

Building agreements upon agreements: The European Union and grand strategy

European Journal of
International Relations
2015, Vol. 21 (2) 267–292
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sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1354066114535273
ejt.sagepub.com


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Abstract

What explains the European Union's successes and failures in producing a grand strategy? Conceptualizing grand strategy as a composite commonplace linking together understandings of scene, agent, purpose and means (tetrad), I contend that the European Union has a grand strategy. In the early 1990s, advocates succeeded in institutionalizing the diffusion strategy. A decade later, however, the advocates of the European Security Strategy failed to do so. My explanation of this descriptive finding focuses on the constellation of prior agreements on the components of the tetrad. In both cases, widely taken-for-granted agreements on a recently shifted scene (security environment) provided openings for the advocates. But only the advocates of diffusion had the opportunity to work with equally widely taken-for-granted agreements on agent (identity), purpose (interest) and means (power). The advocates for the European Security Strategy, by contrast, were lacking such a favourable social context. Borrowing from rhetorical studies, this study makes a threefold contribution to the study of grand strategy. It moves beyond the literature's statism; shows that grand strategy is constituted by interpretations not just of power and interest, but also of the security environment and identity; and clarifies that explanations of the making of grand strategy need to inquire into the making of agreements rather than merely the interplay of material forces. My findings that the European Union has a grand strategy and came to adopt it by building a new agreement upon already-existing ones also have implications for the study of European Union foreign policy and International Relations Theory.

Keywords

Community, enlargement, European Union, identity, rhetoric, security

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Introduction

How far has the European Union (EU) come in producing a grand strategy? What explains its successes and failures in doing so? These are important questions to ask not despite, but *because* of, the fact that the EU is a system of governance rather than government. On the one hand, governance entails fragmentation. Decision-making authority is dispersed across many actors located at different levels. On the other hand, governance is also about sharing. These many different actors converge around a pool of 'conceptual ideas' (Kooiman, 2003: 80) about how to figure out what to do and how to act accordingly. Whether conceptual ideas are inside or outside this pool has crucial repercussions for the capacity of governance systems to generate political outcomes. Grand strategy and the EU are no exception in this regard. Whether the EU is able to perform as a security actor on the world stage — as it sets out to do in the Lisbon Treaty (Art 2 TEU) — has a lot to do with the degree to which member states and the Brussels bureaucracy converge on key conceptual ideas about international security. Grand strategy clearly belongs to this category of ideas.

Governance has a lot to do with communication (Crozier, 2008), and rhetorical studies tell us a great deal about communication. Thus, my contention draws heavily from this heterogeneous cluster of research.¹ On a descriptive level, I contend that grand strategy is a *composite commonplace*. It is composed of what, borrowing from Burke (1969a), I refer to as tetrad, that is, interpretations of scene (security environment), agent (identity), purpose (interest) and means (power). This tetrad assumes a taken-for-granted quality; it is the seemingly self-evident starting point for figuring out what to do in international politics. Judging by this benchmark, the EU succeeded in establishing a grand strategy in the early 1990s. The diffusion strategy is a tetrad that provides the seemingly self-evident compass for how to deal with enlargement and the neighbourhood. Yet, the EU failed to establish a more robust grand strategy a decade later. The 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) is a tetrad, but it did not sink in as a commonplace.

On an explanatory level, I argue that the *constellation of prior agreements* delineates the opportunities for advocates to bring a new grand strategy into being. I highlight two key aspects of this constellation. First, if a commonplace agreement on the scene has recently shifted, there is an opening for interlocutors to make an argument for a new grand strategy resonate. Second, if the interpretations of agent, purpose and interest used in this argumentation are also commonplace — no matter whether recently shifted or not — there are opportunities for interlocutors to deepen the resonance of this argument to the extent that it sinks in as a composite commonplace. To put this differently, a mosaic can only be put together if the pieces for doing so are actually available.

My inquiry into constellations of commonplaces helps explain the fate of initiatives to forge an EU grand strategy. The advocates of the diffusion strategy and the ESS made use of the openings provided by shifting commonplace understandings of the scene (post-Cold War and post-11 September, respectively). However, while the former could also ground their advocacy in long-standing commonplace agreements of agent, purpose and means, the latter were lacking these opportunities. The advocates of diffusion skillfully seized these communicative opportunities. All the proponents of the ESS could do,

however, was to build a compromise on existing disagreements. It never developed further into a commonplace; it never became a grand strategy that actors could put to use as a compass to navigate international politics.

First and foremost, this study seeks to contribute to the literature on grand strategy. My descriptive and explanatory arguments are aimed at *amending the analytical toolbox* for the study of grand strategy. Cautioning against the prevailing statism in the literature, my results strongly suggest that it is not just states that can generate grand strategies. Security communities, for instance, can do so as well. Discussing the components of grand strategy, I add to existing definitions of grand strategy that focus exclusively on interest and power. Grand strategies weave together interpretations of the security environment, identity, interest and power (the tetrad). Finally, my findings cast serious doubt on accounts of grand strategy that over-privilege material forces at the expense of ideational ones. Grand strategies are agreements. More precisely put, they are composite commonplaces. Inquiring into the making of grand strategies, therefore, necessitates inquiring into how such agreements evolve.

Yet, the findings of this study also have implications for the study of Europe's foreign policy and International Relations theory. Comparing the EU's successful attempt to produce a regional grand strategy (diffusion) with its failed attempt to generate a global one, this study adds to our insights into the *EU's actorness* in regional and global settings. Conceptualizing varying intensities and extensities of agreements, this study sharpens our understanding of how actors build *particular kinds of new agreements upon specific kinds of prior agreements* in world politics.

I develop my argument in five steps: first, I review the literature on grand strategy; second, I introduce my descriptive framework; third, I develop my explanatory framework; fourth, I identify the EU's successes (diffusion) and failures (ESS) in producing grand strategies; and, fifth, I explain these successes and failures. Finally, the conclusion summarizes my findings and elaborates on the contributions of this study.

Studying grand strategy: Towards more eclecticism

The discipline of International Relations has changed markedly in the last decade. More and more scholars are exploring exciting eclectic avenues for research that criss-cross between contending perspectives (Jackson and Nexon, 2004; Katzenstein and Sil, 2008; Lake 2013; Williams, 2007). The literature on grand strategy, however, has been remarkably sheltered from these developments in the wider field. Statism, over-reliance on the concepts of interest and power, and materialism still loom large. This section argues that this canon is out of sync with the empirical evidence generated by this literature, as well as its practices of doing research.

