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# The EU global strategy: the dynamics of a more politicized and politically integrated foreign policy<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract** *The European Union (EU) has been portrayed as a force for good in the international system. However, due to systemic changes in the international environment and the crises of European integration, its role in the world is becoming more contentious. This paper applies the politicization literature to EU foreign policy and, using the case of the EU Global Strategy (EUGS), questions the effects of emerging politicization for EU political integration. The paper analyses how the EUGS has downscaled the transformative ambition of EU foreign policy, showcasing an adverse framing of its strategic narrative. However, it also argues that this narrative has been accompanied by more integrationist practices, as shown by the institutional developments during the making of the EUGS and its implementation in security and defence. The paper concludes that the effects of emerging politicization in EU foreign policy can simultaneously reflect a less transformative narrative but lead to more integrated practices and policies.*

## Introduction

The European Union Global Strategy (EUGS) states that ‘we live in times of existential crisis, within and beyond the European Union [EU]. Our Union is under threat. Our European project, which has brought unprecedented peace, prosperity and democracy, is being questioned’ (EUGS 2016, 7). These words situate the EU in a context of multiple crises (Youngs 2018), both domestically and internationally. Internal contestation in the EU, securitization practices and

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systemic changes in the international system are altering its self-perception in multiple domains, including foreign policy.

Whereas social and economic policies in the EU have often been the object of politicization and contestation, foreign and security policy have traditionally been considered a domain where 'more Europe' is needed (Peters 2014). As such, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) have fallen within the rhetoric of 'permissive consensus' in this field of EU integration (Hooghe and Marks 2009), among political actors and public opinion alike. This has translated into the isolation of these policies from the broader trends of politicization in European integration (Schimmelfennig et al 2015), understood as the extension of political debates that disrupt the established 'permissive consensus' on European integration (de Wilde 2011). So far, CFSP and CSDP are unexplored areas of politicization (Schneckener and Hegemann *nd*). Yet, as shown by the changing narrative of the EUGS, the absence of politicization cannot be taken for granted.

This paper situates the EUGS in the context of the politicization debate and questions the effects of a gradual politicization of EU foreign policy for political integration in this area. EU foreign policy has traditionally been characterized as having a cosmopolitan or transformative bias, given the EU's self-perception as a 'force for good' (Solana 2006) and a 'normative power' (Manners 2002). The narrative of the EUGS tones down the transformative ambitions of its predecessor, the European Security Strategy (ESS) of 2003.

Understanding the dynamics of politicization of EU foreign policy may help us to grasp how the growing resistance among European political actors to European integration and globalization explains the narrative embodied in the EUGS, further to common alternative explanations—such as emerging multipolarity, the changes in the EU's international environment and international crises (Smith 2013; Grevi 2009; Müller 2016). Based on the analytical concept of politicization, this article explores how the EUGS simultaneously projects a less transformative framing of the EU's foreign policy—resulting from the resistance to normative understandings of the EU as a global actor—but more integrated institutional practices and policies, particularly in security and defence.

The article will proceed in the following manner. The first section outlines the analytical framework of politicization and its effects on European integration. The second section introduces the traditional transformative ambition of EU foreign policy and shows how the import of controversial issues into the security agenda along the lines of politicization has eroded its transformative narrative. The third section presents the framing of the EUGS, which reflects the securitization of EU foreign policy as a consequence of emerging politicization and internal contestation, on the one hand, and the changing international landscape, on the other. The EUGS is considered a relevant empirical case, as it deals with the interaction between politicization, securitization and integration. While its narrative puts forward a securitization discourse, its framing downscals the EU's transformative identity. The fourth section combines the manifestation of the politicization dynamics put forward in the previous section and their impact on political integration. It argues that, while the EUGS embodies a more politicized approach to EU foreign policy, the results of this

politicization point to stronger political integration dynamics, as shown by the policy-making process of the EUGS and its implementation in security and defence. The final section summarizes the findings of this work and reflects on its implications for the politicization debate.

### **International institutions and European integration: a politicization approach**

The mass protests in Seattle against the World Trade Organization Conference, in 1999, symbolized the rise of a nascent anti-globalization movement. This movement unveiled the social concerns and fears existing since the 1980s with regard to the 'denationalization' (Kriesi et al 2008) that takes place through the transfer of political authority to institutions beyond the nation state (Held et al 1999). In this respect, globalization and regional integration processes may be considered two sides of the same coin. The outcome of international negotiations and the decisions of international institutions, including at the EU level, have come under suspicion, so 'the assignment of authority to international institutions is contested and requires justification' (Zürn 2014, 47).

