Fighting Terror in Mali: the Power of Narratives, Myths, and Culture on European Foreign Policy

*A discourse analysis of European narratives on security and defence in Mali from 2011 until 2021*

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Abstract

After nine years of military intervention, advisory missions, and building state capacity in Mali, Europeans are withdrawing from the country. The prudent observer will not be fooled by claims of success of the European strategy in the Sahel. It is a tragic fact that the Malian political system has been captured by a brutal junta that is waging war against its own population with the help of reckless Russian mercenaries. Europeans believed that the conflict in Mali was about fighting terrorism, and that counterterrorism operations would suffice to provide time for the Malian state to become strong enough to extend its reach to the most remote areas of the Sahel. Europeans were warned that the conflict was more complex, yet they persisted and they failed. What has prevented them from learning from their own experience on the ground and the analysis of experts? This paper builds on the ‘discursive turn’ in the study of strategic culture to describe and test a mechanism that allows to understand strategic culture as the result of a competition between epistemic communities. The reliance on the counterterrorism analysis is explained by the pervasiveness of narratives on the ‘war on terror’ that have been strategically deployed to resonate with existing political myths of European exceptionalism. These narratives successfully influenced the dominant discourse on grand strategy, and consequently, of a European strategic culture itself. But the dominant discourse changed, which highlights the fluid nature of strategic culture, and offers the promise of an innovative research agenda.

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Keywords: Strategic culture, strategic narratives, political myths, grand strategy, counterterrorism, foreign policy, Mali, Sahel, European Union, state security, human security.
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1. Introduction

1.1. The failure of counterterrorism in Mali

On Wednesday 16 February 2022, the main actors involved in the military intervention in Mali gathered at the French presidential palace, the Élysée, and agreed that the conditions for the pursuit of military operations were not met anymore (Berthemet, 2022). The following day, European member states involved in the counterterrorism operations announced the withdrawal of their troops from Mali, while reaffirming the continuation of the fight against jihadists in the wider Sahelian region and the Gulf of Guinea (Élysée, 2022). These developments appeared as the natural conclusion of a year of increasing tensions between Mali on one side, and France and the European Union on the other. Although the frustration can be traced back to the presidency of Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, it took an irreversible turn when he was ousted from power in August 2020 and when the putschists repeated in May 2021 (Lasserre, 2021). These events are especially evocative of the soured turn of events of a nearly decade-old European military intervention in Mali.

France has in fact been militarily engaged in Mali since January 2013, when former President François Hollande launched operation Serval to counter the advance of a coalition of jihadist groups towards Bamako (EMA, 2021). The year before, Tuaregs independentists of the MNLA joined forces with the jihadist groups Ansar ed-Dine and MUJAO that had just pledged allegiance to AQIM, the North-African branch of Al-Qaeda (Charbonneau, 2017b). France faced difficulties to gain support from the United States and other European member states which saw in the rebellion of northern Mali a domestic problem of self-determination. It is only when the MNLA was side-lined to the benefit of the jihadists that France began to convince its American and European allies of the necessity to combat Al-Qaeda in Mali and prevent the establishment of terrorist training camps on Europe’s doorstep (Charbonneau,
European Training Mission for the armed forces of Mali
Mission multidimensionelle intégrée des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation au Mali
Supposedly corrupt muslims that are excommunicated by takfiri and can therefore be targeted by jihadists
Term used to describe the postcolonial system in Francophone Africa where France remained a central actor in shaping the political landscape of the region.
objectives to maintain its grasp on West-African nations (Wing, 2016). The European Union is only interested in the conflict because of its concerns over the domestic impact of forced migrations, drug trafficking, and terrorist threats (Cold-Ravnkilde & Nissen, 2020). The corrupt elites of Mali have no desire to reach peace because they benefit from the rent of international aid without being accountable to its population, while the jihadists rely on the presence of all the above-mentioned actors to justify their existence (Charbonneau, 2017b, 2019).

1.2 Counterterrorism as political blindness

Although these analyses point to real problems and provide precious knowledge on the dynamics of violence in Mali, they fall short of accounting for the fact that Europeans have been persisting in a strategy based on counterterrorism while there has been consistent and repeated feedback on its counter-productive effects (Charbonneau, 2019; Malejacq & Sandor, 2020; Schmauder, Soto-Mayor, & Goxho, 2020). Cost-benefit calculations should have led Europeans to reconsider their approach much earlier. Currently, it has come to the point that Russian mercenaries of the Wagner group are now well settled in Mali and the anti-French and anti-European propaganda is used to legitimise the authoritarian rule of the junta (Benoît, 2022). Rumors of oppressive behaviours from Malian forces and Russian soldiers of fortune have been tragically confirmed in the massacre of Moura, in the Mopti region, where hundreds of Malians were arbitrarily executed (Berthemet & Bellone, 2022). As the spiral of violence is gaining a renewed momentum, it is necessary to search for alternative explanations to understand why Europeans have failed to consolidate the Malian democracy and silence the guns. In the case of European strategy in Mali, it seems that certain ideas about the nature of the conflict have grown so powerful that they de facto eliminated alternative policy options to the ones focused on fighting terrorism. When facing a ‘social wrong’, N. Fairclough (2012) argues that critical researchers should identify the obstacles that prevent from alleviating or eradicating this social wrong. In Mali, the social wrong is the fact that the Malian population has become entrapped between a predatory State on one side, and reckless jihadists on the other. As an identified obstacle that prevented this social wrong from happening, this research will look at the concept of strategic culture, and more specifically how strategic culture becomes salient in influencing foreign policy as the result of strategic
narratives resonating with political myths. It will assess the extent to which the European strategy in the Sahel has been shaped by a European strategic culture heavily concerned with state-security in general, and counterterrorism in particular.

**Strategic culture**

The concept of strategic culture was developed to explain events in international relations that theories centered on the rationality of actors or on the structuring effects of the international system could not account for (Berger, 1993, 1996; Snyder, 1977). The idea is that the choices made by policymakers not only result from cost-benefit calculations, but are also influenced by the culture shared by policymakers. Lock (2017) defines strategic culture ‘as consisting of common ideas about strategy that exist across populations’ (p.1). These ideas are expected to shape the way challenges are constructed and how foreign policy is designed to face these challenges. But culture is broad and difficult to grasp. As a consequence, what strategic culture is and how it should be studied is contested. An enduring debate has focused on determining whether strategic culture can be identified independently from policymaking and quantified (Johnston, 1995), or whether it is a context that is only subject to interpretivist methods (Gray, 1999). Recent literature argued for a ‘discursive turn’ which (re-)introduces discourse at the center of the study of strategic culture (Libel, 2020). Strategic culture comes to be understood as the result of a competition between epistemic communities, that is networks of professionals whose knowledge provide them with an authoritative claim on policymaking, that are attempting to impose their own discourse on strategic matters with the objective to obtain a hegemonic control over policymaking (Libel, 2020).

**Political myths**

This ‘discursive turn’ is especially interesting as it opens new pathways for the study of strategic culture. Of particular relevance is the concept of political myths, which is central in the constitution of cultures (Bliesemann de Guevara, 2016; Bottici, 2007). A political myth is a certain form of narrative that provides significance to the political conditions faced by individuals (Blumenberg, 1985). This means that a political myth not only produces meaning out the contingency of the world, but it acts on the identity of human beings in a way so that
it also determines how a community ought to act (Bottici, 2007). As narratives, political myths provide a coherent logic to a set of events in a way that it resonates with the cultural references of a particular group. But political myths are more than just narratives as they make a claim on truth, which enables them to be unfalsifiable and pervasive in shaping the identity of human communities (Bliesemann de Guevara, 2016).

Strategic narratives

Political myths appear to offer attractive perspectives for a better comprehension of strategic culture when they are combined with strategic narratives. Together, political myths and strategic narratives form a mechanism that has the potential to uncover the nature of a particular strategic culture, but also how it comes into being. Strategic narratives share the narrative form of political myths, but while the latter are broadly shared and of undetermined creator, strategic narratives are intentionally crafted by agents to create a particular effect (O. Schmitt, 2018). Indeed, strategic narratives organise events into a plot with the objective to appeal to the emotions, the experience, or the cultural references of an audience (Freedman, 2015). The success of these narratives depends on the extent to which they resonate with an already existing political myth. It is the process of the ‘work on myths’, where a narrative gains power from an existing myth while at the same time updating this myth (Blumenberg, 1985; Bottici & Challand, 2006; O. Schmitt, 2018). Together with political myths, strategic narratives therefore allow to introduce the actions of individuals in a concept of strategic culture often perceived as being extremely path dependent and slow to change.

Research question

In the case of Mali, France has used the strategic narrative of the ‘war on terror’ to mobilise and gain support (Charbonneau, 2017a, 2019; Dworkin, 2016; Wing, 2016). This narrative actually originates from the military actions taken by the United States following 9/11. Then, American political leadership articulated the narrative of the ‘war on terror’ based on existing myths of ‘American exceptionalism’ and ‘Clash of civilisations’ to justify the military expeditions in Afghanistan and Iraq (Bottici & Challand, 2006; Esch, 2010). In a study on the
European Security and Defence Policy\textsuperscript{10} and the European Security Strategy of 2003, Rynning (2003) already noted the presence of narratives where the EU was presented as a liberal force that would consolidate democracy within the Union, and convert its illiberal neighbours to its liberal project. Della Sala (2016) explains that even though the European Union claims to champion universal values of liberalism and modernity, this is in fact a form of exceptionalism as these values are destined to be spread to areas that are not yet ‘liberal’ or ‘modern’. This suggests that the French strategic narrative of the ‘war on terror’ may have been working on a political myth of ‘European exceptionalism’, in a similar way to what happened during the American ‘war on terror’ launched by George W. Bush.

This leads to the following research question: To what extent has the strategic use of narratives and political myths shaped a strategic culture that influenced European strategy in Mali between 2011 and 2021?

1.3. Objective, case-selection, methods, and relevance

Objective

To answer this question, the research will take the form of a single-case study design that will employ critical discourse analysis. The choice to focus on one unit of analysis, the case of European strategy for Mali between 2011 and 2021, is motivated by the objective of the study which is theory-driven. This study aims at describing, and testing, a mechanism that will contribute to a better understanding of strategic culture. Researching the work of strategic narratives on political myths will enable to explore how a certain strategic culture emerges and how it changes as a result of a competition between epistemic communities. Thus, this paper develops an innovative approach to strategic culture by taking the ‘discursive turn’ further into the realms of myths and narratives.

\textsuperscript{10} Now the Common Security and Defence Policy
Case selection

The case of European strategy in Mali was selected for its potential to research the theoretical contributions of this paper. In fact, the mechanism theorised is particularly relevant in the case of the European Union where a large number of national and transnational epistemic communities compete with one another. The question whether there is an emerging European strategic culture and what it looks like is subject to particular attention and is a source of rich debate (Biava, Drent, & Herd, 2011; Biehl, Giegerich, & Jonas, 2013; Cornish & Edwards, 2005; Lindley-French, 2002; Rynning, 2003). However, the willingness of the EU to become an active actor, i.e. its actorness, in security and defence is relatively recent. Since 2003, the EU has launched 36 civilian and military missions around the globe. In 2021, there were 18 ongoing Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations in Europe, the Middle-East, and Africa, 11 of which were civilian and 7 military (EEAS, 2022). It is important to note that the military operations are usually non-executive – except for the maritime domain – which means that the use of force is excluded (i.e. limited to the right of self-defence), and tend to focus on advice and training. As a consequence of the presence of Russian mercenaries and the increasingly authoritarian turn of the Malian government, the EU is in the process of terminating the training activities of EUTM Mali (France24, 2022). Nonetheless, military CSDP missions in Mali have been deemed to be the most significant with regards to the increasing actorness of the EU in security and defence matters, the presence of the EU in the Sahel being sometimes presented as the laboratory for the future of the CSDP (Cold-Ravnkilde & Nissen, 2020). This EU ambition to become a security actor has in fact been strongly encouraged by France as was illustrated by the creation of Task Force Takuba. Launched under the European Intervention Initiative (E2I), Takuba is a coalition of the willing, under the authority of French operation Barkhane, that gathers special operation forces from several European countries. One of the declared goals of Takuba is the development of a European strategic culture through the joint practice of combat operations (EMA, 2021; Maulny, 2019).