International Relations is no longer as fixated on the state as the actor of international relations as it once was. Even studies of international security deal with actors other than states, such as advocacy groups (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Keck and Sikkink, 1998), as well as actors composed of states, such as security communities (Adler and Barnett, 1998; Deutsch et al., 1957). The bulk of the literature on grand strategy, however, clings on to the statism assumption. Influential works on grand strategy focus on great powers, especially the US (Art, 2009; Kennedy, 1991) and its competitors, such as

the Soviet Union (Gibbs, 1987; Luttwak, 1983) and China (Goldstein, 2001; Johnston, 1995). Even research challenging much of the received wisdom of the literature on grand strategy remains state-centric, focusing on states other than great powers (Neumann and Heikka, 2005).

The problem with state-centrism is that it settles an important question by assumption rather than by empirical research. Some commentators and scholars — being as intellectually diverse as, say, Schmidt (1986), Kagan (2002) and Howorth (2009) — assert that groups of states may converge on grand strategies. They do have a point. There is no plausible reason why security communities such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or the EU should never be able to converge on grand strategies. If a security community is, *inter alia*, based on ‘a perpetual dynamic process of mutual attention, communication, perception of needs, and responsiveness in the process of decision making’ (Deutsch, 1957: 36), it cannot be excluded *a priori* that these communities may come to embrace grand strategies that guide them in their interactions with the outside world.

International Relations has moved away from the over-reliance on the concepts of interest and power. The concepts are still of central importance, but there are other key concepts as well. The concept of identity, for instance, may originate with constructivist approaches but it has been used beyond them for some time as well (Kupchan, 1998; Nau, 2002). Widely cited conceptualizations of grand strategy, however, are still all about interest and power. Kennedy holds that grand strategies ‘bring together all of the elements [of power], both military and non-military’, and ‘the preservation and enhancement of the nation’s long-term best interests’ (Kennedy, 1991: 5). Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth (2012: 11) echo this definition when they write that grand strategy is about ‘a set of ideas for deploying a nation’s resources to achieve its interests over the long run’.

This strong conceptual focus on power and interest is contradicted by empirical studies on grand strategy. Luttwak’s (1983) and Posen and Ross’s (1996) studies on grand strategy illustrate this very well. In many ways, they are very different. Luttwak writes about the grand strategy of the Soviet Union, while Posen and Ross discuss competing visions for a post-Cold War US grand strategy. Yet, the studies have in common that they start with descriptions of the security environment, follow up with the nation’s identity, move to the national interest and, finally, move to power. In other words, empirical research strongly suggests that grand strategies are not just about understandings of power and interest. They are also about interpretations of the security environment and identity.

Related to the previous point, the literature on grand strategy has been slow to open itself up to the ‘ideational turn’ in International Relations theory. Some scholars steadfastly hold on to materialism. Grand strategy, ultimately, is a function of material forces, especially the distribution of capabilities (Lobell, 2003; Miller 2010; Schweller, 2004). Other authors travel further down the road towards ideationalism. Grand strategy is about ‘relatively discrete and coherent arguments’ about a state’s ‘role in the world’ (Posen and Ross, 1996: 3), or, as cited earlier already, ‘a set of ideas’ (Brooks, Ikenberry and Wohlforth, 2012: 11). These ideas are chosen by decision-makers (Wohlforth, 1994/1995: 98) or anthropomorphized states (Posen, 1984: 13). Yet, another group of writers conceptualizes grand strategy as ‘some kind of consensus’ across different actors,

as Haas (1981: 39) puts it. Neumann and Heikka (2005) specify the nature of this agreement. They hold that grand strategies are broad agreements that come to assume a taken-for-granted quality. They sediment deeply into the cultural background (Neumann and Heikka, 2005: 11).²

In adjudicating these contentions about how much ideas matter for the study of grand strategy, it is highly instructive to take a look at the origins of this literature. From the very beginning, advocacies for grand strategy aimed at generating a broad societal agreement. Edward Earle, who institutionalized the study of grand strategy in the US, built networks of communication linking academia, decision-makers (president, State Department officials, members of Congress) and the public (Earle, 1943; Ekbladh, 2011/2012: 109). Without the persuasive argumentation happening within these networks, a set of ideas such as containment could never have become a grand strategy (Dueck, 2005).³ Containment illustrates another important point very well, too. Once adopted, a grand strategy is no longer just an argument. It assumes a taken-for-granted quality. It becomes a 'paradigm' (Kagan, 2008: 32); it comes to be deeply ingrained in culture (Nadal, 1995). This explains why although different administrations interpreted it differently (Gaddis, 2005), containment proved very enduring. From the late 1940s onwards, containment was no longer an argument: it had evolved into a taken-for-granted starting point for making arguments about foreign policy.

The points raised in this literature review make the study of grand strategy more complex. It puts the onus on the analyst to: inquire into the boundaries of a grand strategy; scrutinize how grand strategies link understandings of the international environment, identity, interest and power; and examine the making of broad and taken-for-granted agreements on these linkages. The next sections outline descriptive and explanatory frameworks that are designed to guide the student of grand strategy through the analysis of this complexity.

Rhetorical studies and grand strategy: A framework for description

This section contends that grand strategies are *composite commonplaces* that are held by interpretive communities and constituted by intersubjective understandings about what, borrowing from Burke (1969a), I refer to as scene, agent, purpose and means (tetrad).

Interpretive communities are held together by a stock of shared ideas. These enable the members of the community to communicate meaningfully with one another, make the world intelligible to themselves and reproduce community (Fish, 1980: 147–174; Johnstone, 2005: 186). Finding out the boundaries of such a community is a matter of empirical research. Given a particular issue area, the community may be congruent with nation-state borders, much more confined (e.g. to a particular administration) or extend well beyond them (e.g. a security community). All that matters is whether there is a shared stock of ideas that enables actors to interpret the world together, or not. Likewise, it is a matter of empirical research to determine whether grand strategies are part of the shared knowledge or not.⁴

Seen through a rhetorical lens, it is not surprising at all that empirical studies on grand strategy identify four rather than two components that constitute grand strategy. In his

Table 1. Intensity and extensity of agreements in a community.