This process of 'an increase in polarization of opinions, interests or values and the extent to which they are publicly advanced towards policy formulation' is referred to as 'politicization' and is 'observable in three indicators: rising awareness, mobilization and polarization' (de Wilde and Zürn 2012, 140). Politicization, hence, entails increased salience or rising awareness of an issue, the level of polarization of the stances taken by actors about such issue and the mobilization or expansion of the range of actors involved in the associated debate (Grande and Hutter 2016, 8).

The politicization approach becomes relevant in the case of the EU given the prominent transfer of authority from European states to EU institutions (de Wilde and Zürn 2012, 137). The empirical works analysing the politicization of European integration process focus on how the domestic and European public spheres react to controversial issues (de Wilde 2011), such as immigration or political integration, and the consequences for the European project (Grande and Kriesi 2015). The debate between those for and against the EU in a broad sense has become a core element of the political controversies in most member states.

The literature on politicization highlights the emergence of a constitutive political cleavage transforming world politics and European political systems alike. This divide cuts across different political levels (domestic, European, global) and is centred on 'differing conceptions of community' (Bornschier 2010, 419–420), opposing cosmopolitanism and globalism, on the one hand, and communitarianism and nationalism, on the other (Zürn 2014, 65). In the context of the politicization debate, Grande and Kriesi (2015, 191) state that the 'pro and anti EU conflict' is a constitutive part of a more fundamental 'integration–demarcation' (or 'cosmopolitan–nationalist') cleavage in world politics.

As a 'discursive phenomenon', politicization occurs in 'different arenas of political discourse' (Hurrelmann et al 2015, 45). These authors distinguish between 'institutional arenas at the core of the political system, which are populated by full-time politicians ... intermediary arenas linking political decision-making processes to broader citizenry ... and citizen arenas' (Hurrelmann et al 2015, 45). They assume that politicization does not necessarily affect all arenas in an equal manner and degree, so certain issues can

become more politicized in the institutional arena than they are in the intermediate or citizens' arena. According to Costa (2018, 7), intergovernmental settings such as CFSP and CSDP 'will be prone to keep politicization within the limits of institutional arenas'. As will be argued, the EUGS is characterized by the combination of a more politicized discourse and a more integrated foreign policy in the institutional arena.

The impact of politicization for European integration is thus far from linear (Kauppi and Wiesner 2018). On the one hand, some see this phenomenon as a democratic imperative and thus a precondition for the legitimacy of European integration (Hix 2006). Others consider that politicization opens deliberative spaces for the mobilization of citizens and facilitates arguments in favour of the European integration project (Beck and Grande 2007), coinciding with a branch of literature that sees normative contestation as inherent to the constitution of international norms and necessary for their legitimacy (Wiener 2014). According to Deitelhoff and Zimmermann (2013, 3), 'if the right framework for such deliberation exists', then contestation can actually be 'a strengthening, not a destabilizing force' for norms. Politicization, as well as normative contestation regarding international institutions, is seen as a positive process for European integration.

On the other hand, the post-functionalist school (Hooghe and Marks 2009, 8) claims that 'politicization of European integration has changed the content, as well as the process of decision making' and that a 'brake on European integration' (Hooghe and Marks 2009, 13) is plausible. The emergence of a bloc of Eurosceptics that raises concerns and fears throughout national and European debates has resulted in 'the embedding of opposition, effectively giving it a structural role in the integration process' (Usherwood and Startin 2013, 2). In the context of rising Euroscepticism 'the current politicization of Europe must be interpreted as disappointing, if not frightening, for those that promote a "cosmopolitan Europe"' (Grande and Kriesi 2016, 222).

However, post-functionalism does not provide evidence on how EU policy-making adapts to the politicization dynamics and the outcomes that emanate from them—beyond the salience of European issues at the national level. Elaborating on this theory, Schimmelfennig (2017) argues that 'an increase in politicization does not imply either integration or disintegration effects'. In the case of the eurozone crisis, he witnesses the salience of neo-functionalist dynamics as a consequence of the unexpected reinforcement of supranational institutions such as the European Central Bank (Dehoussé 2016). This runs against some assumptions of post-functionalism, which 'highlights the role of politicization during the [eurozone] crisis but cannot explain the crisis outcomes' and expects politicization to 'constrain integration or even lead to disintegration' (Schimmelfennig 2017). The reinforcement of political integration in the institutional arena will be put forward when analysing the changes brought about by the EUGS and its implementation in security and defence.

