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DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION STRATEGIC CULTURE: NARRATIVE, INSTITUTIONAL AND NORMATIVE ASPECTS***

Abstract

In this paper, we examine the issue of the strategic culture of the European Union as a requirement for the autonomous concept in international relations. The subject of this research focuses on narrative, institutional, and normative aspects of aligning the perception and solidarity of the member states in connection with the threats to the Union's values and interests. For the assessment of the state, current tendencies, and possible development of the joint EU strategic culture, we have used the comparative analysis of secondary sources, as well as the analysis of the contents of the EU organs' documents referring to the narratives and institutional support to the development of the autonomous collective strategic thinking and acting. Some special attention has been paid to the challenges occurring within the process, considering the fact that it is, in terms of values and interests, potentially a supranational entity having the capacity to influence international relations in a relatively independent way (Fabbrini 2020). The aim is to qualify the state of the Union in the current geopolitical environment and to identify the elements on which one may assess this organisation's strategic development. The acquired results show that the joint strategic culture is the requirement for the EU to become an autonomous security participant on the international

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stage. A specific finding is the estimate that institutional mechanisms assigned by the founding agreements do not fit the joint strategic thinking of the member states, which is currently undermining the prospects of the development of the joint strategic culture and the EU position in global affairs.

Keywords: joint identity, joint defence, tradition, sovereignty, strategic autonomy

INTRODUCTION

The concept of strategic culture implies the existence of a common perception of threats to the survival and functioning of the political community. Its significance stems from the fact that in its semantic field, the reasons for the necessity of collective actions abide, which contributes to the creation of concord and unity within the community. Thus observed, it can present the essential characteristic of a credible defence.

During the last decade, we could witness intensive aspirations to strengthen defensive and security mechanisms within the European Union. If observed from the point of political narrative aspect, it is noticeable that the EU officials and institutions step out with the thesis that the Union is facing ever greater challenges in the strategic surroundings. Neither trying to analyse the Joint Foreign and Defence EU Policies, nor the diplomatic skill often established by dictates, blackmails, and unwillingness to compromise and coexist, we ought to take into account that these political narratives imply that the EU member states are exposed to hostile undertakings tending to cause divisions among them, along with the foreign interference aiming to discredit the EU democratic systems. In that context, informative space, both media and capillary, is daily exposed to the placement of the narratives of the alleged cyber attacks and campaigns of misinformation against the EU members, followed by the campaigns of defaming certain states, marked as unfriendly or inadequate in terms of their political systems.

Having considered the EU Strategic Compass and space defence technologies, adopted by the EU Council on March 21st, 2022, it has been pointed out as the document setting up the frame for directing the defence policy in the decades to come. The EU is proclaimed to be dedicated to the protection of its citizens, values, and interests, as well as to the contribution to global peace and security. The current confrontation between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, at the EU borders, and especially the Russian progress regarding their military capacities, primarily the

missile technology, the EU views as an opportunity to reinforce its own defence position and to improve the cooperation between the member states so as to develop the capacities for efficiently dealing with the challenges (Council of the European Union 2022).

The challenges faced by the EU have been more thoroughly examined in the analytical document *European Defence – Readiness 2023*, issued by the EU Commission and defining defence threats. Two threats are prominent there. The first concerns the crises at the European borders: Russia as the central threat and the Ukraine and Belarus situation, with the proclamation that the Belarusian authorities are involved in the act of state terrorism over the European airspace. As the second threat, there are a few challenges for the global well-being: Chinese reinforcement of their military presence and wide use of misinformation and propaganda, the treatment of Hong Kong and oppression towards the Uyghurs, the worsening security situation in Sahel, disturbing the regional peace development while presenting a huge risk for the Europeans, the unclear future of Syria and Libya, challenging matters regarding the strategic direction of Iran and Turkey, the security situation in Mozambique and Ethiopia, and another reason for additional huge concern – free access to naval, space, air and cyber space (European Commission 2023).

