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Abstract

This project attempts to analyse the role of the autonomous projection of hard power as tool of EU strategic culture through investigation into three case studies. These case studies constitute several EU military operations including: EUFOR BiH (Operation Althea), EUFOR DRC (Operation Artemis) and a joint investigation into EUNAVFOR MED (Operation Sophia) and EUNAVFOR MED (Operation Irini). The case selection of these operations is justified through the application of strategic culture theory as well as discourse and documentary analysis of the literature surrounding each of these missions. Further documentary, discourse and empirical analyses are undertaken during the case studies, as well as contextual factors being taken into consideration, in order to come to conclusions regarding the consequences of the strategic actions taken by the EU and other allied or aligned actors in each case upon the strategic culture of the EU. The extent of the relative autonomy ODF the actions of the EU from other aligned actors is also investigated in order to make determinations about the extent to which the EU was fully strategically responsible for a given military operation and, therefore, how consequential the outcomes of a given mission are upon the strategic culture of the EU. The core actors which were identified as being the most significant to the launch, conduct and conclusion of the EU military operations under analysis were: The US, France, The UN and NATO. Each case study is roughly broken down into three major constituent parts which are as follows: to what extent does the operation exemplify the proposed status quo of the EU as a normative or diplomatic actor; what are the consequences of the conduct of the operation upon EU strategic culture; and how autonomously can the EU have been said to have acted in a given case. This is then collated in order to conclude that the EU has placed itself upon a trajectory wherein the application of autonomous hard power in order to achieve strategic objectives is a viable tool for EU strategic thinkers and that the autonomous projection of hard power from the EU is more plausible and effective than it ever has been.

List of Common Abbreviations

BiH – Bosnia and Herzegovina.

CFSP – Common Foreign and Security Policy.

CMPD – Crisis Management and Planning Directorate.

CSDP – Common Security and Defence Policy.

DDR – Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration.

DRC – Democratic Republic of the Congo.

EAG – European Air Group.

ECHO – European Commission Humanitarian Office.

EEAS – European External Action Service.

ENP – European Neighbourhood Policy.

ESDP – European Security and Defence Policy.

ESS – European Security Strategy.

EU – European Union.

EUFOR BiH – European Union Force Bosnia and Herzegovina.

EUFOR Chad/CAR – European Union Force Chad and the Central African Republic.

EUFOR DRC – European Union Force Democratic Republic of the Congo (2003).

EUFOR FYROM – European Union Force Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

EUFOR RD Congo – European Union Force Democratic Republic of the Congo (2006).

EUGS – European Union Global Strategy.

EUMC – European Union Military Committee.

EUMP – European Union Police Mission.

EUMS – European Union Military Staff.

EUNAVFOR Somalia – European Union Naval Force Somalia.

EUNAVFOR MED Irini – European Union Naval Force Mediterranean Irini.

EUNAVFOR MED Sophia – European Union Naval Force Mediterranean Sophia.

EUPOL PROXIMA – European Union Police Mission Proxima.

FAC – Foreign Affairs Council.

FYROM – Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

GNP – Gross National Product.

IEMF – Interim Emergency Multinational Force.

IFOR – Implementation Force.

KFOR – NATO's Kosovo Force.

MONUC – Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo/United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

NSS – National Security Strategy.

OHR/HR – Office of the High Representative.

PESCO – Permanent Structured Cooperation.

PSC – Political and Security Committee.

RRF – Rapid Reaction Force.

SAR – Search and Rescue.

SFOR – NATO's Stabilization Force.

TEU – Treaty on European Union.

UK – United Kingdom.

UN – United Nations.

UNSC – United Nations Security Council.

UNSCR – United Nations Security Council Resolution.

US/USA – United States of America.

WEU – Western European Union.

Introduction

The subject of an EU strategic culture, or lack thereof, has been a topic of great debate as well as many academic investigations and policy briefs for some time now. There have been those who have asserted that because there are a lack of consolidated structures within the EU which are critical to strategic operations – such as a unified military, integrated intelligence agencies or an executive branch with centralised control over foreign policy – the concept of a unified EU strategic culture is, essentially, impossible. (Hyde-Price, 2006; Matlary, 2006). Others, have argued that it is not these conditions which have stunted the development of a clear European strategic culture, rather that internal disunity over a clarity of purpose or differing conceptualisations of foreign policy objectives have prevented the EU from taking concrete steps towards a comprehensive set of strategic idioms. (Ulriksen *et al*, 2004; Özveri, 2011) Indeed, there are those who have gone so far as to identify internal coalitions or informal intra-EU networks which possess their own conceptualisations of potential strategic dogmas to be applied at the EU level. (Howorth, 2004). From there it has been contended that these coalitions have each had influential roles in shaping the strategic actions of the EU at a given point in time, thus resulting in an ever changing or Zeitgeist dependent culture of strategic decision making. (Boşilcă *et al*, 2021).

What is abundantly clear, then, is that there is no commonly understood framework from which to analyse EU strategic culture or, indeed, whether or not such a thing even exists. However, this investigation does not seek to explicitly determine the existence of an EU strategic culture or to attempt to define or label it with generalist terms such as civilian, normative or militaristic. Rather, this investigation is designed to utilise strategic culture theory as a tool in order to draw conclusions from case studies of EU military operations on the role of the projection of hard power as a constituent aspect of a potential EU strategic culture. Regardless as to whether or not one believes the EU possesses a consistent enough pattern of strategic behaviour to constitute an overarching culture, what is undeniable is that the EU has undertaken several military operations of varying scale in recent years. Furthermore, the inception, conduct and outcomes of these operations will, invariably, have consequences on the way in which European strategic decision makers approach and apply solutions to foreign policy problems. (Butler and Ratcovich, 2016).

Thus, while significant observations such as the consequences of the relative decentralisation of the offices tasked with strategic planning within the EU, or the ever fluctuating developments of Brexit, will be taken into consideration, they will not constitute much of the core analysis of this project. Alternatively, three EU military operations – EUFOR BiH, EUFOR DRC and EUNAVFOR MED

Sophia which will be analysed together with EUNAVFOR MED Irini – will be explored as case studies of EU strategic behaviour in action. It is from this perspective, and in tandem with the principles of both the first and third generations of strategic culture theory, that this analysis will draw its conclusions regarding the significance of hard power projection to EU strategic culture. (Smircich,1983; Wildavsky, 1985; Meek, 1988; Johnson, 1995; Gray, 1999).

Not only do these missions represent the longest, most recent and one of the earliest military operations undertaken by the EU, but their launch, organisation and consequences demonstrate the internal workings of the EU's strategic capabilities and thought processes. Indeed, the projection of hard power is central to the understanding of strategic culture for many, and it is perceptions of the EU as a relatively reserved or mostly normative actor which have contributed to accusations of a lack of developed or nuanced strategic culture. Thus, determining under what circumstances the EU seeks to apply military force and what the consequences of such have been is both key to understanding whether or not the EU can indeed be said to possess a strategic culture and what can be assumed of the role of hard power therein.

However, there is more to hard power projection than the quantity of troops deployed and the empirics of how they were utilised and what ends were achieved. In order to ascertain the effects of these military operations on EU strategic culture, it is important to understand the extent to which the EU bore the strategic responsibility for these missions, from start to finish. In other words, how autonomously can the EU be judged to have acted when other aligned or allied states' actions during these operations are taken into consideration? (Howorth and Keeler, 2003; Simón, 2013, 2016, 2016, 2019; Howorth, 2003, 2004, 2017; Drent *et al*, 2019). It is from this perspective that the thesis of this investigation arises: to what extent do EU military operations demonstrate a future for the autonomous projection of hard power as a core aspect of EU strategic culture?

Which EU military operations have been chosen in order to address this question have already been mentioned and the justification for their selection will be laid out in further detail in subsequent sections. These three operations will constitute the three core chapters of this analysis, with each chapter containing sub-divisions so as to further elaborate upon the specifics of each case. Given the significance of the literature which describes the EU as a normative or civilian power, (Duchêne, 1972; Manners, 2002; Dimitriadi, 2014; Guilfoyle, 2016; Palm, 2017; Little and Vaughan-Williams 2017), each chapter will contain a section dedicated to determining to what extent the operation can be described as a fully military action or whether or not there are dual approaches or normative aspects to each. Each chapter will also seek to investigate the consequences of all aspects of a given operation, from planning to execution to debrief where applicable, upon EU strategic thought, doctrines and decision making structures. (Butler and Ratcovich, 2016; Drent *et al*, 2019) Finally

the extent to which each operation can be understood to exemplify autonomous action on the part of the EU will be analysed in order to understand the consequences of the actions of other states and military actors on the conduct and outcomes of these operations. This will all be analysed in order to demonstrate that the EU appears to exhibit a relatively comprehensive, developed and nuanced system for the autonomous projection of hard power and that the latter is a relevant and increasingly applied tool in the arsenal of EU strategic culture.

Methodology, Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

In order to address the question of the extent to which EU military operations demonstrate a future for the autonomous projection of hard power as a core aspect of EU strategic culture, it is first necessary to address several concepts and preconditions.

As previously discussed in the introduction, one can break down the constituent components of this research question into further aspects and reveal ongoing, vibrant and dynamic debates surrounding each part. In order for this project to maintain its focus in terms of these debates, and avoid repeating what has already been said, it will take the approach of analysing EU military operations and their effects upon the EU's strategic decision making processes and outcomes, specifically, the consequences of the EU's strategic actions upon its strategic culture. The issue of whether or not the EU possesses a single, definable set of doctrines or axioms, which can be described as a strategic culture, is a topic of much debate in of itself. Indeed, there are divisions both outside and within strategic culture theory regarding whether or not such a concept is inherently identifiable, tangibly explicable or even a useful conceptualisation of the strategic actions of a given actor. Both of these sets of debates are extensive and could easily be the subject of an investigation of comparable size to this paper. However, this analysis maintains that not only does answering these questions fall outwith the remit and scope of this investigation, but to do so would not be necessary in order to answer the proposed research question. Through this approach, this paper aligns itself with the observations of both the first and third generations of strategic culture theory as they describe strategic culture as a concept that is ever evolving yet doing so slowly and with respect to a degree of inertia, subject to politics and polities, preparedness and administrative structures as well as systems of military command and the nature of the adversity faced. (Grey, 1981, 1986, 1999, 2003; Johnson, 1995, 1995).

The major rift between these two generations of strategic culture theory comes in the form of the disagreement over the proposed falsifiability of the first generation, and the implication of universal applicability of the doctrines of the third across multiple actors, times and contexts. (Grey, 1999). In so far as how this analysis intends to proceed, no attempt will be made to address whether or not the observations of the first generation are indeed falsifiable or not, and the actor in question – the EU – will be kept constant, in order to bypass the issue of multiple actors. In addition, the potential for any strategic culture that is exhibited by the adversaries of the EU across the case studies of this analysis, will not be taken into consideration. This is in part because this also lies outwith the remit of the investigation, but also because it has been deemed justifiable due to the status of these

adversaries as entirely non-state actors including terrorists, human traffickers and guerilla organisations. Indeed, the EU has never formally been at war with a nation state, therefore any implications of a potential strategic culture on the part of these non-state actors with which the EU has found itself in confrontation, will be limited in scope, applicability and relevance as regards any implications for an EU strategic culture which has emerged under these circumstances.

Furthermore, there is a consistent pattern across EU documentation which singles out organised crime and terrorism as targets of EU strategic military action, thus, the prevalence of these non-state actors throughout this analysis is central to understanding the contextual factors which inform the EU's strategic decision-making process and likeliness to apply hard power. (Charter of Paris, 1990; TEU, 1992; TEU, 1999; TEU, 2003; TEU, 2009). Therefore, to devote great time and effort to revealing any semblance of a unified strategic culture of these non-state actors would be largely irrelevant to the research question at hand.

The observations of both of these generations of strategic culture theory will be grounded throughout the course of the analysis within the literature of other prominent academics and experts as they relate to the topic at hand. The choice of authors and literature have been made will be discussed in further detail shortly. To return to strategic culture theory, a common aspect to both generations is that strategic culture is a highly nuanced and multifaceted abstraction which relies on many interdependent factors that are often in a constant state of flux or are inherently difficult to define, and it is for these reasons that strategic culture remains such an elusive topic despite its prominence and significance. (Grey, 1981, 1986, 1999, 2003; Johnson, 1995, 1995). The purpose of the application of strategic culture theory in this case, then, is neither to attempt to side with one generation or another, nor to attempt to make a case for a precise definition of EU strategic culture; likewise the assertion that such a notion is impossible to define or a complete abstraction is not the intention of this paper. Rather, one can clearly identify inputs in the form of crises or occurrences which the EU seeks to overcome through the application of hard power in the form of military operations, as well as outputs which take the form of the consequences of the launch, conduct and aftermath of these operations. This describes a process or method which both generations claim to exemplify a strategic culture. Further, they both show that these military operations are simultaneously based upon, or at the very least informed by, the culture of the organisation conducting the operation as well as leading to consequences for the culture in question. This demonstrates that the two exist within a feedback loop with one another. This means that the EU cannot help but devise and apply “European” solutions to its problems. In turn these resolutions both inform what EU strategic decision making looks like under a given set of circumstances as well as what it might look like in the future or across differing contexts. (Grey, 1981, 1986, 1999,

2003; Johnson, 1995, 1995).

