The EU as a Maritime Security Actor in the Mediterranean Sea
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The EU as a Maritime Security Actor in the Mediterranean Sea

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Preface

This study analyzes the EU’s potential as a strategically autonomous maritime security actor in the Mediterranean Sea. Against the backdrop of Europe’s changing external security environment, the EU has signaled its ambition to enhance its role as a global security actor in its latest strategies. Accordingly, a comparative analysis is undertaken on the EU’s strategic approach to maritime security and defense on the one hand and its practical conduct in the case of Operation Sophia on the other hand. Analyzing the EU’s degree of strategic autonomy in terms of its envisaged and actual actorness not only allows for a better understanding of the EU’s ambitions, but it also reveals the deficiencies the Union is facing on ground, which may hamper the realization of its potential in the sensitive area of CSDP. This study finds that despite certain operational deficits that remain to be overcome, Operation Sophia has demonstrated that the EU is on the way forward to becoming a strategically autonomous maritime security actor on Europe’s southern flank.

Key words
EU actorness, maritime security, CSDP, EU Maritime Security Strategy, EU Global Strategy, Operation Sophia
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<tr>
<td>AFSJ</td>
<td>Area of Freedom Security and Justice</td>
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<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of South East Asian Nations</td>
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<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
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<td>CBRN</td>
<td>Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear</td>
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<td>CFSP</td>
<td>Common Foreign and Security Policy</td>
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<td>CSDP</td>
<td>Common Security and Defence Policy</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>European Community</td>
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<td>EDA</td>
<td>European Defence Agency</td>
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<td>EEAS</td>
<td>European External Action Service</td>
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<td>ENP</td>
<td>European Neighbourhood Policy</td>
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<td>EPC</td>
<td>European Political Cooperation</td>
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<td>ESDP</td>
<td>European Security and Defence Policy</td>
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<td>ESS</td>
<td>European Security Strategy</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>EUBAM</td>
<td>EU Border Assistance Mission</td>
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<td>EUCAP</td>
<td>EU Capacity Building Mission</td>
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<td>EUGS</td>
<td>European Union Global Strategy</td>
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<td>EUHHRD</td>
<td>European Union Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy</td>
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<td>EULEX</td>
<td>European Union Rule of Law Mission</td>
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<td>EUMSS</td>
<td>European Union Maritime Security Strategy</td>
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<td>EUNAVFOR</td>
<td>EU Naval Force Mediterranean</td>
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<td>MED</td>
<td>European Union Naval Force</td>
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<td>EUNAVFOR</td>
<td>European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation</td>
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<td>EUROPOL</td>
<td>European Union Training Mission</td>
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<td>EUWMD EU</td>
<td>Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction</td>
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<td>FRONTEX</td>
<td>European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union</td>
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<td>GNA</td>
<td>Government of National Accord</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
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<td>INTERPOL</td>
<td>International Criminal Police Organization</td>
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<td>IPSD</td>
<td>Implementation Plan on Security and Defence</td>
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<td>IR</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
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<td>ISIS</td>
<td>Islamic State</td>
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<td>ISR</td>
<td>Surveillance and Reconnaissance</td>
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<td>MSO</td>
<td>Maritime Security Operations</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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### Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>SAR</td>
<td>Search and Rescue</td>
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<td>SOLAS</td>
<td>International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea</td>
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<td>TEU</td>
<td>Treaty on the European Union</td>
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<td>TFEU</td>
<td>Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union</td>
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<td>UDHR</td>
<td>United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights</td>
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<td>UfM</td>
<td>Union for the Mediterranean</td>
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<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNCLOS</td>
<td>United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea</td>
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<td>UNODC</td>
<td>United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime</td>
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<td>UNSC</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council</td>
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<td>UNSCR</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council Resolution</td>
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<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>USSR</td>
<td>Soviet Union</td>
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<td>WMD</td>
<td>Weapons of Mass Destruction</td>
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1 Why the EU’s Maritime Security Actoriness in the Mediterranean Sea is Crucial

We need a stronger Europe.
This is what our citizens deserve,
this is what the wider world expects.¹

Europe’s external security environment is changing and with it the nature of the European Union (EU) as an international actor. Whilst the EU has focused its external conduct mainly on economic and political cooperation for a long time, recent global events, including the Ukraine crisis, the Syrian civil war, the rise and spread of Islamist terrorism, as well as the mass migration movements to Europe have required the Union to rethink its strategic approach to security.² The urgency to take greater responsibility in global affairs has been further pressured by the increasing uncertainty about the reliability of existing international partnerships, for instance with the United States (US) and Turkey. Consequently, the EU has signaled its ambition to enhance its role as a global security actor.³

Due to the instability in large parts of the Middle East and North Africa, the Mediterranean Sea region has developed into a major security concern for the EU. Constituting the EU’s external border to the south and a significant area for maritime trade and recreation for Europe, the basin has not only become a major route to the continent in the current refugee crisis. It has also increasingly served as a backdoor to Europe with regard to transnational threats such as terrorism and cross-border crime.⁴ Considering that the EU’s internal security dimension is increasingly affected by the deteriorating security situation emerging on Europe’s southern flank, the protection of its maritime external borders has become a strategic priority

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³ EUGS, 3.
for the EU. Whereas the Union has for a long time suffered from what has come to be known as ‘sea blindness’\(^5\), the release of the European Union Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) in 2014 has signaled its ambition to strengthen its visibility as a maritime security actor.\(^6\)

Generally, maritime security is “a large and sometimes nebulous concept”, which has come to be associated with a variety of actors and interests on multiple levels.\(^7\) However, maritime security is not to be confused with maritime safety. Whereas the latter refers to the protection of the maritime domain against natural and environmental challenges, maritime security entails “the combination of preventative and responsive measures to protect the maritime domain against threats and intentional unlawful acts”\(^8\)

Considering the comprehensive and multidimensional nature of maritime security, the concept not only includes economic, environmental and political elements, but also those related to security and defense.\(^9\) While acknowledging the relevance and interconnectedness of the different components, this study focuses on the EU’s maritime security dimension in terms of human and border security under the scope of the Union’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

CSDP is the operational arm of the EU’s intergovernmental area of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Action is, thus, subject to the unanimous approval of all member states.\(^10\) Accordingly, due to its association with national sovereignty, as well as the differing capabilities and

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political willingness of individual states to participate in joint military action, CSDP has always been a “particularly difficult area in which to develop EU inter-state cooperation”. Nevertheless, considerable developments have taken place on institutional and practical levels. Whereas member states have mainly relied on the security structures of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) due to their overlap in membership, they have increasingly recognized that the “deteriorated and more unpredictable security environment” requires a strengthened and complementary role for CSDP.

Emphasizing that excessive militarization is not an option, the EU intends to act in an integrated manner, based on which it can rely on the wide range of soft and hard power tools at its disposal. It is particularly this comprehensive approach to security that could allow the EU to live up to its full potential as a global security actor and, thereby pose a more reliable partner to NATO and the United Nations (UN).

As the sea constitutes the EU’s largest external border, accounting for a coastline of over 70,000 km, maritime border protection is fundamental to prevent external security threats from entering the Union. Whereas the deployment of naval forces has traditionally been associated with the projection of military power and presence abroad, the rise of transnational threats, including cross-border crime and terrorism has resulted in the growing participation of navies in policing operations (and a conceptional return to homeland and alliance defense).

Such a cohesive approach is necessary considering that the very nature of the sea, as a vast and relatively open space, facilitates its use for illegal activities. Consequently, “the EU’s security […] strongly depends on the control of the seas surrounding the

14 EUGS, 2016, 4.
17 Ibid, 78, 88.
18 Ibid, 74.
Union and beyond.” To improve the EU’s flexibility and autonomy in responding to the increasingly complex maritime security challenges, the EUMSS has not only promoted a more comprehensive approach to maritime security, but it has also stimulated an enhanced role for CSDP.

The idea of boosting the EU’s security and defense actorness to allow for more extensive and independent action has been strengthened with the release of the European Union Global Strategy (EUGS) in 2016. The EUGS marks a novel approach to the Union’s foreign, security, and defense policies by underlining the EU’s ambition to become a strategically autonomous security actor. ‘Strategic autonomy’ refers to “the ability to act and cooperate with international and regional partners wherever possible, while being able to operate autonomously when and where necessary.”

Based on the notion that “Europeans must be able to protect Europe,” the EU and its member states should face their responsibility to security and be “ready and able to deter, respond to, and protect [the Union] against external threats.” Yet, considering the complexity of Europe’s external security challenges, autonomous action is indicated as a matter of last instance. Rather, the EU should strengthen its military capabilities to become a more credible security and defense partner within Europe’s overall security architecture.

To identify whether the EU acts upon this notion in presence, this study analyzes to what extent the EU can be considered a strategically autonomous maritime security actor in the Mediterranean Sea. Accordingly, the EU’s strategic approach to maritime security and defense is compared to the Union’s action on the operational level. On the one hand, the EU’s strategy is analyzed on the basis of the EUMSS and the EUGS, as well as their respective Action and Implementation Plans. On the other hand, the EU’s practical conduct is examined based on the case of Operation Sophia. Analyzing the EU’s degree of strategic autonomy in terms of its envisaged and actual actorness not only allows for a better understanding of the EU’s ambitions, but it also reveals the deficiencies the Union is facing on-ground, which may hamper the realization of its potential in the sensitive area of CSDP. Whereas scholars have either investigated the EU’s security

19 Ibid, 103.
20 EUGS, 4.
21 IPSD, 4.
22 EUGS, 9.
23 EUGS, 4; EEAS, 2017e.
strategies\textsuperscript{24} or the Union’s practical conduct in the Mediterranean Sea\textsuperscript{25}, this study fills an existing gap, by adapting the concept of EU actorness to the area of security and defense, as well as extending it to enable the analysis of both the EU’s strategy and performance in context.

Operation Sophia, originally named EUNAVFOR MED, was launched in June 2015 in response to the worsening maritime refugee crisis in the central Mediterranean. The operation seeks to counteract the human trafficking business model at the Libyan coast, which has not only fostered illegal mass migration to the EU, but also led to a high number of casualties at sea.\textsuperscript{26} In contrast to the EU’s previous maritime security and defense missions, Operation Sophia poses a special case for investigation in several ways. Firstly, the operation is unique in that it clearly combines the Union’s internal and external security dimensions. Thus, the internal security challenge of illegal immigration, cross-border crime and terrorism is addressed through an action taking place outside of the EU’s territory.\textsuperscript{27} Secondly, it is the first CSDP operation subject to “a potential openly coercive mandate which, if implemented, would lead the EU to engage in ‘peace enforcement’-type of activities.” \textsuperscript{28} Presupposed that the EU receives a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) mandate, the operation holds the option of entering the territorial waters of a third country, namely Libya, without its consent.\textsuperscript{29} Finally, although acknowledging the conduct of actions to rescue life at sea, the operation’s mandate primarily focuses on the disruption, capture and disposal of human traffickers “rather than on the rescue of migrants themselves”.\textsuperscript{30} This has led to a notion of tension


\textsuperscript{28} Ibid, 3.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid, 1.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, 1.
between the EU’s efforts to ‘offensive self-defense’ on the one hand and its ideals as a ‘human security’ actor on the other hand. Hence, Operation Sophia offers a number of peculiarities which make the operation an interesting and relevant case for the analysis of the EU’s maritime security and defense actorness in the Mediterranean Sea.

In order to study and compare the EU’s strategy and Operation Sophia, the concept of EU actorness is used as a basis. In contrast to traditional International Relations (IR) theories, which mostly focus on the role of states as actors in the international system, EU actorness offers a conceptual approach specifically for the analysis of the EU’s \textit{sui generis} character. Additionally, the concept acknowledges the necessity to reflect on both the EU’s internal and external dimensions. Thereby, it allows for a comparative analysis of the gaps between the Union’s self-representation on the one hand and its actual performance and perception on the other.

However, the concept of EU actorness not only remains relatively broad, it is also subject to a complex range of diverse criteria from different scholars at different times. Therefore, in this study, existing EU actorness conceptualizations are restructured and merged with the characteristics of EU security and defense actorness. The resulting criteria of ‘feasibility’, ‘credibility’ and ‘operability’ consider both the EU’s strategic approach to security and defense as well as its operational conduct. For greater comparability, the framework is applicable to all dimensions of CSDP and not specifically narrowed down to maritime security. To recall, strategic autonomy is defined as the EU’s ability to pose a strengthened and more reliable security and defense partner to its international security allies. Accordingly, the EU can be considered a strategically autonomous maritime security actor, if it has feasible interests, a credible identity, and operable tactics.

This study is subject to a qualitative research design based on which primary and secondary sources are assessed. In the ‘EU Strategy’ part, mainly the EUGS, the EUMSS, their respective Action and Implementation Plans,

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as well as other official EU documents are investigated. For better understanding, the collected data is complemented by pertinent information from secondary sources. The analysis of Operation Sophia mostly relies on official EU, NATO and national documents, international treaties, personal correspondences, as well as a vast collection of secondary data. The latter is derived from books, print and online journals, research articles, as well as official websites. Considering the topicality of this study, the time frame for analysis is limited from the launch of the EUMSS in 2014 to the European Council’s decision to extend Operation Sophia’s mandate in July 2017. This clear cut enables an in-depth analysis on completed decisions and incidents, which intends to prevent speculations regarding the constantly changing situation. Developments of 2018 and early 2019, including incidents such as the extension of the mission’s mandate in December 2018, Italy’s increasingly critical position towards the mission and, consequently, the EU’s decision to end its maritime patrols and enhance its air presence instead, remain subject to further research. Overall, the EU is treated as a unit. Nevertheless, due to CSDP’s intergovernmental nature, it is impossible to fully understand the Union’s security and defense actorness without taking into consideration the positions of individual member states. Accordingly, the political positions and actions of Operation Sophia’s driving forces, namely Italy, France, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom (UK), are referred to where necessary for better understanding. Yet the main unit of analysis remains the EU as an entity in its external environment.

This book is structured as follows: Firstly, the EU’s role as an international actor and security provider is briefly introduced. Secondly, existing conceptual approaches to the analysis of EU actorness are illuminated and used as a basis for the development of a more specific concept for the evaluation of the EU’s strategic autonomy in the area of security and defense. Thirdly, the EU’s strategic approach to maritime security and defense vis-à-vis its actual performance in Operation Sophia are examined and evaluated based on their fulfillment of the established criteria. Finally, this analysis concludes by summing up the main findings.

36 Nugent, 1.
Security and defence have become the new front lines of the European project.\textsuperscript{37}

Throughout the course of integration, the EU’s role and presence as an international actor has changed notably. Whereas the EC played a rather marginal role in world politics in the early decades, the EU has developed into an indispensable global actor.\textsuperscript{38} In 1973, Galtung was among the first to depict the EC in terms of its international role. He envisaged the EC as an emerging ‘superpower’, providing an opportunity to re-establish the Eurocentric world.\textsuperscript{39} In the following years, scholars have increasingly focused their research on the issue of the EC’s power in its international environment. This has led to the development of three dominant categorizations: civilian, normative and hard power Europe.\textsuperscript{40} Whereas each strand has its supporters, the uniqueness and increasing complexity of the EU in its external relations has led to a rising perception that the EU cannot be positioned into a single box.\textsuperscript{41} Consequently, a common trend has emerged, emphasizing the complementarity of these soft and hard power approaches in the EU’s foreign policy. Larsen, for instance, identified the EU’s potential of transforming from a regional civilian power to a global

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security actor. As internal integration is the basis for the EU’s external actorness, the Union should develop and institutionalize reasonable military capabilities to complement its existing political and economic means. Nevertheless, hard power should only be applied if soft power tools fail to achieve effective conflict resolution or crisis management. This view is shared by others, including Maull and Youngs, who argue that military force needs to be viewed in terms of its desired effects. Accordingly, “military force will be applied – never alone and autonomously, but only collectively, only with international legitimacy, and only in the pursuit of ‘civilizing’ international relations”. The idea that soft and hard power should go hand in hand has been particularly highlighted by Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, in the EU’s recent Global Strategy. It is this mix of soft and hard power tools that makes the EU a unique global actor.

To fully grasp the Union’s role and potential in responding to the new type of threats emerging in its external environment, discussions about the EU’s role as an international security and defense actor are inevitable. Overall, the term ‘security’ is difficult to define, as it is contested due to its scope, various meanings, and conceptualizations. Yet, in international politics, ‘security’ is commonly understood as the “freedom to exercise certain values” or, in turn, the “absence of threats to acquired values.” Feldt explains,

45 EUGS, 2016, 4.
Security is not so much a definable condition, but an essential diffuse feeling, which could be far from realistic, as it deals with apparent risks, something that might happen, rather than existential danger.48

Despite several attempts to harmonize member states’ foreign policies in the 1960s and 1970s, such as the launch of European Political Cooperation (EPC) in 1970, it was not until the 1990s and 2000s that the EU’s foreign, security and defense policies were gradually developed and institutionalized.49 The Maastricht Treaty of 1993 provided a first milestone in defining objectives in security and defense. However, the lack of an official security strategy limited the EU’s external action mainly to the “cooperation with partner countries, an emphasis on conflict prevention, and a broad approach through aid, trade and diplomacy” 50

At that time, scholars, such as Hill, recognized the Union’s ambition of manifesting itself as an international security actor. According to Hill, hard power, and the capability of operationalizing it, is inevitable for the EU to become an effective international security actor. He claims that

> If the Community does not develop the capacity to defend itself and to project military power beyond its borders there will remain a great many things (for good or ill) which it will not be able to do. Conversely if the Community does develop a military dimension, it will have taken an immensely serious step towards transforming itself as an international actor and in consequence also external attitudes towards it.51

With the EU having been mainly associated with economic and political power, member states more often relied on NATO in terms of collective security and defense matters. However, Hill emphasizes that “the Europeans have become too used to the American subsidy to be able smoothly to make the transition to funding their own security”.52 Thus, in case American support with or without NATO should diminish, Europe should be prepared to act autonomously if possible.53

48 Feldt, 13.
49 Lindstrom, “History and Development of CSDP”, 16.
51 Hill, 318.
52 Ibid, 320.
53 Ibid, 319.
The Union’s inability to solve the crisis in the Balkans in the early and late 1990s triggered development in the institutionalization of CFSP and CSDP.\textsuperscript{54} The first breakthrough occurred at the Saint-Malo summit in 1998, which was “considered by many as the catalyst for European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)”.\textsuperscript{55} In the following European Council summit meetings, the definition of civilian and military capabilities necessary to fulfil the Petersberg tasks paved the way for ESDP to become operational in 2003.\textsuperscript{56} This process ran parallel to the adoption of the EU’s first official security strategy in 2003, the European Security Strategy (ESS). The ESS was rather broad and lacked “specific priorities that could drive day-to-day decision-making”, yet, it gave momentum to the EU to act as a regional security actor and promote its values abroad.\textsuperscript{57}

Underlining the idea of a Union of shared values and a promoter of peace, early attempts of establishing the EU as a security and defense actor in the 2000s found their legitimacy in humanitarian causes. ‘Human security’, or ‘individual security’, has the promotion of basic freedoms and liberal democratic values at its core.\textsuperscript{58} Due to the rising interdependence and connectivity of peoples and states, human conditions have become a central subject to policy-makers in the world community. Cohen explains that “damage to the security of individuals in one country, by external or more often internal forces, now means that other peoples and their governments feel that their own security is diminished”.\textsuperscript{59} This so called ‘globalization of concern’ is closely related to the promotion of stability abroad, as security threats often have their roots further afield.\textsuperscript{60} The EU’s approach to human security and the promotion of stability beyond its borders is reflected in its various CSDP missions, including EUCAP Sahel Niger and Mali, EULEX Kosovo, EUTM Somalia, as well as the Union’s first naval mission, EUNAVFOR ATALANTA.\textsuperscript{61} Matlary confirms that the EU, as a Union of norms and values, has great potential in becoming a global human security actor, provided that the member states can demonstrate strategic willingness and

\textsuperscript{54} Biscop, “Analysing the EU Global Strategy”, 28.
\textsuperscript{55} Lindstrom, 17.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid, 17.
\textsuperscript{57} Biscop, “Analysing the EU Global Strategy”, 28.
\textsuperscript{58} Cohen, “Cooperative Security”, 2.
\textsuperscript{59} Cohen, 8.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid, 9.
overcome their reluctance to the use of military force under EU command.\textsuperscript{62}

Although the the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 marked progress for the institutionalization of CFSP and CSDP, the EU was unable to live up to its desired role as an effective international security actor in the following years. Particularly, the EU’s failure to act in the Libya crisis of 2011 sparked concern about the Union’s potential role as an effective crisis management actor in its near abroad.\textsuperscript{63} Reality has shown that the inability of the EU to overcome its internal discrepancies hampered effectiveness and progress in the area of CSDP. In a study on the dynamics of capabilities, Rieker concluded that the EU has achieved decent scores regarding the process of institutionalization, the availability of resources, and the knowledge and competences in the security field and, therefore, should be taken seriously as international security actor. However, the EU suffers from deficiencies regarding its organizational skills, meaning that “the EU is not exploiting its potential.”\textsuperscript{64}

Considering the changing security environment around and within Europe in recent years, scholars emphasize that different methods are needed to tackle the increasingly transnational security issues, such as piracy, terrorism, and illegal immigration. The intricacy of these threats requires an adjusted, comprehensive and more offensive approach to security. As Flechtner explains,

> the safety of the EU population can accordingly no longer be guaranteed through traditional strategies such as more secure borders and deterrence. Instead, new defense thinking is ‘offensive’, focusing on action beyond one’s own borders and before a hostile attack occurs.\textsuperscript{65}

This so called notion of ‘offensive self-defense’, a combination of agencies and methods, including the employment of intelligence, policing, and military operations at the EU’s borders and abroad, can, however, only be achieved on the basis of a solid security strategy as well as enhanced operative capabilities.\textsuperscript{66} Accordingly, the adoption of the EUMSS in 2014 and

\textsuperscript{65} Flechtner, “European Security and Defense Policy”, 168.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid, 168-169.
the EUGS in 2016, are seen as essential in this regard, providing the “strategic sequence necessary for the Union to move forward.”\textsuperscript{67} Based on these strategies, the EU can enhance its role as a global (maritime) security actor and develop the institutionalization, as well as practical dimension of CS-DP.\textsuperscript{68}

According to scholars, such as Riekeles, “security and defence have become the new front lines of the European project.”\textsuperscript{69} To secure its citizens and the wider continent, the EU needs to progress towards a Security and Defence Union. Five steps are necessary to achieve this end: (1) the definition of a collective security strategy for Europe, (2) the further institutionalization of security and defense policies, (3) the leveling up of military ambitions, (4) respective military capabilities, and (5) a new type of cooperation with NATO.\textsuperscript{70}

Cooperation among the EU and NATO “is not only desirable, but rather mandatory in this interdependent and interconnected world.”\textsuperscript{71} Both organizations have a comparative advantage in specific areas: NATO in its military and operational power and the EU in its comprehensive approach to security.\textsuperscript{72} The EU’s comprehensive approach not only calls on a combination of soft and hard power, but also emphasizes the increasing importance of merging the EU’s internal and external security dimensions. Hence, it is a multi-dimensional and cross-sectoral approach to tackle the increasingly complex and intertwined security challenges the EU is facing.\textsuperscript{73} Thus, whereas NATO is focused on military intervention, the EU “encompasses economic, civilian, military, humanitarian, and normative elements.”\textsuperscript{74} As the EU and NATO overlap in terms of interests and members, close cooperation is crucial for “the development of an international ‘Comprehensive Approach’ to crisis management and operations, which requires the effect-

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\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{69} Riekeles, 13.