At the core of these definitions, there is the regional and global EU ambition, both in the sense of its further expansion and increasing the significance of its role in global issues. The EU tendency to develop a joint strategic culture right now can be seen through the evolution of security narratives, aligning the Strategic Compass and its consequences on the acquisition of political autonomy and overcoming the challenges that disturb the progress of a clear joint strategic culture.

In general, culture is everything that humans create, alter, or adjust for themselves (Bauman 1984, 7–8). A well-rounded culture can be created by a community internally connected with their shared points of view, customs, interests, beliefs, and the flows of history. Human societies also create certain patterns of behaviour and reactions in situations that demand action in international relations. Therefore, culture encompasses the conceptualisation of threats, challenges, risks, and the ways of facing them, including the notion of the use of force or abstaining from it. All of these are covered by the concept of strategic culture. Strategic culture involves a set of traditions, values, patterns of behaviour, shared achievements, history, and methods of solving issues and decision-making (Blagojević *et al.* 2025, 16–17). It can describe and clarify the differences or complementarity with other communities. Hence, the strategic cultures of the EU member states may be differentiated. For example, France is a nuclear power fully integrating the potential use

of force into its strategy. On the other hand, due to their well-known 20th-century experiences of the World Wars, Germany is quite cautious in its national strategy regarding the use of force. The other member states, depending on their constitutional systems and historic experiences, may embody radically different strategic cultures, such as neutrality, as in the case of Hungary concerning the conflicts outside the EU territory (Institute for Security Studies 2021).

Therefore, it is justified to pose the question of the extent to which the contours of the joint EU strategic cultures can be formed. Strategic culture does not only refer to the institutions or defence tools, but it first and foremost concerns the exact actions and results, and is expressed via the activities. In that sense, one may wonder whether the tendency to the common acceptable narrative can be adequate to provide clarity in the practical implementation of the EU strategic culture and, within that frame, whether the narrative promoting the antagonism towards the Russian Federation can be good enough.

Strategic cultures are no unchangeable phenomena. They evolve over time, in accordance with new experiences and needs dictated by the environment and one's own capacities. When it comes to the EU, in favour of the creation of a shared feeling of strategic understanding and active solidarity of the member states, there is the joint distribution of forces in the operations or missions in the world, or for the protection of the EU. The existence of a perception of a certain threat to the common EU values and interests or at least solidarity in relation to that source of threat in the region outside the Union, worthy of the readiness to apply force, may be proven by the contemplation of several European states to be engaged militarily in the Sahel region (European External Action 2021). The fact that the missions in Niger and Mali have been ousted does not diminish the awareness of the EU interest or at least some of its influential members for this region. The development of the EU strategic culture, not depending on being in their own, general or the USA interest, show the interest in the situation of free sailing in the Guinea Bay, as well as the initiative to deploy naval missions to the Red sea because of the Yemeni Houthi blockages. Such military efforts may support functional formats, such as European initiatives for interventions, instigated by France in September 2017 as a part of their vision for "*sovereign, united and democratic Europe*". Although that is an attempt for the European states to enable them to take over the greater responsibility for their own security through joint European intervening forces and joint doctrine for acting independently from the European Union, in spite of many viewing this proposal as a tool to overcome the French frustration due to the EU inability to be engaged in the

potential crises within the member states sphere of influence, the fact is that nine EU members signed this initiative (Mills 2019, 1). Today, not counting the help to Ukraine in the conflict with Russia, the EU participates in peace operations, prevention of conflicts and strengthening international security with approximately 3.500 military officers and 1.300 civilians distributed worldwide in 20 EU missions and operations, including eight military and one civil-military initiative (European External Action 2025).

MILITARY POWER: FROM INTERNATIONAL MILITARY COOPERATION TO JOINT MILITARY ENGAGEMENT

Our current practice has shown that the EU tends to be a global agent. In that respect, joint initiatives offer palpable and concrete contributions to raising strategic awareness and strategic dialogue among the member states. They embody the strategic culture on the EU level.

