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Towards a 'more united Union' in security and defence:

The case of EMILYO

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Introduction

“Europe needs a new generation of true Europeans, and a new sense of belonging to our continent and our Union. This is true in all sectors, from politics to academia. And it is equally true for our armed forces. [...] Common threats call for common responses, and for a shared European defence culture. It is becoming more and more vital that our future military leaders have the opportunity to enjoy a truly European training and education. [...] ‘Interoperability’ begins with mutual understanding, shared know-how and friendly personal relations, too.”

Federica Mogherini,
Former High Representative of the Union for
Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Sense of belonging, common defence culture and training, and interoperability are the main tenets of the foreword written by Federica Mogherini (2016) for a study on young officers’ mobility published in 2016. These few sentences, while aiming to set the stage for a new wave of awareness regarding the needs of the European Union, have also been the drive for imagining and writing this dissertation. While often ignored in favour of more practical elements of the military cooperation among Member States of the European Union, abstract concepts such as a sense of belonging, a shared defence culture, mutual understanding and personal relationship play a critical role in the path towards a ‘more united Union’. The curiosity and the desire to explore the integration process in a different fashion have guided the ideation of this dissertation: without ignoring the practical and material elements that have an undeniable and important role in shaping new and old relationships among the Member States and on the global scene, this dissertation aims to put a spotlight on the importance of ideational factors often discarded in the study of International Relations.

The history of EU cooperation in security and defence goes back to 1992, when the Member States signed in Maastricht the Treaty on the European Union (also referred to as Treaty of Maastricht): laying the foundation for a political role of the Union, the Treaty identified a common foreign policy and a common security policy as its second pillar, underlining the importance of cooperation not only in the economic field. After the St. Malo British-French Declaration in 1998, which many sees as the 'launch pad for CSDP' (Bickerton *et al*, 2011: 3), the Member States agreed to launch the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) in Cologne, issuing a call for capabilities adapt to a role on the international stage. Then in 2003 the European Union launched its first ever security strategy, titled 'A Secure Europe in a Better World' (European Council, 2003). The ESS identified global security challenges, key threats and strategic objectives of the European Union. Furthermore, while calling for a more active, more capable and more coherent action, the ESS represents the first official mention of the need of a common strategic culture. To improve European defence capabilities, 2004 saw the birth of the European Defence Agency (EDA), and a French-British-German initiative provided the start for the introduction of the EU Battlegroups: multinational, military units part of the European Union's military rapid reaction force, that reached full operativity in 2007. In 2009 the Treaty of Lisbon renamed the ESDP the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the European Union, expanding the so-called Petersberg tasks: defined in 1992 by the Petersberg Declaration, they are now identified in the Article 43(1) of the consolidated version of the Treaty on the European Union, together with a clause of mutual assistance (Article 42(7) TEU), and include 'joint disarmament operations, humanitarian and rescue tasks, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks, tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making and post-conflict stabilisation' (Article 43(1) TEU). A new momentum to the CSDP was given by the 2016 EU Global Strategy (EUGS): as a response to the changes within (such as Brexit) and outside of its borders, such as the

upheavals that had disrupted the international arena in the previous years (for instance, the Arab Uprisings and the Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014), the EU revisited its security strategy with a call for a more integrated system of defence, which passes through a credible, responsive and united Union (European Council, 2016), which led to a strengthening of military cooperation (Bratislava Declaration, 2016). The EUGS also set the stage for the development of the Permanent Structured Cooperation mentioned in the Lisbon Treaty, finally established in December 2017. In 2022, with war coming back on the European continent following the Russian aggression on Ukraine, the topic of military cooperation and defence integration has become more important than ever for the European Union. The adoption of the Strategic Compass in March 2022 expresses the will of the Member states to further strengthen the EU's security and defence policy, while the compact response of the EU to the aggression gives hope for the future steps of defence integration.

In the eyes of IR scholars, however, the European Union's processes of integration in the field of security and defence still represent a puzzle (Cladi and Locatelli, 2015a). It is not a mystery that traditional and even newer theories of IR, and integration theories, struggle to provide a serious and comprehensive theoretical account of issues related to European integration in security, first and foremost the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The theory-informed analyses of defence cooperation among EU Member States in fact, while providing interesting insights on the development or functioning of the cooperation, often fail to grasp the complex network of relations, ideas and values that drives it. On the other hand, accounts too anchored to ideational factors risk to ignore the role that material factors have and will always have in a field such as that of security and defence. For this reason, the dissertation will explore the traditional and mainstream theories of IR to determine the answer to the first research question:

RQ1: To what extent is a Constructivist point of view necessary to understand the process of European integration in the field of security and defence?

While there is a large amount of literature exploring the concepts of European defence integration and CSDP, few scholars have given attention to the initiatives taken under the umbrella of the CSDP. Among these, there are initiatives aimed at tackling both old and new security issues, capability development initiatives and, closely linked to that, the initiatives of education and training. One of the most successful in terms of numbers, and yet one of the most ignored in terms of research, is the European Initiative for the Exchange of Young Officers (EMILYO), hereinafter also referred as the Initiative or Military Erasmus. As the name suggests, this initiative is inspired by the civilian EU project Erasmus, and it is designed to allow cadets from all over the European Union to experience a period of study and training abroad. While the main focus of this initiative is on boosting the interoperability of the Member States' Armed Forces, it provides an interesting case study to examine both the interaction of material and ideational factors which led to its establishment and implementation and the ideational outcomes at the level of the participants. According to Constructivism, in fact, ideas and beliefs have an essential role in shaping the reality, and identities define desires and ambitions of the actors involved. In the preamble to the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), the concept of a common defence and security policy is linked to the reinforcement of 'the European identity' (C 325/9). Therefore, it appears evident that the redefinition of the relationships among the Member States, which is at the basis for further integration in the field of security, goes hand in hand with the redefinition of their identities and with a commonly held 'sense of belonging' to the European Union, as suggested by Mogherini (2016). This dissertation will analyse the material and ideational factors involved in the establishment and implementation of EMILYO and will evaluate the success of it in fostering the 'sense of belonging' through the analysis of the cadets' evaluation of their

experiences and the results of a short survey circulated among the participants, in order to answer the second research question and its sub-questions:

RQ2: How does the case study demonstrate the importance of taking into consideration ideational factors?

RSQ1: In the case of EMILYO, what are the material and ideational factors that interacted in the establishment and the implementation of the Initiative?

RSQ2: To what extent is the Initiative succeeding at the ideational level, fostering a European sense of belonging in the participants?

The aim of this dissertation is two-fold: on the one hand, it seeks to join the theoretical struggle to find an appropriate framework for exploring the past evolution and the future developments of the European integration process, especially for what concerns security and defence. To do so, it will argue that, notwithstanding the importance of material factors, concepts such as ideas and widely held beliefs cannot be overlooked in order to obtain a satisfactory account of the EU security and defence integration path, thus arguing for a synthesis of Constructivism and Realist theories, and using the case study to demonstrate the usefulness of analysing the interaction between ideational and material factors; on the other hand, the dissertation aims to explore the effects of initiatives under the umbrella of CSDP on the ideational level and investigate the (eventual) added value of a EU project. To do so, it will explore the ideational outcomes of the Initiative used as a case study, EMILYO, to determine whether or not it has succeeded so far in increasing the sense of belonging to the European Union of the young officers, and in which way it has affected their sentiments towards their peers and how they see each other.

There are several reasons that have driven the choice of this topic, and the choice of the research questions. The main reason is the interest of the author for the

theoretical discussion around the EU integration process: while theory is often overlooked in favour of more practice-based approaches, the scholarship still needs to put the spotlight on theoretical explanations to understand past and future developments. The focus on Constructivism is due to the awareness of the importance of ideas, beliefs and values in the European Union narrative. Therefore, exploring the extent to which Constructivism should be used to analyse a process such as that of integration in the security and defence field appeared to be the most appropriate path for this dissertation. The case study, furthermore, has been chosen in an attempt to demonstrate the importance of ideational factors without denying the role of material factors. The choice of this particular initiative, EMILYO, over other initiatives under the umbrella of the CSDP has been driven by both the unicity of it, as a mobility program which tries to conciliate both academic and vocational training, and because of the participation of the author in an exchange in the EMILYO framework. Finally, the topic is important because on the one hand it tries to shed light on the still unclear process of EU integration, while on the other hand attempts to provide an evaluation of an on-going EU project not in terms of material results, but in terms of ideational outcomes.

Methodology

The dissertation will explore the path to European integration in defence through a Constructivist lens, and to do so it will employ the case study of the European Initiative for the Exchange of Young Officers inspired by Erasmus (EMILYO). This case study gives the opportunity to both analyse the factors which led to its implementation (material and ideational) and explore the results of the experience on the participants, especially in terms of ideas, beliefs and the relative changes which may or may not have occurred.

To determine the answer to the main research question, the dissertation will provide a short overview of the mainstream theories used to explore European

integration, in general and in the field of security and defence. The theories, while providing some useful insights, are all Realist-based and, as such, overlook important elements of European integration, which can be best explained by focusing on non-material and ideational factors, such as identity, ideas and beliefs. For this reason, the dissertation will go on exploring the main features of Constructivism as a theory to explain EU integration.

To answer the second question, the dissertation will employ a case study: the case study methodology will follow the definition given by Robert Yin (2009), who defines a case study as ‘an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident... [and] using multiple sources of evidence’ (Yin, 2009, p. 13). Furthermore, the case study will be analysed using three different methodologies, which will allow to provide a thorough description of the factors which influenced the establishment and implementation of EMILYO and its results on the personal level of the participants. The case study has been chosen because of its descriptive power and its ontological stance according to Farquhar (2012), who claims that the case study has an ‘ideographic’ ontological stance, which implies that the researcher sees the world as ‘socially constructed and understood only by examining the perceptions of participants or actor’ (Farquhar, 2012, p. 4). This case study has been chosen because, while being a part of the CSDP of the European Union, it has a certain unicity, and it is different from the other initiatives under the umbrella of the CSDP.

First, the dissertation will draw a theoretical analysis based on the framework proposed by Meyer and Strickmann (2011), which combines Neoclassical Realist insights and the spotlight that Constructivists place on ideational factors. The analysed factors will be determined through the analysis of the existing literature on EMILYO and more general Constructivist accounts of European defence and security integration. To answer the first sub-question, the

interactions of factors with each other and with reality will be analysed, and how they contributed to shape reality.

The answer to the second sub-question will be determined by the analysis of two sources which should reveal something about the impressions, feelings and ideas of the participants in the mobilities. First, the dissertation will proceed with the content analysis of the evaluations of the mobility periods written by the cadets and published on the website of EMILYO (<http://www.emilyo.eu/>). Then, the dissertation will provide a descriptive analysis of the results of a survey specifically designed by the author to explore the outcomes of the Military Erasmus on an emotional level. Both the content analysis of the evaluation published on the Initiative website and the survey present some methodological limitations.

For what concerns the reports, the first issue with the data is the reliability of the opinions expressed in the reports: the evaluations are not anonymous, and are made to be published on the EMILYO website and eventually graded by the authors' superiors (as such, they are probably affected by a selection bias). For this reason, the overall opinion of the experience that comes out of this report is expected to be positive, and probably no critics will be expressed. To address this limitation, the author designed an anonymous survey which is expected to shed some light on the real impressions of the participants. Furthermore, some difficulties have been encountered during the collection and analysis of the data. First of all, the reports do not have the same template, nor appear to follow the same rules. Only from 2021 onwards a common template has been adopted to fill in the reports. However, a general structure of the reports was identified. The final limitations concern the coding *per se*: due to the particularity of the reports, the coding had to be done manually, and the content analysis is based on purely qualitative data, which are impacted by the personal biases of the author.

Furthermore, while having been chosen as the most suitable research method in order to gather enough participants and opinions to draw meaningful

conclusions, the survey research design carries with it some ethical and practical issues that need to be addressed. For what concerns the practical issues, the circulation was made among cadets from four European countries through an online questionnaire. The relatively low number of answers do not allow for a statistical analysis, although the sample was selected from an already very limited population. Moreover, the structure of the survey, while being easier to compile and analyse, may be interpreted in different ways by the respondents and the author, thus resulting in data which differs from reality. Regarding ethical concerns, the survey has been designed to guarantee confidentiality and a certain degree of anonymity. Furthermore, due to the particular nature of the population among which the questionnaire has been circulated, no questions regarding sensitive information were asked, nor the respondent has been asked to comment on his or her superiors or peers. However, the survey has undergone a process of ethics approval conducted by the Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects of the School of Social Sciences at the University of Glasgow.

The case study in itself also presents some limitations. First of all, its low power of generalisation: in this specific case, notwithstanding the elements which are common to both EMILYO and others running military mobility initiatives, there are some important elements which can largely impact the final evaluation of the Initiative and make the results differ, such as the young age of the participants, the fact that the mobility takes place not on the field but in an academic setting, and so forth and so on. Moreover, the qualitative nature of this case study allows for the researcher's own subjective feelings to influence the case study. The dissertation will therefore be limited to a descriptive account of the Initiative and how it is perceived by the participants, in order to understand the actors' perspectives in their own context.

Literature review

In the following chapters, the dissertation will proceed with a short overview of Realist-based theories used to analyse the CSDP of the European Union, in order to understand what classical mainstream theories of International Relations have to say regarding military cooperation and EU defence integration. Then, the dissertation will offer a more detailed overview of Constructivism as a theory and how it sees the EU integration process, both in general and in the field of security, to grasp the added value of this theory. Finally, it will explore the scientific literature on the European Initiative for the Exchange of Young Officers (EMILYO), which will then be used as a case study.

On IR theories and EU defence integration

Of all the different fields in which the European Union is pursuing integration, the field of security and defence is the one that most eludes from the boundaries of mere European integration theories and trespasses in the realm of International Relations theories. Long ignored because not deemed enough to foster integration and a sense of unity, the field of European security and defence has been rediscovered when it has become clear that economy and monetary issues were not adequate to inspire the European peoples to think and act as a one (Ash, 1999). The international role of Brussels has become more and more important in the path to a more integrated Union, and the latest developments of the international system, with the migration crisis and the war in Ukraine have highlighted the need for the EU to be as effective and credible with its ‘hard power’ as it is when using its ‘soft power’. Theorists and scholars have therefore gone back to studying the EU role in the current multipolar world, adopting several different views and trying to adapt IR theories to the specific case of the European Union and its security architecture.

Due to the peculiar nature of the European Union and of its CSDP, Piechowicz and Szpak (2022) argue that one theory is not enough to explain holistically the

process of integration in defence and suggest that, being the theories not mutually exclusive, they can be combined and used without losing their coherence. And this is demonstrated by the wide body of literature trying to combine European integration and IR theories to explain the European Union integration (or the lack thereof) in the realm of security and defence.

As suggested by Bickerton *et al.* (2011), all the mainstream approaches to the study of CSDP are characterised by four main concerns: power, institutions, structure and agency, and ontology of the state, with its interests and behaviour (Bickerton *et al.*, 2011: 11). The following paragraphs will provide an overview of the mainstream approaches to the study of the EU's CSDP, derived from both traditional IR theories, theories of European integration or combinations of both.

