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**European Defense: Legal and Strategic Autonomy Foundations  
for a European Armed Forces**

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*“United we stand, divided we fall”*  
*- Aesop, Greek Storyteller*

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### **List of Relevant Acronyms or Abbreviations**

Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)

Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP)

Coordinated Annual Review on Defense (CARD)

Council of the European Union or the Council (CEU)

European Commission (EC)

European Defense Community (EDC)

European Defense Agency (EDA)

European Economic Community (EEC)

European Union or the Union (EU)

Member States (MS)

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Permanent Member (PM)

Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)

Treaty of the European Union or Lisbon Treaty (TEU)

Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)

United Nations (UN)

United Nations Charter (UNC)

United States of America (USA or U.S.)

Western Union Defense Organization (WUDO)

## Introduction

The time has come for a truly capable and responsible Europe, a concept that requires a high level of strategic and defense cooperation. The catchphrase around defense cooperation is “Strategic Autonomy”, which is defined ambiguously by the 2016 Council of the European Union conclusions as “the ability to act autonomously when and where necessary, and with partners wherever possible.”<sup>1</sup> It shows, nonetheless, a realization by many European capitals, and certainly by Brussels, that a more strategically capable Europe is needed. This sentiment was bolstered after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in early 2022.

As of the time of writing, Europe’s biggest security problem, Russia, had invaded Ukraine with a force of over 150,000.<sup>2</sup> It was an unprovoked and illegal use of force. The war in Ukraine is fundamentally changing how Europe considers its security and defense. Europeans wish to be part of this active conversation about their security and to stop depending on the United States for hard power. For many years, especially since the end of the Cold War, Europe has been a rather dormant security actor. It has mostly relied on NATO, with its strong American backing, to provide the muscle needed to deal with its more concerning threats. Until very recently this was an attractive offer.

The United States is more than willing to provide the personnel and money to guarantee European defense. In return, European capitals had to be an ally to American

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<sup>1</sup> EU, Shared vision, common action: A stronger Europe: *A global strategy for the EU's foreign and security policy*, 13–44, 2016. [https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top\\_stories/pdf/eugs\\_review\\_web.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> David Brown, *Ukraine: How big is the Russian military build-up?* BBC News, February 23, 2022. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-60158694> (accessed February 25, 2022).

The last changes to this document were on April 4, 2022. It is likely that current events have changed since.

foreign policy and invest a few million euros in defense coordination with NATO. Except for specific cases such as France, Europe did not need or want a military force capable of standing alone against Russia or newer hybrid threats such as terrorism or cyber-attacks. European countries individually were largely keen members and partners of NATO. A rethinking of the balance of the relationship between NATO, the EU, and the United States, however, is at hand.

In 2014 the annexation of Crimea signaled to Europe that an assertive and interventionist Russia was back, much like the former USSR had been for several years before its demise. A return to old-style territorial defense between states was very much a possibility. This was the first spark of a long series of events that would ignite the ongoing conversation around European strategic capacity, autonomy, and its future. Sanctions were issued, declarations were made, diplomacy was waged, military budgets were increased and the odd defense cooperation mechanism was used, but the main challenges facing military defense are still very much at play.

Fragmentation, duplication, underdeveloped defense industries, and a lack of strategic cooperation resulted in a dire state for European defense systems. Even if Europe wanted to be militarily autonomous, it could not be so today. Donald Trump's 2016 presidential victory in the United States came as a surprise to most European leaders and as a rupture of the traditional role of the United States as the security guarantor and protector. With his striking rhetoric and harsh diplomacy, Trump staggered most European leaders and citizens, causing the Europeans to ask themselves: will the United States always be there to protect us, or shall we need to do it alone? Trump's rhetoric seemed to suggest the United States might no longer be a reliable partner, causing even French President Emmanuel



Macron to say that NATO was “braindead”.<sup>3</sup> In other words, Europe realized that it might have to do it alone, something it has not had to consider in a long time. Even in the Biden Administration, the United States is focused on competing with the rising power of China. The latest AUKUS agreement, a trilateral defense alliance between Australia, the UK, and the U.S. with the objective of building nuclear-powered submarines,<sup>4</sup> highlighted the United States’ new foreign policy interest but also proved how it is willing to sidestep its European allies. The rift caused after Australia pulled out of its submarine deal with France as a byproduct of AUKUS highlighted the American pivot to Asia and hurt French pride.

