

# Europe: Cultures of Defence and the Defence of Cultures

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## Abstract

This article explores the cultural dimensions of European security policies. It looks at three main questions. The first relates to the impact of various European cultures on the emergence or not of a European culture of defence. The second, explores how cultural change in the European defence sector can impact EU's external action as a whole. Third, the article outlines actions and policy measures that would contribute both to the faster development of European cultures of defence while contributing to the defence of cultures worldwide. Investments will be required in at least two areas for defence sectors: life-long practice-oriented interdisciplinary intercultural learning for security and defence staff, and enhanced creative and artistic partnerships with cultural professionals, in Europe and beyond. Strategic creativity has become as important as creative strategies.

## Resumo

**Europa: Culturas de Defesa e a Defesa de Culturas**

*O artigo explora as dimensões culturais das políticas de segurança europeias à luz de três questões. A primeira relaciona-se com o impacto de várias culturas europeias sobre a possibilidade ou não de emergência de uma cultura de defesa europeia. A segunda explora como é que alterações culturais no setor da defesa europeia podem ter impacto sobre a ação externa da União Europeia como um todo. A terceira sugere ações e medidas políticas, que possam contribuir para um desenvolvimento mais célere de culturas de defesa europeias, ao mesmo tempo que contribuem para uma cultura de defesa mundial. Dois requisitos serão necessários: uma prática de aprendizagem interdisciplinar e intercultural para profissionais que trabalhem nos setores da segurança e defesa e o incentivo parcerias com parceiros no domínio da cultura, na Europa e para além desta.*

## Introduction

Recent progress in Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) seems to show the EU defence agenda is growing (at least rhetorically<sup>1</sup>), in tune with EU opinion polls that have regularly confirmed the appetite of EU citizens for a more 'Europeanised' approach to security and defence (European Commission, 2017a)<sup>2</sup>. The 2017 Reflection Paper on the future of European Defence speaks of convergence and alignment of strategic cultures through training, joint exercises and joint military interventions (European Commission, 2017b). This vision has been emphasized by French President Macron and intensely commented by security and defence experts<sup>3</sup>.

However, in contrast with the optimistic PESCO narrative (partly designed to counterbalance the negative impact of the 'Brexit' referendum) and perhaps paradoxically, European strategic convergence and internal cohesion is in halt: European leaders' inability to deal with migration shocks reveals a crisis in EU governance. Controversial and slow responses to the financial and bank crisis have affected cohesion amongst Europeans (Janning, 2017). An EU existential crisis narrative has emerged, fed by 'eurosceptic', 'EU sceptic' and other so-called 'populist' political forces<sup>4</sup>.

This article departs from the assumption that, beyond efforts deployed within officers education mobility initiatives (such as EMilYO inspired by ERASMUS), this perceived EU existential crisis also has cultural (other would say normative) origins and looks at its roots and implications in the security and defence sector.

Defence cooperation in Europe develops in a variety of formats inside or outside EU institutional frameworks. Internal disagreements (often linked to cultural differences not least between Germany, France and the UK) towards European futures have often slowed down defence integration.

This article explores the cultural dimensions of European security policies and seeks to answer the following question: is there a conducive environment in 2018 for the emergence of a European culture of defence, and what would be the role of culture in it?

Let's first clarify the terms used here. In the case of European policies (and in this article), culture means two things: human worldviews and habits as well as various

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1 See Maulny (2017).

2 Key findings include: for almost eight in ten respondents, the term security brings to mind something positive (78%); nearly one in five considers security as negative (19%). Almost two thirds (65%) are in favour of a common foreign policy of the 28 Member States. Three quarters of respondents are in favour of a common defence and security policy among EU Member States (75%). More than half of all respondents (55%) are in favour of the creation of an EU army.

3 See Whitney (2018).

4 See Brack and Costa (eds.) (2012); Brack and Startin (2015) and Bertoincini and Koenig (2014).

artistic expressions<sup>5</sup>. Culture – a complementary competence of the EU<sup>6</sup> – is back on the EU agenda: the 2017 Goteborg declaration aims at strengthening European identity through culture and education (European Commission, 2017c). The EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy refers to culture seventeen times<sup>7</sup> and the 2017 Council conclusions on international cultural relations encourage the cultural dimensions of external action (Council of the European Union, 2017). Initiative 4 of the European Year for Cultural also included the transformation of military heritage (European Commission, 2018).

