possibility of acting without a UNSC resolution due to current divisions within the Security Council, but emphasised that this would be an exception to the norm. Domestically, the requirement for unanimous agreement at the PSC and then later at the Council of Ministers demonstrates a high threshold of authorisation to use force. Ambassadors generally supported the current authorisation mechanism without ever involving any other EU-level institutions or bodies, such as the European Parliament.

4.2. Attitudes towards the use of force

The attitudes towards the use of force are operationalised through the way the force is used once the Council authorises the military operation. At one end of the spectrum, there is a very defensive nature of the use of violence, with a restrained attitude, proportionate use of force and very low tolerance of casualties, i.e. just for self-defence. At the other end, there is an offensive attitude, including high-risk operations in non-permissive environments high tolerance of casualties both of own and foreign forces. To reveal Ambassadors' attitudes towards the use of force, the question of how active or restrained the EU should use force once the operation or mission was launched. The interviews with Ambassadors once again revealed very similar attitudes towards the use of force within the EU's CSDP setting. To describe how active or restrained the EU should use the force once the operation is launched, all Ambassadors turned to a very defensive posture in their answers. Interviewees described the use of force with such words or phrases as "defensive in nature" (Interviewees 3, 5, 7, 12), "utmost restraint or very restrictive use of force" (Interviewees 5, 8), "use of force as a last resort" (Interviewee 1), "right of self-defence or extended self-

defence" (Interviewees 5, 7, 9). In addition, several Ambassadors stressed that Operation Aspides, although it has a strictly defensive mandate, is already the next step for the EU (Interviewees 3, 5). When asked a follow-up question about whether the EU should become more aggressive or more offensive in its approach to CSDP, all Ambassadors strictly rejected such a notion. This non-offensive spirit of the CSDP is shared among the Ambassadors deeply, as many of them explicitly stressed this in their interviews, stating that an offensive operation is "unimaginable" (Interviewee 6, April 2024), "other options [non-defensive] are not on the table" (Interviewee 8, April 2024), or that "more offensive operation like Prosperity Guardian … is not in the EU's strategic culture" (Interviewee 7, April 2024). In addition to defensive attitudes towards the use of force, many Ambassadors preferred indirect involvement in military operations, such as training and military assistance missions. Interviewee 9 (May 2024) stated, "In Somalia, crisis management operations, both military and civilian, [are] to support the stability and state-building of the country, not to fight against Al-Shabaab". Interviewee 3 (March 2024) provided the same example of Somalia, where there is active fighting, and stated that "we are not the ones fighting the terrorists, we are training and advising them [a country] to do that … we are not the peace force or peacekeeping force for them". So, to conclude, Ambassadors widely shared a defensive attitude towards how the force is used. Once a military operation is authorised, the use of force is described in terms of defence, restraint and as a last resort. Ambassadors' deeply shared defensive and restrained attitude prioritises stability and de-escalation over aggressive or offensive military actions. Even more, there is a shared preference for indirect involvement, such as training and military assistance missions, over direct involvement in combat.

4.3. Beliefs about the threat and survival or action in an international system

A common threat perception within a given security community, be it a state or a subculture, is one of the major prerequisites in the development of shared worldviews and, in turn, the strategic culture of a security actor in an international system (Bloomfield, 2012; Fiott, 2020; Lantis, 2014). The report by Daniel Fiott (2020) revealed more than 20 different security threat categories listed in the EU Member States' national security documents and EUGS, with terrorism, cyber

and hybrid threats topping the list. In this study, Ambassadors were asked to name the top three security threats for the EU, and their answers were very similar. All the Ambassadors mentioned Russia's aggression against Ukraine, terrorism and migration in one way or another. It is important to note that only a few Ambassadors consider Russia as a direct threat to the EU: "the threat that is coming from the East – Russia" (Interviewee 1), "imperialist aggressive posture of Russian Federation" (Interviewee 12), "military threat of Russia" (Interviewee 6). Interviewee 11 described Russia as a direct threat to many areas of the EU interest: "[The]Russian Federation, not just the current war in Ukraine, but hybrid, cyber, long-term threat, threat to our way of life, the complex warfare or antipathy that they have towards the Western system … the proxy wars that Russian Federation is fighting with the EU in some of our partner countries like Moldova". The rest of Ambassadors perceive Russia's threat rather indirectly: as "challenging the rules-based order" or "world order" (Interviewees 4, 5); "Russia's invasion [of] Ukraine" (Interviewee 3) as a major cause for overall "inflation of world security" (Interviewee 7), "changed security architecture" (Interviewees 8, 9) around the EU, to a more subtle threat – "malign influence by third parties [Russia, China]" (Interviewee 10) to "interfere in internal politics" (Interviewee 9) and to "divide and fragment political cultures or positions of Member States" (Interviewee 12).

Terrorism and migration were the second security threats shared among the Ambassadors and, in many cases, were mentioned inseparably. Only two Ambassadors did not mention terrorism and migration at all, with another Ambassador expressing the direct and systemic threat to EU missions, operations and global EU presence, where terrorism could be interpreted as one of those direct threats. The main difference in the answers of the interviewees was noted in the source of these threats. Several Ambassadors claim that climate change causes migration and terrorism to flourish (Interviewees 4, 5, 7). Others perceive "general instability" (Interviewee 9), "conflicts in Africa" (Interviewee 4), "non-integrated migrants inside the EU" (Interviewee 11) as a primary source of these threats. The third security threat description diverged among the Ambassadors, with "cyber, hybrid and disinformation" (Interviewees 7, 8, 9, 11) being the most dominant, and the rest not so much. These were "Internal (dis) unity" (Interviewees 3, 10) among the Member States and "working in silos, … not working hand in hand" (Interviewee 7) on the matters

of security; weapons of mass destruction (Interviewee 5); industrial capacity (Interviewee 7); competition between the US and China.