Through this interpretation of strategic culture theory one avoids the issues of attempting to address the ramifications of a multicultural union, in the form of the EU, on the evolution of strategic culture, as well as having to make an empirically justifiable determination regarding the existence of a specific type or exemplification of an EU strategic culture. Furthermore, both first and third generation strategic culture theory concur that strategic culture can be irrational, dysfunctional or antithetical in nature to the desired goal of the actor which is attempting to apply it. (Smircich, 1983; Wildavsky, 1985; Meek, 1988; Johnson, 1995; Gray, 1999). The fact that this argument is put forward by both generations, further affords this investigation a degree of nuance when evaluating EU strategic culture from the perspective of the application of hard power, as it may be the case that the EU seeks to apply hard power as a solution to a given strategic problem when this is a highly inefficient or problematic method for achieving its objectives. Alternatively, it may also be the case that the EU seeks to avoid the application of hard power at great cost due to some kind of inherent cultural aversion towards it, despite being presented with a scenario in which military force is the conspicuous answer to the problem at hand. Thus, this investigation will be able to apply strategic culture theory to the question of the centrality of hard power as a core aspect of EU strategic culture without reiterating the long, and often complex, arguments which permeate the discussion around the existence and state of EU strategic culture.

Conspicuously absent until this point has been any mention of second generation strategic culture theory. This is due to the assertion by proponents of this doctrine that the existence of long term patterns in the strategic behaviour of actors cannot be assumed but rather investigated on a case-by-case basis. (Klein, 1988; Lock, 2010). As previously mentioned, to do this would fall outside the scope of this investigation as well as being an unnecessary distraction from the core topic of the research question which relates to the autonomous projection of hard power as a tool of EU strategic operators. Therefore, first and third generation strategic culture theory will form the core theoretical framework of this analysis in its attempt to address the question of the extent to which EU military operations demonstrate a future for the autonomous projection of hard power as a core aspect of EU strategic culture.

The next crucial aspect of the research question relates to the EU's ability to conduct hard power operations with autonomy from closely aligned or allied states. As was briefly mentioned in the introduction, the crux of the issue relates to the extent to which it is accurate to describe the EU as the actor which held the mantle of strategic responsibility for the military operations which have been identified in this paper. This, too, is an issue which has previously been identified within the

literature that seeks to analyse the manner in which the EU conducts hard power operations. The author Luis Simón has written several investigations into this issue, and in doing so he has coined the phrase “the EU-NATO conundrum”. (Simón, 2013, 2016, 2016). This thesis describes the extent to which the EU appears to rely upon NATO assets and capabilities in order to achieve its own strategic objectives, and has been identified as a useful framework from which to assess the extent of EU autonomy from NATO. Simón's observations have been subsequently expanded upon by other academics and, as a result, constitute a significant and nuanced perspective on EU military operations. (Howorth and Keeler, 2003; Howorth, 2003, 2004, 2017; Drent *et al*, 2019). In addition to this is the observation that, in the text of the 1992 TEU which calls for the creation of the CFSP, is a line which states the following: ‘...shall respect the obligations of certain Member States under the North Atlantic Treaty and be compatible with the common security and defence policy established within that framework.’ (TEU, 1992: 126). This line is either directly reiterated or reaffirmed in the 1999, 2003 and 2009 TEUs (TEU, 1999: 12; TEU, 2003: 7; TEU, 2009: 154). Therefore, much of the foundational documentation which outlines the expected manner and conduct of EU military operations is intrinsically linked with NATO and, resultantly, this relationship warrants investigation in order to make robust conclusions regarding the extent of the autonomy of a given EU military mission. Thus, this paper aligns itself with the assertions of the analyses mentioned above and maintains that the extent of the autonomy of EU strategic thinkers, and the assets at their disposal, is critical to understanding both the circumstances under which the EU seeks to act militarily, as well as the consequences of these military actions on EU strategic culture.

In order to address the concept of autonomy, an empirical analysis will be undertaken on a case-by-case basis across each of the identified EU military operations. This will help to determine which assets and significant actors are aligned with which state, to whom they report in the chain of command and, consequently, whether or not the EU can be said to accurately bear the brunt of the responsibility for a given military operation. Furthermore, a documentary analysis of the significant fundamental texts, upon which EU operations are based or which authorise or legitimise EU military action in a given context, will be undertaken, which will include the TEUs mentioned above as well as other notable documents. (The ESDP, 1999; The ESS, 2003; Thessaloniki Declaration, 2003; A New and Ambitious ENP, 2011; EUGS, 2016). In addition to this, several other texts will be employed so as to ground the empirical analysis within broader academic understandings of the military operations as well as to add both context and nuance to the conclusions below regarding the nature of these operations. The most significant analyses that will be employed in each case study are as follows: Kupferschmidt's investigation into the strategic

partnership between the EU and NATO in the case of Operation Althea; Ulriksen, Gourlay and Mace's study into the consequences of EU military action in the case of Operation Artemis; and Johansen's scrutiny of the EU's strategic capacity in the case of Operation Sophia. (Ulriksen *et al*, 2004; Kupferschmidt, 2006; Johansen, 2017).

Finally, those actors with regard to whom the EU is being described as acting autonomously, or not, must be clarified. This will also be done on a case-by-case basis and, further, this was an issue which played a significant role in the case study selection of the EU military operations which will be analysed later in this project. Based on the work of Simón and others, disentangling NATO from EU military operations seemed the obvious first step. (Howorth and Keeler, 2003; Kupferschmidt, 2006; Simón, 2013, 2016, 2016; Howorth, 2003, 2004, 2017; Drent *et al*, 2019). Furthermore, the centrality of UNSC resolutions and mandates to the inception of EU military operations and their justification, as well as the publicly declared political goals of the operations, including the mechanisms through which they come to an end, was identified at this stage. Therefore, the UN is also identified as an actor of interest in determining the extent of the autonomy of EU military operations. This is made further evident through the fact that the EU cited multilateralism as one of its core strategic objectives in the 2003 ESS, alongside identifying the UN as a key partner in this regard. (The ESS, 2003: 8-12). Two further actors with a large degree of overlap with the UN and NATO were also identified as necessary candidates for understanding how autonomous EU hard power projection can be thought of: the US and France. Both nations are key founding members of the NATO alliance as well as permanent members of the UNSC, and are consistently present throughout the literature surrounding EU military operations as states with keen interests in the conduct and consequences of many of these operations. (Homan, 2007, Knauer, 2011, János, 2015, Billon-Galland and Williams, 2019). The US in particular is an actor which realists assert will be in contention with the EU for the position of major global security provider and, even, in a balance of power with one another. (Demetriou, 2016). While these are not the only actors that will be taken into consideration – the other two members of the so-called 'EU big three' in the form of the UK and Germany will also feature a prominent role, alongside others such as Turkey and Italy – these four actors will form the core subjects of analysis in this attempt to answer the question of the extent to which EU military operations demonstrate a future for the autonomous projection of hard power as a core aspect of EU strategic culture.

It now becomes necessary to justify the selection of the case studies which will be analysed later in this paper. Fortunately, the list of EU military operations is not particularly extensive, especially when placed in context alongside the other actors of interest to this project. The EU itself, in 2018,

recognised that since 2003 it had undertaken 34 'CSDP missions and operations', of which '22 were civilian and 11 were military, and one – in Darfur – [was] mixed.' (eca.europa.eu, 2018). This simultaneously identifies a list of 11 military operations from which to select the most significant candidates for analysis as well as clearly establishing the year 2003 as a noteworthy date for EU hard power projection. Because of this, EUFOR FYROM Operation Concordia stood out as both the EU's very first military operation and one that was launched in the significant year of 2003. However, taking the other factors which have so far been discussed such as relative extent of autonomy from other meaningful actors, in this case the most significant being NATO, and the consequences of the length of a given operation as well as the number of troops and other assets on strategic culture, another operation which occurred at a very similar time and in close proximity stands out further. EUFOR BiH Operation Althea was launched approximately 18 months after Operation Concordia and with over ten times the number of troops available to the operational commanders. Furthermore, Operation Concordia lasted only nine months whereas Operation Althea continues to this day. Moreover, the geography of both operations which took place in the Balkans, an area located within Europe itself, is also of significance in understanding how the EU decides upon and prioritises amongst which localities are of the most strategic importance to it. Therefore, Althea represents a scenario with more significant consequences for EU strategic culture, a more self-evident example of the projection of hard power on the part of the EU, and an operation which has featured more prominently in the literature which seeks to analyse the ramifications of EU military operations. In addition to this, Operation Althea also has intrinsic and clear links to several of the actors of interest to this study in the form of NATO, the UN and US. This is due to fact that Althea was launched as a replacement operation for NATO's SFOR mission in BiH which, in turn, replaced the UN's IFOR mission. Thus, Operation Althea occurred at an important moment in the history of EU military operations, represents a significant test of EU strategic capabilities and culture, and also involves several other actors of interest to the research question of this investigation.

One final justification for the selection of Operation Althea as one of the case studies of this paper relates to viewing the research question from the opposite perspective. This is a prospect that was briefly mentioned in the introduction and will be discussed in further detail below, however the prevalence, in terms of both volume and relative importance, of literature which details the EU as a normative or civilian power makes approaching the research question from this standpoint somewhat unavoidable. (Duchêne, 1972; Manners, 2002; Dimitriadi, 2014; Guilfoyle, 2016; Palm, 2017; Little and Vaughan-Williams 2017). In other words, if one is to investigate the extent to which EU military operations demonstrate a future for the autonomous projection of hard power as

a core aspect of EU strategic culture, it is important to also address the extent to which these operations may also exemplify a continuation of the proposed 'normative' status quo. Therefore, the conduct of the forces which constitute the operation is of great significance to this analysis. This gives further credence to the exclusion of operation Concordia as a mission that was rapidly replaced by a civilian policing operation in the form of EUPOL Proxima. Furthermore, the significance and nuance of Althea was, resultantly, greatly enhanced as an operation which prominently featured exercises such as the removal of landmines and the search for indicted war criminals as well as capacity building and police training. It is for these reasons that Operation Althea was selected to be the first case study of this investigation.

Second only in relative significance to operation Althea, in the literature regarding EU military operations, is EUFOR DRC Operation Artemis. This is largely due to the fact that Operation Artemis is also indicative of many of the factors which this analysis seeks to investigate, which are the loci of much of the debate on EU military operations. For example, Operation Artemis was launched in June 2003, defining it as a formative occurrence during a developmental time in the evolution of EU approaches to hard power projection, akin to Concordia. Furthermore, with 1,800 military personnel deployed, Artemis stands out as a relatively extensive example of the application of military force within the context of EU military operations. (János, 2015: 125). While Artemis had fewer troops at its disposal than EUFOR RD Congo's 2,300 or EUFOR Chad/CAR's 3,700, the operational significance of Artemis is enhanced in other ways. (Fritsch, 2008: 43; eeas.europa.eu). Indeed, the importance of the timing of the launch of Artemis goes beyond the potential for analysing the consequences of the earliest EU military operations. Rather, it is often proposed in the literature on Operation Artemis that the role of US and UK involvement in Iraq played a critical role in both the manner in which the operation came about as well as the level of French involvement. (János, 2015: 125; Homan, 2007: 3; Ulriksen *et al*, 2004: 522). Therefore, any analysis of Operation Artemis will likely be indicative of the contextual factors under which the EU seeks to project hard power. Moreover, the fact that the EU has undertaken several significant military operations in the Congo and Central/Sub-Saharan African region is also of importance to understanding which locations the EU identifies as being of enhanced strategic significance. Further, Operation Artemis will be indicative of the role of France as a decisive military actor within the framework of an EU military operation and the importance of UN mandates to EU strategic culture. While these conditions are also true in the cases of EUFOR RD Congo and EUFOR Chad/CAR, these two operations lack the contextual factor of the EU's response to the 2003 invasion of Iraq which permits an environment to analyse EU strategic actions and capabilities with a diminished degree of US involvement and, therefore, a more comprehensive understanding of the EU's hard power

capacity as an autonomous actor. Although the US has been identified as an actor of interest in understanding the extent of the relative autonomy of EU military operations, it cannot feature across all the chosen case studies otherwise any conclusions in this regard will lack nuance and proper justification. According to some, at the beginning of the 21st century the EU and NATO had been moving generally in the same direction with respects to one another but not converging in terms of consensus regarding the application of force. (Hunter, 2002: 93). Nowhere is this clearer than in the case of Africa, with NATO to date only having undertaken limited engagements in Somalia and Libya when compared to the EU which has launched several large-scale operations across the Sahel and Sub-Saharan regions. Both of these areas have been identified as being of enhance strategic interest within public EU strategic documentation. (ESS, 2003; EU Sahel Factsheet, 2016; EUGS, 2016). With this in mind the apparent reliance on France, which has been discussed in great detail throughout the literature on Artemis, will be permitted a more extensive and detailed investigation. Once again the conduct of the operation itself is meaningful to both understanding how and why EU strategic thinkers seek to apply hard power as well as whether or not Artemis can be described as a completely hard power mission that was fully divorced from any potential normative aspects. Thus, the fact that Operation Artemis featured the enforcement of a weapons-free zone, the dispersal of humanitarian aid and significant cooperation with NGOs is of paramount importance to the justification for its selection as the second case study of this analysis.

