

Changing EU role conceptions in the 21st century

- Still a Normative Power Europe?

Abstract

The European Union has expanded its foreign policy significantly in recent years. It is now widely accepted as an important, albeit unique, international actor. Given the EU's growing influence on the global scene, this study aims to describe changes in EU role conceptions between 2003 and 2016. Departing in role theory, the study constructs an analytical framework based on ideal types. Mapping EU role conceptions across two dimensions – the EU's global role and capabilities – enables a thorough examination of changes over time. Looking at the European Security Strategy (2003), the subsequent Report on its Implementation (2008), and the EU Global Strategy (2016), the study finds that EU role conceptions have changed in recent years. EU foreign policy makers have gone from seeing the EU as a Normative Power primarily dependent on civilian instruments, to a traditional great power with an increasing preference for military instruments.

Key words: role conceptions, role theory, Normative Power Europe, EU foreign policy, EU Global Strategy

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Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CoE	Council of Europe
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
EDA	European Defence Agency
ESDP	European Security and Defence Policy
ESS	European Security Strategy
EU	European Union
EUGS	EU Global Strategy
EULEX	EU Rule of Law Mission
G8	Group of Eight
HR/VP	High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NSS	National Security Strategy
OSCE	Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SSR	Security Sector Reform
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WTO	World Trade Organisation

1 Introduction

Portraying itself as a force for good in the world, the European Union¹ has expanded its foreign policy significantly in recent years. The EU is engaged in global trade, environment negotiations, crisis management and development aid across the world. It is now widely acknowledged as an important – albeit unique – international actor. Labels such as ‘Civilian’, ‘Ethical’ or ‘Normative’ Power Europe have been used to describe its special international character. But the EU’s reputation as a peaceful contributor to a better world has recently come into question. With increasing foreign policy competencies and expanding military capabilities, critical voices have started to question whether the EU is not just yet another traditional great power that is trying to impose its norms on others. Reputation is one thing, self-perception is another. By looking at EU role conceptions, this study is zooming in on the latter. What role does the EU see for itself on the global scene?

9/11 and the following war on terrorism made the start of the century turbulent. Global instability was accentuated by parallel processes of globalisation, the rise of emerging powers, and Russia’s invoked great power ambitions. With the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria, instability has once again come close to the EU’s borders. As the EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini states in the EU Global Strategy: “The purpose, even existence, of our Union is being questioned. Yet, our citizens and the world need a strong European Union like never before”. (European Council, 2016: 3) Indeed, the EU is in the midst of an existential crisis. The list of internal issues that require European leaders’ urgent attention is long – managing migration flows; countering terrorism; handling the Eurozone financial crisis; challenging the wave of populism spreading across Europe; and dealing with the effects of the British decision to leave the Union. Like any existential crisis, this one has triggered some serious self-reflection on the purpose and future of the European Union. Developments over the past decades have forced the EU to constantly re-evaluate and re-define its global role, but what is the outcome of this self-reflection process? What do we actually know about how EU role conceptions have changed in the 21st century? Given the EU’s increased influence in a number of policy areas, EU foreign policy makers’ visions and ambitions for the EU in the world deserve greater attention.

¹ The EU, the European Union, and the Union is used interchangeably throughout the text. References to the EU include all member states at that particular moment. The European Union in 2016 and beyond includes the UK, if not otherwise stated.

1.1 Purpose and research question

Role conceptions are generally stable over time, in order to provide foreign policy makers with consistency and guidance. But given recent rapid developments both within and beyond the EU's borders, the stability of EU role conceptions can be questioned. The purpose of this thesis is therefore to identify and describe changes in EU role conceptions in the 21st century. The research questions are:

*How has the European Union's role conception changed from 2003 to 2016?
How can we understand these changes from a role theoretical perspective?*

The aim of the study is to describe what role the EU has identified for itself in the international system in recent years; to outline changes in EU role conceptions; and to enhance our understanding of such changes based on role theory.

1.2 Previous research and relevance of the study

Much has been said about what type of international actor the EU is. Its proponents have described it as a 'postmodern superpower', 'quiet superpower', 'civilian' or 'civilizing' power, 'normative power', and 'ethical power' etc. (Aggestam, 2008; Manners, 2002; McCormick, 2006; Moravcsik, 2009; Sjursen, 2006b; Teldø, 2007), whereas its sceptics have been more inclined to use terms such as 'EU-topia' or 'Kantian Paradise'. (Kagan, 2002; Nicolaïdis and Howse, 2002) The effectiveness of EU foreign policy in different regions and policy areas have been evaluate, and so has the EU's actorness. (Bretherton and Vogler, 2005)

Although the word 'role' is not often used, what these research strands are essentially concerned with is the EU's global role. Role theory is a growing research field within international relations, located somewhere between foreign policy analysis and traditional IR-theory. Holsti (1970) was the first to introduce *national role conceptions* as a way to understand states' interactions within the international system. By studying foreign policy makers' images of the roles they see for the state, Holsti provided the missing link between national identity and foreign policy behaviour. Sources of national role conceptions can be both domestic and international, material and ideational.

Elgström and Smith (2006) were among the first to merge role theory and European studies in their study of the international roles of the European Union. Since then, a growing body of literature has explored the EU's roles and role conceptions in different policy areas and regions (see Bengtsson and Elgström, 2011), but also the external images of the EU. (see Lucarelli, 2014) States can hold multiple role conceptions simultaneously, and the same goes for the EU. The centrality of these 'context-specific' roles shifts depending on the situation. Normative Power Europe is generally considered the EU's 'meta-role', to which EU foreign policy makers turn for guidance. However, little is known about the stability of this general

EU role conception. Internally, the EU's foreign policy has expanded rapidly and the EU has gradually acquired both new capabilities and member states. Externally, the EU's environment has gradually become more unstable. Given these development, this study will zoom in on *changes* in EU role conceptions in recent years. Have internal and external circumstances affected EU role conceptions? Have changes in external images been mirrored by changes in EU role conceptions? Is Normative Power Europe still considered a relevant global role for the EU, according to its own foreign policy makers? By drawing on the rich conceptual framework provided by role theory, this study will contribute to our understanding of EU foreign policy makers' image of the EU's global role. With the EU's expanding foreign policy and emerging strategic culture, its international influence is increasing. By exposing possible changes in EU role conceptions, we can indirectly also enhance our understanding of changes in EU foreign policy behaviour. Role conceptions can reveal intentions and motives that would otherwise be left unknown.

1.3 Defining EU foreign policy

Before proceeding, we must first define EU foreign policy. What makes EU foreign policy so different from national foreign policy? Firstly, the EU is a multi-level political entity of 28 different member states, which all have their own foreign policy separate to that of the EU. Even though the EU aims at 'speaking with one voice' in all external action, one cannot assume coherence between EU foreign policy and the foreign policy of its member states. The EU is in itself both an actor engaged in shaping global events, and an arena for its member states to advance their respective foreign policy objectives. Secondly, the EU has different decision-making procedures and competencies for each policy area. Divisions cut through issues that are traditionally associated with national foreign policy. The EU is ultimately in the hands of its member states when it comes to what it should do and how. Thirdly, there is not one single institution responsible for EU foreign policy. The main platform for implementing its political and diplomatic dimensions is the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). This includes various civilian and military crisis management instruments under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).² However, EU external action goes beyond this and includes also external trade policy, development cooperation, economic and financial cooperation with third countries, humanitarian aid, sanctions and international agreements. In addition, some internal policies of the EU – such as energy, environmental, and migration – have external dimensions of relevance for EU foreign policy. (Keukeleire and Delreux, 2014) EU foreign policy is therefore narrower than *European* foreign policy, which entails European non-EU member states, but broader than the sum of national foreign policies of EU member states, or simply CFSP. Since the aim of this study is to examine the EU's own

² Known as the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) until 2009, when the Lisbon Treaty entered into force.

role conceptions, it is important to include as many aspects as possible of its potential external engagement. A broad definition of EU foreign policy, mirroring the EU's own 'external action', will therefore be used.

1.4 Scope and delimitation

The EU's foreign policy has gradually expanded over the years, but the reasons for looking at EU role conceptions between 2003 and 2016 are several. One is the changing global dynamics after 9/11, which forced the EU to re-evaluate its foreign policy objectives. Another is that the EU acquired several new foreign policy instruments, expanded its security and defence capabilities, and deployed its first missions under the European Defence and Security Policy (ESDP) in 2003. Discussions about the EU's global role materialised in the EU's first security strategy later the same year. The period has seen several institutional changes of relevance for EU foreign policy, most notably the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 and EU enlargements. These internal developments, together with the changing strategic environment, merit a closer look at EU role conceptions from 2003 to 2016.

This study will not look at concrete implementation of EU policies – that is, assessing the EU's performance on the global scene. EU actorness (Bretherton and Vogler, 2005), the EU's capabilities-expectations gap (Hill, 1993), and the potential or actual impact of the EU in the world are research fields of their own. Focus is here on changing EU *role conceptions* – that is, the images EU foreign policy makers' hold about how the EU *should* act on the global scene. However, the degree to which the EU can be considered a normative power is ultimately determined by the degree to which other actors internalize its ideas. (Bengtsson and Elgström, 2011: 115) Broken promises; ideas that are not perceived as legitimate; and incoherence between words and deeds would likely have a negative impact on the external perceptions of the EU, and thereby also on its ability to lead by example. (Elgström and Chaban, 2015: 17) From a role theoretical perspective, this interplay between internal and external aspects of roles are of great importance. External images of the EU will, however, only be addressed in so far as they contribute to changes in EU role conceptions.

This study will only examine changes in the EU's general 'meta-role' conception. The EU has multiple roles, which depend on the context and situation. Changes in these 'context-specific' roles will not be addressed, except if they play a major role in changes in the EU's general role.

1.5 Outline

This study is structured as follows: The introductory chapter explains the research problem and states the aim of the study. The theoretical framework introduces role theory and outlines the Normative Power Europe debate. In the methodology section, the theoretical departure is

translated into an analytical framework for understanding changing EU role conceptions based on ideal-types. The material is then introduced, before it is put in a wider context. The three EU foreign policy documents in question are described one by one in the section called empirical findings, before the respective EU role conception are derived from the analytical framework. The following section discusses how changing EU role conceptions can be understood from a role theoretical perspective. The results are then problematized and discussed further in the last section, where areas for further research are also highlighted.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Role Theory

Originating in sociology, the concept of national roles conceptions was first used in Foreign Policy Analysis by Holsti (1970). In his seminal work *National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy* Holsti examines states' role conceptions as viewed by their own policy-makers. Holsti identifies a number of national role conceptions that guide foreign policy behaviour. By providing a link between identity and behaviour, national role conceptions become important elements for understanding states' interactions within the international system.

“A *national role conception* includes the policymakers' own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate regional systems. It is their “image” of the appropriate orientations or functions of their state toward, or in, the external environment.” (Holsti, 1970:245-6)

By introducing the notion of national role conceptions, Holsti acknowledged the subjective dimension of national foreign policy. Focus was on decision-makers and their perception of the situation. The following research on role theory has worked out a rich conceptual language to designate certain role conceptions to states within the international system. Aggestam (2006) breaks down national roles into four components. *Role expectation* relates to what others expect the role-beholder to do. *Role conception* is the role-beholder's own, subjective definition of its responsibilities and obligations in foreign policy. Role conceptions can reveal the intentions and motives behind certain foreign policy actions. *Role performance* is the actual foreign policy behaviour of an actor, as expressed through characteristic patterns of decisions and actions. *Role-set* refers to one general role, which is the predominant school of thought given an actors different, specific roles. For the purpose of this study, focus will be exclusively on role conceptions – meaning the subjective dimension of roles that Holsti identified as the missing link between identity and behaviour. In an attempt to develop an analytical framework for understanding the rules of action guiding *EU* foreign policy – rather than *national* foreign policy – Aggestam (2006: 19-20) defines an EU role conception as one that “...refers to images that foreign policy-makers hold concerning the general long-term function and performance of the EU in the international system.” This definition takes an

elite-centred perspective on the EU's global role, and can be used to describe the views of policy-makers who are engaged in shaping EU foreign policy. In line with the purpose of this study, such a definition seems well suited and will therefore be used.

