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Military operations and the EU's identity as an international security actor

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ABSTRACT

For long, its lack of military means served to single the European Union out as a “civilian” or “normative power”. However, since 2003 twelve EU military operations have been launched. On the basis of a comprehensive analysis of all EU military mission so far, this article seeks to establish how these missions have evolved over time and how they have affected the character of the EU as an international actor. For this purpose, the article outlines four ideal-typical conceptions of the EU's international identity and operationalises them along two underlying dimensions: justification (the purpose of military operations) and policy-embeddedness (the coordination between military means and other foreign policy instruments). Analysing the military operations along these two axes, the article suggests that the EU has been evolving towards a “Liberal Power” identity, as is reflected in a shift from value-based to utility-based justifications, while military operations have at the same time become more embedded in the EU's overall foreign policies.

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Introduction

In 2003, the EU launched its first military operation: Operation Concordia in the FYR Macedonia. Since then, the Union has undertaken a total of twelve military operations under its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Such a collective use of military force by the EU was far from self-evident. After the failure of the European Defence Community in the 1950s, the absence of military means came to be celebrated as a virtue rather than as a sign of weakness of the EU. Labels as civilian power (Duchene 1972) and normative power (Manners 2002) not only served to characterise the EU's particular international power, but also had a prescriptive purpose. For example, they were enthusiastically endorsed by key EU representatives, such as Commission-president Barroso: “we are one of the most important, if not the most important, normative powers in the world” (Peterson 2007, see also Larsen 2002).

Hence, the launch of the EU's military operations triggered a lively academic debate about the role of the military instrument in defining the character of the EU's international

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actorness. Typically, Smith (2005) argued that a normative power identity is inherently incompatible with the use of military means, as any military intervention is bound to change the logic of foreign policy decision-making and will compromise normative standards. However, most analysts rather maintained that military means might serve to strengthen the EU's normative power as it added an essential instrument to promote the EU's values across the globe (Sjursen 2006, Björkdahl 2012). Others again have suggested that the EU has never been a genuine normative power anyway, and that the employment of military means would allow the union to engage in traditional international power behaviour (Hyde-Price 2006, Rynning 2011).

Now, more than fifteen years later and with the EU having undertaken twelve military missions, this article returns to this debate and asks: *How has the EU's use of military missions affected its identity as an international security actor?* Picking up on the initial debate, we seek to assess whether the EU has been able to reconcile the employment of military missions with its normative aspirations or whether they have inevitably come to undermine them. In fact, a broad range of scholarship has emerged that covers the military operations. So far, however, many of these analyses are descriptive in character (Grevi et al. 2009, Merlingen 2012, Howorth 2014) or seek to explain their genesis (Gegout 2005, Germond and Smith 2009, Engberg 2014, Pohl 2014, Nováky 2018a). Other research has addressed the planning process (Mattelaer 2013, Nováky 2016) and the implementation of EU military operations (Merlingen and Ostrauskaité 2008), their impact (Ginsberg and Penksa 2012) and effectiveness (Whitman and Wolff 2008, Peen-Rodt 2011). Moreover, some studies examined the influence of EU institutions (Klein 2010, Cross 2013, Dijkstra 2013, Riddervold 2015) or particular Member States (Pohl 2013) on the planning and conduct of missions, and the relationship with external actors such as NATO (Riddervold 2014) the UN (Major 2008) and the African Union (Plank 2017).

What has been absent is a systematic analysis of the totality of the military missions to consider whether there are any underlying patterns in the way these missions have evolved over time and what such patterns say about the evolution of the EU's identity as an international security actor.¹ These are the concerns addressed by this article. Admittedly, such an analysis faces the challenge that the activation of military missions is conditioned by external events and that there is considerable variation among the missions (Table 1).² Still, we expect that when we take a comprehensive look at all military missions over time, some overall trends can be discerned. To capture these trends, our theoretical

Table 1. Overview of EU military operations.

Operation (Country)	Period
Concordia (FYROM)	2003
Artemis (DR Congo)	2003
EUFOR Althea (Bosnia and Herzegovina)	2004–present
EUFOR RD Congo (DR Congo)	2006
EUFOR Tchad/RCA (Chad – Central African Republic)	2008–2009
EU NAVFOR Atalanta (coast of Somalia)	2008–present
EUTM Somalia (Uganda and Somalia)	2010–present
EUTM Mali (Mali)	2013–present
EUFOR RCA (Central African Republic)	2014–2015
EUMAM RCA (Central African Republic)	2015–2016
EUTM RCA (Central African Republic)	2016–present
EUNAVFOR Med (Mediterranean Sea)	2015–present

framework unpacks the debate about the EU's international security identity by distinguishing between the *justification* (i.e. the character of the motivations offered) and the *policy embeddedness* (i.e. whether the military instrument supports or crowds out non-military instruments such as aid and political dialogue) of military operations, and by identifying the ideal-typical conceptions that can be associated with the different combinations along these axes.

To be practically feasible, a comprehensive coverage of all military missions requires some restrictions to the analysis. For a start, we only focus on the EU military missions proper (in accordance with the EU's own classification) and thus exclude the EU's civilian missions. Military operations are the most visible outcome of the battle of ideas about the identity of the EU as an international security actor (McDonagh 2015). While the number of civilian missions launched under CSDP³ is much higher than that of military missions, they do not touch upon the key dimension of contestation: the collective use of military force. A second restriction of the analysis is that it focusses on the supranational level and the formal positions that are adopted by the EU as a whole and leaves the divisions between the EU's member states and the politics among them outside of our analysis (Bretherton and Vogler 2005, see also, Brattberg and Rhinard 2012). Hence, this study starts from the premise that the EU has some level of actorness of its own. Furthermore, we combine a constructivist ontology with a qualitative deductive content analysis (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006): while we consider the EU's security identity to be a function of its own articulation, our empirical analysis takes the ideas on the use of military force as expressed in official documents by the EU at face value to position the different missions along the two dimensions identified. On that basis, we come to an overall appreciation of the way the EU's identity as an international security actor has evolved in its military missions.