\textsuperscript{70} Riekeles, 15-22.


\textsuperscript{74} Germond, The Maritime Dimension of European Security, 142.
ive application of both military and civilian means.\textsuperscript{75} The division of labor between the EU and NATO is also applicable in the maritime security domain. Whereas “the EU has a comparative advantage in civilian and police operations”, such as counter-immigration operations and coastguard-capacity building, NATO “will remain the dominant naval actor which will step forward in the case Europeans need to project military power at sea”\textsuperscript{76}

Overall, the shift from a civilian and normative power towards its hard power dimension reflects the European Union’s progressive institutionalization of CFSP and CSDP, as well as its changing security environment. Whereas the EU has been engaged mainly in humanitarian missions further abroad throughout the 2000s, recent literature on EU security actor-ness has revealed an increasing emphasis on the necessity to strengthen the Union’s strategic and operative capacities in the military domain to secure its direct neighborhood and its own external borders. Security threats have come closer to the EU’s territory, impacting the Union’s external and internal security dimensions alike. This requires a comprehensive approach to security, in which “soft and hard power go hand in hand”.\textsuperscript{77} Hence, if the EU wants to become a more autonomous international security and defense actor, it needs to deepen and enhance its security policy and strategy and build up respective military capabilities.\textsuperscript{78} With the adoption of more robust and concrete strategies, including the EUMSS and the EUGS, the EU has demonstrated its willingness to adapt to the changing circumstances. Whether the Union is able to implement these visions on a practical level remains subject to the further course of this study.

\textsuperscript{75} Kána/Mynarzová, 430.
\textsuperscript{76} Germond, \textit{The Maritime Dimension of European Security}, 193.
\textsuperscript{77} EUGS, 4.
\textsuperscript{78} Kána/Mynarzová, 426.
3 Conceptual Background

The concept of EU actorness and its underlying criteria are selected to serve as the theoretical basis for the development of a more specific conceptual approach regarding the analysis of the EU’s role as a strategically autonomous security and defense actor.

3.1 EU Actorness: Existing Concepts and Criteria

Whereas traditional IR theories continue to dominate the study of states as actors in the international system until present day, political scientists such as Sjöstedt, Jupille/Caporaso as well as Bretherton/Vogler, have realized the need to develop theoretical approaches which are more suitable for the analysis of a *sui generis* entity, like the EU. Sjöstedt was the first to present a more systematic approach, by introducing a conceptual framework specifically for the analysis of the EC’s role as an international actor. Although recognizing that certain state-like characteristics are required for the EC to be seen as an equal player in the international arena, he defines the concept ‘actor capability’ to “distinguish between different sorts of actors in a systematic and controlled way.” Consequently, ‘actor capability’ measures an “autonomous unit’s capacity to behave actively and deliberately in relation to other actors in the international system”. Accordingly, the subject of analysis needs to possess a certain degree of ‘autonomy,’ as well as a distinct set of ‘structural prerequisites’ to be considered a capable interna-

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81 Sjöstedt, 13-14.

82 Sjöstedt, 16.
tional actor. Sjöstedt’s definition has provided the basis for most future conceptualizations of EU actorness.

Jupille/Caporaso extended Sjöstedt’s work by being the first to introduce a clear set of criteria for the analysis of EU actorness. The scholars defined that to evaluate the EU’s role as an international actor, ‘recognition’, ‘authority’, ‘autonomy’, and ‘cohesion’ must be taken into consideration. Bretherton/Vogler created another set of criteria to analyze “the extent to which the European entity could function as an effective, capable actor across the range of its external activities”.

In contrast to Sjöstedt, who largely focuses on the internal behavior and ‘structural prerequisites’ of the EC to determine its actor capability, Bretherton/Vogler take a social-constructivist approach and emphasize the importance of external perceptions and expectations towards the Community. They stress that “actorness is constructed through the interplay of internal political factors and the perceptions and expectations of outsiders”. Consequently, the three criteria of ‘presence’, ‘opportunity’, and ‘capability’ were introduced. The scholars acknowledge that the concept of EU actorness is dynamic and changes depending on the circumstances of time and the respective development and institutionalization of EU foreign policy. Therefore, they have constantly re-assessed and adapted their analytical framework.

Niemann/Bretherton confirm the necessity to re-evaluate existing EU actorness approaches. Arguing that the changing nature of the EU requires new theoretical considerations, the scholars observe and promote “a shift in focus from notions of actor capability to actor effectiveness”. The scholars distance themselves from previous EU actorness approaches, which treat the EU as a sui generis entity. Instead, they call for a more comparative approach of measuring the effectiveness of EU action in relation to that of other international powers. One of the first attempts to analyze

84 Bretherton/Vogler, The European Union as a Global Actor, 1.
85 Ibid, 5-6; Sjöstedt, 16-17.
86 Bretherton/Vogler, The European Union as a Global Actor, 1.
88 Niemann/Bretherton, „EU External Policy at the Crossroads“, 263.
89 Niemann/Bretherton, 268-269.
EU actorness in terms of effectiveness was undertaken by Hill. To understand Europe’s activities in the world, the author claims that it is essential to link both the internal and external dynamics of EU foreign policy.\(^90\) When studying the EU’s internal capabilities in relation to its external perception, Hill discovered that the EU has become subject to a significant ‘capability-expectations’ gap. Thus, the Union has become incapable of managing and fulfilling the expectations generated on it by the outside world. To close this gap, “either capabilities will have to be increased or expectations decreased”.\(^91\) Considering that the article was published in 1993 and that since then the EU and its foreign policy have developed profoundly, it could be assumed that this concept has lost significance over time. However, according to Toje, the ‘capabilities-expectations gap’ has transformed into a ‘consensus-expectations gap’. This gap is particularly present in the sensitive areas of CFSP and CSDP, where Member States are often unable to find consensus due to a lack of common political will.\(^92\) This has not only undermined the EU’s overall strategic culture, but also its external reputation as an international actor.\(^93\)

Nevertheless, EU foreign policy goes far beyond the mostly intergovernmental area of CFSP and CSDP. According to Télo, the impact of EU external action needs to be viewed in the light of its multidimensional nature.\(^94\) The scholar emphasizes the Union’s external actorness in different policy areas and levels, ranging from trade to security policies, and regional to global levels.\(^95\) By defending the notion of the EU being a sui generis entity, Télo stresses that the analysis of EU actorness should be based on realistic expectations of what the EU is and can become. As the EU is not a state and will always be dependent on its member states, the scholar argues that the EU might increase its autonomy in particular dimensions, however can never become a completely autonomous global actor.\(^96\) Thus, the EU should not be talked into something that it cannot be. To analyze the EU’s present and future external impact, Télo stresses the need to link internal and external variables, in terms of “material, strategic and institutional ca-

\(^90\) Hill, 307, 309.
\(^91\) Ibid, 321.
\(^96\) Télo, 26-27.
pacities” and “the evolving international post-Cold War system”.97 Only by considering both dimensions the EU’s influence on its near and far abroad can be determined.

Smith extends previous conceptualizations of EU actorness by focusing on the EU’s changing global role in terms of power. Whereas most existing concepts were designed to analyze the EU’s roles and identity in the world, the scholar claims that it is equally important to investigate what type of power the EU intends to be, what power it possesses and how it uses this power to underline its identity and role in the international arena.98 Accordingly, Smith advocates the identification of an ‘EU grand strategy’ based on which it is possible to examine “how the EU acts (its power) and justifies its actions (its purpose)”.99

Existing literature on the conceptualization of EU actorness reveals the different approaches with which the EU’s international standing can be assessed. Considering the changing nature of EU foreign policy over the past decades, the concepts have been constantly re-evaluated, adapted, and extended. Whereas in the 1970s the question of whether the EC is an international actor at all has dominated the debates, scholars in the 1990s and 2000s presumed EU actorness and directed their concepts towards analyzing the degree, effectiveness and power of the EU on the global stage.

3.2 Framework for Analysis: EU Strategic Autonomy in Security and Defense

To analyze the extent to which the EU can be considered a strategically autonomous security and defense actor, common strands among existing concepts and criteria are detected and merged into a single comprehensive framework. Bretherton/Vogler’s criteria of ‘opportunity’, ‘presence’ and ‘capabilities’ are used as a starting point. They have constantly modified their framework according to the EU’s institutional and environmental transformations. Thereby, their approach to the analysis of EU actorness is among the most adjusted and extensive to date, acknowledging the importance of linking internal and external factors for analysis.

97 Ibid, 1-3.
Considering that this concept was created for the study of EU actorness in general, the following framework for analysis adjusts and extends their criteria to suit the purpose of assessing the EU’s strategic autonomy in security and defense. The compatibility of combining general EU actorness criteria with more specific thoughts on EU security and defense actorness can be seen in direct comparison. Norheim-Martinsen, for instance, claims that the EU’s strategic actorness depends on the ability to express common security interests, the determination to promote and act according to these interests, and the respective generation of relevant capabilities.\textsuperscript{100} This stance reflects the original criteria of ‘opportunity’, ‘presence’ and ‘capabilities’.\textsuperscript{101} Furthermore, Norheim-Martinsen explains that “strategic actorness is […] treated as a matter of ‘level of’ rather than ‘either/or’.”\textsuperscript{102} This view is also upheld by Bretherton/Vogler, who argue that instead of analyzing whether the EU is an actor at all, an analysis should consider the extent to which it can be considered an international actor.\textsuperscript{103}

The subsequent framework not only merges general EU actorness criteria with notions on EU security and defense actorness, it also restructures existing EU actorness concepts, by taking into account the EU’s internal strategic dimension on the one hand and its external operational dimension on the other hand. This approach is particularly relevant for the analysis of EU actorness in policy areas within which member states still hold the exclusive competence to act. Whilst the EU often presents itself as a strong and independent international actor on paper, in practice it is bound to the decisions of its member states. Therefore, an analysis of the EU’s ability to act autonomously in these policy areas needs to consider both sides: the EU level and the member state level.

Accordingly, the three developed main criteria of ‘feasibility’, ‘credibility’ and ‘operability’ are each divided into two sub-criteria for the analysis of EU strategy on the one hand and a respective practical case on the other hand. Based on the notion that strategic autonomy refers to the EU’s approach to enhance its ability as an international security and defense actor in order to become a more reliable partner to its security allies, the status of the EU’s envisaged strategic autonomy depends on the ‘feasibility’ of its strategic interests, the ‘credibility’ of its identity and the ‘operability’ of its

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Norheim-Martinsen, \textit{The European Union and Military Force}, 7.
\item Bretherton/Vogler, “Past its Peak?”, 3-17.
\item Norheim-Martinsen, 7.
\item Bretherton/Vogler, \textit{The European Union as a Global Actor}, 1.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
tactic. As a result, the framework holds that the EU can be considered a strategically autonomous security actor, if (1) it has the opportunity to act according to its strategic interests, (2) its identity is reflected in its presence, and (3) it is capable of formulating and acting upon a joint policy and capabilities. Accordingly, strategic autonomy depends on ‘feasibility’, ‘credibility’, and ‘operability’.

3 Conceptual Background

104 IPSD, 4.
3.2 Framework for Analysis: EU Strategic Autonomy in Security and Defense

3.2.1 Feasibility: Interests and Opportunity

Interests

To be one of the dominant actors in the international arena, the EU needs to define a clear set of interests in its strategic vision and step up to the opportunities it is given. Hence, “whatever the emerging world order, the clear message is that the Union and its members, which have their own uncoordinated national strategic perspectives, can either play hand in shaping the international system or be shaped by it.”\(^{105}\) The formulation of interests requires strategic dialogue not only within the EU’s institutions, but also between the EU and its member states and relevant third parties such as NATO, the UN, and other international security partners.\(^{106}\) Nevertheless, the definition of interests is often contested, posing a “serious handicap”, due to the “divergent opinions between, and perhaps within, the member states concerning how different interests should be operationalized and what sort of action the EC should take.”\(^{107}\) According to Sjöstedt, a clear set of interests and goals is a basic requirement of EU actorness (p. 75). Depicting interests as rather broad “guiding principles”, he explains that these are necessary to define the direction of actor behavior and the application of the respective means at its disposal.\(^{108}\) Norheim-Martinsen confirms that strategic actorness in security and defense depends on the EU’s ability to define common security interests.\(^{109}\) Thus, a clear set of strategic interests is fundamental in determining the EU’s willingness to act.

Opportunity

Generally, opportunity refers to “a favorable juncture of circumstances” or “a time or set of circumstances that makes it possible to do something.”\(^{110}\) In the context of EU actorness, Bretherton/Vogler define opportunity as “the external environment of ideas and events – the context which frames

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107 Sjöstedt, 85.
and shapes EU action or inaction.\textsuperscript{111} Thus, a changing security environment, for instance through new types of threats, new actors on the global stage, or a geopolitical shift of interests, may provide the EU with an opportunity to act and, thereby, enhance its role as an international security actor. The EU’s changing external context after the end of the Cold War, for instance, provided the EU with opportunities to establish a European sphere of influence in regions which have previously been under superpower domination.\textsuperscript{112} Particularly, the uncertainty about further US military presence in Europe fueled EU incentives to enhance security and defense policies as well as capacities to face external opportunities and challenges.\textsuperscript{113} In a world of globalization and increasing interdependence, individual states are unable to exert adequate influence in global matters. This in itself poses an opportunity for the EU to bring together the interests of its member states and act as an increasingly autonomous global player.\textsuperscript{114}

Interests and Opportunity

The criteria of ‘interests’ and ‘opportunity’ are interconnected. They should not be treated in isolation from each other. By defining the direction of EU security actoriness, interests determine what type of opportunities the EU is willing to seize. In turn, opportunities have the potential of adjusting and extending previously defined security interests. After having analyzed the criterion of ‘interests’ in the relevant EU strategies and the criterion of ‘opportunity’ in the practical case of Operation Sophia, the criteria will be merged to evaluate the ‘feasibility’ of the EU as a strategically autonomous maritime security and defense actor.

\textsuperscript{111} Bretherton/Vogler, The European Union as a Global Actor (2nd ed), 24.
\textsuperscript{112} Bretherton/Vogler, “Past its Peak?”, 7; Bretherton/Vogler, The European Union as a Global Actor, 8.
\textsuperscript{113} Bretherton/Vogler, The European Union as a Global Actor, 8.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid, 7.
3.2.2 Credibility: Identity and Presence

Identity

Identity describes the nature of the EU based on its common history, shared values, culture et cetera.\textsuperscript{115} Hence, “it refers to shared understandings that give meaning(s) to what the EU is and what it does.”\textsuperscript{116} These values, images and principles the Union is based upon are essential in shaping the EU’s interaction with the world.\textsuperscript{117} As Duke stresses, EU action “will [...] depend upon a more developed sense of ‘self’, where the EU is able to use tangible tools at its disposal to shape relations both near [...] and far [...]”\textsuperscript{118} The notion of a shared identity is particularly relevant in determining EU actorness and how this is perceived by other international powers. Norheim-Martinsen claims that if the EU seeks to establish itself as a global security actor, it needs to overcome its internal divisions and promote “an independent, non-elusive and fairly permanent identity” and act accordingly.\textsuperscript{119} The so called ‘strategic culture’ an actor develops by acting according to its identity, “help[s] identify some fundamental parameters that may constrain or facilitate a strategic actor’s room for manoeuvre”\textsuperscript{120} Therefore, as a form of self-representation, identity is essential in determining actorness.

Presence

Bretherton/Vogler define ‘presence’ as the “ability of the EU [...] to exert influence beyond its borders”.\textsuperscript{121} It refers to the effects of the EU’s internal development and policies on shaping the “perceptions, expectations and behavior of others”.\textsuperscript{122} Thus, presence describes the external perceptions and expectations other international actors have towards the EU based on

\textsuperscript{115} Bretherton/Vogler, The European Union as a Global Actor (2nd ed.), 27.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} Duke, 60.
\textsuperscript{119} Norheim-Martinsen, 7.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid, 8.
\textsuperscript{121} Bretherton/Vogler, “Past its Peak?”, 3.
\textsuperscript{122} Bretherton/Vogler, The European Union as a Global Actor (2nd ed.), 27.
the way the Union presents itself to the outside world. This, in turn, determines its credibility and standing as an international security actor. As Lucarelli and Fioramonti claim, “the way the EU is perceived by other countries is likely to have a direct bearing on its success as a player in the international arena”.

Expectations towards the EU as an international security and defense actor are raised with the course of increasing development and integration in the policy area. Lucarelli and Fioramonti confirm that “increasing power [leads to] increasing responsibility”, which raises external expectations on the EU to take action. Yet, whereas a united Union, based on further integration and the expansion of policy ranges, makes the EU more present in the eyes of the outside world, an internally divided and incoherent image of the EU decreases its perception as an autonomous global actor. Therefore, Sjöstedt argues that it is important to differentiate between actions initiated by the EU as an entity and actions stemming from individual member states. Hence, as an expression of unity and identity, common action emanating from the Union as a whole enhances the EU’s presence as an international actor.

Identity and Presence

Overall, the criteria of ‘identity’ and ‘presence’ go hand in hand. The commitment to a shared identity shapes the EU’s strategic culture, and thereby, its willingness to act, which in turn determines the perceptions and expectations of outside actors towards the EU. After having analyzed the criterion of ‘identity’ in the relevant EU strategies and the criterion of ‘presence’ in the practical case of Operation Sophia, the criteria will be merged to evaluate the ‘credibility’ of the EU as a strategically autonomous maritime security and defense actor.

126 Bretherton/Vogler, The European Union as a Global Actor, 6-7.
127 Sjöstedt, 20.
3.2 Framework for Analysis: EU Strategic Autonomy in Security and Defense

3.2.3 Operability: Tactics and Capability

Tactics

Generally, ‘tactics’ are “a method of employing forces in combat.”128 In terms of EU actorness, it refers to the way the EU envisages the employability of its forces in relation to the goals determined in its strategies. Thus, tactic is the plan of action attached to a strategy on how to achieve the desired outcomes.129

Having a tactic regarding the use of policy instruments is a central and determining component of any security strategy. Yet, to be credible, it is essential that the EU refrains from adopting “unrealistic or unclear recommendations that bear no relation to the physical and human resources at hand.”130 Thus, the EU needs to link its strategic ambitions to the availability of policy and instruments in a realistic manner.131 Since CSDP is one of the EU’s intergovernmental policy areas, the EU is dependent on the willingness of its member states to define policies and actions. These, in turn, have often been rather hesitant regarding the joint application of military power. Nugent explains the reluctance of member states to integrate and apply military power as being the consequence of differing national interests, perspectives, histories, and relations with third countries among EU member states.132 Furthermore, it is also of financial nature, as security and defense expenditure “must compete with economic and political priorities.”133

However, purely national action is insufficient in meeting the rising transnational threats around and within Europe. Acknowledging its deficiency of maintaining an independent standing army, navy, and air force, the EU has developed a coordinating role instead. It holds that

Cooperation can be triggered, facilitated and reinforced by the EU and help make collective action more effective. The Union can provide the

130 Duke, 246.
131 Ibid, 163, 246-247.
132 Nugent, 377.
133 Duke, 247.
In sum, the criterion of ‘tactics’ is set up to analyze the EU’s strategy in terms of its envisaged operability. The EU is aware that its ability to act in security and defense depends on the willingness of its member states to provide and join forces. Accordingly, the strategies are used to identify the EU’s tactical role as a coordinator of national capabilities in the area of maritime security and defense.

Capability

Capability refers to “the internal context of EU external action (or inaction) – those aspects of the EU policy processes that constrain or enable action and hence govern the Union’s ability to capitalize on presence or respond to opportunity.”135 In other words, capability denotes the ability and means the EU has at its disposal to act and, thereby, enforce its role as an autonomous security and defense actor. Against the background of rising asymmetric threats, the EU’s internal security increasingly depends on its own capability to mobilize respective actors and instruments in its CFSP and CSDP.136 Accordingly, Bretherton/Vogler distinguish between two dimensions of capability: the “ability to formulate priorities and develop policies” and the “availability of and capacity to utilize policy instruments”137.

To manifest itself as a strategically autonomous security actor, the EU must possess or at least have access to a diverse set of capabilities to achieve its strategic interests. Generally, these comprise political means, including diplomacy and negotiation, economic instruments, such as incentives and sanctions, and military power. The use of these resources depends largely on the EU’s ability to overcome the internal issues of consistency and coherence to formulate respective policies.138 Considering the sensitive nature of CSDP, the EU has always presented itself rather weak in deciding upon fast and effective responses to crises.139 Yet, consistency among the

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135 Bretherton/Vogler, “Past its Peak?”, 10.
136 Ibid, 19.
137 Ibid, 10-11.
139 Koenig, “The EU and the Libyan Crisis”.