The views of CSDP vary among the realist accounts of European defence integration, but they all share a scepticism towards cooperation (Rosato, 2011) and towards the European defence integration project, based on the idea that CSDP is an attempt of the EU to play a role in the international power distribution, but does not represent a definitive stage in European strategic autonomy (Rynning, 2011). Realist scholarship, although broad and diverse (Donnelly, 2008), stems from the concept of anarchy in the international system and the strive of sovereign states to maximise their power and security, and therefore argues that CSDP will never overcome its intergovernmental nature. Realist arguments have often been used to explain the failure of the European defence integration projects to deliver meaningful results in the path of building autonomous security capabilities for the EU (Haesebrouck, 2015). Realists share three (plus one) core assumptions: (a) the international system is anarchic and the distribution of material capabilities drives the interests and preferences of the states; (b) states are rational and unitary political units, and other actors exist but have limited impact; (c) state preferences are fixed and conflictual

and (d) institutions tend to have little role in the international system (Maher, 2021: 92-93).

Structural realists, based on Kenneth Waltz' (1979) theory of balance of power, have proposed different descriptions of European integration: sharing the assumption that integration in Europe is the outcome of external pressures, scholars have declined structural realism in many different ways. While few, such as Rosato (2011) identifies in the Soviet Union and its superior power the main cause of European integration, a good part of the scholarship sees the United States as the real objective of the European balancing. Excluding, for historical and rational reasons, the instance of hard balancing (see Walt, 2005), the contributions differ on the ways in how they 'conceive of power as an explanatory variable' (Cladi and Locatelli, 2015: 14). Scholars such as Art (2004) and Paul (2005) advocate for soft balancing, which, in the case of Europe, consists in getting together in order to obtain results which are contrary to the desires of the hegemon (in this case, the US) and therefore would be impossible to obtain without a concerted effort. According to Paul (2005), soft balancing can be realised when the power asymmetry is a concern, but not an existential threat to the smaller states; the hegemon provides to the second-tier states public goods that would be not available otherwise; the balancing efforts do not directly challenge the hegemon and therefore do not risk causing retaliation (Paul, 2005: 59). When these conditions are met, second-tier states act through their institutional and diplomatic means as 'brakes' on American assertive policy (Art, 2004). Suggesting balancing for autonomy, instead, Barry Posen suggests that European states, subject to external systemic pressures, are forced to choose between balancing and bandwagoning (Posen, 2006). Since the latter would ultimately lead to dependence on the US, European states try to build autonomous capabilities to maximise their autonomy and avoid depending on another actor for their security. This strand of structural realism argues that the European Union does not antagonise the United States, but is indeed seeking an alternative to manage autonomously the security issues in its neighbourhood

(Posen, 2006; Jones, 2006; 2007). CSDP is therefore seen by a large part of the scholarship as the employment of non-military tools by the EU to restrain the military US action, containing *de facto* Washington without relying on hard balancing and open confrontation (Art, 2004; Pape, 2005; Layne, 2006; Posen, 2006). However, as Rynning (2011) notes, the implication of this strategy is that ‘distrust and distinct approaches to politics feed the balancing of power, and this is what the CSDP is about’ (Rynning, 2011: 26). Other positions of structural realists on CSDP include the general distinction between defensive realists, who see the CSDP as a toolbox to both address regional security issues and influence US policies (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2005; 2008), and offensive realists, which are focused on geographical proximity and therefore argue that CSDP is focused not on balancing the US, but on containing Germany (Mearsheimer, 2001; Jones, 2003).

Classical realists, on the other hand, stress the importance of domestic factors in the determination of foreign, defence and security policies (Carr, 2021; Morgenthau, 1967). As a result, while studying the European defence integration, classical realists tend to focus more on the internal tensions among European states: based on the assessment of Stanley Hoffmann (1966) that the European project was destined to succumb due to the ‘domestic differences and diverging world views’ among the member states, Calleo (2009) sees the CSDP as a ‘compromise between political projects’ (Rynning, 2011: 29). Building on Kissinger, Rynning asserts that the fact that outcomes are always results of bargaining structurally weakens the CSDP (Rynning, 2011). Classical realists, having focused either on the shared heritage of European states (Calleo, 2001) or on the differences among them (Hoffmann, 2000), maintain an internal focus, depicting the CSDP as about ‘domestic’ European affairs’ (Rynning, 2011: 31). However, while there is no agreement among classical realists on the destination of the CSDP, they all share a quite pessimistic view: Rynning describes it as a ‘precarious balance between tragedy and order’ which requires careful statesmanship (Rynning, 2011: 32), and warns that the pluralism in Europe

prevents from having too high hopes for the future of its common security policy; Lindley-French argues that the success of CSDP depends on the establishment of a European ‘concert of great powers’ (Lindley-French, 2002): this view is mentioned by Piechowicz and Szpak (2022), who recognise that ‘European realism’ has to account for the power asymmetries that exist internally to the EU and that great European powers (France and Germany) agreement is necessary to achieve results (Piechowicz and Szpak, 2022); for Hyde-Price the EU should refrain from acting as a moral actor in international relations in order to be effective (Hyde-Price, 2008). Criticising the functional concepts of integration through ‘spillover’, Hoffmann also underline that integration is highly unlikely to happen in areas of ‘high politics’ such as security and defence (Hoffmann, 1966).

From the combination of the structure understanding of structural realism and the accounting for agency of classical realism, neoclassical realism has emerged as a distinct position on CSDP. In the neoclassical realist thinking, CSDP ‘is driven by power [...] but shaped and moulded by European people responding to their own desires and ambitions’ (Rynning, 2011: 33). For some, this means that the more EU is powerful, the more CSDP will be strong (Selden, 2010); others propose to find a relationship between motives and power distribution, with the consequent creation of a ‘balance of interest’ which guides the behaviour of states (Schweller, 1994). In this view, the EU project could represent an attractive alternative to the US for smaller states, causing them to bandwagon with the European states. In his neoclassical realist account of CSDP, Tom Dyson (2015) points out the importance of considering both systemic-level variables (and properly differentiate them) and domestic-level variables in explaining the limited convergence of European states on the process of so-called ‘reformed bandwagoning on the US’ with which he identifies CSDP (Dyson and Konstadinines, 2013).

The concept of 'reformed bandwagoning' comes from a Neorealist perspective which sees bandwagoning not just as the opposite of balancing, but as a mean to gain through the alliance with the hegemon. As opposed to Waltz' (1979) claim that bandwagoning ultimately leads to subjugation, and to Posen's analysis which deems it as 'too risky' for the EU since it would lead to dependency from the US (Posen, 2006), Schweller (1994) claimed that bandwagoning could represent a strategic behaviour to gain without the risk of overt confrontation. Taking into account the huge power asymmetry between the United States and European states, with the alliance deeply unbalanced in favour of the former, Neorealism posits that the latter have responded rationally to these systemic pressure through an attempt at defence and security integration (Cladi and Locatelli, 2015). Bandwagoning thus appears as a strategic behaviour aimed at, in the words of Cladi and Locatelli, 'have it both ways' (2015: 20): acting in this way, European states can maintain the relationship with the US and foster integration in order to get closer to strategic autonomy and decrease the power gap with the US (Cladi and Locatelli, 2015). CSDP is seen as a way to enhance Europe's collective voice *vis-à-vis* the US (Press-Barnathan, 2006) and bandwagoning gives European states the opportunity to profit of the victories of the Atlantic Alliance, without the risk of ruining the relationship with Washington (Dyson and Konstadinines, 2013). An important distinction between 'soft balancing' and this type of bandwagoning is that, while proponents of the former suggest a general opposition to US power, advocates of the latter demonstrate that CSDP is both an attempt 'of meeting regional security challenges in the context of partial US disengagement from Europe' (Dyson and Konstadinines, 2013: 152) and at seeking to increase their influence on the US by being not a competitor, but a 'better partner of the US' (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2005: 93), and therefore does allow EU states to disagree on US policies that do not meet their approval, and to accept and favour others (Dyson and Konstadinines, 2013; Brooks and Wohlforth, 2005).

Realist-based accounts of CSDP stem from the ontological primacy of the state in international relations: the interests of sovereign states and their grand strategies appear to be fundamental, and European integration is driven by instrumental reasoning. In this view, the European defence integration is seen as a form of alliance (Kucera, 2017). Drawing on the concept of alliance (Walt, 1990; Snyder, 1990), realist scholars recognise the trade-offs between political autonomy and security which are needed of the European states in order to constitute an integrated common security policy, and argue that CSDP is more cooperation than integration, since states are not willing to sacrifice their political autonomy but they need to cooperate in order to resist systemic pressure and address contemporary security issues. States are not likely to renounce to their primacy in national security, since this is the *raison d'être* of the state, and therefore defence and security policies are beyond EU integration, which can indeed happen in issues of low politics (Øhrgaard, 1997).

This idea is shared by the mainstream theories of European integration, intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism (Kucera, 2017). Intergovernmentalist approaches, while assuming that the behaviour of states is driven by their preferences and positing that the bigger states tend to prevail and therefore lead EU decision (Piechowicz and Szpak, 2022), do not consider possible the integration in security and defence. Intergovernmentalism therefore proposes some sort of 'great power concert' which goes back to its realist foundations (Kucera, 2017) and demonstrates that this approach take on CSDP is that it is destined to remain merely intergovernmental. Differently from more realist approach, however, intergovernmentalists acknowledge that national preferences may be influenced by European institutions, and bargaining is essential to CSDP (Piechowicz and Szpak, 2022).

Puetter's deliberative intergovernmentalist approach, on the other hand, sees the EU security policy as an integrated intergovernmental bureaucracy with supranational elements (Puetter, 2012): the European security-sphere is

understood as consensus-oriented and needing constant dialogue among independent parties to reach consensus on common EU positions, therefore negotiation needs to happen at the highest level of bureaucracy and to create supranational competences. For Puetter, the success of EU security policies depends on the successful pooling and sharing of resources, which require adjustments and coordination of national preferences and policies (Puetter, 2012; Piechowicz and Szpak, 2022).

Among IR theories, Liberalism has also been declined to provide an account of European integration. While being, like Realism, a ‘broad and diverse school of thought’ (Maher, 2021: 92), liberal scholars share some core assumptions: (a) pressure groups and individuals are more relevant on the international stage than states, which are just the outcome of domestic politics and behave accordingly; (b) interdependence among states shapes interests and preferences, beside being an incentive to cooperation; and (c) institutions play an important role in facilitating cooperation by overcoming states’ preferences (Maher, 2021: 92).

Liberal declinations of intergovernmentalism, set out by Andrew Moravcsik, in fact, recognise the importance of domestic pressure groups such as lobbies and NGOs in setting the preferences of states. In this view, governments play an important role in aggregating domestic preferences and translating them into national preferences in the international arena (Moravcsik, 1997; 2008). Depicting EU integration as the result of a ‘multi-stage process of constrained social choice’ (Moravcsik, 2008: 250), however, theories based on liberalism fail to explain EU cooperation in the fields of security and defence (Richter, 2015), appearing more suited to explain economic-related issues (Piechowicz and Szpak, 2022) and still focused on power and material factors.

This appears in fact to be the case also for Neoliberal Institutionalism, which argues that the EU is the outcome of shared economic interests: while still seeing the international system as anarchic, NI has a more positive view on the possibility of cooperation (Richter, 2015). For NI, states may coordinate their

policies to ultimately reach institutional arrangements (Keohane, 1984). Thus, institutions emerge from policy coordination and increased cooperation to provide aid to the states who created them, benefitting all the participants and creating interdependence among them in the economic field (Richter, 2015). However, although not foreseen by the first NI scholars, European states have widened the scope of their treaties and institutions to security and defence (Richter, 2015). In the words of Richter, however, Liberal IR theories, while being a powerful tool to explain the dynamics of the EU integration process, fail to grasp the complexity of CSDP (Richter, 2015: 62). This is explained also by Pohl, van Willigen and van Vonnó, who, while providing an interesting liberal analysis of CSDP, admit that Moravcsik's New Liberalism is too focused on domestic factors, such as governmental interests and public opinion, and fails to account for external factors (Pohl *et. al*, 2015).

The idea that defence integration is beyond the reach of European integration is found also in neofunctionalist accounts, based on the studies of Haas (1958; 1970). One of the core concepts of neofunctionalism is the concept of 'spillover', which can be functional (related to how integration in one particular policy area leads to integration in others to reach an anticipated objective, which has happened in the financial and monetary area); political (related to the process which leads national political elites to realise their problem cannot be addressed at the domestic level and therefore expectations, political activities and also loyalties shift to a new centre, in this case the EU); and cultivated (which takes into consideration the role of supranational institutions in the integration process, prompted by institutions in order to obtain a larger share of power) (Haas, 1958; Lindberg 1963). Although focused on the 'willingness of EU states to delegate certain policy issues to the EU' (Piechowicz and Szpak, 2022: 63), neofunctionalism is pessimist about integration in the defence and security domain, as it sees national defence as an area of 'high politics', therefore immune to the spillover mechanism (Haas, 1961; Rosamond, 2000). Schmitter argued that regional integration projects drive the participants to

adopt common policies towards third parties (Schmitter, 1969) and this was later called ‘exogenous spillover’ (Niemann, 2006; Bergmann and Niemann, 2015), but it still excludes security from the fields affected by this phenomenon.

Nevertheless, the concept of nationalisation of defence illustrated by Matlary and Østerud (2007), challenges this argument: when the purpose of armed forces is no longer territorial defence, but becomes a diplomatic instrument (Matlary and Østerud, 2007: 9), the field becomes ‘accessible to the neofunctionalist logic of supranational integration’ (Kucera, 2017: 330). Defence policy is no longer issue of ‘high politics’, and therefore is no longer immune to spillover mechanisms. Furthermore, Selden (2010), argues that the EU will likely emulate the process which made possible to formation of a federal government in the US (Selden, 2010), and Ojanen goes even further, proposing a ‘new functionalist logic’ (Piechowicz and Szpak, 2022: 69) which claims that European integration is capable of shifting political issues from the realm of ‘high politics’ to the real of normal or even low politics, and defence does not have any more a special feature which could impede its supranationalisation (Ojanen, 2006). This process of supranationalisation, according to Ojanen, would be composed of three processes happening at the same time: socialisation of national actors, inclusion of supranational actors and complex linkages between issue areas (Ojanen, 2006: 64), which would ultimately lead to integration in security and defence policy as in other fields.

Both neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism, however, still consider the state as the most important player in the arena, and the eventual development of integration projects are not seen as menacing for the primacy of the sovereign state (Kucera, 2017). Nonetheless, neofunctionalists recognise the importance of insitutions as agents of integration, while intergovernmentalists and liberal intergovernmentalists claim insitutions to have a little role in the process, the former seeing as the primary motive for integration the interests of the state and

the relative power they have in the bargaining process; the latter highlighting more the role of pressure groups to determine the interest of government to undergo a process of integration (Bergmann and Niemann, 2015).