France seems to be the leading voice in favor of European Strategic Autonomy, and most acknowledge that it is the country with the clearest understanding of the concept. Strategic Autonomy is part of Macron’s vision of Europe, a vision that he is delivering on during France’s ongoing EU Council presidency. It is important to note France’s role in this project, as it has pursued a more independent foreign policy from the U.S. since the Second World War, and Strategic Autonomy for France is also about being leaders within Europe. France is also the only nuclear power in the European Union, and holds the only permanent, veto-wielding UN Security Council seat of any EU country. As of now, it is also the only EU state involved in a foreign military operation.<sup>5</sup> France has a far more interventionist focus

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<sup>3</sup>NATO is 'brain dead', France's Macron says. Euronews. December 9, 2019 <https://www.euronews.com/2019/11/07/frances-macron-says-nato-suffering-brain-death-questions-us-commitment> (accessed March 14, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Patrick Wintour, *What is the AUKUS Alliance and what are its implications?* The Guardian, September 16 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/sep/16/what-is-the-aukus-alliance-and-what-are-its-implications> (accessed March 14, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Operation Barkhane, Anti-Insurgent operation led by France in the African Sahel Region. *Mapping Armed Groups in Mali and the Sahel, Operation Barkhane*. European Council on Foreign Relations, [https://ecfr.eu/special/sahel\\_mapping/operation\\_barkhane](https://ecfr.eu/special/sahel_mapping/operation_barkhane) (Accessed April 3, 2022).

than any other EU member does, and it is the main supporter of bolstering the EU as a military actor. Macron also sees it as a way to gain leadership and be pro-Europe, something he wants to display to French voters in the weeks leading up to the French presidential election of April 2022. France's agenda as EU President, therefore, is to see a Sovereign Europe and a Strategic Europe. As recently as 2017, Macron's Sorbonne speech proposed a European Intervention Initiative, which also added to the conversation as to what Europe's strategic culture might be.<sup>6</sup>

Germany, the other EU heavyweight, was historically less keen on an interventionist or even a sovereign Europe. It has traditionally chosen to play a more inclusive role in the European Union and a mediator role with Russia. Before the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Germany had not imposed swift sanctions<sup>7</sup> and vowed it would not deliver weapons to a war zone. Both policies were hurriedly reversed after the invasion began and Germany substantially increased its own military budget.<sup>8</sup> Despite Germany's traditional hesitancy, however, Angela Merkel did wish for a European Army on her birthday.<sup>9</sup>

The idea of European defense integration and thus a stronger, more assertive Europe is not new. The idea of unified armed forces was first discussed after the end of the Second

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<sup>6</sup>Ministère Des Armées, *European Intervention Initiative*. June 22, 2021. <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/english/dgris/international-action/l-ieil-initiative-europeenne-d-intervention> (accessed February 12, 2022).

<sup>7</sup>Miranda Murray, *German foreign minister: Cutting Russia off from Swift 'not sharpest sword'*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/german-foreign-minister-cutting-russia-off-swift-not-sharpest-sword-2022-01-21/> (accessed February 12, 2022).

<sup>8</sup>*Germany to ramp up military spending in major policy shift*, Al Jazeera, March 1, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/27/germany-to-ramp-up-military-spending-in-major-policy-shift> (accessed March 14, 2022).

<sup>9</sup>Peter Glover, *Merkel's European army: More than a paper tiger?* World Politics Review, April 25, 2007, <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/Articles/727/merkels-european-army-more-than-a-paper-tiger> (accessed February 13, 2021).

World War with the signing of the European Coal and Steel Community, when it was considered a novel but unpopular idea. Former French President Charles de Gaulle, although attached to the idea of nation-states and national sovereignty, nonetheless wished for a powerful and assertive Europe capable of countering the powers of the Soviet Union and the United States. Since then, the European Union underwent many forms of deepening cooperation and enlargements, such as in 1991 with the creation of a Common Foreign and Security Policy and in 2009 with article 42 of the Treaty of Lisbon (2007).<sup>10</sup> It was with the Franco-British declaration of Saint-Malo where European Strategic Autonomy was born, however, advocating for an autonomous, credible force capable of responding to crises.<sup>11</sup>

Currently, Europe's most vigorous exercise of strategic cooperation is only starting to be used. The Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) is Europe's first true defense cooperation mechanism, but doubts remain about whether it is enough to establish a stronger Europe capable of autonomous action. Another example of defense cooperation are the unused EU battlegroups; the fact they exist but have never been deployed also shows the EU is reluctant to employ hard power.