We conclude that the decision-making on EU military operations has become ever more institutionalized, which is particularly visible in the way their initiation has come to be embedded within the CFSP at large. At the same time, we find that the EU, throughout, remains a rather risk-averse military actor that is quite selective in the missions it engages in and has a strong preference for missions with relatively low levels of military robustness. We also find that whereas early missions were generally motivated on the basis of value-based concerns like human security, this has gradually given way to more utility-based justifications. In all, we conclude that the evolution of the EU's military operations suggests that its international security identity has steadily developed into that of a 'Liberal Power', that is, an international actor whose engagement is primarily justified in terms of utility-based concerns (rather than values) but for whom military power remains subservient to a broader foreign policy repertoire.

The article proceeds as follows. The next section sets the theoretical stage by introducing four conceptions of the EU's identity as an international security actor. Section 2 uses these four conceptions to distinguish two dimensions – justification and embeddedness – by which we can assess the EU's military operations. Section 3 details and explains our methodology. Section 4 and 5 contain the comprehensive analysis on the two dimensions of justification and embeddedness of all twelve military missions that the EU has launched, with section 4 analysing the first five EU military operations launched between 2003 and 2007 and section 5 considering the missions that have been initiated since 2008.

Four conceptions of the EU's international identity

The debate about the EU's international security identity and whether it is in any sense fundamentally different from that of other, more traditional, international powers (especially the USA) can be organised around four central positions: pacifist and interventionist Normative Power⁴, Realist Power and Liberal Power. These power identities differ in terms of the justification of foreign policy goals and the (prioritisation of) foreign policy instruments used towards these goals.

To capture the presumably distinct international identity of the EU, Ian Manners (2002, 239) has coined the term Normative Power Europe (NPE), which refers to the European Union's "ability to shape conceptions of what is normal". A normative power relies on the power of ideas rather than that of material capabilities, like economic and military power. Central to NPE is the assertion that a pure instrumental use of norms is not possible (Whitman 2013). Compared to these traditional means of power politics, the impact of ideas may be less direct. However, when the power of ideas is effectively applied – i.e. in accordance with the procedural principles of legitimacy, coherence and consistency – it can be the greatest power of all because it aligns the interests of other powers by internal persuasion rather than by external pressure (Manners 2009). Furthermore, NPE refers to the promotion of particular ideas. In Manners' understanding, normative power is about promoting and defending universal values (see also Noutcheva 2009, p. 1069).⁵

This original understanding of NPE is difficult to reconcile with the use of military power (see Whitman 2013, pp. 180–182). As Smith puts it: "By folding to the supposedly superior hand of military force, the EU discredits and discards (...) the most powerful instrument of soft power it had" (Smith 2005, p. 76, see also Sangiovanni 2003, Orbie 2009). A key concern is a militarisation (and even securitisation, Bailes 2008) of the EU's international security identity, i.e. a crowding out of other foreign policy instruments by military force. While Manners (2006a, 194) concedes that, under strict conditions, the use of military means may be compatible with normative power, he observes that "the EU's normative power is being undermined by unreflexive militarization." This refers to both the financial reallocation from aid to the support of security objectives, the discursive prioritisation of the military instrument in the European Security Strategy, and the institutional prioritisation of military means in the EU's Security and Defence Policy (Manners 2006b, p. 412).

However, when it came to the introduction of EU military missions, the NPE-camp split in two. Deviating from the traditional pacifist understanding of NPE, some scholars argued that military force may be an essential instrument to effectively propagate the universal values at the heart of NPE across the world (Stavridis 2001, Sjursen 2006). Supporters of such a more interventionist conception of NPE draw inspiration from normative principles like 'human security' (Glasius and Kaldor 2006) and the 'responsibility to protect' (Bellamy 2013), which offer justifications for military intervention where local powers fail to live up to the (minimal) universal standard of respect for human dignity. Only a powerful international security actor with all means at its disposal, but which nevertheless eschews great power action, can truly be characterised a normative power (Janusch 2016, p. 9). Thus, these scholars expect that the EU's military operations will turn the EU from a normative power by default into a normative power by choice. While they recognise the risks of military means, for them the critical issue is not *whether* military means are employed but *how* they are employed. Motivated by the concern for human security, a normative

power restricts the justified use of force to the protection of civilians. This way a normative power “lives by example” also in the way it uses military force.

Regardless of the internal divisions, from early on, advocates of NPE have encountered “normal power” approaches (Wood 2009, Pardo 2011) that are sceptical about the EU’s distinctive security identity. In these views, references to the EU’s normative power were nothing but a poor rationalisation of its weakness of commanding no military capabilities of its own during the Cold War-era (Hyde-Price 2006, Rynning 2011). Essentially, such approaches adopt the premises of Waltz’s neorealism (Waltz 1979). However, while neorealism traditionally insists on states being the primary international actors and refuses to attribute actorhood to international organisations, EU scholars like Hyde-Price (2006) have argued that the EU can be regarded as an international actor that adheres to the same action-logic as states. Thus, in this realist view, the foreign policy of the EU was always driven by self-interest but frustrated by practical constraints and the failure of collective action. Only with military means the EU can start to position itself as a more serious Realist Power and pursue geo-political security-objectives that were previously beyond its reach. As Hyde-Price (2013, 18) puts it, if the EU is to become “an effective and coherent vehicle for collective endeavours to safeguard and enhance common European security interests, they [Member States] must shed their lingering illusions about the virtue and efficacy of an EU security strategy primarily based on soft power and moral suasion and develop political will and military capacity to back up diplomacy with coercive instruments when necessary”. From this perspective, value-based concerns are at most of second order importance (Hyde-Price 2008).