Because the nature of the research question lacks emphasis concerning a specific time or context from which to analyse EU military operations and their consequences for the role of hard power projection as a tool of EU strategic culture, it was deemed necessary to take a broad approach. In terms of selecting the final case study for examination in this paper, this meant that diversifying the time-frame under analysis beyond 2003 and 2004, alongside the method of hard power projection from the EU, would greatly strengthen the conclusions of this investigation. This made several operations in particular stand out: EUNAVFOR Somalia (Operation Atalanta), EUNAVFOR MED (Operation Sophia) and EUNAVFOR MED (Operation Iriini). This is because these operations all represent the application of naval assets and power in order to achieve strategic objectives. In addition, all of them occurred much closer to the present – 2008, 2015 and 2020 respectively – than the previous two cases. The effects of this are twofold. Firstly, the application of naval power is more readily associated with the so-called 'great powers' due in part to its potential to be more expensive, logistically demanding and strategically challenging than other forms of hard power projection. Further, in order to form comprehensive conclusions relating to the willingness to apply hard power as a tool of EU strategic culture it is necessary to investigate as diverse as possible a set of methods through which the EU seeks to project hard power, including naval operations. Indeed,

understanding the significance of the EU's high seas capabilities is crucial to understanding which locations the EU is able to identify as being of strategic significance and, consequently, how it will act. Thus, the fact that the EU has undertaken several naval operations is of great significance in determining the circumstances under which the EU seeks to apply hard power as a tool of crisis resolution, or as simple power projection. Secondly, bringing the timeline of this analysis closer to the present permits for more justifiable conclusions on the state of contemporary EU strategic culture as well as being illustrative of how EU strategic culture may have changed, or not, over time. This final point has permitted this analysis to adopt the approach of attempting to determine what kind of trajectory the EU has set itself upon as regards the likelihood that it will apply hard power as a tool of strategic culture. Thus, the final case helps to justify and inform the ultimate conclusions of this investigation.

Ultimately, in terms of selecting which of the three operations to analyse, each presented their own strengths and weaknesses. Operation Irini was the most recent of the three and as it had only just come to a close at the time of writing of this project, it had by far the least coverage in the academic literature. This provided an opportunity for enhancing the originality of this analysis, however it also came at the cost of consensus about the effects of the mission upon EU hard power operations and strategic culture. On the other hand, Operation Atalanta as the first EU naval mission, offered the opportunity to investigate a potential framework approach to the application of naval power. This, however, came at a cost. Atalanta was significantly closer in time to Althea and Artemis, as well as the fact that the operation occurred within a larger context of several anti-piracy operations which were being undertaken by several states in the region. This, therefore, complicated the issue of attempting to disentangle the consequences of EU strategic actions from these other states, aligned or otherwise, operating in the Gulf of Aden. Thus, one arrives at Operation Sophia. This mission consisted of hard power components in the form of enforcing coast guard actions, proposed dual approaches in the form of capacity building in Libya, and normative aspects of supporting humanitarian NGOs in their efforts to conduct SAR missions. (Pricopi, 2020: 304). Furthermore, Operation Sophia is intrinsically linked with both Operation Atalanta and operation Irini as the framework of Sophia was based upon the launch and conduct of Atalanta and Irini acted as a contingent successor operation to Sophia. (Johansen, 2017: 517; Mantini, 2019: 2-4; Boşilcă *et al*, 2021: 230). Because of this, it was deemed justifiable to analyse Operation Irini alongside operation Sophia, particularly given much of the literature which did relate to Irini stressed the importance of its inception as being inherently linked to the perceived failings of Sophia. Furthermore, this addition would permit the re-inclusion of the aspect of originality mentioned above, all the while bringing the conduct of Irini, as an operation designed to enforce a UN mandated arms embargo,

under scrutiny. The significance of this UN mandate is further enhanced through the observation that Operation Sophia lacked any such mandate, and through reiterating the fact that the consequences of this, as well as UN involvement in a broader sense, are both key concerns of this analysis. Thus, the selection of a joint analysis of Operations Sophia and Irini as the final case study of this analysis fits the prescribed remit of analysing the projection of naval power as an aspect of hard power projection within EU strategic culture; investigating the impact – or more accurately in this case, lack of impact – of aligned or allied actors; understanding the contextual factors of time and geography to the EU's strategic decision making processes and evaluating the consequences of the conduct of military missions upon EU strategic culture.

As was briefly mentioned previously, these case studies did not occur within a vacuum. Rather, they were each informed by significant sets and subsets of academic analyses which varied in topic and approach on a case-by-case basis. It is important to justify which texts were selected, and why in order to reinforce the justification for their selection and the ease with which of the conclusions of this investigation can be understood. Therefore, this will be discussed below. Beginning with operation Althea it was deemed important to immediately introduce the concept of 'normative power Europe', as grounding each case study in an analysis which seeks to determine the extent to which it can be described as either divorced from or inherently linked to normative practices. (Duchêne, 1972; Hill, 1996; Nicolaidis and Howse, 2002; Manners, 2002). This also meant employing literature which takes the approach of investigating EU military operations from a realist perspective. (Hyde-Price, 2006; Demetriou, 2016; Billon-Galland and Williams, 2019).

Furthermore, as this topic will form a core aspect of the analyses of operations Artemis, Sophia and Irini, it was necessary to introduce literature which addresses the apparent normative aspects of these case studies. (Matlary, 2006; Homan, 2007; Dimitriadi, 2014; Guilfoyle, 2016; Little and Vaughan-Williams 2017; Megerisi, 2020; Pricopi, 2020; Boşilcă *et al*, 2021).

To return to the case of Althea, further studies which were deemed to be of significance related to empirical analyses of the EU's forces and assets there (Mace, 2004; euforbih.org, 2011; János, 2015); as were those which discussed any potential shift in attitudes or approaches as a consequence of the launch or conduct of the operation (Delcourt, 2006; Knauer, 2011; Pulko, Muherina and Pejic, 2016); and, finally, texts regarding the implications of any contextual factors such as Brexit (Billon-Galland and Williams, 2019). Moreover, as the first case study, the analysis of Althea introduced several other core texts which will be employed throughout this analysis to address concepts such as the effect of internal EU coalitions on EU strategic culture (Howorth, 2004); the EU-NATO conundrum (Kupferschmidt, 2006; Simón, 2013, 2016, 2016; Howorth, 2003, 2004,

2017; Drent *et al*, 2019); and the methodology through which the EU incorporates changes into its strategic decision making processes as a consequence of its military operations. (Palm, 2017).

The case of Operation Artemis – in addition to seeking to analyse EU autonomy, strategic culture and any potential normative underpinnings to this military exercise – required an understanding of the agreements which permitted the operation to occur as well as some history of the interactions between the EU, and more specifically France, and the theatre of operation: Africa. (Ulriksen *et al*, 2004; Homan, 2007; Özveri, 2011). This case study also features an empirical analysis of strategic assets at the EU's disposal. (startinsight.eu; János, 2015). Additionally, the significance of UN mandates to EU military operations required further elaboration at this stage, (Howorth, 2004; Homan, 2007; János, 2015) as did the concept of the framework nation approach, (Homan, 2007; Ulriksen *et al*, 2004) and the contextual effects of the conflict in Iraq. (János, 2015; Homan, 2007; Ulriksen *et al*, 2004).

Operations Sophia and Irini also introduced their own nuances in the form of the legality of action on the high seas, (eur-lex.europa.eu; Butler and Ratcovich, 2016; Bevilacqua, 2017) and the legality of operations without a UN mandate. (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Estrada-Cañamares, 2015; Ansell 2020). Furthermore, the interplay between two prominent theses which relate to the EU's strategic capacity and the manner in which the EU relied on the framework of Operation Atalanta to shape the conduct of Sophia is also explored. (Johansen, 2017; Boşilcă *et al*, 2021). Supplementary literature was also taken into consideration in order to conduct empirical analyses of operations Sophia and Irini (eunavfor.eu; Mantini, 2019). Finally, it was deemed necessary to employ literature in all three case studies to determine the consequences that the closely aligned or allied actors had upon EU strategic culture on a case-by-case basis. (Kupferschmidt, 2006; Özveri, 2011; Palm, 2017; Megerisi, 2020).

Thus, significant and relevant literature has been employed throughout the course of this project in order to address the core components which have been deemed to be necessary to answering the research question, as well as to address the nuances of each case study, as they relate to the topic at hand, and on an individual basis. With this framework in place, the analysis may now commence.

Chapter I – EUFOR BiH (Operation Althea)

1.1 - Introduction

On 2 December 2004 the EU launched its flagship military operation in BiH. While technically predated by Operation Concordia in the FYROM, this peacekeeping mission deliberately relied on NATO capabilities and within a year of launch had been replaced by EUPOL PROXIMA; thus its significance as a military operation which is indicative of EU strategic culture is greatly diminished. On the other hand, Althea endures as an EU military operation to this day and the EU has gone to great lengths in order to ensure that it, at least, appears to be a fully autonomous EU military operation. Althea came into being through the culmination of many years of agreements and talks dating back to the Berlin Plus Agreement of 1996, otherwise known as the NATO-EU Strategic Partnership. Thus, not only does Althea mark the beginning of a concerted effort on the part of the EU to achieve strategic outcomes through the application of military force, but the operation also demonstrates an intrinsic link with NATO and its capabilities, despite attempts to market it as otherwise. Indeed, the current task force in BiH consists of troops from nineteen nations, of which five – Albania, Chile, North Macedonia, Switzerland and Turkey – (euforbih.org, 2011) are non-EU member states. This, coupled with no clear set of objectives to define an end to the operation, makes it difficult to comprehensively understand the effects of the operation on EU strategic culture. However, that is exactly what this chapter intends to clarify. Firstly, the extent to which Althea may be emblematic of a shift away from a so-called 'normative power Europe' or 'civilian power' (Duchêne, 1972; Manners, 2002; Palm, 2017), towards one more accepting of the use of military power to achieve strategic objectives will be examined. These findings will then be utilised so as to comprehend the impact of operation Althea on EU strategic culture during its early stages of development as well as in the more contemporary context. Finally, the extent to which Althea relies upon and is separate from NATO's strategic culture and capabilities will be examined in order to determine the importance of the autonomous projection of hard power within EU strategic culture.

1.2 - An End to Normative Power Europe?

It has, historically, been asserted that the EU has sought to present an alternative to 'typical' or 'traditional' state behaviour in so far as it shies away from the application of coercive power in all its forms and instead seeks to undertake a different approach (Hill, 1996; Nicolaidis and Howse, 2002; Manners, 2002; Delcourt, 2006). This, however, is in contrast with the sudden uptake of policing, border force, joint civilian and military operations which the EU began to implement around 2003.

Thus, the question of whether these developments mark a shift in EU policy and, therefore, strategic culture as well as the role of Operation Althea therein appears inevitable. However, the extent of such a shift in policy and even the nature of the EU as a 'normative' or 'civilian' power remains a topic of debate in both the academic and political spheres.

Manners, a notable proponent of the ideology which seeks to define the EU as a normative power, himself acknowledges that the 1992 TEU, 1999 ESDP and declaration of the creation of an EU RRF by 2003 all denoted a “trend towards military power Europe”. (Manners, 2002: 237). Further, Corten and Dubuisson note that the American evocation of the right to self defence as justification for the invasion of Afghanistan in the wake of the 11 September attacks, met no resistance from the EU despite the the necessity to work with the UNSC upon the application of this right. Delcourt infers this to be indicative of what she describes as “a shift to a less formalistic view regarding the use of force in international relations” on the part of the EU. (Delcourt, 2006: 166). Finally, Hyde-Price asserts neorealist logic in his claim that the actions of the EU have always been indicative of a need to present a unified military force and that the attainability of such was hampered by internal consensus. (Hyde-Price, 2006). He goes on to note that agreements such as the 1999 TEU designate tangible landmarks in consensus and that, therefore, they denote progression towards an increasingly militarily oriented EU. Indeed, it is the Maastricht Treaty which calls for the creation of the CFSP, therefore defining the turn of the century as a critical moment in the nascence of EU strategic culture. (TEU, 1992: 123). There are few topics upon which these scholars agree.

However, the notion that by the early 21st century the EU was experiencing a change in course towards the feasible application of military power, is one such example of consensus.

Thus, it is evident that Operation Althea occurred at a crucial moment in the history of both EU military operations as well as at a defining juncture in the *raison d'etre* of EU strategic culture.