For these reasons, Mali as a case-study has the best potential to research the theory developed in this paper. In addition, the case is temporally bounded to the period 2011-2021.
The choice to start one year prior to the start of the conflict is motivated by the first European Strategy for the Sahel that was published in 2011. This document is especially informative and must be included in the data as it prefigures the missions launched in the following years. Hence, the unit of analysis is European strategy in Mali between 2011 and 2021.

**Methods and sources**

The mechanism theorised will be tested through the intensive critical analysis of public speeches of political leaders of France and of the European Union, as well as EU policy documents related to strategy. It must be specified that the selection of texts includes speeches from French Presidents because France has been the first actor to articulate strategic narratives on the ‘war on terror’ to mobilise its European allies to join and support France’s counterterrorism intervention in Mali. More generally, the study of political speeches is central for this study as they are the privileged location where strategic narratives are expected to be deployed. Indeed, speech can be understood as an act of argumentation that is instrumental in the pursuit of a political strategy (I. Fairclough & Fairclough, 2013). A political strategy being generally aimed at shaping the reality of the social world according to certain ideas or beliefs, the strategic function of speech echoes the use of strategic narratives. The fact that public speech lacks the spontaneity of an interview or a press conference is actually of interest for the study of strategic narratives. As the visible ‘frontstage’ public speech is the result of a ‘backstage’ process of consensus formation (Wodak, 2013), speech is expected to be particularly informative with regards to the argumentation that an epistemic community intends to articulate to fulfil its strategic objectives. Therefore, a political speech can be understood as an instance where a certain epistemic community attempts to persuade others of the relevance of its analysis. And it can most efficiently do so if it appeal to the existing ideas and beliefs of the group that is to be convinced (Freedman, 2015). Therefore, speeches of French and EU leaders will be studied with a special attention to the strategic narratives on the ‘war on terror’ and how these try to appeal to the political myth of European exceptionalism.

Policy documents are central when it comes to studying a certain strategy. In the case of this study, policy documents are of special importance to assess the success or failure of strategic
narratives. Indeed, EU policy documents are the results of intense processes of bargaining and negotiation between member-states. As a consequence, they represent an agreement on a certain set of beliefs, values, norms, and ideas (Zyla, 2011). Hence, in policy documents, the salience of strategic narratives on the ‘war on terror’ relative to political myths of European exceptionalism is expected to be especially informative with regards to the actual effects of these strategic narratives on policymaking. Therefore, the joint analysis of the data of these two types of sources will make it possible to identify the presence of strategic narratives on the ‘war on terror’ and of political myths of European exceptionalism, and assess whether the former works on the latter.

**Academic relevance**

This paper makes an academic contribution at the theoretical level. It develops a theoretical framework which proposes a new way to approach the formation of a strategic culture. It most importantly conceptualises strategic culture as the result of a discursive competition between epistemic communities, thereby following the ‘discursive turn’ in the study of strategic culture. Hence, strategic culture departs from the traditional comprehension of the concept as being extremely slow to change and greatly path-dependent. Instead, with strategic narratives and political myths, strategic culture can be understood in a more dynamic and fluid manner. This means that actors may have more agency in shaping culture through the strategic use of narratives. Thus, it articulates rational-choice together with culturalist theories in such a way that strategic culture can be conceived as both shaping actors while being shaped by these actors. From an academic perspective, this study proposes a new research agenda, where the middle-range concepts of myths and narratives facilitate access to a high-level concept of strategic culture that is otherwise difficult to directly touch upon empirically (Gray, 1999; Johnston, 1999).

**Societal relevance**

Besides the contribution to theory-formation that this paper makes with regards to the academic study of strategic culture, it is also directly relevant in terms of policymaking. First,
specifying the mechanism of the work of strategic narratives on political myths allows for a better understanding of the impact of discourse in the formation of strategic culture. From a policymaking perspective, this should encourage more reflexivity in the processes of policy formation. If a certain strategic narrative can be identified as attempting to resonate within an existing political myth, this should be source of debate on the relevance of past and future policy choices. Second, strategic narratives are also deployed in the context of ‘power politics’. This is what Freedman (2015) calls the narratives about strategy, which are aimed at deceiving, confusing, or winning over an adversary. For instance, O. Schmitt (2018) researches the impact of the strategic narratives crafted by the Russian government to influence French political parties, and more specifically populist parties. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has brought to the fore the fact that strategic narratives in a context of war or brutal competition have been an integral part of certain strategies for a long time (Snegovaya, 2015). The anti-French and anti-European discourse in Mali have been largely spread by the Wagner group, which is now producing narratives in an attempt to generate African support to the invasion of Ukraine (Olivier, 2022).

What this study actually aims at describing is the mechanism which lies at the source of the power of narratives. To be aware of where narratives take their power from is essential for both improving the quality of democratic debate, for example by overcoming simplistic narratives that overshadow the complexity of societal issues, as well as consolidating the resilience of democratic institutions in a context where strategic competitors use narratives to amplify cleavages. Hence, in the case of Mali, a good understanding of what strategic narratives Russian mercenaries are using in reference to which political myths is the first step to design strategies to counter these operations of influence. It is especially clear in Mali that strategic narratives can have direct consequences for civilian lives. Russian narratives have been successful in both consolidating the authoritarian rule of the junta and expulsing the French armed forces from the country. The consequent security void is now brutally filled by the Wagner group, as sadly demonstrated in Moura (Berthemet & Bellone, 2022).
2. Theoretical framework: A narrative approach to strategic culture

2.1. Strategic culture

The concept of strategic culture implies that culture somehow influences the way human beings think about strategy. This idea is not new, and can be found throughout history through different terms such as national character or national ‘ways of war’ (Uz Zaman, 2009). Inspired by the notion that the political culture of a polity directly participates in the stabilization of democratic institutions (Almond & Verba, 2015), the term culture came to be more systematically associated with strategy in a field of security and strategic studies. These studies conceptualized strategic culture as a means to account for outcomes in international affairs that theories based on rational-choice and structuralist assumptions alone could not predict (Berger, 1993, 1996; Snyder, 1977).

However, it rapidly became apparent that a danger was looming behind using the notion of culture. If what cannot be explained by the rationality of actors and the structure of the international system can be accounted for by cultural elements, then it might be tempting to hide behind culture when complex situations arise (Johnston, 1995). Hence, explaining the behaviours of states through the culture of their people can lead to a certain analytical idleness, and consequently to simplistic and stereotyped conclusions. This problem led to several debates and a rich literature. Johnston (1995) developed a famous genealogy of the study of strategic culture to promote his own approach to the question. He particularly attacked the interpretivist view of the first students of strategic culture such as Jack L. Snyder, Colin S. Gray, or Thomas U. Berger, whom Johnston labelled the ‘first generation’, that strategic culture is a context which participates in favouring certain types of policies over others (Berger, 1993, 1996; Gray, 1999; Snyder, 1977). For scholars of the so-called first generation, strategic culture is indeed made of both ideas and behaviours that influence each other and cannot be distinguished from one another. But for Johnston (1995), it is this attitude towards strategic culture that easily encourages stereotyped analyses. In reaction to this approach, Johnston (1995) identifies, and criticizes as well, a second generation that conceptualized strategic culture as being an instrumental discourse designed by elites to
secure their power and hide their true agenda (Klein, 1988). Johnston (1995), who labelled his work as the ‘third generation’, rejected this critical understanding of strategic culture on the ground that it took away the cultural aspect of the concept, and more specifically focused his critique on the first generation. During a seminal debate (Gray, 1999; Johnston, 1999), Johnston argued that strategic culture must be made falsifiable by adopting a strict positivist approach, that is by clearly defining strategic culture in ideational terms so it can be distinguished from behaviour. Doing so would allow to assess the effect of strategic culture as an independent variable on policymaking as the dependent variable.

Nonetheless, Johnston’s positivist stance in comprehending strategic culture as “an integrated system of symbols” (Johnston, 1995, p.46) created difficulties in operationalizing the concept in quantitative terms. Rather than attempting to establish the effect of strategic culture on policymaking, a fourth generation of researchers shifted the focus on the changing character of strategic cultures. While strategic culture was often perceived as something heavily grounded in history, and therefore slow to change, some scholars argued that a certain national strategic culture is the result of a competition between domestic sub-cultures (Bloomfield, 2012). Libel (2020) further specifies this argumentation by theorizing that strategic culture is shaped by the struggle between epistemic communities, that are not necessarily bound within national borders. These communities are formed by networks of professionals whose knowledge provides them with an authoritative claim on policymaking. Epistemic communities attempt to control the policymaking process because it enables them to ‘shape the symbolic discourse of the strategic elite and therefore of strategic culture itself’ (Libel, 2020, p.698). Epistemic communities embody strategic sub-cultures that are struggling against one another to impose their sub-culture as the dominant strategic culture (Libel, 2020). The theory that epistemic communities are engaged in a continuing competition to promote their ideas with the objective to reach a point of hegemony is especially interesting for the study of international organizations such as NATO or the European Union. This recent work on strategic culture actually brings back the idea that strategic culture is a process where competing elites engage in a process of construction of meaning in a context of changing power relations, which was advanced by the second generation (Johnston, 1995; Klein, 1988; Lock, 2017). Therefore, culture is not just determining individual action, but the agency of individuals matter as much as the constituting effects of the cultural structure (Lock, 2017).
This constructivist approach underlies the reconceptualisation of strategic culture provided by Neumann and Heikka (2005) in their study of the social roots of Nordic defence. They propose to conceptualise culture as a ‘dynamic interplay between discourse and practice’ (Neumann and Heikka, 2005, p.6). They also address the strategic element of the concept by reflecting on grand strategy. While recognising the military nature of strategy, they also acknowledge the more comprehensive and peace-oriented implications of a ‘grand’ strategy, which goes beyond battlefields and wars. Most importantly, Neumann and Heikka (2005) propose to move grand strategy ‘from the realm of explicitly formulated doctrines (ideas) to the realm of preconditions for formulating such doctrines’ (p.13). This means that instead of comprehending grand strategy as a set of ideas hold by individuals, grand strategy should be understood as a discourse that holds the preconditions for action. Hence, grand strategy is in fact a certain type of discourse related to the use of military force.

Additionally, culture should not be understood as ‘the stable product of a homogeneous process inside a clearly limited nation-state, but rather as an unstable compromise of a contested process of a transnational type’ (Neumann and Heikka, 2005, p.17). As a consequence, strategic culture is the result of a process where discourse on grand strategy and practices of agents (i.e. policymaking) are mutually constitutive, but that is also subject to a competition between epistemic communities that can be national or transnational. This is the understanding of strategic culture that will be used in this study.

Table 1 – Conceptualisation of strategic culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptualisation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
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<td>Grand strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic culture</td>
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that is also subject to a competition between epistemic communities that can be national or transnational.

Sources: Libel (2020); Neumann and Heikka (2005).

Such a conceptualization of strategic culture allows to reintroduce the agency of individuals, and thereby justify a critical approach to the study of strategic culture, but also to understand how various interpretations of the international system come to compete in the making of strategic culture. Neumann and Heikka (2005) resort to Alexander Wendt’s cultures of anarchy (Wendt, 1999) to explain how elites make sense of their international environment. They argue that ‘strategic culture is ultimately tied to the fundamental philosophical questions about the meaning of life and the relationship between self and other’ (Neumann and Heikka, 2005, p.7). Therefore, whether one considers the ‘other’ as friend, rival, or enemy, as theorised by Wendt (1999), this will have an influence on the choices one makes in regards to strategy. Stressing that strategic culture is a certain type of discourse that is closely linked to the meaning of life, and the identity of the schmittian ‘self’, that is of a political community (C. Schmitt, 2009), brings us towards another concept that appears to be central for a better understanding of strategic culture, that of political myths.