In recent times, a fourth position has been emerging in the debate on the international identity of the EU, *Liberal Power Europe* (LPE).⁶ Like NPE, LPE insists that the specific character of the EU precludes it from operating like a Realist Power (see Wagner 2017). However, distinctive from both value-based and geopolitical security concerns, a Liberal Power’s external engagement reflects its internal configuration as a single market, thus focusing on economic concerns as justification of the use of military force (Damro 2012, see also Pohl 2013). This economic rationale, as Parker and Rosamond (2013) underline, translates into a rather legalistic approach which gives some credence to Manners’ (2006b) claim that the EU is committed to a logic of international action that is fundamentally at odds with the security-logic of neorealism. This legalistic approach translates in a rather reluctant use of military force, visible in unanimity requirements and the value attached to external UN-authorization (Haine 2009, Laïdi 2010). In practice, this means that even if the EU formally commands military capacities, it is bound to remain distinctively risk averse in their employment. This reluctance involves a “shirking responsibility, a hesitant attitude, delays in implementation, selectivity of commitments and incoherence” (Destradi 2017, p. 320, cf. Bickerton 2011). Thus, in stark contrast to Interventionist NPE, rather than prioritising the protection of local civilians, LPE is expected to justify its military engagement in terms of specific EU interests and to premise its operations on casualty avoidance and exit strategies (Haine 2009).

Thus, starting from the debate on Normative Power Europe, we have distinguished four positions on the identity of the EU as an international security actor (Table 2). This classification distinguishes between, on the one hand, the value-based justification of the two NPE conceptions and the utility-based positions of RPE and LPE, on the other. At the same time, there are obvious differences between the four conceptions in how

Table 2. Four conceptions of the EU's international identity.

	Classical, pacifist NPE	Interventionist NPE	Realist Power	Liberal Power
Justification of foreign policy	Human Security	Human Security	Geopolitical Security	Economic Security
Alignment of military intervention with foreign policy at large	Exclusive focus on non-military means	Active military employment	Priority of security interests and military instruments	Priority of economic interests and instruments
Effect of militarisation	Corruption the EU's global power position and its normative credibility	Reinforcement of normative credibility	Reinforcement the EU's global power position	No militarisation, reluctant and risk-averse use

they position military means in relation to other foreign policy instruments and, by implication, in the way they expect the introduction of military means to impact the EU's international identity.

Operationalising the character of EU military operations

The preceding four concepts imply rather distinct logics for the EU to behave and evolve as an international security actor. At the same time, two major dimensions emerge on which they can be systematically distinguished from each other. The first dimension operates at the level of motivation and concerns the kind of arguments that are adduced to justify EU foreign policy initiatives. The second dimension concerns the way a military mission is organised at the operational level. Here the critical issue is how the employment of the military instrument is related to other foreign policy instruments.

As we want to assess how the EU's international security identity has evolved through an analysis of its military missions, these dimensions can be projected onto the EU's military missions themselves. On the one hand, we can distinguish between competing security logics in the justification of the use of military force, either prioritising a utility-based conception of security (e.g. economic security, border security) or a value-based conception of security (e.g. human security). On the other hand, we can distinguish between missions in which the military aspect operates rather unconstrained and in isolation from those missions that are firmly embedded in a broader foreign policy strategy and effectively coordinated with other, non-military, policy initiatives.

The first dimension to assess the EU's military operations relates to the logic of *justification*, i.e. the purpose and kinds of reasons that serve to justify the deployment of an operation. To operationalise this dimension, we adopt the distinction between value-based and utility-based justifications (Lerch and Schweltnus 2006, see also Riddervold 2018). Value-based justifications depart from the human security-oriented understanding of NPE and imply that operations are motivated by the aim to protect civilians. This would come with specific objectives like the creation and protection of safe havens, the protection of convoys delivering humanitarian assistance, disarmament and demobilisation, providing a secure environment for elections or for the return of refugees and displaced persons (Glasius and Kaldor 2006, p. 12). In contrast, if the EU does not operate as a normative power, one would expect utility-based justifications to predominate. In that case, military operations are justified on the basis of distinct material interests of the EU member

states, like geopolitical security (e.g. toppling unfriendly regimes) and economic interests (i.e. protecting trade routes).

Empirically, the justification dimension leads us to focus on how the initiation of military missions is motivated and how its objectives are publicly communicated. Such an approach assumes that the ways in which these objectives are phrased and the way in which military operations are justified are not “just words”. The analysis of actual justifications cannot uncover the “real” motives of the actors involved, but can demonstrate the different rationales provided for the launch of military operations (Geis and Müller 2013, see also Diez 2013). The kind of justifications that the EU relies upon is taken to restrain certain policy options and make others more likely. In turn, the choices of EU missions constrain the kind of justifications that can be credibly used. While in some cases the humanitarian motivations may be unassailable, in others the EU’s own security interests may be blatant. Obviously, the stated objectives of military operations may well contain both utility-based and value-based considerations (Aggestam 2008, Raik 2012). Logically, they can co-exist and do not necessarily have to result in immediate tensions. However, we can make the distinction analytically and assert empirically which of the two considerations dominates and has been decisive in the initiation of the mission.