### **An adverse context for the EU's transformative ambitions**

Among all EU policies, foreign and security policy is considered the most prominent example embodying the EU's cosmopolitan and transformative bias. The literature on EU foreign policy has often depicted it as a *sui generis*

actor in the international scene, behaving as a 'normative power' (Manners 2002). This literature argues that the EU's identity is based on a solidarist approach to international affairs, in which it behaves as an 'ethical' power (Aggestam 2008), 'doing good' in the international system (Sjursen 2009). Even those who consider ethical concerns and political values to be second-order concerns have come to acknowledge that the EU is the 'institutional repository' of such concerns (Hyde-Price 2006).

The political values of the EU are exemplified in the promotion of democracy, multilateralism and human rights (see for instance Wetzel et al 2015). Among the principles of EU foreign policy, the protection of human rights stands as the most distinctive aspect of its normative and cosmopolitan approach to international politics (Sjursen 2017). Departing from Duchêne's (1973) 'civilian' power concept, the EU projects itself as a 'civilizing' power (Mitzen 2006), whereby its cosmopolitanism is grounded on the export of its own values to the rest of the world and the transformation of the international environment in its own image.

The self-image of the EU as a value-promoter is reflected in its strategic documents, which act as 'autobiographies' (Mälksoo 2016). Key among these texts is the ESS, whose strapline 'a secure Europe in a better world' showcases the transformative purposes of the EU (European Council 2003). The ESS presents the strategic objectives of the EU, three of which are in line with the EU's cosmopolitan and transformative approach to international affairs: building security and good governance in its neighbourhood, promoting effective multilateralism and fostering regionalism.

Building security and good governance in the EU's neighbourhood is paramount to the EU's transformative power. The ESS advocates the establishment of a 'ring of well governed countries' (European Council 2003, 8) in the EU's eastern and southern neighbourhoods. The document, which was discussed simultaneously with the setting up of the European Neighbourhood Policy, understands that the best way to foster internal security and to play a role in international politics is to transform the EU's neighbours. Exporting the EU's model goes hand in hand with stabilization, thus simultaneously pursuing internal motivations and exemplifying the EU's transformative purposes.

The ESS also puts a strong emphasis on the notion of 'effective multilateralism' (European Council 2003, 9). It considers that the best way to have a distinctive impact on the international agenda is to follow the EU's essence as a body giving primacy to international law and upholding the values of the United Nations (UN) Charter. Similarly, by promoting regionalism elsewhere and inter-regional relations among EU-like constructions, the EU exports its internal model and transforms the international landscape in its own image. As the Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy reads, 'where others seek to emulate us, in line with their particular circumstances, we should support them' (European Council 2008, 11).

The transformative ambition of the EU has suffered a major turn due to the effects of a changing international environment, but also due to the emerging politicization of EU foreign policy. The literature has captured the effects of multipolarity for the EU's position in the world system (Smith 2013; Grevi 2009; Van Langenhove 2010), its inevitable decline as a central power in the international system (Youngs 2010) and the inadequacy of a strategy based on

'entrenchment' to preserve the existing international order given the new distribution of power at the international level (Barbé et al 2016). More recently, others have analysed the effects of Brexit and the election of Donald Trump for the future of EU foreign policy (Biscop 2016; Niblett 2017; Novotná 2017).

Less explored, though, are the effects of politicization as an element limiting the EU's transformative foreign policy narrative,<sup>2</sup> although several signs of politicization in intermediary arenas hint at the emerging influence of this phenomenon. On the one hand, 'insurgent parties' (Dennison and Pardijs 2016) are becoming sources of internal contestation. Traditionally absent from foreign policy debates and discussions, populist parties across Europe are increasingly mobilizing contestation on foreign policy issues and broadening the range of actors involved in these discussions, thus fulfilling the mobilization criteria of the politicization literature. Salient issues such as the refugee crisis have been used by populist parties to provide a radical rethink of the EU's foreign and security agendas.

In this area, but also in terrorism and migration, the link between the internal and external dimensions of security (or the emergence of intermestic affairs<sup>3</sup>) is paramount. As Hooghe and Marks (2009, 17) note, parties close to traditionalism/authority/nationalism (the so-called *tan* parties) 'reject European integration because they believe it weakens national sovereignty, diffuses self-rule and introduces foreign ideas. They oppose European integration for the same reasons that they oppose immigration: it undermines national community.'