By ‘European culture of Defence’, we refer here to the idea of shared sets of norms, beliefs and practices about foreign, military and security policies in Europe. In that sense, a European culture of Defence is broader than a ‘European Defence culture’: it involves and interacts with groups and communities that are not part of the professional security system. It is close to the notion of ‘security culture’ or ‘strategic culture’ but does not entirely overlap with them because it has a stronger societal dimension<sup>8</sup>. It is much broader than the notion of a European Industrial defence identity.

Defence is cultural in many ways: by interpreting, anticipating and addressing security threats, it is the expression of a group’s worldview and values. The Defence sector interacts with other EU culture-related policies. In that sense, Defense has cultural dimensions. When Defence is combined with development cooperation to train, equip, build military capacities or assist in Security Sector Reform, what is often at stake is a cultural (or mentality) change.

Military diplomacy combined with external and strategic communications (audio-visual in particular) inherently carry culturally-loaded messages both in their style and content (European External Action Service, 2013; Piras, 2018). They shape and are shaped by perceptions. In other words, when Defence policies interact with a range of other policies (research and education, environment, cultural heritage, and of course cultural policies and other forms of artistic expressions), their cultural dimensions are significant and should be considered seriously.

Defence is also a cultural expression in itself, expressing what a society is experiencing, even if it is not part of the cultural sector: military architectural heritage, uniforms’ and weapons styles, combat aircrafts design, military flags and logos,

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5 The EU is “committed to promoting a tolerant, pluralistic approach to international cultural relations” (European Commission, 2016).

6 “The Union shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore. Action by the Union shall be aimed at encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, supporting and supplementing their action (...)”. Article 167, Treaty of the European Union.

7 This includes the words ‘culture’ and ‘cultural’ (European Union, 2016).

8 See Howorth (2002) and Nunes (2010) among others, on debates about those concepts.

informal and official music but also films, series for or about soldiers, warriors, security or super heroes relate to important forms of creation and aesthetics in our societies.

Since World War II, defence cooperation in Europe has developed within a variety of formats, yet territorial defence has been largely dominated by NATO. Individual national defence cooperation of Member States with bilateral partners has been shaped by historical, political and economic ties as well as normative features. In parallel, the EU policy layer of European Defence has emerged in the 1990s and focused on external security interventions. It is steadily getting thicker, although still very much framed by NATO and transatlantic relations.

Foreign and security policies in Europe are very much marked by the encounter of various military and security cultures, influenced by national patterns and traditions. NATO prevalence means that US military culture dominates European defence systems. In wider cultural and societal terms, Europe and the US have also influenced each other to great extent<sup>9</sup>. This led Robert Cooper, the pen holder of the 2003 European security strategy to state that Europe is “a subset of the American order”<sup>10</sup>.

The emergence of ESDP/CSDP in the 1990s had already raised the question of an EU military, defence and security culture that would be distinct from a NATO and US-dominated one. Under the leadership of Donald Trump, European and US leaderships are experiencing the widening of their differences. Acute divergences appear in several external policy areas such as trade and defence. Contradictions reveal themselves in cultural attitudes and behaviours, use of social media and positioning on Western ethical references such as truth, science, cultural diversity, humanism and justice. How will this new context of US-EU relationship affect European cultures of defence?

This article looks at three main questions. The first one relates to the impact of various European cultures on the emergence or not of a European culture of Defence. Second, it explores how cultural change in the European defence sector can impact EU’s external action as a whole. Thirdly, it sketches out actions and policy measures that would contribute both to the faster development of European cultures of defence while contributing to the defence of cultures worldwide.

### **European Cultures of Defence: Engaging Societies**

For security and defence experts, acknowledging (and categorising) political, societal and cultural differences amongst national defence systems in Europe usually

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9 See Pells (1997).

10 Speech at the 2014 EUISS Annual Conference, personal note of the author. See also Wallace (2016).

comes at the end of the analysis. It is the wall against which defence integration bumps, and pauses. This is where the journey of this article actually starts: by exploring interactions between societies and Defence, beyond officers' education schemes. The literature on security and defence policy in Europe has taught us three main messages in that regard.

First, a lot of research has addressed at length the question of a European strategic culture, echoing initial attempts to foster a European security and defence culture<sup>11</sup>. Some descriptive analytical work has been done on the differences between national strategic and security cultures and on national visions of European defence. Edited volumes or seminars are often structured along supposed national belonging and expertise: the British scholar writes about the UK, Germans about Germany and so forth<sup>12</sup>. Cultural differences usually serve as independent variables explaining why there is no or limited defence convergence.