The capacity can operatively act rather rapidly when there is agreement among member states, and the European Union has demonstrated that by initiating the military operation in the Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED IRINI). It is primarily the implementation of the UN embargo regarding the import of weapons, i.e. the EU contribution in terms of organising the international law implementation with the help of their member states joint air, satellite and naval forces. This operation has secondary tasks that include the prevention of illegal export of oil from Libya, enabling and developing the Libyan coast guard and navy in order to implement the laws at sea, especially those directed against smuggling and trafficking people, and help considering the mitigation of smuggling and trafficking people via collecting the information and patrolling in the open sea (Council of the European Union 2020, 4).

Operatively observed, the EU does have the members of its armed and security forces distributed in joint missions and operations. In order to advance its operative engagement and strategic presence in the world, the Union has developed certain institutional tools. Among them, there is the capability for military planning and conducting (MPCC), the staff in charge of operational planning and carrying out the EU military missions without executive authorisation, founded in 2017 with the aim of providing faster, more efficient, and effective activities of the EU as the guarantor of security without its borders (European External Action). The staff is currently commanding the EU training missions in Somalia and the Central African Republic, the mission

of military help in Mozambique and Ukraine, and the EU initiative for security and defence in the Gulf of Guinea.

Secondly, since 2022, there has been the capacity for rapid distribution, which should enable rapid distribution of the modified fighting groups with up to 5.000 troops, including land, air, and naval elements, along with strategic enablers. This capacity was introduced via the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, which extends the Global EU Strategies by establishing actions and instruments that allow the Union to act faster and more decisively in crises, with MPCC being the preferred command element (European External Action 2023).

The next tool is the European Peace Fund (EPF), the EU instrument established in 2021 by the Council decision to reinforce the EU capability to prevent conflicts, build peace and strengthen security by financing outside of the regular budget of military mission within the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and offering military help to partner states, among which there are Ukraine, Albania and Moldova (European Commission 2025).

Finally, there is a Coordinated Maritime Presence (CMP), the tool enabling the improvement of coordinating naval and air instruments of the member states in the regions of interest for the EU Common Security and Defence Policy. However, that is the specific instrument connected neither to the missions nor operations. The coordination is conducted on a voluntary basis, under the chains of command of member states (European External Action 2024).

This indicates that the EU strategic culture is not built only on joint perceptions of threats, but through joint project engagement as well. In that context, permanent structured cooperation as a mechanism within the Common Security and Defence Policy enables the member states to cooperate after their own initiative in the development of defence capacities through shared projects and by undertaking obligations conceived to improve the EU security and defence. Furthermore, this implies that strategic awareness, as the essential expression of strategic culture, is generated through the development of institutional capacities, too.

It is beyond doubt that the EU is geopolitically facing a more turbulent world, but there is less consensus on whether it is a more hostile world and what the EU is supposed to be able to do practically regarding the differences as perceived by the member states. This is the consequence of the states having their own strategic cultures based on history, culture and geographical position. That raises the question of whether they are an obstacle to the cultivation of the EU strategic culture, in particular if the EU is accepted as an international organisation not necessarily having

a uniform strategic culture, but a shared one meant to be built up on the national ones. A dilemma stems from this: can the common EU strategic culture, with productive impact, be the result of dialogue and experience apart from the vision of individual member states?

For the member states to achieve a more coherent approach to the development of defence capacities, mutual understanding of the use of power is a must. Strategic culture involves more than just military power; it refers to security and defence as much as to the geostrategic role of the EU. Hence, that is actually the political awareness. Nevertheless, a limited attention paid to the idea proclaimed at the Conference on the Future of Europe, on the formation of the European Defence Union and introduction of voting by the qualified majority (Meijer and Klein 2024, 1), proves that there still is no constructed collective political ambition and unity to overcome more efficiently the obstacles to the evolution of a joint strategic culture.

In relation to the development of strategic culture, one ought to bear in mind the important aspect is the ideological awareness of the future generations (Meibauer 2020, 20). In order for values and interests to have a greater influence on the younger generations, their comprehension of politics, power, and conflicts can be linked with the concrete problems of their lives. This demands an active dialogue within the communities on strategic matters so as to triumph over the passive influence of movies and social networks in order to stimulate their social engagement.