Indeed, national role conceptions have almost exclusively been studied via decision makers own perceptions of the roles they see for their state. They have been used as independent variables to explain foreign policy decisions. In so doing, role theorists have assumed that: (i) there is consensus among elites; (ii) role conceptions are shared between the elite and the masses. (Cantir and Kaarbo, 2012:7) Both these assumptions are worth addressing as regards the European Union. The EU's foreign policy elite is a diverse set of actors, comprised of policy-makers from 28 member states as well as officials from several EU institutions. The EU's multi-level governance structure adds yet another layer compared to that of national foreign policy making. However, the intergovernmental nature of the EU's foreign policy has one advantage. Every decision taken by the European Council is subject to negotiations between member states' representatives, and they do therefore not imply prior consensus. (see Larsen, 2002) The European Council could thus be seen as an arena for elite contestation, where member states' governments agree on a common EU role conception. Regarding the second assumption, there is still little research into whether EU citizens share the role conceptions of the European elite.

According to Holsti (1970), sources of national role conceptions are both domestic (eg. resources, values, ideology, and public opinion) and international (eg. system structures, legal principles, treaty commitments, and "world opinion"). It is not the actual conditions that matters, but the decision-makers' *perceptions* thereof. National role conceptions must simultaneously resonate with domestic audiences and be credible in the state's relations with other states. (Breuning, 2011:24). In this regard, EU role conceptions are no different than national role conceptions. Just like national foreign policy makers face both domestic and international pressure, the same is true for their European counterparts. Internally, EU foreign policy makers are pressured by EU citizens, limited by the EU's institutional structures, and restricted by formal decision making procedures. Externally, they have to consider pressure from partners as well as opponents, while adhering to international rules and responding to changes in the international system. The struggle to find a role conception that resonates well both at home and abroad puts EU foreign policy makers in a peculiar situation, especially considering the diverse set of actors within the EU. Prioritising among the many issues on the table is a fine balancing act, which requires the support of a range of internal and external actors. EU role conceptions provide EU foreign policy makers with a road-map that helps them to navigate this complicated landscape. However, it is also widely acknowledged that actors simultaneously conceive of multiple roles, which vary in importance and according to the situation. (Aggestam, 2004:89) The EU is no different. It has several 'context-specific roles' that vary according to issues and geographical areas, for example as a leader in international trade and environmental negotiations, or as a partner for development in the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. (Bengtsson and Elgström, 2011) But the EU also has one generalized 'meta-role' – often said to be that of a Normative Power Europe – which is more consistent and provides a bedrock for its other context-specific roles. The overarching 'meta-role' is associated with a general role conception, which incorporates the role

conceptions of the EU's specific roles. The EU's own generalized role conception rest on a set of central elements irrespective of empirical context. (Bengtsson and Elgström, 2012: 105)

The role conceptions within an actor's role set vary in relative importance depending on their centrality and salience. (Chafetz et. al, 1996) Different role conceptions within the same role-set are not necessarily compatible, and the existence of multiple roles can create conflict over which role conceptions to select in any given situation. Role conflict may take the form of either intra-role or inter-role conflict. *Intra-role conflict* is internal to the actor in question. It can arise when two or more role conceptions within a role set clash, or when different components within one role conception are inconsistent. (Nilsson, 2015: 49) For the EU, such intra-role conflict could for example arise when the discrepancy between the EU's role conceptions in different geographic areas become too large, or when role conceptions in several issue areas deviate too much from the generalized meta-role of a Normative Power Europe. *Inter-role conflict* relates to the incompatibility of two or more of the roles an actor occupies, and the expectations associated with these roles. Such conflict emerges in the social relationship between an actor and its counterparts. (Nilsson, 2015:49) The EU is constantly engaged in social interactions with its partners, neighbours, and rivals. When the expectations of these actors clash with the EU's own role conceptions, inter-role conflict can arise. Harnish et. al. (2011: 256) further identifies a specific type of inter-role conflict – *inter-role conflicts with systemic relevance* – when role conceptions relating to the international order are incompatible or conflicting. International relations could then be in upheaval, leading to a large-scale redistribution of power, a reorganisation of international institutions, or a division between those in favour of status quo and those in support of fundamental change. (Harnish et. al. 2011: 256)

Contradictory role conceptions do not automatically lead to role conflict. Skilful decision-makers can manage incompatible role conceptions by keeping them separate in time and space. (Nilsson, 2015: 48) Where such compartmentalization fails, the decision-makers' desire for consistency and cognitive stability could instead initiate a search for change in role conceptions. (Aggestam, 2006: 23) If role conceptions are to provide policy-makers with guidance as to what constitutes appropriate behaviour, they need to remain relatively stable over time. Role conceptions are therefore inherently reluctant to change, and they are more stable the more central they are within a role-set; if the elements within the role conception are consistent; or when they are unquestioned. (Aggestam, 2006: 23-5) Generally, when role conceptions do change it is more often the result of gradual adaptation than sudden crisis. (Breuning, 2011) There are, however, several reasons for actors to change their role conceptions: to maximise utility; to retain or regain legitimacy by finding "appropriate" responses; or after arguing about new standards of appropriateness (i.e. norms and values). (Harnish et. al., 2011:256)

Identities and roles are closely related, albeit distinctly separated, concepts. The relationship between role and identity can be seen as a two-way process. On the one hand, roles prescribe a certain behaviour which then reinforces an identity. On the other hand, identity shapes roles which guide behaviour. (Nabers, 2011:82-3) The distinction between identities and roles is particularly important at European level, because the EU is still a political identity in-the-making. European foreign policy functions as a clarifier of the values and principles of the EU both to its own citizens and to the rest of the world. (Lucarelli,

2006a: 13) The role the EU plays in the world thus becomes an important element in the formation of a common European identity. Identifying EU values and defining the EU's international role is part of the same identity-building process. (Lucarelli, 2006b: 49) It has been argued that foreign and security policy is the next phase of European integration, mainly for reasons related to the internal dynamics of the EU. (Bickerton, 2015) The EU's global role is both shaping and being shaped by its still emerging identity. Ultimately, what constitutes a European identity and whether this can be seen as an important source of EU foreign policy roles remains debatable. (Aggestam, 2006:21) The more interlinked national role conceptions are with national identity, the more resistant they are to change. (Aggestam, 2006:91) Considering the EU as a political entity still in search for its international identity, EU role conceptions would be more prone to change.

2.2 Normative Power Europe

The growing international aspirations of the European Union has led to an increased interest in understanding, characterising, and explaining its global role. It is often argued that the EU is a distinct, *sui generis*, international entity unlike any other. The views on what the EU's specific characteristics are differ – from its goals and values; to its use of political instruments; to its peculiar institutional construction. (Elgström and Smith, 2006:2) Although an explicit link to role theory is rarely made, much of the literature following Duchene's (1972) notion of a 'Civilian Power Europe' is in one way or another concerned with the EU's international role. Few people today contest that the EU is different from other international actors, and much of the literature has therefore tried to analyse what the EU's distinctiveness consists of. One of the most influential concepts describing the European Union as an international actor in recent years originates in Ian Manners (2002) article *Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?*. According to Manners, the EU is 'leading by example' through its ability to project externally the norms and principles that it holds internally. Normative Power Europe is less concerned with the capabilities of the Union – whether this be civilian or military – and more with the ideational aspects of the Union's international influence. In Manners' (2002:239) own words, the EU's "ability to shape conceptions of 'normal' in international relations needs to be given much greater attention". Normative Power Europe was quickly embraced in both political and academic circles, which caused some critics to reject the concept over concerns that it was too intertwined with official EU language to offer any critical insights. (Sjursen, 2006a:170) This lack of distance between policy-making and research is of course problematic for scholars who wish to deconstruct and challenge the prevailing picture of the EU's international identity. But, as will be argued in this study, the same fuzziness can make Normative Power Europe a useful analytical tool when combined with role theory.

Another common critique concerns its lack of conceptual clarity. Empirical investigation of the concept is difficult without clearly defined criteria and assessment standards (Sjursen, 2006c),³ many of the assumed causal mechanisms behind the concept are poorly understood (Forsberg, 2011), it is essentially euro-centric, and most studies are concerned with whether the EU *acts* as a normative power rather than whether it *has* normative power – i.e. means rather than de facto impact of EU policy. (Diez, 2005) In addition, ‘Normative’, ‘Power’, and ‘Europe’ are all contested concepts in themselves.

Manners (2002:242) identifies five ‘core’ norms within EU laws and policies: peace, liberty, democracy, rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. These are complemented by four ‘minor’ norms within the constitution and practices of the EU: social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development, and good governance. As rightly pointed out by critics, the EU is by no means unique in promoting these objectives. (Diez, 2005; Sjursen, 2006a) The US have done so for decades, although with different instruments and geographic scope. The EU’s influence have been stronger in its immediate neighbourhood, whereas US ambitions have been global in reach. The EU has relied on its soft power, while the US have not hesitated to intervene military to promote its norms and principles. Kagan (2002) argues that the emergence of Europe as a ‘Kantian paradise’ of peace and prosperity was only possible under the umbrella of American military power protection, thus making the EU’s reliance on soft power a matter of necessity rather than choice. In addition to the US, other great powers such as Russia and China also see themselves as agents of peace and development in the world. (Zielonka, 2011) The idea of a normative great power is not new, and the concept is not exclusively applicable to the EU.

Manners instead argues that EU’s normative difference comes from (i) its historical context – created in a post-war setting where the need to contain destructive nationalism was crucial for peace; (ii) its hybrid polity – a combination of supranational and international forms of governance which transcend Westphalian norms; and (iii) its political-legal constitution – an elite-driven, treaty based legal order in which constitutional norms are important expressions of its international identity. Due to its distinctiveness as an international actor, the EU favours different means of influence than traditional great powers. EU norm diffusion is characterized by six distinguishing factors. *Contagion* is the unintentional diffusion of ideas to other political actors (eg. exporting regional integration). *Informational* diffusion stems from strategic communications. *Procedural* diffusion is the institutionalisation of the EU’s relations with third parties (eg. accession talks, membership of international organisations). *Transference* arises when the EU exchanges goods, trade, aid or technical assistance. *Overt diffusion* is based on the physical presence of the EU (eg. EU delegations). *Cultural filter* affects the impact of international norms, which leads to learning,

³ Manners (2008:78) later responds to this critique by introducing three elements for assessing the EU’s normative power. Firstly, EU *principles* have to be coherent with universal norms and consistently promoted, ‘living by example’. Secondly, EU *actions* must build on processes of engagement and dialogue to ensure that those implicated by EU external actions are involved, ‘being reasonable’. Thirdly, EU *impact* should be guided by ‘do least harm’, i.e. emphasising local ownership and positive conditionality.

adaptation or rejection. (Manners, 2002: 244-5) Based on this, Manners famously concludes that "...the most important factor shaping the international role of the EU is not what it does or what it says, but what it *is*." (Manners, 2002:252, emphasis added) In other words, what matters the most for the EU's influence in the world is its distinct nature as a global actor.

Normative Power Europe has been met by much criticism from realist scholars, who reject that the EU has any separate actorness to its member states. Hyde-Price (2006) argues that the Normative Power approach suffers from an ignorance of structural forces; the neglect of power in international relations; and an explicitly normative stance. Borrowing Wolfers' (1962) concept of milieu goals – that is, aiming to shape the conditions beyond national boundaries – Hyde-Price (2006) sees EU foreign policy as a collective attempt at milieu shaping driven primarily by the Union's most powerful member states. Using the Common Defence and Security Policy (CSDP) as a case in point, Hyde-Price (2006) argues that the process of closer military cooperation has been driven largely by the EU's 'Big Three' – the UK, France and Germany. The first concerns of states are always security and power maximization, but the EU's limited role in the field of security and defence has instead turned it into an arena for member states' ethical, 'second-order' concerns – such as democracy, multilateralism and human rights. However, member states will only allow the EU to be a promoter of ethical concerns as long as these do not conflict with core national interests. (Hyde-Price, 2006:223) Normative Power Europe ignores the relationship between normative concerns and strategic interests, and thus fails to acknowledge that material issues always trump the normative agenda whenever the two clash. (Youngs, 2004) This argument is in stark contrast to Manners (2002), who uses the EU's role in the abolition of the death penalty to showcase that the EU deliberately goes against its interest to promote its norms.