2.2. Political myths

Religious myths, sacred logos, and political myths

Myths immediately bring to the imagination a universe of gods and heroes. Bottici and Challand (2006) argue that while myths in ancient societies performed both a religious and a political function, modern societies, with the process of democratisation and the retreat of the religious, see the emergence of purely political myths. These political myths are similar to ancient myths as they are a valid source of meaning and knowledge (Bliesemann de Guevara, 2016; Bottici, 2007), but they differ as they are no longer limited to gods and heroes: they can be about any possible topic.
Features of political myths

Political myths are common narratives that provide significance to the political conditions and the experiences of a political community. They bring together events into a plot which resonates with the cultural references of a certain audience in such a way that it helps human beings to make sense of the world, while suggesting how they should be acting in this world (Blumenberg, 1985). But what distinguishes a political myth from a common narrative is the fact that a political myth cannot be falsified. This means that the political myth makes a claim on truth and therefore should remain unquestioned (Bliesemann de Guevara, 2016). It can however be reinterpreted so that it remains valid through time by fitting to the contingencies of particular time periods. This is the ‘work on myths’, a cyclic process that goes back and forth from the production of a myth, its reception among a specific audience, and its reproduction. This process stops when the political myth is falsified. Then the political myth stops being a myth, and returns to its status of a simple narrative (Bottici & Challand, 2006).

The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss identified two main aspects of a myth (Goetze, 2016). A myth has an explicit structure, which is labelled the syntagmatic structure. It is what is apparent at first sight in the syntax which articulates words to tell a story. But it also has a paradigmatic structure that contains implicit meanings. For instance, Goetze (2016) explains that the syntagmatic structure of the political myth of Afghan warlords is a story where the collapse of the Afghan state offers opportunities for violent entrepreneurs. Warlords enrich themselves, establish private militias, and exploit the civilian population. In the end, they set up a pervasive patronage network, which turns them into tyrants. But this myth also has a paradigmatic structure which conveys another meaning through a mirroring mechanism. Here, the image of the Western/modern state acts as the virtuous mirror of the corrupt warlord society: in the story of the construction of the Western state, warlords are replaced by kings, militias by armies, racketeers by merchants, patrons by bureaucrats, tyrants by statesmen (Goetze, 2016). Therefore, the syntagmatic structure of the myth of Afghan warlords contains a justification for intervention to bring down warlordism, while the paradigmatic structure provides an excuse for the failure of intervention as warlordism prevents the implementation of sound and efficient governance (Goetze, 2016).
Functions of political myths

What is truly interesting about political myths is the role they have for human societies. Blumenberg (1985) describes how human beings have felt enstranged throughout history from the world they live in. Myths have helped them to bring the reality of the world closer to them, thereby generating a sense of comfort and moral security by providing guidance for action. Thus, the basic function of a political myth is to put a name on what is unknown to human beings, and help them understand what is inexplicable. But political myths are double-edge swords that can both provide the necessary fictions that allow individuals to feel closer to the world they live in, or generate ideological delusions which hide the actual contingency of human condition (Bliesemann de Guevara, 2016).

Bliesemann de Guevara (2016) identifies four possible functions of political myths. They are determining when used instrumentally by a dominant group to maintain its power and the existing order (1). Political myths are enabling when they enable the weaker groups to become aware of their oppressed condition and thus mobilise and act to change the social order (2). They are also social constructs that assume a naturalising role by making historical and political processes look natural while they are in fact contingent (3). Finally, political myths can be understood as being a constituting feature of human nature, which means that not only human beings produce political myths, but they are themselves produced by these very myths, which means that knowledge production is also influenced by political myths (4).

In all cases, political myths assume their functions by acting on the identity of actors, and this is why they are particularly relevant for interpretive policy analysis. Interpretive policy analysis is interested in understanding how the identity of actors involved in policymaking influence their perception of reality. Problems are not just out there for policymakers to find and solve. They are partly constructed by actors, and therefore, interpretive policy analysis seeks to understand the process where actors problematise aspects of their social world and imagine certain solutions to deal with these constructed challenges (Münch, 2016). These actors involved in policymaking constitute the epistemic communities whose struggle for hegemony determines the dominant strategic culture of a country or of an international organisation.
Strategic culture and political myths

Thus, political myths participate in shaping the identity of groups, among which the epistemic communities involved in policymaking. In turn, the identity of these communities determines the way they make sense of the world, the problems they construct and define as salient, as well as the solutions they propose for solving these problems. This means that the identity of epistemic communities produces certain discourses with regards to specific topics. Grand strategy was actually defined earlier as ‘a certain discourse held by epistemic communities on the appropriate and legitimate use of force to maximise power and/or to solve conflicts’. Therefore, political myths, by acting on the identity of actors, shape the discourse an epistemic community will have with regards to the use of force, which constitutes the grand strategy of this community. At the same time, a grand strategy, through its practical implementation, influences political myths and may strengthen them or weaken them depending on its success. The strategic sub-culture of an epistemic community is the result of this interplay between political myths and grand strategy. The epistemic community that successfully imposes its strategic sub-culture determines the strategic culture of a nation or international organisation.

*Figure 1 – Strategic culture as an interplay between political myths and grand strategy, adapted from Neumann & Heikka (2005)*

As mentioned earlier, epistemic communities attempt to ‘shape the symbolic discourse of the strategic elite and therefore of strategic culture itself’ (Libel, 2020, p.698). But their own discourses are shaped by political myths in the first place. Hence, political myths are not only informative to understand how actors construct problems, but they also directly participate in our understanding of the emergence of strategic cultures.
Besides, the role of political myths in shaping discourse suggests a mechanism which might clarify how certain epistemic communities are more successful at imposing their strategic subcultures than others. For that purpose, it is important to go back to the process of the ‘work on myths’. Blumenberg (1985) explains that it is the continuous process through which a myth is reinterpreted and reproduced so to better match the cultural affinities at a certain time and place. What exactly does the process of reinterpretation and reproduction of political myths look like? To answer this question, it is necessary to dive into another concept, closely related but different than myth: strategic narratives.

2.3. Strategic narratives

Defining strategic narratives

Strategic narratives gained a special attention in the context of the literature surrounding the revolution in military affairs, a theory which emerged in the 1990’s and argued that new information and communication technologies represent a critical juncture in warfare similar to the introduction of the gun powder or the Napoleonic levée en masse (Cebrowski & Gartska, 1998). More specifically, information superiority was expected to become a central element to achieve victory, especially when forces are engaged in irregular warfare (Freedman, 2006). Military superiority conceived in material terms came to be seen of little relevance if the ‘hearts and minds’ could not be won over. Freedman (2006) explained that:

‘It is in this context that the concept of narratives – compelling story lines which can explain events convincingly and from which inferences can be drawn – becomes relevant. Narratives are designed or nurtured with the intention of structuring the responses of others to developing events. They are strategic because they do not arise spontaneously but are deliberately constructed or reinforced out of the ideas and thoughts that are already current.’ (Freedman, 2006, p.22)
Three elements are important in Freedman’s definition of strategic narratives. First, they are ‘compelling story lines’, which means that they have a plot, just like political myths. Second, they are ‘deliberately constructed’, and hence they highlight the agency of individuals. Third, they are crafted ‘out of the ideas and thoughts that are already current’: Freedman (2015) indeed states that for a narrative to be successful, it must relate in some way to the culture and experiences of the targeted audience, an aspect also underlined by Bliesemann de Guevara (2016) with regards to political myths.

The function of strategic narratives

With regards to the ‘strategic’ element of strategic narratives, Freedman (2015) makes an important distinction between narratives that serve strategy, and narratives about strategy. While the former are an integral part of a strategy aimed at an out-group, usually to confuse, deceive, or win over an adversary, the latter are oriented towards the in-group to gain support and mobilize. Then, in international relations, strategic narratives are shaped while taking into account the two-level game where states are acting both with regards to their domestic audience and external states (Miskimmon, O’loughlin, & Roselle, 2014). Although strategic narratives can be set to achieve different goals, they always are about persuasion:

‘If your strategic narrative is convincing, allies will commit resources, publics will reelect your party to continue your foreign policy, and enemies will realize their prospects are bleak unless they change course. But strategic narratives are also an instrument of power by constituting the experience of international affairs and thus the identity of its actors and the meaning of the system.’ (Miskimmon et al, 2014, p.26).

Strategic narratives and the ‘work on myths’

As previously discussed, the ‘work on myth’ described by Blumenberg (1985) is the process where myths are produced, interpreted, and reproduced in a cyclic manner. Strategic narratives represent in fact the intermediary mechanism where a myth is being worked on, that is interpreted and reproduced. O. Schmitt (2018) argues that political discourse is shaped
by the interaction between strategic narratives and political myths. To do so, agents craft narratives strategically, in order to achieve a certain goal, and in a way that it will resonate with a political myth that is already existing. While strategic narratives are produced by agents and can therefore be traced back to specific individuals, political myths are widely shared and of undetermined origins (O. Schmitt, 2018). Going back to the conceptualisation of strategic culture presented earlier, strategic narratives allow to directly relate the shaping of strategic cultures to the competition between epistemic communities (see figure 2). These epistemic communities design strategic narratives in a way that these can successfully resonate with already existing political myths, with the ultimate goal to ‘shape the symbolic discourse of the strategic elite and therefore of strategic culture itself’ (Libel, 2020, p.698).

Figure 2 – Conceptual framework: the strategic use of narratives in the competition between epistemic communities embodying strategic sub-cultures
European strategic culture

The European Union has provided a fertile ground for the study of strategic culture. The difficulties faced by the EU to mobilize its member states to build a European defence, or more recently a European strategic autonomy, has often been accounted for by the lack of a common strategic culture shared by the member states (Lindley-French, 2002; Rynning, 2003). Whether scholars find that there is an emerging European strategic culture or not, largely depends on their understanding of the concept of strategic culture and their unit of analysis. Indeed, European strategic culture has been approached through a positivist lens with research focusing on the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) (Biava et al., 2011; Cornish & Edwards, 2005; Rynning, 2003), as well as interpretivist studies of national contexts aimed at identifying signs of convergence between strategic cultures of member states (Biehl et al., 2013). The EU is often perceived, and attempts to be perceived, as a normative power, although individual member states tend to revert to more aggressive power balancing attitudes when the normative stance fails (Cottey, 2019). For Matlary (2006), the EU offers an opportunity for member states to develop a strategic culture based on human security, rather than state security. As discussed in the introduction, the EU has justified its military intervention in Mali in the name of the fight against terrorism, but also to prevent migration and drug-trafficking, therefore suggesting a dominance of state security concerns over human security ones.

The strategic narrative on the ‘war on terror’

The focus of European action in Mali has been on fighting terrorism. And the counterproductive effects of this approach to the conflict in Mali have been highlighted early in the intervention in Mali and in a consistent manner, in such a way that it has reached a point where there is a wide consensus across academia and foreign policy analysis (Benjaminsen & Ba, 2019; Boeke, 2021; Charbonneau, 2017a, 2017b, 2019; Schmauder et al., 2020; Wing, 2016). The narrative on the ‘war on terror’ originates with the 9/11 terrorist
attacks. The State of the Union Address of former US President George W. Bush is one of the most eloquent illustrations of this narrative (Bush, 2002). It is a narrative that worked as a reappropriation of the myth of American exceptionalism and the myth of ‘Barbarism vs. Civilization’, which notably served as the base for the theory of a ‘Clash of Civilizations’ (Esch, 2010). Bottici and Challand (2006) argued that Huntington’s theory of a ‘Clash of Civilizations’ actually raised itself to the status of a political myth. It has created an image of the conflict where jihadists are only the expression of a ‘muslim rage’ against the Western civilization, and therefore have no rational grievances, and hence no legitimate demands (Bottici & Challand, 2006).

The political myth of European exceptionalism

The myth of the ‘Clash of Civilization’ is not exclusive to the United States, but it takes a different form in the context of the European Union. In fact, the founding myth of the EU is based on a story where Europeans have freed themselves from the evils of nationalism during World War II to rise again as a new and unique form of political order which destiny it is to bring peace and prosperity to the world. It is therefore also a story of redemption, which implies that Europeans have rejected once of for all the power politics which are associated with nationalism (Della Sala, 2016). As a consequence, Della Sala argues that the EU has attempted to create a political community that is self-governing, without resorting to a myth of exceptionalism, which is usually at the core of national myths. Europeans come together because they share universal norms and values, not because they are a ‘better’ people, which leave the door open to converting the rest of the world to these values (Della Sala, 2016). However, this is where some tension in the myth becomes apparent: to spread universal norms and values implies that there is still an ‘other’ who does not yet share these norms and values. This is where the European myth of exceptionalism kicks back in. In her genealogy of political myths, Bottici (2007) explains that the sacred logos, the absolutist truth claimed by Christianity, continued in a reformed manner with the Enlightenment. In fact, the position given by the Enlightenment to ‘reason’ as the ultimate and universal value can be understood as an expression of the work on myth, where a myth is reinterpreted and reproduced in a different form (Bottici, 2007). Similarly, modernity and liberalism are also reinterpretations of the myth of the Enlightenment where what is modern or liberal respectively becomes the
highest value. This allows to make the dichotomies between the rational and the irrational, the modern and the primitive, or the liberal and the illiberal. Consequently, the distinction between the 'self' and the 'other' remains, thereby constituting a myth of European exceptionalism (Della Sala, 2016).