As a platform for raising strategic solidarity among member states in solving the threats, there is the EU Strategic Compass (Council of the EU and EP 2024). This document follows the defence initiatives introduced in 2016. It tends to promote the collective understanding of the EU strategic culture in the sphere of security and defence. Yet, its effectiveness depends on the proactive approach of member states, so as to ensure that strategic thinking could be the priority on the political stage and help the alignment of perceptions and aims (Institute for Security Studies 2021). This is linked to the issue of whether the strategic dialogue can substitute historic experience and practice. Momentarily, the EU is not in the good place in the sense that it lacks capacities and key initiatives. Thus, a normative instrument such as the Strategic Compass can add value to the idea and development of the EU strategic culture by accentuating the importance of defence, but the economies of the member states have shown an unfavourable trend, while China, Russia and the USA are getting apart with their military capacities.

It seems that a more frequent distribution of the member states forces into the civilian and military missions and operations could be the incentive to the EU strategic culture. A true EU

strategic culture cannot be created without the development of the potential EU responses originating from the clause on mutual help and the clause on solidarity, as planned by the Agreement on the EU and the Agreement on the EU Functioning. The reach of normative acts is there to cast emphasis on the need for growing interoperability between the armed forces of the member states and downsizing strategic dependence so as to advance the capacity for acting and strategic autonomy along with strengthening the role of the strategic partners of NATO and the USA.

Another significant element of institutional incentives for building up the EU strategic culture is strategic communication. The EU institutions and bodies are expected to ensure that defence and security are prominent in the political discourse of the EU. While communicating with the public, the institutions and governments should be open in their talks on the EU position both globally and geopolitically. Considering the current lack of EU military power, strategic communication implies raising the awareness of the key issues related to geopolitics, power and peace.

STRATEGIC COMPASS AND POSITIONING OF THE EU AS A SECURITY AGENT

Joint foreign and security EU policy starts with promoting democracy, human rights, rule of law, and peace, as well as basic values in international relations and implementation of procedures such as aid, trade, cultural programmes, and diplomacy, aiming to attract and convince third countries, their governments, and populations. Such an approach assures the positioning as a *civilian power* having the possibility to shape international norms and values by offering stability and development, while on the other hand, it has the possibility to act in accordance with the principles of peace, stability, and cooperation without resorting to the means of hard power. This foreign policy strategy was fundamental in establishing the EU's position in international affairs. The lack of one's own hard power was being replaced by the membership of its members in NATO and strategic partnership with the USA as the global hegemon. Under the circumstances of new geopolitical challenges, due to the development of multipolarity and Russia becoming a power ready to protect its national interests even by force if necessary, the EU faces the temptation to be formatted as a more active security agent or to be reduced to a political wing within NATO. To accomplish its aims and become the effective global (world) geopolitical player, the EU member

states should develop their joint strategic culture, i. e. the agreed understanding of threats and common approach to defence and security policy. This transformation and tendency towards the greater EU independence impose a serious problem: how to achieve joint autonomy while simultaneously maintaining full political and sovereign control of every individual member state over their own foreign and security policy?

The Ukrainian armed conflict has made bare some institutional and strategic challenges to the creation of the joint EU position; primarily, some member states are under the USA influence, while the EU has no capacity to act outside the articulation of NATO policies, even when they do not comply with or are against the interests of some members. The result is the increase in the gap between the EU capabilities and expectations that undermines the prospects for military coordination and interoperability (Sorbino 2024, 2).

At the end of the 20th century and in the early 21st century, soft power presented the dominant method imposed by the EU in international relations. This attitude invigorated its agent role, shaping global norms and values through its policies, not by force. In that sense, the soft power dimension stood out in the first narrative on European security, the European Security Strategy from 2003, in which the EU is depicted as “*the power of good*” (Council of the European Union 2003). From this narrative comes the message that it is an agent with the ambition to improve values and stability internationally (Barbé and Morillas 2019) and that is dedicated to the construction of a more balanced world order based on the system of rules (Mälksoo 2016).