3 Conceptual Background

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individual external policies of member states and those of the EU, as well as coherence between internal EU policies are necessary for the EU to manifest itself as a capable and autonomous strategic actor.140

Particularly, the development and use of strategic capabilities in security and defense has become essential to meet the transforming nature of the EU’s external security environment.141 However, due to the sensitivity of security and defense issues, most member states have been unwilling to give up their national sovereignty in this policy area.142 Consequently, the European security architecture is rather fragmented and characterized not only by differing political standpoints on the use of military force, but also by a diversity of capabilities.143

To overcome its shortage in military and defense capabilities in the long run, the European Defence Agency (EDA) has introduced the approach of ‘pooling and sharing.’ The initiative aims to improve the coordination and cooperation of military and defense capabilities among EU member states. By combining different national military means and using them on a collective basis, the EU and its member states not only benefit from a wider range of military tools made available, but also from a cost-effective and flexible approach to security and defense.144 Hence, the pooling and sharing of military resources can provide the EU with access to a considerable set of capabilities, however, their deployment remains subject to the national sovereignty of the member states.

In sum, the criterion of ‘capability’ is used to analyze the ability of the EU to mobilize joint action and capabilities among its member states in the case of Operation Sophia.

Tactics and Capability

The analysis of ‘tactics’ and ‘capability’ is fundamental to determine whether the EU is capable of manifesting itself as a strategically autonomous actor. On the one hand, the formulation of a common tactic is a precondition for the EU to develop actor capability in the area of security

140 Bretherton/Vogler, “Past its Peak?”, 11-14.
141 Duke, 156.
142 Bretherton/Vogler, “Past its Peak?”, 16-17.
and defense. On the other hand, capability is necessary to act autonomously vis-à-vis its external partners. Only if EU member states are willing and able to overcome their divisions and constraints in security and defense, the EU can live up to its potential as an autonomous international security provider. After having identified the EU’s ‘tactics’ in the relevant strategies and analyzed the criterion of ‘capability’ in the practical case of Operation Sophia, the criteria will be merged to evaluate the ‘operability’ of the EU as a strategically autonomous maritime security and defense actor.
4 The EU as a Maritime Security Actor in the Mediterranean Sea

4.1 EU Strategy

Strategy is relevant – and increasingly so.\textsuperscript{145}

With Europe’s changing security environment, calls towards the EU to enhance its role as a global security provider are becoming louder. To meet the constantly evolving challenges and opportunities, the EU needs to “begin to think strategically.”\textsuperscript{146} Generally, strategies “define actual goals and set up priorities to achieve policy objectives, while describing which means can be used, and under what conditions, to fulfill those objectives.”\textsuperscript{147} According to Tocci, “by identifying and agreeing on a set of interests and goals as well as on the means to achieve them, a strategy can become a tool that encourages different actors, instruments and policies to work in greater synergy.”\textsuperscript{148} Strategies go beyond simply describing “the way you try to get what you want.”\textsuperscript{149} Apart from identifying an actor’s overall strategic direction, they clarify which types of interests are threatened and how to deal with these security challenges and risks based on the different tools and measures at hand.\textsuperscript{150} Yet, they can only be successful if they are based on realistic assumptions and expectations about the availability of resources, as well as political and public acceptance.\textsuperscript{151} Furthermore, strategies define the ideational context to act.\textsuperscript{152} As Norheim-Martinsen claims, any strategic actor, including the EU, “cannot operate outside a fairly stable ideational context or culture that constrains and facilitates certain ac-

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Duke, 61.
\item Ibid.
\item Norheim-Martinsen, 43.
\item Norheim-Martinsen, 34.
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\end{footnotesize}
tions”. Hence, the perception and definition of an actor’s strategic outlook are based on the awareness of its identity and values. Summing up in the words of noted political scientist Samuel Huntington:

If a service does not possess a well-defined strategic concept, the public and the political leaders will be confused as to the role of the service, uncertain as to the necessity of its existence, and apathetic or hostile to the claims made by the service upon the resource of society.

Currently, Europe is faced with a combination of traditional and unconventional security threats and risks, which “are likely to push the EU to reassess its common interests and strategic objectives in a rapidly evolving international environment.” According to Rogers strategies are the outcome of a process of ‘dislocation’ and ‘articulation’. Dislocation occurs when existing security structures are challenged by new threats or negative experience. Articulation, in turn, is the process of adapting to these new circumstances by changing the policies and the overall strategic approach.

Since 2003, the EU has been conducting its foreign and security policies on the basis of strategies, with the ESS being the first of its kind. The strategy emerged in the context of the US invasion in Iraq in 2003, which led to deep-seated political disparities among EU member states and their trans-Atlantic ally. In response to these developments the strategy intended to equip the EU with a clearer sense of direction. Due to the EU’s progress in terms of institutionalizing and implementing its CFSP and CSDP in the following years, the ESS was updated in 2008. However, Europe’s security environment has changed fundamentally throughout the past decade, bringing new challenges and opportunities to the front. Thus, recent security circumstances, including the war in Syria, the Ukraine crisis, the rising tensions with Turkey and Russia, the massive flow of refugees entering

153 Ibid, 34.
156 Rogers, “From ‘Civilian Power’ to ‘Global Power’”, 836-837.
Europe, the increasing number of terrorist attacks on EU soil, and doubts about the future role of the US in Europe’s security architecture, have culminated in the ‘articulation’ of the 2016 EU Global Strategy.

This strategy is perceived as a breakthrough for the EU to manifest itself as a strategically autonomous security and defense actor. Praising the EU-GS for its realistic approach regarding security objectives and means, Biscop argues that the strategy presents a new approach to the EU’s foreign, security and defense policies. Thereby, it provides the strategic basis, which is needed for the EU to move forward. Although being more precise than its predecessor, the EUGS remains an umbrella strategy for the EU’s general approach to security. Yet, together with other relevant strategies subject to the different aspects of EU security policy, the EUGS is an essential component of what scholars term the EU’s ‘Grand Strategy’. A ‘Grand Strategy’ describes the overall direction of an actor. It brings together all relevant sub-strategies and capabilities – diplomatic, economic, and military – that contribute to the achievement of the overall goals and interests in a coherent manner. Thus, “strategies have to be translated into sub-strategies, policies and action to achieve their objectives”. To analyze the EU’s strategic position and capabilities with respect to its maritime security actorness in the Mediterranean Sea, it is, therefore, necessary to look at the narrower EU strategies related to its maritime security domain.

The EU’s maritime security dimension had to function without a separate, dedicated strategy until the launch of the EUMSS in 2014. Maritime security was not even mentioned in the ESS. However, scholars and the political elites recognized that the distinctiveness of maritime security requires a separate, more specific strategy of its own. As Jopp claims, globalization and the interconnectivity of the sea basin increasingly demand strategic thinking in the maritime domain. The EUMSS is considered one of the EU’s first strategic documents promoting strategic autonomy in a clear

160 Riekeles, 13.
163 Seidler, “Die Zukunft der EU”, 98.
164 Till, Seapower, 49.
and integrated fashion. Endorsing the comprehensive approach to security, the strategy not only links the EU’s internal and external security dimensions, it also promotes a mix of tactics – hard and soft power – in responding to the diverse maritime security threats and opportunities the EU faces. As a “test case for marrying internal–external, civilian–military, private–public and intergovernmental–supranational elements into a comprehensive multilevel governance approach to security”, the EUMSS can be considered a forerunner of the EUGS.166 Before the launch of the latter in 2016, the EUMSS was perceived as “the most comprehensive and integrated security strategy to date”.167 The EUMSS is accompanied by the EUMSS Action Plan, which describes in detail how and by whom the strategy is to be implemented. It consists of 130 action points which are subject to the five priorities for EU maritime security identified in the EUMSS.

In the subsequent section, the EU’s approach to maritime security and defense actorness, particularly in relation to the Mediterranean Sea, is assessed based on the EUMSS (2014), the EUMSS Action Plan (EUMSS AP, 2014) and the EUGS (2016). Additionally, reference is made to related EU sub-strategies, including the EU’s Implementation Plan on Security and Defence (IPSD, 2016), which specifies the implementation process of the EUGS in the area of security and defense, as well as the EU’s Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (EUHRD, 2015), which presents the EU’s ideational background as an external actor.

4.1.1 Interests

As far as the identification of the EU’s interests in the context of its maritime security actorness in the Mediterranean Sea is concerned, the EUMSS and the EUGS are the relevant documents to be taken into consideration. While the EUGS describes the Union’s general security interests, the EUMSS presents the EU’s interests and perceived opportunities in the area of maritime security. As EU strategies, the EUGS and EUMSS do not refer to the interests of individual member states but to the interests of the Union as an entity. The EUGS states that “as a Union of medium-to-small

166 Landman, 1-2, 11.
167 Ibid, 2.
sized countries, we have a shared European interest in facing the world together”.

Thus, “our interests are indeed common European interests”.

Specifying the Union’s “strategic interests across the global maritime domain”, the EUMSS addresses “security challenges linked to the sea and sea borders management”. The strategy does not limit itself to individual sea regions; rather it is applicable to all seas impacting the interests and well-being of the EU and its citizens. Yet, due to its strategic value, the Union should enhance its focus on regional maritime security issues “in particular in its neighbourhood, thereby also enhancing its own security and its role as a strategic global actor”. This approach is confirmed by the EUGS, which defines action in the EU’s direct neighborhood as a strategic priority. In contrast to the EUMSS, the EUGS specifically mentions the Mediterranean as a key area of concern.

The Mediterranean Sea has always been of geostrategic importance for European security. Not only does it pose the geographical border between Europe, Africa and Asia, it is also a space of ethnic, political, economic and cultural convergence between Orient and Occident. Economically, the EU’s primary maritime trade routes to and from Asia run through the Mediterranean Sea, with the ‘choke points’ of Gibraltar, Suez and Bab-el-Mandeb being of utmost strategic importance. Additionally, the Sea offers a variety of natural resources, including fishery and energy supplies, which are vital for the economic development of the EU. Politically, the Mediterranean Sea not only poses an often tense geographic boundary. At the same time, it is an arena of intercontinental cooperation and dialogue. Yet, it has also become one of the major routes towards Europe regarding transnational threats, including illegal immigration, organized crime and terrorism. Consequently, the EUGS declares that “solving conflicts and promoting development and human rights in the south is essential to ad-

168 EUGS, 15.
169 EUGS, 4.
171 EUMSS, 4. 8.
172 EUGS, 25, 34.
dressing the threat of terrorism, the challenges of demography, migration and climate change, and to seizing the opportunity of shared prosperity.”

Considering the interconnectedness of security threats within the Mediterranean Sea and its wider environment, it is essential to take into account the ‘wider Mediterranean’. For instance, threats related to commercial or criminal flows originate mostly at or beyond the outer borders of the Sea.

Overall, the EUMSS identifies different strategic interests and opportunities regarding the EU’s maritime security actorness, ranging from economic and environmental security, to human and border security matters. While the importance of economic and environmental security is acknowledged and briefly discussed below, focus is placed on the EU’s human and border security interests. Yet, it is difficult to separate these interests completely due to their interconnectedness.

According to the EUMSS “the Sea is a valuable source of growth and prosperity for the European Union”. Considering the EU’s dependency on the oceans regarding trade, transport, energy security, fishery, and tourism, the sea is directly linked to the Union’s economic development and the well-being of its citizens. Thus, the protection of economic security interests at sea is a central strategic interest of the EU, as this “facilitates trade and sustainable growth and development.”

The EU’s maritime economy, also named the ‘blue economy’, consists of three main dimensions: 1) trade and commercial shipping, 2) tourism and settlement, and 3) resources, including energy and fishery.

With regard to trade and commercial shipping and maritime transport, the EUMSS defines “the preservation of freedom of navigation, the protection of the global EU supply chain and of maritime trade, the right of innocent and transit passage of ships and the security of their crew and passengers” as a central interest to the EU as a maritime security actor. More than half of the EU’s international trade in goods with third countries is...
transported across the sea.\textsuperscript{184} As the US and China are the EU’s largest oversea trading partners, particularly the North Atlantic sea line of communication and the Suez-Malacca route are of major strategic value to the Union.\textsuperscript{185} Whereas the North Atlantic route is dominated and secured by the West and NATO, the Suez-Malacca route poses numerous maritime security challenges, including piracy and terrorism at sea at the Horn of Africa and in the Malacca Strait. This may cause significant delays in the just-in-time economy, cargo losses, as well as financial implications resulting from the payment of ransoms.\textsuperscript{186}

Accounting for one third of the EU’s maritime economy, coastal and maritime tourism is a valuable “source for growth and jobs”\textsuperscript{187} The rise of cruise tourism, for instance, not only generates jobs and wealth for the cruise companies, but also provides and fosters business opportunities and growth in the receiving ports.\textsuperscript{188} In addition, statistics reveal that “the coastal regions in Europe have some comparative advantages in terms of GDP, employment, performance in tourism, and such unique economic activities as fishery, extraction of salt and maritime manufacturing.”\textsuperscript{189} Therefore, the EU has a strong interest in guaranteeing security in this domain. Threats and challenges include human security issues, such as (terrorist) hijackings at sea, as well as environmental matters, such as the degradation of marine ecosystems.\textsuperscript{190}

The protection of marine ecosystems is also identified as a key strategic interest of EU maritime security. This includes “the protection of the environment and the management of the impact of climate change in maritime areas and coastal regions, as well as the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity to avoid future security risks”\textsuperscript{191} The securitization of the marine environment is indirectly linked to human security, as “the se-
security of individuals depends on their natural surroundings”. Germond explains that

polluted air or water, climatic change and its consequences, as well as resource scarcities can eventually engender insecurity for the individuals, the societies, and even states: diseases, famines, natural disasters, but also conflicts over scarce resources, mass migrations, polarization of existing inequalities within a society.

Thus, the EU has an interest in limiting environmental issues to a minimum, since these can be the root causes of largescale human and economic security challenges and threats. Considering that the EU holds the second-largest fishing fleet behind China, the reduction of fishing activities caused by ecological challenges would have a severe impact on the EU’s economy and human security alike.

Furthermore, “the protection of critical maritime infrastructure, such as specific areas in ports and port facilities, off-shore installations, energy supply by the sea, underwater pipelines, [and] seabed cables” is defined as a major EU maritime security interest. The EU is dependent on the sea for its energy supplies. According to the European Commission (2017b), most of Europe’s oil and gas production takes place offshore. More than 1000 operations take place in European waters, mostly in the North Sea, as well as the Mediterranean, Black and Adriatic Seas. Additionally, large amounts of the EU’s energy imports such as oil from the Gulf States, is transported by sea.

In sum, due to the Union’s dependency on the sea for international trade, transport, tourism and natural resources, economic and environmental security at sea are identified as a first set of core interests in the EUMSS. The second set of interests identified in the strategy address the rise of maritime security and defense challenges and threats in the EU’s neighborhood. According to the EUGS, it is fundamental to “promote peace and guarantee the security of [EU] citizens and territory.”

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193 Ibid, 85.
194 Ibid, 94.
195 EUMSS, 6.
197 EUGS, 7.
“our security at home depends on peace beyond our borders.”\textsuperscript{198} Thus, the protection and “effective management of the Union’s maritime external borders” is a key concern in the maritime security strategy.\textsuperscript{199}

Despite being applicable to all seas which are of interest to the EU, the EUMSS emphasizes that the EU’s scope of action should be focused on its direct neighborhood. It calls for the EU to “strengthen and support its regional responses to maritime security” due to “their strategic value or potential risk for crisis and instability.”\textsuperscript{200} The EUGS confirms that the EU’s “wider region has become more unstable and more insecure.”\textsuperscript{201} Based on the notion “my neighbour’s and my partner’s weaknesses are my own weaknesses”, the EUGS promotes “state and societal resilience [as the EU’s] strategic priority in the neighborhood.”\textsuperscript{202} Thus, programs and initiatives, such as the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), are essential in building regional dialogue and, thereby, fostering security, stabilization and prosperity in the EU’s external environment.\textsuperscript{203}

With regard to the protection of the EU’s external maritime borders, the EUMSS identifies four main threats which the Union seeks to address. These include “threats or use of force against Member States” and European citizens, “cross-border and organized crime”, “terrorism and other intentional unlawful acts at sea and in ports”, and the “proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.”\textsuperscript{204}

\textit{Threats or the use of force against member states and European citizens} may derive from breaches against “Member States’ rights and jurisdiction over their maritime zones”, or from “acts of external aggression including those related to maritime disputes, threats to Member States’ sovereign rights or armed conflicts.”\textsuperscript{205} The impact of disputes over maritime zones can be seen, for example, in the discrepancy between Greece and Turkey over the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{198} Ibid.
\bibitem{199} EUMSS, 7.
\bibitem{200} Ibid, 4.
\bibitem{201} EUGS, 3.
\bibitem{202} Ibid, 25.
\bibitem{204} EUMSS, 7-8.
\bibitem{205} Ibid, 7.
\end{thebibliography}
Aegean Sea. For more than four decades, the two countries have often been close to war due to their disagreement regarding the exercise of sovereignty. Therefore, the promotion of “rules-based good governance at sea” is a vital interest of the EU.

With the course of technological and strategic developments regarding nation’s maritime conduct, oceans had become subject to resource exploitation and territorial disputes. Consequently, an effective system of maritime governance was required and established in 1958 with the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Having been signed and ratified by more than 130 nations, the 1982 UNCLOS offers a legal platform for the conduct of states in the global seas. Besides defining general rights and responsibilities of states regarding their maritime behavior, the convention established the concept of maritime zones, including “territorial seas, contiguous zones, exclusive economic zones, and continental shelf areas.” Yet, Till explains that the prevailing international order at sea is challenged top-down and bottom-up. The first refers to structural changes, including “global power shifts, changing threat perceptions, naval modernization, and changes in naval capabilities.” The second relates to “non-traditional security threats like piracy, terrorism, trafficking in WMD, unsustainable overfishing, and environmental degradation.” Hence, the changing circumstances of conduct at sea make “respect for international law, human rights and democracy and full compliance with UNCLOS” inevitable for the “preservation of peace […], the peaceful settlement of maritime disputes […], the prevention of conflicts and the strengthening of international security.”

207 EUMSS, 5-6.
212 Bekkefold/Till, International Order at Sea, 7.
213 Ibid.
214 EUMSS, 5-6.
Cross-border and organized crime includes “maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea, trafficking of human beings and smuggling of migrants, organized criminal networks facilitating illegal immigration, trafficking of arms and narcotics, smuggling of goods and contraband”.\textsuperscript{215} Piracy and armed robbery at sea impact EU maritime security in several ways, having implications on human, economic and energy security.\textsuperscript{216} To clarify, piracy refers to “actions performed in international waters”, whereas armed robbery at sea is “actions performed within territorial waters”.\textsuperscript{217} Pirate attacks on ships and boats may not only cause immediate human casualties, but also subject seafarers to kidnapping and ransoming. Economically, “piracy has a cost”.\textsuperscript{218} By raiding commercial ships, pirates not only cause cargo losses, but also disrupt maritime trade as a consequence of the delays created. The EU’s energy supply is affected in equal measure, as the hijacking of tankers, for instance, may lead to temporary energy supply shortages. In terms of delays, piracy does not only affect the attacked ships themselves, but also all other ships which are forced to reroute to avoid certain areas of risk, with the “main risky zones [being] located in the waters near Indonesia (including the Strait of Malacca), the Horn of Africa and Somalia, Nigeria and Benin”.\textsuperscript{219}

According to Germond, “the majority of criminal activities at sea concerns arms, drugs, and people trafficking/smuggling”.\textsuperscript{220} Due to the sea’s far-reaching scope, criminal networks benefit from the rather under-policed transport routes at sea. As Germond claims, “the very nature of the maritime milieu facilitates the proliferation of transnational threats”.\textsuperscript{221} Arms trafficking pose threats to human and national security, considering their use for purposes associated with “warlordism, civil wars, insurgencies, and […] terrorism”.\textsuperscript{222} Furthermore, they facilitate other criminal activities, such as drug- and human trafficking.\textsuperscript{223} In turn, drug trafficking, being one of the most profitable organized criminal activities in Europe, implies

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{215} Ibid, 7.
  \item \textsuperscript{216} Germond, The Maritime Dimension of European Security, 81.
  \item \textsuperscript{217} Ibid, 80.
  \item \textsuperscript{218} Ibid, 81.
  \item \textsuperscript{219} Ibid, 80-81.
  \item \textsuperscript{220} Ibid, 83.
  \item \textsuperscript{221} Ibid, 74.
  \item \textsuperscript{222} Ibid, 83.
  \item \textsuperscript{223} European Commission, “Trafficking in Firearms”, ec.europa.eu.
\end{itemize}
costs on human health, public safety, labor productivity, and the environment.224

Trafficking and smuggling activities also facilitate the entrance of illegal migrants into the EU. According to Shelly, “human smuggling and trafficking are rapidly growing transnational criminal activities that involve the recruitment, movement and delivery of migrants from a sending region to a destination.”225 Whereas Europe has always been subject to migration, the rising influx of illegal immigrants, largely as a consequence of war, failed states, social insecurity, and environmental disasters, challenges receiving states in Europe.226 It is important to mention that in the majority of cases concerning illegal immigration, the criminals are the human smugglers rather than the migrants.227 Considering that the migrants are often smuggled on small and fragile boats, the death ratio of crossing the sea is high. Therefore, minimizing human suffering at sea is a central aim of the EU’s external maritime security forces.228 Accordingly, naval forces shall not only counteract smuggling, but also save the lives of endangered maritime migrants in accordance with the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS).229

Maritime forces, including coastguards, navies and marine police, merely cover the symptoms of human trafficking and illegal immigration. Hence, the EUMSS calls for a comprehensive approach, “to effectively address maritime security threats at and from the sea, tackle the root causes and restore good governance”230 Accordingly, the EUGS, demands “a more effective migration policy” with “a special focus […] on resilience […] on origin and transit countries of migrants and refugees.”231 By this, migration and conflicts shall be prevented at the earliest stage possible.232 In sum, tackling cross-border and organized crime is identified as a major interest of the EU in the EUMSS and EUGS. Piracy, armed robbery at sea, arms,
drugs and human smuggling, as well as illegal immigration pose security threats to the Union, its member states, and its citizens.  

