Towards a 'more united Union' in security and defence: The case of EMILYO

Abstract

The topic of security and defence integration has sparked a great deal of debate among scholars, and the literature has yet to produce a theory that can account for the variety of elements at work. This research project aims to shed some theoretical light on the still unclear process of EU integration in security and defence, arguing that, notwithstanding the importance of material factors, the role of ideas and widely held beliefs cannot be overlooked. To support this claim, the dissertation will use the programme of mobility for Cadets, the European Initiative for the Exchange of Young Officers (EMILYO) as a case study. First, by applying a theoretical framework designed by Meyer and Strickmann (2011) which combines insights from the Realist tradition (specifically Neoclassical Realist insights) and the focus on ideational factors typical of Constructivism, to demonstrate the importance of a coherent synthesis of theories to incorporate both material and ideational factors. Then, starting from the assumption that further integration can be reached only by fostering a European 'sense of belonging' among the citizens, and thus military personnel, the dissertation explores the outcomes of the experience for the Cadets on an ideational level, registering their opinions and feelings and the results of the mobility period in fostering their 'sense of belonging' to the European Union, thus further advocating for the significance of ideational factors. This second analysis is conducted through the examination of two sources: the evaluations of the mobility period written by the participant in the experience and a short survey designed by the author. The case study, while further emphasising the importance of considering both material and ideational factors and revealing positive sentiments towards the experience, does not uncover evidence of drastic effects of the mobility period on the 'sense of belonging' to the European Union of the participants.