The EU’s ambition was not in agreement with the new geopolitical events (for example, the Crimea annexation by the Russian Federation, unilateral secession of the eastern parts of Ukraine in 2024), which radically changed the auto-perception of the EU. The new events have proven that the borders of the EU normative influence and reach. Therefore, in 2016, they developed a new security strategy called the EU Global Strategy, presenting a more realistic context of the European foreign and defence policy (European External Action Service 2016). The foundation for this security strategy was “*responsible engagement*”, aspiring to align strategic tendencies (state resilience, conflict resolution, regional cooperation, and citizen protection) (Biscop 2022). This strategy breathes principled pragmatism since it integrates political realism with strategic goals. That indicates the emergence of hard power with the tendency to fulfil the integration of practices and policy (Barbé and Morillas 2019). The statement that security

strategies announce the EU concept as a security agent of some kind with a special identity appears to be well-grounded (Mälksoo 2016, 376).

The outbreak of the Ukrainian war brought back the policy of force in Europe. Thence the need for a more pragmatic security strategy of the Union, i. e., Strategic Compass (Council of the European Union 2022). It expresses an ambitious narrative directed to the bettering of foreign, security and defence policy of the EU until 2030, and the cultivation of the common strategic culture, and the member states are instigated to agree on the key threats to the EU and to develop the responses together (Scazzieri 2020). This poses the potential base for the development of a more harmonised approach to the EU security and defence. The Strategic Compass has received support from the European Council owing to its pragmatic aspects in terms of integration in defence, with the focus on Russia as the enemy (Fiott 2023). Four directions of the EU defence policy have been defined: the development of capacities for rapid distribution; advancement of the capabilities for predicting threats through a larger exchange of intelligence; investment in the technological capacities and military-industrial base; and strengthening strategic partnerships (Fabbrini 2022, 12). By defining the pillars (acting, securing, investing, and partnership), the Strategic Compass sets up the plan for the EU defence in the form of a defence agent and, consequently, necessarily with the common strategic culture.

For the first time, this security frame introduces the joint estimates of threats to the member states. This estimate aids the identification of a string of shared perceived threats, including geopolitical tensions, military engagement, hybrid tactics, cyber attacks, and terrorism (Fiott 2023). It enables that on the EU level diverse scripts can be predicted, prepared, and responded to in terms of endangering the Union's security (Rodriguez 2022). We may argue that the Strategic Compass represents an attempt for the dimension of hard power to be integrated into the European rhetoric of soft power. The most disputed element of "*the EU hard power*" is the development of a joint strategic culture, as the member governments disagree about the importance of military power and the attitudes on legality and legitimacy of the use of force (Moser 2020, 12). Proposing the joint and integrated approach to defence and security, this strategy could present the initial step towards the independent EU political activities in international relations and strategic autonomy. According to Helwig, the EU is narrowly focusing on its dependence on the USA as the guarantor of security, and strategic autonomy would represent its ability to advance a range of its international policies based on its varying values and interests. In his opinion, without the

advancement in political autonomy, especially when it comes to the convergence of strategic member cultures, it is difficult to realise the joint set of norms, strategic evaluations, and patterns of behaviour that could ease the joint activities in global undertakings (Helwig 2020, 11). Viewed as the promotion of common priorities, joint estimates of threats, and harmonisation of defence strategies, the Strategic Compass tends to increase the potential of the EU action and thus stimulate the creation of the joint strategic culture, by which the frame for the joint EU defence could be strengthened.

CHALLENGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF JOINT EU STRATEGIC CULTURE

Over the years, the EU has perfected its security narratives, but in practice, there is still an array of challenges preventing it from developing its strategic culture. Some of these challenges stood out in the EU's reactions to the Ukraine conflict. Several issues have been noticed there, all stemming from the founding agreements, such as lack of appropriate supranational jurisdiction and reaching relevant decisions when unanimous voting is required (Fabbrini 2022, 11). In theory, two general challenges to the development of agreed and consistent political autonomy exist: one is institutional, the other is strategic.