The second dimension regards the operational relationship of military missions with other EU foreign policy instruments, in short, their *policy embeddedness*. Policy embeddedness can be defined as the extent to which an EU military operation aligns with the EU’s overall foreign policy involvement with a country (see Kirchner 2013). In addition to the deployment of military operations, such involvement can for instance include economic and diplomatic instruments (cf. Smith 2008, p. 62/63, see also Koutrakos 2013). The issue of policy embeddedness has been receiving increasing attention in EU security circles. In particular, there has been much talk about the EU’s so-called “comprehensive approach” to external conflict and crises, which aims to ensure maximal consistency and complementarity in the EU’s engagement with countries and regions elsewhere in the world (e.g. COM/HR 2013). As the “comprehensive approach” serves some constructive ambiguity (Jegen and Mérand 2014), it is not clear how the different policy instruments are prioritised and related. This article does not engage in a systematic assessment of the comprehensive approach. Instead, its focus is on the position granted to the military instrument in this endeavour to streamline the EU’s foreign policy instruments.

High policy embeddedness means that the EU military operation is complementary to, and in support of, the EU’s overall foreign policy involvement with the country concerned. Low policy embeddedness indicates a military operation that is either dominant, crowding out other EU foreign policy instruments, or isolated from the EU’s non-military instruments. It refers to a situation of (institutional) prioritisation of military structures and means (Manners 2006a, p. 189). Common notions in the EU actorness literature refer to coherence and consistency to examine the synergy between different goals, instruments and procedures (see Brattberg and Rhinard 2012). Policy embeddedness, however, is more concerned with the hierarchy between different instruments. A militarised foreign policy can be very consistent and coherent and nevertheless score low on policy embeddedness.

In operational terms, we seek to establish policy embeddedness in two domains, which we assume to point in the same direction. First, *institutional* embeddedness concerns the formal organisation of the military operation. This relates to the way the relations are defined between, on the one hand, the military missions and, on the other hand,

Commission instruments, civilian operations and the involvement of EU Special Representatives (EUSR). We qualify institutional embeddedness as low in those cases where the military command takes precedence over the leadership of the Commission, a civilian CSDP-mission or the EUSR. Further, institutional embeddedness also refers to the relation within the EU's External Action Service (EEAS), operational from December 2010 onwards, between the CSDP-bodies and the thematic and regional structures of the diplomatic service (Quille 2010). Second, the *discursive* embeddedness of the military operation captures the way the operation is presented. Statements that the military operation is at the centre of the EU's foreign policy involvement score low on discursive embeddedness. In contrast, references that emphasize the complementarity of a military operation and the importance of dealing with the "root causes" of conflict score high.

Taken together, the two dimensions can be used to connect the analysis of the EU's military operations to the debate about the EU's international power identity. We take it that there are no necessary correlations between the two dimensions and, thus, that all combinations are possible in principle. The only amendment that then needs to be made compared to the four concepts presented in the preceding section is that the classical, pacific, NPE position falls out, as it is inherently incompatible with the engagement in military operations. Still, the juxtaposition of the two dimensions does lead us to distinguish an *Interventionist NPE* position, in which the military instrument really takes on a logic of its own (i.e. liberal interventionism), from a NPE position in which the use of military means remains firmly embedded within a broader foreign policy strategy and which we call *Comprehensive NPE* in reference to the much-cited "comprehensive approach" in which the EU seeks to consistently align its military endeavours with its other foreign policy initiatives (COM/HR 2013).

Among the utility-based conceptions we identify *Realist Power* with operations that score low on policy embeddedness. If this kind of missions has come to prevail, it would confirm the worst expectations of those NPE advocates who have come out against any form of military engagement. Alternatively, there is the possibility that the EU's military missions are effectively embedded in its overall foreign policy, while they are motivated on utility-based grounds. Such a position we associate with the conceptualisation of *Liberal Power Europe*, in which the EU's external engagement is above all defined by its liberal market order. Rather than prioritising the protection of the local population of the host-country, such missions are explicitly justified to serve specific EU interests, like protecting trade routes or rescue missions of EU civilians. At the same time, however, the military instrument is one instrument among others to pursue these interests, and hence coordination with other foreign policy instruments is high.

Methodology

The preceding argument is premised on a (non-essentialist) constructivist understanding of the EU's security identity that takes it as a product of the way the actors directly involved frame it and that allows this understanding to evolve over time (Wendt 1999). From this perspective, it is also possible to separate the (perceived) identity of the EU as a supranational actor from that of its different member states; a move that ascribes some level of actorness of the EU itself, which transcends the sum of its constituent member states (Bretherthon and Vogler 2005).

In our analysis we look at the way the EU motivates (justification) and organises (embeddedness) its military missions as offering cues to how it understands itself and how this self-understanding has evolved over time. In executing this analysis, we rely primarily on the official statements by the EU itself: the Joint Actions or Joint Decisions that the Council of the EU adopts to launch the operations, complemented by relevant documents from the EEAS and Commission. While we prioritise the EU policy documents for being most telling for our argument as well as having greatest validity for any statements about the EU's (self-perceived) identity, we draw upon the wealth of existing literature on the EU's military missions to check and enrich our interpretations.

The method employed to analyse the documents can be characterised as “deductive content analysis” (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006). This means that we depart from the theoretical and logical plausibility of the distinction between justification and embeddedness as developed in the previous section, and that we analyse the Joint Actions and Council Decisions outlining the mandate of the EU military operations to come to an appreciation on both dimensions. Given our theoretical framework, our analysis also remains deductive in that we stick to the level of the text and assign our findings on that basis (see Table 3 for the coding scheme).⁷

In terms of presentation, the analysis is divided in two phases. This division is informed by our findings that over time the EU's military missions have tended to become more utility-based on the justification dimension while they have also become more embedded. Thus, the first phase includes Concordia, Artemis and Althea EUFOR Congo and EUFOR Tchad/RCA, while the second phase starts with the launch of EUNAVFOR Atalanta in

Table 3. Coding Scheme.