Hypotheses

The objective of this research project is to assess the extent to which strategic narratives on the ‘war on terror’ have been used by European leaders and to explore whether they have been crafted in such a way that they ‘work on’ political myths of European exceptionalism. Hence, the present project aims at describing and testing the mechanism where a narrative on the ‘war on terror’ is strategically used to resonate with a political myth of European exceptionalism with the objective to shape the dominant grand strategy. It is this mechanism that is productive of a certain strategic culture. At this point, it is important to stress that the main focus of this study is not the competition between epistemic communities as described in figure 2, but instead the mechanism presented in figure 3. The conceptual framework described below is in fact an elaboration of figure 1 as it incorporates the role of strategic narratives in the making of a strategic culture by specifying how strategic narratives position themselves with regards to political myths and grand strategy.
Strategic narratives on the ‘war on terror’ are expected to be particularly influential when they resonate with already existing ideas about the exceptional character of the European Union. For instance, when jihadists are portrayed as irrational fanatics, this is an image that easily resonates with the idea that the Enlightenment has freed Europeans from obscurantism, and that the EU is destined to similarly free its neighbouring regions from such obscurantist ideologies. If this is true, the strategy with regards to the EU’s neighbouring countries is expected to reflect this discourse, with for instance a focus on state-building, on European state security, and a disregard of grievances which have fertilized jihadist rhetoric.

**Hypothesis 1**: If a narrative on the ‘war on terror’ is strategically used to work on a political myth of European exceptionalism it will more likely have an impact on EU strategy in Mali.

However, if the ‘war on terror’ is used without referring to myths of European exceptionalism, it is more likely that European strategy be less blinded by terrorism, and will instead take into account aspects which lay at the roots of the conflict such as problems of governance, injustice, and oppression of minorities.
**Hypothesis 2**: If a narrative on the ‘war on terror’ is not used strategically, it will be less likely to have an impact on EU strategy in Mali.

3. Methods

3.1. Operationalisation of the concepts

Before diving into the methods for studying our concepts, it is important to clearly define the categories to which these concepts belong, and how they are positioned on the ladder of abstraction (Sartori, 1970). Strategic culture belongs to the broader category of culture. However, similarly to culture, strategic culture is a high level theoretical concept that cannot be directly observed in an empirical fashion. This is why the concepts of political myths and strategic narratives are especially interesting. They enable us to indirectly evaluate the presence, or the formation, of a certain strategic culture. Hence, political myths and strategic narratives are medium-range theoretical concepts that could potentially be the subject of cross-cases studies. As this study is theory-centered, and as such is focused on a single case chosen for its informative potential with regards to theory formation (Rohlfing, 2012), the concepts of political myths and strategic narratives are taken down the ladder of abstraction to look more into the specifics of the case of European military intervention in Mali. Thus, the political myth of European exceptionalism and the strategic narrative of counterterrorism have extended attributes which allow us to get a better sense of the context in which they are going to be studied (Sartori, 1970).

However, a crucial distinction needs to be made. As mentioned in chapter 2, political myths are a certain form of narratives. Hence, political myths and strategic narratives both belong to the higher category of ‘narratives’. The narrative form in fact constitutes what they have in common (*genus*). What distinguishes political myths from strategic narratives (*differentiam*) is to be found in their claim on truth, their unfalsifiability, as well as their pervasiveness and their undetermined origin (Blumenberg, 1985; Bottici, 2007; Sartori, 1970; O. Schmitt, 2018). What is unique to strategic narratives is their origin which they take from identifiable agents,
as well as their argumentative character which relates to the idea that they are designed to achieve an effect (Freedman, 2006, 2015; Miskimmon et al., 2014; O. Schmitt, 2018).

The political myth of European exceptionalism is unfalsifiable as the implied superiority of liberal or modern values are rarely consciously questioned. If this was to change, this myth would go back to the status of a simple narrative. In contrast, the strategic narrative on the ‘war on terror’ is of determined origins. However, it has been argued that this narrative worked as a political myth by representing a reinterpretation of the existing myths of American exceptionalism (Esch, 2010). Therefore, whether the strategic narrative on the ‘war on terror’ remains in the category of strategic narratives, or whether it transfers into the category of political myths is an important point to keep in mind in the data analysis. Nonetheless, the narrative on the ‘war on terror’ has traditionally generated more resistance in Europe than in the United States, and there is ground to believe that it remains in the category of strategic narratives in the European context (Dworkin, 2016).

3.2. Critical Discourse Analysis

Strategic culture was defined as ‘the result of a process where discourse on grand strategy and practices of agents (i.e. policymaking) are mutually constitutive, but that is also subject to a competition between epistemic communities that can be national or transnational.’ Here, discourse should be understood as a system that puts ‘language, action, interaction, values, beliefs, symbols, objects, tools, and places in such a way that others recognize you as a particular type of who (identity) engaged in a particular type of what (activity)’ (Gee, 2004, p.35). This is important as the object of this research is the work of strategic narratives on political myths because of its impact that it has on discourse on grand strategy. The discourse of the strategic elite is what epistemic communities attempt to influence in order to impose their own strategic sub-culture as the hegemonic strategic culture (Libel, 2020). Discourse is closely related to language, even if it is broader than language. In fact, language is often the only way to approach discourse because it is the main location where ideas are being expressed (Larsen, 2018). Language allows individuals to inform each other, to prepare for action, as well as to form their identities. But language is only meaningful when it is related to practices, which involves a certain perspective on the distribution of social goods, such as
status, privilege, or rights. The distribution of social goods being the object of politics, language is intrinsically political (Gee, 2004). Epistemic communities are actually competing for a specific social good, which is the right to decide which strategy should be implemented and who should benefit from it. Hence, epistemic communities are engaged in discursive struggles for power, and this is precisely why the study of discourse should be critical (Diez, 2014).

Critical discourse analysis is therefore the relevant method to study the object of this research. Removing the obstacle to address a social wrong requires indeed a critical understanding of the obstacle itself. In the case of European intervention in Mali, the obstacle is the persistence of the counterterrorist approach to conflict resolution. Diez (2014) argues that ‘discourse provides the context in which individual policy articulations are set, and in that sense can contribute to the explanation of policy’ (p.320) but it goes further as ‘the way in which discourse informs policy articulations works both through providing meanings on which one can build and through setting the limits of a meaningful and legitimate policy’ (p.320). This means that discourse both enables certain policies to be implemented while restricting the range of policy options. The work of strategic narratives of counterterrorism on political myths of European exceptionalism may have had exactly this enabling and disabling effects on the European strategy in Mali. Critical discourse analysis is the most appropriate tool to uncover these effects.

3.3. Data Collection

The critical discourse analysis will be conducted in the deductive form, as the study is driven by theory. The text will be subject to intensive analysis to identify primarily the syntagmatic structure of the narratives present in the text, while keeping in mind their paradigmatic structure.
Syntagmatic analysis

The syntagmatic structure corresponds to the apparent form that narratives take in the text (Goetze, 2016). A central feature of a narrative is that they bring together actors, actions, and events to logically connect them in a way that the whole is clearly understandable and source of meaning. Gustav Freytag’s five-stage narrative is especially useful to grasp what a narrative is and why it is a powerful cognitive tool (Della Sala, 2016). According to Freytag, a narrative starts where an existing status quo comes to be disrupted by an external action (1). Then, a rising action follows where the main actors are confronted to a series of tests and struggles (2) which leads to a climactic point where tension is at its highest level (3). This is followed by a falling action where protagonists and antagonists are still struggling (4), but towards the end of this struggle, which resolution brings the conclusion and the advent of a new order, or status quo (5) (Della Sala, 2016).

The identification of the narrative form seeks to recognise which actors are framed as protagonists or as antagonists. The analysis will look for images of a previous status quo that is challenged and therefore loses a sort of harmony, and hopes for a new order that will be brought about by the victory of the protagonists over the antagonists. The kind of struggle that actors need to go through will also be an object of study. These different elements of a narrative is what Lévi-Strauss calls mythèmes (Goetze, 2016). These will have a central role in the coding process.

Paradigmatic analysis

The paradigmatic structure is made of the symbolic meanings that are not directly observable, but which underlie the syntagmatic structure. For Lévi-Strauss, the way this paradigmatic structure interacts with the apparent one is what generates the power of narratives or myths (Goetze, 2016). Uncovering what lies behind the words and the syntax is therefore at the heart of critical discourse analysis.

An important argument that underlies discourse analysis is that meaning is constructed through difference (Diez, 2014). Discourse works as a delimitation between what belongs to
the ‘self’ and the ‘other’, and that is actually a central aspect of the mechanism which enables certain policies while disabling others (Diez, 2014). In fact, an important aspect of language is to generate meaning by creating categories that often function in terms of binary oppositions (Milliken, 1999). This is what generates the mirror images identified by Goetze (2016) with regards to the myth of Afghan warlords where statism comes to be the good mirror of warlordism. This is how discourse constructs social realities, what Milliken (1999) calls ‘discourse as structures of signification’. To ‘deconstruct’ these social realities, the researcher must understand how meaning is constructed, for instance through binary oppositions, and how the resulting oppositions are related to each other in a hierarchical manner.

This mechanism of enabling and disabling effects of discourse needs to be specified because the binary opposition is not enough to create what Milliken (1999) characterises as the productivity of discourse. She argues that for a discourse to be productive, it must operationalise a certain ‘regime of truth’. This sounds at first similar to the ‘claim on truth’ that is characteristic of political myths, and which distinguishes them from strategic narratives. However, these two terms must be distinguished. When a discourse attempts to operationalise a ‘regime of truth’, this must be understood as an attempt to make a ‘claim on truth’. Hence, a strategic narrative can try to operationalise a ‘regime of truth’ in order to produce a certain type of policy, but it does not mean that it will be successful in this endeavor. We could say that this ‘regime of truth’ becomes a ‘claim on truth’ when it stops to be questioned and challenged. Then the narrative would become a myth.

Coding

The codes have been designed to represent the different mythèmes of the narratives on the ‘war on terror’ and the myth of European exceptionalism (see table 2). They follow the syntagmatic structure of Freytag’s pyramid described above (Della Sala, 2016). In addition three keywords were associated with each mythème. The purpose of the keywords is to be able to identify elements in the texts that belong to the narratives, while being able to discriminate between each mythème. These keywords also make it easier to identify paradigmatic aspects of the narratives.
Table 2 – Mythèmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A – Narrative on the ‘war on terror’</th>
<th>B – Myth of European exceptionalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disruption</td>
<td>A1 – The return of obscurantism</td>
<td>B1 – The rise of nationalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rising action</td>
<td>A2 – Obscurantists use terror to sow discord and division</td>
<td>B2 – Nationalist wars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climax</td>
<td>A3 – The danger of civil war</td>
<td>B3 – Fascism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falling action</td>
<td>A4 – The Just War on terror</td>
<td>B4 – Liberal forces prevail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution and denouement</td>
<td>A5 – Victory over terrorists</td>
<td>B5 – A new European order</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Bottici and Challand (2006); Della Sala (2016); Esch (2010), data analysis

The codes were applied to the texts using the software Atlas.ti designed to conduct qualitative content analysis. On Atlas.ti, the narrative on the ‘war on terror’ and the myth of European exceptionalism were created as folders. The mythèmes formed the categories of the coding frame, and the keywords the sub-categories. The coding frame is available in its entirety in Appendix 2.

3.4. Sources

Nature of sources

Milliken (1999) argues that discourses are social systems of signification, which implies that discourse is intrinsically intersubjective. Signification is produced through the interaction between individual subjects who share a common discourse, reinterpret it, or challenge a discourse with another. As a consequence, critical discourse analysis cannot rest on a single text, even if it is an important one. She argues that the selection of texts must be based on the authority that a certain speaker has with regards to reproducing or challenging a dominant
This study will look into two main categories of texts: public speeches of French and EU political leaders, and EU policy documents related to European strategy in Mali. 