Sociological studies have also shown that various groups in a given country hold various cultures of defence. Various schools of thought and specialised networks and communities dealing with security and defence co-exist across the national boundaries of defense systems in Europe: this transnational feature of a European culture of defence (expressed among others by Irondelle's formula 'Europeanisation without the EU') is probably to be explored more deeply in the future.

Second, some attention has been paid to the process of Europeanisation within national security systems (Jacoby and Jones, 2008; Paile-Calvo, 2016). There is however still limited forward looking studies on the required change within national cultural systems vis-à-vis security and defence issues. Those questions lie at the intersection of security policy studies, cultural/anthropological studies and sociological studies on values, beliefs, socialisation and cultural expressions.

The state of the art of research on 'europeanisation' in security and defence sectors has mapped the various channels through which change happens (socialisation, download/upload, through EU regulations or not, etc.)<sup>13</sup>.

Thirdly, recent work by Malena Britz (2016) on strategic culture explored the conditions under which strategic culture can change or evolve, for instance studying the justifications of the participation in international military operations (the case of Germany in particular is interesting). Other factors are related to internal societal dynamics (for instance the presence of Kurdish populations in Germany and its impact on Germany's interventions against Daesh and in support of Kurdish

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11 See WEU Assembly document A/1816, Recommendation n°724, "Developing a security and defence culture in the ESDP", 3 June 2003; rapporteur: Mrs Katseli. Quoted by Paile-Calvo (2016).

12 See for example Santopinto and Price (eds.) (2013) and Fiott (ed.) (2015).

13 See Hoefler and Faure (2015).

fighters). A third factor to look at, but too often neglected, is the relationship between strategic culture and political culture.

These recent findings seem particularly relevant to our discussions on a European culture of defence, as they look at a wider spectrum of stakeholders and constituencies (including for instance various cultural or – previously – migrant communities as well as public opinion writ large). They also match the need to analyse cultures of defence through the interactions between European internal societal dynamics and external security and defence actions.

In this context, investing more in the cultural connections and interactions of defence systems with European societies becomes a necessity. It is the only way to grasp, anticipate and influence the evolution of various (including transnational) European cultures of Defence. Gathering such knowledge would contribute to identify the conditions under which a certain collective vision of security and defence could or should prevail in Europe and in external action. It will help us understand how mental barriers and cultural lines can move, converge, collide or clash, and how mental shifts and cultural changes may happen in the design and implementation of EU external action.

Three examples of connections between societies and defence systems can be mentioned here and could inspire future research agendas, to feed in EU external action strategic planning.

The first connection is the most well-known example: it is related to the education of officers and soldiers. The second one concerns cultural heritage policies, including the policies of memory, historical narratives as well as tangible (architectural military sites) and intangible heritage (common myths, trauma and misunderstandings)<sup>14</sup>. The third one has to do with the linkages between cultural and artistic expressions (including audiovisual, digital productions and even video games) and their interaction with security and defence systems.

### **Defence and Culture in EU External Action: Priority to Trust-building**

Developing the Defence-culture nexus nationally and in Europe will bring more coherence between domestic politics and European external action.

Domestically, it would help reconcile people's perceptions of national and European security priorities. This would provide some answers to the ongoing political volatility. On the foreign affairs side, more open, more resilient and more credible security apparatuses in the eyes of their own societies, will be better equipped to assert a well-understood European approach to collective defence and human security. The Defence-culture nexus brings answers to three main transformations in EU's external action.

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<sup>14</sup> See Bouchard (2016).

Change number one is about European societies' management of their own cultural diversification. Europe's attractiveness still seems quite powerful (despite intercultural tensions and lack of cohesion). To put it differently, European societies are facing new intercultural realities. It is the result of various dynamics: EU enlargement; freedom of circulation within the enlarged EU; globalisation of migration flows, consequences of conflicts in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa; postcolonial realities, reopening of previously closed migration routes towards Europe. In that case, external factors impact Europeans collectively even – if not evenly – and provoke change within European societies.

In addition to dealing with their own various strategic cultures, European defence sectors now also have to deal with the strategic dimensions of cultural diversity, at two levels: in the societies they are supposed to protect, and in their external action writ large (Wong, 2013). New cultural alliances will be needed by European governments as well as by European individuals, networks and corporations. Intercultural sensitivity is a new priority for the EU, internally as well as in its external action: this is implication number one.

From the above, the derived question therefore is: How can various European cultures of Defence contribute to build trust worldwide in an interculturally-aware manner? This is looked at in the third part of this article.