One important issue that must be considered while studying CSDP is in fact the role of institutions in the integration process, and their role *vis-à-vis* the states who created them. While for intergovernmentalists bigger states set the stage and drive EU decisions, scholars such as Menon argue that CSDP acts as an instrument to empower smaller states in the arena of European decision-making in the security and defence field (Menon, 2011). The institutionalist approach, in fact, sees the CSDP as ‘institutionalised attempts on the part of Member States to respond to the security challenges they confront’ (Menon, 2011: 83). In contrast to the realist view of institutions as something having ‘minimal influence on state behaviour’ (Mearsheimer, 1994/95: 7), institutionalist scholarship claims that institutions have an independent saying about the outcomes (Ikenberry, 1998/99) and ‘can elude the control of their creators’ (Menon, 2011: 86). Moreover, institutions are said to reduce the power asymmetries among the states (Wivel, 2005) and to grant voice to smaller states (Ikenberry, 1998/99). To the realist argument that institutions are epiphenomenal, and the states can and will use them for their own designs, institutionalism answers positing that institutions not only can behave outside the track originally intended for them, but also that this and path dependency make them resistant to change and to the emerging of new institutions (Ikenberry, 1998/99; Menon, 2011). The evolution is therefore the consequence of constant bargaining among the parties (Dyson and Konstadinines, 2013). Institutionalism studies the ‘multiple processes of formal/informal rules that create the daily aspects of the EU’s functioning’ (Piechowicz and Szpak, 2022: 63), claiming that the mere participation in the Union is enough to shape national preferences given the effects of path dependency on the Member States, but its bargaining character is seen as a weakening feature for CSDP, and is the cause of CSDP’ ineffective institutional design (Haesebrouck, 2015).

The traditional approaches to the study of CSDP all focus on the ontological primacy of the state, and its agency is almost exclusive. When this is not the case (Liberalism) the main drive of interest and behaviour of actors is still considered to be power, with little if no attention to ideational factors. Other approaches, however, try to challenge the assumption of the primacy of the state.

A challenge comes from governance approaches to the study of CSDP (Zwolski, 2015): these approaches, in fact, focus on the 'shift from a hierarchical, state-centric intergovernmental policy-making environment in defence and security to one that is heterarchical, multilevel and inclusive' (Dyson and Konstadinines, 2013: 119; Krahmman, 2003), challenging the view of the state as a unitary actor (Mérand *et al.*, 2011). The concept of 'security governance' attempts to explain the ways in which security policies are created by the interactions of state and non-state actors (Krahmann, 2003), and some authors argue that CSDP has moved beyond its character of intergovernmentalism (Norheim-Mastinsen, 2010) and is now the product of a 'system of complex, multi-tiered, geographically overlapping structures of governmental and non-governmental elites' (Wessels, 1997: 291). The multilevel governance thesis, or transgovernmentalism, thus sees the state as a disaggregated entity, and cooperation happens through dense interaction across different levels of society (Mérand *et al.*, 2010). However, Mérand *et al.* (2011), in a social network analysis of CSDP governance structure, argues that while 'CSDP governance is indeed more heterarchical and two-level than intergovernmentalists acknowledge' (Mérand *et al.*, 2011: 140), states remain the primary player on the field and dominate the security policy process.

Following the idea of a 'post-national security' in which the state is not the only actor, the two-levels game theory account of CSDP presented by Janne Haaland Matlary relegates the grand strategies of European states as secondary, stressing the importance of domestic factors and the need of policymakers to 'politically

survive' at home: the interest in defence and security cooperation stems from the need to pool resources and obtain legitimacy for the 'war of choice' European states have embarked on since the end of the Cold War (Matlary, 2009): the CSDP is thus 'a complex mixture of the interaction of domestic and international interests' (Dyson and Konstadinines, 2013: 126) which primary use is to secure governments' position against the opposition at home (Matlary, 2009).

However, among the approaches who defy the Realist ontology, the prominent approach is Constructivism. Based on the idea that reality is socially constructed and on the relationship and differences between material and ideological structure, Constructivism has emerged in International Relations at the end of the Cold War, and will be discussed in the next chapter.

In fact, theories who are based almost exclusively on analysing material factors, such as the ones explained in this chapter, cannot fully account for the developments that have taken place in the European Union and in the defence integration in the last decades. For this reason, this dissertation will now proceed to illustrate the core tenets of Constructivism and the view this theory has of the project of the European Union and of the integration process in the field of security and defence.

On Constructivism in IR

In 1990s, with the end of the Cold War, dominant IR rationalist theories were said to have failed in explaining the demise of bipolarism. At the same time, many traditional rationalist theorists were starting to admit the potential of reflectivist critical theories (Keohane, 1988) and a generational change was taking place in IR scholarship (Price and Reus-Smit, 1998). The combination of these three 'mutually reinforcing factors' (Jung, 2019: 1) led to the so-called 'Constructivist turn in IR' (Price and Reus-Smit, 1998).

Constructivism in general argues that reality is socially constructed, and shaped by the actors in it through their interactions (Theys, 2018). For this approach, the behaviour of an individual actor is determined by the ideas and beliefs shared collectively with all the other actors. At the same time, the actions of the individuals form the ideational environment which surrounds them. In other words, Constructivism is based on ‘a social ontology which insists that human agents do not exist independently from their social environment and its collectively shared systems of meanings’ (Risse, 2005: 160).

Constructivism has been consolidated and made mainstream thanks to the work of Adler (1997) and Wendt (1992; 1999). The former attempts, in his article *Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics* to ‘pull together the pieces and provide a synthetic explanation’ for this approach (Adler, 1997: 320). Defining Constructivism as a ‘middle ground’ between rationalist and relativist approaches to the study of IR, Adler argues that ‘Constructivism is the view that *the manner in which the material world shapes and is shaped by human action and interaction depends on dynamic normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world*’ (Adler, 1997: 322, original emphasis), and that IR are primarily constituted by social facts, which are such only by human agreement. Likewise, Wendt argues that identities, ideas, norms and perceptions matter and material factors have a meaning only through social interactions (Wendt, 1999), and therefore Constructivism focuses on the examination of non-material factors. Furthermore, Constructivists argue that society has a reflexive character, thus agency and structure are mutually constituted (Theys, 2018).

For what concerns the assumption that reality is socially constructed, Constructivism emphasises the reflexivity of society, claiming that agency and structure are mutually constituted (Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001; Wendt, 1999). Wendt provides an explanation in his article *Constructing International Politics*, in which he describes a social structure as composed by both material and

ideational factors: a social structure is first composed by the shared knowledge and intersubjective ideas of the agents in it, that determine the relationship of amity or enmity between them, creating either a security dilemma (if the states have a shared understanding of not trusting each other) or a security community (if, on the contrary, there is a relationship of mutual trust between the actors); the different composition of this structure of shared knowledge leads to assign a meaning to material resources, the second component of a social structure (material resources owned by an hostile state will be deemed more dangerous than the ones owned by a friendly one, and vice versa); the third component of a social structure, the practices, illustrate the reflexivity of the process (states have the agency to reinforce or change practices, and will do so driven by the ideas and beliefs they hold) (Wendt, 1995: 73).

Constructivism is therefore based on the examination of non-material factors (Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001). Shared beliefs and intersubjective ideas have an important role in shaping the social structures that compose the international system (Theys, 2018), while other non-material factors such as identity and social norms also have effects on world politics according to Constructivists scholars.

Identity is crucial, since it represents an actor's idea of what they are and in turn determines the interests, preferences and actions of that actor, which is usually the state (Jung, 2019). Identities, in fact, 'imply a particular set of interests or preferences' (Hopf, 1998: 175) and drive the course of action of a state in the international arena. There is not, however, agreement on the weight of domestic and international factors between the two pioneers of the importance of identity in Constructivism, Wendt and Katzenstein (1996): while the latter claims that domestic factors are a key element in shaping the identity of a state, the former focuses instead on international factors (Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001).

The important role of identities explains why social norms are also critical for the approach. Constructivist authors hold the idea that states behave following

‘a standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity’ (Katzenstein, 1996: 5), which has been called ‘logic of appropriateness’ by March and Olsen (1998). This logic entails the fact that actors (in this case, states), tend to behave in ways that are consistent not only with international laws, but also with their role in the international arena and their social structure. Moreover, with this logic an actor tends to behave according to what is the ‘right thing’ to do in that given context, not on the basis of what they are likely to get as an outcome of their decision, contrary to the ‘logic of consequences’ claimed by theories such as Intergovernmentalism to be the driving logic of states in IR (Piechowicz and Szpak, 2022). Going therefore back to reflexivity, Constructivists argue that social norms not only regulate behaviour, but also have a constitutive effect on the identities of actors as members of a community (Onuf, 1989; Risse, 2005).

The reflexivity feature comes back also when establishing the ontological and epistemological stances of Constructivism. The nature of reality (ontology) is argued to be socially constructed; the same is said about the nature of knowledge (epistemology): knowledge and reality are therefore mutually constitutive (Guzzini, 2000). Constructivism, in fact, puts emphasis on the ‘ontological reality of intersubjective knowledge and on the epistemological and methodological implications of this reality’ (Adler, 1997: 322-23): claiming that IR are made up of human facts, while acknowledging the existence and important role of the material world (Adler, 1997), Constructivism challenges the material view of politics offered by Realist and Liberal approaches, accounting for the constitutive power of norms and ideas. The same can be said for the view of the sovereign state: in Constructivism, the nation-state ‘is not an ontologically constant entity in IR’ (Kucera, 2017: 328).

Constructivism is seen not as a theory of politics *per se* (Adler, 1997: 323), but rather as a social theory which ‘makes claims about the nature of social life and social change’ (Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001: 393) and provides a base for

constructivist theories of international politics (Adler, 1997). As a ‘theoretically informed approach to the study of IR’ (Ruggie, 1998: 80), it is based on three basic assumptions: ‘(a) human interaction is shaped primarily by ideational factors, not simply material ones; (b) the most important ideational factors are widely shared or ‘intersubjective’ beliefs, which are not reducible to individuals; and (c) these shared beliefs construct the interests and identities of purposive actors’ (Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001: 392-93).

In the field of international security, Constructivism has been demonstrated to be capable of providing useful insights to understand issues such as humanitarian intervention (Walling, 2013) and more broadly also the change which took place in military interventions in general (Finnemore, 2004, cited in Jung, 2019). Moreover, following Wendt’s claim that ‘actors do not have a portfolio of interests they carry around independent of social context’ (Wendt, 1992: 398), Weldes (1996) argues that national interest is a ‘social construction’ emerging from the ‘intersubjective and culturally established meanings with which the world [...] is understood’ (Weldes, 1996: 280).

On Constructivism and EU

The debate on Constructivism in IR made possible the arrival of this approach in the field of European integration studies without ‘heavy metatheoretical baggage’ (Schimmelfennig, 2012: 35): Constructivism ‘left’ the realm of meta-theories and the struggles to find a coherent epistemology and become more substantive. The focus on ideas and identity offered by Constructivism has become particularly important in exploring the question of European integration. In fact, the economic integration of the beginning is not deemed sufficient for the European peoples to feel a sense of belonging to the European Union, and a sense of *we-feeling* (Monteleone, 2015) which connects them to fellows Europeans. The issue of fostering a European ‘sense of belonging’ in its citizens has been a challenge for the European Union since the day it was born.

The difficulties arise from the beginning, since there are profound differences between the concept of citizenship and that of identity.

While the European citizenship has been awarded to all the nationals of the Member States following the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, and it involves both feelings of identity and the rights and duties of citizens, identity 'refers to the individual and their positioning towards a culture or group of people' (Llurda, et al., 2016, p. 324). Furthermore, a vast body of literature explores the concept of 'European citizenship' as a socio-cultural category which is constituted by a political and a civic dimension, but cannot prescind from subjective, emotional and cultural considerations, thus following a Constructivist approach (Shore, 2004).

Although there is a general grade of optimism for the European project in the Constructivist literature on the matter, one of the first challenges is whether 'European identity' is a viable concept, given the peculiarity of an entity such as the European Union: can a non-state structure foster the same sense of belonging usually linked to state and local level (Llurda, et al., 2016)? Whereas state identities have been created through decades- (and sometimes centuries-) long processes of nation-building, the European Union has been born as a political experiment, the establishment of a supra-national entity which primary objectives were to ensure peace and create an economic cooperation among existing states in the Old Continent, with previous histories and cultures. The creation of European citizenship has therefore been a bureaucratic move, established overnight by the Maastricht Treaty, which reads: 'Citizenship of the Union is hereby established. Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union' (Treaty on the European Union, 1992). While citizenship of EU can be established overnight, the construction of a shared identity encounters several problems. First, the definition itself of Europe and European still generates controversy (Llurda, et al., 2016): for the majority of Europeans, 'European Union' is still a blurred concept, something which is

there but is not clearly defined, and neither are its dynamics and significance (McCormick, 2010). Moreover, as of 2022, more than 70% of people around the EU identify themselves as being European citizens (European Commission, 2023: 78), but are not always sure of what it means (McCormick, 2010). Some argues that a European collective identity is not possible, because Europe lacks an ‘European demos’ (Grimm, 1995) and an ‘European public sphere’ (Risse, 2011), for others the absence of a common language makes a political community impossible (Scharpf, 1999). Constructivist refuse these arguments, exploring different conceptions of identity (Risse, 2011).

Constructivists see European identity as a social construction (Fan, 2008) constituted by social interactions, and the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 added to Article 8.1 of the Maastricht Treaty the indication that ‘Citizenship of the Union shall complement and not replace national citizenship’, highlighting fact that the EU identity should not compete with the national identity, but is intended as an ‘additional’ identity (Llurda, et al., 2016). Constructivism, on this matter, argues that people can and will hold multiple identities. European and state-identity should not be seen as a zero-sum game, in which if one wins, the other one disappears. Rather, state and EU are both ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson, 1991) and European people hold multiple social identities, without having to choose a primary one (Risse, 2005: 151). The data from the Eurobarometer survey seem to confirm that a transnational European identity is rising (Risse, 2011): among the people who declared they identify with being Europeans, few of them identify as exclusively European, while the majority identify both as European and national of their home country (European Commission, 2023). Thus, empirical findings demonstrate that increases in European identity do not necessarily mean a decrease in the sense of belonging to the nation-state (Risse, 2005), but rather that European identity complements national identities (Risse, 2014).

There are different ways in which identities can coexist: Risse (2011) identifies three ways in which national and European sense of belonging can exist side-by-side: (a) nested identities, understood as concentric circles where ‘local identities are subsumed in national identities, and national identities subsumed in Europe-wide identities’ (Hermann and Brewer, 2004: 8, cited in Risse, 2011), implying a hierarchy of identities. European identity therefore represents the ‘outer layer’, while the attachment to one’s one nation-state is the core identity (Risse, 2011): on this idea are formulated the Eurobarometer questions; (b) cross-cutting identities, in which ‘members of one identity group are also members of another identity group’ (Risse, 2005: 153), but not necessarily, as in an Euler-Venn diagram.; finally, identities can be (c) intertwined, meaning that ‘national and European components mix and blend’ in the so-called ‘marble cake model’ (Risse, 2011: 65): this model is consistent with the concept of ‘Europeanisation’ of national identities, and suggests that the EU is ‘integrated into core understanding of one’s national (or other) sense of belonging’ (Risse, 2011: 45). If in the first two cases either one identity usually overpowers the other, or the two identities cannot fully blend together, in the last case the relationship between the identities produces ‘an outcome which is greater than the sum of its parts’ (Cram, 2009: 101). However, while Risse (2011) uses the latter as the model to explore identities in Germany and Spain and claims that data suggest the possible validity of the marble cake model (Risse, 2011), others claim that the empirical evidence is more consistent with the first two models, and it is difficult to find results that confirm the validity of this model (Guglielmi and Vezzoni, 2016).