The refugee crisis is a prime example of how insurgent parties have broken ranks on current foreign policy debates. This issue—together with European integration at large—sits 'at the heart of the complex internal–external nexus' (Balfour et al 2016), so populism has mobilized the public opinion in areas where foreign policy has a pronounced impact. As another signal of emerging politicization, in the European Parliament the 'substantive conflict between restrictive and liberal positions emerges as the principle conflict dimension of asylum policy' (Frid-Nielsen 2018, 15). Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) oriented towards a pro-security position have lately put an end to the primary emphasis on human rights of this institution (Frid-Nielsen 2018), showcasing how traditional transformative preoccupations have lost centrality compared with securitization dynamics, thus reinforcing politicization.

On the other hand, issues such as trade have been increasingly politicized from a foreign policy angle, since most populist parties prefer 'borders closed, migration low and trade protected' (Dennison and Pardijs 2016, 1–3). Here again, intermestic issues provide signs of the emerging politicization of EU foreign policy. In defence, the European Parliament has also witnessed the appearance of polarization of the discussions relating to CSDP reports, thus gradually politicizing this domain (Herranz-Surrallés 2018).

According to Ojanen (2016, 232), issues such as security and defence have the more capacity to apply political pressure and raise political awareness than

<sup>2</sup> Some efforts have been made to apply politicization in specific areas of foreign policy, such as humanitarian aid (Dany 2015).

<sup>3</sup> 'Intermestic affairs' are defined as areas lying at the crossroads between domestic and foreign policy (Manning 1977).

matters of ‘ordinary foreign policy’. In the context of the Brexit referendum, when Jean-Claude Juncker expressed the need to make progress on a European army after Brexit (*The Guardian* 2015), the debate on the ‘EU army’ quickly became a signal of politicization in security and defence matters. The Brexit referendum was used by insurgent voices to denounce EU moves in security and defence, Brexiters accusing the EU of keeping a joint army plan ‘secret from voters’ (*The Times* 2016).<sup>4</sup> Since then, the debate on the EU army has also entered the political discourse in Germany and France, where discussions on Europe’s ‘strategic autonomy’ have gained traction with Brexit and Trump’s election (Besch 2016; Howorth 2017).

In sum, the contestation of foreign policy issues and an adverse international environment signal an emerging politicization of EU’s foreign and security policy. The contours of EU foreign policy are rapidly changing and, with them, the emerging politicization of this area of EU integration. Therefore, politicization provides an appropriate—although incipient—framework for the analysis of EU foreign policy and, more precisely, for the framing dimension of the EUGS. The following sections will elaborate on the politicized discourse of the EUGS and the political integration resulting from it, revealing the mixed outcomes of politicization when applied to EU foreign policy.

### **The framing of the EUGS: discursive opportunities for the politicization of EU foreign policy**

EU strategies help us to understand the EU’s role in the world (Krotz and Maher 2011, 565), as well as help to create a shared feeling of ‘community’ among member states (Sjursen 2017). The EUGS was elaborated in a dramatically deteriorating environment, which undermined the EU’s liberal values *ad extram*, as pointed out by the strategic assessment leading to the EUGS (EEAS 2015), but also *ad intram*.

The penholder of the EUGS, Nathalie Tocci (2017, 61), argues that ‘the EUGS stands firm on the affirmation of the EU’s internal values ... [and] its firmness on this point is all the more important given that those values are being questioned within, as evident with the rise of extreme-right populism across the continent. But this does not mean that the EU expects its internal liberal values to be adopted externally too.’ This more moderate vision was present as well in the mindset of representatives from EU member states at the time of drafting the EUGS. As an official puts it, ‘the motivation for new strategic thinking was more defensive, based on security threats, the diminishment of internal cohesion and a wobbly internal and external environment’, which also reveals a consciousness that ‘the world did not want to be like us Europeans anymore’ (Morillas 2019, 135).