		Intensity	
		Preference	Identification
Extensity	Divergence	Coordination	Idioplance
	Convergence	Compromise	Commonplace

rhetorical theory of action, Burke (1969a) identifies four abstract categories that provide orientation to actors: scene, agent, purpose and means. These are useful metaphors that can be tailored to the study of grand strategy. The *scene* tells the actors about the security environment they live in. What are the threats and opportunities? *Agent* is the definition of Self. What norms constitute the Self that is operating in this security environment, and, given these norms, who are the Self's friends and foes? *Purpose* is interest. How does the Self define its 'long-term (that is, in wartime and peacetime) best interests' (Kennedy, 1991: 5)? Finally, *means* is about power. What forms of power does the Self consider appropriate and effective in order to attain these 'best interests'? Grand strategies *link* scene, agent, purpose and means. Different grand strategies do so in different ways. But, at a minimum, they place the agent onto the scene and, given this placement, specify the agent's purpose in affecting the scene and the means for doing so. With due apologies to Burke and his pentad, this linking of scene, agent, purpose and means may be labelled a *tetrad*.⁵

In virtually any kind of interpretive community, a complex patchwork of agreements and disagreements on ideas can be found. Agreements vary in intensity and extensity.⁶ The intensity of agreements pertains to the degree to which they have sunk into the identity of the actors making up a community. Some agreements remain confined to the level of preference; actors subscribe to them because of the benefits offered, but not because they have come to constitute their identity. Other agreements, by contrast, constitute identification (Burke, 1969b; Cheney, 1983: 145) with others in the community. The extensity of agreements is about how widely an agreement is shared across a community. Agreements are rarely ever shared by everyone. Instead, there is more convergence in some cases and more divergence in others. Putting these dimensions of intensity and extensity together, Table 1 identifies four ideal-typical agreements. *Coordination* is an agreement that is confined to the level of preference within a small set of actors in a community.⁷ An *idioplance* is a taken-for-granted agreement that is shared by sub-communities within a community.⁸ A *compromise* is an agreement among all or most relevant actors in a community that reflects but does not change the actors' preferences (Bellamy, Kornprobst and Reh 2012). Finally, a *commonplace* is a widely shared and taken-for-granted agreement. Members of a community employ them as seemingly 'natural' starting points for their reasoning and argumentation (Aristotle, 1975; Cicero, 1967), which greatly helps them to engage in meaningful communication with one another.

Not every agreement on a tetrad qualifies as a grand strategy. Only a tetrad that has evolved into a commonplace does. Grand strategy is a commonplace. In terms of intensity of agreements, grand strategy does not stop at the level of preferences. Grand strategy is taken-for-granted knowledge that provides orientation in the world. Only because it is internalized can it provide orientation in international politics. In terms of extensity

of agreements, a grand strategy is much more widely shared than idioplaces. It is a community's prevailing compass for navigating world politics together.

More precisely put, grand strategies are *composite commonplaces*. Commonplaces can be located on a continuum. On the one hand, elementary commonplaces stand on their own within the repertoire of commonplaces that actors have available to them. Linkages to other commonplaces do not feature in them. This is how most scholars interested in rhetoric conceptualize commonplaces (Crawford, 2002: 291–342). On the other hand, composite commonplaces do not stand on their own. They are composed of several commonplaces — elementary or composite — and the taken-for-granted linkages among them. There are many shades in between these two poles. What matters for this discussion is that grand strategies are composite commonplaces *par excellence*. Grand strategies are not commonplaces that stand on their own at all. Their key characteristic is that they ‘weave’ seemingly disparate issues ‘into a coherent framework’ (Layne, 1998: 8).

Rhetorical studies and grand strategy: A framework for explanation

How does a composite commonplace such as a grand strategy come to be shared across a community? My contention may be summarized as follows: the more extensive and intensive are agreements on a recently shifted scene, as well as on agent, purpose and means, the more conducive is the social context to attempts by interlocutors to forge a new grand strategy.⁹

This contention is based on two crucial insights provided by rhetorical studies. First, few issues have received more attention in rhetorical studies than *the right moment* in time to win over others. This includes authors who stress the skills and talents of the interlocutor. Borrowing from Greek philosophy, De Certeau (1984: 82) refers to the right point in time as ‘*kairos*’. It also includes writers who put more emphasis on structural forces. The social movement literature conceptualizes the right point in time as an opportunity structure (Joachim, 2003; Kitschelt, 1986). Second, *new agreements are built upon already-existing agreements*. Classical rhetoric is adamant that orators have to employ commonplaces — that is, intensive and extensive agreements — to bring about new agreements (Aristotle, 1976; Cicero, 1967). Contemporary social theory sometimes uses the term *bricolage* for capturing this phenomenon. Actors draw from a repertoire of already-established ideas and combine them in order to make an audience converge around a new agreement (Campbell, 2004: 69; Levi-Strauss, 1966: 13–33).

These two insights are very helpful in explaining how new grand strategies come into being. Two features of the constellation of *kairos* and existing agreements stand out. First, a *recently shifted commonplace agreement on the scene* provides an opening for interlocutors to drive it home to an audience that even the most fundamental and taken-for-granted ideas about international politics have to be revisited.¹⁰ A shifting scene causes disorientation, making other actors listen to interlocutors who suggest different compasses for navigating the world. If the interlocutors make this shifted commonplace feature prominently in their advocacy, they can benefit from the extraordinary times when understandings of the world are more in flux than usual.¹¹

Second, *prior commonplace agreements on agency, purpose and means* further facilitate the institutionalization of a new grand strategy. The extensity of these agreements enables the interlocutors to move ‘with rather than against the flow’, as Nye (2006) puts it aptly in his discussion of communication and contextual intelligence. Their intensity ensures that they are the kind of building blocks required for establishing a new composite commonplace. It is not that compromises on scene, agent, purpose and means make forging a new agreement out of them impossible. But it is the kind of social context that merely supports the establishment of a compromise. Grand strategies, however, are not just compromises. They are commonplaces. Taken-for-grantedness is a defining feature of them. To put this more succinctly, a composite commonplace can only be forged out of already-existing commonplaces (no matter whether these are elementary commonplaces or composite ones themselves).

None of this is to suggest that the intensity and extensity of agreements on the four components are carved into stone. But major social transformation mechanisms are required for them to change significantly. The advocates of a new grand strategy might be involved in this. But changing the components around is much too grand a task for advocates of a grand strategy to leave a major impact just by themselves. Singing a grand strategy into being — we are back at Nye — has much to do with going with the flow.

The following descriptive analysis asks a simple question: does the EU have a grand strategy or not? Putting documents on the EU’s external relations generated by the European Council and the European Commission under scrutiny, I seek to determine whether there is an extensive and intensive agreement on a tetrad in the EU. I infer extensity from occurrences of a weaving together of scene, agent, purpose and means in these documents. I infer intensity from their routine recurrences as anchors for new decisions, guidelines and justifications on external relations in these documents. If I do not find recurrences on the EU level, I investigate further on the member-state level, examining whether there are any such recurrences in domestic documents on security strategy. As far as these domestic documents are concerned, my analysis is confined to France, Germany and the UK. These three nations are often considered the ‘big three’. Without them, coherent foreign policymaking and the making of coherent ideas for foreign policymaking are impossible. The analysis spans from 1989, when the end of the Cold War made European elites and even publics rethink their basic understandings of security, to today’s post-Lisbon EU.