However, the extent to which Althea exemplifies a commitment on the part of the EU to act as an interventionist military power remains open to interpretation. EUFOR Althea took over the situation in BiH from NATO's SFOR BiH which in turn replaced the UN's IFOR, with each stage seeing a significant reduction in troop numbers. IFOR began with approximately 54,000 soldiers stationed within BiH which had been diminished to 32,000 by the start of SFOR, and further condensed to just 7,000 by the time of EUFOR BiH in 2004. Since Operation Althea began, this number has been further reduced to just 600 active personnel within the country itself. While the starting figure initially eclipses both those of EUFOR Concordia (400) and EUFOR Artemis (1,850), when compared to the previous statistics of the IFOR and SFOR missions there is an evident disconnect between the EU's willingness and ability to intervene militarily. (Mace, 2004: 481; János, 2015: 125) While it is true that significant numbers of both IFOR's and SFOR's troops were contributed

by EU member states, this only serves to demonstrate that the EU has only opted to take charge of its own assets after a significant reduction in the numbers of said assets had already taken place. Furthermore, the EU would then go on to persist with these reductions until it commanded only a fraction of the resources of NATO and the UN. This is, evidently, not indicative of an EU which seeks to act as a large, autonomous militaristic power in any serious manner, be it in the form of attempting to counterbalance American interests or even act as a first responder to serious instability in its own backyard.

Knauer, however, is quick to note that the purpose of Operation Althea was not to test the EU's crisis response capabilities but rather to test its post-crisis and stability management and, therefore, that the lessons of Althea were not designed to be applicable across all contexts and scenarios. (Knauer, 2011: 20). However, this is telling in itself. For the EU to opt for a deliberately reserved strategy when faced with a crossroads of decision making demonstrates a degree of continuity as regards the application of civilian approaches over military power. Indeed, perhaps it was to be expected that the opening military operations of a traditionally non-interventionist power with a focus on unity and cohesion would be marred by teething problems and not be emblematic of a sudden change in course.

Nevertheless, Operation Althea endures as a military operation run by the EU, and the contemporary choices which it elects to proceed with may be indicative of a desire to revisit the dominance of the concept of normative power Europe. There are those who have pointed out that the UK provides '...25% of the key enabling capabilities and 20% of all military capabilities within the EU...' (Billon-Galland and Williams, 2019: 5) including those forces currently deployed in BiH, and that 'Essentially, it is the Euro-Atlanticist coalition that insists on keeping the executive mandate and prevents the ending of EUFOR Althea.' (Palm, 2017: 80). Thus, the continuity of Althea and, by extension, EU strategic culture will likely find itself at a crossroads once again. The fact that Althea has yet to come to an end means that how Althea factors into the EU's decision making process on the application of military power may yet have unforeseen consequences. However, as regards the known ramifications, Althea may have been indicative of a step away from a civilian Europe, but it does not signify that the application of hard power is now central to the attainment of the EU's objectives.

1.3 - Althea's Impact on European Strategic Culture

If Althea is to be understood as a step towards a trajectory in which the application of hard power is increasingly relevant to strategic actors within the EU, then there should be demonstrable evidence of this in EU strategic thought. One way to approach this is to understand why the EU sought to

assume command of the military operation in BiH and how this has affected the EU's approach to subsequent military operations.

Kupferschmidt outlines four factors which he claims contributed to the launch of Althea. The first relates to the agreements reached between NATO and the EU, in the form of Berlin Plus, which he alleges allowed the EU to undertake operations on a scale such as Althea, where it previously could not. The second is the interest of the EU in BiH as a prospective member nation of the union. The third was the progression of the conflict in BiH which was 'starting to show positive signs'. Finally, a diminishing interest on the part of the US in the conflict which opened up the mantle of leadership to Europeans. (Kupferschmidt, 2006: 7). These observations have several implications as regards the state of EU strategic culture in 2004. One implication reinforces the concept that the EU demonstrates a reserved approach towards transitioning into a more militaristic or hybrid actor, as it did not seek to supplant the US as the primary security provider in the Balkans until the US itself desired a reduced role; nor did the EU seek to promote its own vision for the region without first reaching key agreements with NATO and the US, as demonstrated within the framework of Berlin Plus. Indeed, there is a further implication here that the EU recognised the Western Balkans as a region of strategic interest for its own purposes but required the express consent of actors such as the US and NATO in order to undertake its own devolved, military actions there. Thus, from the outset, the creation and evolution of EU strategic culture is inescapably linked with the capabilities and desires of closely aligned actors. Further, in the 2003 Thessaloniki Declaration, the document in which the EU acknowledges the importance of the Western Balkans and outlines its desire for the nations there to join the union, the EU evokes the importance of NATO, US and UN cooperation to the stability of the entire region. (Thessaloniki Declaration, 2003: 4). This document is far from alone in defining the Balkans as a region of strategic significance, and the concept is granted further continuity by the 2003 ESS, 2016 EUGS and PESCO, as well as the fact that the ESS is deliberately modelled around its US equivalent: the NSS. (Report on the Implementation of the ESS, 2008: 1; The ESS, 2003: 8; EUGS, 2016: 21). Therefore, although Althea may represent one of the first examples of the autonomous projection of hard power on the part of the EU, there is evidently more nuance to the claim that Althea is indicative of such operations becoming an inevitability or, even simply, an increasing possibility. On the other hand, there are those, such as Ortega, who have claimed that EU strategic culture must be constructive rather than reactionary, hence its reserved stance and relative lack of reactivity. (Ortega, 2007: 93). What is clear, however, is that Althea is definitely indicative of a change in course for EU strategic thought and of the broadening of possibilities, in the military dimension in particular, for EU strategic thinkers to act more autonomously than ever before in order to overcome strategic problems.

Thus, it has been argued that the only way to project a form of hard power that is not contradictory to the image and ideals of the EU is to engage in more reserved operations such as peace-building, state-building, conflict prevention and policing. Only from these steps can the use of military force be legitimized and, therefore, find a role at the heart of European strategic culture. Perhaps this is overly critical however; if one takes into consideration the other observations of Kupferschmidt that operations of the scale of Althea were essentially impossible right up until Althea's launch, then careful experimentation with evolving and emerging structures, tools and approaches is as legitimate an approach to developing strategic doctrines as unprecedented and revolutionary overhauls. However, a reoccurring theme of examining EU strategic culture is that the rhetoric rarely matches the practice. Nowhere is this better exemplified than by a quote from a French soldier stationed in BiH as part of Operation Althea: “C'est le Club Med ici”, which several have been quick to contrast with the descriptions of Althea as “the first major military operation” (Knauer, 2011: 4).

All of this is not to say, however, that operation Althea had no effects on the potential future application of hard power from the EU, and there are several factors here to investigate. The first relates to the fact that Althea has yet to come to an end. It is no coincidence that ever since the launch of Althea the conditions to bring about an end to EU military operations or a clear end date have always been included in their proposals. (Palm, 2017: 81-82). This has also revealed an increased emphasis on the concept of consensus as regards the implementation, conduct and conclusion of military operations. Who bears the brunt of the responsibility for a operation and who demonstrates the willingness to carry them out has been argued to correlate with individual coalitions within the EU and the strength of their positions relative to one another. (Palm, 2017: 81-82). In other words, whether 'French Europeanism', 'British Atlanticism' or 'German federalism' are in the ascendancy at a given moment in time within EU strategic doctrine and thought. (Howorth, 2004). This is in direct contrast to the concept of consensus politics and demonstrates that it may be internal divisions, as opposed to a lack of will power or capacity, that stunts the EU's ability to pursue military power as a core aspect of its strategic doctrines. Alternatively, it could be argued that the experience of Althea revealed the need for more consensus based strategic thought and less coalition driven decision making; and that, therefore, subsequent military operations are more likely to be generally more cautious, smaller in scale and relatively reserved. (Ortega, 2007: 93). The impact of the 'Euro-Atlanticist coalition' once again brings the consequences of Brexit into the fold, with the potential for both opportunities as well as set-backs for the future of EU strategic culture. Alternatively, if Althea leads to a shift towards consensus building and attempts to address internal divisions within EU strategic doctrines, the extent of the centralization of the EU's own

internal strategic apparatuses, such as its lack of unified intelligence services and military, will have implications of its own.

1.4 - Can Althea be Separated from SFOR BiH?

Thus far, Althea has appeared as a reserved move from a somewhat constrained actor with limited intentions towards a more prominent role for the future projection of hard power. However, as Althea's impact becomes more evident, the question of how its progression and relation to SFOR, and NATO as a whole, becomes more pertinent. Althea came about as both the successor to SFOR and as a consequence of agreements between NATO and the EU, and as has been noted, strategic cooperation between the two actors would be to the mutual benefit of both. (Kupferschmidt, 2006: 8). However, whether or not Althea is indicative of such cooperation remains open to interpretation. Indeed, the extent to which an increase in the overlap between the two organisations has produced desirable results for the EU's ability to pursue an independent strategic culture, is open to interpretation.

On 16 December 2002 the EU's HR for the CSDP, Javier Solana, declared that the meetings which took place between the EU and NATO that day regarding the state of EU-NATO strategic operations would “bring the two organisations closer together” and that they marked the beginning of “the strategic partnership between NATO and the EU”. (Kupferschmidt, 2006: 5). However, some have questioned the extent to which the subsequent relations between NATO and the EU truly exemplify the agreed upon principles of “strategic partnership” and, further, whether or not Solana was speaking on behalf of all nations involved in the pact, given indications that not all desired the agreement to be successful. (Kupferschmidt, 2006: 6). It is argued that this is made evident by the complications of the planning process of Althea, as a successor operation to SFOR. The preparations for Althea took around two years which, even when American desires to retain control over counter-terrorism operations and the capturing of war criminals is factored in, is a very long time. Kupferschmidt argues that this was also partly due to the EU wanting to assert its influence so as not to be relegated to the position of a junior partner of the US or NATO. (Kupferschmidt, 2006: 15). However, this is not indicative of a well functioning strategic partnership, rather the opposite. Furthermore, if one takes the approach that this assertiveness and desire for strategic autonomy on the part of the EU is a good thing as far as the development of an independent strategic culture is concerned, then it becomes more difficult to excuse the lack of decisive action once the go-ahead for Althea had been given.

Additional complications arise beyond the planning stage of Althea as regards the self-reliance and self-sufficiency of the EU's assets in BiH. The enlargement of NATO in recent years to increase the

overlap between EU and NATO members has, according to Kupferschmidt, exacerbated problems with the logistics of Althea. This has come about thanks to Turkey using its veto powers over NATO Military Committee meetings regarding operation Althea so that Turkish representatives do not have to sit at the same negotiating table as Cypriot ones, thus advancing Turkish foreign policy objectives at the expense of the EU's. (Kupferschmidt, 2006: 14). However, as Knauer points out, one of the factors which permits the EU forces in BiH to conduct their operations with such low numbers of soldiers is because they can call upon support from so-called 'over the horizon' forces; including troops from NATO's KFOR operation in Kosovo. (Knauer, 2011: 16). Thus, Althea presents a situation in which the EU is reliant on nearby NATO forces for support, thereby facilitating low operational expenses and demands, as well as promoting unity and consensus over the conduct of Althea. All the while, structures and forces within NATO essentially hamstringing the EU's efforts to pursue an autonomous projection of hard power and a truly independent strategic culture. Billon-Galland and Williams compare the EU's efforts to act autonomously in the cases of Althea and EUFOR Chad/CAR to reach the following conclusion:

'...Althea reveals the EU27's small appetite for operations. Member States' reluctance to get involved in CSDP military missions is not new. EU officials often recall the cumbersome and embarrassing force generation process for the 2008 EUFOR Chad/ CAR. A combined effort by 23 EU Member States and 3 third states, without recourse to either NATO or US assets, the operation struggled to secure sufficient contributions and its launch had to be postponed several times. EUFOR Chad/CAR – which, when fully deployed, numbered up to 3,700 troops – provides a sobering example of how challenging ambitious CSDP operations can be. More than ten years later, few believe that Member States would be able and willing to launch a CSDP military operation of the calibre of EUFOR Chad/CAR today.' (Billon-Galland and Williams, 2019: 6-7).

Bearing in mind that EUFOR Chad/CAR took place several years after Althea, and that operational changes which integrated learning from Althea as well as a degree of advancement in EU strategic doctrines had already taken place by then, it becomes difficult to conclude, at least by 2008, that the EU could be described as an actor capable of fully autonomous projection of hard power. All of this appears to affirm the larger narrative of the EU-NATO conundrum, in which EU-NATO summits and documents stress the need for European strategic autonomy while simultaneously many European nations simply view the CSDP as a tool to prevent over-reliance on US assets.

Concurrently, the US expresses its desire for EU security structures to not simply replicate those of NATO, and for EU strategic culture to be inclusive of non-EU members of NATO. (Simón, 2019: 1-2; Drent *et al*, 2019: 9). Thus, both the EU and NATO appear to affirm a desire for a degree of European autonomy but the major actors within both organisations demonstrate a reduced appetite for such fundamental change. This is made further evident by the fact that, even to this day, there are no formal structures through which EU and NATO staff are able to meet and discuss military mobility; a fact that could be relatively easily remedied, and with significant positive consequences for both actors. (Drent *et al*, 2019: 10). Alternatively, some realists would assert that NATO is a tool through which the US asserts its military, nuclear and economic hegemony and that further EU autonomy would be against US interests. (Demetriou, 2016: 3). This concept has found continuity in the metaphor of Mars and Venus which is often applied to the US and EU in order to describe them as militaristic and diplomatic actors respectively. (Demetriou, 2016: 5) However, the Mars, Venus status quo disproportionately benefits the Americans at the expense of EU strategic autonomy thus, the US deliberately entangles itself and NATO with operations such as Althea in order to maintain the situation and prevent the EU from developing into its own autonomous security provider, more akin to Minerva or Athena than Venus.