Both realists and Manners base their arguments on the assumption that norms and interests can be separated. Contesting this, Diez (2013) instead advocates the use of the concept hegemony to describe the EU's global role. Diez rejects the realist conception of hegemony – where the power of 'brute force' is in focus – and instead favours a Gramscian reading. The Gramscian conception of hegemony has a discursive and relational emphasis, in which the power of ideas and consensus is essential. Such power, Diez argues, is at the heart of the normative power Europe's ability to 'shape conceptions of normal'. (Diez, 2013: 195) The concept of hegemony incorporates the idea that norms and interest are part of an inseparable complex, which in turn forms a discursive practice. The nearly consensual discourse around Normative Power Europe have come to represent the continuation of, rather than a break with, traditional forms of power. Constructing the EU as a 'force for good' inevitably means creating the 'other' as something different – something the EU is not. The EU's 'others' then become adversaries of EU norms, marginalised in the same way as opponents of traditional powers. The process of 'othering' can take different forms: representation of the other as an existential threat; as inferior; as violating universal principles; or simply as different. (Diez, 2005: 628) Embedded in the concept of Normative Power Europe is the assumption that the EU has an international identity. Diez (2005) further argues that this is not the case. Instead, the discourse of a Normative Power Europe functions as a creator of the EU's international identity. Normative Power Europe is potentially the only form of identity the diverse set of actors within the EU can agree on. The discursive practice of identity formation is not *per se* a bad thing, but it needs to be followed by self-reflection. Only by engaging in a continuous

debate about the way EU norms and values are promoted can the EU maintain its normative power status. (Diez, 2005: 636) In a joint contribution to the Normative Power Europe debate, Diez and Manners (2007) acknowledge the inherent tension between the promotion of norms, on the one hand, and reflexivity, on the other. To bridge this tension, they identify a self-reflexive normative power as one that is spreading norms through example rather than preaching; addressing internal failures instead of demonising; holds a preference for dialogue with others rather than trying to change them; and is committed to binding itself to norms set by others. (Diez and Manners, 2007: 185)

The characteristics of a self-reflexive Normative Power are similar to those of a 'Civilian Power Europe'. Maull (1990, 2005) describes an ideal type civilian power as one that deploys primarily non-military foreign policy instruments; cooperates with other states; and is willing to develop multilateral institutions to manage international problems. Although the two concepts discuss similar aspects of the EU as an international actor, Manners maintains several differences between them. In Manners (2006a) view, Normative Power Europe is distinct from Civilian Power Europe in that it rejects implicit claims of a neo-colonial 'civilising' power; emphasises non-material norms rather than (material) economic or other non-military resources; discards the focus on states; and introduces a normative theorising of what the EU *should* be. (Manners, 2006a).

The most controversial issue regarding the European Union as a civilian power is one that ties into the Normative Power Europe debate – namely its compatibility with military integration. Under what conditions, if ever, can a civilian power use military force? Two main views can be identified. On the one hand, military capabilities are seen as always being incompatible with a civilian power status. The mere existence of military instruments renders a civilian identity impossible, even if such instruments are used exclusively for peacekeeping or humanitarian missions. Development of European defence capabilities shifts focus away from the EU's comparative advantage in the economic and diplomatic domain, thus transforming the Union into a "non-civilian" power. The capacity to use military means, regardless of how civilian the ends are, makes it impossible to label the EU an exclusively civilian power. (Smith, 2005; Moravcsik, 2009; Zielonka, 2004) On the other hand, military means are seen as necessary for upholding civilian values. Military instruments should only be used as a last resort, but simply by having them – or having the ability to threaten to use them – the EU becomes more credible in its civilian power ambitions. (Stavridis 2001). A defence capacity transforms the EU from a civilian power "by default" to a civilian power "by design". (Larsen, 2002:292) Ultimately, the acquisition of military capabilities ensures the safeguarding of EU's civilian norms and principles. Military means underpin rather than eliminate the EU's normative ambitions. (Howorth, 2010) If the line is to be drawn between 'having' and 'not having', the civilian power label is already outdated. The fact is, the EU does have a Common Security and Defence Policy; a European Defence Agency (EDA); EU Military Staff (EUMS); and substantial military resources at hand. A more nuanced approach is therefore needed to capture the EU's evolving international role. Manners and Diez (2007) agree that normative power is not the opposite of military power – on the contrary. Military force may very well be used to back up the spread of normative values, as long as the reliance on the power of norms itself is not compromised. Indeed, if normative power is to make sense as a separate category it cannot be reduced to only military or economic power. Similarly,

Maul (2005) argues that the role concept of a civilian power suggests a specific way in which military force will be projected – always collectively, only with international legitimacy, and only in the pursuit of civilizing international relations – rather than any inability or unwillingness to use military force.

3 Methodological approach

This section will outline the methodological concerns related to the analysis of changing EU role conceptions in the 21st century. It will first motivate the use of role theory and ideal-types, before explaining the theoretical motivations behind the construction of the two ideal-types – based on Manners Normative Power Europe and Diez’s critique. A second dimension focused on capabilities will be introduced, namely the EU’s preference for civilian or military instruments. These two dimensions are then combined in an analytical framework, constructed to facilitate the mapping of EU role conceptions and thereby to identify changes.

3.1 Role theory and ideal types

Role theory has a rich conceptual language, but it has not always been translated into a solid methodological approach. (Thies, 2010). This study will therefore make use of ideal-types, to allow for a systematic analysis of changes in EU role conceptions over time. The use of ideal-types in European studies is not new. Indeed, Forsberg (2011) has concluded that Normative Power in general is best seen as an ideal type, which the EU resembles more than any other international actor. The novelty here is instead the use of Normative Power Europe for studying EU role conceptions. The question is not whether the EU *is* a normative power, but whether the EU *sees* itself as a normative power. Before going into details on the analytical construct, first a few words on the use of ideal types. The construction of ideal types means that certain characteristics of a phenomenon are accentuated to their extreme, in order to provide the researcher with an analytical tool. This also means that ideal types should not be seen as descriptions of actual events, but rather as instruments used for understanding the empirical reality. As theoretical constructions, they have no empirical equivalent. (Esaiasson, 2012: 140) The use of ideal types enables a systematic comparison of any given empirical material, in this case three EU foreign policy documents. (Bergström and Boréus, 2005: 171) When opposing reference points are created, ideal types can be used to study gradual differences. Important here is that the ideal types represent fundamentally different views, and that the characteristics of the ideal types contrast each other. (Esaiasson, 2012: 139) By building on previous research, *relevant* characteristics through which the material will be analysed should be identified. (Esaiasson, 2012: 143). Relevant means constructing categories of analytical value. That is, categories that can add new insights into the research problem at hand. For the purpose of studying changes in EU role conceptions, it will be argued below that Manners’ Normative Power Europe and Diez critique thereof represents relevant and sufficiently opposing reference points that can add analytical value to the study of changing EU role conceptions.

The embrace of the concept Normative Power Europe – in political as well as academic circles – makes it particularly well-placed for the study of EU role conceptions. If policy-makers are influenced by the academic debate, it is reasonable to believe that the ideas behind Normative Power Europe is reflected in the role EU foreign policy-makers see for the EU on the global scene. EU role conceptions were previously defined as “images that foreign policy-makers hold concerning the general long-term function and performance of the EU in the international system” (Aggestam, 2006: 19-20). EU foreign policy makers’ images should be influenced by the ideas about the function and performance of a Normative Power Europe.

The concept of Normative Power Europe has been extensively discussed, criticised and elaborated over the past decades, but no one has been as closely involved in scrutinizing it as Diez. Over the years, Manners and Diez have been engaged in a constant debate about the flaws and fixes of Normative Power Europe.⁴ While coming to agreement on some levels, they still show considerable differences regarding the way the EU functions in the international system. Both are primarily interested in the ideational aspect of the EU as an international actor, and thus belong to the constructivist camp of IR-scholars. Due to the nature of EU role conceptions – based on perceptions rather than strictly material conditions – Manners and Diez provide *relevant*, yet sufficiently *contrasting* theoretical perspectives on the EU’s global role. By constructing two opposing EU global roles based on Manners’ Normative Power Europe and Diez critique thereof, a closer examination of changes in EU role conceptions over time will be enabled. The two ideal types are elaborated in more detail in section 3.2.1, and summarized in Table 1.

But analysing EU role conceptions through these ideal types omits one important aspects of the EU’s global role – its capabilities. The Normative Power Europe literature pays considerable attention to ideational ends and immaterial norms, but less to the instruments used for achieving these objectives. As the vivid debate around the potential militarisation of the EU shows, the question of EU capabilities is an important one. This study will therefore construct a two-way matrix of EU role conceptions: combining the EU’s self-perceived global role with the perceived attractiveness of the instruments it has at hand. The EU foreign policy makers could, to a varying extent, prefer the use of either civilian or military instruments.

⁴ For some of Manners subsequent contributions to the debate, see: Manners, I. (2006) 'Normative power Europe reconsidered: beyond the crossroads'; Manners, I. and Whitman, R. (2003) 'The Difference Engine: Constructing and Representing the International Identity of the EU'; Manners, I. (2008) 'The Normative Ethics of the European Union'; Manners, I. (2013) 'Assessing the decennial, reassessing the global: Understanding European Union normative power in global politics'

3.2 Analytical framework

The analytical framework will here be presented in more detail. First, the EU's perceived global role will be constructed as 'Normative Power Europe' or 'Great Power Europe'. Second, the EU's capabilities will be divided into either a preference for civilian or military instruments. Third, these two dimensions will be combined in a two-way matrix and discussed together.

3.2.1 The horizontal dimension: The EU's global role

What kind of role conception can we expect from Manners' Normative Power Europe? Or, in other words, what images would EU foreign policy makers hold concerning the international function and performance of the EU if we depart in Manners' Normative Power Europe? Firstly, the EU's normative difference – stemming from its historical context, hybrid polity, and political-legal constitution – makes it a different international actor which transcends the Westphalian system. The European Union has a strong international identity based on its common values, principles and norms. Building on its own example, the EU should support multilateralism and regional cooperation within the international system. Secondly, encouraged by the success of the EU as a multilevel, regional political entity in fostering peace in Europe, the EU could – and should – shape and transform international rules (i.e. 'shape conceptions of normal'). Thirdly, the function and performance of the EU in the international system is guided by its normative basis. The five core norms of peace, liberty, democracy, rule of law, and human rights and fundamental freedoms are of primary concern in all of the EU's external engagement. The EU always deliberately chooses to put its norms ahead of its interests. Fourthly, the EU is engaged in a continuous self-reflection process. Being normatively different and having a normative basis is not enough, the EU must also reflect on its position in the international system. The EU sees a more active role for itself where the potential influence is the largest, most notably in its neighbouring regions. The EU needs to 'lead by example' by living up to its principles internally. Self-reflexivity also means knowing ones weaknesses, and being ready to address internal failures. This fourth point does not necessarily contradict the third. It is of course possible that EU interests are stronger in its neighbouring regions, but so is the EU's potential influence. Putting norms ahead of interests means emphasising EU principles in any given international engagement. Self-reflexivity means knowing when to do anything at all.