The question of whether institutions play a role in shaping identities and therefore interests is central to European studies, and thus is of interests to the Constructivist view of the EU. In contrast to Intergovernmentalist accounts, Constructivism claims that institutions ‘tend to have *constitutive* effects’ on both corporate and individual actors (Risse, 2011: 88, original emphasis), becoming part of the fabric of the social environment in which people act (Risse, 2011).

In fact, in the insitutional framework actors' interests and identities go through a process of socialisation (Checkel, 2007) that leads to the 'internalisation of new roles and interests' (Maher, 2021: 104). Moreover, as some have singled out, EU membership has transformed the domestic environment of the Members, leading to harmonisation and convergence of structures (Sedelmeier, 2012).

Analysing the changes in identity across EU Member States, Risse identifies a number of mechanisms that could nurture changes in the identity of a community: (a) interest change leading to identity change (neofunctionalist explanation by Haas, 1958); (b) frequent interaction (based on Deutsch's integration theory, 1953); (c) incremental socialisation (sociological institutionalism explanation by Checkel, 2005); (d) socialisation through persuasion; (e) crises and critical junctures (identity change nurtured by shared traumatic experiences) (Risse, 2011: 88-89). Notwithstanding the lack of empirical evidence, Risse claims that European integration is succeeding in fostering an 'Europeanisation of national identities', but this is happening in different ways depending on the country and the narratives chosen by the elites of the country (Risse, 2011: 101).

Although Constructivism is in general seen as having an optimistic view of the process of European integration, many scholars do not share the optimism, and instead claim that sixty years of attempts to foster a common European identity have failed (Maher, 2021). These claims are based both on the persistence of national loyalties and the absence of clear evidence for what concerns socialisation effects (Maher, 2021). Checkel and Katzenstein (2009) argue that people in the EU are more emotionally attached to their own countries than to the EU (Checkel and Katzenstein, 2009), and others note that while higher classes and political and business elites may feel more European, this feeling decreases when considering lower classes, which instead identify more in national terms (Fligstein, 2008). While the Eurobarometer data abovementioned

show that 56% of respondents identify or tend to identify with being European, they also show that almost half of the respondents either do not identify as Europeans at all or at least are non-committal (European Commission, 2023). Thus, one can still argue that ‘there is no evidence for a shift of mass loyalties and change of identities’ (Schimmelfennig, 2012). Following the claim of Hoffmann (1966) that a deep European integration would fail because national allegiance would not simply disappear, some claim that a common European identity ‘is an illusion’ (White, 2012), and is not possible because of all the differences in language and traditions and, last but not least, historical rivalries (Maher, 2021). The pessimistic view of European integration comes also from the empirically demonstrated weakness of socialisation effects, especially on European institutions (see Egeberg, 1999; Trondal, 2004; Scully, 2005; Beyers, 2005, all cited in Schimmelfennig, 2012). Furthermore, others argue that Europeanisation has failed to lead to a harmonisation of domestic politics and institutions and there is no feeling of solidarity among European peoples (Maher, 2021).

On Constructivism and EU defence integration

Constructivism has also been used to study and explain the attempts at European integration in the field of security and defence and the CSDP. In fact, Constructivists acknowledge the importance of having a ‘defence identity’ and a defined, important role on the international arena for the European Union to exist (Wæver, 1998: 90) and argue that ‘European integration in the field of foreign, security and defence policy and the coordination practices established by EU member states cannot be fully explained by looking at material factors only’ (Monteleone, 2015: 83). Stressing the importance of identity and shared beliefs, Constructivist research on defence and security integration has focused on the existence of a shared European strategic culture and on the Europeanisation of national foreign policies, and accounts of CSDP have highlighted the importance of norms and of common ideas and values.

Although it has started as an economic project, it could be argued that the European Union was born as a ‘security project aimed at redefining the amity-enmity relations’ (Monteleone, 2015: 83) among European states, and reshape their identities, obtaining a shift in preferences and interests (Katzenstein, 1996). Having reached the objective of peace in the European continent, the member states have then decided to take a further step and proceed to the integration also in the security and defence field. Economic integration, in fact, could not foster cohesion and strengthen and European identity as a common foreign and defence policy would have as demonstrated also by the Eurobarometer Standard Survey results (European Commission, 2023). The push towards a European foreign and security policy came from political actors (top-down) but also from the public (bottom-up), which in different occasions has expressed strong support for a common foreign policy and a common defence policy (Monteleone, 2015: 84). Many Europeans, in fact, see the integration in defence and security as essential for both the definition of a European identity and the definition of the EU role into the world, which are deemed to be incentives for an increase of the support and legitimacy for the European Union both within and outside its borders (Monteleone, 2015).

A stronger sense of identity would reflect the sense of ‘*we-feeling*’ typical of a security community as theorised by Adler and Barnett (1998) following Deutsch’s (1957) conceptualisation of security community as ‘a group of people which has become ‘integrated’’ (Deutsch *et al.*, 1957: 123). Adler and Barnett define the security community ‘as a transnational region comprised of sovereign states whose people maintain dependable expectations of peaceful change’ (Adler and Barnett, 1998: 30) and categorised them in loosely and tightly coupled security communities on the bases of ‘their depth of trust, the nature and degree of institutionalisation of their governance system, and whether they reside in a formal anarchy or are on the verge of transforming it’ (Adler and Barnett, 1998: 30). In a security community, ‘actors choose to act *as if* there is a community’ (Wæver, 1998: 70) and being part of the community becomes a

defining feature of the actors' identities (Monteleone, 2015). Adler and Barnett then analyse the European Union security community, defining it as a 'tightly coupled pluralistic security community' (Adler and Barnett, 1998). In their understanding, tightly coupled security communities are the final stage of the defence integration process, started with an alliance and continued with the gradual shift of national identity and interests to communitarian identity and interests (Kucera, 2017). Being a member of a security community, in the Constructivist view, has several effects: (a) it fosters a shared identity; (b) it creates the belief that social norms imply common actions and consultations to face security challenges (making it appropriate to coordinate); (c) transforms the nature of the state through socialisation and joint learning; and (d) gives to a 'post-national security entity' the right to use force (Adler and Barnett, 1998; Wæver, 1998; Monteleone, 2015; Kucera, 2017).

Another important consequence of a deeper integration in defence and security would be the development of a European security culture and, more importantly, a strategic culture.

The concept of security culture is critical in the Constructivist idea because it represents the sum of all 'those enduring and widely shared beliefs, traditions, attitudes, and symbols that inform the ways in which a state's/society's interests and values with respect to security, stability and peace are perceived, articulated and advanced by political actors and elites' (Krause, 1999: 14). In other words, these norms and beliefs, rooted in the historical experience of a country, determine the security posture of said country, and are a drive for actors to prefer some security instruments rather than others (Howorth, 2002). Security cultures, moreover, are the bases for strategic cultures. The concept of strategic culture has been topic of debate for decades among scholars, but in the 1990s strategic culture was defined by the 'third generation' (Monteleone, 2015) of scholars studying it as an 'integrated 'system of symbols' [...] which acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the

role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious' (Johnston, 1995: 46). As pointed out by Monteleone (2015) the three elements of strategic culture are deeply linked to ideas and beliefs: how a community perceives war (either inevitable or an aberration), the adversary and the relative threat (zero-sum or variable sum), and the stance of the community on the use of force all provide information on what a country's strategic culture is (Monteleone, 2015: 87). While the strategic culture of a state is shaped by its historical experience and disposition towards the use of force, the question becomes more complicated when considering the strategic culture (or lack thereof) of the European Union. The concept of shared European strategic culture has become institutionalised in 2003, when the first European Security Strategy (ESS) was launched. It is the ESS itself that makes explicit the 'need to develop a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid, and when necessary, robust intervention' (European Council, 2003: 39). In this context, strategic culture represents a 'kind of common mindset' (Meyer, 2005). In 2009, moreover, the Treaty of Lisbon, beside renaming the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) in Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), formally endorsed the extension of the so-called Petersberg tasks, adding the aim of political and military solidarity among the Member States. In 2016, a new strategy was released, the EU Global Strategy, which gave new momentum to the development of CSDP and determined the shift of the EU from a 'civilian' to a 'global' power approach (European Council, 2016).

Some authors, adopting a realist approach, claim that strategic cultures across Europe are still largely different (Rynning, 2003; Lindley-French, 2002), but Constructivist approaches claim that this diversity does not impede defence cooperation (Meyer, 2006) and indeed highlight some dynamics which are pointing towards a convergence in a European strategic culture (Meyer, 2005; Monteleone, 2015), process in which the CSDP is fundamental (Rieker, 2006, Meyer, 2005). The evolution of CSDP is seen by Constructivist scholars as the

outcome of the social interactions among agents in the EU context and their attempts to reconcile and reduce the differences (Meyer and Strickmann, 2011). Moreover, a number of studies have underlined how the fostering of a European strategic culture passes through insitutional and elite socialisation and joint learning (Cornish and Edwards, 2005). Finally, Meyer (2006) points out that factors of ideational convergence are shared experience from joint mission, elite socialisation in common institutions, similar threat assessments, societal learning from crises and a demand for ‘out-of-area’ operations (Meyer, 2006: 6).

Furthermore, as identity and values are central to the concept of strategic culture, a recurring theme in the constructivist literature is the view of the European Union as a ‘normative, civilian power’, first introduced by Duchene in 1972 (Orbie, 2006). In the same way, Manners underline the character of the EU as a ‘post-national normative actor in foreign policy’ (Manners, 2008: 45). This focus on ideational factors leads to consider the EU as an ethical actor on the global arena, committed to export and expand those values of which it is the bearer, and for which is legitimised both within and without the borders, view that is challenged by several critics, on the empirical bases of the reality of EU actions (Hyde-Price, 2008).

However, as the latest developments in the international arena have widely demonstrated, being a civilian, soft power is not enough. For this reason, the EU has equipped itself with military means which allow it to pursue its global missions. In fact that the EU has shifted from a ‘civilian power’ approach towards a ‘global power’ one, ideological development fostered and followed by development of military capabilities and military crisis management (European Council, 2016).

On Constructivism and military cooperation

The Constructivist focus on the role of ideas, norms and beliefs also impacts on the view of military cooperation. While Realist and Liberal approaches put the spotlight on material factors such as power and economic interests, Constructivism argues that the meaning of military cooperation is itself socially constructed and contingent upon the perceptions and beliefs of the actors of the international system. Military cooperation, in this view, is the product of how states perceive their interests and identities in relations to others: states that have identities which emphasise cooperation over competition and share common values and beliefs may be keener to cooperate militarily to achieve mutual benefits. Moreover, states may be driven to cooperate with others by the 'logic of appropriateness', which makes them perceive that military cooperation is the right thing to do according to widely shared and accepted social norms and values. Another important feature of Constructivist accounts of military cooperation is the role of institutions, which serve as forums for states and other actors to interact, socialise and internalise common norms and rules, which ultimately result in states seeing military cooperation as a legitimate and acceptable form of interaction in the international system.

Consequently, when looking at military cooperation within the European Union, it is seen as socially constructed and as a product of shared norms and identities among its Member States. The military cooperation has evolved following the evolution of identities and ideas of European States, as well as their perception of security and their global role: whereas it started as a project to maintain peace and stability within the European continent through collective action, the scope of the European Union has widened to longing for a prominent role in the global world (European Council, 2016). To achieve such an objective, a smooth and fully functioning military cooperation is essential. Another tenet of Constructivism concerns the concept of identity: a common European identity that transcends the individual nations' borders is essential to grow a sense of

solidarity among EU countries and boost military cooperation. Ultimately, the role of the insitutional framework should not be downplayed, since the EU institutions facilitate societal learning and socialisation among the states and their militaries. Through regular interaction and joint decision making, member states internalise the European identity and this process fosters a culture of coordination and cooperation, creating a reality in which military cooperation is the natural response to security challenges.

Since Constructivism emphasises the role of ideas, beliefs and identity, the role of the individuals should not be overlooked: personal relationships shape the interactions, the ideas and the beliefs of people, including those of the military personnel. While military cooperation involves formal agreements and good relations among the countries, the success of such collaborations is often in the hands of the people that live them. For this reason, an attempt to enhance military cooperation and improve collaboration among militaries from different countries should pay attention to personal relationship, which importance can be understood through some key points, such as:

a. Trust: the primary aspect of every successful relationship is trust, and military collaboration does not represent an exception. A higher level of trust among military personnel from different countries facilitates communication and sharing of information, increasing the possibility of working together successfully.

b. Cultural understanding: in the Constructivist view, cultural factors play an important role in shaping the behaviour of states, and each military has its own unique culture, traditions and ways of operating. Military cooperation forces people from different cultural backgrounds to work together, and fosters cultural awareness among military personnel, allowing them to gain insights into each other's culture which should allow to reduce misunderstanding and frictions due to cultural differences, thus enhancing cooperation and teamwork.

c. Shared identity and common goals: in the case of the European Union, the goal is not just military cooperation per se, but integration and the ability to work alongside foreign militaries as one. Getting military personnel from different countries together encompasses also the emergence of a European shared identity, which would lead to a sense of solidarity among EU Member States. Moreover, the collective identity would also lead to identify common goals and objectives, strengthening the sense of unity and commitment to success.

d. Shared beliefs about norms of behaviour: Constructivism argues that the reality is socially constructed through shared beliefs and values. The socialisation of military personnel from different countries is likely to lead to the definition of social norms and rules of behaviour that are commonly held and accepted through all the European Union, facilitating collaboration.

Nevertheless, personal connections between military personnel are essential to shape trust, enhance cultural understanding and find shared values, important elements that contribute to successful and enduring cooperation. Officer exchanges initiative create opportunities for creating new personal connections, leading to the formation of a new shared identity.

For this reason, the dissertation will now explore the case of the European Initiative for the Exchange of Young Officers (EMILYO), as an initiative which creates the opportunity to form new personal connections, leading to the redefinition of the relationship between military personnel all over the European Union.

A brief history of EMILYO

The exchange of military personnel among military academies has been part of the European militaries' modus operandi for quite some time, although this was more an addition to the individual cadet's education than a viable alternative to national training (Gell *et al.*, 2018). The adoption of the first European Security

Strategy in 2003 represented an important step for the European Union, which for the first time was acknowledging the need to operate together not only in economic matters, but also for what concerned security challenges. The Report on the Implementation of the ESS, issued in 2008, mentioned the need for a common training for officers (European Council, 2008b), and in the same year, the EU Ministers of Defence approved the launch of the European Young Officers Exchange Scheme, modelled on Erasmus, the civilian exchange scheme which had already been successful in 2008 (European Council, 2008). The project was ‘intended to strengthen the interoperability of the armed forces and promote a European security and defence culture’ (European Council, 2008a: 23). The fulfilling of this mandate was appointed to the so-called Implementation Group (IG), assisted by the European Security and Defence College (ESDC). The Implementation Group consists of representatives from each participating academy, and its components meets regularly to discuss developments and goals (Gell *et al.*, 2018). The Ministerial Declaration (European Council, 2008a) provided recommendations on three different levels: (a) European level, (b) national and institutional level, and (c) implementation level. For what concern the European level, it was necessary to compare and group the national curricula, identify the possible obstacles to mobility, develop common modules and a system of equivalence to make the exchanges easier and more appealing to both cadets and academies. Member States and their militaries were encouraged to make use of the instruments offered by the Bologna Process¹ and recognise in full the military education received abroad, beside favouring the mobility of students and teaching staff (Gell *et al.*, 2018). For what concerns the implementation level, the IG defined eight ‘Lines of

¹ The Bologna Process is the attempt of the European Union to bring more coherence to higher education systems across Europe. It established the European Higher Education Area ensuring, among other things, the mutual recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad. From *The Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area* | *European Education Area*. Available at: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/node/1522> (Accessed: 19 May 2023).