1.5 - Summary

To conclude, the consequences of EUFOR BiH were simultaneously revolutionary and underwhelming. Operation Althea, as a manifestation of years worth of security agreements between the EU and NATO, drew the EU away from its roots as a normative power, but not nearly as much as contemporary documentation or political declarations would have one believe. Indeed, whether or not it is accurate to describe the EU as a hybrid actor, let alone a completely military one from the evidence provided by Operation Althea, remains spurious and contested at the best of times. All of this is not to say, however, that Althea did not have a profound impact on EU strategic culture. Althea is, undeniably, indicative of a recognition on the part of the EU of the strategic significance of both the Western Balkans and of military operations as a whole. Further, there are evident lessons that have been learned by strategic thinkers within the EU as a consequence of Operation Althea. However, Althea began as a pseudo-peacekeeping operation with limited troop numbers and no clear objectives to define the end of the operation. This has worked in tandem with internal coalitions driving key decisions and a lack of consensus over the future of Althea so as to hamper the positive effects of EUFOR BiH on EU strategic doctrines. This is all further obscured by the role of NATO in both the inception and conduct of Althea. The EU's ability to rely on nearby NATO forces as well as NATO assets in general has created an environment in which the strategic

choices of EU decision makers are diminished and conflicting foreign policy objectives of states such as Turkey are permitted to be disruptive. Thus, Operation Althea symbolises the status quo. Attempts to address the relevance of military operations as a tool in the EU's arsenal of power projection are reserved and conservative; this, inevitably, puts minimal pressure on the EU's military structures, internal consensus or logistical capabilities, thus the need for anything other than moderate change to strategic conduct never arises. Finally, the issue of the EU-NATO conundrum is brushed under the carpet, thereby permitting the official language of EU-NATO agreements to appear inexorably progressive all the while symbolising very little change. Therefore, EUFOR BiH demonstrates a limited future for the autonomous projection of hard power as a core aspect of emerging EU strategic culture. However, should the issues of internal divisions, over-reliance on NATO and the teething problems made evident by Althea be addressed in the future, then it would not seem overly optimistic or naïve to suggest that there might exist a strong potential future for the EU as an independent military actor.

Chapter II – EUFOR DRC (Operation Artemis)

2.1 - Introduction

One of several international efforts that took place in the DRC, Operation Artemis was a French led EU military operation which was deployed to the city of Bunia between 30 May and 1 September 2003. It came about as a consequence of the deteriorating situation throughout the province of Ituri where UN forces had failed to enhance the stability of the region. In response to direct attacks on the MONUC operational headquarters in the provincial capital of Bunia, the UNSC passed resolution 1484 which authorised a temporary relief force to Bunia so as to aid the UN forces in their objective of providing stability and humanitarian aid. Meanwhile the UN would reassess the mandate and capabilities of MONUC forces, as far as bringing about an end to the violence in the greater Ituri region was concerned. (János, 2015: 124-125). The UN officially named the relief force the IEMF, however once handed the mantle of leadership, the French led operation was quickly re-branded as Operation Artemis – a name which is inescapably linked with Europe – and set a precedent for the naming conventions of subsequent EU military operations. Beyond the extreme violence that had been occurring in the Eastern DRC, a second piece of key historical context helps to shape the framework and understanding of Operation Artemis: the Iraq War. It has been asserted by several observers that there was a desire on the part of European leaders, particularly in France, to present the EU as an alternative military operator which was capable of acting independently of NATO assets and US political objectives. (János, 2015: 125; Homan, 2007: 3; Ulriksen *et al*, 2004: 522). Thus, it becomes evident that in order to assess the impact of Artemis on EU strategic culture, this context will have to be taken into consideration. The impetus of Artemis and the other contextual factors which contributed to the launch of the operation will also be investigated. These components will then be taken into consideration in an attempt to determine the effects of Artemis upon European strategic culture in both the long and short term. Finally, core aspects of the operation such as the way in which the EU, and more specifically France, were able to leverage their normative powers so as to reinforce the military operations in the DRC will be scrutinised; these findings will be compiled so as to form nuanced conclusions on the centrality of the autonomous projection of hard power as a key aspect of EU strategic culture.

2.2 - The EU's First Peacekeeping Mission

Operation Artemis not only set a precedent for the naming convention of EU military operations but, indeed, as the first EU military operation it set many standards for the conduct of such

missions. Two very notable examples of this can be found in the fact that the operation was sanctioned by UN mandate and that the fundamental purpose of the operation was peacekeeping through the application of humanitarian aid and the stabilization of security conditions. These are factors that were also present in the case of Operation Althea and will reoccur again in further analyses later in this paper. Thus, in order to understand the circumstances under which the EU seeks to autonomously project hard power in order to achieve strategic objectives, it is necessary to take these preconditions into account. However, the concept that EU military operations have an innate connection to the UN stands in contrast to the previously advanced assertions of Delcourt regarding an increasingly informal view of the application of global military power (Delcourt, 2006: 166). Rather, the argument that the EU requires a locus of consensus in order to overcome the incapacity to act, appears to be advanced by the importance of UNSC 1484 and the driving role of both French political will and military assets to the inception of Artemis. Therefore, the example of Operation Artemis bears both similarities to, as well as several key distinctions from, other EU military operations.

In the example of Operation Althea the role of the so-called Euro-Atlanticist coalition was shown to have played an integral role in the shape of both the launch of the operation as well as its length and conduct. In the case of Artemis, some have asserted that it was a different coalition, in the form of the former colonial powers of the British and French, who would play a much more significant role. This is not to say, however, that the Euro-Atlanticist coalition had no effect on the fashioning of Artemis; indeed the role of the Anglo-German rift over Iraq and its consequences for Artemis will be investigated further in due course. Rather, in the years leading up to Artemis several foundational agreements between France and the UK in the form of the 1998 St. Malo, 2001 Cahors and 2003 Le Touquet summits, directly led to the creation of the EAG and a programme to strengthen both nations peacekeeping capabilities in the Francophone and Anglophone parts of Africa respectively. (Ulriksen *et al*, 2004: 509). Both of these would play a central role in the realisation and ultimate conduct of Artemis. Furthermore, it was another Franco-British agreement in November 2003, which solidified the need for an EU RRF, as part of both the debrief from Artemis and the lead-up to Althea, as well as centralising the importance of a UN mandate for the deployment of said RRF. (Ulriksen *et al*, 2004: 522). This, again, indicates a degree of continuity to the concept that where EU strategic decision making is concerned, powerful internal coalitions play a key role in advancing foundational doctrines, and this remains true in the precedent-setting case of Artemis. What remains to be seen, however, are the consequences of an EU nation other than one of the 'big three' attempting to pioneer an operation such as Artemis or Althea.

UNSCR 1484 has been mentioned several times already due to the role it played in simultaneously

calling for and authorising Artemis. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that the detail and specificity of the mandate contributed to the shape of the operation greatly. Homan markedly emphasises the importance of strong limitations in terms of both the scope and time scale of the IEMF in securing French support for the operation. (Homan, 2007: 2). This goes some way in explaining why Artemis was ultimately tasked with securing Bunia alone rather than Ituri as a whole, and the fact that provision of stability was to be addressed through a weapons-free zone and humanitarian aid rather than the pacification of rebel forces and a regional programme of DDR – two concepts which are often associated with peacekeeping operations. In other words, so as to acquire assistance from the EU, the UN would have to retain the mantle of responsibility of the larger, more wholistic and more complicated processes of achieving peace in Ituri and the DRC as a whole. Once again, this is demonstrative of an EU which at a potential turning point in its defining characteristics, military capabilities and political willpower, opted for what can only be portrayed as a finite and narrow approach. (Özveri, 2011: 5).

However, the EU's extensive civilian and normative structures also played a significant role in the case of IEMF, with hallmark French diplomacy helping to secure the cooperation of neighbouring states prior to the deployment of Artemis. Indeed, more formalised joint strategic initiatives between the EU and AU is a publicly stated objective of EU global strategy. Report on the Implementation of the ESS, 2008: 11). One of the key conditions of French support for the mission was the official backing of the governments of Rwanda, Uganda and the DRC, which was achieved through the application of coercive power from both French as well as European institutions. Indeed, as János observes it was the EU Minister for Foreign Affairs' assistant, Aldo Ajello, who initiated contact with the governments of the region. (János, 2015: 124-125). Furthermore, civilian-military cooperation was a central aspect of the operation and the extent to which this condition was successful has been hailed as one of the major successes of the operation. (János, 2015: 129). This led Homan to state the following: “According to those directly involved in Operation Artemis (certainly so in the opinion of the ECHO and the humanitarian community in general) the cooperation between Artemis and humanitarian agencies went remarkably well.” (Homan, 2007: 4). Nevertheless, there is one final detail which is necessary to a nuanced understanding of Operation Artemis, and that is the intrinsic link with the Rwandan Civil War. Not only was the violence in the Eastern DRC a direct consequence of the conflict which began in Rwanda, but the perceived failure on the part of the EU, Europeans and the West as a whole to do something about the Rwandan genocide undoubtedly played a crucial role in the EU's decision to act militarily. Similarly, one can characterize Operation Althea as a response to the events of Srebrenica and, therefore, the manifestation of the need for the EU to be seen as capable of presenting a comprehensive and

decisive response to the occurrence of genocide where coercive or normative attempts have failed. (Ulriksen *et al*, 2004: 513). Thus, the fact that the first two EU military operations, in the form of Artemis and Althea, can be said to have taken place as a response to genocide, must be taken into consideration when attempting to understand the circumstances under which European strategic actors will seek to apply hard power.

2.3 - Artemis and European Strategic Culture

Operation Artemis then, akin to Althea, appears to affirm the continuity of the concept that the application of hard power was becoming an increasingly relevant and applicable tool in the arsenal of European strategic thinkers. The nuance in the case of Artemis lies in the distinction between EU, French and UN strategic doctrines and military assets.

The decision to intervene militarily in the DRC was not one that was taken lightly by Europeans given the history of the interactions between the two continents. The region has previously been described as: “an area where several European states had been politically and militarily discredited less than a decade before.” (Ulriksen *et al*, 2004: 508). It is at this point that France comes in. With the setbacks of Somalia and Rwanda effectively causing many other EU states to get cold feet at the prospect of further peacekeeping missions and intervention in Africa, the devolution of French military policy in Africa from the hands of the presidency across several parliamentary and NGO actors helped to prevent a total withdrawal of European strategic interests in Africa. (Ulriksen *et al*, 2004: 509). Not only did this have the effect of maintaining the strategic interests of one of the EU 'big three' in Africa, but the increased inclusion of NGOs and the private sector in this domain also came with the consequence of facilitating a stronger connection than is typically exhibited between solely military actors and humanitarian organisations. As Homan puts it: “ Relations between military and humanitarian organisations can often be difficult, as they do not always share the same perspective and above all use very different means.” He then goes on to laud the cooperation between the ECHO and those humanitarian organisations that were involved in assisting with the stabilisation process in Bunia. (Homan, 2007: 4). This, in tandem with the French approach of securing diplomatic connections with regional actors demonstrates the importance of the dual application of hard and soft power where possible for European led operations. However, once again of note is the fact that it is one of the 'big three' in the driving seat, rather than any single member or, indeed, a coalition of smaller members.

On the other hand, there are several key aspects of operation Artemis which set it aside from what might be construed as a typical EU military operation. Homan asserts that the EU planning process and the capabilities of the newly formed RRF, were not tested properly as a direct consequence of

French domineering. (Homan, 2007: 3). Indeed, this is further amplified by the limited scope of the UN mandate under which Artemis operated and the fact that the EU was able to compensate for any potential shortcomings through the application of normative and coercive power, rather than to directly address any military deficiencies. It should, however, be noted that Artemis marked only the beginning of European military missions in the DRC and that the ESDP would continue to be tested by these throughout this formative period. (János, 2015: 129). Furthermore, Artemis undoubtedly advanced the EU's operational relationship with the UN, which would not have been the case had the EU acted in contention with the UN mandate and attempted to operate in a larger area, for a longer period of time or outwith the scope of what was defined by UNSCR 1484. (Özveri, 2011: 5; Homan, 2007: 4). However, again, one is obliged to note that diversifying the coalition of participant nations would likely have limited the negative consequences of French domineering and, perhaps, have had further positive connotations for European strategic culture. As regards the planning process of Artemis, it is here that great degrees of nuance surrounding the role of France and the UN begin to emerge. When compared with Althea, the inception of Artemis appears smooth, effortless and efficient. However, the question of why this is the case does not bring to the surface significant, amendable discrepancies in the planning procedures. Rather, three factors that are unique to the case of Artemis appear to explain the relative rapidity of the deployment of EU forces. These are the enhanced cooperation between the EU and UN, the driving force of French political will, and the absence of the US as a force which has the potential to curtail EU strategic operational capabilities out of self interest, as in the case of Althea. (Kupferschmidt, 2006: 15). Thus, despite the fact that Althea appeared to be indicative of a case in which the EU did not seek to propose a particularly serious alternative to American peacekeeping doctrines, Artemis does. This is likely due to the relative lack of engagement of the US in this scenario, which permitted the EU to act largely independently and to promote its viability as a self-sustaining and autonomous actor without running the risk of direct contention with the Americans. Indeed, this fits perfectly into the thesis of proposed 'French Europeanism' as a potential counterbalance or alternative to US or NATO strategic hegemony. (Howorth, 2004). This has led some to conclude that Operation Artemis could not have taken place without both the political will and military assets of the French as well as an invitation from the UN and that, therefore, these conditions must reoccur alongside the doctrinal ascendancy of French strategic thought within EU decision making circles, in order for such an operation to be viable once again. Further, these observations highlight exciting future possibilities for EU strategic culture where an increased engagement for the smaller nations is more readily available.