Category	Code	Definition	Example
Justification	Value-based	The use of military force is justified with reference to human security	Artemis: “This force will contribute to the (...) humanitarian situation in Bunia, including (...) to the protection of the civilian population” (Council of the EU 2003c)
	Utility-based	The use of military force is justified with reference to geopolitical or economic concerns	Atalanta: “the protection of vulnerable vessels cruising off the Somali coast, and the deterrence, prevention and repression of acts of piracy and armed robbery off the Somali coast, in accordance with the mandate laid down in UNSC Resolution 1816 (2008)” (Council of EU 2008b)
Policy Embeddedness	Supportive	The military instrument is supporting and complementary to non-military foreign policy tools	Concordia: “complement and support” the EU's already “deep[ly] engagement” with the country (Council of the EU 2003*).
	Isolated	The military instrument is not connected to non-military foreign policy tools	[no references to other foreign policy instruments/strategies]
	Dominant	The military instrument is prioritised over non-military foreign policy tools	Artemis: “the intention of the Commission to direct, where appropriate, its action towards achieving the objectives of this Joint Action” (Council of the EU 2003b)

2008 (which remains on-going). While the shifts that we identify take place incrementally and at times also in fits and starts, this division helps to underline how the way the EU justifies and organises its military missions by the late 2010s has moved quite significantly from how it started in the early 2000s.

Early missions (2003–7): value-based and varying levels of embeddedness

In 2003, the EU was able to agree upon its first security strategy and the launch of two military operations in the Balkans: Concordia in the FYR Macedonia and Artemis in Congo. One year later, the EU initiated Operation Althea in Bosnia–Herzegovina, taking over from a preceding NATO-operation. All three of these missions were justified in distinctively value-based terms, even if their focus differed. The missions in the republics of the former Yugoslavia aimed at upholding peace agreements, the Ohrid Framework Agreement in the case of Concordia (Council of the EU 2003a) and the Dayton agreement in the case of Althea (Council of the EU 2004b). Also in the case of Artemis, the value-based justification of its objectives is clear:

The EU will deploy an interim emergency force [to] contribute to the stabilization of the security and humanitarian situation in Bunia, including (...) to the protection of the civilian population (Council of the EU 2003c)

In 2006, the EU's second military operation in Congo (EUFOR RD Congo) served the peaceful administration of democratic elections (Council of the EU 2006b). In turn, EUFOR Tchad/RCA was aimed at "improving the security of refugees and internally displaced persons, facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance and creating favourable conditions for reconstruction and development efforts" (Council of the EU 2007a, see also Council Secretariat 2009). These objectives thus explicitly invoke the humanitarian values of peace, safety, and human security.

As regards policy embeddedness, the missions display greater variation. The policy embeddedness of *Operation Concordia* was relatively high. There was not much of an EU strategy towards FYR Macedonia before the internal ethno-political conflict got violent in 2001 (Palm 2014). However, when NATO stepped in with Operation Essential Harvest to disarm ethnic Albanian groups, the EU emerged as a committed humanitarian and diplomatic mediator in its shadow. So once Operation Concordia took over from NATO in 2003, it was explicitly embedded within the EU's broader strategy:

The activities of the Union, supported, *inter alia*, by the Community's institution building programmes under CARDS Regulation, will contribute to the overall peace implementation in the FYR Macedonia as well as to the achievements of the Union's overall policy in the region, notably the stabilisation and association process (Council of the EU 2003a, 2003d).

Although Concordia's reliance on NATO's command structure (Berlin Plus arrangement) negatively affected the possibilities for linking military and non-military instruments, the Operation Commander cooperated closely with the EU's non-military presence (Kirchner 2013). Regarding the relationship between Concordia and the EU Special Representative, the Council Joint Action states that there shall be close coordination "to ensure consistency of the military operation with the broader context of the EU activities in FYR Macedonia" (Council of the EU 2003a)

In contrast, once *Operation Artemis* started, all other EU foreign policy instruments were effectively made subservient to the military mission, regardless of the longer-standing EU involvement in the Great Lakes region. When briefing the Council on the various options for the intervention in Congo, the member states' ambassadors to the EU in COREPER underlined the need to explore possible political, diplomatic, financial and economic elements *to support* the military operation (Council of the EU 2003f). This call was translated in the mandate as it subsumed the Commission engagement in Congo to the military operation by declaring "the intention of the Commission to direct, where appropriate, its action towards achieving the objectives of this Joint Action" (Council of the EU 2003b). Specific suggestions were offered for Community avenues "in support of the Stabilisation Force" and for financial support to African partners participating in the peace-keeping operation (Council of the EU 2003f). Notably, at the time of the military operation, the Commission was involved in supporting NGOs in Bunia to build capacity in the local police. However, there was no direct linkage of the military operation with civilian capacity building (Ulriksen et al. 2004). With regard to the EUSR for the Great Lakes Region, the Joint Action called for coordination "of the respective activities", while refusing a more strategic role for the EUSR as was the case in Operation Concordia (Council of the EU 2003b). These elements all indicate that Operation Artemis was not just an "isolated military endeavour" (Norheim-Martinsen 2013) but that it was in fact quite invasive of other forms of EU involvement. The operation put the military engagement at the centre and expected all Community and Commission measures to support it.