Hence, a public speech, in a political context, is an act of argumentation which aim it is to participate in the pursuit of a political strategy in order to shape the social world in accordance with what is considered to be just (I. Fairclough & Fairclough, 2013). Therefore, public speech is one instrument for individuals involved in politics to reach their objectives. This echoes the use of strategic narratives by epistemic communities to ultimately shape the dominant strategic culture. The fact that public speech lacks spontaneity is in fact of additional value for studying strategic narratives. The ‘frontstage’ public speech expresses a ‘backstage’ consensus of an epistemic community over the argumentation to be deployed to accomplish a strategic objective (Wodak, 2013). Therefore, public speeches will be studied with a special attention to the strategic narratives on the ‘war on terror’. The selection includes text from the European Commission, as well as from the French Presidency. The choice to extend the study to texts pronounced by French Presidents is motivated by the assumption that France has been the first actor to articulate strategic narratives on the ‘war on terror’ to mobilise its European allies to join and support France’s counterterrorism intervention in Mali. However, a similar use is expected from leaders of the European Commission, but here with the aim to further develop the actorness of the EU with regards to security and defence matters. Finally, the inclusion of texts from French President is done while bearing in mind the possible influence they will have on the results of this research.

In addition to speech, it is also necessary to study policy documents. While speech can be understood as instrumental in a pursuit of a political strategy, a policy document is the outcome of ‘the bargaining and negotiation processes of nationally held strategic beliefs, values, norms and ideas of security’ (Zyla, 2011, p.672). As political myths are myths because of their unquestioned authority – the claim on truth – we can expect political myths of European exceptionalism to be well represented in EU policy documents. Besides, policy documents on European strategy are informative with regards to the enabling and disabling effects of discourse. Political myths participate in the formation of discursive representations which enable certain policies while excluding others, which should inform on the success or
the failure of strategic narratives. Finally, discursive representations also play a central role in constructing the identity of the ‘self’, in opposition to an ‘other’ that is build as a threat (Diez, 2014; Larsen, 2018; Neumann, 2008). This is especially interesting with regards to the construction of an EU identity in security and defence issues, or the emergence of an EU strategic culture.

Search for sources

Keywords such as ‘terrorism’, ‘war on terror’, ‘Mali’, ‘Sahel’, ‘counterterrorism’, ‘EUTM Mali’ were used as filters, as well as the period 2011-2021. The list of documents was then browsed manually and a first selection was made based on actors, topics, and contexts. The French speeches were selected as to include both former President François Hollande who initiated the French military intervention in Mali, as well as current President Emmanuel Macron. Whether the speech was given in a European context was an important criteria for selection. Speeches of the European Commission were selected mostly on the topic, either European action in Mali or counterterrorism, and the actor providing the speech, either the President of the Commission, or the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP).

Regarding the policy documents, the first products to be selected were the Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel of 2011 and the EU’s Integrated Strategy in the Sahel, 2021, two key documents to understand EU action in Mali. The Global Strategy for the EU’s Foreign and Security Policy of 2016, which replaced the European Security Strategy of 2003, was added as it remains until today the bedrock for other EU strategic documents. However, and as opposed to public speeches, no French policy documents were included. This is motivated by the object of the research, which is ultimately the strategic culture of the EU between 2011 and 2021 in the context of Mali. The selection of speeches and policy documents is presented in table 3.

Table 3 – Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>France</th>
<th>European Union</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

36
Public speeches
François Hollande, 15 May 2013
Emmanuel Macron, 26 September 2017
Emmanuel Macron, 16 February 2021
Catherine Ashton, 13 March 2013
José Manuel Barroso, 02 April 2014
Jean-Claude Juncker, 09 June 2017
Policy documents
A Global Strategy for the EU Foreign and Security Policy, 2016
The EU’s Integrated Strategy in the Sahel, 2021

Sources: Vie Publique, Élysée, European Commission, European External Action Service

The documents have been retrieved from four different public websites. The speeches of the French Presidents were retrieved from the website ‘vie-publique.fr’, a state-owned platform dedicated to generating public debate and developing the understanding of policymaking, as well as from the website of the French Presidency ‘elysee.fr’. The speeches of leading members of the European Commission were retrieved from the press corner of the website of the Commission ‘ec.europa.eu’. Finally the policy documents were collected from the website of the European External Action Service ‘eeas.europa.eu’. As all these documents are retrieved from public websites, they display information that is wished to be expressed publicly. This is important to bear in mind as the texts analysed do not let us have access to the discourses present in classified documents.

3.5. Validity and reliability

Validity is about the consistency of the theoretical categories that were designed, that is whether one is measuring what one ought to measure. With regards to discourse analysis, validity can be considered to be achieved when the addition of new texts does not question the consistency of the theoretical categories (Milliken, 1999). The selection of texts was done while keeping in mind the limited timeframe available for conducting this research. Ideally, including more texts further along the study should remain a possibility, depending on whether the results are coherent with the theoretical categories designed. In addition, the categories from which the codes are derived have been built deductively, directly from the theoretical framework. A sample of the source selection was used to briefly test the validity
of the coding frame. But the limited timeframe did not allow to pursue a real inductive approach that would have grounded the theoretical categories in the data. The coding frame would also be stronger by going through a careful review and trial with peers to make sure that the codes are not subject to divergent interpretations.

These elements lead to issues of reliability, that is the consistency of the interpretations made when applying the theoretical framework to external texts and other studies (Milliken, 1999). The analysis of the results will be conducted while considering previous research on political myths and narratives. Nonetheless, the reliability of the result would benefit from including more inductive logic in the deductively-formed coding frame.

4. Results

4.1. General overview

The texts were coded based on the different mythèmes which form the building blocks and the story line of a narrative. The first step in interpreting the results was to look at the relative repartition of the mythèmes which belong to the strategic narrative on the ‘war on terror’, and the mythèmes which make up the political myth of European exceptionalism.

Three documents stand out in regards to the narrative on the ‘war on terror’: The EU Strategy for the Sahel of 2011 (EU, 2011), the speech of François Hollande in 2013 (Hollande, 2013), and the speech of Emmanuel Macron in 2021 (Macron, 2021). In each of these documents, mythèmes related to the narrative on the ‘war on terror’ are dominant in comparison with the mythèmes related to the political myth of European exceptionalism, with a respective proportion of 57.83%, 59.09% and 62.35%. All of these documents are directly addressing the question of terrorism in the Sahel region. The speech of Catherine Ashton (Ashton, 2013) also displays a strong proportion of mythèmes related to the ‘war on terrorism’ with 45.45%. This document directly addresses as well the security of the Sahel and the fight against terrorists.
Table 4 – Relative repartition of the mythèmes across documents

The five remaining documents display a large majority of mythèmes related to the myth of European exceptionalism. Among these five documents, the European Global Strategy (EU, 2016), the speech of Emmanuel Macron in 2017 (Macron, 2017) and the speech of Jean-Claude Juncker in 2017 are not only concerned with terrorism in the Sahel, but more broadly with European security and defence. Interestingly, the EU Strategy for the Sahel of 2021 (EU, 2021) also contains a vast proportion of mythèmes related to European exceptionalism with 73.39%, against 26.61% for the mythèmes related to the ‘war on terror’. Macron (2017) displays a very small proportion of mythèmes associated with the ‘war on terror’ which represent 6.86% against 93.14% of mythèmes belonging to European exceptionalism. It is important to bear in mind that this speech stands out compared with other speeches. Notably, this speech took place after Emmanuel Macron’s first election as French President, and it was set as the launch of his vision and ambition for the European Union.
4.2. Consistency of the narratives

However, these proportions are not very informative with regards to the deployment of a full narrative and its potential strategic use. A narrative gains its power from its plot, which means that the different mythèmes that build up a narrative are articulated together.

Texts where the narrative on the ‘war on terror’ is dominant

Among the documents that display a larger proportion of mythèmes on the ‘war on terror’ all of them also contain the full deployment of the mythèmes, which means that the plot of the narrative is developed in its entirety. On the other hand, the myth of European exceptionalism is missing two of its mythèmes in each text (either B1, B2 or B3). However, it is interesting to note that the last mythème of European exceptionalism, B5 ‘A new European order’, which represents the denouement of the narrative, is overrepresented. Hence, it represents 31.37% of all the mythèmes in Hollande (2013), 27.62% in Macron (2021), and 30.53% in EU (2011). Comparatively, the last mythème A5 ‘Victory over terrorism’ of the narrative on the ‘war on terror’ is less present with respectively 7.84%, 7.62%, and 7.37%. This pattern may suggest the mechanism through which a strategic narrative works on a political myth. Indeed, the denouement of the myth of European exceptionalism comes to play the role of the denouement of the narrative on the ‘war on terror’. The narrative that is used strategically would attempt to resonate with a political myth by accepting the conclusion of the political myth as the conclusion for the strategic narrative. How this mechanism could work will be illustrated further.
Table 5 – Repartition of the mythèmes of the narrative on the ‘war on terror’

| Source: data analysis |

Texts where the myth of European exceptionalism is dominant

When the mythèmes related to European exceptionalism are more present than those associated with the ‘war on terror’, the texts follow two distinct patterns. In Macron (2017), Ashton (2013), and Juncker (2017), all the mythèmes of the myth of European exceptionalism are present. In Barroso (2014), EU (2016), and EU (2021), the mythème B3 on ‘Fascism’ is absent or negligible. However, these last three texts display a very large proportion of the denouement mythème B5 ‘A new European order’, with respectively 52.17%, 53.99%, and 53.69%. This high presence of the denouement of European exceptionalism might be a sign of a myth of European exceptionalism that is reinterpreting a narrative on the ‘war on terror’, thereby illustrating the fact that if strategic narratives can resonate on political myths, a political myth may also be used to modify or reinterpret narratives, or simply have productive effects because of its constitutive function. This will also be illustrated later.
Table 6 – Repartition of the mythèmes of the myth of European exceptionalism

| Source: data analysis |

5. Analysis

5.1. Narratives on the ‘war on terror’

Strategic use of the narrative

Strategic narratives were theorised by Freedman (2015) as compelling story lines that either serve strategy, by confusing, deceiving, or winning over an adversary, or are about strategy, when they aim at mobilising and generating support. The strategic narratives on counterterrorism identified in the data are all about strategy as they are without exception deployed in contexts where the stake is to mobilise either the European Union, EU member states, or African states. Freedman’s definition of strategic narratives is particularly useful to discriminate between two groups of texts that were identified above. In the sources analysed, four texts display narratives on the ‘war on terror’ which respect the three criteria a narrative must fulfil to be considered strategic (Freedman, 2015): the EU Strategy for the Sahel of 2011, and the speeches of Hollande (2013), Ashton (2014), and Macron (2021). In these texts, all the mythèmes of the narrative on the ‘war on terror’ are fully and coherently deployed (1). In
addition, the mythèmes present are expliciteily formulated, and in a fashion aimed at suggesting certain policy options. This supports the idea that they are deliberately constructed (2). Finally, all these narratives on the ‘war on terror’ largely combine the denouement of the myth of European exceptionalism with the denouement of the ‘war on terror’. This mechanism means that the narrative on the ‘war on terror’ attempts to appeal to existing ideas and beliefs (3), and confirms its strategic use.

In the four texts, the story that is told begins with the first mythème of the narrative on the ‘war on terror’, which is where the obscurantist forces arise. Their obscurantism means that they are characterised by ignorance, backwardness, and evil. Hence, Ashton (2013, p2) pays tribute to the efforts of France:

‘in driving the terrorists out of the cities and regions of the north, taking the battle to their retreats in the northern mountains.’