Framing the EUGS around the contestation of traditional normative discourses shows the salience of EU crises and the evolution of the EU’s narrative from a cosmopolitan and transformative vision to a more demarcated and

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<sup>4</sup> As noted by the politicization literature, referendums provide fertile ground for the mobilization of salient issues of the political agenda (Hoeglinger 2016, 58; Schimmelfennig et al 2015, 771).

securitized one, thus providing a discursive opportunity for the politicization of EU foreign policy. The EUGS thus recalibrates the long-lasting dichotomy between interests and values in EU foreign policy, arguing that these must go 'hand in hand' (EUGS 2016, 13). It opts for 'principled pragmatism' (EUGS 2016, 16) as a way to 'move away from the outwards looking idealism of the early 2000s, without swinging all the way to the opposite end of realpolitik' (Tocci 2017, 55). In the context of the politicization debate, principled pragmatism can be seen as a way to 'resist the lure of retrenchment' exemplified by Hungary's fences to prevent the inflow of refugees and the popular backlash against the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) (Tocci 2017, 62).

Beyond this new positioning on the interests versus values discussion, the EUGS also downscals the transformative vision of its predecessor by adopting a 'less complacent and more energized' narrative (We Perfectly Know 2016). Instead of portraying the EU as a force for good, the EUGS acknowledges that the first interest of the EU is to 'promote peace and guarantee the security of its citizens and territory' (EUGS 2016, 14), thus fully integrating the link between internal and external security. As Tocci notes, the internal-external nexus is 'the silver thread running across the document', migration being the most poignant case in point of the securitization trend as a speech act embodied in the EUGS (Tocci 2017, 80).

Also, the EUGS frames EU foreign policy around a series of priorities that also break ranks with the ESS's transformative and Eurocentric logic. First, it adopts a more securitized approach to EU foreign policy, advocating an 'appropriate level of ambition and strategic autonomy' (EUGS 2016, 19) and demanding more investment in the security and defence capabilities of the EU. The protection and security of Europe 'starts at home' (EUGS 2016, 9), as a result of the EU's self-perception as being 'under threat' (Johansson-Nogués 2018, 6) and the spillover of instability on its eastern and southern flanks, particularly since the Ukrainian, Libyan and Syrian crises.

The EUGS introduces a bottom-up approach to security. Citizens' protection becomes a salient objective and replaces the traditional approach of the EU as an entity projecting values and providing security internationally. In doing so, the EUGS acknowledges that the security threats emanating from a more 'connected, contested and complex' world (EEAS 2015) require a collective securitized approach to foreign policy, thus abiding by the understanding of securitization as a 'process by which speech acts position particular issues as threats and, as a consequence, provide legitimacy and reason to policies taken in response' (Sperling and Webber 2016).

Second, rather than promoting its norms and values in the neighbourhood for the benefit of a ring of well-governed countries, the EUGS adopts a narrative based on the concept of 'resilience' (EUGS 2016, 23), a 'middle ground between overambitious liberal peace-building and under-ambitious stability' (Tocci 2017, 71). When substituting its transformative ambitions for the promotion of 'resilience' (Bendiek 2017), the EU aims to stabilize no longer the neighbourhood but 'itself' (Johansson-Nogués 2018, 10). Focusing on resilience serves the combined purpose of not fully abandoning the ambition to foster a principled policy towards the EU's neighbourhood (Juncos 2017) and also giving an answer to the voices that regard the refugee crisis as a source of

internal ‘anxiety’ (Krastev 2017)—and to the *tan* parties that politicized this crisis.

Third, and as a result of the EU’s poly-crisis, the EUGS acknowledges the limitations of its model of regional integration and opts for the establishment of ‘cooperative regional orders’ (EUGS 2016, 32), instead of simply exporting its model of regional integration as with the ESS. As the new strategy reads, the EU ‘will not strive to export our model, but rather seek reciprocal inspiration from different regional experiences’ (EUGS 2016, 32). Behind this more realistic and modest ambition lay the effects of the EU’s triple crisis of sovereignty in its dimensions of money, borders and defence (Howorth 2016), which question the inspirational capacity of its model of regional integration, as well as the return of geopolitical competition in several regions bordering the EU (Russell Mead 2014).

Finally, previous normative approaches to multilateralism are substituted by a more pragmatic tone on the shape of the global order. Pursuing a new framework of ‘global governance for the twenty-first century’ (EUGS 2016, 39) replaces the ESS’s ‘effective multilateralism’ formula, which clearly represented the EU’s transformative purposes (Barbé et al 2015). This, in turn, downscals the EU’s normative approach to foreign policy, which now rests ‘on the more ordinary principle of sovereignty rather than the radical principle of human rights’ (Sjursen 2017, 452).