**Terrorism and other intentional unlawful acts at sea and in ports** include actions “against ships, cargo, crew and passengers, ports and port facilities and critical maritime and energy infrastructure, including cyber-attacks.”233 In contrast to piracy and armed robbery at sea, which mainly seeks financial or private gains, maritime terrorism is based on political, ideological or religious motivations.234 Considering that the disruption of commercial and industrialized infrastructure is one of the main driving incentives for terrorists at sea, their actions are largely concentrated on strategically important choke points, such as the Strait of Malacca. The Strait of Malacca, for instance, is “the most significant trade route between the Far East, the Gulf States and Europe.”235 Complications in the Strait would require ships to re-arrange their course through Indonesian Sunda and Flores Passage, which would prolong the journey by 1,000 km and a minimum of two extra days at sea. Besides blocking sea routes and, thereby, hindering maritime trade, terrorism in so called mega-ports, such as Rotterdam, would not only lead to severe material damage and disrupt the delivery of imports and exports, but the breakdown of only one mega-harbor “would have a devastating effect on world trade and provide terrorists with an event comparable to 9/11.”236 Furthermore, previous attacks, such as Al-Qaeda’s attack on the French oil tanker ‘Limburg’ in 2002 and Abu Sayyaf’s attack on a passenger ferry in the Philippines in 2004, reveal that terrorism at sea not only concerns economic security, but also affects human and environmental security.237  

Yet, considering the technical and operational difficulties regarding the handling of ships and maritime infrastructure, terrorist attacks at sea and in ports are comparatively rare. Rather, terrorists use the sea for transport and communication, particularly regarding operatives and material, including explosive devices and other weapons.238 This, in turn, facilitates the practices of terrorist networks with respect to attacks on land.  

Hence, due to the (potential) impact terrorism at sea and in ports has on the EU’s economic, human and environmental security, the EUMSS recog-

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233 EUMSS, 8.  
235 Ibid, 28.  
236 Ibid, 29.  
237 Ibid, 28-29.  
nizes its prevention and containment as a key security interest of the EU.\textsuperscript{239} The EUGS confirms this approach, by stating that “increased investment in and solidarity on counter-terrorism are key.”\textsuperscript{240}

Finally, the \textit{proliferation of weapons of mass destruction} (WMD) includes “chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) threats.”\textsuperscript{241} The application of these weapons may lead to large-scale human casualties, for example through poisoning, diseases or radioactivity.\textsuperscript{242} The significance of fighting this issue is demonstrated by the fact that the EU has launched a separate ‘EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction’ (EUWMD) in 2003. It emphasizes that “the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery […] are a growing threat to international peace and security.”\textsuperscript{243} Therefore, “meeting this challenge must be a central element in the EU’s external action”\textsuperscript{244} Considering that a large part of illicit WMD material and technologies is transported by sea, it is a key interest of the EU to tackle this threat in its maritime security dimension.\textsuperscript{245}

Summing up, with the help of the EUMSS and the EUGS a core set of interests regarding the EU’s maritime security actorness are identified. On the one hand, these include economic and environmental interests, such as the protection of maritime trade and commercial shipping, tourism, and natural resources, such as energy and fishery. On the other hand, the EUGS has confirmed that it is of growing interest to the EU to secure its actions in human and border security. Main concerns the EU intends to address include threats to the territory and sovereignty of member states, cross-border criminal activities, such as piracy, armed robbery at sea, arms-, drug- and human trafficking, as well as illegal immigration, terrorism at sea and in ports, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Overall, these strategies provide the EU with a geopolitical vision, taking into account interests and threats further abroad, however focusing on those in its

\textsuperscript{239} EUMSS, 6-8.  
\textsuperscript{240} EUGS, 21.  
\textsuperscript{241} EUMSS, 8.  
\textsuperscript{243} Council of the European Union, \textit{Fight Against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction – EU Strategy Against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction}, 15708/0, (2003), 2. (To be referred to as “EUWMD”).  
\textsuperscript{244} EUWMD, 2.  
\textsuperscript{245} Kwast, \textit{Maritime Interdiction of Weapons of Mass Destruction}, 2-3; EUMSS, 8.
direct neighborhood. Particularly, threats associated with the Mediterranean Sea, including arms, drug and human trafficking and illegal immigration, are identified as major concerns to EU security. Considering the increasing interconnectedness of internal and external security, the EU’s domestic security increasingly depends on the management of security threats in its surrounding regions. The identification of these interests and threats reveal that the EU seeks to enhance its visibility as an international and maritime security actor.

4.1.2 Identity

To analyze the EU as an international maritime security actor, the Union’s identity and strategic culture needs to be determined. The EU’s ‘sense of self’ is essential in shaping its interaction with the world. This is also recognized by the EUGS, which states that “living up consistently to our values internally will determine our external credibility and influence.” Accordingly, the EUMSS and the EUGS both call for the EU to “enhance [its] role as a global actor and security provider”, by emphasizing the need to base this action on the Union’s underlying historical identity and values.

As Nugent confirms, “no political system or organization can properly be understood unless it is set in its historical and operational contexts.”

For most parts of its history, Europe was subject to divisions and conflicts, with each state having its own linguistic, religious, cultural, political and economic identity and vision. It was not until the end of two devastating world wars in the beginning of the 20th century, that European countries realized the need for closer cooperation to ensure peace and stability on the European continent. Whereas political and defense cooper-

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247 EUGS, 14.
248 EUMSS, 10.
250 EUGS, 15.
251 EUMSS, 6; EUGS, 3.
252 Nugent, 1.
253 Ibid, 3-4.
ation remained impossible in the early attempts, peace and prosperity in Europe were to be restored by the creation of an economic union, based on the values of “respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights” (Art. 2 TEU). 255 These values have not only secured peaceful cooperation among EU member states ever since the foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, but they have also served as the basis for any EU external action. 256 According to the EUGS, it is this accomplishment that makes the Union a role model and influential actor regarding the promotion of peace and security in other parts of the world. As Federica Mogherini stresses, the EU is “a Union that builds on the success of 70 years of peace; a Union with the strength to contribute to peace and security in our region and in the world.” 257 Hence, as a global security actor, the EU will “live up to the values that have inspired its creation and development.” 258 Furthermore, the EUGS stresses that to safeguard the quality of our democracies, we will respect domestic, European and international law across all spheres, from migration and asylum to energy, counter-terrorism and trade. Remaining true to our values is a matter of law as well as of ethics and identity. 259 Hence, the promotion of global peace and stability based on these values are at the heart of the EU’s external policies. According to the EUHRD, “sustainable peace, development and prosperity are possible only when grounded upon respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law.” 260 This notion is reflected also in the EUMSS, which defines that “respect for international law, human rights and democracy […] are the cornerstone of this Strategy and key principles for rules-based good governance at sea.” 261 In line with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the EU believes in the right to freedom, equality and security of all human beings and “reaffirms its commitment to the promotion and protection of all human rights, whether civil and political, or economic,

255 Tobler/Beglinger, Essential EU Law in Charts (2nd ed.), 40.
256 Nugent, 5.
257 EUGS, 5.
258 Ibid, 15.
259 Ibid.
261 EUMSS, 5.
social and cultural”\textsuperscript{262} Measures include the protection and promotion of freedom of expression, freedom of religion, gender equality, children’s rights, as well as the combating of torture, ill-treatment and death penalty.\textsuperscript{263} Hence, discrimination and violation in all their forms shall be minimized and the rights of “children, persons belonging to minorities, indigenous peoples, refugees, migrants and persons with disabilities” advocated.\textsuperscript{264} Considering that Europe is increasingly faced with political and humanitarian challenges, it is essential to “mainstream human rights into all the EU’s activities and policies”, including both internal and external security dimensions, such as trade, migration and asylum, counterterrorism, as well as security and defense.\textsuperscript{265} Member states are not only expected to be exemplary in their internal conduct, they also have a collective responsibility in promoting and ensuring these values externally.\textsuperscript{266} In addition, the EU has the promotion of democracy and the rule of law at its core.\textsuperscript{267} As the EUHRD states, “democracy is a universal aspiration.”\textsuperscript{268} Hence, in close cooperation with its partners worldwide, the EU desires to foster “the development of genuine and credible electoral processes and representative and transparent democratic institutions at the service of the citizen”.\textsuperscript{269} This goes hand in hand with the promotion of freedom of expression and the support of independent civil societies.\textsuperscript{270} As an integral part of democracy, respect for the rule of law is a key component of the EU’s identity, considering that “every action taken by [the Union] is founded on treaties approved voluntarily and democratically by all EU member countries”.\textsuperscript{271} Accordingly, the EUMSS highlights that all

\textsuperscript{264} Ibid, 2.
\textsuperscript{268} Ibid, 9.
\textsuperscript{269} Ibid, 10.
\textsuperscript{270} Ibid, 10-12.
\textsuperscript{271} European Commission, “Rule of Law”, ec.europa.eu.
action taken by the EU in terms of maritime security should be subject to “rules-based good governance at sea, in waters under the sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction of Member States and on the high seas”.272 Thus, the strategy acknowledges the EU’s nature based on the rule of law and emphasizes the Union’s conduct not only according to its own competences and rights, but also regarding the sovereign rights of its member states over maritime zones, as well as respective international law, such as the UNCLOS.273

In the post-Cold War era, security has become closely linked to the dissemination of liberal values.274 On the one hand, states have established international organizations, including the EU and NATO, based on common liberal democratic norms and institutions. Membership in these organizations, which is conditional upon the dedication to these liberal norms, promised collective security. On the other hand, as liberal democracy is seen as the basis for peace and security, these organizations act jointly to promote and spread their norms and values abroad.275 As Lucarelli explains,

The major international institutions of the so-called European security architecture had a twofold aim to: (i) redefine (in the case of NATO) or reinforce (in the case of the EU) their own international identity so to gain new (or reinforced) legitimisation; and (ii) develop security by means of diffusing Western liberal democratic principles and norms.276

Considering the EU’s foundation based upon the values and principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, the Copenhagen criteria demand candidate countries to have acquired these values upon their accession to the Union.277 Thus, through enlargement and European Neighbourhood Programmes, the EU not only disseminates its identity and values, but it also extends its security architecture.278

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272 EUMSS, 5.
273 Ibid, 4.
275 Lucarelli, “Peace and Democracy”, 4-5.
276 Ibid, 4.
277 Nugent, 43.
Simultaneously, the EU’s identity as based on these values serves as legitimation for humanitarian security and defense operations abroad.\textsuperscript{279} Using its identity and values as a justification for external action is closely linked to the idea of ‘human security’. According to the EUGS, an integrated approach to human security is essential in solving conflicts and crises, particularly in the EU’s neighborhood.\textsuperscript{280} As defined in the strategy,

We will take responsibility foremost in Europe and its surrounding regions, while pursuing targeted engagement further afield. We will act globally to address the root causes of conflict and poverty, and to champion the indivisibility and universality of human rights.\textsuperscript{281}

Thus, the EUGS outlines the EU’s principled approach to peacebuilding and security, mainly in its neighborhood, but also further abroad to fight both symptoms and root causes.\textsuperscript{282} Intervening in humanitarian crises at an early stage is inevitable to preserving peace, as “preventing conflicts is more efficient and effective than engaging with crises after they break out”.\textsuperscript{283} The EU’s strategic culture as an international security actor can, therefore, be seen as a mixture of ‘human security’ on the one hand and ‘offensive self-defense’ on the other hand.\textsuperscript{284}

The concepts of human security and offensive self-defense also find presence in the EU’s maritime security context. The EUMSS states that to fulfill its role as a global security actor, the EU should

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[take] on its responsibilities in conflict prevention and crisis response and management in the areas of interest, at sea and from the sea, and [achieve] stability and peace through comprehensive and long-term EU action.\textsuperscript{285}
\end{quote}

Threats to human security at and from the sea include organized crime, terrorism, piracy, and migration. Yet, these direct threats are often merely the symptoms of more complex indirect threats caused, for instance, by the failure of states, wars, resource shortages and climate change. A lack of action to counter both the direct and indirect challenges to human security at and from the sea may result in more severe and long-term complications.

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\textsuperscript{279} Lucarelli, “Peace and Democracy”, 4. \\
\textsuperscript{280} EUGS, 28. \\
\textsuperscript{281} Ibid, 17. \\
\textsuperscript{282} Ibid, 17, 28. \\
\textsuperscript{283} Ibid, 29. \\
\textsuperscript{284} Flechtner, 168. \\
\textsuperscript{285} EUMSS, 6.
\end{flushleft}
for the EU, considering their potential of transforming from an external to an internal threat to the Union. Consequently, the EU has a two-fold interest in promoting its values and identity abroad; not only to bring peace to other countries and regions, but also to secure its own territory and scope of influence.

According to Germond, “seapower in general and naval forces in particular allow projecting security and normative power beyond one’s own external boundary” By engaging in peace operations and having access to numerous European oversea naval bases, the sea enables the EU not only to foster security abroad, but also to channel its values to its periphery and beyond. Thus, maritime security “has a normative component, since it contributes to the promotion of the EU’s values and thus to a multilateral liberal world order.” Whereas material capabilities are required for the implementation of naval operations, the launch of missions is dependent on their ideational component in the first place. The EU’s conduct in previous and undergoing naval operations further demonstrates that the Union itself acts according to its normative vision and identity. This is essential for reasons of justification, legitimization and credibility. Hence, maritime security and the promotion of European values are not only interlinked, but they are also central for the EU to achieve its external interests regarding both human security and offensive self-defense. The EUGS sums up nicely that “[the Union’s] interests and values go hand in hand”

With regard to actorness, the EUGS emphasizes the Union’s primary presence as an influential global economic actor. It states that the EU is “the first trading partner and the first foreign investor for almost every country in the globe.” However, considering the EU’s engagement in more than 17 civilian and military CSDP missions, the categorization of the EU as being solely a civilian power is insufficient. This is emphasized in the strategy, claiming that “the idea that Europe is an exclusively ‘civilian power’ does not do justice to an evolving reality” Rather, the strategy

289 Ibid, 97-98.
290 EUGS, 14.
291 Ibid, 3.
292 Ibid, 4.
depicts the Union as an actor capable of ensuring security by both civilian and military means. It states that “for Europe, soft and hard power go hand in hand.”

Another essential element determining the EU’s identity and presence as an international security actor is the unity with which it presents itself to the outside world. The necessity of unity and ‘cooperative security’ are highlighted in both strategies, the EUGS and the EUMSS. As the EUGS stresses,

In a more complex world, we must stand united. Only the combined weight of a true union has the potential to deliver security, prosperity and democracy to its citizens and make a positive difference in the world.

Thus, the EU will only be able to meet the rising global challenges and complexities if it acts as one. This notion has guided EU integration from early on. Considering Europe’s drastically changing security environment in recent years, “forging unity as Europeans – across institutions, states and peoples – has never been so vital nor so urgent.” Yet, agreeing upon shared interests and common action in foreign and security policy is not always easy in a Union composed of 28 member states, which each have their own political and strategic priorities. The EUGS acknowledges this potential deficiency, however, argues that “joining all our cultures together to achieve our shared goals and serve our common interests is a daily challenge, but it is also our greatest strength: diversity is what makes us strong.”

The strategy emphasizes that the interests of member states and those of the European Union overlap, considering that the EU is the product of its member states. Hence, “there is no clash between national and European interests.” Consequently, the EUGS calls upon EU member states to jointly live up to their responsibility to global peace and security. It explains that “through our combined weight, we can promote agreed rules to contain power politics and contribute to a peaceful, fair and prosperous world.” Acting as a unified global security provider not only empowers

293 Ibid.
294 Ibid, 8.
295 Ibid, 16.
296 Ibid, 4.
297 Ibid, 16.
298 Ibid, 15.
the Union to tackle challenges and threats more efficiently and autonomously, it also enables the EU to live up to the expectations of its partners around the globe.\footnote{Ibid, 3, 7.}

The importance of unity and cooperative security is also highlighted in the EUMSS. The strategy is based on the idea of common strategic interests between the EU and its member states regarding global maritime security challenges.\footnote{EUMSS, 2.} The necessity and advantages of acting jointly in the maritime security dimension is summarized in the strategy’s following statement:

A shared unity of purpose and effort by all involved is necessary to achieve coherence between sector specific, EU and national policies and to enable all relevant authorities to operate effectively together. By strengthening cooperation between different sectors, Union bodies and national authorities, the EU and its Member States can achieve more, act more quickly and save resources, thus enhancing the EU’s response to risks and threats in the maritime domain.\footnote{Ibid, 3.}

Unity and cooperation on all levels are keys for the EU to live up to its potential as an influential and effective maritime security actor. Therefore, the EUMSS intends to encourage solidarity and mutual support between member states to enable “joint security contingency planning, risk management, conflict prevention and crisis response and management.”\footnote{Ibid, 3, 6.} To improve “common situational awareness”, member states are asked to “take into account not only the need to know but also the need to share”\footnote{Ibid, 6.} As only the “greater sharing of best practices, risk analysis and threat information” allow the Union to enhance its capabilities, responsiveness and role in the world.\footnote{Ibid, 13.}

Summing up, the strategies reveal that the EU’s identity as an international and maritime security actor is rooted in its historical and ideational values. These present the EU as an actor striving for peace and security based on its core principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Accordingly, EU security actorness, at sea and on land, finds its justification and legitimacy in the dissemination of these values. The promotion
of its identity abroad not only intends to bring peace to other countries, but also aims to secure the Union’s own dimensions. Thus, the EU’s strategic culture in terms of its international and maritime security actoriness is characterized by a combination of ‘human security’ and ‘offensive self-defense’. Considering the EU’s notion that its identity is key to establishing a peaceful global order, the Union’s engagement in numerous civilian and military missions worldwide have led the strategies to redefine the EU’s ‘sense of self’ as a comprehensive actor capable of both soft and hard security. However, the strategies also acknowledge that the Union will only be able to live up to its full potential as a security actor if it acts in a unified and coordinated manner. Hence, the EU’s ideational intentions and cooperative security are inevitable for projecting an image of the Union as a legitimate, credible and effective maritime security actor to the outside world.

4.1.3 Tactics

To depict the degree to which the EU is capable of acting as a strategically autonomous maritime security and defense actor in the Mediterranean Sea, the strategies are used to identify the EU’s tactical approach in terms of its operability.

The necessity to enhance Europe’s strategic autonomy in security and defense is recognized by the EUGS and the EUMSS, as well as their respective action and implementation plans. Therefore, both strategies define a tactics on how to reach this goal, claiming that EU strategic autonomy in security and defense can only be achieved through a comprehensive approach to the resolution, management and prevention of crises and conflicts.305 Underlining the inevitability to coordinate all relevant levels, dimensions and instruments subject to EU policy, the strategies seek to merge internal and external security dimensions, as well as, the implementation of civilian and military means.306 Furthermore, the EUGS highlights the expansion of the EU’s comprehensive approach to security to include action at “all stages of the conflict cycle, investing in stabilization, and avoiding premature disengagement when a new crisis erupts”.307 Overall, the comprehensive approach to security and defense is necessary, since “in-

305 EUGS, 28; EUMSS, 9.
306 EUGS, 10-11; EUMSS, 3.
307 EUGS, 9-10.
ternal and external security is ever more intertwined: our security at home entails a parallel interest in our neighbouring and surrounding regions.\textsuperscript{308}

Accordingly, the EUMSS intends to tackle existing and emerging maritime security threats and challenges to the EU and its member states in a “cross-sectoral, comprehensive, coherent and cost-efficient way”.\textsuperscript{309} This notion is strongly linked to the strategy’s call for the implementation of the EU Maritime Security Operations (MSO) Concept.\textsuperscript{310} Generally, MSO refer to “actions performed by military units in partnership with other government departments, agencies and international partners in the maritime environment to counter illegal activity and support freedom of the seas, in order to protect national and international interests”.\textsuperscript{311} Thus, the concept is a guideline for the contribution of maritime forces to the countering, deterrence and prevention of illegal activities at sea, as well as an attempt to restore maritime good governance through the coordination and cooperation of all relevant maritime security actors and instruments on the national, EU and international levels. These include civilian and military authorities and agencies in the areas of law enforcement, border control, coast guards, intelligence agencies, as well as European navies or other maritime forces.\textsuperscript{312} The EUMSS Action Plan identifies that the strengthening of cooperation and coherence among the EU’s internal and external security policy domains is particularly important regarding the prevention of cross-border and organized crime, such as arms, drug and human trafficking, an issue, with which the EU is particularly confronted in the Mediterranean Sea.\textsuperscript{313} Hence, a comprehensive approach to maritime security not only enables the Union to “capitalize on the best practices of internal and external policies related to maritime security aspects in order to promote better maritime governance”, but it also allows the EU to “effectively address maritime security threats at and from the sea, tackle the root causes and restore good governance”.\textsuperscript{314}

Consequently, the EUMSS and its Action Plan foresee to “enhance the interoperability between participants in CSDP operations and missions on

\textsuperscript{308} Ibid, 14.
\textsuperscript{309} EUMSS, 3.
\textsuperscript{311} In Till, Seapower, 283.
\textsuperscript{312} EUMSS, 3-4.
\textsuperscript{313} EUMSS AP, 4.
\textsuperscript{314} Ibid, 8-9.
the global maritime domain.”\textsuperscript{315} This notion is in line with the EUGS, which claims that “[CSDP] missions and operations can work alongside the European Border and Coast Guard and EU specialized agencies to enhance border protection and maritime security in order to save more lives, fight cross-border crime and disrupt smuggling networks.”\textsuperscript{316} Considering the vastness of the sea, coordination and cooperation among the different authorities and agencies involved in maritime security is unavoidable to prevent criminal organizations and actors to benefit from uncontrolled spaces at sea. Through joint action, maritime security actors are not only able to extend their presence by patrolling larger areas at sea; they can also complement each other in terms of capabilities. Whereas European coast-guards are limited in their capability to operate mainly within territorial waters, naval forces are better equipped and trained to fulfill missions on the high seas. Against the backdrop of rising transnational threats, such as terrorism and illegal immigration, purely military or policing operations have become insufficient to promote and control good governance at sea.\textsuperscript{317}

Therefore, the EUMSS and its Action Plan emphasize the need for coordination among respective civilian and military EU agencies responsible for maritime human and border security, including the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (FRONTEX) and the EDA.\textsuperscript{318} Whereas FRONTEX covers policing missions within the EU’s external border control dimension, the EDA deals with the EU’s military defense capabilities required for crisis management, conflict resolution and peace-building missions. Yet, the interconnectedness of transnational security threats in the EU’s maritime security environment has led to an increasing overlap of policing and CSDP tasks and operations at sea. Consequently, CSDP missions have become an essential element in the day-to-day conduct of EU maritime security action.\textsuperscript{319}

The growing importance of CSDP operations for the protection of Europe against direct threats at its borders is also recognized by the EUGS. The strategy stresses that “in particular, investment in security and defence is a matter of urgency”, considering that “full spectrum defence capabilities are

\textsuperscript{315} EUMSS AP, 4; EUMSS, 8.
\textsuperscript{316} EUGS, 20.
\textsuperscript{317} Germond, The Maritime Dimension of European Security, 74, 78.
\textsuperscript{318} EUMSS, 10; EUMSS AP, 4.
necessary to respond to external crises, build our partners’ capacities, and to guarantee Europe’s safety.”