As an opposing reference point, what kind of EU role conception can we expect according to Diez's reading of Normative Power Europe? What images would EU foreign policy makers then hold concerning the function and performance of the EU in the international system? Firstly, the EU's history, institutional set-up and legal basis may be different from those of other international actors, but they does not predispose it to act in a certain way. If necessary, the EU could act alone within the international system. Secondly, the EU operates within existing international rules, and must be ready to intervene in support of international law

whenever it is threatened. Thirdly, EU norms are – at least in principle – guiding all EU international engagement. Norms should always be promoted to the largest extent possible, but there is no contradiction between promoting norms and serving EU interests. Ensuring the security of the EU and its citizens is sometimes more important than promoting EU norms abroad. If and when necessary, the EU will put its own interests first. Fourthly, there is a lack of self-reflection on behalf of the EU. Through an ambitious agenda for its external action, the EU should contribute to peace and security all around the world. EU norms are superior and could therefore be imposed on others. The characteristics of these two ideal-type EU role conceptions are summarized in Table 1:

Table 1. The EU’s global role: two ideal types

	‘Normative Power Europe’ global role (Manners)	‘Great Power Europe’ global role (Diez)
Relation to other international actors	EU transcends the Westphalian system. Promotes multilateralism and regional cooperation.	EU resembles a traditional great power. The EU is ready to act alone, if and when necessary.
Relation to international rules	Shapes and transforms international rules. (‘shapes conceptions of normal’)	Operates within existing international rules.
Norms and interests	Promotes its norms equally in all external engagement. Deliberately chooses norms over interests.	Promotes its norms selectively. Puts interests first, if necessary.
Self-reflexivity, geographic scope	Self-reflexivity. Limited scope, engages where the potential influence is the largest. The EU should ‘lead by example’ (i.e. live up to its norms internally).	No self-reflexivity. Missionary spirit with a global reach. The EU could impose its norms on others.

As previously noted, neither of these two ideal types will be present in their purest form. There is no such thing as a completely Normative Power Europe global role, neither is there a fully-fledged Great Power Europe global role. The ideal types are constructed as analytical tools, in this case for the purpose of studying potential shifts in EU role conceptions over time.

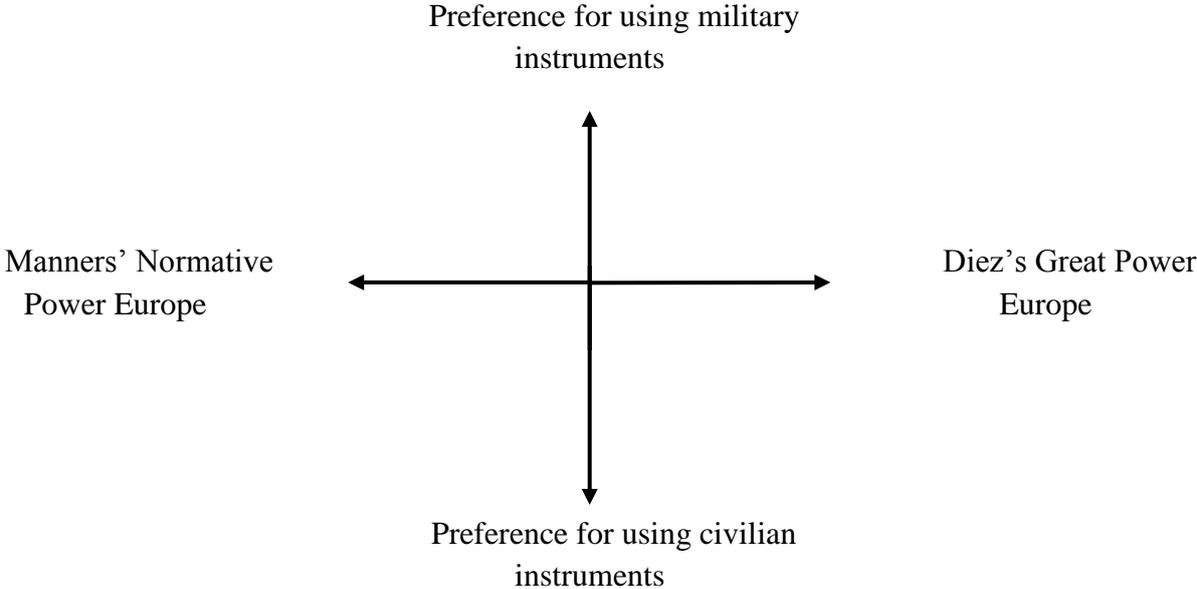
3.2.2 The vertical dimension: Capabilities

Capabilities will be divided into preference for using civilian or military instruments. Civilian instruments are all non-military tools used to pursue strategic objectives, including economic, diplomatic, cultural, and developmental instruments. Deployment of non-military personnel that contributes to security (i.e. police officers, judges, or civil servants) is also considered a civilian instrument. (Keukeleire and Delreux, 2014: 181) The relative centrality of the different types of civilian tools will not be addressed, since the distinction between civilian and military tools is here considered a more relevant dividing line than differences within the civilian dimension. This division also follows the academic debate regarding the EU’s militarisation. Military instruments, on the other hand, involves the use of armed force in one way or another. It should be noted that neither are civilian instruments necessary non-coercive – for example economic sanctions – nor are military instruments necessarily coercive – for example advice and training of another state’s armed forces upon invitation. (Sjursen, 2006b: 239)

The subjective nature of EU role conceptions enables us to study the willingness to use certain tools over others – because those for one reason or another fit better with the type of behaviour the EU finds appropriate for itself – but not the actual use of instruments. Recognising that most EU foreign policy instruments (both civilian and military) have expanded in recent years, this study will examine changes in the *relative* willingness to use one type of instruments over the other. The capabilities dimension therefore shows to what extent the EU considers military or civilian instruments its preferred option in dealing with its external environment.

3.2.3 Combining the two dimensions

Figure 1. Changing EU role conceptions, analytical framework:



The horizontal axis represents the EU's self-perceived global role – Normative Power Europe or Great Power Europe – and the vertical axis shows the perceived attractiveness of its instruments – civilian or military. In the upper left corner, EU foreign policy makers' conceive of the EU as a normative power within the international system. Military capabilities could be used to pursue its foreign policy objectives, if preceded by a process of thorough self-reflection. In the lower left corner, the EU's normative power status should be coupled with the use of civilian instruments. In the lower right corner, EU foreign policy makers consider the EU to be a great power – albeit a normatively different one. Its international engagement should rest on civilian tools. In the upper right corner, the EU's great power could be backed up with military capabilities.

3.3 Material

3.3.1 Selection of material and its limitations

National role conceptions have primarily been studied by analysing individual leaders' speeches and statements, or by adducing national role conceptions from historical sources. (Thies, 2010) This study is no different. It takes an elite-centred perspective on EU role conceptions, thus putting the foreign policy makers' images of the EU's global role at the centre. The European Council is the highest decision-making body for EU foreign policy. It gives guidance and provides tasking to the EU executive institutions responsible for carrying out EU foreign policy, primarily the European External Action Service (EEAS). Decision-making in the field of CFSP is intergovernmental, meaning that all decisions have to be taken by consensus. They are the result of negotiations and elite contestation between member states' elites. Documents from the European Council could therefore provide insights into the images shared by EU foreign policy makers about the purpose and orientation of the EU in the international system. The empirical material consists of the European Security Strategy (2003), the Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy (2008), and the EU Global Strategy (2016). They have been chosen because of their broad take on EU foreign policy, and for their comparability. Due to the nature of the second document – the Implementation Report – it is slightly different than the other two. It has a sometimes stronger focus on the EU's achievements in recent years, including recently launched initiatives, because it was also aimed at assessing progress. However, the structure largely mirrors that of the other two strategies, and it still contains a substantial strategic outlook and sets objectives for the EU's foreign policy in the years ahead. It will therefore be treated equally to the other documents. All documents have been adopted by consensus on the European level, but they do not reveal anything about elite contestation within each member state. Considering that the EU is both an international actor in itself and an arena for member states to carry out their own foreign policy, this is an important shortcoming. However, since the aim of this study is

to look at EU role conceptions towards the external environment – not the process of Europeanisation among member states’ national role conceptions – this need not concern us too much here.

Analysing speeches by foreign policy-makers would have been another plausible option, but the problem within an EU context is to find material that is comparable across time. Partly due to the EU’s major institutional rearrangement after the Lisbon Treaty, and partly due to internal confusion over who is representing the EU in different fora,⁵ it is difficult to know who’s speeches to study. Interviews would have given valuable information about the EU foreign policy makers’ images of the EU’s global role, but the prospects of reaching sufficiently high-ranking officials and politicians were not considered good enough.

3.3.2 Background on the documents

The European Council approved the European Security Strategy (ESS) “A Secure Europe in a Better World” on 12 December 2003. Apart from being the EU’s first ever security strategy, it also served several internal purposes. Amid times of strong disagreement among the 15 EU member states over the Iraq war, overcoming internal divergence and mistrust was almost as important as giving strategic direction to the Union’s external policies. (Keukeleire and Delreux, 2014:54) Divergence between the EU and US view on security had increased under the Bush administration, with European public opinion showing a greater reluctance to use force without international legal sanction. (Bailes, 2005: 9) The document has been subject to frequent comparisons with the US National Security Strategy (NSS), published in September 2002. The European Security Strategy is, however, shorter and has a more general nature. Its focus on developing ‘well-functioning international institutions and a rule-based international order’ has been seen as an attempt to distinguish it from the US approach to foreign policy. (Keukeleire and Delreux, 2014: 55) The Strategy was drafted by a few key individuals in the office of the High Representative Javier Solana, strictly a top-down process, and was intentionally left short and concise. It identifies three strategic objectives for the EU’s external action: addressing threats; building security in its neighbourhood; and promoting an international order based on effective multilateralism. The ESS has been critiqued for saying little about what the EU *should* do, and more about *how* they will do things – perhaps as a result of the internal disagreements.

Five years later, on 11 December 2008, the European Council endorsed the “Report of the Implementation of the European Security Strategy: Providing Security in a Changing World”. This document was presented by the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, at the request of the December 2007 European Council. The tasking was to “examine the implementation of the Strategy with a view to proposing

⁵ The Joint Declaration on EU-NATO cooperation from July 2016 was for example signed by Donald Tusk, the President of the European Council, and Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Commission, but not by Frederica Mogherini, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

elements on how to improve the implementation and, as appropriate, elements to complement it” (quoted in Giegerich et al, 2009). Compared to the previous document, the scope of threats was expanded and a broader set of instruments was listed to pursue the EU’s security goals. However, divergences among member states about the EU’s strategic interests persisted. (Keukeleire and Delreux, 2014: 55) Two successive enlargements had seen EU membership expand – from 15 member states when the previous strategy was released to 27 member states in 2008. The new member states had slightly different strategic priorities, with an increased focus on Russia and a greater reliance on the transatlantic link for the provision of security within Europe. The enlargement also shifted the EU’s immediate neighbourhood further East, which forced the EU to pay increasing attention to the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Eastern countries such as Moldova and Ukraine.

The following EU foreign policy strategy was not released until eight years later. Much had happened with the EU’s institutional set-up in between. The entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 led to several important changes for EU foreign policy: the abolishment of the pillar system brought all dimensions of EU foreign policy together; the EU was granted legal personality; the position of a High Representative/Vice President (HR/VP) and the European External Action Service (EEAS) were created; and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) was renamed and strengthened. On 28 June 2016, the EU’s High Representative Frederica Mogherini presented the new EU Global Strategy titled “Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe”. Only days earlier, the British people had voted to leave the European Union. According to one of her closest partners Tocci (2016), it was therefore long unsure whether Mogherini would still push for its release. The decision to go forward with the Global Strategy despite the result of the British referendum has been seen as a skilled act of strategic diplomacy and a pledge to remain together as Union. (Davis Cross, 2016; Mälksoo, 2016) Much like the EU’s first security strategy functioned as a tool to overcome internal disagreement over the Iraq war back in 2003, so did the Global Strategy with regards to Brexit in 2016. Although this was not the original intention, the timing of its release turned the Global Strategy into yet another foreign policy document of great internal importance. During the drafting process, numerous consultations were held with national foreign and defence ministries, research institutions and think tanks across Europe. This unusually inclusive process was initiated to ensure the broadest support possible for the final document, and to engage all relevant actors in strategic reflection. (Tocci, 2016) Considering how events unfolded, this broad support enabled the European Council to welcome the document in June 2016 – despite its unfortunate timing and without much discussion. In terms of substance, the Global Strategy is more comprehensive and considerably longer than its predecessors. It identifies not three but five priorities for EU external action: The security of the Union; State and Societal Resilience to the East and South; an Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises; Cooperative Regional Orders; and Global Governance for the 21st Century.