All in all, the framing of the EUGS represents a less cosmopolitan approach to the international arena. In adopting this new strategic narrative, the EU reduces its transformative ambitions, as a consequence of both the crisis of integration and a more adverse international environment. The framing of the EUGS also brings politicization into EU foreign policy, as in other areas of European integration. However, counter-intuitively to what the proponents of post-functionalism suggest, the politicization of the agenda in the EUGS does not result in a ‘brake on European integration’ (Hooghe and Marks 2009, 13). Rather, as the next section argues, the policy-making of the EUGS reveals strengthened integration dynamics in the institutional arena of EU foreign policy.

### **Strengthening political integration, an unexpected consequence of politicization**

The unequal manifestation that politicization may have in different arenas (Hurrelmann et al 2015) and its uncertain impact for political integration (Schimmelfennig 2017) open the door to unexpected institutional developments, whereby politicization may be coupled with the reinforcement of political integration. As the previous section demonstrated, the framing of the EUGS has reflected increased politicization dynamics. This section focuses on the positive impact that a highly politicized EUGS has had for the political integration of EU foreign policy. This argument will be made through a two-step analysis: first, by looking at the institutional dynamics that characterized the policy-making of the EUGS and, second, by analysing the political integration in security and defence which has ensued during the implementation of the strategy.

### *Institutional dynamics in the EUGS's policy-making process*

The EUGS, contrary to its predecessor (the ESS), stands as a policy-oriented strategy (Dijkstra 2016; We Perfectly Know 2016). Its strapline reads 'joint vision, common action' and its last section, 'from vision to action' (EUGS 2016, 44–51), includes a series of policy recommendations that enable one to read this strategy as a 'benchmark and reference framework' for day-to-day policy-making (Biscop 2007, 9). In the case of the EUGS, it is a strategy very much linked to the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty, as it covers the totality of the EU's external action. It serves as a guide to the new external action institutions of the Lisbon Treaty, particularly the office of the High Representative/Vice-President (VP Mogherini/VP) and the European External Action Service (EEAS). Through a 'whole of EU' approach to external action, the EUGS has the primary purpose of avoiding the traditional silo mentalities in the CFSP and Commission-led external relations and the lack of coherence in the EU's international policies.

The existence of multiple crises and the need to overcome divisions among member states—and within them in the form of populism and Euroscepticism—triggered the understanding of the EUGS as a bridge over 'multiple divides' (Tocci 2017, 17–23). In its institutional dimension, the references to a 'joined-up' approach also came as a response to a more fractured EU, which demanded 'a wide set of institutional actors to be brought to work together far more systematically' in order to 'deliver better policy results only by working more together' (Tocci 2017, 24).

HR/VP Mogherini showed her willingness to embark on a 'joined-up' strategy-making exercise from the beginning of her mandate. In 2013, the European Council had invited 'the High Representative, in close cooperation with the Commission, to assess the impact of changes in the global environment, and to report to the Council in the course of 2015 on the challenges and opportunities arising for the Union, following consultations with the Member States' (European Council 2013). Member states understood the wording of the European Council conclusions as covering the domain of foreign and defence policy only—as was the case with the ESS—given that this European Council was a 'thematic debate on defence'.<sup>5</sup>

However, this assessment reflected the willingness of the HR/VP to go beyond security and defence only (EEAS 2015). During its preparation, the HR/VP and her team prioritized a 'whole of EU' approach (Tocci 2015; 2016a; 2016b) to the text, which ended up covering all dimensions of external action, making 'the case for joined up EU external action' with a view to producing a 'common, comprehensive and consistent EU global strategy' (EEAS 2015). Before the drafting of the EUGS began, the penholder of the EUGS wrote that a 'broader Global Strategy ... [should] bring together into a coherent whole all dimensions of EU external action, security and non-security related' (Tocci 2015, 117), particularly as a response to the migration crisis and the nexus between internal and external security which the crisis represents (Tocci 2017, 80).

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<sup>5</sup> The findings presented in this section are based on a series of interviews held with officials from member states and EU institutions between October 2016 and July 2017 as part of the research published in Morillas (2019).