Development' (LoDs), with regards to the challenges and the necessary elaborations necessary to improve the program.

The offers of the Initiative range from a week-long common module to the international semester: cadets have the opportunity to spend from one week to several months in the hosting academy, and therefore have different experiences of the foreign institutions.

While being focused on enhancing interoperability and therefore creating capabilities, an important implication of the Initiative is the creation and fostering of a common European strategic culture, through European training and education (Mogherini, 2018). For this reason, this dissertation will explore whether the participation in the exchanges provokes or not some effects on the sense of Europeanism of the cadets.

Scientific literature on EMILYO

The wide-shared view of security and defence policy as a matter of the State implied that also military education was considered a national prerogative, in which the state's strategic culture and traditions had the precedence. For this reason, the Military Erasmus and exchange on a larger scale were not seen as beneficial for the cadets, if not even disadvantageous since the exchange students were believed to 'lose' a part of their education. The job of the Implementation Group was therefore that of making the military education more integrated and therefore convenient for both cadets and academies, and that of demonstrating benefits and potential of the mobility.

The abovementioned LoDs were in fact born to address some of the arguments against the mobility: mutual recognition, financial investments, difficulties related to language, and so forth and so on. For what concerns the practical benefits for the cadets, a research conducted by Col. Harald Gell, the head of the Implementation Group, demonstrates that Officer Cadets benefit from international exchanges (Gell, 2017). The research focuses on personal

development of Cadets analysing three different types of data: grades, metabolic data and external evaluation reports. By using different methods, the author claims that the grades comparison of mobility and non-mobility students demonstrates that the mobility increases the personal development of the individual, since the mean of the grades of those who experience a mobility is both higher than before the mobility and higher than the mean of those who did not study abroad. A similar conclusion is reached thanks to the analysis of the levels of 'mental arousal' of the students, determining that exchange students improve their capacity to manage challenges and their resilience thanks to the period abroad. Finally, the analysis of the external evaluation of the Common Modules strengthens these conclusions, stressing the boost to personal development the experience gave the students (see Gell, 2017).

Another research on the matter is carried out by Paile-Calvo, and it is focused on the instruments and factors which make the exchanges possible (Paile-Calvo, 2016). In his research, the author explores European military higher education to determine the different models and their grade of compatibility, ending with some proposal for further improving the Initiative, which is deemed as 'the most relevant level-playing field for designing the future actions in favour of the mobility of military knowledge' (Paile-Calvo, 2016: 115).

Chapter summary

The previous chapters illustrate how the general scepticism towards cooperation shared by Realist-based accounts of the process of the European defence integration (Rosato, 2011) influenced the theoretical discussion on this topic and how, on the other hand, the general optimism shared by Constructivists has given new strength to the debate, shedding some light on the reason why a Constructivist lens has to be applied to the study of the European integration process and the importance of ideational factors.

A major difference between Realist theories and Constructivism is in the ontology of the state: while the former endow to the state an ontological primacy in international relations, the latter sees the state as a social structure, made up of human facts and therefore constituted by both material and ideational factors, where the latter are the most important component, because of their constitutive power over the former (Wendt, 1995).

In the case of the EU Member States the friendly relationships among them, outcome of decades of integration, lead to sharing values and beliefs on several issues, including security and defence. This has two major consequences. First, the states become members of a security community, where they sense the so-called 'we-feeling' (Monteleone, 2015). Second, and consequently, the states tend to behave according to the so-called 'logic of appropriateness' (March and Olsen, 1998), pursuing not their immediate gain but the 'right thing' to do in that particular situation.

However, Realism should not be completely discarded when analysing the European Union. For instance, the concept of balancing, although not in its original conception, is still important when it comes to analyse the reason why the European Union is seeking more and more integration in the security field: notwithstanding the importance it has in the general quest for integration, it is undeniable that in order to play a prominent role on the global scenario, interoperability is essential.

Furthermore, Neoclassical Realism argues that CSDP 'is driven by power [...] but shaped and moulded by European people responding to their own desires and ambitions' (Rynning, 2011: 33), and that both systemic and domestic variables must be considered in explaining CSDP (Dyson, 2015), while Constructivism has long been criticised for its lack of attention to material factors, essential to fully grasp foreign policy transformation (Legro, 2005). At the same time, Constructivism does not limit itself to monocausal explanations of the integration process, but it adds 'theoretical value by exploring the

interaction between ideas, discourses, preferences and interests' (Meyer and Strickmann, 2011): for this reason, and following Piechowicz and Szpak's (2022) claim that since one theory is not enough to account for the whole process more theories should be combined, the dissertation will apply the theoretical framework drawn by Meyer and Strickmann, which will be illustrated in the next chapter.

Furthermore, the literature review has highlighted how the limited research on EMILYO focuses on material and practical factors, at different levels. This dissertation will instead use the program of mobility of young officers as a case study in a Constructivist framework, in order to determine the outcomes of the Initiative for what concerns the 'sense of belonging' to Europe of the participants.

Theoretical framework

In an attempt to 'update' Constructivism so it would acknowledge the role of material factors, Christoph Meyer and Eva Strickmann Constructivism incorporate insights of Neoclassical Realism (in particular, the study of the interaction between systemic pressures and domestic processes) and the reflexivity and ideological primacy of Constructivism (Meyer and Strickmann, 2011). While this attempt has been criticised because runs the 'risk of theoretical indeterminacy' (Dyson and Konstadinines, 2013), the two authors suggest Constructivist scholars to focus on the effects of creation of new material capabilities, such as the Battlegroups and co-ownership of military assets (Meyer and Strickmann, 2011: 78). Following this suggestion, this dissertation will explore the ideational effects of the project of military mobility among the European military academies.

In their 2011 paper 'Solidifying Constructivism: How Material and Ideational Factors Interact in European Defence' Meyer and Strickmann advance the

proposition of a Constructivist theoretical framework which takes into account also the material factors typical of a Neoclassical Realist view. Starting from a core assumption of Constructivism, the idea that ‘though material factors exists independently from the social world, they are given meaning only through ideas, beliefs and norms that are reproduced through social interactions’ (Adler, 1997; Wendt, 1999 cited in Meyer and Strickmann, 2011: 62), the authors attempt to ‘solidify’ Constructivism by investigating the interplay of material and ideational factors using key concepts of Neoclassical Realism, but without embracing all realists assumptions. This dissertation will draw on the insights of this proposed theoretical framework to analyse the interplay of material and ideational factors in the establishment, development and current outcomes of the European Initiative for the Exchange of Young Officers - inspired by Erasmus (EMILYO).

<i>Level</i>	<i>Material</i>		
	<i>Intra-unit</i>	<i>Unit level</i>	<i>Inter-unit</i>
Macro	Economic structure	Economic size	Economic dependence
Meso	Share of defence budget	Coercive capability	Symmetry of capabilities
Micro	Availability of particular assets	Adequacy of force structure	Functional adequacy of capabilities
	↕	↕	↕
<i>Level</i>	<i>Ideational</i>		
	<i>Inter-unit</i>	<i>Unit level</i>	<i>Intra-unit</i>
Macro	Degree of friendship	Identity	Ideological cleavages
Meso	Compatible strategic cultures	Strategic culture	Class and generational culture
Micro	Compatibility of modus operandi	Norms and ideas	Party-political and individual norms

Table 1- Ideational and Material Factors (Meyer and Strickmann, 2011: 70)

Meyer and Strickmann start by identifying ‘a number of dimensions for measuring the most important *material and ideational properties* of a given political unit’ (Meyer and Strickmann, 2011: 69), capturing those factors considered most important by realists and constructivists. These dimensions are represented in Table 1.

The three columns represent properties within the unit, at the level of the unit itself and between units, while the lines represent three levels of analysis. For their analysis of the European defence integration, the authors measure material factors across ‘continuum of economic interdependence versus isolation and military symmetry versus asymmetry’, while ideational factors are measured across the level of amity (or enmity) and normative compatibility (or incompatibility) on the strategic culture level (Meyer and Strickmann, 2011: 71). The three levels of analysis measure respectively generic properties of the unit (*Macro*), properties related directly to the use of coercive means (*Meso*) and processes related to the conduct of defence policy and the ideas and beliefs on which these are based (*Micro*).

<i>Phase 1: Cause →</i>	<i>Phase 2: Mediation →</i>	<i>Phase 3: Contestation →</i>	<i>Phase 4: Change</i>
<i>Material changes</i>	Interaction of pre-existing ideas and material structures	Social agency and interaction at national and EU levels	Ideational change
<i>Capabilities inadequate to threat</i>	Identity crisis	National or transnational social movements	Identity change
<i>Shifts in capability distribution</i>	Politicized public debate	National and European parties and institutions	Cultural change
<i>Shifts in affordability of capabilities</i>	Elite/technocratic debate	National/transnational coalitions of norm entrepreneurs	Normative change

Table 2 - From Material to Ideational Change: An Illustration (Meyer and Strickmann, 2011: 70)

The authors go on by relating the aforementioned properties to each other, in order to understand particular changes in a unit's behaviour in security and defence policy. Ideational and material factors make up different contexts which 'can significantly alter the effect that changes in the relative distribution of military capabilities or growing disagreement over the purpose and modalities of using force have on behaviour of actors' (Meyer and Strickmann, 2011: 71).

The rationale for this redefinition of Constructivism lies in the fact that European Member States have not only ideational bond, but are also deeply linked on the material level, while being at the same time often diverse in both their military capabilities and ideas on the use of force. Meyer and Strickmann argue that the combination of material and ideational context makes possible the existence of a European security community, and therefore both contexts are worth investigating (Meyer and Strickmann, 2011).

In the next chapters, this dissertation will draw on the division of factors identified in this theoretical framework to demonstrate that, notwithstanding the importance of material factors in the creation and implementation of the European Initiative for the Exchange of Young Officers, ideational factors hold a critical role in the process. Then it will proceed in an attempt to determine, through a content analysis of the evaluation made by the cadets and the analysis of the results of a short survey created by the author, whether this project has had meaningful results for what concerns the 'sense of belonging' to Europe of the participants.

Analysis

The following analysis will be conducted on two different levels. The first level of analysis will be more theoretical, and will follow the framework determined by Meyer and Strickmann (2011) of interaction between material and ideational factors. The aim of the first level of analysis will be to provide an overview of

the material and ideational factors that have interacted in the establishment and implementation of the Initiative and to claim that, notwithstanding the importance of material factors, ideas and beliefs have had and still have a critical role in the project of harmonisation of the young officers' education and the interoperability of the European Armed Forces and to demonstrate this through the case study.

The second level of the analysis, on the other hand, will focus on the effects of the mobility on the participants, determining whether the participation in the exchanges enhanced the 'sense of belonging' to the European Union of the young officers, and in which ways they benefitted from the interactions with foreign officers. This second level of analysis will be conducted through the examination of the results of a survey created by the author for this dissertation and through the content analysis of the evaluation reports of the common modules written by the participant cadets and available on the EMILYO website (emilyo.eu). This dissertation will not focus on the functioning of the mobilities, nor its practical outcomes, but it will concentrate on the factors which led to the creation of it and the results so far.

Factors analysis

To begin with the analysis of material and ideational factors, these have to be identified. Based on Constructivist literature and Paile-Calvo (2016), the author has identified and classified material and ideational factors in the following tables.

Material

Level	<i>Intra-Unit</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Inter-Unit</i>
Macro	Educational structure	"Family" of military higher education system	Existence of Joint Mission
Meso	Readiness to interoperability	Attractiveness of the Institution	Institutional curricula
Micro	Previous exchanges	Mechanisms relevant to mobility	Sharing of mechanisms relevant to mobility (ECTS system)

Table 3 - Material factors at play in the Initiative (author's own illustration)

Ideational

Level	<i>Intra-Unit</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>Inter-Unit</i>
Macro	Educational Culture	Identity	Sharing of identities
Meso	Military culture	Strategic culture	Compatibility of strategic cultures, EU strategic culture
Micro	Predisposition to exchanges	Experiences, joint socialisation	Degree of friendship

Table 4 - Ideational factors at play in the Initiative (author's own illustration)

The author identified, following Meyer and Strickmann's (2011) framework, factors within the unit (with the unit being, in this case, the country and its military), at the level of the unit and among the units. Moreover, the factors are divided in three levels of analysis: macro (generic properties of the unit), meso (properties directly related to the military higher education institution or the

military in itself) and micro (related to the particular field of exchanges and mobility).

Material factors

Material factors have to be considered in an attempt to anchor Constructivism to reality. Indeed, while claiming that better cooperation between militaries and an increased level of interoperability require the sharing of identities, ideas and beliefs, it cannot be denied that those are all the results of an attempt to coordinate and harmonise material factors such as the ones identified in the table. Modern Constructivist in fact recognise the existence and important role of material world in the reflexive construction of reality and the identity and interests of the actors (Adler, 1997). For this reason, in order to provide a thorough account of the Initiative, material factors need to be considered.

The author first considered the general educational structure of the country: following the Bologna Declaration (1999), European Member States agreed to the establishment of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), in which the structure of higher education is made of a three-cycle system, consisting of bachelor's, master's and doctoral studies. This means that the educational structure of the EU Member States follows the same direction (at least in higher education).

Different considerations should be made for what concerns the 'families' of military higher education system in the European Union. Following the study of Paile-Calvo, in fact, it appears evident that the EU Member States give different weight to academic education and vocational training in their curricula. The basic education of young officers in all the Member States is composed of both academic education (intended to obtain a degree which can be spent also outside the military) and vocational training (the part of the training specifically designed to be used in the military life), but the ways in which those two coexist are different. Paile-Calvo (2016) offers an exhausting overview of possible

classifications of the systems, with different levels of relevance for what concerns the mobility process (Paile-Calvo, 2016). Without providing a definitive classification, what is underlined is that different ‘families’ of military higher education systems exists among EU Member States, and that affects the mobility: while an exact match of the curricula is not expected nor desirable, a similarity in the balance of academic and vocational components makes the exchanges both easier and more appealing to students and academics.

Another important material factor contributing to easing the mobility is the existence of Joint Missions under the umbrella of the European Union, but also NATO or UN mandates. In the framework of CSDP, EU Member States have consolidated (also) military capabilities for peacekeeping, conflict prevention and enhancement of international security. These capabilities consist in multinational forces to be deployed outside the borders of the European Union, that have to work and act together as one. This was and still is one of the main reasons which make essential to foster the interoperability of the European militaries and the capacity of officers to work together efficiently in an international context.

Related to enhancing interoperability of forces there is, one level down, the question of the readiness to interoperability that an institution can provide to its students: given the quest for more and more interoperability among forces, the capacity of institutions of military higher education to prepare their student to act effectively in concert with foreign armed forces is an essential measure of the readiness of the institution to welcome foreign military students.