In turn, the record in the case of *Operation Althea* is more mixed, even if this mission had a clear deterrence-function and, at least initially, involved a large number of troops.⁸ In discursive terms, the Operation Concept presented Althea as *complementing* and *supporting* the measures taken by the EU in Bosnia–Herzegovina, being part of the EU's "comprehensive policy". Moreover, the Operation Concept explicitly notes that it is "important to avoid the creation of a culture of dependence upon EUFOR" (Council of the EU 2004a). However, when we turn from the discursive to the institutional domain, documents suggest a clear hierarchy among the EU's foreign policy instruments in Bosnia–Herzegovina – both in relation to the EUSR as to the European Commission. Similar to Operation Concordia, there is a call for close coordination with the EUSR "to ensure consistency of the EU military operation with the broader context of the EU activities in BiH" and the obligation to "take EUSR local political advice into account" (Council of the EU 2004b). Hence, Norheim-Martinsen (2013, 145) concludes that Althea is "part of coordinated EU presence in BiH under the chairmanship and direction of the EUSR." However, it took until 2008 before the position of the EUSR was strengthened vis-à-vis the Operation Commander to provide political *guidance* (Council of the EU 2007a, see also, Klein 2010, Palm 2017). Like in the case of Operation Artemis, we find affirmed "the intention of the Commission to direct, where appropriate, its action towards achieving the objectives of this Joint Action" (Council of the EU 2004b). In line with this, in the crises response coordination teams that were set up, the European Commission was "informed", rather than involved as an equal partner (Schroeder 2007, p. 27).

In contrast to Artemis, *EUFOR Congo's* embeddedness was better organised. The European Commission had been involved during the planning phase with a joint fact-finding mission with the Council Secretariat (Knutsen 2009, p. 449). While the Joint Action was rather neutral on the relationship with the Commission's non-military involvement –

referring only to the need for “consistency” between the military operation and the Commission’s “external activities” without privileging either of the two (Council of the EU 2006b), – it was discursively connected to a much broader EU involvement, following up on earlier political agreements reached in Pretoria and Sun City in 2002 (Council of the EU 2006a). What is more, military deployment was complementary to the already present civilian CSDP operations, EUPOL Kinshasa and EUSEC Congo (Knutsen 2009, Norheim-Martinsen 2013).

The case of *EUFOR Chad* is again more ambiguous in terms of its policy embeddedness. The European Commission had been involved in drafting a Joint Options Paper (Seibert 2010, Mattelaer 2013). As with *EUFOR Congo*, the Council Joint Action only states rather generally that the Council and the Commission “shall ensure consistency between the implementation of this Joint Action and external activities of the Community” (Council of the EU 2007a). The Commission’s assistance to the region was intensified, focusing on training and equipping the Chad police/gendarmerie to provide security for refugee camps (Haine 2011). However, these security related expenditures in the development programme did not come at the detriment of the development instruments (Orbie and Del Biondo 2015). In effect, it appears that an informal division of labour was established between the security and development spheres of the EU: while *EUFOR*’s activities concerned the East of Chad, the Commission delegation focused more on the other parts of the country (Orbie and Del Biondo 2015).

To sum up, the first five EU military missions all served clear value-based objectives: implementing peace-agreements and protecting civilians and refugees. At the same time, they display great variation in terms of policy embeddedness. While Operation *Concordia* was marked by a high degree of policy embeddedness, Operation *Althea* has a more mixed record: while there was great attention for the embeddedness of the operation in the wider foreign policy involvement, military considerations came to be prioritised in its institutional organisation. Regarding the EU’s military involvement with Congo, we find that Operation *Artemis* came to dominate all other EU policy-involvement in DR Congo, which contrasts with the subsequent operation (*EUFOR Congo*) which scored higher on policy embeddedness. Finally, *EUFOR Chad* was a rather isolated endeavour, neither crowding out nor positively aligning with non-military instruments.

Later missions (post-2008): the emergence of utility-based justifications and increasing policy embeddedness

The operations since 2008 include *EUNAVFOR Atalanta* (since 2008), *EUTM Somalia* (since 2010), *EUTM Mali* (since 2013), three successive operations in the Central African Republic (*EUFOR RCA* 2014/2015; *EUMAM RCA* 2015/2016; *EUTM RCA* since 2016) and *EUNAVFOR Med* (since 2015). While the earlier military missions reflect little consistency in their embedding, from 2008 onwards we see a reinforcement of the trend to ensure their proper embeddedness in a broader EU policy. By 2013, this is underpinned by the adoption of the notion of a “comprehensive approach” (COM/HR 2013). At the same time, however, we discern a notable shift in the justification of these more recent operations as they contain some distinct utility-based considerations.

This certainly applies to *EUNAVFOR Atalanta*, the EU’s first maritime operation. *Atalanta*’s initial mandate involved the value-based objective of “the protection of

vessels of the WFP [UN World Food Programme] delivering food aid to displaced persons in Somalia, in accordance with the mandate laid down in UNSC Resolution 1814 (2008)" (Council of EU 2008b). However, the mandate added to that task the more broadly conceived utility-based objective of protecting commercial trade routes off the Somali coast against piracy and armed robbery. Thus, with *Atalanta*, the EU explicitly acknowledged for the first time its own economic interests in the set-up of an operation (Germond and Smith 2009). While it is true that the protection of trade routes has not come at the cost of the world food programme (Riddervold 2011), it turned out that one or two of the EU frigates are used for the protection of the WFP and the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), while five or six other frigates are deployed to protect commercial vessels (see Palm 2019).

Initially, EUNAVFOR *Atalanta* was a rather isolated endeavour. References to several Commission strategies were missing.⁹ Over time, however, the embeddedness of the operation increased, first within CSDP and subsequently in connection to the EU's external policies more broadly. In 2010, a military training mission (EUTM Somalia) was launched:

to contribute to strengthening the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) as a functioning government serving the Somali citizens; (...) a comprehensive and sustainable perspective for the development of the Somalia security sector (...) (Council of the EU 2010).