4 Empirical findings

The following section will analyse each of the three documents – the European Security Strategy (2003); the Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy (2008); and the European Union Global Strategy (2016) – in detail according to the analytical framework presented in section 3.2. The last part of the section will summarize the EU role conceptions identified in each of the documents, and place them in the figure.

4.1 The European Security Strategy (2003)

4.1.1 The EU's global role

The introductory paragraphs of the Strategy note the European Union's contribution to peace and stability in Europe, and the document is generally optimistic in terms of what the EU can do on the global scene. The EU's international identity as a unique, normatively different actor on the global scene is assumed to be solid enough to build its external engagement on.

All key threats identified in the Strategy – terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure and organised crime – are of a transnational character. They transcend traditional state borders and challenge the prevailing international order, thus affecting not only the EU itself negatively but also its neighbours and partners. Cooperative efforts are needed to deal with the transnational threats, and a strong United Nations is a European priority. The Strategy notes that a more active Union can “contribute to an effective multilateral system leading to a fairer, safer and more united world.” (European Council, 2003: 14) The EU wants to export its success story to the rest of the world, while also recognising the potential to strengthening global governance through regional cooperation. Although the EU is portrayed as being particularly well equipped to respond to new multi-faceted situations, they should not do this alone. EU foreign policy makers' consider multilateralism and regional cooperation keys to dealing with transnational threats, and the EU's relation to other international actors therefore closely mirrors that of a Normative Power Europe.

The Strategy further acknowledges that the EU is “committed to upholding and *developing* International Law” (European Council, 2003: 9, emphasis added) Maintaining status quo is not enough, the EU must also contribute to the development of international rules where political cooperation and multilateralism are the guiding principles. At the same time, the Strategy is not foreign to intervening in support of the existing international system:

“We want international organisations, regimes and treaties to be effective in confronting threats to international peace and security, and must therefore be ready to act when their rules are broken.” (European Council, 2003: 9) The Strategy sees merit in the basic *structure* of the current order, but the EU’s role is to guarantee that it is efficient and well-functioning. One part of this is to ensure that the laws governing the rules-based international order evolves in response to current developments, such as the increasing threats posed by proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and global warming. EU foreign policy makers’ prefer a Union that operates within existing, albeit slightly updated, international rules. This places the EU’s relation to international rules somewhere in between a Normative and a Great Power Europe.

Even though the Strategy generally promotes an EU that is ‘leading by example’ (i.e. by making an international order based on effective multilateralism one of its strategic objectives), it rarely makes explicit reference to what Manners identifies as the EU’s five core norms. The minor norm of good governance is, however, frequently emphasised throughout the document. Besides the importance of dealing with corruption and the abuse of power, the Strategy also several times returns to the need to create “well-governed” states on the borders of the Union. Norms are generally promoted on their own merit, rather than as repackaged EU interests. For example, energy dependency is considered a specific concern for Europe. The Gulf, Russia, and North Africa are named as main import countries, and it is the EU’s interest to maintain good relations with them. But despite their major importance for the EU’s energy supply, the Strategy does not offer these regions any ‘concessions’ when it comes to promoting EU norms. In other cases, the spread of EU norms are explicitly equated with EU security concerns. Restoring good government and fostering democracy in the Balkans is described as one of the most effective ways of dealing with organised crime also within the EU. (European Council, 2003: 6) Extending EU norms beyond its borders then becomes a way to ensure internal security for EU citizens. The strategy notes that: “With the new threats, the first line of defence will often be abroad.” (European Council, 2003: 7) While recognising the underlying EU interests behind its external action, the Strategy generally promotes its norms relatively equal across all international engagement. The image shared by EU foreign policy makers’ can be placed towards the Normative Power Europe end of the scale.

In terms of geographic scope, the Strategy recognises that “In an era of globalisation, distant threats may be as much a concern as those that are near at hand.” (European Council, 2003: 6). Despite this, the EU sees a greater role for itself in its immediate neighbourhood. The main focus of the Strategy is on the Balkans and the Middle East. “Our task is to promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean...” (European Council, 2003: 8) The Strategy notes that the prospects of joining the European Union offers neighbouring countries both a strategic objective and an incentive for reform. Behind the EU’s strategic objective of building security in the neighbourhood first – rather than aiming for global security all at once – is a sense of self-awareness that contributes to the document’s lack of missionary spirit. Having said that, the Strategy does not completely ignore the rest of the world. The role of the transatlantic relationship is for example considered “one of the core elements of the international system” (European Council, 2003: 9), and the EU aims to build on existing relationships with those countries around the world to which it has historical, geographical and cultural ties – meaning

more or less all states. However, EU relations to more distant countries are primarily dealt with through international institutions. The emphasis remains on the EU's immediate neighbourhood, whether this means supporting neighbouring countries, or strengthening the effectiveness of regional organisations such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe (CoE). In a less self-reflexive manner, the Strategy rarely addresses areas where cooperation between member states needs to be enhanced. An in-depth discussion regarding whether the EU is living up to its norms internally is also completely absent. Regardless of why that is – norm fulfilment could simply be assumed, or it could be deemed irrelevant for the EU's external action – it highlights a certain lack of self-reflexivity on behalf of the EU. But despite portraying itself as a Union of well-governed democratic states (in opposition to poorly governed or non-democratic states located outside the EU), the EU does not find it legitimate to impose its norms on others. The EU role conception is therefore located somewhere in between full and no self-reflexivity.

4.1.2 Capabilities

EU's preferred response to instability in any given region is first and foremost strengthened economic and political cooperation. Trade and development policies, along with assistance programmes, conditionality and targeted trade measures are considered the most important features of EU external action. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) are named key institutions in the international system, through which the EU can make use of its economic influence. In opposition to the purely military threat posed by the Cold War's arms race, the new threats require other types of responses. As noted in the Strategy: "none of the new threats is purely military; nor can any be tackled by purely military means." (European Council, 2003: 7) EU foreign policy makers take pride in the large variety of instruments it has at hand and sees the EU as particularly well equipped to deal with new multi-faceted situations. To underscore the importance of civilian instruments, the Strategy notes that "...we should be ready to act before a crisis occurs. Conflict prevention and threat prevention cannot start too early." (European Council, 2003: 7) Civilian preventive measures are favoured over military conflict management, although both are possible. Military means remain just one element among others – preferably to be used in combination with civilian instruments. The EU can "add particular value by developing operations involving both military and civilian capabilities." (European Council, 2003: 11) Although military instruments are never referred to as the first option to pursue the EU's strategic goals, neither are they completely ruled out. The relationship with NATO aims to enhance the operational capabilities of the EU, although NATO is primarily considered an important political expression of the EU-US strategic partnership. Through additional resources for defence, more effective use of existing resources, and reduced duplications, the EU wish to become more capable in the military dimension. In fact, "a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid, and when necessary, *robust* intervention" (European Council, 2003: 11, emphasis added) is envisaged. Given the call for a more active use of the full spectrum of instruments for crisis management and conflict prevention, EU foreign policy makers show a willingness to include also military instruments in response to crisis. "In failed states, military

instruments may be needed to restore order, humanitarian means to tackle the immediate crisis. Regional conflicts need political solutions but military assets and effective policing may be needed in the post conflict phase.” (European Council, 2003: 7) The EU always emphasises the combination of tools the EU can use in any given situation – whether this be a mix of several civilian capabilities or a combination of military and civilian instruments. EU foreign policy makers clearly prefer civilian instruments, although these could be accompanied by a limited use of military tools.

4.2 The Implementation Report (2008)

4.2.1 The EU’s global role

The Implementation Report emphasises international cooperation and multilateral efforts as keys to tackle threats to European security. Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; terrorism; organised crime; cyber security; and climate change should all be addressed in international fora or through multilateral partnerships. Support to UN peacekeeping missions is provided by individual EU member states, but EU foreign policy makers see these contributions as important expressions of the EU’s commitment to working through multilateral fora, and particularly through the UN. The export of regional integration is explicitly mentioned as the EU’s responsibility in the world. Regional cooperation is first and foremost promoted in the Balkans, but also through EU relations with other regional organisation around the world such as the African Union, ASEAN, SAARC, and the OSCE. The EU should promote more effective multilateralism and support regional cooperation, fully in line with a Normative Power Europe.

The Implementation Report sets an ambitious agenda regarding what the EU should do to transform international rules. In fact, it is even stressed that “...Europe must *lead* a renewal of the multilateral order.” (European Council, 2008: 2, emphasis added) The goal is a more efficient and legitimate international system built on multilateralism, and the EU does not shy away from leading such efforts. Existing multilateral channels are not working satisfactory enough: “Representation in the international institutions has come under question. Legitimacy and effectiveness need to be improved, and decision-making in multilateral fora made more efficient.” (European Council, 2008: 12) Key elements to this end include continued reform of the UN system, a more effective International Criminal Court, moulding the IMF and other financial institutions, and transforming the G8. It is somewhat contradictory to unilaterally initiate a reformation process aimed at more multilateralism, but also telling for what role the EU sees for itself within the international system. The vision of a more proactive EU – a Union which is “ready to shape events” (European Council, 2008: 2) – is emphasised throughout the document. EU foreign policy makers clearly envisage a transformation of international rules. The objective – a more effective, multilateral order – rests on a Normative

Power Europe role conception, whereas the unilateral efforts foreseen to achieve set objectives is closer to that of a Great Power Europe.

In a world of diverging norms, the EU is committed to “advancing the EU’s security interests based on our core values.” (European Council, 2008: 3) The Implementation Report makes an explicit link between norms and interests, with the latter being contingent on the former. With the recognition that “...globalisation is accelerating shifts in power and is exposing differences in values.” (European Council, 2008: 1), the EU positions itself as a normatively different actor. Supporting democracy, promoting respect for human rights, contributing to the development of rule of law and ensuring good governance are key elements in the EU’s external action. However, EU norms are not always promoted equally. The Implementation Report recognises that “Concerns about energy dependence have increased over the last five years.” (European Council, 2008: 5). With Russia being one of the main energy suppliers, energy security is included as an important element of the EU-Russia partnerships. The Implementation Report therefore stresses “respect for common values, notably human rights, democracy, and rule of law” (European Council, 2008: 10) in EU-Russia relations, while simultaneously emphasising the need to consider common interests and objectives. EU norms are present, but so are interests. Similarly, piracy is considered an increasingly dangerous form of organised crime that is of great concern for the EU. “The world economy relies on sea routes for 90% of trade. Piracy in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden has made this issue more pressing in recent months, and affected delivery of humanitarian aid to Somalia.” (European Council, 2008: 8) Interestingly, the EU prefers to portray its engagement in humanitarian terms despite its considerable trade dependency. Living up to EU norms is described as more important than serving EU economic interests. In contrast, it could be argued that piracy – which remains a relatively distant and seemingly trivial threat compared to, for example, proliferation weapons of mass destruction – would not have been featured in the document if it was not threatening the EU’s economic interests. EU foreign policy makers would like to see the EU as a Normative Power Europe, although this role conception is not always consistent with the foreign policy objectives outlined in the Implementation Report. The EU’s selective norm promotion makes it more like a Great Power Europe.

The Implementation Report acknowledges that “enlargement continues to be a powerful driver for stability, peace and reform.” (European Council, 2008: 6) and pays considerable attention to the EU’s Eastern neighbourhood, including assessments of the current state-of-play in each country on the Balkans. However, certain global aspirations are embedded already in the subheadings of the document – in “*global* challenges and key threats” as well as in “building stability in Europe and *beyond*”. The Implementation Report notes that “we need to be more effective – among ourselves, within our neighbourhood and around the world.” (European Council, 2008: 9) Focussing on the EU’s neighbourhood is not enough, the EU needs to be more effective and visible world-wide. For example, the Implementation Report refers to the importance of respecting human rights under the umbrella of Responsibility-to-Protect (R2P), and notes that “Where we have worked together, the EU and US have been a formidable force for good in the world.” (European Council, 2008: 11) There are few limits on what the EU could do on the global scene, which reflects the EU foreign policy makers’ missionary spirit. In terms of self-reflexivity, only limited comfort is offered by the fact that

the Implementation Report also acknowledge the need to be more efficient internally. Calls for a more internally coherent implementation of EU foreign policies merely represents a wish for efficiency, not the launch of an extensive reflection process aimed at assessing the EU's international performance. Regarding the level of self-reflexivity, the EU role conception therefore resembles a Great Power Europe.