Does the EU have a grand strategy?

The ESS is not a grand strategy, although it was designed as such. It never completed the evolution from compromise to commonplace. Yet, the EU — this is all too often overlooked — has a grand strategy. A decade before member states compromised on the ESS, the diffusion strategy evolved from a compromise into a commonplace.

Diffusion strategy

The 1993 European Council in Copenhagen forged an extensive agreement on how to link representations of scene, agent, purpose and means into a closely interwoven tetrad.

The interpretation of the scene focuses on post-Cold War Europe. The end of the Cold War has given rise to an era of fundamental change and uncertainty on the continent. Much of Europe's fate depends upon the success or failure of efforts of political and economic reform in the former Warsaw Pact states (European Council, 1993b: 12). The delineation of the agent is primarily constituted by understandings of geography and norms. As far as the former is concerned, Europe is conceptualized in terms of concentric circles. Roughly speaking, current EU members and soon-to-be members (Austria, Finland, Sweden) form the core, Central European states form the first peripheral circle, the Western Balkans form the second one, and the neighbours further to the east (including Russia and Turkey), as well as the Maghreb states, form the third one (European Council, 1993b: 16–19). As far as the latter is concerned, the EU clarifies that it understands itself primarily as an inclusive *Wertegemeinschaft* (community of values). Except for the last circle, the peripheries are invited to join the EU if they abide by the EU's normative catalogue. This catalogue is summarized in the often-cited Copenhagen criteria for accession, above all, democracy, the rule of law, human rights, minority group rights and market economics.

The purpose of the tetrad is not simply to invite new members, but to actively diffuse the norms constituting the EU *Wertegemeinschaft* into the neighbourhood. The EU sets itself the goal to 'EU-ize' the periphery: the closer it is to the core, the more this ought to happen. The EU's principal means for doing so is active socialization. Brussels embraces a particular approach to socialization that revolves around economic incentives and teaching. In EU jargon, the EU builds 'structured relationships'. Vehicles such as 'multilateral dialogue', 'concertation on matters of common interest' and 'concertation on a broad range of topics and in several fora' aim at socializing the political elites of candidate states into established EU practices of doing things (European Council, 1993b: 14–15).

At Copenhagen, the tetrad was still a compromise. Yet, it soon evolved into a commonplace. It became the seemingly self-evident anchor for making sense of the EU's relations with its neighbourhood. The 1994 European Council at Corfu already took the diffusion tetrad for granted. It built further on it, for example, by stressing the territorial status quo norm (European Council, 1994a: II B) and elaborating on the norms to be diffused to the peripheries further removed from the core (European Council, 1994a: II I).¹² The 1994 European Council at Essen went into further detail with regard to applicant countries, formulating the so-called 'pre-accession strategy' (European Council, 1994b: Annex IV; Sedelmeier, 2005: 415), and provided more details on Euro–Mediterranean relations (European Council, 1994b: 7–8, 25–26). This pattern of employing the diffusion tetrad as a foundation for reasoning on neighbourhood relations and building on it further has stayed firmly in place (e.g. EU Commission, 2011; European Council, 2002). It indicates that the agreement on the tetrad is not just extensive; it is also intensive. Thus, the diffusion strategy is a fully fledged grand strategy.

The ESS

The 2003 ESS — revisited in the European Council's (2008) 'Report on the implementation of the European Security Strategy' — is an attempt to move beyond the diffusion strategy and towards firmly establishing the EU as an actor in world politics.

The ESS is based on an extensive agreement on a tetrad. It depicts a large and almost chaotic scene. The end of the Cold War has given way to complex globalization processes that do not stop at EU borders. Some globalization flows are to be welcomed, such as ‘flows of trade and investment, the development of technology and the spread of democracy’ (European Council, 2003: 3). Others, however, are threatening, not only to the world at large, but also to the EU and its neighbourhood. These include terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and organized crime, as well as state failure and regional conflicts (European Council, 2003: 4–5; 2008: 3–6). The EU ought to be an agent who channels the manifold developments on the scene into warranted directions. In doing so, the EU ought to stand for ‘effective multilateralism’ and the rule of law, especially the ‘fundamental principles of the UN Charter and [OSCE] principles and commitments’ (European Council, 2008: 2). These include the responsibility to protect ‘populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity’ (European Council, 2008: 2). The EU positively identifies with those it perceives to share these norms as friends, most notably, with the US and NATO (European Council, 2008: 2), and it demarcates itself from those who do not, such as Al Qaida (European Council, 2003: 3) and also Iran (European Council, 2008).

The purpose of EU agency ought to be to ‘defend its security and ... promote its values’ (European Council, 2003: 6) on the turbulent global scene into which it has been placed. Somewhat reminiscent of the diffusion strategy and in line with the goal of promoting values, the ESS writes about means of active socialization through dialogue (European Council, 2003: 11) and economic incentives (European Council, 2003: 12). The ESS also includes coercive means. There are capacities for economic and even military sanctions (European Council, 2003: 12). Military force, as a matter of last resort, is very much part of the ESS.

The agreement on this tetrad, however, did not intensify. It never evolved beyond a compromise. It did not become a grand strategy.¹³ Shortly after the ESS was published, Biscop (2004: 42) had high hopes: ‘[A]t all times policy-makers must decide and act with the objectives and the approach of the Strategy in mind.’ This did not materialize. As a high-ranking official of the European External Action Service (EEAS) puts it, ‘the ESS is certainly not a bible that we use in our everyday work’.¹⁴ The ESS is virtually absent from EU foreign policy debates. The European Council’s (2008) report frankly acknowledges these problems. It writes about the nascent character of the ESS and calls for ‘becoming more strategic in our thinking’ (European Council, 2008: 2) in order to get closer to the ‘vision’ of how the EU could contribute to a safer world (European Council, 2008: 12). In December 2013, the ‘Conclusions’ of the European Council dedicate 22 paragraphs to international security and strategy but do not mention the ESS at all (European Council, 2013: 1–10).