Clearly, this statement appeals to a "human security" perspective – focusing on security sector reform aimed at the protection of Somali citizens (though see Ehrhart and Petretto (2012) for a more critical appreciation).

Beyond CSDP, EUNAVFOR *Atalanta* contributed to the launch of the Strategic Framework for the Horn of Africa, launched in 2011 and included in the operation's mandate of 2012 (Council of the EU 2011a, 2012). This Framework acknowledged that the root causes of piracy cannot be solved by the military instrument, and this was translated institutionally into the position of an EU Special Representative, who was tasked to coordinate all policy instruments (Council of the EU 2011b). So, while the military engagement initially very much put its imprint on the EU's involvement with Somalia, the launch of the Strategic Framework marks a shift from a "piracy first" to a "Somalia first" policy (see Ehrhart and Petretto 2012). Nevertheless, the regional strategy puts emphasis on security-oriented measures rather than poverty reduction (Keukeleire and Raube 2013, Henökl and Webersik 2014).

The next arena where EU military became active was Mali, where *EUTM Mali* was launched in 2013. Again, we find that, in justifying this operation, utility-based considerations feature prominently besides more value-based concerns. The central aim of the operation was formulated as "restoring Malian territorial integrity and reducing the threat posed by terrorist groups" (Council of the EU 2013). However, in a background note the European External Action Service highlights the threats to the EU's own strategic interests (EEAS 2016). Thus, while the focus is first of all on Malian territory and its integrity, the threat that is referred to also concerns the EU's own security. As regards its embeddedness, EUTM Mali is clearly embedded within the broader EU Sahel Strategy (EEAS 2011, Council of the EU 2013, see also, Helly and Galeazzi 2015). In terms of institutional embeddedness, this is clearly reflected in the fact that the Mission Commander "shall receive local political guidance from the Head of Union Delegation in Bamako in close coordination with the EU coordinator for Sahel" (EEAS 2011).

In 2014, the EU launched *EUFOR RCA* aimed at providing a “safe and secure environment” in the capital of the Central African Republic, Bangui, in support of the mission of the African Union (Council of the EU 2014). The EU assumed responsibility for the international airport, which provided a refuge for tens of thousands of internally displaced persons and served as an entry point for humanitarian supplies (Törö 2015). Early 2015, the military operation was replaced by the EU military advisory mission *EUMAM RCA* to support preparations for security sector reform (Council of the EU 2015b). After 1.5 years, this operation was succeeded by an EU military training mission, *EUTM RCA*, aimed at “modernizing” the Central African Armed Forces, and making them more “effective and democratically accountable” (Council of the EU 2016). Thus, the justification of all these three missions was very much value-based. As regards their embedding, these operations were discursively signalled to be subject to the EU’s overarching comprehensive approach (Council of the EU 2014). However, in contrast to the other missions in this period, there was no overarching regional strategy. Institutionally, like in the case of *EUTM Mali*, the commanders of the *RCA*-operations receive political guidance from the Head of the EU Delegation (in Bangui). In sum, the *RCA*-operations do not crowd out non-military efforts, but neither are they embedded in an overall approach towards solving the conflict, i.e. they are relatively isolated endeavours.

The EU’s most recent military mission is *EUNAVFOR Med Sophia*. This operation is quite distinctive in the extent to which it is exclusively justified with reference to the EU’s own security interests. While the international legal obligation of “search-and-rescue (SAR)” is acknowledged, the primary objective of *EUNAVFOR Med* is to “identify, capture and dispose of vessels and assets used or suspected of being used by smugglers or traffickers” (Council of the EU 2015a).¹⁰ In theatre, the Operation led the SAR-activities increasingly to NGO ships (Riddervold 2018). This predominance of a utility-based logic is also underlined by the expansion of the mandate in June 2016. Two secondary tasks were added: the capacity building and training of the Libyan coastguard and contributing to the UN arms embargo (Council of the EU 2016). The fact that *EUNAVFOR Med* was primarily motivated by EU-internal concerns is also reflected in the unprecedented role that the Commission played in initiating the operation (European Commission 2015, see also Nováky 2018b). Consequently, *EUNAVFOR Med* has been very well embedded in the overall approach of the EU institutions towards sea-crossing migrants. However, in important respects the military approach and its deterrence objectives have rather come to dominate the EU’s approach to tackling the issue.

In short, military operations are increasingly integral parts of a broader EU foreign policy strategy, such as the Strategic Framework for the Horn of Africa in the case of *Atalanta* and *EUTM Somalia* and the Sahel Strategy in the case of *EUTM Mali*. At the same time, in the period since 2008 we discern a distinct shift in the justification strategies employed as increasingly there are also utility-based considerations at play: EU trade interests in the Somali cases, EU security interests in the case of Mali, and border security in the case of *EUNAVFOR Med*.

Discussion and conclusion

In this article we have assessed how EU military missions have affected the EU’s identity as an international security actor. For that purpose, we analysed all military missions that the

EU has started up until today in terms of their justification and their embeddedness in a broader foreign policy framework. This analysis bears out that there is significant variation among the missions in the way they have been conceived strategically. What is more, our two-dimensional typology allows us to identify some systematic shifts that appear to have taken place over time.

In terms of the logic of justification we find that most EU military missions have been value-based. Certainly, in launching its initial missions the EU emphasized the humanitarian concerns that were at stake. Typically, such operations aimed to support the implementation of peace agreements or democratic elections. However, over the last ten years – in operations like EUNAVFOR Atalanta, EUTM Mali and EUNAVFOR Med Sophia – we find that utility-based concerns like trade interests, fighting terrorism and border control have increasingly come to the fore.