Cultural change number two relates to the consequences of Donald Trump's behaviour towards NATO. The so-called 'West' is entering a fragmentation phase. It is creating new opportunities and opening new spaces for European engagement in the world in politics as well as with societies at large.

The usual transatlantic love story (which was initially an American idea and an American project) is getting old. The idea of Europe as a part of the American world and the West becomes partly outdated. As Ivan Krastev (2018) recently wrote, the time when the US had European allies is over. In politics, the norms and values of "predictability and reciprocity" and on behalf of which European governments used to stand up for together with America, are not shared anymore. Old friends might not be friends any longer. This might be untrue at the level of societies where some engagement will still be required.

European governments need to defend themselves from betrayals originating from their closest ally and that have far reaching consequences beyond security and defence cooperation: on trade, political and emotional ties.

With Trump's frontal attacks against the European members of NATO and the EU, the equation and the paradigms of European security and defence policy-making have changed from the outside (one change factor identified by Europeanisation theorists). In the long run, relying on the US to keep NATO sustainable is becoming risky, and costly for each EU Member states individually. European strategic autonomy is not an option anymore, it has become an impera-

tive for Europeans as they each are losing access and credibility in the eyes of Trump's America.

If this is really a paradigm change, implications are immense. First, Europeans have to reinterpret their respective national belonging to 'the West' ... or to themselves. 'The West' has to be reinterpreted culturally and politically by revisiting the trust-building terms of European relations with the US government and with the American people. Second, it means Europeans need to find and keep allies outside the 'West'. Building trust with them will be one of the first priorities for EU external action. Reinventing trust-building is therefore implication number two, and it involves cultural relations.

Change number three has to do with the strategic relevance of cultural expressions in a digital age. Phases of peace and prosperity in human history were also phases of cultural innovation and creation. Innovation also came from military and security investments. Peace has been a founding stone of European integration after unprecedented bloodsheds. In an age of artificial intelligence and environmental fragility, immaterial value will be pursued, reinforced by irrational dispositions such as beliefs, feelings and prejudices. Fake news and the manipulation of public opinions and consumers through big data are already the latest manifestations of this trend. In an uncertain connected world, those able to generate trust and emotions will generate movements of peaceful change. Cultural expressions in their diversity are an endless source of inspiration and emulating value. Their promotion, preservation and enhancement, beyond cyber security cooperation, will become a strategic asset in an interconnected, contested and dematerialised world.

Implication number three is that European defence sectors have to invest in strategic creativity by developing peace-focused partnerships with the cultural and creative industries to protect artistic freedom and recognition. In terms of innovation, boundaries between the civilian and the military are already blurred. The same will happen between the military and the creative.

The regulation of internet or laws on robots and intelligent objects will also reflect visions of our future societies. If there is a European way of life (although it was developed with the support of the US since WWII) that is worth being defended in the future, what type of defence systems will be ready to protect the diversity of its cultural expressions?

To conclude this second part, it seems quite clear that our strategic reappraisal in 2018 points towards the need for at least three innovations in European defence policies summed up as follows: first, to build trust within and beyond the 'West'; second, enhancing intercultural approaches in external action; third, in partnership with creative and cultural professionals.

The next section delves into the concrete measures that could be adopted in that regard.



### **Defending Cultures: Creative Partnerships as a Strategic Agenda**

The contribution of EU defence policies to trust-building are already framed by the EU Global Strategy and the strategic approach to international cultural relations and could be synthesized by the motto “European cultures of Defence to defend culture”. Specific measures that would contribute to this objective revolve around 4 main themes and methods.

First, a strategic approach to the Defence and culture nexus could be developed through cross-disciplinary work between various cultural professionals and institutions (Foreign Affairs, Defence and Cultural ministries, Parliaments, development cooperation, humanitarian affairs, education, environment, health, to name but a few). It would enhance cultural awareness and connections between the security and defence sector and other organisations dealing with external cultural affairs<sup>15</sup>.

Second, the theme of heritage and memory has already been identified as a relevant and promising one. In the short term, cooperation between museums, military sites and other cultural institutions (for instance the House of European History) on heritage and memory management (particularly with digital technologies, 3D and video games) could be further enhanced<sup>16</sup>. Some more collaborative work on European defence myths, heroes and mindsets (such as the Dunkirk and Saint-Malo mindsets<sup>17</sup>) could also be envisaged.