The ESS does not loom very large in the minds of decision-makers located on the member-state level either. Documents on national security speak volumes about this neglect. The German security strategy is quite positive about the ESS (Bundesministerium für Verteidigung, 2006: 10–17, 42–46). London and Paris, however, sidestep the ESS. In the UK, neither the Labour-drafted national security strategy (Cabinet Office, 2008) nor the Tory-drafted one (Cabinet Office, 2010) even mention the ESS. The 2008 French national security strategy mentions the ESS late in the document and only to deplore that

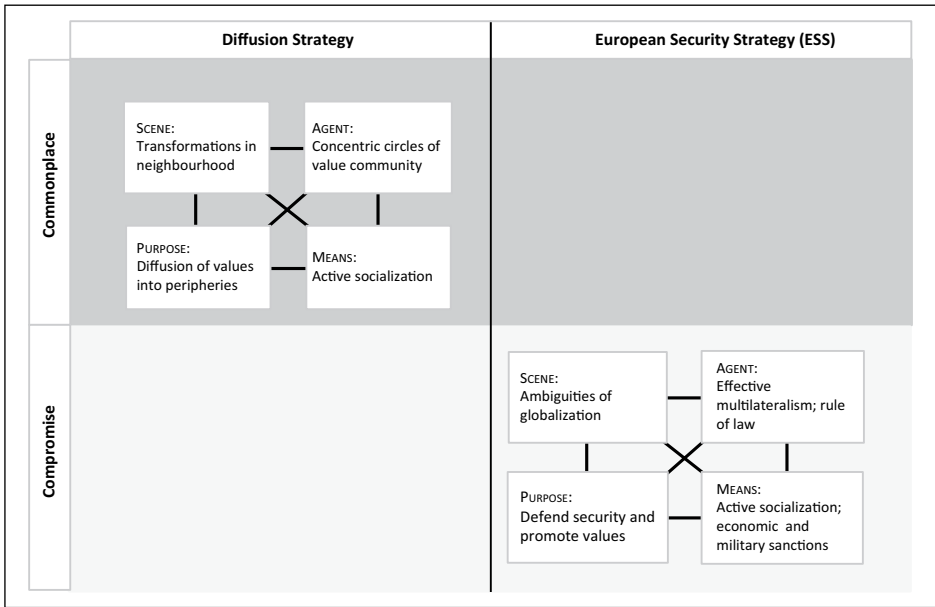


Figure 1. Different intensities of agreement on diffusion and the ESS.

the strategy has not made much of a difference (Commission du livre blanc, 2008: 84). The 2013 strategy echoes this practice, putting even more emphasis on the need to overcome the EU’s reluctance to assume military responsibilities in international politics (Ministère de la Défense, 2013: 61–68).

Comparison: Diffusion as a commonplace versus the ESS as a compromise

Figure 1 summarises the descriptive finding. Diffusion and the ESS are extensive agreements on tetrads. The former: locates the EU in the post-1989 transformative processes on the continent (scene); identifies the EU as a community of values, with a core and peripheries (agent); expresses its resolve to diffuse its values into these peripheries, especially those located close to the core (purpose); and declares to do so by actively socializing the periphery through a mixture of incentives and teaching (means). The ESS: places the EU into an ambiguous globalizing environment full of opportunities but also threats (scene); embraces multilateralism and the rule of law in international relations (agent); aims at defending its security and promoting its values (purpose); and lists an array of instruments, ranging from socialization to economic and military sanctions (means).

However, Figure 1 also depicts the crucial difference between diffusion and the ESS. The former is an extensive and intensive agreement. Not only is it a widely shared tetrad; it is also a tetrad that has acquired a taken-for-granted quality. It is a grand strategy. The

ESS, by contrast, is merely an extensive agreement on a tetrad but not an intensive one. It never completed the evolution from compromise to commonplace. The ESS, therefore, is not a grand strategy.

What explains this crucial difference? Employing a structured, focused comparison (George and Bennet, 2005: 67–72), the following section probes the explanatory theoretical framework. It puts under scrutiny the evolution of the extensity and intensity of agreements on scene, agent, purpose and means in the EU (and its predecessors) prior to the diffusion and ESS advocacies, and how these prior agreements contributed to the successes and failures of these advocacies. Since the focus is on agreements and disagreements on scene, agent, purpose and means *before* advocates tried to link them together in a tetrad, my analysis starts with the 1951 Treaty of Paris. It extends to 1993 (components of diffusion) and 2003 (components of the ESS), respectively.¹⁵

I look for occurrences (extensity) and recurrences (intensity) of agreements on scene, agent, purpose and means. If I do not find recurrences on the European level, my analysis moves again to the member-state level (France, Germany, UK). Analysing milestone documents of the European integration process (EU level), as well as key parliamentary debates and speeches by decision-makers on foreign policy (member-state level), my empirical scrutiny goes much beyond the documents on security strategies that I analysed in the descriptive part. Statements on the components of what advocates would later link together in a tetrad (explanation) are simply much more dispersed than those on a tetrad (description).¹⁶

How diffusion became a grand strategy but the ESS did not

Key advocates of diffusion, such as Leon Brittan and Hans van den Broek from the Directorate-General External Relations, seized the opportunity provided by a recently shifted commonplace agreement on the scene. They forged a compromise on diffusion. The main advocates of the ESS made the most out of a recently shifted agreement on the scene as well. Javier Solana, the EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, and Robert Cooper, his key advisor, persuaded member states to compromise on the ESS. This is, however, where the parallels end. It was possible for diffusion to evolve further into a composite commonplace because the representations of agent, purpose and means selected by the advocates had already been commonplaces prior to the advocacy for a long time. The advocates of the ESS, by contrast, had to work with compromises and idioplaces to compose their tetrad. Building a new composite commonplace upon highly contested representations of agent, purpose and means proved to be impossible.

Diffusion: Building a new composite commonplace upon prior commonplaces

Underpinned by the end of the Cold War, there was an extensive and intensive agreement on a shifting scene in the late 1980s and early 1990s across member states and EU (European Community) institutions. Making sense of the new scene focused on Europe, Leon Brittain (1991) cautioned that the end of the Cold War meant losing ‘the old

certainties and simplifying logic of the East/West divide' and called for the EU to play an active role in the transformation processes in Central and Eastern European states in order to safeguard stability and prosperity in Europe. Parliamentary debates in France, Germany and the UK echoed this position, at times, almost verbatim (Deschaux-Beaume, 1990; Genscher, 1990; Ashdown, 1990). This intensive and extensive agreement on the shifting scene is important. It provided an opening for the advocates of the diffusion strategy.

The representation of the agent selected by the diffusion advocacy was anything but a novel conception. There had been an extensive and intensive agreement on it for decades. Ever since the 1957 Rome Treaty, European leaders have come to take for granted that there is a range of commonplace norms that are constitutive of the identity of the European polity.¹⁷ The 1988 Rhodes Declaration summarizes the key norms: freedom, democracy, pluralism and the rule of law (European Council, 1988: Annex IV). A year later, the conclusions of the Strasbourg European Council read like a blueprint of the Copenhagen criteria (European Council, 1989). The geographical reasoning in terms of concentric circles takes shape from 1989 to 1992. The Strasbourg European Council postulates a closer proximity to Central and Eastern European states, but also to North Africa (European Council, 1989: 13–14). The 1992 European Council in Edinburgh underlines this shared reasoning by outlining the prospect of EU accession for Central and Eastern European states (Council of the European Union, 1992a; Sedelmeier, 2005: 412).