On the dimension of policy embeddedness, the initial missions yielded rather mixed results. In contrast, the more recent missions in Somalia and Mali are clearly embedded in a broader policy strategy and there is indeed evidence of them giving positive impulses to other forms of EU involvement. This assessment suggests that the EU is increasingly capable of embedding its military instruments within its overall foreign policy toolkit.

When we plot the different missions on the two dimensions, the shift from low to high policy embeddedness is clearly more pronounced and consistent than the one from value-based to utility-based justifications (Table 4).

Notably, there have been missions that approximate the (comprehensive) NPE conception in being both value-based and highly embedded (Concordia, EUFOR Congo and EUTM Somalia). Importantly, this finding speaks against those pacifist NPE positions (e.g. Smith 2005) that maintain that military power is bound to undermine any normative orientation power per se. At the same time, these strongly value-based and well-embedded missions have been relatively few and incidental in character and certainly do not represent the direction that the EU’s military missions have been evolving towards. On the contrary, over the last decade we rather find that, while value-based considerations are duly acknowledged, utility-based considerations have become more critical in the way the EU justifies its military involvement. At the same time, we have not encountered any truly “realist” missions that are not only utility-based but also exclusively driven by the military logic.

Eventually, the analysis suggests that whereas the EU’s military engagement started of with operations of mostly the *Interventionist NPE* kind, it has evolved towards missions that resemble more a *Liberal Power Europe* conception. This conclusion is underlined by the fact that the missions have increasingly come to be characterised by the presence

Table 4. Classification of EU military operations (2003–2016).

	High Policy embeddedness	Low Policy embeddedness
Value-based justification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concordia (2003) • EUFOR Congo (2005/2006) • EUTM Somalia (>2010) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artemis (2003) • Althea (>2004) • EUFOR Chad (2008/2009) • EUFOR/EUMAM/ • EUTM RCA (>2014)
Utility-based justification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EUTM Mali (>2013) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EUNAVFOR Med (>2015) ← EUNAVFOR Atalanta (>2008)

of utility-based considerations in combination with an ever more systematic embedding of the military instrument in a broader foreign policy repertoire. The characterisation of the EU's international security identity as a Liberal Power is reinforced by the selectivity of the EU's military engagement as is born out by the fact that the frequency by which the EU initiates military operations has decreased rather than increased. While this trend seems to reflect a quite pervasive endogenous logic, its persistence into the future is of course not guaranteed in a field like the CSDP where exogenous developments, like shifts in the overall geopolitical constellation, play such an important role.

One further nuance in this respect is that, among the more recent missions we actually encounter a mix of utility-based considerations that go beyond the narrow categories of geopolitics and strictly commercial interests: securing trade routes, fighting terrorism and illegal migration. In that sense, the kind of Liberal Power we encounter is not exclusively focussed on economic interests, but certainly a rather pragmatic power that is unlikely to get militarily involved for the sakes of others alone. Thus, this evolution towards a Liberal Power identity as reflected in the launch of military operations is indicative of the "principled pragmatism" in the EU's new Global Strategy (Council of the EU 2016, p. 16). While the preceding European Security Strategy of 2003 in many respects positioned the EU as a rather Interventionist NPE, the findings of this analysis indicate that the EU's own interests have come to figure much more prominently in its external affairs (Biscop 2016) and that in the course of its military operations the EU has come to be increasingly removed from any pretension to be a Normative Power.

Notes

1. A notable exception that explicitly takes a temporal approach to the study of CSDP is Smith's (2017) *Europe's Common Security and Defence Policy*. Moreover, Björkdahl (2012) provided a comparative assessment of the EU's CSDP-operations until 2008 with reference to the EU's normative power.
2. See supplemental data for overview of the size, costs and political authorization of the operations.
3. A total of 22 civilian missions has been launched: 12 civilian missions are completed, another 10 are ongoing (EEAS 2019).
4. We focus on Manners' notion of "Normative Power Europe" as it has been most prominent in the literature in the latest years (it is the most cited piece of the *Journal of Common Market Studies* in which it was published, with almost 1000 citations), rather than on Duchêne's (1972) earlier concept of "civilian power".
5. Others have criticised Manners for equating universal values with EU values (Aggestam 2008, see also Pace 2007) and emphasized cosmopolitan international law as the benchmark for normative power (Sjursen 2006, p. 249).
6. "Liberal" refers in this context to the way it is used in Moravcsik's (1998) seminal "liberal inter-governmentalist" theory of European integration, which underlines how foreign policy interests can be understood as a function of pluralistic politics, rather than to the notion of liberal internationalism (Ikenberry et al. 2018), which bears more resemblance with an interventionist normative power.
7. See supplemental data for a complete overview of the coding of the mandates in terms of justification and policy-embeddedness.
8. Although reconfigurations of the mission in 2007 and 2012 led to significant reductions of the number of troops involved, they maintained its "robust" character as a peace-enforcement operation (Council of the European Union 2007b).

9. These include: “EU partnership for peace, security and development in the Horn of Africa”, “An EU regional political partnership for peace, security and development in the HoA” and the “Joint Strategy for Somalia of 2008-2013” (European Commission 2006a, 2006b, 2008).
10. Since an UN-security resolution had not been secured by the start of the operation in May 2015, the operation was conceived of in sequential stages. By the end of September 2015, the operation moved to the second stage. This meant a shift from intelligence gathering and patrolling on the high seas, to actual “boarding, search, seizure and diversion” of vessels in the high seas.

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