The EUMSS confirms that enhanced coordination and cooperation between member states with regard to maritime security and defense capabilities is necessary to “provide global reach, flexibility and access that enable the EU and its Member States to contribute to the full spectrum of maritime responsibilities”.

Yet, the strategies acknowledge the EU’s dependency on the decision and capabilities of its member states in security and defense matters. Since the control of capabilities is an essential precondition for the EU to act autonomously, the Union aims to foster the pooling and sharing of national capabilities. Accordingly, the EUGS states that “the EU will systematically encourage defence cooperation and strive to create a solid European defence industry, which is critical for Europe’s autonomy of decision and action.” Similarly, the EUMSS “[bears] in mind that military capabilities are owned and operated by the Member States.” Therefore, the strategy promotes the pooling and sharing of maritime security and defense capabilities, stressing the EDA’s role in facilitating the coordination of naval capabilities among member states.

Pooling and sharing shall also facilitate the development and implementation of “dual-use and multipurpose capabilities”. Dual-use capabilities are instruments that can be used for more than one purpose. For instance, maritime patrol boats and aircraft can be used for civilian (and less than high-end warfare) purposes, including search and rescue tasks or border security patrolling, while also being deployed in military missions abroad. Hence, “dual-use incentives can reduce costs, enhance civil-military interoperability and improve the competitiveness of Europe’s defence industry.” This in turn, can further improve the EU’s “rapid response mechanism for a rapid reaction at sea.”

The EU’s comprehensive approach to security and defense not only concerns the coordination and cooperation among internal EU actors and agencies, but also common action related to its external partners, includ-

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320 EUGS, 10-11.
321 EUMSS, 10.
322 EUGS, 11; EUMSS, 12.
323 EUGS, 11.
324 EUMSS, 12.
325 Ibid, 13.
326 EUMSS AP, 12.
327 Landman, 5.
328 EUMSS AP, 6.
ing NATO, the UN and regional fora.\textsuperscript{329} Accordingly, the EUMSS depicts ‘maritime multilateralism’ as one of the key guiding principles of EU maritime security action.\textsuperscript{330} It defines that

while respecting the institutional framework and decision-making autonomy of the EU, cooperation with all relevant international partners and organisations, in particular the United Nations and NATO, and coordination with existing international and regional fora in the maritime domain are essential.\textsuperscript{331}

The importance of cooperating with external partners is also emphasized in the EUGS and its IPSD, as being a central component of the EU’s approach to strategic autonomy.\textsuperscript{332} Thus, while being able to operate autonomously if necessary, the EU intends to cooperate with its partners wherever possible.\textsuperscript{333} The EU is envisaged as a responsible international security actor, however, this “responsibility must be shared and requires investing in […] partnerships”.\textsuperscript{334} Hence, ‘co-responsibility’ is presented as a guiding principle of EU security actorness.\textsuperscript{335}

In the context of crisis management, both strategies as well as their respective implementation plans particularly emphasize the importance of cooperation with NATO. As the EUGS states, “the EU needs to be strengthened as a security community: European security and defence efforts should enable the EU to act autonomously while also contributing to and undertaking actions in cooperation with NATO”.\textsuperscript{336} The EUMSS confirms that “in the context of crisis management, EU and NATO engagement in the maritime domain should remain complementary and coordinated”.\textsuperscript{337} Furthermore, enhancing the EU’s capability in security and defense not only benefits European countries alone, but would also strengthen its transatlantic ties.\textsuperscript{338} Improved cooperation with the US and Canada within the framework of NATO is identified as fundamental to “strength-

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{329} Ibid, 3.
\bibitem{330} EUMSS, 5.
\bibitem{331} Ibid.
\bibitem{332} EUGS, 14; IPSD, 4.
\bibitem{333} IPSD, 4.
\bibitem{334} EUGS, 18.
\bibitem{335} Ibid.
\bibitem{336} Ibid, 20.
\bibitem{337} EUMSS, 10.
\bibitem{338} EUGS, 20.
\end{thebibliography}
en resilience, address conflicts, and contribute to effective global governance.”

Therefore, the EU aims to deepen its partnership with NATO through coordinated defence capability development, parallel and synchronised exercises, and mutually reinforcing actions to build the capacities of our partners, counter hybrid and cyber threats, and promote maritime security.

The importance of cooperating with NATO is, thus, recognized particularly with respect to hybrid threats and maritime security. Consequently, the EUMSS Action Plan intends to “identify complementarity between the EU and NATO to ensure better coordination and develop enhanced cooperative relations on relevant aspects of maritime security between the two organizations, in the context of CSDP.”

Germond confirms the necessity of an integrated and comprehensive approach to maritime security and defense among the EU and NATO for several reasons. Firstly, being concerned primarily with European security, both organizations act within the same maritime operational arena, particularly the wider Mediterranean Sea region. Secondly, the EU and NATO share the majority of its members; therefore, cooperation is essential in avoiding expensive and inefficient duplication. Thirdly, by each having their own areas of expertise and access to different types of capabilities and know-how, the two organizations can complement each other well. Whereas NATO is superior with regard to high-spectrum naval capabilities, its military structures and operational experience, the EU is better equipped in terms of its comprehensive approach to security, combining both ‘soft military power’ and civilian means to counter maritime security threats at sea. Hence, cooperation with NATO is considered key to ensure good governance at sea and address maritime security threats. Yet, the EU’s envisaged maritime multilateralism goes further, aiming to strengthen cooperation with other external players, such as the UN and regional fora.

With regard to the UN, the EUMSS Action Plan calls on the identification of “areas of commonality and complementarity between the EU and the UN and its bodies to develop an improved partnership in the field of

339 Ibid, 36.
340 Ibid, 37.
341 EUMSS AP, 3.
343 EUMSS AP, 3.
maritime security, with a view to the development of joint-regional maritime capacity-building activities. The EU and the UN have always been working together closely in the area of peace-keeping and crisis-management. The two organizations consider themselves as ‘natural partners’, due to the similarity of their underlying norms and values, their mutual political interests, as well as their operational interdependence. By developing joint political visions and capabilities, EU-UN cooperation intends to enable rapid and sustainable responses to conflicts and crises, also in the maritime security domain. Furthermore, the EUMSS Action Plan emphasizes the necessity to identify areas of commonality between the EU and regional fora, such as the African Union and sub-regional African organizations, the Union for the Mediterranean, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) as well as international organizations such as the IMO, ILO, INTERPOL und UNODC, seeking improved partnerships in the field of maritime security.

Apart from the EU’s partnership with INTERPOL and the African Union (AU), with which the EU aims to enhance its cooperation against terrorism and organized crime at and from the sea, cooperation with these regional fora mostly focuses on the economic, societal and environmental aspects of maritime security and is less concerned with security and defense. Yet, the stabilization of these domains remains a relevant precondition for the projection of peace and stability throughout the different regions. The Union for the Mediterranean, for instance, promotes the environmental protection and sustainable development in the Mediterranean Sea, as well as access to water resource. Thereby, it aims to counter “threats to its biodiversity, natural resources, habitable areas and health with many regions on the northern and southern shores being confronted with water scarcity and droughts, or victim to floods and fires”. Since the sea is an important resource for the survival and well-being of the populations living close to it,

344 Ibid.
its protection is essential in guaranteeing human security from an ecological and economic viewpoint.\textsuperscript{349} As Germond explains, “the security of individuals depends on their natural surroundings”.\textsuperscript{350} Resource scarcities, polluted water and climatic change may endanger individuals, societies and states in terms of natural disasters, diseases and famines, eventually leading societal inequalities, conflicts over scarce resources, as well as mass migration.\textsuperscript{351} Hence, fostering the cooperation with regional fora active in the promotion of economic and environmental programs is equally important for the EU’s comprehensive approach to maritime security as strengthening cooperation with partners purely in the area of security and defense.

In sum, the EU’s tactic regarding its operability in maritime security and defense is defined by its approach to strategic autonomy and can be divided into two main strands. Firstly, by aiming to enhance its role as a strategically autonomous security and defense actor, the EU strategies envisage a comprehensive approach to security. The coordination and cooperation of internal and external, as well as civilian and military security actors and capabilities is described as central to counter the transnational threats Europe is increasingly facing. To be capable of complementing its existing security structures with the necessary hard power, the strategies call for an enhanced role for CSDP, not only in terms of its capabilities, but also regarding its conduct and management in day-to-day maritime security tasks, particularly in the Mediterranean Sea. Yet, the strategies acknowledge the EU’s dependency on its member states regarding the mobilization of capabilities and willingness to use them. As the control of maritime security and defense capabilities is a prerequisite for the EU to act autonomously, the strategies aim to foster the pooling and sharing of capabilities among member states. This not only enables the dual-use of capabilities, but also enhances the EU’s rapid response mechanisms to crisis management. Secondly, the definition of strategic autonomy reveals that the EU should be able to act autonomously if necessary, but it should act together with partners wherever possible. Thus, maritime multilateralism is preferred and considered fundamental to meet the wider maritime security and defense challenges within a region. Hence, the cooperation of the EU with other relevant maritime security and defense actors, particularly with NATO, but also with the UN and regional and international fora, is equally essential.

\textsuperscript{349} Kronfeld-Goharani, “Bedrohungen und Herausforderungen im maritimen Bereich”, 85, 91-94.
\textsuperscript{350} Germond, \textit{The Maritime Dimension of European Security}, 85.
\textsuperscript{351} Ibid.
4.2 Operation Sophia

4.2.1 Opportunity

To recall, opportunity refers to “the external environment of ideas and events – the context which frames and shapes EU action or inaction.”\textsuperscript{352} To find out whether the EU has the opportunity to meet its strategic interests and manifest itself as a maritime security and defense actor in the Mediterranean Sea, based on Operation Sophia, the peculiarities of its external security environment in the region, between 2014 and 2017, are assessed.

Due to its geostrategic relevance as a border and space of convergence between Europe, Africa and the Middle East, the Mediterranean Sea constitutes a basin characterized by instability and tensions until present day.\textsuperscript{353} Major security challenges include the protection of maritime transport, trade and critical infrastructure, as well as the fight against illegal immigration, organized crime and terrorism.\textsuperscript{354} Particularly, in recent years, the consequences of inter- and intrastate conflicts in the Middle East, as well as of failed states and worsening living conditions in Africa have led to “security policy-related spillovers” with the potential of transforming the region into a ‘crisis hotspot’ that not only threatens Europe’s external maritime security, but also its internal security dimension.\textsuperscript{355}

According to Albrecht et al., the Arab rebellion and the Syrian civil war have demonstrated the vulnerability of the Mediterranean region, as well as the chain of effects a crisis in Europe’s neighborhood can have on its own security.\textsuperscript{356} Particularly, the rise and involvement of terrorist organizations, most importantly the Islamic State (ISIS), have emerged as an additional threat to the already daunting circumstances. Not only has ISIS managed to grow in numbers rapidly and claim large parts of the Syrian and Iraqi territories, it has also managed to expand its influence beyond those territories by recruiting fighters from all over the world and encouraging these to execute terrorist attacks in their homelands.\textsuperscript{357}

\textsuperscript{352} Bretherton/Vogler, \textit{The European Union as a Global Actor (2nd ed.)}, 24.
\textsuperscript{353} Sanfelice di Monteforte, “Mediterranean Insecurity”, 248-249.
\textsuperscript{354} Seidler, 104.
\textsuperscript{355} Albrecht et al., 119.
\textsuperscript{356} Ibid, 118.
Numbers reveal that, in February 2016, over 470,000 Syrians have lost their lives to the civil war and more than 6.1 million people are internally displaced. Consequently, the Syrian civil war has led to one of the most severe refugee crises at present date, with approximately 4.8 million people seeking protection abroad.\(^{358}\) The number of Syrian refugees entering Europe has been steadily increasing in the past years, with roughly one million Syrian refugees having sought asylum within EU member states between 2011 and 2017.\(^{359}\)

At the same time, pictures and social media posts of the arrival of refugees in Europe coming from across the Middle East and North Africa have found their way also to other parts of the African continent. There, the constantly deteriorating living conditions, worsened by oppressive governments, civil wars and the rise of terrorist groups, such as Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab, have resulted in mass migration also from sub-Saharan Africa towards Europe.\(^{360}\) Statistics reveal that between 2014 and 2017, more than 500,000 refugees have crossed the Mediterranean Sea from Africa, with the general trend increasing.\(^{361}\)

Considering the geographical vastness of the sea and the lack of capability to control EU sea borders in their entirety, maritime migration through the Mediterranean Sea has increased steadily.\(^{362}\) Particularly, the peninsulas of Spain, Italy and Greece pose ‘natural bridges’ to Africa and the Middle East, thereby, offering a much shorter passage to the EU. Whereas most refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq have used the Eastern Mediterranean route, entering the EU from Turkey to Greece, the majority of refugees from Africa, most of all Eritrea, Nigeria and Somalia have travelled the Central Mediterranean route, entering the EU from Libya to Italy.\(^{363}\) Whilst the Western Mediterranean route, from Morocco to Spain used to be subject to high numbers of maritime migration particularly in the 2000s, enhanced cooperation among Spanish and Moroccan authori-
ties has managed to keep the migrant numbers relatively low on this route.\textsuperscript{364} The general trend reveals that whilst the Eastern Mediterranean route has been the dominant migratory route until 2015, the Central Mediterranean route has become the major maritime point of entry into EU in 2016 and 2017.\textsuperscript{365}

The masses of migrants crossing the sea under mostly unsafe and dangerous travel conditions on small and decrepit boats, have led to what the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) terms a “maritime refugee crisis of historic proportions”\textsuperscript{366} In 2015 and 2016 a total of over 7,400 people died crossing the Mediterranean Sea. Records show that, particularly, the Central Mediterranean route, accounting for more than 505,800 arrivals between 2014 and 2016, has become one of the deadliest, with a rate of one death for every 47 arrivals in 2016.\textsuperscript{367} Saving lives at sea is, thus, essential to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe at the external borders of the EU.\textsuperscript{368}

The massive wave of refugees making its way to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea has not only resulted in a humanitarian crisis at the EU’s external maritime border, but its impact can also be felt within EU member states. Particularly, countries facing the arrival of seaborne refugees, namely Italy and Greece, suffer from enormous political, economic and social strains. Italy, for instance, has not only been struggling to meet the growing spatial and humanitarian needs in its reception centers. After having launched individual search and rescue and border control efforts, it has also realized its inability to handle the maritime crisis alone. Additionally, other EU member states, including Germany and Sweden, have become popular destinations for asylum seekers. Consequently, illegal mass migration continued to sweep across EU member states, benefitting from the EU’s Schengen policy of open borders.\textsuperscript{369} Within the affected member states, challenges not only include the overcoming of financial, spatial, legal and bureaucratic burdens related to the individual asylum policies, but also the issue of integrating the mass of migrants into the own

\textsuperscript{364} European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX), “Western Mediterranean Route”; frontex.europa.eu.
\textsuperscript{365} European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX), FRONTEX Risk Analysis Network (FRAN) Quarterly, Quarter 1 (January-March 2017).
\textsuperscript{366} The UN Refugee Agency, “The Sea Route to Europe”, 2.
\textsuperscript{367} FRONTEX, “Central Mediterranean Route”; The UN Refugee Agency, “Mediterranean Death Toll Soars, 2016 is Deadliest Year Yet”; unhcr.org.
\textsuperscript{368} The UN Refugee Agency, “The Sea Route to Europe”, 19.
\textsuperscript{369} Ibid, 14, 18.
society, considering the different religious, cultural, political and ethnic norms and values they have imported to Europe.\textsuperscript{370} Hence, the fact that EU member states are increasingly being affected internally by the mass of refugees and illegal migrants entering Europe from the sea, and, in the case of Italy and Greece, have even called upon the EU for assistance, poses an opportunity for the EU to enhance its role as a security actor in the Mediterranean Sea.

Yet, the humanitarian refugee crisis and its impact on EU member states in terms of illegal immigration is only one side of the coin, as criminal and terrorist organizations have found ways to benefit from the overall crisis. Considering the tremendous demand for transportation to Europe, organized criminals have developed an exploitative business by organizing the journeys across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. Additionally, by promising the migrants a better life in Europe, the human trafficking business influences even more people to cross the Mediterranean Sea. Profiting from the desperation and ignorance of the refugees, the unfair ticket prices for a ride across the Sea in rotten boats by far exceed the costs of alternative means of transportation. Accordingly, the profits of human trafficking are so high that even terrorist organizations, such as Al-Qaeda have joined the business to finance their activities.\textsuperscript{371}

With regard to the Central Mediterranean route, most human trafficking activities depart from the Libyan coast. Before 2011, Libya under Moammar Gadhafi used to be a major destination for migrants and workers from the sub-Saharan countries, due to the country’s labor shortage in its energy and service sectors. Yet, despite preventing the majority of migrants from seeking further prospects in Europe, illegal immigration via the Mediterranean Sea occurred. Therefore, the EU agreed on a deal with the Gadhafi government to stop maritime migration to Europe. However, when the effects of the Arab Spring in 2011 have turned Libya into a country of civil war and crisis ever since, thousands of people started turning their hopes towards Europe. Consequently, the Libyan coastline has become the major point of departure for conflict refugees and economic migrants from most parts of North- and Sub-Saharan Africa.\textsuperscript{372} Accordingly, human trafficking and smuggling has become a main source of income in Libya over the past years, with a variety of groups on different levels profit-

\textsuperscript{370} Albrecht et al., 126.
\textsuperscript{371} Sanfelice di Monteforte, 244.
Not only can anyone with access to a boat sell tickets to the migrants for passage, but before even reaching the coast, migrants might be captured, for instance, by militia and terrorist groups which extort them for release or sell them to smugglers.\footnote{The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, “Libya: A Growing Hub for Criminal Economies and Terrorist Financing in the Trans-Sahara”, \textit{Policy Brief}, (2015), 4.}

Hence, criminal organizations and ruthless entrepreneurs are not the only ones benefitting from the maritime refugee crisis. Terrorist organizations, including ISIS and Al-Qaeda, are not only one of the root causes for the mass migration in the Mediterranean, but they have also demonstrated ways to exploit the crisis for their cause. Apart from the financial business centered on human trafficking, terrorists and criminal organizations have benefitted from the rather uncontrolled situation in Libya with respect to drug and arms smuggling. As a consequence of the political and social instability after the fall of the Gadhafi regime in 2011, many previously state-owned arsenals have fallen to terrorist groupings and traffickers. These not only further disseminate the weapons among affiliates on the African continent, but also smuggle them into Europe via the Mediterranean Sea. Additionally, Libya has become a point of departure for the maritime transport of drugs into Europe, particularly regarding the illegal shipment of cocaine. Annually, approximately 18 tons of Colombian cocaine, are smuggled through the West African coastal states to Libya, where it is shipped on to Europe. The financial profit resulting from these criminal activities adds up to billions of US dollars per year.\footnote{The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, “Libya”, 3.}

Whereas financial profit is the central goal of criminals, for Islamist terrorists it merely provides the means with which they can fulfill their ideological goals of jihadism.\footnote{Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, “Jihadism as an Ideology of Violence – The Abuse of Islam for Terrorist Purposes”; verfassungsschutz.de.} Thus, to smuggle its fighters into Europe or deliver operatives and materials, ISIS for instance, has increasingly made use of the Mediterranean Sea as a line of communication, impacting the security situation of EU member states in different ways.\footnote{McDonald-Gibson, “How ISIS Threatens Europe”; Germond, \textit{The Maritime Dimension of European Security}, 80.} On the one hand, the terror and unrest they spread across the Middle East and North Africa has led to even higher numbers of people taking off on unsafe journeys across the Mediterranean Sea to seek asylum in Europe.\footnote{McDonald-Gibson.}
er hand, terrorists have used the mass migration flows to smuggle their own fighters into EU member states, establishing sleeper cells “under the disguise of political asylum”\(^\text{378}\). The increasing number of terror attacks in France, Belgium, Sweden, the UK, and Germany has shown that the number of Islamist terrorists residing within the EU has risen and that Union citizens are no longer safe from attacks on their own territory\(^\text{379}\).

Overall, Europe’s increasingly instable external security environment directly and indirectly affects the EU’s internal security dimension. The instability caused by conflicts, civil wars, failed states, and overall worsening living conditions throughout the Middle East and Africa have resulted in a spillover of events reaching from Europe’s periphery to the heart of the EU\(^\text{380}\). Externally, the Union is challenged by an increasingly unstable situation in its neighborhood, characterized by conflict-driven, dissolute, and economically weak states. This, in turn, not only led to mass migration to Europe, but also gave rise to several criminal and terrorist actors. Having learnt to benefit from the crises in terms of profit and influence, their activities and presence has worsened the circumstances in the respective countries even more. With the Mediterranean Sea serving as passage to Europe the originally local crises have transformed into a severe humanitarian crisis directly at the EU’s external borders. Additionally, criminal and terrorist organizations have profited from the rather uncontrolled maritime migration flows, by importing supporters and operatives into the EU.