4.2.2 Capabilities

The Implementation Report identifies a “distinctive European approach to foreign and security policy.” (European Council, 2008: 2) The EU has historically contributed to a more secure world by building human security, reducing poverty and inequality, promoting good governance and human rights, assisting development, and addressing the root causes of conflict and insecurity. (European Council, 2008: 2) This has been achieved by drawing on “a unique range of instruments” (European Council, 2008: 2), of which civilian measures are most frequently emphasised. In relation to all key threats, the Implementation Report highlights a number of civilian measures which have been used during the past years – i.e. combined political and financial action to deal with proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, intercultural dialogue to counter radicalisation, budgetary support to the Palestinian Authority, and mediation between parties to the conflict in Georgia. The preference for civilian instruments is partly expressed in the importance of *prevention* of conflict, with each situation requiring a specific combination of instruments. The EU's toolbox includes a number of civilian means to choose from – political, diplomatic, development, humanitarian, economic and trade co-operation, and civilian crisis management. Only one listed instrument belongs to the military dimension, namely military crisis management. Hence, the EU seems to favour its many civilian tools over its one military instrument.

Despite its strong emphasis on the EU's wide range of civilian instruments, the Implementation Report also notes that the European Security and Defence Policy is growing in experience and capability. Both civilian and military missions and operations are described as important tools for responding to crisis situations abroad. The EU has special potential when it comes to combining civilian and military expertise within the same mission. Still, past or ongoing civilian missions are more extensively discussed in the Implementation report than past or ongoing military operations. The success of civilian missions are exemplified by, among other things, the European Parliament's election monitoring missions, the EU police mission in Afghanistan, the rule-of-law mission EULEX in Kosovo, and other civilian monitoring missions. But to strengthen the security aspects of the security and development nexus, the Implementation Report also highlights efforts aimed at post-conflict stabilisation and reconstruction through Security Sector Reform and Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration initiatives – i.e. military operations. (European Council, 2008: 8) The willingness to use such military post-conflict tools is expressed in parallel to the importance of preventing conflict by early civilian intervention. Additionally, the strategic partnership between the EU and NATO should be deepened to further expand the EU's range of military crisis management capabilities and enhance operational cooperation between the two

organisations. Although their capabilities differ dramatically, a closer partnership with NATO implies a willingness on behalf of the EU to at least consider the use of military instruments. To the extent that opening up for better relations with NATO also means opening up for joint responses in crisis situations, such cooperation could potentially add a substantial military component to EU's otherwise mainly civilian instruments.

4.3 The EU Global Strategy

4.3.1 The EU's global role

The key role for the EU in the multilateral system is that of “an agenda-shaper, a connector, coordinator and facilitator within a networked web of players.” (European Council, 2016: 43) The EU sees itself as one international actor among many. It is neither a leader nor a follower, but a *facilitator*. Co-responsibility is the guiding principle in relation to other international actors, with a special emphasis on partnerships. The importance of working closely with partners crosses several fields, from counter terrorism and radicalisation to cyber security and crisis management. Out of the four principles that should guide EU external action – unity, engagement, responsibility, and partnerships – all but one includes more cooperation with other international actors. In order to pursue its foreign policy goals, the EU will reach out to states, regional bodies, international organisations, civil society and the private sector. The need for greater cooperation cuts through every policy area. While the EU could statue example for other regional cooperation around the world, the Global Strategy also notes that “Regional orders do not take a single form.” (European Council, 2016: 32) The EU is holding on to the supremacy of regional cooperation, while also acknowledging that it comes in different forms. But in contrast to these cooperative efforts runs a parallel track: the need to increase the EU's ability to act alone. “The Strategy nurtures the ambition of strategic autonomy for the European Union.” (European Council, 2016: 4) The EU foreign policy makers' vision of strategic autonomy represents a considerable step towards a Great Power Europe – able and willing to act alone if necessary.

The Global Strategy identifies a rules-based global order as one of four vital interests that will underpin all external action, along with peace and security, prosperity and democracy. A multilateral order based on international law, the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is considered the only way to guarantee peace and security. The EU's role in this is to “...promote agreed rules to contain power politics...” (European Council, 2016: 15) The Global Strategy takes a clear stance in the trade-off between transforming the international system on the one hand, and upholding existing international rules on the other: “The EU is committed to a global order based on international law, including the principles of the UN Charter. This commitment translates into an aspiration to *transform* rather than simply preserve the existing system.” (European Council, 2016: 39, emphasis added) The EU should,

for example, shape global economic and environmental rules. But wherever the EU wants to transform international rules, it needs support from others. Cooperation with others is key to changing the international system, and co-responsibility is the guiding principle for promoting a rules-based global order. Going it alone is not an option, but neither is maintaining the existing system. EU foreign policy makers' emphasis on *co-shaping* international rules places the role conception closer to a Normative Power Europe.

The EU's guiding principles stem from a combination of a "realistic assessment of the strategic environment" and "an idealistic aspiration to advance a better world" (European Council, 2016: 16) The EU will be guided by something called 'principled pragmatism'. EU external action should neither be limited by normative ambitions, nor by basic security interests. Principled pragmatism enables a selective emphasis on norms or interests depending on the situation, and the Global Strategy does not shy away from making explicit reference to the link between the two. "We have an interest in promoting our values in the world. At the same time, our fundamental values are embedded in our interests." (European Council, 2016: 13) Peace, security, prosperity, democracy and a rules-based global order are part of the EU's fundamental values, but they are also part of the interests that underpins EU external action. Working together for a rules-based global order that "embeds democratic values within the international system" (European Council, 2016: 16) – that is, promoting the EU norm of democracy – is considered key. Meanwhile, such a global order also "...unlocks the full potential of a prosperous Union with open economies and deep global connections..." (European Council, 2016: 16). A rules-based global order is simultaneously aimed at promoting EU norms and serving the EU's economic interests. The same explicit linkage between norms and interests are made regarding peace. Promoting peace is always in the interest of the EU, although for different purposes depending on the geographic context: peace and stability in Asia is a prerequisite for the EU's prosperity, whereas peace and development in Africa is needed to ensure European security. The concept 'principled pragmatism' enables EU foreign policy makers to promote EU norms selectively, thus placing it on the Great Power Europe end of the spectrum.

The European Union's citizens and territory are facing a wide range of transnational threats, including terrorism, hybrid threats, climate change, economic volatility, energy insecurity and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Global Strategy recognises that many of these threats have both an internal and an external dimension (for example terrorism, hybrid threats, cyber and energy security, organised crime and external border management) By locating security threats within its borders – and not only in foreign countries far away – the EU sheds light on its own weaknesses. A threat is a threat regardless of where it comes from, and should be treated as such. The importance of living up to EU values and norms at home is also a reoccurring theme in the Global Strategy. The greatest cost of failing to 'lead by example' is a loss of reputation that discredits the EU and diminishes its potential influence in the world. "Living up consistently to our values internally will determine our external credibility and influence." (European Council, 2016: 15) As if this was not enough, the EU also risks negative consequences at home. For example, the spread of violent extremism within Europe is partly attributed to a lack of norm fulfilment among EU member states. The Global Strategy pays significant attention to Europe and the EU's surrounding regions, while engagement further afield is limited to targeted measures.

Building on its unique influence, the EU should promote reforms and contribute to the spread of EU norms in candidate countries in the Balkans. Outside its immediate neighbourhood, the EU's enduring power of attraction is not limited to any particular country. The EU could spur transformation across neighbouring regions, with Tunisia and Georgia mentioned as prime examples. The surrounding regions of the Union are stretched into Central Asia and Central Africa. Focus in these regions are on state and societal resilience in a broader sense. Instead of profiting from the EU's transformative power of attraction, the EU has a more general role. Supporting inclusive, prosperous and secure societies is the main goal, rather than specific reforms aimed at benefitting the EU accession process. EU foreign policy makers show a great deal of self-reflexivity, not only when it comes to geographic scope but also regarding the threats assessment and envisaged action.

4.3.2 Capabilities

The Global Strategy emphasises the wide range of civilian instruments available to the EU in pursuing its foreign policy objectives. "A stronger Union requires investing in all dimensions of foreign policy, from research and climate to infrastructure and mobility, from trade and sanctions to diplomacy and development." (European Council, 2016: 44) Among the EU's civilian tools, diplomacy is most frequently advocated. The Global Strategy recognises that diplomacy comes in many forms – energy, cultural, economic, cyber, public, and preventive. The key to strengthening diplomatic channels is mobilisation of EU delegations and Special Representatives. Diplomacy represent a significant contribution to the EU's civilian capabilities – and one that is clearly stressed by EU foreign policy makers. The EU will pursue its priorities by "...mobilising our unparalleled networks, our economic weight and all the tools at our disposal in a coherent and coordinated way." (European Council, 2016: 44) Once again, the EU's preference seems to be the use of diplomatic and economic instruments to pursue its strategic objectives.

However, 'all tools at our disposal' includes not only civilian measures but also military instruments and any combination of the two. Enhancing security and defence is by far the most prominent aspect of ensuring the EU's security, and an important step in this direction is the push for deeper partnership with NATO. "European security and defence efforts should enable the EU to act autonomously while also contributing to and undertaking actions in cooperation with NATO. (European Council, 2016: 20, emphasis added) In order to ensure a certain level of autonomy, the Global Strategy identifies a number of areas within the military dimension where capacities need to be enhanced: synchronisation of defence planning cycles; support to research and technology; making better use of the European Defence Agency (EDA); and strengthening the European defence industry. The limit for what the EU could do in the military dimension is stretched, because "...the idea that Europe is an exclusively "civilian power" does not do justice to an evolving reality." (European Council, 2016: 4) Strengthening the EU as a security community is considered key, and by explicitly breaking with its civilian power label the EU gets more room for manoeuvre. As Mogherini notes in the foreword: "For Europe, soft and hard power go hand in hand" (European Council, 2016: 4) The 'EU way' of handling international crises is clearly not of an exclusively civilian

nature. The development and use of military instruments is considered a natural response to the current security environment, and no means are excluded to provide security for EU citizens. Furthermore, the Global Strategy emphasises the possibility to intervene across all stages of the conflict cycle “...acting promptly on prevention, responding responsibly and decisively to crises, investing in stabilisation, and avoiding premature disengagement when a new crisis erupts.” (European Council, 2016: 9) While preventive action has a more civilian ring to it, decisive crisis responses could include military instruments. In order to deploy a military operation, all necessary tools must first be made available. Interestingly, the Global Strategy does not shy away from the acquisition of high-end military capabilities – including full-spectrum land, air, space and maritime capabilities, and strategic enablers. (European Council, 2016: 45)

4.4 Changing EU role conceptions 2003-2016

The EU role conception derived from the European Security Strategy in 2003 closely resembles that of an ideal type Normative Power Europe with a strong preference for civilian instruments. The EU recognise the need to update international rules, although this is not its most central function in the international system. A multilateral order, however, is key to responding effectively to transnational threats. Perhaps as a reaction to the US debacle in Iraq 2003, the EU alone should not intervene substantially beyond its borders without legal authorization. Importantly, military instruments should only be used as a last resort and always combined with civilian tools. The EU’s form of regional cooperation should be supported and EU norms should be promoted equally in all external action. However, the EU is aware of its limitations as an international actor and should therefore concentrate its efforts to the neighbourhood. There is little evidence to support Diez’s fear of a missionary spirit with global reach. But rarely – if ever – does the EU reflect on internal norm fulfilment or areas where cooperation between member states need to be enhanced. Self-reflection is limited. Civilian instruments are clearly favoured, with a strong emphasis on the potential use of several civilian tools in combination. Political solutions, economic instruments, and development aid are mentioned in relation to almost every specific situation. While not ruling out the use of military instruments, the EU remains firmly committed to the primacy of civilian instruments.