The stress on the geographical locations ‘north’ and ‘northern mountains’ subtly brings in mind images of isolated and primitive people, living far away from civilisation. Similarly, Hollande (2013, p.2) describes how the terrorists ‘subjugated the populations, destroyed monuments, enroled children, abused women.’¹¹ He highlights here the evil deeds of terrorists, but also the ignorance of people who destroy ‘monuments’, lasting symbols of culture and civilisation. Terrorists of Islamic inspiration come to echo the radicality of medieval crusaders and inquisitors, or the irrationality of the religious wars. Just as the Renaissance provided the answer to obscurantism by reviving education and culture, modern terrorism also comes from ignorance. Hence:

‘Lack of education and employment opportunities for young people contributes to tensions and makes them prone to cooperate with AQIM or organized crime for financial reasons or to be radicalized and recruited by AQIM’ (EU, 2011, p.3)

¹¹ ‘soumettaient les populations, détruisaient des monuments, enrôlaient des enfants, violentaient des femmes’.
And ignorance comes from the fact that the ‘northern regions’ have yet to be touched by civilisation:

‘The remote and isolated character of this sensitive region and the difficulties faced by the Sahel countries in providing, assistance, development and public services to local populations, the insufficiently decentralised decision making and the inequitable sharing of revenues of capital-intensive economic activities pose serious challenges.’ (EU, 2011, p.3).

The terms ‘remote’ and ‘isolated’ both have a political geographical connotation and a normative connotation which contains the idea of backwardness in relation to civilizations.

The rise of obscurantism makes the second mythème possible. Then, terrorists have arisen and they seek to sow discord and division within the society. The terrorists want to ‘shake with fear the African states themselves and directly threaten the security of Europe’ (Hollande, 2013, p.2). Not only the terrorists aim at destroying the modern state, which would bring chaos, but they also have the ambition to export their war to the world:

‘Indeed, the agenda of the RVIM, affiliated to Al-Qaeda, and of IS-GS, it is not simply Kidal or Bamako, but it is to strike even further, tomorrow Abidjan, Dakar, other horizons, and to continue to prosper.’ (Macron, 2021, p.2).

Terrorists’ ultimate goal is to bring about civil war and chaos. This is the third mythème which brings the narrative to its climactic moment. Terrorists seek to stir discord because it allows them to survive:

‘assisting at national level in mitigating internal tensions, including the challenges posed by violent extremism on which AQIM and other criminal groups feed.’ (EU, 2011, p.4)

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12 ‘faire trembler les États africains eux-mêmes et menacer directement la sécurité de l’Europe’.
13 ‘En effet, l’agenda du RVIM, affilié à Al-Qaïda, et de l’EIGS, ce n’est pas simplement Kidal ou Bamako, mais c’est de frapper plus loin, demain Abidjan, Dakar, d’autres horizons et de continuer à prospérer.’
Terrorists feed on discord, which they attempt to initiate through the killing of the innocent, as Macron (2021, p.2) reminds to his audience: ‘And I want here to remind that the first victims of this terrorism, it is the civilian populations of the Sahelian states’. In their search for chaos, terrorists destroy and ruin every sign of civilisation:

‘Then, terrorist groups destroyed much infrastructures essential to everyday life: electric generators destroyed, water pumps out of use, public buildings, markets, schools and health centers put to ashes.’ (Hollande, 2013, p.3)

Once the climactic point has been reached, then the narrative can go down in terms of intensity. Now that the forces of evil have reached their highest point, the forces of good mobilise and resist, thereby initiating the way down towards the denouement. This is the beginning of the Just War on terror when the forces of good strike back:

‘Nonetheless, in January, we took the decision, France, to come to the help of Mali, as requested by its President.’ (Hollande, 2013, p.2)

Interestingly, when come the mythèmes related to the Just War on terror, come also mythèmes related to the myth of European exceptionalism where the liberal forces strike back, and more specifically the ‘European heroes’. The fight against terror is just, and therefore intrinsically heroic. Ashton (2013, p.2) ‘must pay tribute first of all to the efforts and sacrifices of one member state, France’. Similarly, when arguing for a deeper integration of European defence, Juncker (2017, p.2) claims that ‘When France intervenes in Mali, it is European honour they are saving’. These instances where the fight against terrorists conflate with the idea of European heroic deeds might suggest the beginning of the work of the narrative on the ‘war on terror’ on the political myth of European exceptionalism.

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14 ‘Et je veux ici rappeler que les principales victimes de ce terrorisme, ce sont les populations civiles des États du Sahel.’
15 ‘Ensuite, les groupes terroristes avaient détruit bon nombre d’infrastructures essentielles à la vie de tous les jours : groupes électrogènes détruits, pompes à eau mises hors d’usage, bâtiments publics, marchés, écoles et centres de santé démolis.’
16 ‘Et pourtant, au mois de janvier, nous avons pris la décision, la France, de venir en aide au Mali, à la demande de son Président.’
In the end, terrorists are doomed to be defeated. Thus, ‘This military effort defined in Pau allowed victories, it allowed us to achieve results and the save the Sahel once more’\textsuperscript{17} (Macron, 2021, p.3). This victory will bring peace, progress, prosperity:

‘I want to explain the progress made since then, the EU’s role in it, the challenges that remain, and what we are doing to support Mali – and the region – in overcoming them so that the people of Mali can live in peace and security and return to the path of development.’ (Ashton, 2013, p.2)

This is where the myth of European exceptionalism clearly steps in through the denouement mythèmes B5. Victory over terrorists not only makes it possible for the Sahelian countries to be at peace and prosper, but it also offers an opportunity to bring the countries together into an EU-like regional organisation:

‘Secondly, that achieving security and development in the Sahel is only possible through closer regional cooperation. This is currently weaker than it needs to be, and the EU has a potential role to play in supporting it.’ (EU, 2011, p.1)

Words such as ‘integration’, ‘regional’, ‘cooperation’, but also ‘sustainable’ and ‘inclusive’, are lexical triggers that systematically evoke the EU model throughout documents originating from the EU. Moreover, democracy is the corner stone for such a model, and is therefore a central aspect of what is at stake once terrorists have been defeated:

‘Two Sahelian states have conducted, or are conducting, an electoral process in a peaceful manner – which only a few imagined possible just one year ago – such as the Burkina Faso that completed its elections’\textsuperscript{18}. (Macron, 2021, p.4)

\textsuperscript{17} ‘Cet effort militaire défini à Pau a donc permis des victoires, nous a permis d’obtenir des résultats et a sauvé une deuxième fois le Sahel’

\textsuperscript{18} ‘Deux Etats sahéliens ont conduit ou sont en train de conduire un processus électoral de manière pacifique, ce que peu ont envisagé il y a un an, comme le Burkina Faso qui a parachèvé ses élections.’
Therefore, the narrative on the ‘war on terror’ strategically attempts to resonate with the myth of European exceptionalism by appealing to its ambition to export the EU model of integration and its universal liberal values. Terrorists have to be vanquished as a necessary step in preparing the Sahelian ground to be fertilized with the seeds of European beliefs, values, and norms.

Passive role of the narrative

The second category of texts when it comes to the narrative on the ‘war on terror’ are primarily made of Barroso (2014), the EU Global Strategy of 2016, the EU Strategy for the Sahel of 2021, and to a lesser extent of Juncker (2017), and Macron (2017). In these, the narrative on the ‘war on terror’ may be present through all its mythèmes, but to a much lesser extent than the political myth of European exceptionalism. Most importantly, the narrative seems to remain in the background, contained to a passive role. The narrative forms the context in which certain solutions are proposed. In the EU Global Strategy of 2016 this is especially visible as the threat of terrorism is mostly mentioned through the term ‘terrorism’ without any mention to its religious character or specific locations. This relative neutrality in naming terrorism is also present in the EU Strategy for the Sahel of 2021.

Hence, the narrative does not appear to appeal to current ideas or beliefs, nor to be consciously constructed to achieve a purpose. Therefore, it does not seem to be used strategically. In fact, in Barroso (2014), EU (2016), and EU (2021), another narrative comes to reinterpret the one on the ‘war on terror’ to replace the original threat of terrorism by the threat of under-development, fragility, and vulnerability. This discourse is present in Barroso (2014), but also strikingly in the EU Global Strategy of 2016 and the EU Strategy for the Sahel of 2021. In these texts, elements of the narrative on the ‘war on terror’ are there, but they don’t appear to try to resonate on the political myth of European exceptionalism. Instead, it seems to be the latter that is reinterpreting the former.
5.2. Political myths of European exceptionalism

Mythèmes from the political myth of European exceptionalism are present in all the texts, and in general, mostly through the denouement mythème of the political myth. Three groups of texts emerge in regards to the political myth of European exceptionalism. In the texts where the narrative on the ‘war on terror’ is dominant, or close (Ashton, 2014), the political myth of European exceptionalism is mostly present through the denouement mythème (EU, 2011; Hollande, 2013, Macron, 2021). In the texts where the mythèmes on the political myth European exceptionalism are dominant, two trends can be identified, with on one side, Barroso (2014), EU (2016), and EU (2021), where the denouement mythème of the political myth of European exceptionalism is massively present (above 50% of all the mythèmes), and on the other, Juncker (2017) and Macron (2017) where the political myth is most fully and skillfully deployed.

When the ‘war on terror’ resonates with European exceptionalism

In the texts where the narrative on the ‘war on terror’ is dominant, the political myth of European exceptionalism is used with the ambition to present counterterrorism as a natural solution to the problem of jihadi-insurgency:

‘The EU’s development policy in the Sahel, drawn up in partnership with the countries concerned, is geared towards tackling the root causes of the extreme poverty and towards creating the grass-root conditions for economic opportunity and human development to flourish. But it will be hard for this policy to achieve a high impact unless security challenges are also tackled’. (EU, 2011, p.2)

Before tackling the ‘root causes’ of the conflict, identified here in underdevelopment, security challenges must be addressed. Counterterrorism becomes the necessary condition for exporting the EU model which will bring prosperity, peace, and progress. Thus, the denouement mythème of European exceptionalism, which is about the advent of a democratic and post-national order of European inspiration, serves as the denouement of the narrative on the ‘war on terror’:
‘Only a regional, integrated and holistic strategy will enable us to make progress on any of the specific problems.’ (EU, 2011, p.2)

Once more, the lexical triggers ‘regional’ and ‘integrated’ suggest the EU model as the ultimate solution for the dynamics of violence in the Sahel. However, the narrative makes sure to take the audience from the threat of terrorism towards peace, prosperity, and democracy in such a way that fighting terrorism appears to be the natural way forward. This corresponds with the naturalising function of a political myth that makes historical and contingent processes look natural while they are in fact contingent (Bliesemann de Guévara, 2016).

When European exceptionalism reinterprets the ‘war on terror’

In Barroso (2014), EU (2016), and EU (2021), the narrative on ‘the war on terror’ appears less coherent, and is contained to a passive role. However, as discussed above, this narrative seems to be reinterpreted so that the threat of terrorism is not caused by the rise of obscurantism, which is the first mythème of the ‘war on terror’, but rather by the idea of state collapse. In both EU (2016) and EU (2021), it is generally the fragility of the neighbouring regions that is source of threats. For the EU Global Strategy ‘Fragility beyond our borders threatens all our vital interests’ (EU, 2016, p.26). For the EU Strategy for the Sahel 2021 ‘in recent years, the Sahel has faced complex situations involving mutually exacerbating vulnerabilities, fragilities and insecurity’ (EU, 2021, p.3). ‘Fragility’ and ‘vulnerability’ trigger the idea of regions that are still primitive because the modern state has not yet fully reached them. As a consequence, terrorists rise because of the fragility of democratic institutions and their vulnerability to the corruption and authoritarianism of the ruling class. This means that terrorism is not anymore the force that disrupts the order, but rather the consequence of other causes. This shift is clearly apparent in the EU Strategy for the Sahel of 2021, and it is precisely what makes it so different than the one of 2011:

‘Given the need to achieve tangible results as soon as possible, the EU wants to make its action part of a partnership based on each partner’s responsibility to fulfil its commitments. This mutual accountability is based on close and continuous
political dialogue, allowing progress to be made in jointly agreed priority areas, in a climate of trust. Its aim is to encourage the achievement of concrete and measurable objectives, in particular in the areas of governance, the rule of law and the fight against corruption and impunity.’ (EU, 2021, p.7)

This is in fact in line with the story narrated in the political myth of European exceptionalism which sees as the threat to the liberal order the rise of nationalist and authoritarian forces that undermine democratic institutions. Thus, the political myth comes to transform the narrative on the ‘war on terror’ to its own image. This in fact allows the myth to coherently present the European Union itself as the solution to the fragility of the Sahelian region. Barroso opens the EU-Africa summit by invoking an African hero who echoes the European heroes of EU integration such as Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer, or Alcide de Gaspieri:

‘It is the first time we meet in a Europe-Africa format since the passing away of the great African and world leader, Nelson Mandela. He was a giant. He changed the course of his country, of the African continent and of the whole world. I trust that his vision, his commitment to peace, freedom and justice and his wisdom will inspire our discussions today and our actions tomorrow.’ (Barroso, 2014, p.1)

Then he goes on to describe how the EU has successfully defeated the power politics of nationalist wars (mythème B2) by overcoming nations through liberalism and democracy:

‘This perfectly illustrates that our vision of the world is one of cooperation and not competition, of openness and not retrenchment or exclusivity.’ (Barroso, 2014, p.1).