As a consequence, internally, the EU and its member states increasingly need to deal with the challenges of illegal immigration, cross-border crime, and the issue of terrorism. Viewing immigration as an internal security threat is highly contested, considering that the majority of migrants and refugees merely seek protection\(^\text{381}\). Yet, massive illegal immigration poses a threat to the European society in different ways. Firstly, the receiving states are subject to severe political, economic, bureaucratic, social, and cultural pressures related to the accommodation, subsistence and integration of refugees and migrants. Particularly, the import of different religious, political and ethnic values poses a challenge for policy makers and European

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378 Albrecht et al., 126.
citizens alike.\textsuperscript{382} Secondly, the influx of drugs and weapons via the Central Mediterranean route has fostered cross-border crime throughout the EU, particularly with respect to human, arms and drug trafficking.\textsuperscript{383} Thirdly, the large flow of refugees has enabled terrorist groups to mingle into the crowd without attracting attention to their schemes.\textsuperscript{384} As a consequence, Europe has not only become subject to an increasing number of terrorist attacks on its soil, but the European society has also become vulnerable to radicalization. According to the EUROPOL Terrorism Situation and Trend Reports of 2016 and 2017, a total of 353 terror attacks – failed, foiled and completed – were reported by eight member states, including the UK, France, Italy, Spain, Greece, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, in 2015 and 2016. These attacks resulted in a death toll of approximately 293, as well as the injury of 793 people.\textsuperscript{385} These numbers reveal a drastic increase of incidents and fatalities compared to 2014, with a total of four people killed and six wounded by terrorist incidents.\textsuperscript{386} Additionally, over 5,000 people are believed to have left the EU to join ISIS in Syria and Iraq.\textsuperscript{387}

Hence, the EU’s external environment of events and their spill-over effects regarding the EU’s internal security dimension suggests that the EU has the responsibility and opportunity to enhance its role as a maritime security and defense actor in the Mediterranean Sea. Disrupting the illegal human trafficking and smuggling activities off the Libyan shore is essential in decreasing mass migration to Europe and preventing criminals and terrorists from financing and distributing their causes. Yet, as long as the instability and fragmentation in Libya continues to offer criminals and terrorists relatively safe operating spaces, human, arms and drug trafficking to Europe will continue.\textsuperscript{388} Thus, fostering peace and stability in Libya is vital. Furthermore, considering that the majority of migrants originate from war-driven, socially divided and economically poor countries far away from the Libyan coast, a comprehensive approach to human security is necessary to address the root causes of the refugee crisis. This entails finding political and economic solutions to solve conflicts, prevent human

\textsuperscript{382} Albrecht et al., 126.  
\textsuperscript{384} Albrecht et al., 126.  
\textsuperscript{387} EUROPOL, \textit{EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2017}, 12.  
\textsuperscript{388} The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 6.
rights violations and, generally, improve the living conditions within the respective countries.389

4.2.2 Presence

To identify the EU’s presence and, thereby, its ability to shape the expectations, perceptions and behavior of others, the Union’s reaction to the external environment of events is analyzed within the scope of Operation Sophia. Whereas focus is given to the EU’s presence as an entity, it is essential to take into consideration the unity of viewpoints and actions of individual member states, as these contribute to the EU’s perception as a maritime security and defense actor among other external actors.

In response to the constantly worsening refugee crisis in the Central Mediterranean Sea, impacting the EU’s external and internal security situation alike, the EU launched Operation Sophia in June 2015. In the preceding months, the EU and its member states have witnessed an abrupt increase of refugees and migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea from Libya. Not only has this caused concern regarding the massive arrival of illegal immigrants to Italy, but also because of the humanitarian tragedy taking place directly at the EU’s external maritime border.390 Recognizing that the crisis is fostered by the human trafficking industry which has established itself at the coast of Libya, the European Council has decided to focus on the disruption of the Central Mediterranean smuggling routes to decrease the flow of refugees from Libya to Europe.391

Based on four phases, the operation’s core mandate is to “identify, capture and dispose of vessels and enabling assets used or suspected of being used by migrant smugglers or traffickers”.392 Accordingly, the first phase foresaw the “deployment of forces to build a comprehensive understanding of smuggling activity and methods”.393 In October 2015, this information and intelligence gathering phase was concluded and the mission proceeded to phase two. This includes the “boarding, search, seizure and diversion of smugglers’ vessels on the high seas under the conditions provided for by

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391 Tardy, 1.
4.2 Operation Sophia

The phase is divided into two sub-phases differing in their territorial reach. Whereas the prevailing phase 2a is limited to an operation on the high seas, phase 2b would enable the EU to take action within foreign territorial waters. Yet, being bound by international law, the EU would either need the approval of the Libyan government to enter its territory or a United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR). Whilst phase two is limited to the boarding and seizure of suspected vessels, phase three would add the option of “taking operational measures against vessels and related assets suspected of being used for human smuggling or trafficking inside the coastal states territory.”

Finally, phase four refers to the completion of the operation and the withdrawal of forces. Overall, the transition from one phase to another is dependent on the decisions taken by the European Council.

In June 2016, the European Council extended the mission’s mandate, to include the training of the Libyan Coastguard and Navy, as well as, the EU’s contribution to the “implementation of the UN arms embargo on the high seas off the coast of Libya”, based on the legal framework established under UNSCR 2292 (2016) and UNSCR 2357 (2017). This mandate was further extended by the European Council in July 2017 in accordance with UNSCR 2146 (2014) and UNSCR 2362 (2017), to contain the training and equipment of the Libyan Coastguard and Navy with long-term efficiency monitoring mechanisms, the “conduct [of] new surveillance activities and [the gathering of] information on illegal trafficking of oil exports from Libya”, and the enhancement of “the possibility for sharing information on human trafficking with member states law enforcement agencies, FRONTEX and EUROPOL”.

The training and equipment of the Libyan Coastguard and Navy is particularly essential, considering that the EU’s mandate is limited to the operation on the high seas. An equally skilled and equipped Libyan Coastguard and Navy would thus enable these to undertake measures against human smugglers within the Libyan territorial wa-

394 Ibid.
398 Ibid.
399 Ibid.
400 Ibid.
In turn, the arms embargo enables the EU to use military force for the interception of vessels suspected of delivering weapons to Libya. The mandate, thereby, supports the Libyan Government of National Accord’s (GNA) establishment of power across the country.\textsuperscript{401}

Overall, Operation Sophia’s mandate seemed very promising, not only considering its fast reaction to the crisis, but also with respect to the potential reach of its mandate.\textsuperscript{402} After the sinking of a boat of more than 700 refugees off the Italian island of Lampedusa in April 2015, resulting in a humanitarian tragedy due to the death of nearly all people on board, the European Council decided to take action against the human traffickers spurring the crisis at the Libyan coast, only one month later, in May 2015. In turn, the mobilization of capacities and the actual launch of the operation in June 2015 occurred evenly rapid, preceding the UN’s reaction to the crisis.\textsuperscript{403} Yet, it needs to be acknowledged that Italy has been trying to push the issue of maritime migration via the Central Mediterranean route on the EU’s security agenda already since 2013, due to the constant increase of migrant flows and humanitarian casualties off the Italian coast, resulting from the rise of the conflicts in North Africa.\textsuperscript{404} Hence, considering the crisis’ severe developments in 2015, the EU’s reaction and capability to launch Operation Sophia has benefitted from the fact that discussions about dealing with maritime migration have been considered among EU member states beforehand. Besides the fast response of the EU to take action in the first place, the scope of Operation Sophia to include “the possibility of acting in territorial and internal waters, as well as on land of a sovereign State, without having the consent of that State, but with the only authorization of the UNSC” was novel.\textsuperscript{405} Hence, the launch of Operation Sophia is the first time that the European Council was able to agree on common military action in a fast and extensive manner. Thereby, as

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Harman} Harman, 3.
\bibitem{Middle} Middle East Eye, “UN Authorises EU Naval Operation to Enforce Libya Arms Embargo”, middleeasteye.net.
\bibitem{Estrada} Estrada-Cañamares, “Operation Sophia Before and After”,188.
\bibitem{Estrada2} Estrada-Cañamares, 188.
\end{thebibliography}
Estrada-Cañamares sums up, “with Operation Sophia, the EU shows proactivity and ambition regarding its role on the international scene”.

Despite general disagreements among EU member states on how to deal with the rising influx of migrants and refugees into Europe, the EU has presented itself as a rather determined and unified actor with respect to the launch of Operation Sophia. This cannot only be seen by the EU’s fast external response to the crisis, based on the unanimous European Council decision in May 2015, but also by the fact that 25 member states have been willing to contribute to the operation in terms of surveillance or military capabilities. Particularly, Italy, France, and Germany have proven themselves as the leading member states in the mission. Italy, which is also commanding the operation, has geo-strategic interests in bringing forward Operation Sophia, considering that it has been severely affected by the migration flows from Libya, due to its geographical location. France and Germany, in turn, besides their individual strategic cultures and interests in the Mediterranean Sea, share a common interest in enhancing European security and defense, particularly, after the Brexit vote. Accordingly, the three countries have not only taken the lead in motivating and mobilizing other member states for supporting the operation, but they have also been keen on sending symbols of unity to the outside world. The summit between Matteo Renzi, François Hollande, and Angela Merkel on Ventotene in August 2016, for instance, was highly symbolic in different ways. Firstly, Ventotene was the island on which one of the founding fathers of the EU, Altiero Spinelli, formulated his vision on a united Europe in 1941. Against the background of the EU facing several challenges and crises, this symbolized that the project of European unity is still relevant and increasingly important. Secondly, the talks were held on the Italian aircraft-carrier ‘Garibaldi’, which became the flagship of Operation Sophia in June 2016. Thereby, the three heads of states signaled their willingness and unity regarding the fight against the human trafficking and smuggling activities in the wake of the refugee crises. Whereas the talks revealed that the three leaders of Italy, Germany, and France had diverging national agendas on

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407 Ibid.

From 2015 to 2017, Operation Sophia has managed to seize 110 suspected smugglers, which have been arrested and delivered to Italian jurisdiction. Furthermore, the mission has confiscated more than 452 boats, which is necessary to prevent their reutilization by smugglers. Finally, over 35,037 lives have been saved at sea in 241 incidents. As far as the EU’s practices under the UNSCRs are concerned, the EU has contributed to the UN arms embargo off the coast of Libya in more than 492 occasions since September 2016.\footnote{European External Action Service, EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia. Mission, 1-2; House of Lords, “Operation Sophia: A Failed Mission.” European Union Committee. 2nd Report of Session 2017-19, (2017), 7, 10.}

Yet, despite these accomplishments, Operation Sophia’s overall success remains restricted to the action it may take on the high seas. Consequently, human traffickers benefit from the EU’s inability to access Libyan territorial waters, to the extent that they are “largely able to protect themselves and their boats by remaining within Libyan territorial waters.”\footnote{Harman, 2.} Accordingly, it has become a common tactic among smugglers to limit the utilization of their more valuable boats to Libyan territorial waters and reship refugees and migrants into cheap and unstable rubber boats before they are sent out into international waters.\footnote{Ibid; House of Lords, “Operation Sophia”, 7-8.} Hence, although the EU has had considerable achievements regarding the quantity of smugglers and boats detained, these have affected mostly ‘low-value boats’ and ‘junior people smugglers’.\footnote{Harman, 2.} The main criminal actors and initiators remain relatively safe within Libyan territorial waters. Once the boats packed with refugees and migrants are detected in international waters, it is the duty of EU vessels to
rescue the migrants according to international maritime law.\footnote{United Nations, \textit{United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea} (UNCLOS), (1982), Art. 98(1); SOLAS, “International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea”, Reg. V/33.1, (1974), ifrc.org.} Therefore, Operation Sophia has come to be associated more with the search and rescue of maritime migrants, rather than with its actual mandate on the disruption of human trafficking.\footnote{Harman, 2.} A British House of Lords Report accused the EU that by rescuing the large amounts of refugees at sea, the naval operation has even fostered the human trafficking business in Libya, as the notion started to circulate that the overcrowded boats would only have to reach international waters and, eventually, would be picked up by the European navies.\footnote{House of Lords, 7-8; Pricopi, “EU Military Operation Sophia”, 125.}

Hence, even though the mandate reveals that Operation Sophia is not a search and rescue operation, but focused on the disruption of human smugglers off the Libyan coast, the EU is bound by international maritime law, which prescribes the rescue of persons in distress at sea.\footnote{Harman, 2.} Accordingly, the European Council stated that “the Union CSDP operation will be conducted in accordance with international law, in particular with the relevant provisions of the 1982 [UNCLOS], the 1974 [SOLAS], [and] the 1979 International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR)”\footnote{Council of the European Union, \textit{CFSP} 2015/778, (May 2015), Art. 6.} Thus, actions to prevent the further loss of life at sea are indirectly present in the EU’s mandate:

the UNCLOS, SOLAS and SAR Conventions include the obligation to assist persons in distress at sea and to deliver survivors to a place of safety, and to that end the vessels assigned to EUNAVFOR MED will be ready and equipped to perform the related duties under the coordination of the competent Rescue Coordination Centre.\footnote{\textit{CFSP} 2015/778, Art. 7.}

This entails that the EU is not only obliged to rescue persons in distress at sea, it also has the duty to bring these to a ‘place of safety’. As the operation is under Italian command, saved migrants, as well as suspected smugglers, are brought to Italy first. Considering the difficulty of determining the migrant’s status of being either an economic migrant or a conflict refugee, in addition to the missing mandate to enter Libyan territorial waters, EU ships are not allowed to return those rescued to Libya by international
According to the ‘non-refoulement’ principle, a state is prohibited to return refugees to a country where their life might be endangered by persecution.\textsuperscript{423}

Since the outbreak of the Libyan civil war in 2011, the security situation in Libya has worsened. Particularly 2016 and the beginning of 2017 have seen heavy fighting among forces of the GNA and several militias and extremist groups, leading to high risks of civilians being caught in gunfire, or being abducted and abused.\textsuperscript{424} Thus, by depriving migrants of boats or returning them to Libya, they are likely to become victims of the increasingly instable and insecure conditions in the country.\textsuperscript{425} Additionally, reports reveal the inhumane and abusive treatment of refugees and migrants by the Libyan Coastguards themselves, considering the lack of law and enforcement of Universal Human Rights.\textsuperscript{426}

Hence, although the search and rescue of migrants is not Operation Sophia’s main mandate, the EU is bound by international law. Its lack of access to Libyan territorial waters limits the EU to action on the high seas, where, in turn, it has the duty to rescue persons in distress at sea and deliver these to safe places. Despite numerous achievements regarding the detention of smugglers and their vessels, the EU navies have mostly been active in saving maritime refugees and migrants and transporting these to Italian territory. Thereby, the operation has not only failed to decrease the migratory flows to Europe, it has even worsened the situation for individual member states, particularly Italy, which has become overburdened by the enormous number of refugees that is brought to its shores.\textsuperscript{427} As long as Operation Sophia does not receive the permission to transit into phase 2b, allowing it to act within Libyan territorial waters, the operation is bound to limited success.

Consequently, the inability of the EU to achieve its central purpose, in addition to the worsening refugee situation in Italy and the rest of the EU, has led to an increasingly discontented atmosphere among EU member states. Whereas France and Germany continue to advocate the importance of united and determined European security and defense action, of which

\textsuperscript{422} Harman, 2.
\textsuperscript{424} UK Government, “Foreign Travel Advice. Libya”, gov.uk.
\textsuperscript{425} Harman, 1.
\textsuperscript{426} House of Lords, 12; Human Rights Watch, “EU/NATO: Europe’s Plan Endangers Foreigners in Libya”, hrw.org.
Operation Sophia has become the main symbol, Italy has changed its originally hopeful attitude towards the mission. Since nearly all refugees and migrants rescued under Operation Sophia are delivered to Italian harbors, the operation has increasingly become a strain for the country. Italy’s irksome situation has been worsened by the increasing involvement of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in SAR, as well as by the relatively slow process of redistributing refugees across the EU, due to the lack of solidarity among many member states to share the burden.\footnote{Wesel, “EU Countries Decline to Help Italy with Mediterranean Refugee Crisis”, \textit{Deutsche Welle}, July 6, 2017, dw.com; “Das verlagerte Problem auf dem Mittelmeer”, \textit{Welt}, August 10, 2018, welt.de.} As a consequence, Italy has reconsidered its leading role in the mission and even threatened to turn away further shipments of refugees to its territory. In response, France and Spain clarified their refusal to take Italy’s place as alternative points of entry into the EU. The tense situation among EU member states went as far as that it became unclear whether Operation Sophia’s mandate could be extended for another year in July 2017. Yet, by offering Italy additional financial aid for its refugee programs and border security, the European Council has voted unanimously for an extension of the operation until December 2018.\footnote{Becker/Weiland, “EU verlängert Marinemission”, European Council, “EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia: Mandate Extended until 31 December 2018”, (2017), consilium.europa.eu.} Hence, whereas the EU has been rather united in the early months of Operation Sophia, their external presence has become increasingly characterized by disunity and a lack of solidarity.

In contrast to the rather negative developments among EU member states, other international security actors, including NATO and the UN, acknowledge the EU’s presence in the Central Mediterranean Sea and are aware of the fact that the EU is limited in its abilities due the restrictions imposed by international law. Particularly, within the scope of the maritime migration crisis, the EU has managed to project an engaged and determined image of itself to outside actors, thereby, appearing to be an increasingly relevant maritime security and defense partner.\footnote{NATO Parliamentary Assembly, “NATO-EU Cooperation After Warsaw”, \textit{Defence and Security Committee}, (2017), 1-3; Craanen, personal communication, August 8, 2017.} Whilst the cooperation between NATO and FRONTEX is seen as well coordinated and beneficial, interaction between NATO’s Operation Sea Guardian and Operation Sophia is subject to certain deficiencies with respect to maritime surveillance coordination, thereby, impeding the operations’ situational

awareness. The EU’s lack of organic and sufficient Surveillance and Recon-
naissance (ISR) assets has hampered effective cooperation and operation,
especially within and around Libyan territorial waters. However, although
posing “one of the greatest obstacles to more effective NATO-EU coopera-
tion in the Mediterranean and Aegean Sea”, the deficiency is also seen as an
opportunity to enhance collaboration in the future.⁴³¹

Overall, the EU has projected a rather mixed image of itself as a mar-
titime security and defense actor under the scope of Operation Sophia. On
the one hand, the EU has demonstrated its ability to respond to the evolv-
ing maritime refugee crisis in the Central Mediterranean Sea in a fast and
determined manner. This has not only been acknowledged by EU member
states during the early stages of the operation, but also by other interna-
tional security actors, including NATO and the UN. The latter perceives
the EU as an increasingly important security and defense partner, yet, rec-
ognize that in order to function most effectively certain shortages remain
to be overcome. On the other hand, the EU’s lack of access to Libyan terri-
torial waters and its obligations under international maritime law, have
forced the EU to drift away from its actual mandate on deterring human
smuggling activities at the Libyan coast towards the search and rescue of
maritime migrants in international waters. This has not only been per-
ceived as fueling the human trafficking activities but has also worsened the
internal security situation of individual member states, particularly Italy,
which has become overburdened with the enormous number of refugees
and migrants being shipped to its territory. Accordingly, an increasingly
discontented atmosphere has emerged within the EU, which has been fur-
ther fueled by the lack of solidarity among member states to share the bur-
den of the refugee crisis. This, in turn, almost led to the refusal of Italy to
vote in favor of extending Operation Sophia’s mandate until December
2018.

4.2.3 Capability

To identify the EU’s capability to act as a strategically autonomous mar-
titime security and defense actor in the Mediterranean Sea, the Union’s abil-
ity to mobilize and dispose resources within the scope of Operation Sophia
is analyzed. To recall, capability refers to the EU’s internal context of its ex-
ternal action, thus, “the Union’s ability to capitalize on presence or re-

⁴³¹ NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 3.
spond to opportunity.”\textsuperscript{432} Although the EU is treated as an entity, identifying the positions of individual member states is inevitable to understand the nature and degree of EU action in terms of its CSDP mission Operation Sophia. Whereas the contribution of all member states active in the operation is acknowledged, focus is given to the strategic approaches of the three leading member states of the mission, namely Italy, France and Germany.

As a consequence of the worsening maritime refugee crisis and its impact on the internal security situation of many member states, the European Council decided to launch Operation Sophia in May 2015. The EU’s ability to agree on a CSDP operation within a relatively short time span was novel and not only showed the EU’s awareness regarding its responsibility to become a strategically autonomous security actor in its direct neighborhood, but it also demonstrated the increasing concerns and internal threat perceptions circulating among the member states.\textsuperscript{433} Considering that issues related to illegal immigration, human trafficking and external borders management is traditionally subject to the EU’s AFSJ, the European Council’s decision to launch a CSDP mission in addition can only be understood against the background of the different attitudes and circumstances of the member states.