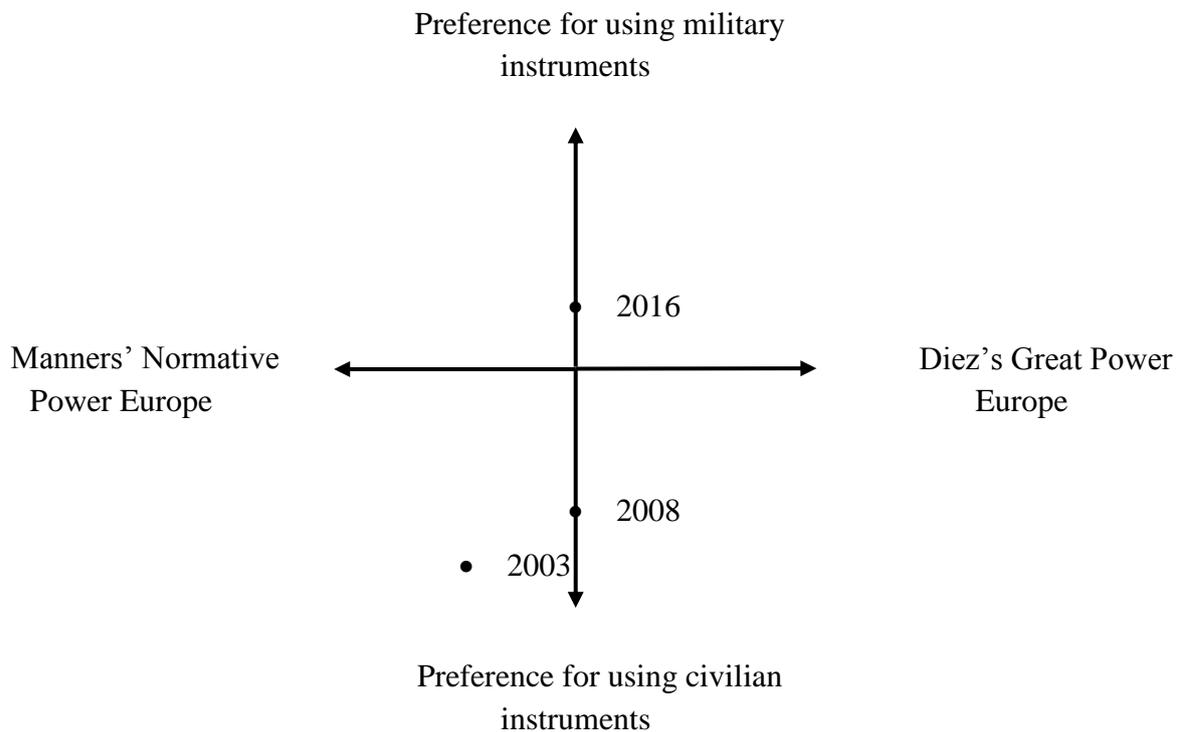
In 2008, the EU’s role conception has shifted slightly towards a Great Power Europe with an increasing willingness to use military instruments. The Implementation Report stresses – more than any of the other strategies – that the EU should be leading a long overdue renewal of the international system. International institutions suffers from a lack of legitimacy and efficiency, and needs to be transformed. The EU should be more proactive when it comes to shaping events. The exact definition of ‘events’ is left to interpretation, but the option of acting alone is on the table – despite a stated commitment to the principle of multilateralism. The EU takes pride in its unique range of instrument and large (civilian) toolbox. Political cooperation, dialogue, and development aid – to name a few – are civilian instruments of

choice in any given situation. In a world of diverging values, the EU remains dedicated to promoting its own norms equally in all external action. However, its international engagement should also be based on EU security interests – simply ‘doing good’ is no longer enough. The EU’s influence should not be limited to its immediate neighbourhood, on the contrary. A more effective Union globally is considered a necessity and the EU identifies an opportunity to ‘go global’, that is, showing a missionary spirit. This development towards less self-reflexivity is only partially halted by the fact that EU leaders also recognise the need to be more efficient internally. The EU still prefers to use different combinations of tools, especially a mix of military and a civilian instruments. The standing of military tools within the EU’s toolbox is advanced, although not so much at the expense of civilian instruments as in addition to them.

The Global Strategy in 2016 shows an EU role conception similar to that of eight years earlier, albeit with a significantly increased preference for military instruments. A transformation of the existing international system is still placed at the heart of EU external action. Building on the EU’s reputation – and increasingly also its own interests – the EU is considered particularly well-suited to shape global trade and environmental rules. Besides these policy areas, the novelty of the EU’s aspiration to transform international system lays in its methods. The EU should ‘co-shape’ rules, i.e. work with others to promote a rules-based global order. In that regard, the EU is only one actor among others. It should facilitate and coordinate multilateral cooperation, rather than impose it. Partners have a key role to play in ensuring a ‘responsible’ EU. At the same time, the EU should be able to *act autonomously*. While multilateralism may be portrayed as standard, unilateral action is certainly considered a viable option. EU norms provide the foundation of all EU external action, although the promotion of specific norms is somewhat arbitrary. The concept of ‘principled pragmatism’ enables a more selective attitude towards norm promotion, which seems to build more the so called ‘realistic assessment of the strategic environment’ than on the ‘idealistic aspiration to advance a better world’. The primary reason for advocating principles such as peace or democracy is almost always the security of the Union. In line with the overall focus on ensuring the security of EU citizens, defence capabilities could and should be expanded to cover a wider range of tasks both within and beyond the EU’s borders. The geographic scope is, however, limited to surrounding regions. The EU acknowledges that dealing with threats with both an internal and external dimension also requires living up to its values internally. For a global strategy, it pays remarkable attention to internal efforts. A more inward-looking and self-reflexive EU halts the shift towards a Great Power Europe, despite EU foreign policy makers’ vision of strategic autonomy. While civilian instruments should be expanded, so should military. EU leaders recognise that the EU should not only rely on soft power but also hard power, which implies a radical change in attitude towards military instruments.

After having analysed the three documents one by one, we now return to the analytical framework presented in Section 3.2. According to the two dimensions identified earlier – the EU’s global role and capabilities – the EU’s role conceptions in 2003, 2008, and 2016 are mapped out in Figure 2 below:

Figure 2. Changing EU role conceptions 2003 – 2016:



As Figure 2 shows above, EU foreign policy makers' image of the EU's long-term function in the international system shifted slightly between 2003 and 2008 – from a Normative Power Europe to a more Great Power Europe global role. Between 2008 and 2016, the perception of the EU's purpose remained stable. The greatest shift instead occurred in relation to capabilities. EU foreign policy makers' willingness to use military instruments to achieve foreign policy objectives increased steadily over time, but the shift accelerated from 2008 to 2016. In the next section follows a discussion of how we could understand these changes from a role theoretical perspective.

5 Understanding change in EU role conceptions

While the previous section identified a change in EU role conceptions – from a Normative Power Europe with a preference for civilian instruments, towards a slightly more Great Power Europe with a remarkably higher preference for military instruments – this section seeks to understand this change in more detail. Using role theory, it will first discuss change through role conflict, before turning to change as the result of changes in internal and external sources of EU role conceptions.

5.1 Understanding change through role conflict

Understanding change through intra-role conflict means looking at inconsistencies (i) within the EU's general role conception, or (ii) between different context-specific EU role conceptions. Understanding change through inter-role conflict means identifying discrepancies between the EU's own role conception and the expectations held by others.

The shift in the EU's geographic scope could be understood as the result of an inter-role conflict. In 2003, the EU's potential influence was considered larger in its immediate neighbourhood (the Balkans and the Middle East), whereas global relations were managed through international organisations. In 2008, the geographic scope had expanded and the EU sought to be more effective internally, regionally and globally. The EU could, especially together with the US, be a 'force for good' wherever it decided to intervene. In 2016, the global ambition had shifted back to what was now called *surrounding* regions – rather than the previous *neighbouring* regions. It is worth noticing that the former is considerably larger than the latter. The surrounding region stretches well into Central Asia and Central Africa, with a comprehensive EU engagement envisaged. The need to create 'a ring of well-governed states' had been replaced with the need to support 'state and societal resilience' to the East and the South of the EU. What looks like a humble retreat from 'going global' may in fact be the result of an inter-role conflict, where EU foreign policy makers have responded to external expectations and adjusted their role conception accordingly. As the Eastern enlargement have shown, the EU has historically been more influential in its neighbourhood. The further afield, the less the EU's has managed to use its power to 'shape conceptions of normal'. Unsatisfactory performance and/or contradictory expectations on the EU's engagement world-wide may have caused cognitive imbalance among EU foreign policy makers. As the result of an inter-role conflict, and in order to maintain internal consistency, EU foreign policy makers may therefore have opted for a more narrow geographic scope in 2016.

Another striking change in attitude – also resulting from the discrepancy between expectations and role conceptions – concerns *when* the EU should engage internationally. In 2003, the emphasis was on civilian means to prevent crisis from erupting in the first place. Other actors were considered better suited to deal with crisis management (NATO) or post-conflict situations (the UN). Starting in 2008, EU leaders begun to see a greater role for the EU in fragile post-conflict settings – for example through Security Sector Reform missions, or in Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration efforts. In 2016, this role had expanded further to include potential EU intervention across the whole conflict cycle, including stabilisation and post-conflict rehabilitation. Due to the importance the EU attaches to international law, its CSDP missions require an invitation from the host country. With this invitation comes certain expectations on what the EU could and should achieve, but these have not always been matched by the EU’s conceptions or the actual results. Elgström and Smith (2006: 248) calls this a ‘conception-performance gap’, in addition to the more frequently discussed capabilities-expectations gap. The change towards greater EU involvement across the conflict cycle might thus be interpreted as the result of an inter-role conflict, stemming from a discrepancy between the EU’s intentions and its performance as perceived by host countries.

The findings of the study also points towards an underlying intra-role conflict between specific EU role conceptions in different issue areas or geographic regions. For example, one policy area which increasingly departs from the role of a Normative Power Europe is energy security. In 2003, the EU’s Normative Power Europe role conception suggested equal norm promotion in all external action, including in Russia where the EU had significant energy interests. In 2008 and beyond, norm promotion in EU-Russia relations had been downplayed and the need to ensure mutual interests was instead emphasised. Never was energy security and area were the otherwise widely accepted principle of multilateralism was guiding EU external action. Although inconsistencies between energy security and other policy areas does not seem to threaten the whole EU role conception, this intra-role conflict may have contributed to the shift towards more of a Great Power Europe role conception between 2003 and 2008.

5.2 Understanding change through internal and external sources

Although role conceptions are inherently stable, major changes in one or more of its sources are likely to cause change. Holsti (1970) identified both internal (i.e. resources, values, ideology, public opinion) and external (i.e. system structures, legal principles, treaty commitments, “world opinion”) sources of national role conceptions. The same factors ought to be important sources also of EU role conceptions, and by identifying changes in these we could enhance our understanding of changing EU role conceptions.

The EU’s increasing focus on security and defence can in part be attributed to changes in both internal and external sources of EU role conceptions. The need to ensure the security of

EU citizens and territory have gained importance over time, and it is now viewed by EU foreign policy makers as the first priority of EU external action. The EU has throughout the time period considered promotion of EU norms (i.e. democracy, peace, rule of law, and respect for human rights) one of the core functions – if not *the* core function – of the European Union in the international system. Although norm promotion has never been completely separate from EU security interests, there has been a recent shift towards a greater emphasis on the latter. In 2003, norms were promoted relatively even across regions. Starting in 2008, and accelerated in 2016, the importance of securing the EU gained prominence at the expense of equal norm promotion. The concept ‘principled pragmatism’ allowed EU foreign policy makers to pick and choose when to emphasise norms depending on the situation. That is, depending on whether it suits EU interests. Indeed, the EU’s external environment have become more unstable in recent years. Terrorist attacks have been carried out on European soil, conflict has broken out near the EU’s borders, financial crises have threatened European economies, and climate change have continued to pose a serious threat to the well-being of future generations. While norm promotion was previously considered the best way to ensure the security of the Union, this priority has been gradually replaced by the need to secure EU territory through a closer collaboration on defence and security. But the shift towards advancing EU interests rather than promoting EU norms can also be attributed to internal factors. The EU’s failure to respond satisfactorily to the many simultaneous crises has turned its own citizens against it. EU foreign policy makers have sought to eliminate the gap between the expectations held by its own citizens on the one hand, and their own foreign policy objectives on the other, by focusing increasingly on security at home. Public opinion is one potential internal source of change, another one is the expansion of resources. The Lisbon treaty sought to enhance coherence in EU foreign policy. Meanwhile, the EU has gradually acquired a wider range of both civilian and military instruments. Simultaneous processes within and beyond the EU’s border have contributed to EU foreign policy makers’ increased focus on security and defence.