Although the purpose used by advocates to compose the diffusion strategy is closely tied in with the end of the Cold War, its contours originate with the very beginnings of the European unification process. The 1951 Treaty of Paris, establishing the European Coal and Steel Community, clearly identifies the purpose of this unification process in the Preamble: to put an end to 'historic rivalries' and build instead a 'broad and independent community among peoples long divided by bloody conflicts'. All major treaties reiterate the rationale to establish peace through cooperation and integration. '[C]alling upon the other peoples of Europe who share their ideal to join in their efforts', the Rome Treaty clarifies that the EU is determined to make its model for securing peace expand beyond the original six members.¹⁸ Trying to 'EU-ize', therefore, was hardly something that came about suddenly when the Berlin Wall fell. It amounts to the EU's 'historic mission' (Preston, 1997: 3). The 1988 European Council in Rhodes tailors this commonplace to the post-Cold War era when it states that the EU hopes to 'overcome the division of our continent and to promote the Western values and principles which Member States have in common' (European Council, 1988: Annex IV). Successive European Councils used similar formulations (European Council, 1989: 14; 1992: 19).

The final component of the tetrad is the means. Here, too, the proponents of diffusion had the opportunity to work with a prior commonplace agreement. Within the EU, it is a commonplace that subtle means of influencing can be rather effective. From the early years of the European Political Cooperation (EPC) onwards, this commonplace has often been invoked. The 1973 Declaration on European Identity (see Hill and Smith, 2000: 94) sets the tone. EC foreign ministers demarcate themselves from great-power politics by clarifying that EU foreign policy 'is not directed against anyone, nor is it inspired by a desire for power'. Instead, there is talk about the 'essential importance' of a 'policy of association' (quoted in Hill and Smith, 2000: 95) in the neighbourhood, the need to

'reinforce ... long-standing links' with countries in the neighbourhood more broadly defined (such as North Africa) and the resolve to 'intensify' relations and 'promote exchanges' (quoted in Hill and Smith, 2000: 96) with countries further abroad (such as China). What the Tindemans Report (quoted in Hill and Smith, 2000: 101) put rather boldly with the rhetorical question of '[w]hy should we cease to spread our ideas abroad when we have always done so?', the Stuttgart Declaration circumscribes with promoting democracy and human rights in the neighbourhood and further abroad. By the time of the Single European Act, this circumscription had become a standard formulation in EU foreign policy documents (see Hill and Smith, 2000: 139).¹⁹

The ESS: Building a compromise upon a prior commonplace, compromises and idioplaces

The constellation of prior agreements on agent, purpose and means that the advocates of the ESS had to work with, by contrast, was very different. They, too, seized an opening provided by a recently shifted commonplace agreement on the scene. The remaining components they selected for the more ambitious ESS, however, were anything but commonplaces. They tried to craft a grand strategy out of compromises and idioplaces on representations of agent, purpose and means. Yet, these foundations turned out to be not sufficiently sturdy to support a new grand strategy. They merely supported the making of a compromise on the tetrad but not a commonplace.

By 2003, a commonplace agreement on a recently shifted scene had evolved that was heavily informed by the Balkan Wars and the terrorist attacks on the US. Close to home, the violent breakdown of Yugoslavia, especially Srebrenica, and the EU's ineptitude to manage this crisis pushed Europeans to add shocking images to the perils of the post-Cold War scene (Cook, 1994; Duras, 1992; European Council, 1992, 1993a; Juppé, 1995; Kinkel, 1995; Scharping, 1995; Spink, 1994). Connecting globe and home, Europeans added many details about new security threats to the scene, including climate change, international crime and distributional injustices (Council of the European Union, 1995; Kinkel, 1994b; Védrine, 2001). Furthermore, the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 left their mark on the scene. There was intensive and extensive agreement that international terrorism posed a major security threat and that the EU had to find a European response to deal with this threat (Balladur, 2001; Blair, 2005; Brown, 2008; Council of the European Union, 2003a: 16; 2003b; Jospin, 2001; Westerwelle, 2001).²⁰

This is, however, where the list of commonplace components of the ESS tetrad ends. The representation of the agent used in the ESS is a well-sounding compromise formulation. This self-definition in terms of multilateralism and international law is perhaps most clearly formulated for the first time by the 1990 European Council in Rome (European Council, 1990: 3). There are, however, a number of idioplaces that this compromise seeks to hide. Three of these are particularly noteworthy. First, member states do not fully agree on what multilateralism actually means. There is a difference, for instance, between Germany's more principled stance on multilateralism and the UK's more pragmatic one. Likened to Wilhelmitic and even Hitlerite policies, unilateralism is considered a diplomatic no-go area in Germany (Guttenberg, 2003; Müller, 1990; Schäuble, 1995).

The British argument for multilateralism, by contrast, is a pragmatic one. Multilateralism is to be made use of to 'best pursue our interests' (Cabinet Office, 2010: 10).

Second, competing understandings of multilateralism are connected to how member states rank their status in world affairs. Germany still tends towards avoiding this issue, escaping into phrases on the need to strengthen the European agent instead (Bauer et al., 2002). France and the UK, by contrast, have the self-confidence to define themselves as great powers. They do so differently. France emphasizes 'l'exception française' (French exceptionalism) and 'vocation à l'universel' (universal vocation) but defines this vocation, *inter alia*, as the task to strengthen the EU as a foreign policy actor (Juppé, 2001). The UK is much more concerned about its sovereignty. Getting too close to the EU is often considered a threat rather than an opportunity, especially among the Tories (Howard, 1998; Jenkin, 2003; Maples, 1999).

Third, there is the issue of special relations. In contrast to the ESS, the Rome European Council mentioned earlier was frank enough to qualify that 'special relations of individual Member States' have to be taken into consideration (European Council, 1990: 3). Indeed, these special relations are of great importance, complicating the identity configurations in the EU. Take, for instance, the relationship to the US. The UK–US special relationship is not unquestioned in the UK, but it is still a key feature of the dominant identity narrative (George, 1990; Key, 2002). While France endorses a friendship with the US (Jospin, 2001; Poniowski, 2003), there is also a considerable amount of scepticism concerning Washington and a commitment to keep its preponderance in check (Caro, 1990; Colin, 1995; Mamère, 2003). Germany oscillates between the two, with the political Left closer to the French position (Beer, 1990; Gysi, 1999) and liberals and conservatives to the British one (Glos, 1994; Kinkel, 1994a; Kohl, 1993).