This is strictly related to the attractiveness of the institution for foreign students. This factor has been deemed as material and not ideational because of the practical, material components of it: taking a Constructivist stance and claiming that reality is socially constructed, it cannot be denied that some factors are widely recognised an intrinsic value. For this reason, the reputation of an

institution, and therefore its attractiveness to foreign audiences, determined by practical components, has been placed among material factors. The material components of this attractiveness, intended as the ‘capacity of the institution to appear as a quality institution providing education and/or training and promoting the level of excellence of its educational offer in general’ (Paile-Calvo, 2016: 86), are several: (a) the offered language trainings; (b) the accessibility of its website; (c) the number of students, although not direct indicator of excellence; (d) the scientific production and the opportunities of scientific research at the institution. The presence of several institutions in the Member States with high levels of attractiveness represented a boost for the program of mobility.

Going forward in the analysis, a critical factor in the exchanges of cadets are the respective curricula of the institutions of basic military education: in fact, while being the main cause of attractiveness, the curriculum of an institution can also be the main obstacle to exchanges (Paile-Calvo, 2016): the military and strategic culture of a country have a huge influence on the curricula of the basic military education, and Member States are often very strict on the completion of them in order to become an officer. One important difference of curricula is the different organisation of vocational and academic components: as abovementioned, the educational systems of Member State differ for the importance given to either one or the other, and this is of course reflected in the curricula of the institutions.

For what concerns the micro-level of analysis, the author identifies the participation in exchanges of the academy before the establishment of the EMILYO framework. Before 2008, in fact, especially among European states, there was already a long tradition of exchanges of young officers (Paile-Calvo, 2016). The previous participation in such exchanges would represent a further incentive for both the institution (which, with being part of the Military Erasmus

framework is given more opportunities to both send its cadets away and welcome more cadets from abroad) and the students.

Linked to this aspect are the last two material factors taken into consideration: the mechanisms relevant to mobility that an institution owns, and the sharing of those mechanisms among the various institutions participating in the exchanges. The most important of these mechanisms is the system used for crediting the academic education and the vocational training of the students: thanks to the Bologna Declaration, the European Credit and Transfer System (ECTS) has been implemented also in military higher education around European Member States, and this has made easier for institutions to 'trade' education and training.

This short analysis of material factors has been useful to underline that, although more focused on ideational factors, a Constructivist account of the European security and defence integration cannot prescind from structural factors. Before proceeding to the analysis of ideas and beliefs that lie under the establishment of the EMILYO project, it is important to consider that without the harmonisation of factors such as mechanisms for the mobility and the curricula of the institutions the exchanges would not have been possible to this extent.

Ideational factors

Adopting a Constructivist view of the Initiative, however, requires a focus on the ideas and beliefs that fostered the idea of such a framework. The importance of ideational factors in shaping the reality which characterises the Constructivist thinking can be applied also to the analysis of this project.

The analysis of the ideational factors identified in the table will now proceed. As we can see, the three level of analysis (macro, meso and micro) correspond to the core tenets of Constructivism: identity, culture and experiences. In this view, collectively held beliefs play a great role in shaping identities and culture of a group, as well as its properties and preferences, hence its behaviour (Meyer and Strickmann, 2011).

The first ideational factor encountered in the table is the educational culture of the single unit: as the counterpart of the educational structure, educational culture ‘involves beliefs and attitudes about the learning/teaching process, in particular the values, preconceptions and ideas about what must or must not be done, what is correct or desirable, what is expected or not from the learning experience’ (Buyse and Morera Bañas, 2016). The European Member States have been on a quest to harmonise their educational cultures in order to achieve a similarity which could make exchanges easier, without standardising them (Cankaya *et al.*, 2015). The same can be said to have happened in the military higher education around Europe: despite the differences in culture, history and experiences, military academies of the Members have sought to adjust their beliefs and attitudes towards learning and teaching processes in order to meet halfway with the others.

Educational culture is strictly linked to identity, core concept for Constructivism. European Member States’ identity has been thoroughly examined in studies of European integration and accounts of European defence and security. In fact, a large part of the scholarship claims that there is a high correlation between European identity and the existence of a common defence policy (Monteleone, 2015). Being part of a tightly coupled security community as Adler and Barnett (1998) describe is at the same time the cause and result of a change in the identities of the Member States. Imagining a collective existence was and still is one of the main challenges for the European Union: beside the efforts made in this field for the general public, it is essential that also the militaries feel not only a sense of belonging to their own nation, but also a sense of belonging and brotherhood with the other European militaries. Constructivism, in fact, suggests that states that feel more European will be more likely to cooperate at the EU level (Manjhi, 2019): consequently, a military that feels more European will likely be more prone to cooperate with other European militaries. One of the assumptions that led the European Commission to create and implement the Erasmus project in 1987 was that

cross-border mobility through schools can lead to a sense of community, thus making European integration and the creation of a shared identity easier (Llurda, et al., 2016; Fligstein, 2008). In the programme guide to the Erasmus+ published in 2018, it is stated that bringing Europeans together should ‘raise participants’ awareness and understanding of other cultures and countries, offering them the opportunity to build networks of international contacts, to actively participate in society and develop a sense of European citizenship and identity’ (European Commission, 2018, p. 30), and former Member of the European Parliament for Luxembourg declared that Erasmus enables students ‘to discover sometimes for the first time a citizenship founded on others’ roots, common to all Europeans’². The same idea has guided the European Council to establish the Initiative, which is explicitly ‘inspired by Erasmus’. It is important, furthermore, to highlight that Constructivism allows for several identities to coexist in an individual: the aim of the mobility is in fact to foster a European identity in the young officers, but not to erase the national identity they already possess.

Sharing identities is therefore crucial for the project of fostering a European common identity: the more features are shared, the easier will be to find common elements that can be used and exploited in the creation of a new, overarching identity. EU Members have focused on their common traits, such as values, to reshape their identity. Sharing identities, furthermore, increases the degree of friendship among countries: the higher the level of friendship, the more probable will be for them to agree to exchange students and know-how, especially in the perspective of increased cooperation. The European Union project started as a mean to redefine the amity-enmity relationship among European states after centuries of war: as a result, their identities were reshaped

² Acceptance speech for the 2004 Prince of Asturias Awards for International Cooperation, assigned to the Erasmus +Programme. Available at <https://www.fpa.es/en/princess-of-asturias-awards/laureates/2004-the-european-unions-erasmus-programme.html?texto=discurso&especifica=0>.

and the Member States started to believe that the appropriate behaviour was cooperation and integration, thus increasing the degree of friendship among them (Monteleone, 2015).

One level down, the military culture of a state is analysed. The specificity of the segment of society represented by the military causes and at the same time is caused by its culture; furthermore, studies have demonstrated that military cultures differ among states. The first element of military culture is, according to Soeters, Winslow and Weibull (2006) is the way in which the normative orientation of those who work in the military is declined: on one end of the continuum, there is the complete devotion to the institution of the military and the values it stands for, on the other, the military is 'just another job' (Moskos and Wood, 1988, cited in Soeters *et al.*, 2006: 241). European militaries are in between these two ends, more often leaning towards the institutional culture. Following Lang (1965, cited in Soeters *et al.*, 2006), Soeters *et al.* identify in hierarchy the second important feature of military culture: there are different ways to interpret hierarchies, and European states differ in the extent of 'rigidity' of their hierarchies (Soeters *et al.*, 2006). The third aspect concerns discipline: according to Arvey and Jones (1985; Shalit 1988, both cited in Soeters *et al.*, 2006), discipline is the degree of conformity to the norms, the acceptance of commands and authority, and the manner the organisation responds to disobedience through overt punishment. This aspect also differs among European states. It is clear, therefore, that different military cultures could be both an obstacle to the success of the exchanges and a further way to experience a diverse environment and therefore increase the adaptability of young officers. However, these two aspects need to be adequately balanced to guarantee a successful exchange.

At the level of the state, it is important to consider strategic culture. The importance of strategic culture for Constructivism has already been explained: beside being the 'system of symbols' which guides strategic preferences and

behaviours of states (Johnston, 1995), strategic culture has a close relationship with identity and in-group identification (Monteleone, 2015). Furthermore, many scholars argue that the national strategic culture of the Members have started a process of convergence (Meyer, 2005; Meyer and Strickmann, 2011). The strategic culture of a state influences the military, and thus it also influences the military education. In the Foreword to the booklet of the Initiative published in 2018, Federica Mogherini claims that the objective of the European defence interaction is not only to create more capability and obtain more assets, but it aims to create a common strategic culture, too. To reach this objective, she goes on, it is vital that military personnel go through a ‘truly European training and education’ (Mogherini, 2018). The creation of a European strategic culture passes through the recognition of the importance of the Union in the eyes of the Member States, but it is not required that States abandon their strategic culture, which is part of their identity. Variety and diversity are among the values of the European Union, and experiencing different strategic cultures is a good way for the young cadets to become more familiar with living and working in an international environment.

Nevertheless, a certain grade of compatibility was required in order to start exchanges. National strategic cultures were and still are quite different among Member States: for instance, France is a nuclear power, and includes the use of power in its strategy, while Germany adopts a more cautious stance on it, such as other neutral Member States. However, the creation and fostering of a common strategic culture is not impossible: joint missions, common threat perception, and elite socialisation are doing a great job in generating a common sense of solidarity and a common strategic thinking. For this reason, fostering a sense of belonging to Europe in young officers is essential: more ‘European’ officers will be more likely to act following European common interests and in accordance with a common strategic culture.

For what concerns the last row, the micro-level ideational factors, it is important to take into account whether the Member States believe the exchanges to be advantageous for their armed forces or not: a State which sees mobility as a profitable occasion to improve the military and the cooperation with other militaries will invest more in the improvement of the program, and will encourage the cadets to take part in more exchanges. This is given mainly by the experiences of the Member States in the matter of European integration, and by the occasions of joint socialisation and joint learning they have been given during their history. The degree of friendship, already addresses above, has a critical role in the relations between two countries, and therefore between their armed forces.

Actors

The interaction of material and ideational factors set the scene for the creation and the implementation of the Initiative in 2008, and have resulted in shared experiences, processes of elite socialisation and joint societal learning. However, when it comes to analyse the top-down and bottom-up processes of integration in security and defence, it is important to identify the actors at play.

At the top, we find the European Union and its institutions: given the importance of the project for security and defence, the Initiative is of interest of the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament, beside the military and civilian CSDP governance structure and the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, that both provide help for what concerns the design of the exchanges and for the promotion of Military Erasmus.

Furthermore, the implementation of the Initiative is guided by the European Security and Defence College (ESDC) which is a network college that includes a large number of European national universities, academies, colleges, think tanks and institutes identified by the Member States. This rather unique

structure gives the ESCD an important role in fostering awareness on CSDP, and therefore was the obvious choice for leading the project of the Military Erasmus: the Implementation Group of the Initiative is in fact a ‘project-focused configuration of the Executive Academic Board supported by the Secretariat at the European Defence College’ (Gell, 2016: 220). The ESCD framework allows for experts from basic officer education institutions of several branches of the armed forces of the Member States to come in contact, exchange ideas and ultimately improve the conditions for the mobility of the cadets. The work of the Implementation group can be seen as a successful example of elite socialisation: beside the periodic meetings of the IG, there have been many events and initiatives linked to the Initiative, and how to better lead the top-down process of reinforcing the ability of European armed forces to act coherently together, such as the ‘International Military Academic Forum’ (iMAF), the CSDP Olympiad and the European Military Academies Commandants’ Seminar (EMACS). All of these events have become instrumental in informing the Member States about the results and to put together suggestions and new ideas, resulting in elite socialisation and institutional-driven processes of fostering integration.

One level down, the Military Erasmus is supported by the Member States, especially in the person of the Ministry of Defence, and of the institutes that provide basic military education and training: the former takes part in the organisation and governance of the latter. Moreover, since the European military academies have adhered to the EHEA, a critical role is also played by the departments of higher education of the Members.

However, the main targets of the Initiative, Cadets and young officers, should be taken into account. In order to determine whether or not the exchanges are successful in fostering a common, European identity, it is essential to take into consideration the opinions, ideas and beliefs of the participants. The dissertation will now proceed to the analysis of the exchange experiences, first by looking

at the published evaluation produced by the student officers, and then analysing the data gathered by the author through a survey specifically designed.

Cadets' evaluation analysis

This chapter will now proceed with a brief content analysis of the evaluation of the experiences of the Common Modules produced by the students that have taken part in them. The evaluations can be found on the website of the Initiative (emilyo.eu).

The author, using NVivo 12, has analysed 53 reports of various experiences in the EMILYO framework. The reports go from 2009 to 2022, with no fixed number of reports per year. Furthermore, no reports have been shared for the years 2014 and 2019.

Notwithstanding the different structures of the reports, a general structure was identified. The evaluations generally start with the name of the event, the indication of the period in which the event took part and the venue. Furthermore, the authors indicate the different countries where the participants came from. The reports then go on with the description of the activities that took place, both academic and recreational. Finally, most of the reports conclude with an overall evaluation of the experience and some comments on the value of it, in terms of socialisation and academic results.

Since the following analysis will be based on the opinions expressed by the cadets in the evaluation of the experience they took part in, some of the earlier reports have been discarded and not analysed because no subjective opinion has been expressed.

As we can see, the overall opinion of the experience is positive. The author analysed 30 reports, extrapolating only the parts which expressed opinions: of 59 references, 39 were considered by NVivo 12 to express positive sentiments. Out of the 30 evaluations, therefore, 22 presented some positive evaluation of the experience; neutral and mixed sentiment are present respectively in 9 and 6 reports (with 12 and 7 references), while only one negative reference was spotted by the system.

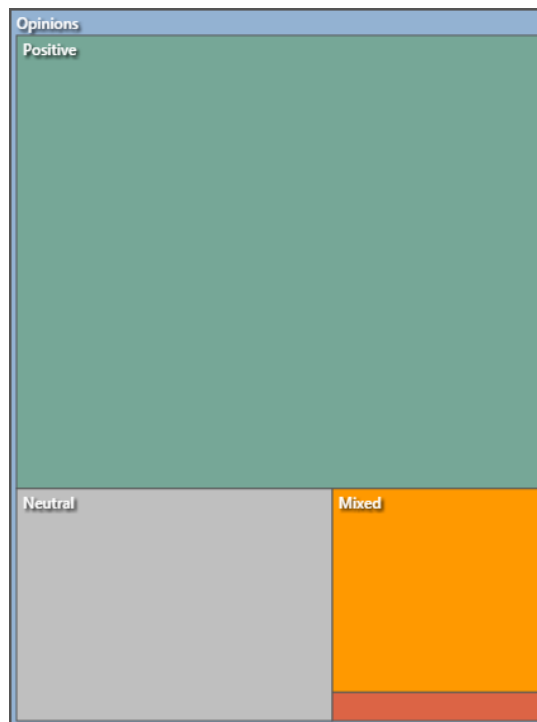


Figure 1 - Sentiment analysis of cadets' evaluation (made by the author using NVivo 12)

In the reports, cadets define their mobility as an 'eye-opener' (Evaluation #4, refer to the table in Annex I), a 'one-of-a-kind' (Evaluation #12) and a 'once in a lifetime' (Evaluation #10 and #11) experience, deeming it 'unique' (Evaluation #5, #6 and #7) and 'unforgettable' (Evaluation #5). A good number of reports also provide reflections about the effect of mobility on the 'European Spirit' and the value of European cooperation, in both the military and the academic field.