The EUGS re-emphasized the ambition to speak on behalf of a ‘joined-up Union’ (EUGS 2016, 11)—the term appears up to 14 times in the strategy. Despite the fact that member states mandated ‘the High Representative [to] continue the process of strategic reflection with a view to preparing an EU global strategy *on foreign and security policy* in close cooperation with Member States’ (European Council 2015, emphasis added), the HR/VP expanded again the scope of the exercise to work on the whole of the EU’s external action. In her words, ‘the Treaty of Lisbon entrusted the Union with a powerful set of external action instruments [so] my task as HR/VP, in collaboration with the EEAS, is to bring these together in a coherent whole. (...) Outlining how the different instruments of our external action can be put to the service of a common set of goals is precisely the aim of a comprehensive EU global strategy’ (Mogherini 2015, 5). The strengthening of political integration became obvious when Mogherini included development cooperation, humanitarian aid, energy, neighbourhood, trade and many other Commission-led policies within the scope of the EUGS.

The policy-making process of the EUGS also reinforced the political integration in EU foreign policy and, in particular, the role of the HR/VP and the EEAS. As the HR/VP expressed it, ‘the process ... is as important as the outcome’ (Mogherini 2015), so Mogherini put special emphasis in devising a strategy-making process that would include the intergovernmental features of the CFSP and the supranational dimension of external relations, under the coordination of the EEAS and the leadership of the HR/VP and her team.

Building on the experience of the ESS, the policy-making of the EUGS was conceived as highly centralized (Morillas 2019). As previously noted, Mogherini appointed Nathalie Tocci as external advisor and penholder to lead the drafting process of the EUGS and set up a core group of EEAS officials to organize the consultations with the member states and the European Commission. This structure served the purpose of avoiding the cumbersome intergovernmental and supranational policy-making procedures of the CFSP and external relations, respectively, and to ensure the consistency of the exercise. The HR/VP and the EEAS became the backbone of the strategy-making process, although a series of consultations were held with both member states and the Commission.

On the side of the member states, an unorthodox system of national ‘points of contact’ (POCs) was established. The group of POCs—composed of appointed officials from EU member states and convened by the EEAS—met a total of seven times during the drafting phase of the EUGS (López-Aranda 2017, 74). Its meetings were supported by a questionnaire prepared by the EEAS, on which the discussions were structured. This ensured that the EEAS kept the upper-hand vis-à-vis the member states in the policy formulation process, although it also ensured the national ownership of the text, since many answers to the questionnaire would be kept in the final draft of the EUGS.

On the side of the Commission, the drafting of the EUGS also avoided entering the often rigid and hierarchical supranational working procedures. The EEAS-based team organized meetings with relevant Commission services to gather their views on the external relations policies covered by the new strategy. The Commission also set up a task force for the purpose of the EUGS and prepared a joint contribution with the inputs of all relevant Directorates

General. With this system in place, Mogherini and the EEAS succeeded in overcoming the Commission's rigid policy-making procedures, as much as they avoided the intergovernmental features of the CFSP/CSDP. As a result, the institutional dynamics during the EUGS policy-making process reinforced the centrality of the HR/VP and the EEAS, which did not prevent the achievement of significant progress during the implementation of the new strategy, particularly in the fields of security and defence.

#### *The results of political integration in security and defence*

In the run-up to the EUGS, security and defence became the source of politicized discussions in the context of the Brexit referendum. The accusations of Eurosceptic voices in the UK on the plans for an 'EU army' manifested the politicization of security and defence at all levels. Also, the migration crisis and its securitization became the most evident example of the internal–external security nexus and of the effects of this crisis for intra-EU divisions (Tocci 2017, 80). However, and despite the salience of these issues during the drafting of the EUGS, the implementation of the strategy also reveals the positive impact on political integration dynamics for security and defence.

Of all areas of implementation of the EUGS (Council of the EU 2016a), these areas have been the ones where most progress has been made, thanks also to the 'turbulence' generated by 'structural' and 'enabling' factors, such as Trump and Brexit, respectively (Tocci 2018). Initiatives that have followed since the publication of the EUGS include the Implementation Plan on Security and Defence (IPSD), the cooperation initiatives between the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) led by the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, and the Commission's European Defence Fund (EDF). These initiatives have found in the EUGS the vehicle through which discussions take place, even if the traditional intergovernmental practices of the CFSP and CSDP still characterize the policy-making procedures in this area of activity (Morillas 2011).

The Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) examined in November 2016 a proposal of the HR/VP on the IPSD in which 'a new level of ambition' in security and defence was presented (Council of the EU 2016b). Although discussions on the IPSD are no longer at the centre of developments in Brussels, the document included references to three major current initiatives, the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) and the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), among others.