For geographical and historical reasons, Italy has always had strong geostrategic interests in the Mediterranean Sea basin.\textsuperscript{434} Considering its geographic position, serving as a ‘natural bridge’ between Africa and Europe, Italy has come to be the most severely affected EU member state by the maritime refugee crisis in the Central Mediterranean Sea. Having witnessed an increase of maritime illegal immigration and human casualties at sea since 2010, long before the effects were felt in other member states, Italy has individually launched its \textit{Mare Nostrum} operation in 2013, which was succeeded by the EU’s FRONTEX Operation Triton in 2014.\textsuperscript{435} Yet, with the steadily increasing wave of migrants and refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea in the beginning of 2015, as well as Operation Triton’s limited reach to include only the Italian territorial waters, the country has been overrun by the entry of more than 320,000 refugees and migrants in

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{BrethertonVogler2016} Bretherton/Vogler, “Past its Peak?”, 10.
\bibitem{Estrada2018} Estrada-Cañamares, 188.
\bibitem{Graziano2015} Graziano, “Transforming while Operating”, 24.
\end{thebibliography}
Accordingly, Italy has taken the lead in mobilizing a common European response to the crises, which was facilitated by the fact that the rising influx of refugees and migrants and their dispersion all over Europe, eventually, convinced other EU member states that the crisis affects them all and not just the Mediterranean countries.\textsuperscript{437}

In terms of Italy’s strategic approach to security and defense in the Mediterranean Sea basin, General Claudio Graziano, Italian Chief of Defence from 2015 to 2018, emphasizes that only a comprehensive approach, taking into account the interconnectedness of security issues in the entire region, is capable of tackling the complexity of the current crisis.\textsuperscript{438} Hence, considering that the root causes of crises in the Mediterranean Sea often originate beyond the actual sea basin, including areas in the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Horn of Africa and the Arabic Peninsula, a multidimensional international approach is required. To limit mass migration via the Central Mediterranean Sea, it is, therefore, fundamental to find an “effective ‘whole-of-government approach’ to solve the crisis in [Libya]” and beyond.\textsuperscript{439} Accordingly, Italy advocates maritime security and defense action through international security alliances, such as NATO and the EU. Particularly, within the framework of the EU, Italy has established itself as an agenda-setter to counter the maritime- and illegal immigration crisis.\textsuperscript{440}

Similarly, France has geopolitical interests in the Mediterranean Sea basin, due to its geographical proximity as well as its ties to its former colonies in Northern and Western Africa. Whereas the country has been less affected by migration flows at its external sea border, France’s internal security situation has been indirectly affected by the large influx of illegal immigrants to Europe. Considering the preceding terrorist attacks on Charlie Hebdo by Islamist terrorists in January 2015, the French government has become particularly sensitive to the prospects of illegal immigration. Additionally, the increasing feeling of discontent among many French citizens regarding the illegal immigration issue has led to the rising popularity of the French nationalist party \textit{Front National}.\textsuperscript{441} Accordingly, France perceives that the “destabilisation of the Mediterranean basin con-
tributes to increase the threat against [its] interests and brings it nearer to Europe and France."\(^{442}\)

Acknowledging that human trafficking activities at the North African coasts fuel illegal immigration to Europe, the French Government emphasizes the necessity of a common European response, “The presence of a large number of potential candidates for immigration in the Mediterranean basin requires the State, in a European context, to seek and provide appropriate solutions to the resulting migratory flows at sea”.\(^{443}\) Furthermore, the country emphasizes its willingness to act within the common framework established under the EUMSS, thereby, promoting a strategically autonomous EU maritime security response on the basis of shared capabilities among EU member states and strengthened cooperation and coordination between the EU and NATO.\(^{444}\)

Although Germany is not located at the Mediterranean Sea, its traditional geostrategic interests assume that maritime security in the region is essential to secure Europe’s and, thus, Germany’s economic and political well-being. Therefore, Germany has been an active promoter of peace, stability, human rights and democracy in the region.\(^{445}\) In the wake of the current refugee crisis, Germany has become the number one destination for migrants and refugees in Europe, accounting for 202,815 applications for asylum in 2014 and 476,649 in 2015.\(^{446}\) Whereas these numbers merely reflect the officially registered refugees, overall immigration – illegal and legal – has resulted in a total of more than three million people entering Germany in 2014 and 2015.\(^{447}\) Although immigration has been seen as economically beneficial, considering the country’s demographic situation, the massive flow of refugees has also posed strains on the country not only

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444 French Government, 50-51.
in terms of the accommodation and adequate supply of migrants, but also with respect to the rising discontent among German citizens.\textsuperscript{448}

Consequently, Germany has emphasized that the protection of the EU’s external borders is essential in overcoming the crisis internally. However, external and, thereby, internal security can only be achieved when EU member states act in a joint and comprehensive manner, including both civilian and military action. Therefore, Germany advocates stronger cooperation and coordination not only among the security and defense capabilities of EU member states, but also regarding the EU’s interaction with NATO.\textsuperscript{449} By being one of the driving forces of Operation Sophia, Germany aims to enhance its vision of the EU becoming a strategically autonomous security and defense actor, emphasizing that Europe is only capable of overcoming the crisis if it acts together.

Overall, besides their individual strategic interests and concerns, Germany, France and Italy have developed a common interest in enhancing European maritime security and defense cooperation. This stance has not only been fostered by the maritime refugee crisis in the Mediterranean Sea, but also with regard to the UK’s vote on Brexit and the increasing notion that Europe needs to be capable of taking care of its own security in a changing international security architecture.\textsuperscript{450} Whilst Operation Triton has demonstrated that deploying a policing force in national territorial waters is not enough, a more comprehensive and wider security approach was necessary. Thus, considering that the three ‘leading’ member states have not been the only countries affected by Europe’s worsening security situation, the EU was able to mobilize its member states to formulate a CSDP approach, as well as to provide the respective capabilities for action. Thereby,

Operation Sophia is the first operation that explicitly brings together the internal and external security agendas, in the sense that internal security and societal challenge is partly handled – in terms of prevention and mitigation – through an action that takes place outside of the EU.\textsuperscript{451}

\textsuperscript{448} Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Baden-Württemberg, “Flüchtlinge in Deutschland”, lpb-bw.de.
\textsuperscript{449} Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, Weißbuch zur Sicherheitspolitik und zur Zukunft der Bundeswehr, (2016), 71-73, 77.
\textsuperscript{450} Keohane, “Three’s Company?”.
\textsuperscript{451} Tardy, 2.
Since that the EU does not possess military resources of its own, the launch and continuation of Operation Sophia has depended on the willingness of the participating member states to pool and share their capabilities. Overall, 25 member states have shown their readiness to contribute to the mission through the provision of military assets, surveillance mechanisms and more than 1,200 military and civilian personnel.\textsuperscript{452} Since 2015, the operation is under the Italian command of Commander Rear Admiral (UH) Enrico Credendino, with a force of three naval units and five air assets.\textsuperscript{453} Whereas the provision of naval and air assets to Operation Sophia rotates among the member states, a total of 58 assets have been active in the mission from June 2015 to August 2017. Germany has been the leading nation in terms of asset supply. It accounts for 12 surface vessels, including four frigates, one corvette, two minehunters and five auxiliary ships, as well as one helicopter. France immediately follows having provided a total of nine surface vessels, including six frigates, one corvette and two patrol vessels, in addition to three air assets, including two maritime patrol and surveillance aircraft and one helicopter. Italy, in turn, accounts for a total of seven surface vessels and air assets, including two landing platform docks, with the ITS San Giusto being the mission’s flagship, two aircraft carriers, and three helicopters.\textsuperscript{454} Italy has shown its dedication and willingness to lead by providing its most valuable naval vessels and, thereby, enhancing the military force projection capability of the operation significantly.

At this point, it is important to mention two other EU member states that have been active contributors to Operation Sophia, namely the UK and Spain. The UK has traditionally presented itself relatively hesitant as far as its contributions to CSDP operations are concerned, particularly in relation to its actual defense capabilities. Hence, although the country continues to be Europe’s strongest military power together with France and, thereby accounts for a high share of EU security and defense capabilities, it is not the EU’s main contributor to defense operations. However, despite the Brexit vote in June 2016, the UK underlines its ambition to continue


\textsuperscript{454} European External Action Service, “EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia. Infographics”.
close cooperation with the EU in terms of external security and defense.\textsuperscript{455} In Operation Sophia, Britain has been especially supportive of the EU’s extended mandate on the UN arms embargo off the Libyan coast.\textsuperscript{456} The Royal Navy and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary have contributed a total of five surface vessels, including a frigate, a destroyer, two survey vessels and a landing ship, as well as four helicopters in sum.

In contrast to the UK, Spain has a stronger interest in counteracting the maritime refugee crisis, considering that the country has been subject to high numbers of illegal immigration through the Western Mediterranean route itself throughout the 2000s.\textsuperscript{457} Besides being a central component of NATO’s Western Mediterranean flank in addition to individual efforts in the region, Spain has contributed considerably to ongoing EU operations, including Operation ATALANTA and Operation Sophia.\textsuperscript{458} Accordingly, the country has provided five frigates, two helicopters and two maritime patrol aircrafts to fight human and arms trafficking in the Central Mediterranean Sea under the scope of Operation Sophia.\textsuperscript{459} Furthermore, the country will take over the command at sea of the operation in September 2017, following an Italian request for support. Yet, the operational headquarters will remain in Rome.\textsuperscript{460}

Hence, for Operation Sophia to be operable, EU member states have pooled and shared their capabilities, with Germany, France, Spain, the UK, and Italy being the mission’s main contributors. Whereas Germany and France reveal particular force strength in terms of naval vessels, Spain and the UK make up for their deficiencies in aircraft assets. Italy, in turn, represents its command with the employment of its light aircraft carriers and amphibious dock landing platforms.\textsuperscript{461}

It needs to be taken into consideration that these numbers represent the overall employment of forces of the five most contributing EU member

\textsuperscript{455} Institute for Government, “UK-EU Defence and Security Cooperation”, instituteforgovernment.org.uk.
\textsuperscript{456} Royal Navy, “Sophia”, royalnavy.mod.uk.
\textsuperscript{457} FRONTEX, “Western Mediterranean Route”.
\textsuperscript{458} Armada Española, “Operational Activities”, armada.mde.es.
\textsuperscript{461} Due to the ongoing critical situation in the Central- and Western Mediterranean Sea, Spain and Italy have notably increased their presence in the mission in 2018. (European External Action Service, “Assets”, operationsophia.eu).
states. Generally, three to five ships and four aircraft assets are deployed at a time. In August 2017, the operation comprised three surface vessels from Italy, Germany and Spain, as well as five aircraft assets from Spain, Italy, and even Luxembourg. Yet, Operation Sophia is only one part of the EU’s bigger maritime security picture in the Central Mediterranean Sea, considering that its comprehensive approach to security advocates interplay of military and civilian actors and measures. Accordingly, with respect to the maritime migration crisis, the EU has simultaneously undertaken policing and diplomatic approaches.

After Italy had called the EU for help regarding the constantly rising numbers of refugees arriving in its territorial waters, the EU has launched its FRONTEX Operation Triton in the end of 2014. With its 16 vessels and six aircraft assets the operation “supports Italy with border control, surveillance and search and rescue in the Central Mediterranean”. Being a policing operation under the EU’s policy area of Freedom, Security and Justice, Triton is limited to action in the EU’s territorial waters. Accordingly, its main area of operation includes the territorial waters of Italy, in addition to parts of the Italian and Maltese search and rescue zones. Occasionally, Operation Triton supports the Italian Coastguard in assisting migrants in distress at sea outside its actual area of operation. Yet, the worsening refugee crisis has demonstrated that Operation Triton alone has been insufficient in dealing with the increasing flow of migrants and refugees crossing the Central Mediterranean Sea. Therefore, Operation Sophia was launched with a more extended reach and scope, being partially backed by a UNSC mandate.

Hence, Operation Triton and Operation Sophia are complementary in several ways. As a FRONTEX operation, Triton is directed towards irregular migrants as such in the EU’s maritime border regions. Generally, they have been focused mainly on the protection and management of the EU’s external borders, with its activities increasingly including humanitarian missions and Search and Rescue (SAR) activities. In turn, as a CSDP op-

463 European Commission, EU Operations in the Mediterranean Sea, 1; Riddervold/Bosilca, 9.
464 Ibid.
eration, Sophia’s mandate is not directly addressed to the illegal immi-
grants, but to the human and arms trafficking activities on the high seas
off the Libyan coast and, under the premise of a UNSC mandate or ap-
proval by the internationally recognized government, even within Libyan
territorial waters.466

In addition to its civilian and military operations at sea, the EU has
made use of its diplomatic strategy. In an attempt to convince the Libyan
government of the necessity to counteract the human trafficking busi-
nesses at its coast, the EU has used the diplomatic method of ‘offering some-
thing in return’.467 Accordingly, the Union has not only backed the Libyan
GNA through the UN arms embargo, it has also supported it with the
training and capacity-building of the Libyan Coastguard and Navy. By ap-
proaching Libya in a diplomatic way, the EU seeks to establish trust and,
thereby, foster cooperation. This, in turn, would benefit its own interests;
either the EU could be granted access to Libyan territorial waters, or Libya
itself could enhance its activities to interrupt the human smuggling mod-
els.468 Furthermore, as a reliable and stable partner is key to dealing with
the crises and conflicts in the region in the long run, the EU has been ac-
tive in restoring peace and stability within the country, for instance
through its Border Assistance Mission EUBAM Libya. The mission foresees
to support Libya’s transition to a stable, democratic and prosperous coun-
try.469 Hence, “the Union is intervening in international politics by making
a strategic use of its wide toolbox”.470

As Italian General Graziano has emphasized, the complexity of security
issues in the Mediterranean basin “calls upon national governments and
international organizations to tackle security challenges using a multi-
dimensional approach”.471 Accordingly, the EU is not the only actor engaged
in security operations in the Mediterranean Sea. NATO has been very ac-
tive in the basin with its Operation Active Endeavor from 2001 until
2016.472 Its mandate covered the deterrence of seaborne terrorist activities,
including the proliferation and smuggling of weapons of mass destruction

467 Estrada-Cañamares, 188.
468 Ibid.
469 European External Action Service, “About EU Border Assistance Mission in
Libya (EUBAM)”, eea.europa.eu.
470 Estrada-Cañamares, 188.
471 Graziano, 24.
472 Seidler, Maritime Herausforderungen der NATO. Strategische Auswirkungen und die
Effektivität des Handelns, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015).
and the protection of trade routes in the Mediterranean Sea.\textsuperscript{473} Considering the continuing instability in the region, as well as the escalation of the refugee crisis, NATO extended its presence by launching Operation Sea Guardian in 2016. The mission takes a broader and more flexible approach to maritime security and covers three main tasks, including the provision of support to maritime situational awareness, counterterrorism at sea, and the contribution to maritime security capacity-building.\textsuperscript{474} With regard to the maritime migration crisis, its major field of operation is the Aegean Sea, where NATO – in cooperation with the EU’s FRONTEX Operation Poseidon – seeks to deter the human trafficking networks, smuggling migrants from Turkey to Greece.\textsuperscript{475} However, NATO’s Operation Sea Guardian is also present in the Western Mediterranean Sea, in addition to enhancing its support to Operation Sophia in the Central Mediterranean, particularly in the area of information sharing and surveillance.\textsuperscript{476}

Nevertheless, NATO’s primary maritime presence remains in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, whereas the EU mainly acts in the Central Mediterranean. This is strategically well thought-through, considering that the Aegean Sea includes Turkish territorial waters. As Turkey is a member of NATO, the latter enjoys access to international, Greek and Turkish territorial waters, whilst the EU is limited to international and Greek waters only.\textsuperscript{477} In turn, the EU enjoys a comparative advantage in the Central Mediterranean Sea, considering its ability to apply a wider and multidimensional approach, which is required for both, mitigating the maritime refugee crisis and restoring stability in the conflict-driven Libya.\textsuperscript{478} Hence, in addition to assisting each other in technical matters, the EU and NATO have divided their task forces according to their geographic, structural and legal advantages.

\textsuperscript{473} NATO, “Operation Active Endeavor”, nato.int.
\textsuperscript{474} NATO, “Operation Sea Guardian”, nato.int.
\textsuperscript{476} NATO, \textit{NATO-EU Relations}, (2017), 1; NATO, “NATO Operation Sea Guardian Patrols Western Mediterranean”, nato.int.
\textsuperscript{478} Tardy, 1.
Simultaneously, the UN has not only contributed to the ongoing NATO and EU operations in terms of extended mandates, it is also active in the eastern Mediterranean Sea based on its UNIFIL mission to monitor peace and security along the ‘Blue Line’ off the Israeli-Lebanese coast.\textsuperscript{479} Furthermore, under the lead of the US, individual countries have formed a Combined Joint Task Force, named Operation Inherent Resolve, in 2014, to fight against the rising threat stemming from ISIS in Syria and Iraq.\textsuperscript{480} Thus, the overall security architecture in the Mediterranean Sea basin is characterized by a wide variety of civilian and military actors involved. Eventually, the effectiveness and efficiency of the multiple operations deployed depends on the ability of these actors to coordinate and cooperate in terms of capabilities, expertise and information-sharing.

### 4.3 Evaluation

So far, this analysis has identified the EU’s maritime security and defense actorness in terms of its interests, identity and tactics in the respective strategies, as well as the Union’s opportunity, presence and capability to act in the case of Operation Sophia. To determine the extent to which the EU can be considered a strategically autonomous maritime security and defense actor in the Mediterranean Sea, the criteria must be directly compared. Thence, a one by one evaluation enables a detailed diagnosis of the conformity and gaps between the EU’s strategic visions on the one hand and its actual performance on the other hand. To recall, strategic autonomy refers to the EU’s approach to enhance its ability as an international security actor, not only to act autonomously if necessary, but rather to become a strengthened and credible partner to NATO and the UN.\textsuperscript{481} Accordingly, the status of the EU’s envisaged strategic autonomy depends on the ‘feasibility’ of its strategic interests, the ‘credibility’ of its identity and the ‘operability’ of its tactics.

\textsuperscript{479} Deutsche Marine, “Über UNIFIL – Der Einsatz im Libanon”, marine.de.
\textsuperscript{481} IPSD, 4.
4.3.1 Feasibility: Interests and Opportunity

The following section evaluates whether the EU’s strategic interests go hand in hand with its opportunity to act as a maritime security and defense actor in the Mediterranean Sea. By setting the EU’s maritime security interests in context with its external security environment in the Mediterranean, three main points of concordance can be identified. First, the Union’s overall strategic interests in the Mediterranean Sea are endangered by the deteriorating security situation in the region. Second, the strategies underline the interconnectedness of the EU’s external and internal security dimensions. Considering the rise of transnational threats, it is of major interest to the EU to manage external crises before they imperil the EU’s internal security. Third, due to the multidimensional nature of the security circumstances in the EU’s external environment the EU has the opportunity to frame a comprehensive response and, thereby, realize its interest in manifesting itself as a global security provider.

Overall, the Mediterranean Sea is identified as a region of geostrategic importance to the EU. It is not only an area of economic prosperity and growth, but also a theater of intercontinental cooperation and dialogue. Accordingly, a “peaceful and prosperous Mediterranean, Middle East and Africa” is of major interest to the EU. Yet, the regions surrounding the Mediterranean Sea have been far from peaceful throughout the past decades, having led to security spill-overs. Therefore, the protection of the EU’s external maritime borders is a key concern of the Union. Considering that most security threats originate abroad, the EU aims to counteract security threats in the neighborhood before they arrive at European borders. This particularly refers to the rise of transnational threats and challenges, such as terrorism, cross-border crime, and illegal immigration.

Whilst the Mediterranean has always been an area of instability and tensions, the spillover effects of an unstable and conflict-driven external environment on European security have become particularly obvious in recent years. The civil war in Syria as well as the deteriorating living conditions in Africa have not only led to mass migration to Europe, but also facilitated

482 EUMSS, 2; EUGS, 34; Albrecht et al., 118.
483 EUGS, 34.
484 EUMSS, 5.
485 EUGS, 34; EUMSS, 7-8; Germond, The Maritime Dimension of European Security, 154.
the rise of crime and terrorism. Consequently, the Eastern and Central Mediterranean Sea have become major transit routes to Europe for more than 1.6 million refugees and migrants. Whereas the migrant flows in the Aegean Sea have been reduced due to the EU’s bilateral agreement with Turkey, the Central Mediterranean has become the main maritime migration route since 2016. Due to the migrant’s hazardous travel conditions in small and fragile boats this route has also become one of the deadliest. The situation has been fostered by the ongoing crisis in Libya, which has been subject to a civil war and the lack of security and stability – or good governance. Criminal and terrorist organizations have benefitted from the country’s uncontrolled condition by developing exploitative human smuggling businesses, in addition to the conduct of arms and drug trafficking. Hence, the Mediterranean basin has developed into a major security challenge for the EU. The outbreak and continuity of conflicts, as well as worsening living conditions have not only resulted in a “maritime refugee crisis of historic proportions”, but also facilitated the rise and conduct of criminal and terrorist organizations.

Domestic security is identified as the highest security interest of the EU. Yet, the strategies acknowledge that internal security can only be guaranteed through the management of peace and security at and beyond the EU’s external borders. Particularly, responses to security threats in the EU’s direct neighborhood are essential, due to their strategic importance and spill-over risks.

As a consequence of the increasing instability on the EU’s southern flank, a security spill-over has occurred in the wake of the current maritime refugee crisis. The smuggling of migrants at the Libyan coast has increased the influx of illegal immigrants into the EU, thereby, subjecting receiving member states to great political, economic, bureaucratic, social, and cultural pressures. Additionally, the smuggling of arms and drugs into Europe via the Central Mediterranean route has increased cross-border crime throughout the EU. Furthermore, the mass migration flows have

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488 The UN Refugee Agency, “Mediterranean Death Toll Soars”.
489 The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, 3-4.
491 EUGS, 7; EUMSS, 2.
492 EUMSS, 4.
493 Albrecht et al., 126.
enabled terrorist groups to smuggle their fighters and material to Europe relatively unnoticed. As a result, EU member states have faced an increasing number of terrorist attacks in recent years.\textsuperscript{494} Hence, the maritime refugee crisis has affected both the EU’s external and internal security dimensions.

The multidimensional nature of the threats originating in the Central Mediterranean Sea and its surrounding regions provides the EU with a number of opportunities to act externally on different levels. On the one hand, this includes the disruption of direct maritime security threats, including cross-border and organized crime and terrorism, as defined in the EUMSS.\textsuperscript{495} Since the human trafficking activities at the Libyan coast encourage illegal immigration to Europe, counteraction from the EU could not only decrease the flow of refugees to Europe and, thereby prevent further loss of life at sea, but it could also disable the illegal smuggling businesses in Libya with which criminals and terrorists are able to finance their activities. Hence, EU action with regard to the management of the EU’s external maritime borders and environment is required. On the other hand, the EU needs to counteract the indirect maritime security threats, namely the root causes of the crisis at sea. As the mass migration flows in the central Mediterranean mostly originate in failed and conflict-driven states in different parts of sub-Saharan Africa, this is a complex challenge which may take generations to solve, if possible at all.\textsuperscript{496} Yet, considering its geographic proximity to Europe, Libya could serve as a potential partner in reducing the migrant flows to the EU. Accordingly, stabilizing and supporting the country would be a first step to alleviate the direct maritime security issues in the EU’s neighborhood.

According to General Kostarakos, Chairman of the EU Military Committee from 2015 to 2018, “CSDP missions serve exactly this purpose, deployed at the heart of instability, addressing its root causes and mitigating the consequences before they reach the European borders.”\textsuperscript{497} As the Union’s internal and external security is threatened, a comprehensive approach, based on all relevant internal and external EU policies and instruments, is not only envisaged in the strategies but is also necessary for the EU to live up to its opportunities. Thereby, the EU could achieve another

\begin{flushright}
494 Ibid; Hershco, “The Impact of the ISIS Terror Attacks on Europe”.
495 EUMSS, 7-9.
496 Sanfelice di Monteforte, 242.
\end{flushright}
central interest defined in the strategies, namely “enhancing its own security and its role as a strategic global actor”.