Consequently, the solution to the ‘vulnerability’ of the African continent is to undergo the same transformation that the European continent achieved in the last 70 years:

‘Last year I was honoured to represent the EU on the 50th anniversary of the African Union in Addis and to express, on behalf of the European Union, our support to the
Just like Europe in the past, Africa must come out of the dark ages through an ‘African renaissance’ while liberating itself from the shackles of nationalism through ‘the integration of the continent’.

While in the strategy of 2011, the defeat of terrorist forces was the main challenge to reestablish the order, and even improve it, with the strategy of 2021 the enemy has changed. The disrupting forces are the corrupt elite that oppress the peace-loving civilian population. As a consequence, the EU must focus more on ‘accountability’, ‘responsibility’, and ‘trust’. This is particularly interesting as this phenomenon relates to the constituting function of a political myth: as they are a constituting feature of human nature, myths are not only produced by human beings, but human beings are themselves produced by myths (Bliesemann de Guevara, 2016). The political myth shapes the identity of the policymaker, which influences the way she constructs problems and proposes solutions. This hints to the productivity of political myths, which, through the interplay with the dominant discourse on grand strategy, participates in shaping a certain strategic culture.

Is another battle going on?

Finally, the political myth of European exceptionalism is most coherently and forcefully deployed in Juncker (2017) and Macron (2017), two texts that are more specifically addressing the subject of European security and defence, and therefore are less concerned with terrorism and the Sahel. Here, the political myth of European exceptionalism appears to be used instrumentally in order to convince of the necessity to build a ‘geostrategic’ Europe that embraces both soft power and hard power in a context of great power competition. Hence, the story that is told is one where the European order as build after the Second World War is disrupted once more by the rise of nationalism which is expressed through populism, ignorance, and hatred:
These ideas have a name: nationalism, identity politics, protectionism, withdrawal sovereignism. These ideas which have, in so many occasions, ignited the braziers where Europe should have perished, here they are these last days again under fresh garnments\(^{19}\) (Macron, 2017, p.2)

The first mythème makes possible the second, where nationalist wars materialise. Power politics becomes the norm, and ‘already, we distinguish again what could destroy this peace that comforts us’\(^{20}\) (Macron, 2017, p.18). The sound of arms starts to reach European ears:

‘Further afield, we witness increasing tensions in East Asia. North Korea is accelerating its nuclear plan and is getting closer with every test’ (Juncker, 2017, p.2).

Besides, nationalism not only threatens of war, but it also subjugates the freedom of the people:

‘We do not cross anymore in our streets the human beings that war left in an inconsolable mourning because fanaticism and nationalism, for a time, took over the conscious of the people’\(^{21}\) (Macron, 2017, p.19).

Nationalism can only lead to fascism which represents the greatest evil and brings nations into ‘mortal conflicts and destructive hegemony’\(^{22}\) (Macron, 2017, p.10). Here, begins the way road down towards the denouement. The liberal forces are resilient, they remember, they resist, and they strike back:

\(^{19}\) ‘Ces idées ont un nom : nationalisme, identitarisme, protectionnisme, souverainisme de repli. Ces idées qui, tant de fois, ont allumé les brasiers où l'Europe aurait pu périr, les revoici sous des habits neufs encore ces derniers jours.’

\(^{20}\) ‘Mais, déjà, nous voyons poindre de nouveau ce qui pourrait détruire cette paix qui nous berce.’

\(^{21}\) ‘Nous ne croisons plus dans nos rues les êtres que la guerre a laissés dans un deuil inconsolable parce que le fanatisme et le nationalisme avaient un temps pris le dessus sur la conscience des peuples.’

\(^{22}\) ‘Perdre cette unité c’est prendre le risque de revenir à nos déchirements mortifères et à l’hégémonie destructrice.’
‘Across wars and crises, across all the challenges of History that stroke Europe, this thought never ceased to grow, to shine. And where chaos should have triumphed, instead, civilisation won, always.’ (Macron, 2017, p.1)

The EU is present and is taking up a leading role in protecting the free world:

‘The European Union has 15 missions around the world and is fighting terrorism in the Sahel: we committed EUR 50 million more on Monday. We are combating piracy in the Indian Ocean and we promote security sector reform in Ukraine. European troops have taken leading roles in NATO missions and UN peacekeeping efforts, most recently in Mali, Somalia, Kosovo and elsewhere.’ (Juncker, 2017, p.1)

This leading role is justified by the tragic history of Europe, and the sacrifices of European heroes that reflect on current generations: ‘because this attachement to the heart, we must have it, because the scares that bruised our Europe, they are our scares!’ (Macron, 2017, p.19)

Ultimately, the myth reaches the denouement where the dark forces of nationalism are defeated and a new order is established. This is the new European order:

‘The only path that can ensure our future, the one that I want to talk to you about today, it is our task, your task, to build it. It is the refoundation of a sovereign Europe, united, and democratic.’ (Macron, 2017, p.3).

The story of the return of power politics is in fact an integral part of the myth of European exceptionalism, but Macron and Juncker divert from the myth when they argue for the sovereignty of the European Union, for its ‘strategic autonomy’. While the traditional myth of

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23 ‘A travers les guerres et les crises, à travers toutes ces péripéties de l’Histoire qui ont frappé l’Europe, cette pensée n’a cessé de grandir, de rayonner. Et là où le chaos aurait pu triompher, la civilisation, toujours, l’a emporté.’

24 ‘parce que cet attachement au cœur, nous devons l’avoir, parce que les cicatrices qui ont balafré notre Europe, ce sont nos cicatrices l’

25 ‘La seule voie qui assure notre avenir, celle dont je veux vous parler aujourd’hui, c’est à nous, à vous de la tracer. C’est la refondation d’une Europe souveraine, unie et démocratique.’
European exceptionalism, in its most current form, is about the EU as a post-national project which represent a rejection of power politics and nationalism, Macron changes slightly the denouement. For him, the EU cannot in itself abolish great power competition. Therefore, it must embrace it:

‘But we must go further. What Europe is missing the most today, it is a European Defence, and common strategic culture [...] to ensure our sovereignty, this is the second key, at the European level, it is about ruling our borders while preserving our values.’26 (Macron, 2017, p.3-4).

It is possible that in these texts, Macron and Juncker are actually attempting to appeal to another kind of European myth. Della Sala (2016) identified different types of political myths among which the myths of exceptionalism, but also the myths of the fortress. Macron (2017) and Juncker (2017) might well be instances where the myth of ‘Fortress Europe’ is used strategically to resonate with a myth of European exceptionalism. This would require further investigation, but it holds the promise of interesting insights.

5.3. Strategic culture

A culture of the ‘war on terror’

Strategic culture was defined as resulting from an interplay between political myths and discourse on grand strategy (figure 1). Epistemic communities share certain political myths which partly shape a particular discourse on grand strategy. In turn, this discourse participates in the formation of strategic narratives when epistemic communities compete with one another to influence the dominant discourse. When strategic narratives are successful in reinterpreting political myths, the dominant discourse is modified according to this reinterpretation (figure 3). This study focussed on the deployement of strategic narratives on the ‘war on terror’ in relation with political myths of European exceptionalism with the aim to

26 ‘Mais il nous faut aller plus loin. Ce qui manque le plus à l’Europe aujourd’hui, cette Europe de la Défense, c’est une culture stratégique commune [...] assurer notre souveraineté, c’est la deuxième clé, à l’échelle européenne, c’est maîtriser nos frontières en préservant nos valeurs.’
reinterpreting it. The texts of Hollande (2013), Ashton (2014), Macron (2021), as well as the EU Strategy for the Sahel of 2011, clearly display this mechanism where narratives are used strategically to resonate on a political myth. The syntagmatic structure of the strategic narrative on the ‘war on terror’ is modified to incorporate the conclusion of the political myth of European exceptionalism. By doing so, the strategic narrative actually suggests the story of European exceptionalism as the mirror image of the story on the ‘war on terror’. Hence, European exceptionalism is subtly incorporated into the paradigmatic structure of the narrative on the ‘war on terror’. The European model of integrated governance becomes the natural solution to the threat of terrorism, and thus, the EU becomes a legitimate security actor to counter an obscurantist insurgency.

In fact, this strategic use of the narrative on the ‘war on terror’ seemed to have been successful in shaping the dominant discourse, and thereby the strategic culture, of the EU at the beginning of the conflict. The EU Strategy for the Sahel of 2011 displays this dominant discourse without any ambiguity. The rise of terrorism is due to ignorance and a certain ‘backwardness’ of local populations, and the solution is in eliminating the obscurantist elements of a society while building up the capacity of the state. Hence, the present analysis supports the hypothesis 1 that ‘if a narrative on the ‘war on terror’ is used strategically to work on a political myth of European exceptionalism it will more likely have an impact on EU Strategy in Mali’.

Towards a culture of human security

In addition, some of the sources actually provide a glimpse at the other aspects of the formation of a strategic culture, and more specifically the mechanism where a political myth is productive of a certain discourse on grand strategy. This was discussed above with regards to the speech of Barroso (2014), the EU Global Strategy of 2016, and the EU Strategy for the Sahel of 2021. In these texts, the myth of European exceptionalism took the upper hand and shaped the narrative on the ‘war on terror’ according to its own references. As a consequence, the dominant discourse shifts from one overly concerned with counterterrorism with one that predominantly addresses questions of governance, justice, or inclusion. This seems to support the argument developed by Matlary (2006) that European integration offers the opportunity
to create an EU strategic culture focussed on human security, instead of a myriad of national strategic cultures based on state security. Here, the political myth of European exceptionalism demonstrates its power and resilience because it rests at the heart of the identity of the EU.

The counterterrorism ‘moment’ of Europe comes to an end, the dominant discourse changes, and with it the strategic culture of the EU. In that regards, the speech of Macron (2021) might illustrate an unsuccessful attempt of a ‘French’ epistemic community to influence this new dominant discourse. Nonetheless, Barroso (2014), EU (2016), and EU (2021) support hypothesis 2 ‘if a narrative on the ‘war on terror’ is not used strategically, it will be less likely to have an impact on EU strategy in Mali’.

The competition between epistemic communities

The last argument mentioned above points to the concept of epistemic communities and their competition to shape the dominant discourse on grand strategy. Overall, the data analysed illustrates the struggle of the EU to accommodate its universal ideals and its post-national ambition to pursue a strategy based on human security, with the reality of a EU that is made of nation-states, whose concerns are with state security. In fact, the force with which the strategic narrative on the ‘war on terror’ is deployed in the texts of French Presidents, Hollande (2013) and Macron (2021), express the deep concern of the threat of terrorism in France. It might even be possible that the ‘war on terror’ evolved from being a simple narrative towards becoming a political myth in a French context that has been characterised by series of terrorist attacks in recent years. This hints to the role of crises, or critical junctures, in falsifying or validating a narrative. Critical junctures have already been identified as playing a central role in the formation of strategic cultures (Hyde-Price, 2004), but what are their effects with regards to strategic narratives and political myths deserve closer attention. In any case, epistemic communities were theorised as competing against one another in order to ‘shape the symbolic discourse of the strategic elite and therefore of strategic culture itself’ (Libel, 2020, p.698). This competition was conceived in a vertical manner with strategic sub-cultures attempting to influence the higher level. But the data seems to show that the competition between epistemic communities is also horizontal, which means that each community not only attempts to influence the strategic elite, but also to convince each other of the validity of their Weltanschauung.
6. Conclusion

This paper questions the extent to which the strategic use of narratives and political myths shaped a strategic culture that influenced European strategy in Mali between 2011 and 2021. A critical discourse analysis allowed to identify two phases corresponding with two dominant discourses. The first one is characterised by a dominance of the narrative on the ‘war on terror’ and its strategic use to resonate with the myth of European exceptionalism. This phase starts with 9/11 and George W. Bush’s campaign of Global War on Terror. The dominance of this discourse has had an uncontested impact on policymaking, as illustrated by the counterterrorist approach to recent wars, such as the ones in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Mali (Charbonneau, 2019; Dworkin, 2016; Malejacq & Sandor, 2020). A significant part of the data is clearly in line with this trend and suggest that the EU strategic culture has been shaped by a discourse on counterterrorism.