The agreement on the purpose selected by the proponents of the ESS also lacked the intensity and extensity of the one used for the diffusion strategy. Formulations about the EU's resolve to defend its security and promote its values on a turbulent global scene are found frequently in EU documents.²¹ National politicians widely agree with this postulate (Bosson, 1992; Chidgey, 1995; Dumas, 1991; Irmer, 1991; Kohl, 1991; Livingstone, 1999). But the postulate is nothing but a lowest common denominator compromise that glosses over the many diverging understandings of purpose across member states. German decision-makers, being rather shy in explicitly formulating its national interests (especially in the field of international security), sometimes echo the ESS's formulation of working towards a 'fairer, safer and more united world' (Fischer, 1998; Schröder, 2003). French statements of national interest, by contrast, are broader and more unequivocal. They range from ESS-like statements about protecting 'human rights, finding peace and maintaining security, and further European unification' (Duras, 1992) to the traditional great-power interest of preserving one's standing among nations (De Villepin, 2002). Any of these many nuances of the French national interest are frequently equated with the European interest (Ministère de la Défense, 2013: 65). British debates about the national interest differ from German and French ones in a very important aspect. There may be occasional grand debates about how the national interest ought to be defined, for example, including (Cook, 1998; Savidge, 1999) or excluding humanitarian concerns (Sillars, 1991; Viggers, 1999). But as lively as such debates may be, these are debates

about the national interest. There is very little debate — or even mention — of a European interest.

Idioplaces and compromises also constitute the understanding of means used in the ESS. The unfolding of the Yugoslav tragedy prompted a rethinking of the means to be employed by the EU. But pleas such as Jacques Santer's to 'convert mass into force' (Santer, 1996) — that is, to make use of the combined coercive capabilities at the disposal of the EU if need be — did little to break with the EU's tradition of normative power. The authors of the ESS used an uneasy compromise meant to gloss over national divergences that could be characterized as 'civilian power plus'. Among the big three, Germany continues to be reluctant to add the 'plus'. In Berlin, the strong emphasis on the civilian aspect persists (Fischer, 1999; Kinkel, 1994b; Merkel, 2003; Schröder, 2003; Westerwelle, 2011). For France and the UK, by contrast, it is self-evident to muster military and civilian means to pursue interests. Their military capabilities include nuclear arsenals, which continue to be understood as a necessary deterrent for safeguarding national security (Chèvenement, 1990; Chirac, 2006; Hamilton, 1994; Hoon, 2003; Hurd, 1990; Joxe, 1992).²²

These different stances are underpinned by different understandings of the appropriateness of the use of force. Differences between Germany and the UK are especially pronounced. In Germany, even those foreign ministers who have pushed Germany towards endorsing military interventions as a matter of last resort demand the persistence of a 'culture of self-restraint' (Kinkel, 1994b) and caution that intervention is sometimes necessary but this makes waging war no less 'disgusting' (Fischer, 2001). These demarcations from the use of force continue to be demarcations from Germany's militarist, fascist and genocidal past. In the UK, rallying the nation around the flag to wage war is not an easy thing to do either, but it is easier. Here, too, historical reasons play their role. A key term in British discourse on resorting to war is 'appeasement'. Sometimes, the analogy with Munich 1938 is made more explicitly and sometimes more implicitly. In any case, framing a decision-making situation in terms of appeasement (Blair, 1999, 2003) makes for a strong argument for war.

Comparison: Prior agreements matter

The processes through which diffusion became a grand strategy but the ESS did not share something in common. The advocates of diffusion and the ESS skilfully seized the openings provided by shifting commonplace understandings of the scene, and forged a compromise on a new tetrad. This is, however, where the similarities end. The advocates of diffusion had the opportunity to anchor their argumentation for a new grand strategy not only in a commonplace understanding of a shifting scene, but also in long-established commonplace understandings of agency, purpose and means. The intersubjective building blocks for the grand strategy were in place. The advocates only had to link them together. They built a new composite commonplace upon already-existing commonplaces.

The ESS, by contrast, was lacking this foundation. The taken-for-granted interpretations of agent, purpose and means for a more robust global strategy differ widely across EU member states. The advocates, therefore, had to resort to idioplaces and compromises

as building blocks for the ESS. Yet, idioplaces and compromises are insufficient for building a new composite commonplace. A high-ranking official of the European Commission refers to the ESS as a ‘soup of all sorts of ingredients’.²³ This metaphor may be somewhat harsh, but it circumscribes the problem very well. There are too many competing understandings of agent, purpose and means built into the ESS for it to evolve into a composite commonplace.

Conclusion

The EU is often criticized for not having a grand strategy (Fouchet, 1999; Howorth, 2009). Conceptualizing grand strategy as a commonplace composed of scene, agent, purpose and means (tetrad), this study suggested a more nuanced picture. The EU does not have a global grand strategy. The ESS never became a commonplace. The EU, however, has a subtle regional grand strategy. The diffusion strategy is a widely taken-for-granted tetrad for making sense of the EU’s regional affairs. I contended that the different constellations of prior agreements on the components of diffusion and the ESS explain why the former became a grand strategy but the latter did not. While the advocates of diffusion had the opportunity to weave together already-existing commonplace interpretations of scene, agent, purpose and means, the advocates of the ESS had to resort to compromises and idioplaces as building blocks for their argumentation for a new grand strategy.

This study sought to make a threefold contribution to the study of grand strategy. First, the findings make us rethink the prevailing statism in the literature. The EU’s diffusion strategy shows very clearly that a grand strategy is nothing that is necessarily confined to a state. Second, this study added to our understanding of the components of grand strategies. Grand strategies are best understood as tetrads and not just dyads. They weave together understandings of scene, agent, purpose and means as opposed to merely purpose (interest) and means (power). Third, the results of this study support recent attempts in the literature to move away from the material end of the ontological spectrum and conceptualize grand strategy as agreement. I built on this research by conceptualizing this agreement as a composite commonplace. Explaining the making of grand strategy presupposes explaining the making of a composite commonplace.

My argument also has implications for the study of EU foreign policy and International Relations theory. This study *adds to existing insights on EU actorness* (Bretherton and Vogler, 2006; Jupille and Caporaso 1998). The existence of a grand strategy is not the *sine qua non* of asserting actorness. The EU, for instance, has deployed about 30 field missions in Africa, Europe and elsewhere. There is no global grand strategy underpinning these deployments. Yet, the existence of a grand strategy does facilitate asserting actorness. Nowhere has the EU asserted more actorness than in its neighbourhood, and it has done so through subtle means of influencing, oftentimes culminating in enlargement. When it comes to managing major international crises, by contrast, the EU still frequently struggles to assert itself or even speak with one voice. The existence of a subtle grand strategy aimed at transforming the neighbourhood and the lack of a more robust global grand strategy go a long way in explaining this pronounced difference.