To understand Ambassadors' beliefs about survival or action within the international system, a new question was asked. This was, what would be the preferred mode of cooperation when it comes to the use of force and should the EU affiliate itself with specific countries, alliances or organisations or act independently when launching a mission or operation. All the interviewees responded that the EU should always act involving third parties in one way or another "to have as broad coalition as possible" (Interviewees 5, 7, 11, 12) and "should never act alone and with the involvement of regional organisations" (Interviewee 6). Other Ambassadors suggested that the EU should involve third parties but "must have the capacity to act unilaterally" (Interviewee 1, 5), "It always needs to be an independent mandate. We have to take an independent decision. … But I would stress the importance of collaboration" (Interviewee 8), "good to have some kind of alliance of the willing, but if needed, I think you should be able to operate also unilaterally" (Interviewee 9). Several Ambassadors mentioned the UN regional organisations such as the African Union, Gulf Cooperation Council (Interviewees 4, 6, 7, 8) and US (Interviewee 8) as important third parties with which to cooperate. Answering this question, only two Ambassadors mentioned NATO as an important partner with which the EU should cooperate (Interviewees 7, 10). However, several Ambassadors' responses to other questions implied that NATO is an important partner in territorial or internal defence of the EU Member States, which are also member states of NATO: "[the] EU is not that kind of body, territorial defence for us – it's NATO" (Interviewee 3), "CSDP is external instruments, and for internal – we have NATO; use of force is for NATO" (Interviewee 4), "without bringing NATO into equation it is impossible to understand why EU is seen a bit timid or modest in its ambitions" (Interviewee 11).

All Ambassadors shared their beliefs on the main security threats to the EU, identifying Russia's aggression against Ukraine, terrorism and migration as the highest ones. Russia is viewed as undermining the rules-based international order and contributing to a more unstable security environment. At the same time, terrorism and migration were frequently mentioned together, with many Ambassadors linking these threats to broader issues such as climate change and regional instability. Regarding survival and action within the international system, Ambassadors emphasised the importance of cooperation with

third parties. There is a consensus that while the EU should be capable of acting unilaterally if necessary, collaboration with international organisations – such as the United Nations – and regional bodies – such as the African Union – is crucial for the legitimacy of missions and operations, and operational success.

Conclusions

This article set out to understand if the PSC of the EU holds the right attributes to be considered as another strategic subculture among the Member States. To demonstrate the theoretical and empirical gaps within the research on strategic culture of the EU the body of literature was analysed, and three main shortfalls were revealed. First, by focusing on the convergence of strategic cultures of the Member States and waiting for this convergence to occur, scholars fell into the trap of "over-continuity", thus overlooking the advances in the fourth-generation theory of strategic culture – the concept and role of subcultures. The convergence of strategic cultures of the Member States implies the change of national cultures. Therefore, the theory of strategic culture suggests that this change either takes a very long time or some external shock to the Union has to be applied to all the Member States. Second, the state level of analysis employed in most research might not be appropriate due to the supranational and intergovernmental nature of the EU's decision-making process and differences that are too stark in the strategic cultures of the Member States. The literature review revealed that the supranational strategic culture must emerge at the level of the EU, at the official bodies where constant interaction of the political elites on CSDP matters takes place. This implies that the classical material and ideational variables of strategic culture must be evaluated and analysed through the lens of the EU within the EU's strategic environment.

Several suggestions on how to fill the gaps within the research were offered. First, it has been suggested to employ the concept of subcultures, as theorised by Bloomfield (2012). This helps to overcome the waiting-for-convergence issue, as different subcultures within the EU could be observed and analysed, and the traits of subcultures could be attributed to the strategic culture of the EU. Second, applying the EU level of analysis, combining Bloomfield's (2012) concept of subcultures and Meyer's (2006) process of gradual institutions-based cultural change, three main attributes of a potential strategic subculture were

presented: (1) the EU institution or a body has to have representatives from all Member States of the EU; (2) it has to deal with CSDP matters frequently, and (3) it has to hold shared worldviews on the use of force. The case of a PSC was presented based on the academic research and the above-mentioned attributes. Finally, the shared worldviews of the Ambassadors were revealed through careful analysis of the Ambassadors' answers, which were collected during the semi-structured interview sessions. The main conclusion of this research is that the PSC of the Council of the EU could be considered as another strategic subculture next to the Member States (strategic subcultures of the EU). This is due to the representation of all Member States, almost daily interaction for institutions-based socialisation process, having the agency to influence security and defence policy outcomes of the EU and sharing the tightly knit strategic worldviews on the use of force.

Of course, this paper is limited in researching just one of the official EU institutions and therefore poses more questions for further research: Does the COREPER, EEAS or EUMC have the potential to be considered yet another subculture of the EU? Which of the strategic subcultures are dominant in the EU setting? Are shared norms, attitudes and beliefs transferred back to Member States, and if so, what are the underlying mechanisms involved? The concept of subcultures has a high potential and can become a go-to tool in answering these questions in further research.

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