Proponents of the concept of an EU strategic culture point to the fact that the 2003 ESS mentions a

need for an outward-looking EU and a stronger emphasis on Africa's security dimension, in tandem with the successes of operations such as Artemis, as evidence of an EU with a nuanced apparatus for identifying and overcoming strategic problems. (Schmidt, 2011: 576-577). Therefore, Operation Artemis not only exemplifies a relatively extensive example of the projection of hard power from the EU, but also that the successes of Artemis may, in fact, signal that the EU has achieved a reliable methodology from which to achieve strategic objectives henceforth.

However, the desire to prove the value, ease and competency of the EU as a stand alone force should not be assumed to be typical of the standard procedures of subsequent EU military operations. Indeed, it would logically follow that once the apocryphal nature of having something to prove has been clearly overcome, it would conspicuously disappear as a core impetus thereafter. Additionally, the tangible improvements to joint EU-UN operational procedures may also have been a one-off occurrence and, therefore, Artemis ought to be better understood in these terms rather than as a landmark from the perspective of which all EU military operations should be compared and contrasted. However, even if this were to be the case, it would also be baseless to say that Artemis was without merit. One need only contrast the evident competency of the EU forces which constituted Artemis with the disaster that was the initial attempt at MONUC in order to comprehend this. Further, the initial failings of MONUC must also be understood from the perspective of the UN as a developed, experienced and relatively competent security provider and military actor. Thus, for Artemis to have been such a success in relative terms is a shining example of the potential for EU strategic culture to be effective, versatile and autonomous.

2.4 - A French, European or UN Mission?

One now comes to the inevitable question of whether or not Artemis really was an EU military operation. Homan describes it as: “a French operation with an EU cover, [rather] than an EU operation led by the French.”, further stating that: “Without French leadership, the EU operation would not have happened.” (Homan, 2007: 4). However, whether or not this is a fair assessment remains to be seen.

On the one hand, the observation that France provided the overwhelming majority of both troops – 1,500 out of 1,850 – and aircraft, and that it was two Frenchmen, General Jean-Paul Thonier and General Bruno Neveux, who were named Artemis force Commander and the Operational Commander respectively, appears to support the view that Artemis was a French operation in all but name. (János, 2015: 125-128). This is often coupled with a statement from Solana that the deployment of EU forces to the region would take: “months, not days”; however once under the control of France, Artemis' combat operations were underway less than a full month later. (Ulriksen

et al, 2004: 512). This illustrates the importance of French political will and efficacious planning for the success of Artemis. However, it would be pertinent to question whether or not these conditions do indeed define Artemis as uniquely French or as exceptionally “uneuropean”.

If one takes the opposite stance, several factors which are obscured by focusing on the role of France become more clear. The first, and perhaps most conspicuous of these is that decisive support from one of the 'big three' for an EU military operation has so far proved to be an evident precondition of a successful launch. In other words, somebody has to be in charge, regardless of a given mission's context as either an EU or UN backed intervention. This condition is, in fact, engrained in both UN and, now, EU doctrines through the position of what is known as a Framework Nation. (Homan, 2007: 2; Ulriksen *et al*, 2004: 512). Thus, the fact that a nation such as France took charge of Operation Artemis is not only the opposite of some kind of exceptional deviation from the norm, but the fact that France is both a permanent member of the UNSC and one of the EU 'big three' means that French leadership of an operation such as this ought to have been expected in the first place. Furthermore, it was a clearly expressed French wish that the operation be a European one and not solely their responsibility, and to suggest otherwise solely on the basis of the centrality of the role of France comes across, even at best, as somewhat conspiratorial.

Those who assert that Operation Artemis represents a French military operation under an EU guise point to the following factors: potential political opportunism from an actor with an historic interest in Africa; the need for France as a member of the UNSC to support the UN when it finds itself in a precarious situation; and French desires to offer up the EU as an alternative to the perceived role of the US as a global security provider, while the Americans were otherwise preoccupied in Iraq. (Schmidt, 2011: 569). Even if all these conditions are true, which is probable, one does not have to refute them in order to defend the position that Operation Artemis was an EU operation. Rather, if one acknowledges that none of these observations are mutually exclusive with the status of Artemis as an EU military mission, then they can be acknowledged to be true alongside the French political declaration as well as the subsequent factors discussed below.

The second factor which is critical in determining Artemis' status as an EU military operation is the role which the UK played in its inception. The function of joint Franco-British declarations in even permitting an operation such as Artemis to be a viable option for European strategists has already been discussed. So too has the significance of the 'big three' to the success of EU military operations. However, the support of the UK for Artemis, as a fellow member of the 'big three', was not only as necessary a precondition as French support, but the UK also played a vital role in securing the support of the final member of the 'big three', Germany. Indeed, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer admitted in a speech to the Bundestag that although Germany was hesitant

to grant leadership of IEMF to the EU, it acceded to the pressure of its two most important European partners. (Ulriksen *et al*, 2004: 513). Thus, when the disagreements over the intervention in Iraq had the potential to totally inhibit the EU's ability to come to a consensus regarding other military operations, the role played by the British proved invaluable in generating such consensus once again. It is because of this that some have described Franco-British cooperation as 'the engine of the ESDP'. (Ulriksen *et al*, 2004: 513). However, one must note at this stage that had this operation not had the firm backing of two of the 'big three', and the hesitant backing of the third, then it may well not have gone ahead.

The final factor which defines Artemis as an EU operation and not solely a French one was the pooling of resources for the operation which took place through EU institutions. Despite the fact that France contributed practically all of the operation's assets, the economic cost of the venture was shared amongst the participating states: the UK, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Brazil, Canada, South Africa and Hungary. (Özveri, 2011: 4). Thus, the EU's institutional frameworks were applied so as to determine the economic responsibility of Artemis using a formula based on GNP, but also to increase the operation's tactical flexibility and logistical capacity, test the merits of the framework nation approach and, ultimately, apply ESDP doctrines. Indeed, the 'Athena mechanism', as this pooling of resources is known, is an EU procedure which is designed to strike a balance between member states' financial backing of military operations and EU control through the CFSP.

(eca.europa.eu, 2018). The fact that the Athena mechanism was applied in the example of Artemis is further evidence in the case for Artemis as an EU operation, and not a French one. It seems difficult, then, to maintain a realist approach which describes France as a powerful state which is capable of autonomous hard power projection in order to achieve tangible and historic interests on the African continent, while also taking into account the fact that the French, essentially, surrendered strategic control of Artemis to the EU. It cannot simultaneously be true that France needed the economic incentives offered by the EU to devolve the leadership of Artemis, and that France was capable of conducting an operation such as Artemis alone. In the case that the stimulus from the EU for control of IEMF was beneficial enough for the French to want to relinquish control of Artemis then one must also concede that French desires to conduct the operation in the first place were not that significant; and that, therefore, to state that Operation Artemis was more a French military mission than an EU one, is a mischaracterisation at best. This is made even more evident through the fact that it was Germany that took the lead in EUFOR RD Congo 2006. (Schmidt, 2011: 572). Thus, signifying that 'French Europeanism' during the Iraq war or French foreign policy objectives are unique factors which drove the EU to act militarily in the DRC. Furthermore, the conceptualisations of Germany as the tentative or hesitant third where EU military operations are concerned are

dispelled, and the picture of an EU with clear and publicly stated interests in the security of Central and Sub-Saharan Africa as well as the ability to achieve these objectives through the projection of autonomous hard power, is made more apparent than ever.

2.5 - Summary

To conclude, Operation Artemis has been subject to much criticism despite its relative successes. While often characterised as just another French intervention in its former colonial sphere, the role of other European partners such as the UK, as well as EU institutions, were critical to the realization of Artemis. Indeed, even from the perspective of Artemis as a cynical ambition to establish a precedent for ESDP operations which advance French political and foreign policy objectives, the operations still stands as testament to the efficacy of EU military operations as a tool of strategic culture. Transatlantic divisions appear to have played less of a role in this operation than in the case of Althea, in part thanks to the UK's ongoing display of solidarity with the US over the conflict in Iraq, and also in part thanks to Franco-British agreements over the desire for an increased role for the EU in Africa. This, in turn, permitted Artemis to demonstrate the virtues and advantages of EU led, UN backed, military interventions and peacekeeping operations. The major criticisms of Artemis come in the form of its limited scope, time-frame and area of operation. However, to have contested or defied the UN mandate for the operation would likely have done far more harm than good for the advancement of EU strategic doctrines. Indeed, precisely because the EU came to the aid of the UN in its hour of need, and by effectively fulfilling the remit of the UN mandate, closer ties between the UN and EU were fostered for the mutual benefit of both actors at the strategic level. Indeed, some have argued that Artemis marked the beginning of 'increasing institutionalisation of EU-UN cooperation', and that an increased reliance on the EU by the UN is indicative of an EU which is transitioning towards becoming a major global security provider and, therefore, hard power actor. (Major, 2008: 9). Thus, Artemis, and to a lesser extent EUFOR RD Congo 2006, are indicative of strengthening institutional ties between the EU and UN, and therefore are also characteristic of the EU as a capable and nuanced military actor. Furthermore, the success of Artemis signalled the efficacy of the framework nation system for generating consensus amongst European states and EU strategic actors. The very fact that the concept of a framework nation which leads the way and enhances internal EU consensus was not applied as a fundamental presupposition in the case of operation Althea, may well be one of the reasons as to why there are commonplace perceptions of the EU as a reserved or amateurish military actor. However, the EU was able to make effective use of its soft power institutions both in terms of the way in which it secured support for Operation Artemis from Central African governments, and through its enhanced cooperation

between military and civilian actors such as humanitarian aid organisations and NGOs. This further reinforces the thesis that where the EU can apply a dual approach of hard and soft power it will attempt to do so. Furthermore, the importance of the acquiescence of the 'big three' is further illustrated by the launch of Artemis. In terms of grounding Artemis relative to Althea, Artemis shows much more promise for EU military operations. The success of the short time-frame, dual approach and UN mandate as well as the frame work nation approach all show a promising potential pathway for repeating operations of a similar nature. Crucially, Artemis does not demonstrate the EU's over-reliance on US or NATO assets and further shows the EU's capabilities to act of its own accord and on its own terms. Thus, while Operation Artemis is certainly indicative of the importance of possessing the capacity to act autonomously for EU strategic thinkers, this case does not appear to advance the concept of the projection of hard power existing as a stand-alone, central component of a cogent and unified EU strategic culture.

Chapter III – EUNAVFOR MED Sophia & EUNAVFOR MED Iriini

3.1 - Introduction

On 19 April 2015, a vessel carrying approximately 700-800 migrants capsized south of the Italian Island of Lampedusa, resulting in the deaths of almost all on board. This event marked the height of what has come to be known as the 'Migration Crisis' in Europe. Less than one month after this, on 18 May 2015, EU Council decision 2015/778 mandated a military crisis management operation in order to disrupt “the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks in the South Central Mediterranean”. (Pricopi, 2016: 123). The operation was named Sophia after a refugee girl born aboard a German ship participating in the operation, and was to be conducted over four distinct stages. (Estrada-Cañamares, 2015: 191). Phase 1 was initiated on 26 June 2015, ran until 7 October 2015, and focused on information gathering. Phase 2 Alpha focused on the boarding, search, seizure and diversion of vessels suspected of being used for human smuggling. Phase 2 Bravo sought to expand this activity to the territorial waters of Libya, and phase 3 detailed expanding the area of operation to include action on mainland Libyan territory. (Johansen, 2017: 516). Operation Sophia, however, ran into difficulties when attempting to transition to phase 2 Bravo as it could not legally operate in Libyan waters without the express consent of the Libyan government or UNSC approval. A compromise was eventually reached whereby Sophia's assets would be allowed to act in Libyan territorial waters on a limited basis in exchange for training and capacity building of the Libyan Coastguard. This is the first of many examples of alterations to the mandate of Operation Sophia through various attempts to address the legal issues which surrounded the operation and the hasty nature of its launch. Indeed, despite an extension of Sophia's mandate for a further six months in 2019, the operation never entered phase 3 and came to a close on 31 March 2020 without a single European boot stepping foot on Libyan soil. (Mantini, 2019: 2-3). On the same day that Sophia ended, Operation Iriini came into place to enforce the UN arms embargo on Libya, which had been in place since 2011. Many of the assets which had been utilised during Sophia were handed over to Iriini and the legal issues that had been faced by Sophia were directly addressed through the UN mandate. Iriini was designed to operate for a much shorter period than Sophia – just 12 months – and the Deputy Operation Commander of Sophia was retained for Iriini. Thus, the two operations are evidently linked and, resultantly, several key areas of investigation are made clear. These include the importance of UN mandates and resolutions to EU military operations and the implications of the use of naval assets for both normative approaches to crisis resolution as well as EU strategic culture. Therefore, these will constitute the core focuses of this

chapter in the attempt to address the question of the centrality of autonomous hard power projection to EU strategic culture.