For what concerns the creation of bonds of friendship among the Cadets from different countries, words such as 'friend', 'friendship', 'bonds' and 'links' have

been used in 22 reports out of 59 analysed. The reports praise the opportunity to forge bonds with cadets from different countries, claiming that the acquaintance and contact among peers contributed to the growth of a ‘feeling of deep estimation and mutual respect’ (Evaluation #1) and establishing a sense of ‘comradeship’ (Evaluation #2).

In terms of European cooperation and boosting interoperability, the mobility period is defined by the authors of the reports as a ‘major footstep’ (Evaluation #8 and #9) and a ‘cornerstone’ (Evaluation #8 and #9) for the process of European Defence integration. It is worth mentioning that a report defines the cadets as members of ‘the wider European family’ (Evaluation #1), while another one identifies ‘European cohesion’ as a driving force during the mobility period (Evaluation #3) which reveals a more than positive sentiment towards the European Union.

Some of the reports even go further and argue that the more European militaries are able to cooperate and work together, the more they will be able to face and overcome future security challenges as a whole, rather than singularly.

Others also express positive hopes for the future of European cooperation, boosted by the multinational synthesis created during the exchanges.

Many reports praise the positive effect of the experience on their academic knowledge and their ability to cooperate in an international setting, and highly recommend the continuation and expansion of the mobilities.

Notwithstanding the good opinion that the Cadets have expressed about creating new friendship and strengthening the bonds with their foreign peers, there is few if not any mentions of the result the exchanges have had on their European sentiment.

The reports are made to evaluate and describe the experience, and as such are not requested to express the feelings and sentiments of the participants.

Survey results

In order to have a better understanding of the real sentiments of the participants, the author of this dissertation has designed and circulated an anonymous survey. The survey was circulated particularly among cadets from Italy, Poland, Lithuania and Greece, and obtained 91 complete answers. Given the number of answers, the following analysis will be descriptive and will not aim to draw statistical conclusions, which would appear too far-reaching considering the limited population considered.

The survey was circulated through an online questionnaire, which took into consideration the feelings and thoughts of the young officers about the mobility and its outcomes (positive and negative) for them. The questions were mainly structured as scales questions (on a scale from 1 to 6) with some interval and nominal questions.

Of the 91 respondents, 33 (36.3%) participated in a one-week mobility, 8 (8.8%) in a mobility that lasted from 2 to 4 weeks, 24 (26.4%) were abroad from 1 to 3 months and 26 (28.6%) took part in a longer mobility (from 3 to 6 months). The totality of the answers came from people younger than 25, with 90% (82 answers) in the age range 22-25 and 10% (9) in the age range 18-21. Around half of the respondents were members of the Italian Armed Forces (49), while 17 people each answered from Greece and Poland (18.6% each), and 8 answers came from Lithuania. For more than 80% of the respondents (75) the Military Erasmus was the first study experience abroad, and all the mobilities were conducted in English.

The results of the survey seem to confirm the overall positive opinion that the cadets have of the mobility experience: the average evaluation of the experience (Q41) is 5.27/6, with 66 and '5', 25 '6' and no answer below '5'. When asked to assign a score to the mobility in terms of fostering their European sentiment (Q42), the average score assigned was 4.45/6 which remains a quite high score. As shown by the graph below, no respondent has given a score lower than 3, and the majority has assigned 4 to the ability of the experience to foster their European sentiment.

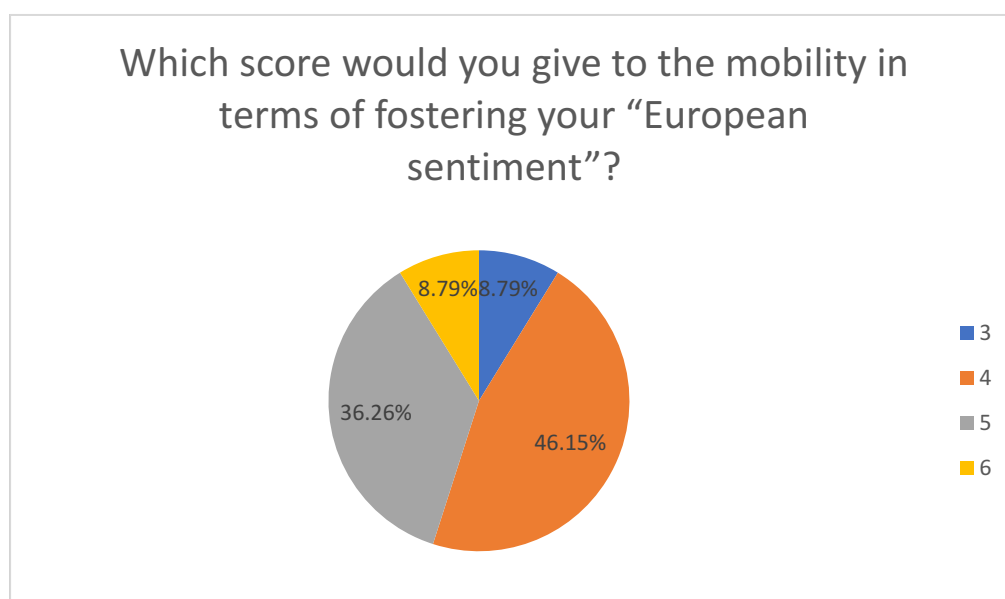


Figure 2 - Q42: Which score would you give to the mobility in terms of fostering your “European sentiment”? (Created by the author)

When asked about their identification in the near future (Q43), 75 respondents (82%) identified themselves first with their own nationality, and then with being European, while for the remaining 18% (16 answers) the opposite was true. Overall, the respondents feel part of the European Union, with 18% fully agreeing with the sentence ‘I feel part of the European Union’ (Q11), 27% agreeing to a lesser extent (5/6), 45% slightly agreeing and less than 10% slightly disagreeing, and the average level of ‘attachment’ to the European

Union turned out to be 4.37/6. However, when asked to evaluate how much they feel proud of being European (Q44), 36% of the cadets gave a 6 out of 6, while 4/6 and 5/6 got each slightly more than 27%. However, 8 people gave 2/6, which means that almost 10% of the respondents do not feel proud of being European. When asked whether they are proud or not of their own country's membership to the European Union (Q15), although the results remain overall positive, the average drops from 4.82/6 of personal pride to 4.45/6. Moreover, 19% agree completely with the sentence 'I often think of myself as a citizen of Europe' (Q46), while 63% agree only in part (16 answered 4 and 41 answered 5), and only 19% slightly disagree (3); this is reflected also by Q18 'Before my mobility, I did not feel a European citizen', to which slightly more than 80% disagreed to a certain degree. Interestingly, the 8 cadets who fully agreed with the sentence all answered 5 when asked whether their ideas have changed after the mobility (Q19), while the 8 participants who slightly agreed with Q18, all fully agreed with Q19. Finally, 79% of the respondents affirm that mobility somehow increased their curiosity about the European Union (Q20).

For what concerns being in contact with other cultures, all the respondents acknowledge the benefits brought by the encounter with foreigners, although 9% declare they are not interested in other cultures or languages. The relationship with fellow Europeans, while being overall positive, does not appear to be that strong: when asked to place on a scale from 1 to 6, where 1 is 'not at all' and 6 is 'very much' their trust in other Europeans (Q47), the average answer is below 4 (3.8/6). As shown from the chart below, the most common answer to Q47 was 4/6, with no totally negative answer (1/6) nor totally positive answer (6/6).

On a scale from 1 to 6, where 1 is "not at all" and 6 is "very much", how much would you say you trust other Europeans?

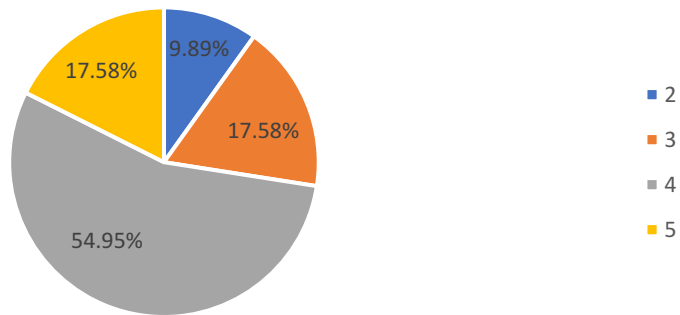


Figure 4 - Q47: On a scale from 1 to 6, where 1 is "not at all" and 6 is "very much", how much would you say you trust other Europeans? (Created by the author)

Slightly more positive is the perception of the respondents about how much they have in common with other Europeans (Q48), with an average score of 3.9/6. However, also in this instance there were no absolute answers.

On a scale from 1 to 6, where 1 is "nothing in common" and 6 is "everything in common", how many things do you feel you have in common with other Europeans?

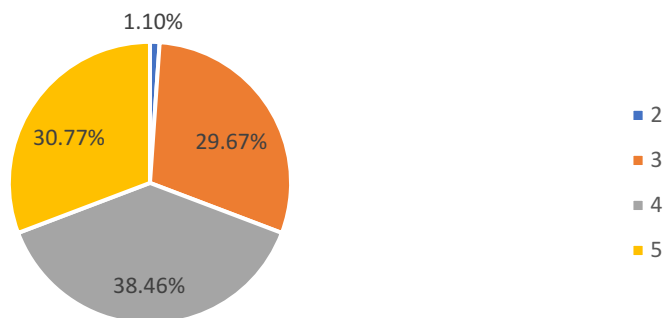


Figure 3 - Q48: On a scale from 1 to 6, where 1 is "nothing in common" and 6 is "everything in common", how many things do you feel you have in common with other Europeans? (Created by the author)

The outcomes of the experience for the European sentiment and sense of belonging appear to be positive: 58 respondents out of 91 admit that the mobility experience was somehow valuable in terms of fostering their European sentiment, while only 16 claim that the mobility gave them few or no motive to feel more European (Q23). However, almost 82% recognise they now have more awareness of security challenges which impact the EU, but not their country specifically, and 26% strongly agree with the sentence 'I consider fighting everywhere in Europe as fighting for my home', with another 26% that only agrees (5/6). However, there is still an aggregate of 47% that slightly disagrees. Furthermore, the results of the survey indicate that already before the mobility, more than 50% of the surveyed somehow considered fighting for another European country as fighting for their own (Q26).

Last but not least, the survey aimed to indicate the effects of mobility on the skills of the cadets and on their academic records. More than 90% of the respondents claimed that mobility did not have a negative impact on their academic record, and the majority of them affirm that their skills have improved. In particular, the exchanges had positive effects on the ability of the cadets to work in an international team (Q30) and in a different language (Q32). Cadets' adaptability also benefited from the experience: more than 80% of survey respondents said that mobility improved their ability to adapt to different environments (Q33), different training (Q34) and education (Q35) systems. Moreover, the internationality of the groups allowed them to improve their capacity of coordinating with other militaries (Q36) and to get to know better foreign militaries' hierarchies (Q37), both important steps towards better integration. When asked to evaluate on a scale from 1 to 6 how much the Military Erasmus has improved their military and academic skills, the average answer was 4.91/6 for the former and 4.15/6 for the latter. The chart below shows the breaking down of the score assigned by the cadets for Q39 (Academic skills) and Q40 (Military skills).

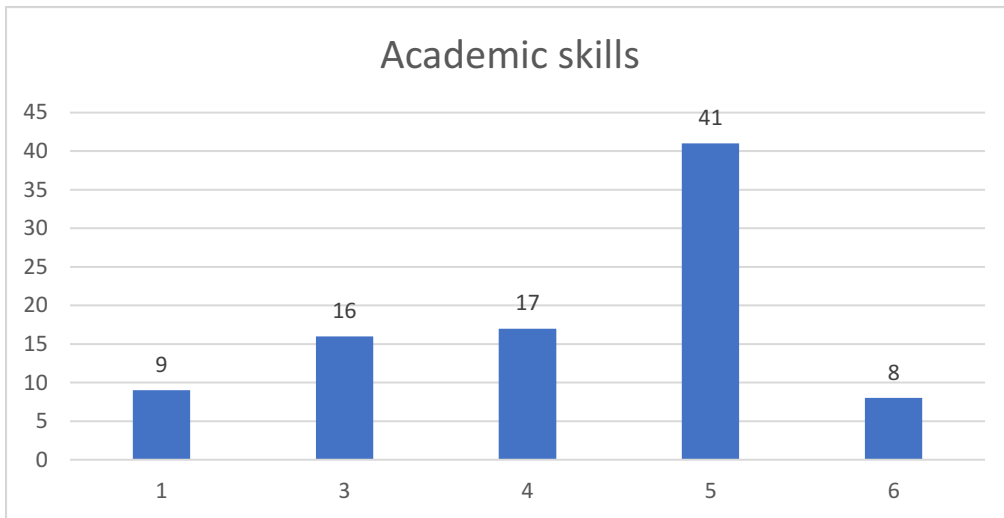


Figure 6 - How much do you think the mobility improved your academic skills? (Created by the author)

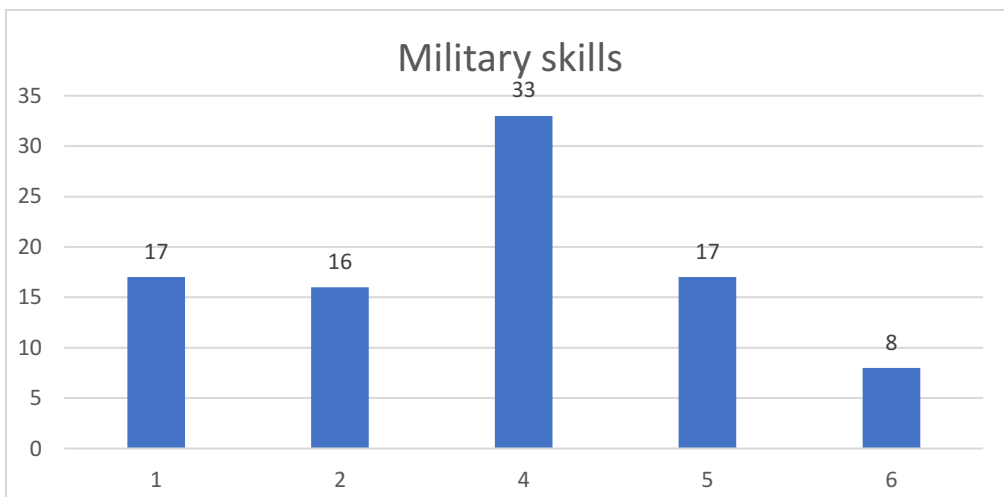


Figure 5 - How much do you think the mobility improved your military skills? (Created by the author)

Discussion of results

Following Meyer and Strickmann (2011) framework, it is necessary to relate material and ideational properties in order to understand the changes that have taken place in the establishment of the Initiative.