CARD, a mechanism for the 'gradual synchronization and mutual adaptation of national defence planning cycles and capability development practices' as defined by the EUGS (EUGS 2016, 20–21), was announced in the same FAC meeting of November 2016 (Council of the EU 2016c). The MPCC, which assumes command of EU non-executive military missions, was established by a Council Decision on 8 June following the Council Conclusions of May 2017 (Council of the EU 2017a). PESCO, a mechanism to enhance cooperation on security and defence among willing member states (Fiott et al 2017), was agreed by the European Council in June 2017 (European Council 2017) and put in motion on 11 December 2017 (Council of the EU 2017b).

PESCO signals a remarkable shift in European defence cooperation. Foreseen in the unborn European Constitution in the form of the European Defence Union, it evolved into a form of enhanced cooperation and was included in the Lisbon Treaty (articles 42.6 and 46 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU). Through it, member states have the capacity to advance towards 'further integrating and strengthening defence cooperation within the EU framework' by making binding commitments (EEAS 2018). It can be used to enable 'increased defence spending, improve force commitments for EU operations and stimulate European defence equipment programmes' (Fiott et al 2017). The meeting between the defence ministers of France and Germany in June 2017 gave political impetus to the initiative and its launch in December 2017 led the HR/VP to state that, in defence matters, the EU has 'moved more in the last ten months than in the last ten years' (EEAS 2017).

So far, a total of 25 member states have signed up to PESCO, making it a salient example of differentiated integration within the EU (Biscop 2017). The use of differentiated integration mechanisms is a regular feature in areas where state sovereignty is not undermined by supranational institutions, such as in EU defence (Schimmelfennig et al 2015). Nonetheless, PESCO has become a trademark of the goal to foster the EU strategic autonomy identified in the EUGS and can be interpreted as a sign of advancing the 'internal logic of integration' in the fields of security and defence, leading to 'increasing convergence' in these areas (Ojanen 2016, 228).

Together with the institutional dynamics in the EUGS's policy-making process, the launch of PESCO has strengthened political integration in the institutional arenas of security and defence, two particularly divisive areas of European integration among member states. This stands as a counterintuitive result of the adverse framing of the EUGS, which could have led to further division and disintegration as a result of the politicization dynamics against which the new strategy was produced.

## Conclusion

This article has analysed the EUGS through politicization and questioned the effects of such politicization for political integration in EU foreign policy. Whereas the literature on the effects of politicization in foreign policy tends to emphasize the influence of insurgent parties upon the intermediary and citizen arenas (Dennison and Pardijs 2016; Balfour et al 2016) and unveils a negative impact for European integration, this research has revealed an alternative outcome. The manifestation of politicization in EU foreign policy has simultaneously had a positive impact on the institutional dynamics of the EUGS, regarding both its policy-making process and its implementation in security and defence.

Structural factors such as a change in the international environment or in the distribution of power at the global stage are commonly surveyed sources of the changing narrative in EU foreign policy. However, the EUGS's 'whole of EU' understanding of external action has also played its part in the politicization of the EU's narrative. By incorporating intermestic affairs in the agenda, reinforcing the internal–external nexus and covering aspects such as migration, the EUGS has opened the door to politicization and an adverse framing of EU

foreign policy. This development contrasts with the narrower focus of its predecessor—the ESS—on areas traditionally falling within the rhetoric of the ‘permissive consensus’ (Hooghe and Marks 2009).

The findings presented in this work thus highlight the partial capacity of the post-functionalist turn to advance the shape of EU integration. They also coincide with Schimmelfennig’s (2014) account of European integration dynamics following the eurozone crisis, which has been exploited by Eurosceptic parties to advance their adverse narrative against European integration. However, this very narrative has also resulted in more political integration and the reinforcement of supranational mechanisms in the eurozone’s governance (Schimmelfennig 2014; Dehousse 2016). In the area of foreign policy, the EUGS also provides an adverse framing but one that results in deeper political integration.

As Hoeglunger (2016, 136) observes, politicization in EU integration can simultaneously be ‘sustained’ but ‘limited and held in check’. As in other areas of integration, the combination of increased politicization and deeper integration may still leave the post-functionalist dilemma between integration and contestation unsolved, given that further integration in security and defence can ultimately lead to additional contestation. Also, Brexit and the advent of Trump’s presidency in the United States—the consequences of which had yet to unfold by the time of the publication of the EUGS—may have a greater effect on integration dynamics than the EU’s new strategy. Further research will be required to shed light on the manifestation of politicization in arenas other than the institutional one and its impact in other areas on political integration, beyond the EUGS case presented here.

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