As far as International Relations theory is concerned, this study provides more nuances than existing research on how actors *build new agreements upon already-existing ones*. A number of studies address this phenomenon. Yet, they conceptualize agreements as either mere reflections of preferences held by individuals (Goldstein et al., 2000; Keohane and Nye, 1977; Moravcsik, 1998) or as identity-constituting and much more widely shared (Crawford, 2002; Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Risse, 2000). This study shows that criss-crossing between these ‘thinner’ and ‘thicker’ conceptualizations provides an important added value. Explaining the making of new agreements requires inquiring into the varying intensities and extensivities of prior agreements.

A lot of research remains to be done. The EU remains an important case for the study of grand strategy. Neither the successes of generating the diffusion strategy nor the failures of producing a more far-reaching global strategy are carved into stone. The increase of Euroscepticism in EU member states, for instance, has the potential to undermine the diffusion strategy. The 2014 Russo-Ukrainian crisis may give rise to a shifting commonplace understanding of the scene within the EU, and, thus, provide an opening for the advocacy of a more robust European global strategy.²⁴ Without any doubt, more empirical research on grand strategy beyond the context of the EU is warranted, too, in order to reach firmer conclusions on the generalizability of my findings. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), for example, would be a case well worth studying. It developed a resolve to manage regional crises much earlier than the EU did. Does this resolve have something to do with a regional grand strategy?

More generally speaking, much more research is warranted on how different kinds of prior agreements give rise to different kinds of new agreements. This phenomenon is simply too ubiquitous in today’s plethora of governance mechanisms on the domestic, regional and global levels for us to neglect studying it.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Marco Cesa, Stacie Goddard, Ron Krebs, John Mearsheimer, Jennifer Mitzen, Christine Reh, Jack Snyder, Srđan Vucetic, William Wohlforth, three anonymous referees and the editors of *EJIR* for their very helpful comments.

Funding

This research was partly funded by the British Academy and the John Fell Fund of Oxford University Press.

Notes

1. This otherwise very diverse cluster of research shares a focus on how actors employ rhetorical means to make up their minds and win over others. Seminal research ranges from Aristotle (1975), the Sophists (Sprague, 1972) and Cicero (1976), to Burke (1969b), Habermas (1995a, 1995b) and De Certeau (1984), to name but a few. In International Relations, research on Habermasian argumentation (Müller, 1994; Risse, 2000), argumentation more broadly (Crawford, 2002), advocacy networks (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Keck and Sikkink, 1998), rhetorical means of persuasion (Chowdhury and Krebs, 2009; Goddard, 2009), shaming (Schimmelfennig, 2000) and representative force (Mattern, 2001), for example, are part of this cluster.

2. Kupchan (1994: 60) hints at this taken-for-grantedness, too, when he conceptualizes grand strategies as 'strategic images'.
3. There is also compelling empirical evidence that these networks have been of great importance for producing post-Cold War grand strategies under the Clinton and Obama administrations (Van Apeldoorn and De Graaff, 2012).
4. They need not be. Interpretive communities find it easier to act on the stage of international security if they share a grand strategy. But just because they do not share a grand strategy does not mean that they are not interpretive communities.
5. I leave aside Burke's concept of acts, which completes his theory of action (pentad). Scene, agent, purpose and means are located on a more abstract level and act on a more concrete one. Since grand strategy is about the more abstract level (Kennedy, 1991: 2), it makes more sense to speak of a tetrad of grand strategy than a pentad.
6. So do disagreements. Yet, I focus on agreements in order to get at the nature of grand strategy. Note that agreements tend to be multivocal (Ansell, 1997), that is, they are convergences of interpretations.
7. I take this term from Rapoport (1960), who conceptualizes coordination as coalition-building by two or more players to outwit other players in a game.
8. I chose this terminology because the Greek 'idio' ('one's own') clearly demarcates the idiom from the commonplace.
9. I have developed a more dynamic model that takes account of the makings and unmakings of these prior agreements, too. Yet, for the purposes of this article, I foreground the question of how prior agreements affect the possibility of new agreements.
10. Oftentimes, such a reinterpretation effort is underpinned by material changes.
11. Studying grand strategy from a more empirical angle, Trachtenberg (1999: 35) makes a similar point.
12. It was prompted to do so by developments in the Ukraine. Yet, the strategic thinking in terms of concentric circles stayed in place. There is more resolve to diffuse into the second than into the third circle.
13. It remains stuck 'in its infancy', as Rogers (2009: 831) puts it.
14. High-ranking EEAS official, interviewed in Vienna, 10 February 2014.
15. Additionally, I sketch the directions in which the components have evolved thereafter in order to get a more complete picture of their evolution. These directions may strengthen or weaken agreement on a tetrad over time, depending on whether they make the components more in line with the tetrad or not.
16. What follows is a concise summary of my findings. These are taken from my book project on EU crisis management, which examines these ideational constellations in more depth.
17. Article 237 of the Rome Treaty. See also Articles 0 and F of the Maastricht Treaty.
18. Preamble, Treaty of Rome.
19. Thus, what the literature refers to as 'civilian power' (Duchêne, 1972), 'normative power' (Manners, 2002) or 'civilizing power' (Mitzen, 2006) is nothing that the protagonists of the diffusion strategy had to invent. It was already a commonplace, ready to be used for their advocacy.
20. To be sure, not all elaborations added commonplace understandings to the scene; there are several persistent idioplaces as well. Most notably, British and French discourses on the scene include references to traditional power politics as well (Fillon, 1992; George, 1990; Voisin, 1992). In Berlin and Brussels, such references are rarely found. But, all in all, the agreements on how to elaborate on the shifting scene were extensive and intensive.
21. See, for instance, Title 1, Article B, Treaty on European Union, and Treaty of Amsterdam, Part One, Article 3.

22. See also Weiss (2012) for all three states, as well as Berenskoetter and Giegerich (2010) for Germany.
23. High-ranking official of the European Commission, interviewed in Brussels, 2 June 2008. In scholarly language, the ESS is an example of what Moravcsik and Nicolaïdis (1998: 26) refer to as a 'lowest common denominator compromise'.
24. In 2012, Italy, Poland, Spain and Sweden started this advocacy, which has already had some impact. The 2013 Brussels European Council dealt extensively with means; it also acknowledged the shifting scene (European Council, 2013). But the question remains as to whether the divergences across member states, especially disagreements on agent, purpose and means, allow for a more robust global grand strategy or merely another compromise document.

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