The second phase is where the narratives on the ‘war on terror’ are still present, but neither coherently, nor in an active manner. It is as if the narratives have exhausted themselves and retreated to the background. This might signal that the epistemic community at the origin of the strategic narratives on the ‘war on terror’ has lost ground in the competition with other communities. Here, the myth of European exceptionalism steps in and is used to reinterpret the narrative on the ‘war on terror’ according to its own standards. The EU strategic culture consequently becomes less interested in terrorism – state security – but more with the well-being of civilian populations – human security.

6.1. Theoretical implications

The results of the critical discourse analysis conducted in this paper are encouraging with regards to the relevance of the mechanism that was formulated. But they also call for further research to explore other aspects of this mechanism that were not specifically studied here. As already mentioned, a part of the data seemed to portray the process where a political myth participates in shaping a discourse on grand strategy. When the political myth of European exceptionalism reinterprets the narrative on the ‘war on terror’ to its own image, the
constituting function of political myths becomes apparent. Nonetheless, this aspect of the mechanism requires analysing additional data as well as further theoretical specifications.

Moreover, one of the main interests in the theoretical framework presently developed is to understand strategic culture as a dynamic concept, through the competition between epistemic communities. The data displayed a tension between a discourse on grand strategy that is more preoccupied with state security, and one that is more concerned with human security. This tension suggests a competition between epistemic communities that are more nationally anchored, and an EU epistemic community that seems to embrace a post-national version of the EU project. To further develop and consolidate the theoretical developments proposed in this paper, it is necessary to have a better understanding of these epistemic communities, that is who are they made of, what are the dominant values and beliefs, or whether they are national or transnational.

Finally, a last element of the mechanism could not be touched upon through the methods used in this study. This is the process through which strategic narratives are produced by a certain discourse on grand strategy. The critical discourse analysis was indeed conducted on public documents that can only inform about the ‘frontstage’ of politics and policymaking. In order to gain insights about the formation of strategic narratives, it would be necessary to access the ‘backstage’ of the scene. This could be partly done by conducting in-depth interviews with members of epistemic communities. This also requires to have a good picture of the landscape of epistemic communities.

6.2. Discussion

The two primary limitations are related to validity and reliability. Although the texts analysed in this study did not disprove the categories theorised and the associated codes, the diversity of patterns of relationships between narratives requires further analysis of additional texts. The present selection includes documents that deal directly with security in the Sahel, others with European security and defence, and one more specifically with the development of the African continent (table 3). To consolidate the validity of this paper, it is necessary to look into more texts for each of these topics to assess whether the categories designed are valid mostly
for texts dealing with the security in the Sahel, or if other categories need to be elaborated for texts addressing issues of European security and defence. Besides, the analysis of the data confirms the need for including an inductive approach in the formation of the theoretical categories and codes. For instance, the climactic mythème B3 ‘Fascism’ of the political myth of European exceptionalism is very weak in all texts, which might be a sign that it should be reformulated.

With regards to reliability, the results of this paper are in line with previous research such as Bottici & Challand (2006), Della Sala (2016), Esch (2010), or Malejacq & Sandor (2020). But as mentioned earlier, the reliability would be strengthened by better grounding the theoretical framework in the data with an inductive approach to the formation of the coding frame.

Finally, regarding hypothesis 1, it is important to bear in mind that the EU Strategy for the Sahel of 2011 comes 10 years after 9/11, a period during which narratives on the ‘war on terror’ were ubiquitous (Dworkin, 2016; Esch, 2010; Malejacq & Sandor, 2020). Therefore, extending the analysis to texts that came prior to the EU Strategy for the Sahel of 2011 would consolidate the claim on hypothesis 1.

6.3. Final words

In the end of April 2022, while war is waging in Ukraine, Russian mercenaries of the Wagner group were filmed by a French surveillance asset while burying dead bodies in the sand next to a military base that had just been evacuated by the French army in Mali (Nasr, 2022). This attempt to stage a war crime in a context of information warfare tragically illustrates the consequences of European strategic failure in Mali, as the civilian population becomes entrapped between an authoritarian regime and its brutal Russian suppletives on one side, and jihadists of AQIM and IS on the other. This paper proposes an original explanation for European strategic choices in Mali through the concept of strategic culture. Taking the ‘discursive turn’ in the study of strategic culture further, this concept was reformulated to highlight a mechanism where narratives are used strategically by epistemic communities to influence the dominant discourse on grand strategy, and hence strategic culture itself. For this purpose, strategic narratives attempt to resonate with existing political myths in order to gain
enough power to shape the dominant discourse. In this case study, the critical discourse analysis of selected political speeches of French and EU leaders, as well as EU policy documents, did support the argument that strategic narratives on the ‘war on terror’ have successfully worked on the political myth of European exceptionalism, in such a way that the EU strategy for the Sahel first approached the conflict with a strong focus on counterterrorism and state security. However, the data also displays a shift which suggests that the dominant discourse changed towards one more concerned with human security. Beyond a need to extend the selection of texts and consolidate the coding frame, this paper sets the first stone for a research program that approaches strategic culture through myths and narratives. Further research should primarily focus on identifying and understanding epistemic communities, as well as exploring the aspects of the mechanism that were not the focus of this study, such as the productivity of political myths themselves. This approach to strategic culture is particularly promising for comprehending the dynamic character of a strategic culture and how a particular strategic culture comes into being. It will also provide valuable insights on the power of narratives in shaping ideas and identities, a knowledge all the more important to have in an era where disinformation and propaganda are taking unmatched proportions through communication technologies and social media.
## Appendix 1 – Contexts and audiences of the documents selected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hollande’s speech 2013</td>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>European institutions, European member states, international community, Mali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashton’s speech 2013</td>
<td>European Parliament</td>
<td>European representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barroso speech 2014</td>
<td>EU-Africa Summit</td>
<td>African Union, African states, United Nations, EU member states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU Global Strategy 2016</td>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>European Union and member states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juncker’s speech 2017</td>
<td>Defence and Security Conference in Prague</td>
<td>NATO, EU institutions, EU member states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macron’s speech 2017</td>
<td>Sorbonne university</td>
<td>EU member states, German chancellor, EU institutions, French elite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macron’s speech 2021</td>
<td>Summit of the G5 Sahel</td>
<td>Sahelian countries, Council of the EU</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: data analysis
### A - Narrative on the war on terror

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mythèmes</th>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1 - The return of obscurantism</td>
<td>A1a - Evil forces / <em>Forces du mal</em></td>
<td>The forces that arise to disrupt the order are evil forces that represent the darkest aspects of human nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A1b - Ignorance / <em>ignorance</em></td>
<td>Evil forces rise because ignorance has gained ground to the detriment of reason. Terrorists are driven by emotions rather than reason.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A1c - Primitive / <em>primitif</em></td>
<td>Terrorism arise out of a primitive situation. It is the inexistence of the state, the dominance of tribal architecture, the absence of capitalism that provide a fertile ground for terrorists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2 - Obscurantists use terror to sow discord and division</td>
<td>A2a - Terror / <em>terreur</em></td>
<td>Terrorists' mode of operation is aimed at instilling fear in the society. For this they target civilians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A2b - Barbarism / <em>barbarie</em></td>
<td>Terrorists target the innocent because ignorance has placed them outside of the realm of civilisation. They are the Barbarians at the gate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A2c - Warmongerers / <em>bellicistes</em></td>
<td>Terrorists are ultimately interested in war. They don't have any reasonable demands or grievances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3 - The danger of civil war</td>
<td>A3a - Discord / <em>discorde</em></td>
<td>Terrorists seek to sow discord between otherwise peaceful communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A3b - Killing of the innocent / <em>meutre des innocents</em></td>
<td>They want to eliminate the moderate voices, that is the innocent who is interested in peace and justice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A3c - Ruin / <em>ruine</em></td>
<td>If they succeed to bring about civil war, societies will be ruined, progress will be lost, and individuals will go back to the dark ages of the war of all against all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4 - The Just War on terror</td>
<td>A4a - Fight back / <em>résistance</em></td>
<td>Liberal forces resist and strike back. The terrorists begin to fail in their endeavours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A4b - Just cause / <em>juste cause</em></td>
<td>The cause of liberal forces is just, and this is why they will prevail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5 - Victory over terrorists</td>
<td>A4c - Forces of good / forces du bien</td>
<td>It is a fight between good and evil. There can be no concession made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 5 of the narrative of the war on terror. This is the denouement. The evil forces are vanquished and the liberal forces are victorious. This brings a new order, or status quo.</td>
<td>A5a - Peace / paix</td>
<td>Victory will bring peace to liberal societies by eliminating tensions between communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A5b - Progress / progrès</td>
<td>Victory over terrorists is also a victory against backwardness. Their elimination will pave the way to progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A5c - Prosperity / prospérité</td>
<td>The victory of liberal forces will bring prosperity and wealth.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B - Myths of European exceptionalism - European integration version

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B1 - The rise of nationalism</th>
<th>B1a - Populism / populisme</th>
<th>Nationalism creates false boundaries between imagined communities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1 of the myth of European exceptionalism. The evil forces of nationalism rise as a side effect of democratisation and disrupt the order and the progress made.</td>
<td>B1b - Ignorance / ignorance</td>
<td>Nationalism is made possible because of the ignorance of the masses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B1c - Hatred / haine</td>
<td>As a consequence, nationalism appeals to the emotions of the masses to create irrational angers and hatreds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B2 - Nationalist wars</th>
<th>B2a - Power politics / politique de puissance</th>
<th>Because nationalism understands international relations as a zero sum game, nations come to believe that wars are instruments for increasing their power.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2 of the myth of European exceptionalism. Nationalist ideologies lead European nations to wage war against one another based on the false belief that war will increase their power.</td>
<td>B2b - Servitude / servitude</td>
<td>In fact, nationalism is used by an elite to exert their power over ordinary citizens for their private interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B2c - Sacrifices of the masses / sacrifice des masses</td>
<td>The masses are sacrificed in absurd wars.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B3 - Fascism</th>
<th>B3a - The greatest evil / le mal absolu</th>
<th>Nationalism takes its purest form in fascism. Fascism is a destructive force that works against the freedom of individuals and basic human rights.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3 of the myth of European exceptionalism. Nationalism reaches a climactic moment with the advent of fascist regimes. These are inherently destructive and threaten the very existence of a free human beings.</td>
<td>B3b - Destruction and chaos / destruction et chaos</td>
<td>Fascism brings back the war of all against all. There is no peace possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B3c - Enslavement / mise en esclavage</td>
<td>Fascism aims at enslaving both the self and the other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B4 - Liberal forces prevail</strong></td>
<td>B4a - Fight back / résistance</td>
<td>Liberal forces are resilient and fight back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B4b - Liberation / libération</td>
<td>The democratic forces fight for freedom. They liberate the people from the authoritarian and oppressive rule of the evil fascist forces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B4c - European heroes / héros européens</td>
<td>From the struggle, new heroes rise. They are the European founding fathers (Adenauer, De Gasperi, Churchill, Monnet)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>B5 - A new European order</strong></th>
<th>B5a - Multilateralism /multilatéralisme</th>
<th>The European heroes expel nationalism once and for all from the politics of Europe. In place, multilateralism becomes the norm.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B5b - European integration / intégration européenne</td>
<td>European integration is the way through which nations are made inoffensive. It is a post-national project driven by progress. As such, it is destined to be exported to the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B5c - Democratic peace / paix démocratique</td>
<td>Because the EU is a unique postnational project build on universal liberal values, it will serve as a beacon of peace and prosperity for the world through the diffusion of its democratic values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography:

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Barroso, J. M. (2014). *Speech by President Barroso at the EU-Africa Summit*. European Commission


**Cover page**