<i>Phase 1:</i>	<i>Phase 2:</i>	<i>Phase 3:</i>	<i>Phase 4:</i>
<i>Cause --></i>	<i>Mediation --></i>	<i>Contestation--></i>	<i>Change</i>
<i>Material changes</i>	Interaction of pre-existing educational cultures and structures	National Armed Forces and Military Academies	Ideational change
<i>Need for a more integrated identity</i>	Joint experiences and socialisation and previous exchanges	National and European military personnel	Identity change
<i>Call for a common strategic culture</i>	Sharing of values and beliefs	European Armed Forces	Cultural change
<i>Need for more integrated Armed Forces and call for interoperability</i>	Predisposition to exchanges and sharing of relevant mechanisms	National Armed Forces and Defence ministries	Normative change

Table 5 - Interaction of material and ideational factors (author's own illustration)

The breaking down of material and ideational factors, together with the overview of the actors involved in the framework of the European Initiative for exchange of young cadets suggest that:

- a. When material changes take place, pre-existing ideas and material structures interact, becoming interconnected and forcing interactions among actors that did not interact before, leading to an ideational change. In the case of European defence integration, the evolution of the European defence and security field has constantly provoked material changes which forced previous material structures (such as the national Armed Forces of each Member, or the Ministries of Defence), which ran on pre-existent ideologies to interact with foreign structures and to respond to a supranational entity, ultimately leading to

an ideational change, with the acceptance of the role of the European Union. A similar process is encountered in the analysis of EMILYO, when the educational structures and cultures of the different Member States had to meet to find a common ground and finally lead to an ideational change in the eyes of both the national Armed Forces and the military academies of the Member States.

b. The need for a more integrated identity characterises the efforts of the European Union, and therefore also the militaries are affected. In the case of EMILYO and other military mobility initiatives, the joint experiences and the socialisation of the military personnel become important for a redefinition of both their personal identities and the collective identity of the Armed Force.

c. Since a strategic culture is defined as the set of ideas and beliefs which guides a state in its use of the force, the call for a common strategic culture must be answered through the sharing of values and beliefs among all the Member States' Armed Forces. The pooling and sharing of resources needed to reach an higher level of cooperation implies the readjustment of national preferences and ambitions.

d. To answer the call for interoperability, on the other hand, a normative change is needed: the national Armed Forces and the Ministries of Defence have to create a normative environment that not only allows, but facilitates military capabilities pooling and sharing among Member States, adjusting their policies to the preferences of the European Union.

Therefore, it can be argued that:

a. Change, although rooted in a material, measurable world, happens when the reality is modified by ideas, beliefs and experiences;

b. Material and ideational factors have to be considered together when examining reality: some of the material factors identified cannot prescind from some ideational bases (e.g. the readiness to interoperability, the attractiveness

of the institution and the existence of joint missions), and vice versa (e.g. military and strategic culture);

c. The role of institution is still critical in shaping reality, since the institutions have had a constitutive role in the synthesis of ideational and material factors to establish the framework of EMILYO;

d. Concepts such as elite socialisation and joint learning are essential in the establishment and implementation of initiatives aimed at fostering a common sense of belonging, and they transform the nature of the state;

e. Being part of a security community such as the European Union does indeed foster a shared identity and create the belief that social norms imply common actions and consultations to face security challenges.

f. The more the European Union is able to foster a sense of belonging into its citizens, the more it will be legitimised, giving it, a ‘post-national security entity’, the right to use force.

These insights therefore demonstrate that a topic such as the process of European integration in the field of security, although deeply linked to the material world, cannot be examined without a focus on the ideas and beliefs which lie underneath the surface and constantly shape the reality. At the same time, it is important to take into consideration the material properties of the examined process. Therefore, it can be argued that a Constructivist point of view is necessary to understand the process of European integration in the field of security, but to the extent that the focus on ideational factors is not exclusive: a combination of Realist-based theories and theories focused on ideas and beliefs is necessary in order to understand the processes of European integration in security and to provide a holistic understanding of it. In the framework used by this dissertation, Constructivism is used together with insights coming from

Neoclassical Realism, which sees CSDP as driven by power, but guided by desires and ambitions of the European people (Rynning, 2011).

The importance of taking into consideration ideational factors, however, is further demonstrated by the case study adopted in this dissertation. While existing literature places the spotlight on the functioning and the material outcomes of the mobility, it is undeniable that ideational factors play an important role on all the levels. Assuming that human interaction is shaped by ideational factors, and human interaction in turn shapes the reality in which military cooperation happens, it appears evident how an examination of the educational structure and of the ‘family’ of higher military education of a country cannot prescind from an interest in the educational culture of said country, let alone its identity. The same can be said about the military and strategic culture of a state and the academic curricula of its military academies. Likewise, the readiness to interoperability of a military is strictly related to its military and strategic culture, and how much these are compatible with those of the other Member States. At an individual level, ideational factors are even more important, because although the most important ideational factors are widely shared and not reducible to individuals, it is the common perception and the shared identity of individuals that ultimately constructs the interests and identities of collective actors such as states. The individual experiences of joint learning and socialisation ultimately lead to modification in the perception of reality of the collective.

This is further suggested by the analysis of the cadets’ opinion which provides some interesting insights.

First of all, the experience of mobility contributes to the development of identity of the individuals, which from national only starts to encompass also the European dimension. According to Constructivism, this change at the level of

the single unit will eventually be translated up, into a change of identity for the whole military.

Since Constructivism claims that reality is socially constructed, the results of the analysis demonstrate that the EMILYO initiative is succeeding in redefining the reality of European Defence integration on a 'personnel' level. In fact, mobility initiatives not only foster interoperability, but also act at a personal level: the reality of the relationship among the participants to the exchanges has encountered a transformation. The participation in the Common Modules result in the creation of new friendships and bonds that inevitably create a new reality. These newly created bonds change the ideas and beliefs of the participants, that start to see foreign cadets not only as peers, or simply people from other countries who have chosen a similar life path to them, but also as people they can relate to in the ordinary, as shown by some of the reports that mention a 'European Family' (Evaluation #1). As a result, these experiences shape new individual identities which, in turn, affect the collective identities. Sharing experiences with foreign cadets leads to the so-called *we-feeling*, typical of the security communities, where actors share an understanding of mutual trust.

The redefinition of the relationship between military personnel from different countries leads also to a redefinition of the so-called 'appropriate behaviour' towards each other: recognising the 'foreigners' as peers, and having personal relationship with them should determine a different attitude towards working alongside people from other European Member States, even if it happens only because of the pressure of perceived social norms.

However, notwithstanding the success of mobility in fostering awareness of the need of more defence cooperation and coordination, and the necessity of a defence identity and a common strategic culture, there is not much evidence that the periods of mobility drastically enhance the sense of belonging to Europe of the participants. On the contrary, some answers suggest that national identities

are still strong and the European identity struggles to affirm itself. Furthermore, although the respondents gave quite high scores to their European sentiment and how much they feel European, when it comes to material examples, such as how much they trust their colleagues from foreign countries, how much they have in common, and fighting for others, they appear less keen to define themselves European. It appears, therefore, that while they may think of themselves as European, creating a common European identity is still a long way.

Suggestions for further research

The scope and the limitations of this dissertation did not allow for an extensive and thorough study of the issues taken into consideration. While the dissertation has provided a contribution to the Constructivist literature on the European process of integration in the field of security and defence, a long way lies ahead. Further research could focus on exploring how identities in the militaries change and coexist, following the abovementioned work of Risse (2005; 2011). For what concerns the outcomes of the exchange initiative future, wider studies could aim to determine whether spending the mobility period in a Member State rather than another has different outcomes in terms of both academic and military skills and in terms of ‘sense of belonging’ to the European Union of the cadets. Furthermore, the analysis could focus on how different backgrounds lead to different outcomes in terms of feeling towards the Union. The literature on military mobility could furthermore benefit from the analysis of the ideational outcomes of other initiatives of mobility among the European Armed Forces, and of an investigation of the changes in identity after the participation in joint missions.

Conclusion

The observation of the factors which influenced the establishment and implementation of the European Initiative for the Exchange of Young Officers (EMILYO), has widely demonstrated that, while acknowledging the importance

of material factors, ideational factors have to be considered while examining reality. Realist-based theories, and also some mainstream approaches that aim to challenge the Realist view (such as Liberalism), maintain a focus on power and material capabilities of the states (or other actors, in the case of Liberalism), while Constructivism focuses on ideas, beliefs and values. For this reason, this dissertation argues that a Constructivist point of view is necessary to understand the process of European integration in the field of security and defence, but to a certain extent. This extent is defined by the dissertation as the use of a synthesis of ideational and material factors in accounting for European integration processes: alongside with the extensive literature review, the case study demonstrated how ideas and the material structure interacts in shaping the reality, and how they cannot prescind the ones from the others.

The case study demonstrated thus first by identifying the factors deemed important, both in the material and in the ideational realm. The analysis illustrated the meaning and the reason of these choices, based on the literature on the Initiative, other Constructivist studies and adopting, with some due changes, the theoretical framework drawn by Meyer and Strickmann (2011). Once the factors were identified, the dissertation proceeded by relating them and showing the strict relations of dependency between the two groups. It was demonstrated that, when a change occurs in reality, it is the results of the interaction between material and ideational structures, thus showing the non-predominance of the one on the other, and vice versa.

The ideational level has also been important in determining to what extent is the Initiative succeeding in fostering a European ‘sense of belonging’ in the participant to the exchanges. In fact, although the analysis of both cadets’ evaluation and survey results have revealed positive sentiments and an overall appreciation of the experience, neither of them has uncovered evidence of drastic effects of the mobility on the ‘sense of belonging’ to the European Union of the participants. While impacting the development of their identities, and

redefining the relationship among cadets from different countries, in fact, the Initiative does not appear to have changed much the attitude of the young officers towards the European Union and their European fellows: notwithstanding the positive answers when asked to evaluate their European sentiment, many respondents are still reticent when asked to trust other militaries and fight for other people. It can be therefore inferred that the Initiative is somehow fostering a European 'sense of belonging', but that is not the main (ideational) outcome of the experience for the participants.

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Annex I: Referred Cadets' evaluations with links

Reference #	File Name	Link
Evaluation #1	2021 AT TMA CMO_PSO_A by HMACSO	http://www.emilyo.eu/sites/default/files/Gell%20Exchange%20experience/2021%2012%20AT%20TMA%20CMO_PSO_A%20by%20HMACSO.pdf
Evaluation #2	Czech Republic visit of Austrian Cadets	http://www.emilyo.eu/sites/default/files/Gell%20Exchange%20experience/2011%20Czech%20Republic%20visit%20of%20Austrian%20Cadets.pdf
Evaluation #3	2021 11 AT TMA CSDP by TMA CADETS	http://www.emilyo.eu/sites/default/files/Gell%20Exchange%20experience/2021%2011%20AT%20TMA%20CSDP%20by%20TMA%20CADETS.pdf
Evaluation #4	2011 Austria CSDP Module by Belgian Cadets	http://www.emilyo.eu/sites/default/files/Gell%20Exchange%20experience/2011%20Austria%20CSDP%20Module%20by%20Belgian%20Cadet.pdf
Evaluation #5	2021 03 GR HAFA CM CSDP by HMACSO Cadets	http://www.emilyo.eu/sites/default/files/Gell%20Exchange%20experience/2021%2003%20GR%20HAFA%20CM%20CSDP%20by%20HMACSO%20Cadets.pdf
Evaluation #6	2021 05 IT SAMS Bioterrorism by HMACSO Cadets	http://www.emilyo.eu/sites/default/files/Gell%20Exchange%20experience/2021%2005%20IT%20SAMS%20Bioterrorism%20by%20HMACSO%20Cadets.pdf

Evaluation #7	2021 AT TMA CSDP by HMASCO	http://www.emilyo.eu/sites/default/files/Gell%20Exchange%20experience/2021%2011%20AT%20TMA%20CSDP%20by%20HMASCO.pdf
Evaluation #8	2016 Austria CSDP Module by Austrian Cadet	http://www.emilyo.eu/sites/default/files/Gell%20Exchange%20experience/2016%20Austria%20CSDP%20Module%20by%20Austrian%20Cadet.pdf
Evaluation #9	2017 Austria CSDP Module by Romanian Cadet	http://www.emilyo.eu/sites/default/files/Gell%20Exchange%20experience/2017%20Austria%20CSDP%20Module%20by%20Romanian%20Cadet.pdf
Evaluation #10	2016 Greece CSDP Module by Greek Student	http://www.emilyo.eu/sites/default/files/Gell%20Exchange%20experience/2016%20Greece%20CSDP%20Module%20by%20Greek%20Student.pdf
Evaluation #11	2020 02 GR HMASCO CM Biosafety	http://www.emilyo.eu/sites/default/files/Gell%20Exchange%20experience/2020%2002%20GR%20HMASCO%20CM%20Biosafety.pdf
Evaluation #12	2022 03 04 GR HMASCSO CM Biosafety by GR Cadet	http://www.emilyo.eu/sites/default/files/Gell%20Exchange%20experience/2022%2003%2008_04%2001%20IT%20SAMS%20CM%20LOAC%20by%20HMASCSO%20Cadets.pdf

Annex II: Survey questions and link to results

Q1: Age range

Q2: Nationality

Q6: Duration of the mobility

Q8: Was the mobility in English?

Q9: Was it your first mobility?

Q43: In the near future do you see yourself as...

Q44: On a scale from 1 to 6, where 1 is "not at all" and 6 is "very much", are you proud of being European?

Q45: On a scale from 1 to 6, where 1 is "not at all" and 6 is "very much", how attached do you feel to Europe?

Q47: On a scale from 1 to 6, where 1 is "not at all" and 6 is "very much", how much would you say you trust other Europeans?

Q48: On a scale from 1 to 6, where 1 is "nothing in common" and 6 is "everything in common", how many things do you feel you have in common with other Europeans?

Q11: I feel a part of the European Union

Q13: It does not make a difference for me whether my country is part of the European Union or not

Q14: My country has not much saying in the European Union

Q15: I am proud that my country is a EU member state

Q46: I often think of myself as a citizen of Europe

Q16: I feel that being in contact with people of different countries and cultures benefits me

Q17: I do not care about other cultures or languages

Q18: Before my mobility, I did not feel a European citizen

Q19: My ideas about the European Union have changed after my mobility

Q20: The mobility increased my curiosity about the European Union

Q21: The mobility did not give me any sort of European or international sentiment

Q22: After the mobility, I have more awareness of security challenges all around Europe, not only the ones which impact my country directly

Q23: The experience of the mobility was nice, but it was not valuable in terms of European sentiment

Q25: I consider fighting everywhere in Europe as fighting for my home

Q26: Before the mobility, I did not consider fighting for another European country as fighting for my own country

Q49: After my mobility, my feelings towards the host country changed positively

Q27: The mobility had a negative impact on my academic record

Q30: Ability to work in an international team

Q31: Ability to manage your time

Q32: Ability to work and cooperate in a different language

Q33: Adaptation to different environments

Q34: Adaptation to different training systems

Q35: Adaptation to different educational systems

Q36: Capacity to coordinate with other militaries

Q37: Knowledge of foreign militaries' hierarchies

Q39: Academic skills

Q40: Military skills

Q41: Overall, what is your evaluation of your mobility experience?

Q42: Which score would you give to the mobility in terms of fostering your “European sentiment”?

Survey results can be found at this address: [Study on Europeanisation of military July 5, 2023 11.27.xlsx](#)