Overall, the EU’s external environment in the Mediterranean Sea reflects the strategies’ interests and threat perceptions. Apart from the EU’s economic and environmental interests in the region, the Mediterranean has developed into a major security challenge for the EU, affecting not only its external borders, but also its internal security dimension. Therefore, the EU’s interests to manifest itself as a ‘global security provider’ go hand in hand with the opportunities it is given in the Mediterranean Sea. The maritime security crisis at its external borders enables the EU to prove its determination to step up to its responsibilities as a strategically autonomous maritime security and defense actor.

4.3.2 Credibility: Identity and Presence

The subsequent segment evaluates whether the EU’s envisaged identity is reflected in its presence as a maritime security and defense actor in the Central Mediterranean Sea. By setting the EU’s identity as an external actor in context with its actual presence, a mixed image of EU maritime security and defense actorness can be observed. On the one hand, the EU acts according to its underlying values and principles and, thereby, presents itself as a human security actor. On the other hand, considering the EU’s rising threat perceptions in relation to its external environment, the Union’s action is motivated by the notion of offensive self-defense. To recall, ‘human security’ refers to external action that has the promotion of basic freedoms and liberal democratic values at its core. In turn, ‘offensive self-defense’ refers to external action in an attempt to protect the own internal security situation. This is reflected in both the strategies, as well as in the EU’s actual presence.

In its strategies, the EU presents itself as a global peace and security provider, acting on the basis of its core values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. All EU external action, at sea and on land, shall be

498 EUMSS, 8.
499 Cohen, 2.
500 Flechtner, 168.
501 EUGS, 28; EUMSS, 6.
based on these principles. Particularly in the area of CSDP, the promotion and protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law serves as a legitimization for EU missions and operations abroad. Yet, considering Europe’s changing security environment, both the EUMSS and the EUGS emphasize that the EU’s external action not only aims to ensure peace and stability beyond its borders, but it also intends to secure the Union’s own internal and external security dimensions.

The EU’s action under the scope of Operation Sophia reflects this notion. As a consequence of the worsening maritime refugee crisis at the EU’s external borders, the Union’s decision to act was triggered by two main motivations. Firstly, the EU recognized the necessity to react to the humanitarian crisis at its doorstep. The deteriorating living conditions in many parts of Africa and the Middle East have led to a mass migration movement to Europe. This has not only resulted in the arrival of millions of destitute refugees and migrants seeking shelter in the EU, but also in thousands of casualties at the EU’s external maritime borders. Secondly, the maritime refugee crisis has not only impacted the EU’s external security dimension, but also increasingly affected its internal security situation. External action is, thus, required to reduce mass illegal immigration, crime and terrorism from entering and spreading throughout the EU. Hence, the EU’s motivation to launch Operation Sophia is ambiguous. On the one hand, it can be seen as an outcome of the EU’s humanitarian concerns. Addressing the smuggling activities at the Libyan coast would reduce the migrant and refugee flows via the Central Mediterranean route and, thereby, prevent further loss of life at sea. On the other hand, the reduction of maritime mass migration flows would not only disrupt the criminal activities of the smugglers and traffickers in Libya, but it would also limit the likelihood of criminal and terrorist groups from entering the EU.

Consequently, the EU launched Operation Sophia with an extensive mandate attached to it. Whereas its early phases have been limited to action in international waters, the mandates core includes action within the territorial waters of a third country, namely Libya. This, in addition to the EU’s relatively fast decision to launch a CSDP operation as a reaction to the maritime refugee crisis, showed the EU’s determination to enhance its

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504 EUGS, 14; EUMSS, 6-7.
505 Riddervold/Bosilca, 4.
role as an international and maritime security and defense actor, particularly in its direct neighborhood. By seizing 110 suspected smugglers, confiscating over 452 boats, contributing to the UN arms embargo in over 492 occasions and saving the lives of more than 35,037 migrants and refugees at sea, Operation Sophia seems to have accounted for considerable achievements.\(^{506}\)

As a promoter of liberal values, the EU bases its maritime security and defense action on the respect for international law.\(^{507}\) Accordingly, the EU has awaited the approval of the UNSC for the conduct of Operation Sophia on the high seas and acted on the basis of the UNCLOS and SOLAS throughout the mission.\(^{508}\) It has not only refrained from entering Libyan territorial waters due to the lack of permission from the Libyan government or a respective UNSCR, the EU has also met its commitment to search and rescue people in distress at sea and bring them to a place of safety.\(^{509}\) Hence, it has acted on the basis of the values it seeks to promote and, thereby, presented itself as a human security actor.

However, the EU’s limitations under international maritime law have severely constrained Operation Sophia in achieving its actual mandate. In effect, the lack of access to Libyan territorial waters has enabled human traffickers to protect themselves and their more valuable boats in this area. Migrants are then reshipped onto cheap rubber boats and released to the high seas, where the EU has the duty to rescue them.\(^{510}\) Considering that the EU is required to bring refugees to a place of safety, in this case to Italy, under the ‘non-refoulement’ principle, Operation Sophia has increasingly become characterized as a SAR operation. Additionally, it has even been criticized for fostering the human trafficking business in Libya and, thereby, boosting the number of arrivals in Italy.\(^{511}\)

Yet, with Operation Sophia, the EU acted to the most possible extent within the limits of its competences, thereby, remaining true to its identity as described in the strategies. The EU has not only respected international maritime law, despite the fact that this has hampered the conduct of its mission, it has also presented itself as a humanitarian actor, by saving a large number of migrants and refugees in distress at sea. Furthermore, the


\(^{507}\) EUMSS, 5.

\(^{508}\) CFSP 2015/778, Art. 6.

\(^{509}\) Riddervold/Bosilca, 12.

\(^{510}\) Harman, 2.

\(^{511}\) House of Lords, 7-8.
training of Libyan coastguards under the UNSCR’s mandate has not only allowed the EU to substitute its lack of access to Libyan territorial waters, but it also enabled the Union to disseminate its identity and values abroad. This, in turn, might strengthen cooperation with Libyan authorities in the future.

Nevertheless, the success of Operation Sophia remains opaque. From a human security perspective, the fact that EU vessels have saved the lives of more than 35,000 refugees in distress at sea can be considered a major success. Considering that the performances of the human traffickers and smugglers in Libya are becoming increasingly cruel and degrading, EU inaction would have resulted in much higher numbers of human casualties in the Central Mediterranean Sea. However, from an offensive self-defense perspective, Operation Sophia was unable to disrupt human trafficking activities and its presence, apparently, even fostered refugee flows from the Libyan coast to Europe. This has not only led to increased mass migration to the EU, thereby, posing strains on EU members states to effectively control cross-border crime and terrorism. It has also led to rising discontent within the most affected member states, particularly Italy.

According to the strategies, the EU can only be a responsible, credible and effective international and maritime security and defense actor, if it stands united. Whereas the EU has presented itself as a unified and responsive actor with respect to the launch of Operation Sophia, the operation’s inability to achieve its central purpose, as well as the constantly increasing flows of refugees entering Europe via the Central Mediterranean route has led several member states, most of all Italy, to doubt the continuance of the mission. Additionally, the EU has increasingly become characterized by a lack of solidarity regarding the redistribution of refugees to relief coastal states, such as Italy. Considering the intergovernmental nature of CSDP, where all action requires unanimous decision-making, the drop out of only one member states would be enough to terminate the en-

514 Harman, 2; House of Lords, 7-8.
515 Becker/Weiland.
516 EUGS, 8; EUMSS, 3.
517 European External Action Service, *EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia. Mission*, 2; Wesel, “EU Countries Decline to Help Italy”.

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tire mission. Yet, the majority of member states, above all France and Germany, as well as the EU’s international partners, including NATO and the UN, believe in the necessity of the EU’s presence off the Libyan coast. Accordingly, Italy was promised enhanced support to deal with the overload of immigrants arriving in its country and the EU as a whole decided to extend Operation Sophia’s mandate until December 2018.

Overall, the EU’s presence as a maritime security and defense actor in the Central Mediterranean Sea reflects the Union’s identity as described in its strategies. With Operation Sophia, the EU has not only shown its determination to act and enhance its role as an international and maritime security provider, it has also remained true to its underlying values and principles. Yet, due to the restrictions imposed on the EU by international maritime law, Operation Sophia has only achieved minor success in effectively executing its mandate regarding the counteraction of human and arms trafficking off the Libyan coast. This, in turn, led to increasing discrepancies among EU member states, which could have terminated the entire mission. While Operation Sophia has been extended until December 2018, it remains clear that as long as the mission is limited to action on the high seas, the situation is unlikely to improve. Thus, the operation needs to be up-leveled and adapted to the changing circumstances off the Libyan coast. However, without a UNSC mandate, this remains dependent on Libya’s internal situation and its ‘government’s’ willingness to cooperate. Nevertheless, NATO and the UN acknowledge Operation Sophia’s limitations imposed by international law and, overall, have appreciated the EU’s determination and presence to act. Despite minor deficiencies which remain to be overcome, the Union is increasingly recognized as a credible maritime security and defense actor in the Mediterranean Sea.

4.3.3 Operability: Tactics and Capability

This section evaluates whether the EU has the capability to act as a strategically autonomous maritime security and defense actor in relation to the tactics envisaged in its strategies. By comparing the EU’s tactics and its operational capability, overall, a coherent image is revealed. With Operation

518 Nugent, 380.
519 NATO Parliamentary Assembly, 1-3.
520 Becker and Weiland; European Council, “EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia: Mandate Extended”.

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Sophia, the EU has not only demonstrated its willingness and capability to respond to the maritime refugee crisis in a comprehensive manner, it has also managed to mobilize the pooling and sharing of capabilities among EU member states.

According to the EU’s strategies, the Union is only capable of achieving strategic autonomy if it utilizes a comprehensive approach for the management, resolution and prevention of crises and conflicts.\textsuperscript{521} Thus, by capitalizing on all relevant means it has at its disposal, the EU is best able to “effectively address maritime security threats at and from the sea, tackle the root causes and restore good governance.”\textsuperscript{522} Considering the vastness of the sea, enhanced interoperability among the various civilian and military authorities and agencies is inevitable to counteract transnational maritime security threats.\textsuperscript{523} Particularly, the complementarity of CSDP missions and European Border and Coast Guards is described as fundamental “to enhance border protection and maritime security in order to save more lives, fight cross-border crime and disrupt smuggling networks”.\textsuperscript{524} Hence, the strategies not only foresee increased cooperation and coordination among military and civilian stakeholders, but also an enhanced role for CSDP regarding the protection of the EU’s external and internal safety.\textsuperscript{525}

The EU’s comprehensive approach to security is reflected in the context of Operation Sophia. To support Italy in dealing with the rising number of maritime migrants arriving at its coasts, the EU has launched its FRONTEX Operation Triton by the end of 2014.\textsuperscript{526} Yet, considering Triton’s restriction to the EU’s territorial waters, as well as the constantly worsening maritime refugee crisis in the Central Mediterranean Sea, Operation Sophia was launched in addition. As a CSDP operation, Sophia offered an extended reach and scope, being able to operate also on the high seas and, provided that it obtains the approval of the Libyan government or a UNSC mandate, in Libyan territorial waters.\textsuperscript{527} Thus, the two EU operations complement each other in terms of their territorial reach and mandate. Whereas Operation Triton remains active in SAR within the reach of the EU’s territorial waters, Operation Sophia addresses the human and arms traffick-

\textsuperscript{521} EUGS, 28; EUMSS, 9.
\textsuperscript{522} EUMSS, 8-9; IPSD, 13.
\textsuperscript{523} EUMSS AP, 4; Germond, B. (2015). The Maritime Dimension of European Security, 74.
\textsuperscript{524} EUGS, 20.
\textsuperscript{525} Ibid, 10-11; IPSD, 10; EUMSS 10; EUMSS AP 4.
\textsuperscript{526} European Commission, EU Operations in the Mediterranean Sea, 1.
\textsuperscript{527} Riddervold/Bosilca, 9.
ing off the Libyan coast.\textsuperscript{528} Thereby, the interoperability of Operation Sophia and Operation Triton has enabled the EU to not only enhance its presence in the Central Mediterranean Sea, but also to guarantee the fastest and most adequate response possible. Furthermore, the EU has complemented its CSDP and FRONTEX operations with a diplomatic strategy. By seeking cooperation with the Libyan authorities under the scope of EU-BAM Libya, as well as Operation Sophia’s mandate on the training of the Libyan Coastguards and Navy, the EU not only seeks to engage Libya within its comprehensive approach to counteract the human and arms trafficking businesses on its territory, but also aims to restore stability in the country.\textsuperscript{529} Thus, in the context of the maritime refugee crisis in the Central Mediterranean Sea, Operation Sophia is embedded in the EU’s comprehensive approach to security.

By taking into account Europe’s changing security environment, the strategies emphasize the rising importance of CSDP operations for the protection of the EU’s external borders.\textsuperscript{530} Considering the EU’s lack of independent military instruments, the EU’s reliance on the willingness and capabilities of its member states to launch and operationalize CSDP measures is acknowledged. Therefore, the cooperation and coordination of national security and defense capabilities is encouraged, based on the EU’s approach to pooling and sharing.\textsuperscript{531}

As a consequence of the EU’s deteriorating security situation, the member states have managed to launch Operation Sophia in a relatively rapid and determined manner.\textsuperscript{532} Despite the differing individual strategic interests among EU member states, the latter have identified a common interest in dealing with the crisis. Particularly, Italy, France and Germany have been the driving forces of the operation. As a CSDP mission, Operation Sophia is dependent on the pooling and sharing of national capabilities. Considering the urgency of action, the EU has managed to mobilize 25 member states to contribute to Operation Sophia in terms of civilian and military capabilities.\textsuperscript{533} Whilst the provision of naval and air assets takes place on a rotary basis, a total of 58 assets have been deployed in the operation between June 2015 and August 2017, with Germany and France having con-

\textsuperscript{528} Bevilacqua, 171, 185.
\textsuperscript{529} Estrada-Cañamares, 188; Tardy, 1.
\textsuperscript{530} EUGS, 10-11; IPSD, 10; EUMSS, 10; EUMSS AP, 4.
\textsuperscript{531} EUGS, 11; EUMSS, 12.
\textsuperscript{532} Riddervold/Bosilca, 10.
tributed the majority of surface vessels and air assets. In turn, Italy, having the operational command, has not only provided the flagships of the mission, but it has also demonstrated its determination to take a leading role in resolving the crisis by deploying its aircraft carriers and helicopter landing platform docks.634 Additionally, Spain and the UK are worth mentioning with respect to their contribution to Operation Sophia. Thus, the EU has managed to mobilize its member states to provide a range of capabilities necessary for the conduct of the operation. Although Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and the UK are the mission’s main contributors, it is the sum of capabilities deployed by all 25 contributing member states that have enabled Operation Sophia to act consistently.

According to the strategies, the EU envisages a comprehensive approach to security not only regarding the cooperation and coordination of its internal actors and mechanisms, but also in relation to its international security partners.635 Considering the multidimensional nature of Europe’s security threats, crises and conflicts can be overcome most effectively if all actors involved in Europe’s security architecture coordinate their actions and cooperate in terms of capabilities, expertise and information-sharing.636 To deal with Europe’s increasingly complex security environment, ‘co-responsibility’ and ‘maritime multilateralism’ are inevitable.637 In the context of crisis management, the strategies particularly underline the complementarity and importance of the EU’s cooperation with NATO, but also with other international security organizations and regional fora, including the UN.638

When taking into account the larger maritime security picture in the Mediterranean Sea, Operation Sophia appears to be part of a wider approach to European security. The EU’s presence in the Central Mediterranean Sea complements the actions of NATO, the UN and other security initiatives in the basin, which each focus on different regions and security situations mainly in the Eastern and Western Mediterranean Sea.639 With regard to the maritime refugee crisis via the Eastern- and Central Mediterranean routes, NATO and the EU have enhanced their cooperation and co-

535 EUGS, 14; IPSD, 4; EUMSS, 5; EUMSS AP 3.
536 EUGS, 18; EUMSS, 10.
537 EUGS, 18; EUMSS 5.
538 EUGS, 20; EUMSS, 10; EUMSS AP 3.
oordination. NATO, with its Operation Sea Guardian, has become the dominant security actor in the Aegean Sea, due to its capability to operate within Turkish territorial waters.\textsuperscript{540} In turn, the EU, with its civilian and military capabilities, enjoys a structural advantage in dealing with Libya, which is instrumental to solving the crisis in the Central Mediterranean Sea.\textsuperscript{541} Thus, to counteract the maritime refugee crisis and the transnational threats associated with it in the most effective and efficient way, the EU and NATO have not only enhanced their technical cooperation, but have also coordinated their tasks according to their geographic, structural, and legal advantages in the respective regions.

Overall, the EU’s capability to act in the case of Operation Sophia reflects the tactics envisaged in its strategies. The EU has managed to mobilize 25 member states to pool and share their capabilities in order to execute Operation Sophia in the first place. Particularly, the provision of surface vessels and air assets by Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and the UK (five of the European naval powers) have boosted the EU’s presence as a maritime security and defense actor in the Central Mediterranean Sea. Yet, this is not to undermine the importance of the contributions by all other member states active in the operation, as it is the sum of all efforts that has enabled Operation Sophia to remain constantly operable. Furthermore, with regard to the EU’s comprehensive approach to security, Operation Sophia has not only been embedded in the EU’s wider response to the maritime refugee crisis in the Central Mediterranean Sea, it has also become an essential and complementary element vis-à-vis the operations of its international security partners. Despite minor deficiencies, particularly the EU’s cooperation and coordination with NATO has benefitted the overall security situation in the Mediterranean Sea.

Operation Sophia has demonstrated the EU’s ability to operationalize on its tactics. By being able to mobilize the capabilities for a CSDP operation in a relatively rapid time, the EU and its member states have signaled their intention to enhance the Union’s role as a strategically autonomous maritime security and defense actor. Considering that strategic autonomy refers to more than merely the EU’s capability to act on its own, Operation Sophia has illustrated that a strengthened role for the EU in terms of security and defense is fundamental to effectively contribute to Europe’s overall security architecture.

\textsuperscript{540} Kostarakos, 17; Garelli/Tazzioli, “Warfare on the Logistics of Migrant Movements”.
\textsuperscript{541} Tardy, 1.
5 Conclusion

This study has analyzed the EU’s maritime security and defense actorness in the Mediterranean Sea, by comparing the EU’s strategic approach to its practical conduct in Operation Sophia. Based on the concept of EU actorness, a framework for analysis has been developed particularly for the study of the EU’s CSDP dimensions. Accordingly, the criteria of ‘feasibility,’ ‘credibility’ and ‘operability’ have been introduced to determine the extent to which the EU can be considered a strategically autonomous security and defense actor. To recall, strategic autonomy refers to the EU’s ability to pose a strengthened and more reliable partner to its international security allies, while being able to act autonomously if necessary. In this sense, the EU can be considered a strategically autonomous maritime security actor in the Mediterranean Sea if it has feasible interests, a credible identity, and operable tactics.

Strengthening the management of peace and security at and beyond the EU’s external borders for the protection of its domestic security has been identified as a key strategic interest in the EU strategies. In turn, the deteriorating security situation especially in the Central Mediterranean Sea has become a major challenge for the EU, externally and internally. Therefore, the EU’s interests to manifest itself as a global security provider go hand in hand with the opportunities its external security environment offers. Particularly, the multidimensional maritime security crisis in the Central Mediterranean Sea qualifies the EU to live out its potential as a strategically autonomous maritime security and defense actor. Hence, the criterion of feasibility is fulfilled.

With Operation Sophia, the EU has demonstrated its credibility as an actor by remaining true to its identity and values. However, due to the restrictions imposed on the operation by international law, it has achieved only minor success in executing its core mandate and has even been accused of fostering the illicit activities off the Libyan coast. This, in turn, has resulted in growing disunity among EU member states regarding the further conduct of Operation Sophia. Nevertheless, the EU’s efforts in the Central Mediterranean Sea are appreciated by its international allies, who perceive the EU as an increasingly important maritime security and de-

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fense partner in the region. Thus, the criterion of credibility is partially satisfied.

As far as the EU’s tactics are concerned, the strategies advocate the pooling and sharing of capabilities among EU member states, as well as a comprehensive approach to security. Operation Sophia has been operationalized in this manner. The contribution of military resources by 25 member states has not only shown their willingness to enhance their participation in CSDP, but it has also enabled the EU to be a constantly present actor in the Central Mediterranean Sea. Furthermore, Operation Sophia has been only one component of the EU’s overall approach to the maritime refugee crisis. By implementing policing, military and diplomatic measures, the EU has offered the fastest and most adequate response to the crisis at its disposal. Additionally, Operation Sophia has become an essential and complementary element vis-à-vis the operations of its international security partners in Europe’s southern flank. Therefore, the criterion of operability is also fulfilled.

Summing up, the EU can be considered a strategically autonomous maritime security actor in the Mediterranean Sea to the extent that it has feasible strategic interests in the region and that it has developed operable tactics to complement Europe’s overall security architecture. Whilst Operation Sophia has demonstrated the EU’s credibility in terms of its strategic identity, the operation has also revealed its legal and internal shortfalls. Rather than giving up on the mission, these can serve as a basis to improve its mandate and adapt it to better suit the EU’s changing external and internal circumstances. To prevent this mission from failing, the member states not only need to overcome their internal discrepancies and lack of solidarity in times of crises, they should also continuously strengthen their external cooperation and presence. This is where the EU as an institution can step in. Considering that the launch and extension of a CSDP operation is subject to a unanimous decision by the European Council, the EU should enhance its coordinating role to stimulate closer cooperation, mutual support and a feeling of unity among all member states. The urgency for the EU to serve as a mediator and coordinator for its member states has been visible once again in 2018 and early 2019, when the mission’s future conduct has been threatened repeatedly due to disagreements even among some of the operation’s driving forces.

Nevertheless, in contrast to most completed and ongoing CSDP missions, the EU’s novel approach to the enforcement of security at its maritime external borders under Operation Sophia, has signaled the Union’s determination to manifest itself as a stronger and complementary security
and defense partner. Thus, despite the internal discrepancies and operational deficits that remain to be overcome in the future, the EU is on the way forward to becoming a strategically autonomous maritime security actor in the Mediterranean Sea. As one thing remains clear; the increasingly complex and challenging nature of maritime security threats require the most comprehensive action the EU and its security partners can afford. Strategic autonomy is not about the power politics of who can act best, it is about strong actors acting united to achieve a positive change in the world.

5 Conclusion
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