3.2 - Normative Approaches and Naval Force Projection

Operations Sophia and Irini differ from the previous examples of Artemis and Althea through several key characteristics, one of the most important of which is the utilisation of primarily naval assets. Naval power projection differs from the deployment of troops or aircraft in terms of both cost and strategic ability, and is more readily associated with the behaviour of the so-called 'great power' states. Thus, for the EU to even consider, let alone actually undertake, a naval operation has consequences for the way in which EU strategic culture, and the role of the projection of hard power therein, must be understood.

Thus far, EU strategic culture has been viewed through a lens which has described the EU as a largely normative power that has sought to apply a dual or joint normative approach to its military operations. However, the extent to which this is the case for Sophia and Irini is not as evident as in the previous examples. The rapid launch of operation Sophia in particular is a factor which can be understood to have played a significant role in the shape and conduct of the operation. A direct consequence of the significantly lessened planning period of Sophia was a considerable reduction in dialogue between the EU and other states which might otherwise have been aligned or impacted by the operation. Two noteworthy examples are Egypt and Turkey, with both of these states being able to exert an influence on Sophia and Irini from an external, and somewhat negative, perspective relative to the EU, rather than as a positive partner at the planning stage. (Megerisi, 2020: 6-7). In other words, no pre-planned normative process was able to bring these significant actors to the negotiating table, let alone come to an agreement regarding Sophia, as was the case with Turkey in the example of Althea or the DRC with Artemis. Indeed, the launch of Sophia was the fastest in the history of the EU to date, which left little room for normative or diplomatic procedures to take place, and appears to be further indicative of changing attitudes within an EU which seeks to act militarily first and address any potential shortcomings retroactively. (Johansen, 2017: 519).

Furthermore, it is a publicly stated objective of the EU to '[maintain] public support for our global engagement[s]' and to ensure 'popular commitment' to 'our commitments abroad'. Report on the Implementation of the ESS, 2008: 12). Thus, for the EU to have acted in the accelerated manner in which it did, with limited public engagement either within the EU itself or in Libya, and without the initial consent of either the UN or Libyan government, does appear to be strongly indicative of a change in course of EU strategic thought. This point of view is not so detached from mainstream literature on the topic. Indeed, Writing from the perspective of 'feminist security and critical

military studies', Hoijtink and Muehlenhoff assert that the EU is indicative of a 'masculine military power' because of its crisis time narrative and '[aim] to develop 'hard' military instruments, but also because of the ways in which militarism permeates political and social relations, discourses and practices...' (Hoijtink and Muehlenhoff, 2019).

All of this is not to say, however, that there were no normative aspects of Sophia or Irini. Indeed, Sophia in particular was supported by a host of NGOs and private actors – most infamously British artist Banksy's ship the Louise Michel – which provided meaningful assistance to the operation, most notably in the field of SAR. In June 2019 there were “no less than 7” NGO operated vessels undertaking operations in the international waters of the Mediterranean. (Pricopi, 2020: 304).

Nonetheless it is evident that, when contrasted with Artemis in particular, key aspects which have previously been typical of the EU's behaviour surrounding the lead up to and launch of military operations are conspicuously absent in this case; therefore, the modern EU more clearly exemplifies an actor willing to apply hard power to achieve strategic objectives. Furthermore, the fight against terrorism and organised crime is a core aspect of EU strategic objectives and is mentioned alongside human trafficking and the illegal arms trade in both the 2003 ESS and the subsequent 2008 report on the ESS. (Report on the Implementation of the ESS, 2008: 4; The ESS, 2003: 6). Given that both of these declarations came well before the start of the so-called 'Migration Crisis', the launch of operations Sophia and Irini also clearly demonstrates a contemporary EU that is more amenable to projecting significant hard power in order to achieve long-standing strategic objectives.

There are, however, several other factors worth investigating at this stage. For example, it has been argued that there were significant consequences of the rhetoric surrounding migrants, depicting them as simultaneously in need of rescue and as a security risk, and that this contributed to the mandate and conduct of Sophia. (Guilfoyle, 2016; Dimitriadi, 2014; Little and Vaughan-Williams 2017, cited in Boşilcă *et al*, 2021: 223). Therefore, the EU continues to demonstrate a sensitivity to the structures which typically inform normative powers such as public discourse, all the while demonstrating an increased interest in the direct application of hard power, rather than the previous cases of a dual approach.

However, also of note is the fact that the ten point plan, which was drawn up by EU ministers in response to the Lampedusa shipwreck, specifically mentions EUNAVFOR Somalia (Operation Atalanta) as a potential framework for Sophia. (Johansen, 2017: 517). Atalanta's 'positive results' and 'comprehensive approach' are cited as factors which ought to be replicated in the case of a naval operation in the Mediterranean. Indeed, the role of Atalanta in the shaping of Sophia and Irini is a factor which will be discussed in greater detail later. However, of note at this stage is the acknowledgement of this purported 'comprehensive approach', which is described in further detail

as follows: “One of the most frequently cited factors contributing to the success of Atalanta was the EU’s so-called “comprehensive approach” in the Horn of Africa, which combined civil and military strategies to address the structural causes of instability, rather than only addressing superficial symptoms.” (UKHL, 2017, cited in Boşilcă *et al*, 2021: 230). This signifies that the original intention of Sophia was to incorporate a substantive dual approach, which is further reinforced with the knowledge that phase 3 was designed with action on mainland Libya in mind. Thus, while there is limited evidence of directly normative or even dual approaches in the actual conduct of Operation Sophia, it is evident that serious consideration of such occurred at the planning stage.

Operation Sophia has been described as demonstrating 'proactivity and ambition' on the part of the EU for opting to forge onwards with the operation rather than react to UNSC resolutions or other invitations to action. (Estrada-Cañamares, 2015: 188). While this approach may have led to issues further down the line, such as the difficulties in transitioning into phase 2 Bravo, it is also indicative of a politically determined and strategically capable military actor. Therefore, while some have come to characterise the launch of Sophia as a double-edged sword for EU decision makers, from the perspective of EU strategic culture there is enough evidence to suggest further steps towards the increasingly viable application of autonomous and proficient hard power. Indeed, the nature of the transition from an operation to disrupt trafficking operations to the enforcement of an arms embargo is further illustrative of this. The difficulties faced by Sophia may well demonstrate issues with the EU's ability to plan and execute operations such as these; however the fact that Sophia went ahead regardless, and even found further continuity in the form of Irini, suggests a significantly revitalised interest in the centrality of the autonomous projection of hard power to EU strategic culture.

3.3 - Implications for EU Strategic Culture

Operations Sophia and Irini present interesting cases as regards their impact upon EU strategic culture. Indeed, this concept of a double-edged sword appears to be an apt metaphor in these examples. Thus, further investigation is necessary in order to determine the consequences of both the positive and negative outcomes of Sophia and Irini to EU strategic culture.

In an investigation into the EU's strategic capacity, Johansen presents the assertion that the EU has generally not been able to link its military means to its desired ends. (Johansen, 2017: 509). This contention is predicated on several crucial observations regarding internal EU strategic structures as well as the conduct of its military operations. For example, Johansen cites the observations of Engelbrekt on strategic action in order to illustrate that the EU already demonstrates an advanced, independent and deterministic ability to collect and analyse relevant intelligence, and produce desirable and attainable strategic objectives from it. (Engelbrekt, 2008 cited in Johansen, 2017:

509). This is utilised in order to conclude that, because the EU was not able to realise its stated strategic objectives in the case of Sophia through the application of hard power, the EU has a diminished strategic capacity. (Johansen, 2017: 519-520). While this may appear to be a damning indictment of the state of contemporary EU strategic culture, this investigation does not seek to determine the viability of the proposed cases, rather to conclude whether or not they are indicative of an increasing importance of hard power projection to EU strategic decision makers. Thus, from this perspective, the fact that Johansen affirms that the EU possesses a capable and nuanced system for making intelligence actionable and articulating specific and achievable end objectives is, in fact, a clearly positive aspect of EU strategic culture which is made evident by the planning process of Operation Sophia and Operation Irini. In other words, the recognition that the EU was not able to meet the objectives of Sophia neither implies that it does not or never had the capacity to do so and, further, indicates that it is more than capable of identifying specific ends and applying specific means; all of which is indicative of a capable and nuanced strategic actor. The instance of failure does not, in itself, demonstrate that success was never attainable.

These observations are further solidified when one takes into consideration the fact that the EEAS, EUMS & EUMC all identified the legal issues of Sophia prior to its launch. This, demonstrates that the EU's strategic planning process was more than capable of detecting the drawbacks of the operation and is, therefore, a capable and developed system. Furthermore, the EU publicly identified the Mediterranean as an area of enhanced strategic significance as early as 1975, and has been working towards an enhanced capacity to act there since as early as 1995 and, therefore, in now strongly and clearly demonstrating the ability to do so, also exhibits its relative effectiveness as a security provider and hard power actor. (Helsinki Final Act, 1975: 36; Barcelona Declaration, 1995). Some have pointed to the EU's ultimate failure to overcome these obstacles as demonstrative of ineptitude or a lack of strategic competence. However, Operation Sophia alone has been attributed with saving over 150,000 lives, the arrest of over 150 suspected human traffickers and the destruction of over 550 "assets" utilised by traffickers/smugglers. (Boşilcă *et al*, 2021: 224-227). Thus, regardless as to whether or not the operation was able to achieve its ultimate goals and to progress through its proposed stages as intended, it remains a successful test of the CSDP and the EU's ability to conduct naval operations and to react within a limited time frame to crisis scenarios. Furthermore, the fact that EU strategic doctrines sought to retroactively address the shortcomings of Sophia and did so, to a limited extent, through capacity building with the Libyan coastguard, a mandate extension, and the eventual launch of operation Irini, is indicative of more strategic competence than is immediately evident. Indeed, the major criticisms of Sophia and Irini are that they represent military solutions to an inherently civilian issue. This, paints a picture of an EU

which had acquired a hammer in the form of viable naval operations from the success of operation Atalanta and, as a result, began to treat subsequent issues as if they were all nails. This is further evidence of an EU which, for one reason or another, seeks to project autonomous hard power where normative approaches might have otherwise sufficed.

While operations Sophia and Irini may have differed significantly from their predecessors in many ways, in many others they did not. Both operations have added continuity to the framework nation approach which was present in the case of Artemis. This concept has helped the EU to overcome internal disagreements over the course and conduct of operations and has enhanced the importance and function of the smaller EU nations. The most significant of these in the cases of Sophia and Irini were Italy and Greece respectively. It has been noted that Italy's acceptance of this role, in the case of Sophia, resolved many of the practical issues of the launch as well as facilitating an operation which had been desired by the Italians for some time but had yet to go ahead thanks to cold feet from members of the 'big three'. (Johansen, 2017: 520; Boşilcă *et al*, 2021: 223). Greece has also been argued to have occupied a similar role in the case of Irini. (Megerisi, 2020: 6-7). Thus, the framework nation approach appears to have played a significant role in facilitating EU military operations and, therefore, has likely had the consequence of permitting European strategic thinkers a greater degree of flexibility where the application of hard power is concerned. However, also of note here is the fact that, although neither Italy nor Greece are members of the 'big three', both were members of the WEU which, despite now being defunct, continues to impact the shape of EU strategic thought. Therefore, the devolution of strategic control of EU military operations through the framework nation approach to member states that are not historic members of the WEU has yet to occur, and will likely have further consequences for EU strategic culture.

In addition to all of this is the role of the OHR in the launch of Operation Sophia, which appears to have been a key cause of the rushed approach and has potential implications for EU strategic culture going forward. Johansen details the actions of the contemporary HR, Frederica Mogherini, as follows: “Interviewees suggest that the [HR] played a key role in the acceleration of the decision-making process by making it clear that she wanted to see results at every [FAC] meeting. At the following FAC meeting, she wanted the operation to be established, and at the one after that, she wanted it to be launched. (Johansen, 2017: 519). This appears to suggest an increasingly centralised role of the OHR which indicates that the political will of a single non-state actor within the EU may possess the relevant influence to initiate or, at least, expedite the planning processes for military operations. Thus, operations Sophia and Irini represent scenarios where crises, such as what occurred at Lampedusa, have irreversibly centralised EU control over naval assets for the

advancement of EU strategic capabilities and, therefore, culture. This, in tandem with the other observations of this section, presents a compelling case for an increasingly important and relevant role of hard power as a viable tool within European strategic culture.