Change in both internal and external sources could also explain EU foreign policy makers’ changing attitude towards EU-NATO cooperation. Maull (2011: 179) argues that national role conceptions of all EU member states within NATO rests on acceptance of a leader-follower relationship between the US and Europe. But because membership in the two organisations differs, the shared EU role conception is not the same as that of European NATO-member states national role conceptions. In recent years, EU foreign policy makers have come to see merit in deeper EU-NATO cooperation beyond strictly upholding a good transatlantic relationship. In 2003, NATO was primarily considered an expression of the historical EU-US relations. The strategic partnership between the two organisations was of a political nature and should cover crisis management, nothing more nothing less. In 2008, EU foreign policy makers were ready to deepen this strategic partnership through enhanced operational cooperation and some work on military capabilities, albeit still limited to crisis management. Part of this change in attitude could be understood through EU enlargements. Many of the new eastern member states relied heavily on NATO for territorial defence, coloured by history and geographic proximity to Russia. NATO was, just like the EU, an important part of their new identity and the European integration process. The EU’s attitude towards NATO therefore changed slightly in favour of closer cooperation. But the real shift came in 2016,

when the EU agreed that European security and defence efforts should enable contributions to, and joint actions with, NATO. A more instable external environment may have contributed to EU foreign policy makers' increased willingness to enhance the defence cooperation with NATO. For the Eastern EU member states, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the ongoing war in Eastern Ukraine is just a few hundred miles away. While civilian instruments may historically have served the EU well, they are no longer considered sufficient to deal with the threats facing the EU. The importance of 'strengthening the EU as a security community' spilled over to EU-NATO cooperation, as a result of changes in both internal and external sources of EU role conceptions.

Changes in the external environment could also shed light on the EU's shifting relations to other actors within the international system. EU foreign policy makers have consistently seen the EU as an actor which could – and should – develop international rules. Operating within the existing international system was never enough, the EU should also play an active role in transforming it for the better. However, the EU's commitment has shifted from a relatively limited role in supporting and developing international law, to a major role in leading and shaping a complete renewal of the international order. Recent emphasis on the need to *co-shape* international rules together with others implies the return to a more multilateral approach. Multilateralism is one of the strongest common themes for EU role conceptions between 2003 and 2016. Most situations are better handled together – be it terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, or climate change. It has been argued that multilateralism is one norm among others, and one that is specific to the EU's normative power relative other normative powers (for example the US's unilateralism). The recent call for more strategic autonomy breaks with the EU's longstanding tradition of multilateralism. However, these two need not be contradictory – at least not in the minds of EU foreign makers. The EU could still partner with whoever it wishes at any time, but it could also choose not to. This changing approach can be understood through changes in the EU's external environment. The rise of new powers, the decline of old powers and the emergence of transnational actors contributed to multilateral world order after the Cold War. Arguably, the world have in recent years seen a return to more polarisation and less multilateral cooperation, which may have been interpreted by EU foreign policy makers as reason to increase the EU's strategic autonomy.

5.3 The external is internal, the internal is external

The nature of EU role conceptions – reflecting EU foreign policy makers' perceptions of the EU's international role – gives them a wide range of potential sources. As shown above, it is difficult to distinguish exactly which ones are of greatest importance in any given situation. Understanding change in EU role conceptions thus requires a closer look at changes in EU internal factors, both material (i.e. the EU's increasing economic weight) and ideational (i.e. public opinion). It also requires a close examination of changes in the EU's external environment, for example systemic structures, the nature of threats, or the capacity of other

actors. Changes in external sources of EU role conceptions could cause a change in EU foreign policy makers' perception of what a plausible and desirable position is for the EU in the international system. But the internal is also external, and the external is increasingly internal. In 2003 and 2008 the transnational nature of threats was the basis for the EU's strategic assessment, and the Global Strategy (2016) strongly emphasised the dual internal-external nature of threats. Mirroring this, EU foreign policy makers' primary concern have shifted from prevention of conflict in fragile states and norm promotion in un-democratic states in its immediate neighbourhood to internal security for the EU's citizens and territory. In fact, EU foreign policy has even been identified as the next arena for European integration. (See Bickerton, 2015) Studying EU role conceptions means looking at how EU foreign policy makers interpret this potential, and whether it is consider a desirable development. 'Speaking with one voice' has indeed become more important in EU external action. As the title of the EU Global Strategy "Shared vision, common action" suggests, it is aimed at reassuring unity among member states. The previous strategies did not stress the need for increased cooperation between member states to the same extent, but rather assumed a shared EU international identity. EU foreign policy makers readily adopted the idea of a Normative Power Europe based on the EU's historical achievements, multi-level governance structure, and treaty-based values and principles. The EU's international identity was assumed to be shared among member states and could thus serve as the basis for EU external action. Internal divisions have, however, always challenged this assumption. The UK's reluctance to further military integration has for example put a halt to most such efforts. With Brexit under way and a distinctive shift towards internal security, EU foreign policy might become more attractive as the next arena for European integration. The shift in EU role conceptions does not seem to oppose such a development.

6 Concluding discussion

Civilian instruments have always been considered an important part of the ‘European approach’ to foreign policy. Economic and political cooperation was the first response to any given crisis situation across the world in the first European Security Strategy in 2003, whereas diplomacy received considerable attention in the Global Strategy in 2016. The EU’s wide range of instruments has been, and still is, considered one of its main advantages. Combinations of different civilian tools or a mix of civilian and military tools are always preferred, and the EU never prescribes one single response as the ‘best’ or only way to deal with any issue. However, the preference for using military instruments have increased dramatically in recent years. By adding new tasks to the EU’s repertoire, EU foreign policy makers have opened up for a stronger military component within its CSDP missions and operations. Interestingly, the primary reason to strengthen the EU’s military capacity has not been humanitarian concerns – but rather the need to ensure the security of EU citizens. Arguable, there is a qualitative difference between expanding military instruments in order to stand up for human rights abroad, on the one hand, and using military defence to secure the EU’s territory, on the other. The EU leaders’ increased willingness to use military capabilities has been accompanied by a qualitative shift towards the latter. Manners and Diez (2007) agree that self-reflexivity is a necessary precondition for a Normative Power Europe to use military power. EU foreign policy makers’ increased willingness to combine civilian tools with military, to expand the EU’s role in post-conflict stabilisation, and to further develop EU military capabilities could be seen as the type of ‘un-reflexive militarisation’ Manners (2006) warns against.

However, as the empirical findings of this study have shown, the concept of Normative Power Europe is deeply embedded in EU foreign policy makers’ image of the appropriate global role for the EU. Not even the recent shift towards strategic autonomy is considered a hinder for the EU’s standing as a multilateral actor – the EU can have its cake and eat it too. Although this study is primarily focused on EU *role conceptions*, not the EU’s *performance* on the global scene, these findings raises several questions regarding the EU’s status as a normative power. If multilateralism is one of the distinguishing features of the EU’s normative power as opposed to other normative powers, then what is the EU without it? Additionally, when the line is no longer drawn between having and not having military instruments, the issue of grading arises. Where is the cut-off point between acceptable and too heavy reliance on military instruments? And how much self-reflexivity is needed to ‘outweigh’ the effect of increasing military capabilities? It has been argued here that the EU’s willingness to address its own deficiencies, to concentrate its international engagement where the potential influence is the greatest (i.e. its neighbourhood), and to provide a realistic strategic assessment of its environment represent a significant level of self-reflexivity. This self-reflexivity is enough to ‘counter’ the effect of an increasing preference for the use of

military instruments. However, self-reflexivity is in itself a rather vague, subjective concept that can be stretched depending on the situation. Manners and Diez's intention may have been to 'save' the concept of Normative Power Europe by introducing self-reflexivity as a precondition for military power. But by doing so, they made it even more difficult to assess whether the EU is in fact a Normative Power. One of the weaknesses of this study is exactly the operationalisation of self-reflexivity, which lacks clearly defined assessment criteria and therefore naturally involves a certain level of interpretation.

The EU's increased willingness to use military instruments, combined with recent follow-up actions to support such intentions, could also be interpreted as the gradual emergence of a European strategic culture. Strategy is commonly defined as "a plan of action designed in order to achieve some end; a purpose together with a system of measures for its accomplishment" (Baylis and Wirtz, 2007: 5) The names of the EU's foreign policy documents – the European Security Strategy and the EU's Global Strategy – certainly suggest that the EU has a strategic culture of its own. Whether this is the case have been debated. Some have argued that a European strategic culture is already developing through a socialisation process. Others have maintained that the EU lacks both the capabilities and will to establish a common foreign and security policy anytime soon. (Lantis and Howlett, 2016: 98) This is perhaps best illustrated with the EU battlegroups, which reached full operational capacity in 2007 but are yet to be deployed. Despite an increased preference for military instruments, no actual change have been seen to date. A stated willingness to use certain tools does not necessarily translate into actual foreign policy behaviour. Having said that, EU foreign policy makers are increasingly linking instruments to the achievement of foreign policy objectives, not least through the development of action plans in different policy areas. The EU Global Strategy was followed by an implementation plan in the area of security and defence, as part of a wider package including a European defence action plan and follow-up to the joint EU-NATO declaration signed in July 2016. The identified shift in EU role conceptions certainly suggests that EU foreign policy makers are thinking more strategically, and a strategic culture might not be unthinkable in the near future.

The EU foreign policy makers' preference for military instruments has increased significantly since 2003, and so has the EU's military capabilities. The more interesting question is then – has the willingness to use military instruments increased because EU role conceptions have changed, or have EU role conceptions changed because the EU have more military tools at its disposal? This 'chicken or egg' problem applies to all factors of EU role conceptions. Given that role conceptions are formed by decision-makers' *perceptions*, these material (and ideational) constraints and opportunities are constantly interpreted by EU foreign policy makers. According to the role theoretical perspective taken in this study, actual capabilities do matter but less so than how decision-makers interpret them.

6.1 Further research

The reasons for role conceptions to change have been scarcely theorised on national level, and even more so on European level. Exploring the mechanisms behind changing EU role conceptions seems a fruitful area of further research. As alluded to in the concluding discussion, role conflict is one potential source of change in EU role conceptions. But there are other factors, both internal and external, that could lead to change. Which are the key drivers of change? Under what circumstances do changes in external and internal sources lead to changes also in EU role conceptions? EU role conceptions are – if not directly, then at least indirectly – related to the EU’s external actions and its behaviour within the international system. Changes in EU role conceptions thus deserve further attention, especially considering that they could also shed light on changing EU foreign policy behaviour.

The EU’s multi-level governance structure makes it a complex foreign policy actor. EU foreign policy makers need to relate to a wide range of internal actors – EU institutions, national governments, national political opposition, public opinion, and civil society. In addition, they must also consider the expectations put on the EU by other international actors, as well as material factors. Without examining the various sources of EU role conceptions, we cannot get an accurate picture of all the complex relationships behind their formation – let alone the reasons they change. What are the sources of EU role conceptions, and how do they differ from those of national role conceptions? Are EU role conceptions more or less stable because of this? Further research could pay particular attention to the link between identity formation and EU role conceptions, given that the EU is still a political identity in the making.

Another area for further research relates to Normative Power Europe. Given the EU’s expanding military capabilities, could it still be seen as a Normative Power? This debate is certainly not new, but neither is it exhausted. It has been argued here that the idea of a Normative Power Europe is embedded in EU role conceptions, although to a lesser extent in recent years. If (or when) the concept becomes irrelevant for describing the EU’s actual global role, it could at least remain an appropriate tool to understand what role its foreign policy makers *envisage* for the EU in the world.

7 References

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