Considering the institutional level, the fact is that valid founding EU agreements predict foreign, security and defence policy to be conditioned by the approval of member states, which may have different national priorities. Due to that, the decisions in these fields depend on the approval and voluntary agreement of member states, which may have different visions and therefore delay coming to a mutual consensus on the international stage. Hence, coherent EU actions have no supremacy over the right of veto and obligation of unanimity, which objectively are the source of authority of member states, even at the price of togetherness. Unanimity frequently disrupted the EU's foreign policy agility and the tendency of "the ever closer Union", which has led to the EU's inability to act as a uniform and quick global agent. Strategic autonomy cannot be separated from foreign policy strategy. In order to achieve that autonomy, the EU ought to be able to maintain unity and reach a balance between autonomous articulation of its jurisdiction in various areas of politics on the international level, its engagement with strategic partners, and duties in the context of global management arrangements (Pirozzi and Ntousas 2019, 7). Inter-government logic often complicates the development of the strong "*institutional autonomy*"

(Helwig 2020), which generates important challenges in the formulation of joint strategic culture. The obstacle lies in aligning different national priorities and their filtration through institutional channels to coordinate them with the Union attitude. Institutional fragmentation, caused by the right of veto and the need for unanimity, makes the EU less aligned when faced with situations requiring fast decisions. This was the most obvious during the Ukraine conflict, where the initiatives of the EU and some member states came across the opposition of some other members, so they were postponed (Psara 2024). The use of the right of veto disturbed the decision-making process, thus limiting the ability of the EU to respond to the conflict as an organisation, which some interpret as the demand for unanimity that is harmful for the EU's ability to act efficiently and fast. According to Koenig, Article 44 of the EU Agreement enables the Council to confer unanimously the conduct of a mission or operation to the group of willing and able member states that would consequently internally agree on the governing, but this clause has never been put to use. The Strategic Compass proclaims that the states until 2023 are "to decide on practical modalities for implementing Article 44", but the problem occurs because this clause initially requires a unanimous decision (Koenig 2022, 7).

From the strategic point of view, apart from having different strategic interests, every member state experiences the threats differently. "European defence depends on the degree to which the European strategic cultures converge, from cooperating among the Europeans in the creation of new military capabilities and the role that the Europeans are willing to play so as to preserve their own security" (Grevi 2022, 100). Strategic cacophony is especially noticeable during the Ukraine conflict, where the Union struggled to align the European collective interest with the combination of different national strategic cultures, interests, and policies. Such heterogeneity of strategic thinking complicates the adoption of the common line in the EU foreign policy and subsequently - the joint strategic culture.

The presence of institutional and strategic challenges is contributing to deepening the gap between the EU's capabilities and expectations, i.e., a profound dichotomy between what the EU is expected to do and its real operative abilities (Hill 1993). This difficulty in balancing the will and ability to act makes the entire development of joint strategic culture even harder, which also goes for strategic autonomy. The inability for the tendencies imposed by the organisation to be aligned with the EU operative realities reaches the position of a united and influential participant in international relations (Fabbrini 2022). The discrepancy between desires and possibilities is

limiting the EU's ability to formulate and carry out the policies that would express an aligned strategic vision of its member states and also to achieve autonomy on the global stage. In that sense, Josep Borrell, a former high EU representative for foreign affairs, recognised that “security and defence probably are the area in the EU integration with the largest gap between expectations and results. Between what we could be, what the citizens demand and what we are achieving” (Borrell 2022).