3.4 - UNSC Resolutions, Copying and Legal Issues

The extent of the similarities between operations Sophia and Irini with their predecessors in the form of Artemis and Althea have been considered, however there is another EU military operation with conspicuous similarities that has been regarded only in passing until this stage: EUNAVFOR Atalanta. Indeed, the fact that the ten point plan which was procured in the aftermath of Lampedusa specifically mentions Atalanta, as well as other similarities in the conduct of the two operations has led to accusations of institutional copying by several observers. (Verdun, 2015; Kamkhaji and Radaelli, 2017; Boşilcă *et al*, 2021). Thus, the consequences of this will be investigated alongside the apparent necessity of a UNSC mandate for EU military operations in order to comprehend the supposed preconditions under which the EU is capable of projecting hard power autonomously, or more likely to so.

Boşilcă, Sternberg and Riddervold present a thesis which describes the EU's strategic decision making process as 'pathdependent' policy choices which are inherently more contingent on the processes and outcomes of previous operations than those of other actors. (Boşilcă *et al*, 2021: 221-223). They argue that the crisis scenario created by the events at Lampedusa left EU decision makers with little time or ability to come up with independent and innovative solutions to the problem at hand and that this, coupled with the 'pathdependent' nature of the EU resulted in the decision to essentially copy the operational structures and processes of Atalanta and simply reapply the same solution to the Mediterranean situation. (Boşilcă *et al*, 2021: 221-223). This thesis, if true, has several interesting implications for the role of the projection of hard power as a tool of EU strategic culture going forward.

The first, most conspicuous point, and the subject of Boşilcă, Sternberg and Riddervold's investigation, is that the EU's internal strategic evaluation processes lack robustness and nuance, and will seek solutions from the past that appear good enough to solve the issue at hand, rather than attempting more relevant innovations. (Boşilcă *et al*, 2021: 221-223). However, this has greater implications for EU strategic culture than merely inferring a lack of competence. For the EU to have looked back to previous military operations and identified Atalanta as the most appropriate or relevant framework from which to construct a new Mediterranean operation appears to be indicative of a significant shift towards the application of autonomous hard power. Operation Atalanta is a significant counter-piracy operation that is still being undertaken by the EU (and UK) around the

Gulf of Aden and Western Indian Ocean. Not only does the operation consist of 19 of the 27 EU member states, but also has significant support from NATO partners such as the US and Canada as well as other large international actors including China, India, Japan and Russia, as part of a larger anti-piracy operation in the region. (eunavfor.eu). Thus, for Atalanta to have been deemed an appropriate framework for Sophia, strategic thinkers within the EU must have had a strong belief in the EU's ability to generate a broad sense of consensus among enough nations to fulfil the necessary requirements for an operation of this magnitude, as well as having a belief in the capacity of the EU to act autonomously from NATO and the other significant actors which were present in the example of Atalanta. Whether or not these beliefs were well founded is largely irrelevant to the observation that the EU opted to act militarily, autonomously, rapidly and at a vast scale. When examining the previous examples of Artemis and Althea it was necessary to evaluate the arguments which depicted these operations as largely, French, NATO or UN affairs which were only nominally controlled by the EU. Not only is this evidently not the case for Sophia, but in terms of planning, ambition and scale, Sophia eclipses many other EU military operations and stands as a strong testament to an EU which highly values its strategic capabilities, and the projection of hard power autonomously from even aligned or allied states.

A second critical observation emerges when more closely examining Operation Irini, which has largely been sidelined until this point. It has already been mentioned that Irini, as an operation to enforce an arms embargo, is a clearer example of the projection of hard power. In addition to this is the fact that Sophia transitioned, more or less, directly into Irini in an attempt to address the legal issues surrounding Sophia's ability to operate in Libyan waters. (Mantini, 2019: 3-4). Interesting interactions arise when one takes these observations in tandem with the concept that the EU's strategic policy making process exhibits a 'pathdependent' nature. Until Operation Sophia all the previously examined cases of EU military operations have relied upon a UNSC mandate for both a legal framework and call to action. In the case of Sophia, the EU was essentially punished for failing to acquire a mandate and then subsequently rewarded for transitioning into an operation that was both based on a UNSC mandate and more clearly demonstrated hard power projection. Thus, if the EU is indeed as sensitive to "sticky or inertial" strategic policy decisions as proposed, then there are good reasons to believe that future EU military operations will lean heavily into UNSC mandates and strong demonstrations of hard power projection. (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Ansell 2020; cited in Boşilcă *et al*, 2021: 222). Indeed, the fact that operation Irini was able to come quietly to a close earlier this year having fulfilled its remit without great controversy over legal questions and the status of migrants will also likely be perceived as a potential successful framework for future EU military operations.

It should be noted, however, that operations Sophia and Irini were not entirely independent of NATO. Operation Active Endeavour was a NATO naval mission that had been taking place in the Mediterranean since 2001. (nato.int, 2016). Not long after the launch of Operation Sophia, NATO replaced Active Endeavour with Operation Sea Guardian, a publicly stated mission objective of which was to collaborate with and provide support to operations Sophia and Irini. (nato.int, 2021). Therefore, the EU is once again open to criticisms which relate to the extent of its reliance on NATO assets as well as its ability to conduct strategic operations with complete autonomy. However, this is much less significant than in the case of Operation Althea which, in turn, lends credence to the concept of an EU which is on a path towards not only the increasing viability of hard power projection, but autonomous hard power projection. Thus, it may well be true that Sophia was controversial, inefficient and indicative of poor planning. It may also be true that a non-civilian operation was inappropriate for the circumstances, that more soft power should have been applied and that Irini might only represent an attempt to save face after rushed preparations led to legal problems. (Mantini, 2019: 2-3). But none of these observations undermine the concept which this investigation has asserted throughout this chapter: the EU appears to demonstrate a trajectory away from the status of a normative power, towards one which is not only capable, but actively seeks to pursue the projection of hard power through military operations which are autonomous from other aligned or allied actors.

3.5 - Summary

To conclude, there are very few normative aspects of naval force projection. Even if one takes into consideration that the original plans for Sophia appeared to include more soft power approaches as well as helping to facilitate NGO and SAR actions in the Mediterranean, the centrality of the projection of hard power remains evident. This is further evidenced by the transition of the operation from one designed to target human traffickers to the enforcement of an arms embargo and the fact that a naval operation was deemed relevant to the issue of people smuggling in the first place. Further, the fact that the EU continues to utilise the framework nation concept in order to launch military operations and, specifically in this case, an operation that was desired by smaller EU states rather than any one or combination of members of the 'big three', demonstrates that the EU possesses a tried and tested method for the application of hard power, regardless of internal disunity. Indeed, opening up EU assets to the smaller nations will likely have the effect of an increased number of EU military operations and, therefore, be further demonstrative of an EU which increasingly seeks to fulfil strategic objectives through the projection of hard power. Thus, the cases of Operation Sophia and Operation Irini appear to demonstrate that the EU is on a

trajectory away from the typical trappings of a normative power and is ever more able and likely to utilise hard power as a tool to achieve strategic objectives. This is further indicated by the 'pathdependent' thesis, regardless as to whether or not one believes the accusations of institutional copying or general ineptitude on the part of the EU's strategic decision making processes. Indeed, there are countless arguments, papers and theses which have described the 2001 and 2003 invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq as similarly strategically inept and failing to address the root causes of the instability in these nations; and yet there are no serious criticisms to be found of the US, UK or NATO which depict them as curtailed by normative underpinnings or as strategically underdeveloped or subordinate. Therefore, operations Sophia and Irini should be understood to be strong examples of the centrality of the projection of hard power within EU strategic culture.

Conclusion

Each of the case studies which have been analysed throughout the course of this paper have presented their own nuances and implications as regards the autonomous projection of hard power as a core aspect of EU strategic culture. Indeed, to have analysed only a single case study would have led to quite different conclusions for the way in which EU hard power projection as a tool of strategic culture can be understood. However, as has been demonstrated in the prior analyses, and as this paper continues to assert, only through analysis of multiple military operations, with respect to one another and with respect to the research question, can the conclusion of this project be reached: the EU has placed itself upon a trajectory whereby the autonomous projection of hard power is an increasingly relevant and applicable tool in the arsenal of EU strategic culture.

Analysis of the example of Operation Althea revealed that during the early years or formative period of EU military operations, the EU adopted a relatively reserved posture. The number of troops deployed, while initially high, was quickly reduced. Thus, the logistical and strategic burden on EU structures was diminished. (Knauer, 2011). Furthermore, the EU was always able to rely on 'over the horizon' NATO forces, therefore once again reducing the need for a comprehensive or overly reactive grand strategy to address any potential shortcomings. (Kupferschmidt, 2006; Knauer, 2011). There are positive aspects to be taken from Althea, such as the recognition of a need for clear terms to bring about an end to EU military operations, or the demonstrable desire to act independently from the US in a location deemed to be of enhanced strategic importance to the EU specifically. However, the case does still appear to confirm the observations of the EU-NATO conundrum. (Simón, 2013, 2016, 2016). Hence, an analysis of Operation Althea alone does not support observations which define the EU as an independent or developed strategic hard power actor.

Bringing Operation Artemis under scrutiny, however, adds significant nuance to the considerations surrounding Althea. Artemis solidifies the concept that strategic thinkers within the EU demonstrate a desire to act as a separate security provider from the US. (János, 2015). Further, it demonstrates that the driving political willpower of the EU 'big three', coupled with a fundamental framework nation approach, permits the EU to act rapidly, independently and comprehensively to deploy military power. (Ulriksen *et al*, 2004). The criticisms of Artemis as a thinly veiled French military operation fall short of the standards of conclusive, condemnatory evidence. Although Artemis remains an example of a relatively small military operation which is also heavily indicative of the application of extensive diplomatic and normative approaches, it also shows that the EU can act on

UN mandates decisively, and even deliver upon strategic objectives where other larger and more developed actors – in this case the UN itself – have failed. (Howorth, 2004). The major limitation of Artemis, in so far as it can be thought to exemplify the autonomous projection of hard power as a core aspect of EU strategic culture, comes from the extent to which it appears to be more indicative of the EU acting as a security provider in the place of the US and UN rather than as an actor which seeks to apply hard power to problems that have been identified within its own apparatus of strategic thought. However, an EU that seeks to act militarily at the behest of the UN is still indicative of an actor with the ability to apply hard power solutions, within a broader framework of strategic culture, to crisis scenarios. (Major, 2008).

The introduction of the cases of Operation Sophia and Operation Irini shift the narrative once again. The rapid deployment of significant naval assets, without prompting from the international community or direct justification from a UN mandate, is clear evidence of an actor with both the desire and capabilities to project hard power in order to achieve strategic objectives. (Estrada-Cañamares, 2015). This becomes even more self-evident when placed in context with the scale, cost and ambition of operations Althea and Artemis. Further, the solidification of the framework nation approach and the demonstration that the EU is capable and willing to project significant hard power at the behest of the smaller nations, not just the 'big three', all contribute to an understanding of a fundamental shift towards a trajectory in which military power projection is more likely than ever before. (Johansen, 2017; Megerisi, 2020; Boşilcă *et al*, 2021). The most serious criticisms of Sophia and Irini relate to an over-reliance on the principles of Operation Atalanta to achieve a fundamentally different set of objectives, as well as a series of tactical failures at the planning stage which have been alleged to demonstrate ineptitude on the part of EU strategic thinkers. (Johansen, 2017; Boşilcă *et al*, 2021). However, this paper asserts that these criticisms are also true of the known, comprehensive hard power actors and, further, the accusations of the institutional copying of Operation Atalanta – another evident example of the projection of hard power – reinforces the conclusions of this analysis, rather than diminishing them.

Thus, it has been demonstrated that since 2003, the EU has shown an increasing appetite for the application of hard power solutions to strategic problems. Where the EU has struggled or failed, attempts have been made to address these issues, and the volume, scope and overall comprehensiveness of these military operations has increased. (Palm, 2017). Not only this, but the EU has also been shown to have the capability and desire to act autonomously from the actors with which it has been closely aligned, by choice or otherwise. (Ulriksen *et al*, 2004; Ortega, 2007; János, 2015; Estrada-Cañamares, 2015). All of this is not to say, however, that the EU will henceforth only seek to apply military solutions to strategic problems or that where and when it

does these operations will be total or comprehensive successes. The extensive period in which the EU could accurately be described as the Venus to the US' Mars has had consequences for the manner in which the EU has emerged as a military actor and the methodology of its hard power actions. There are, indeed, still many factors such as the ramifications of Brexit, the continued lack of an EU army or intelligence service or the fact that a non-WEU member has yet to fulfil the role of the framework nation within an EU military operation which will continue to shape the responses of EU strategic thinkers to the future issues of the union. (Hyde-Price, 2006; Matlary, 2006; Billon-Galland and Williams, 2019). Furthermore, this paper does not assert that once the EU has been given a taste of autonomy that it will seek to act independently forever onwards. Indeed, the consequences of the Russian annexation of Crimea has necessitated closer engagement between the EU, NATO and the US once again. (Drent *et al*, 2019). What does appear clear, however, is that analysis of EU military operations reveals that the EU has, willingly, placed itself upon a trajectory whereby the autonomous projection of hard power is an increasingly relevant and applicable tool in the arsenal of EU strategic culture. The possibility of the EU as Minerva rather than Venus not only remains, but appears to be the will of EU strategic thinkers, and a more likely outcome than ever before.

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