Thirdly, the field of education and socialisation is the most advanced and its cultural potential remains to be exploited more deeply. It is commonly assumed that increased socialisation between European officers will lead to a shared strategic culture. Yet military Erasmus and joint interventions remain confined to the closed world of the defence system. Connecting more systematically security staff exchanges with civilians and cultural education professionals would contribute to accelerate the exchange and encounter of ideas, symbols and references. This would allow defence and cultural professionals to work jointly on mental maps and on the perception of interests and threats.

Finally, the three measures above (comprehensive policy-making, the cultivation of heritage and memory, and more investment in education and socialisation) will require closer cooperation between European defence systems and societies and cultural professionals. At the end of the day, mutual understanding between security and cultural professionals will benefit European societies as a whole, perhaps making armies and security systems look cool (again?) and changing the percep-

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15 This has already materialised in the past through pilot initiatives such as a TV series on police in Afghanistan (Commissar Ammanullah) or radio fiction series on piracy in Somalia.

16 See Gensburger and Lavabre (2012) and Calligaro and Foret (2012).

17 See European Commission (2017d).

tions that security professionals have of creatives. One example of this version of EU's 'comprehensive approach' could be the launch of a Defence Diplomacy Dialogue (3D) culture programme as a component of the Defence Research Preparatory Action and future European Defence Research Programme (European Defence Agency, 2017). The upcoming Horizon Europe programme could also potentially be mobilised, or a sui generis initiative on the model of STARTS (Science Technology and the Arts) programme (European Commission, 2017e).

A common culture, if there will be any, will be composed of various cultures of security and defence in, between and across Member States boundaries. There will be several models, from fusion, to co-existence and, perhaps, compositions. One can expect that the more diverse creative partnerships will be built between defence and culture, the more trust will be generated inside and outside Europe.

### **Conclusion**

Current strategic and cultural environments in Europe are closely interacting with trends in world politics. In an uncertain Western context influenced by unpredictable US leadership, European policy-makers have started to underline the relevance of a specific culture of Defence in parallel with the stronger recognition and promotion of the role of culture (both as intercultural literacy and the flourishing of cultural expressions) in European integration and external action.

Our first conclusion is that the last decades have shown some increased cultural convergence within and between European security systems. European security and defence communities and groups have more to share politically, technologically and culturally (in interventions overseas but not only) than 20 years ago. It is nonetheless still hard to imagine today the rapid emergence of a single culture of Defence of Europe. Yet, if territorial defence turns out to be the new priority for Europeans because of a serious American withdrawal from the 'old continent', a cultural shift could happen relatively quickly.

In that case, the socialisation process encouraged by military mobility and exchanges would intensify. It can certainly be reinforced in the fields of education, research, training and the cultivation of debated memories and heritage. While variety will remain a strong feature of the European defence sector, working consciously and pragmatically towards an open, dynamic and internally diverse culture of Defence is a vision that should be discussed and planned more precisely in European capitals.

Secondly, a more culturally inspired Defence policy would contribute to mutual transformations within the various areas of EU external action. For instance, some investment in military exchanges with external partners about digital creativity (in connection with cyber security), shared memories, shared heritage or cultural products and pieces of arts (linked to defence-related issues) could help deepen

relationships with them. A more elaborated and explicit strategic approach to the Defence-culture nexus (not speaking of wider security-culture nexus) still has to be developed as part of EU external action and European public diplomacy, through and in compliment of official EU policy and communication channels. One challenge is to make EU military “look cool again”; a second one is to envisage an EU soft power strategy that would encompass a Defence component in an overall EU’s image management approach.

Finally, the new EU Multi-annual Financial Framework offers new opportunities with the creation of a single instrument for external action, to be combined with the one on security with the possibility to develop synergies with cultural action. For the next seven years and beyond, the legal basis is in place to pilot and experiment fruitful combinations within an EU security and culture agenda. Ambitious socialisation and mobility initiatives will be necessary but not sufficient. Investments will be required in at least two areas for defence sectors to be in tune with the complexities of the societies and the cultures they are supposed to protect: life-long practice-oriented interdisciplinary intercultural learning for security and defence staff, and enhanced creative and artistic partnerships with cultural professionals, in Europe and beyond.

The defence sector and cultural professionals rarely speak to each other, yet their work nurtures and enables one another. More peace and security enables more culture, and more cultural expressions nurtures well-being, peaceful cooperation and secure coexistence. Technological and geopolitical transformations are putting defence and culture closer to each other: strategic creativity has become as important as creative strategies.

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