Under the circumstances of a non-existent appropriate joint strategic culture of the EU, one may expect the lack of interoperability of member states military capacities. This discrepancy results in the problem of coordinating defensive efforts and establishing a unified front in terms of international security. Namely, without a clear common strategic frame, the members are exposed to the difficulties in the efficient alignment of their operational doctrines, which is essential for their joint reactions to crises and operations. The EU military operations demand from the EU at least the convergence of member states national strategic cultures, just to reach “*better joint understanding of crises and conflicts, better preparations, readiness, and increase in interoperability between the armed forces and faster decision-making*”. The EU initiative for interventions is to be observed in that context, as proposed by the French president, not to create the new forces on alert, but to develop the joint strategic culture. A more detailed analysis of the differences between the EU members shows the challenges faced by this joint culture-building ambition (Zandee and Kruijver 2019, 31, 27). The development of the joint EU strategic culture still appears to be limited by the member states' preferences. We can discern that strategic ambiguity on how the EU would intervene suffers from the fundamental lack of political will to act, particularly without the USA's participation (Gallo *et al.* 2024, 6–7). Anyway, in spite of the differences regarding strategic aims and instruments, national strategic cultures have displayed a certain approach in their perceptions of strategic environment, so it looks like they are recognising the EU as a legitimate and favourable platform for cooperation in the field of security and defence. This demonstrates that we should not neglect the prospects for the emergence of the European strategic culture and Joint Security and Defence EU Policy (Mi 2022, 575). In relation to this, the doctrine points to the growing participation of the EU in international operations of managing crises and stabilisation, including the joint operations with NATO and the United Nations. We are not to deny the existence of the awareness of the joint strategic culture being of vital significance

for the fulfilment of the EU ambition to be the active global agent (Schmidt and Zyla 2013, 8). In case it fails, its actions will be more based on the flexibility of member states than on the unity.

CONCLUSION

The joint strategic culture is the indispensable condition for the EU to become an independent security participant on the international stage. At the moment, the differences in strategic thinking of its member states, under the circumstances of legally assigned institutional mechanisms, are undermining the prospects for its development.

As the elements that the narrative dimension of the development of the joint strategic culture is founded upon today, the theory recognises peace, multilateralism, and an all-embracing approach to security, since the identity of the Union as “*a peace project*” is based on their fulfilment.

The things that can subvert the efficient activities of the EU internationally are the differences in the national member states national strategic cultures. Because of that, some authors are rightfully skeptical concerning the possibilities of developing a truly joint EU strategic culture.

If the obstacles are overcome and this culture is developed, the EU strategic culture, just like national strategic cultures, will not be static and given once and for all, but it will develop through new experiences, political initiatives, and crises. In that sense, we may consider that within the EU there is an awareness of long-term strategic thinking and that the organisation is equipped with the means and instruments for more aligned and productive global activities.

A special step towards greater unity is represented by the Strategic Compass document, which demonstrates the ambition to strengthen the EU's security and defence abilities and to coordinate joint actions more effectively.

What can be derived as the broadest conclusion is that the narrative by which the EU attributes itself the axiological characteristics, such as “*the power of good*”, or the bastion of values internationally accepted as the civilisational standard, for example human rights, or democracy, can impede the development of the joint strategic culture as the Union is thus led to the arbiter position, which cannot present the strategic interest of the member states.

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Резиме

У овом раду испитујемо проблем развоја стратешке културе Европске уније, као услова за аутономни капацитет у међународним односима. Предмет истраживања су наративни, институционални и нормативни аспекти усклађивања перцепције и солидарности држава чланица у вези са претњама вредностима и интересима Уније. За процену стања, актуелних настојања и могућих развоја заједничке стратешке културе ЕУ коришћена је упоредна анализа секундарних извора, као и анализа садржаја докумената органа ЕУ, који се односе на наративе и институционалну потпору развоју аутономног колективног стратешког промишљања и деловања. Посебна пажња посвећена је изазовима који се јављају у том процесу, с обзиром да се ради о потенцијално вредносно и интересно наднационалном ентитету, који има капацитет да релативно самостално утиче на међународне односе. Циљ рада је квалификација стања Уније у актуелном геополитичком окружењу и идентификовање елемената на основу којих се може проценити стратешки развој ове организације. Добијени резултати говоре да је заједничка стратешка култура услов да би ЕУ постала аутономан безбедносни учесник на међународној сцени. Посебан налаз представља оцена да институционални механизми, предвиђени оснивачким уговорима не погодују заједничким стратешким размишљањима држава чланица, што тренутно подрива изгледе за развој заједничке стратешке културе и позицију ЕУ у глобалним односима.

Кључне речи: заједнички идентитет, заједничка одбрана, традиција, суверенитет, стратешка аутономија

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