It is also significant to note that the EU does not have an army—this power still rests with each national capital. This means that, in practice, Europe has many armies, ranging from those capable of foreign intervention such as the French, to those that are neutral such

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<sup>10</sup> Andrew Huckle, *The Evolution of the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy* July 7, 2016 [\(https://www.e-ir.info/2016/07/07/the-evolution-of-the-european-unions-common-security-and-defence-policy/#:~:text=CSDP%20was%20created%20by%20the,\(Atlantic%20Community%20Initiative%201998\)\)](https://www.e-ir.info/2016/07/07/the-evolution-of-the-european-unions-common-security-and-defence-policy/#:~:text=CSDP%20was%20created%20by%20the,(Atlantic%20Community%20Initiative%201998)) (accessed March 25, 2022)

<sup>11</sup> Emyr Jones, *The St. Malo declaration 10 years on*. Financial Times, December 1, 2008, <https://www.ft.com/content/7d97f048-bfc7-11dd-9222-0000779fd18c> (accessed March 25, 2022).

as the Irish, to those focused on defense such as the Polish, and to the very small such as the Maltese. The EU is not a State, but rather a regional organization where member states cede some function to Brussels and guarantee the four freedoms of movement for goods, services, capital, and people. Over time, the EU has come to act and be perceived as a state in many areas, however, creating the idea of European Citizenship and gaining more power from individual capitals, including the handling of many of the foreign policy questions usually reserved to individual states. Many citizens begin to expect the larger security questions to be handled by the most capable actor. The EU's 27 individual countries seem ill-equipped to counter the military powers of Russia or China or to be a credible, strong ally to the United States, but a united Europe might be a formidable force. The push for the EU to take steps to become responsible for its own security and territorial defense seems to be the acquisition of its own joint army.

Most literature regarding CSDP and Strategic Autonomy revolves around three general themes. The first theme is the political aspect, such as the controversy behind it, the drivers for such a concept, and the political likelihood of achieving it. These themes are compounded by general news stories on how the current debate is shaping the Strategic Autonomy debate. Academic writing here focuses on how the concept relates to NATO and how it could impact the geopolitical spectrum. The second general theme is European strategic shortfalls, which are depicted as duplication with NATO and fragmentation, but also negative comparisons to other countries' capacities, such as Russia's. Writing also touches upon what Europe's Strategic Ambition and Capabilities should be. The last general theme revolves around current defense cooperation, usually analyzing the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). This is often a dry take on current EU mechanisms and EU law,

especially its founding treaties. The TEU, with article 42, created most of Europe's defense institutions. Here it expands on the relation, functions, and purpose of each institution and how Strategic Autonomy could impact Member States' constitutions.

Usually, each of these themes is analyzed and written about separately, although most media reports usually connect the political with the strategic shortfalls. Most discussions, therefore, are around the "if" of a unified EU defense program, and not necessarily about the "how". They center on what political actors want from such a concept and if it is achievable. The papers that do study defense policy closely, especially related to the CSDP, always seem to leave the political side out of the discussion and focus on describing the different frameworks already in existence. This work, on the other hand, aims to capture all of these themes as well as expound on the benefits of a stronger Europe separately from political wishes and on how it can go about fulfilling its ambition of Strategic Autonomy.

This work, therefore, analyzes several issues: (1) What is the current EU Defense Cooperation? (2) What treaties and other rules govern these mechanisms? (3) What is the history behind EU defense cooperation? How did CSDP come about? (4) What are the EU's defense cooperation mechanisms and are they enough? How do these mechanisms interact and how do they show strategic shortfalls? (5) What are the EU's current strategic problems and can they be solved? What is the EU operational capacity? Can it defend itself? (6) What does Strategic Autonomy mean? How does Strategic Autonomy play out in themes of policy and beyond just rhetoric? How is Strategic Autonomy viewed by other powers or by the citizens of Europe? What purpose will Strategic Autonomy serve? What are the best ways to achieve a strategically autonomous Europe? (7) Is it with its own army? If so, how could

this army be established? Will an EU army or similar ever occur, has it already with the EU battlegroups? (8) Will it impact the relationship with NATO or undermine it?

These are the central themes of current EU defense cooperation: drivers for increased cooperation, the current problems of EU defense, and defining and realizing Strategic Autonomy.

This work, therefore, suggests that current EU defense cooperation is not enough to guarantee the defense of its own continent and interests, especially the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), Coordinated Annual Review on Defense (CARD), and the European Defense Fund (EDF) projects. It realizes that although the EU could win in a favorable campaign against Russia alone, it is still dependent on U.S. support and is susceptible to inaction due to different threat perceptions from its various member states. This work also advocates that a militarily stronger EU is not only beneficial for the EU itself, but also for NATO; if done correctly, greater EU military autonomy will actually enhance the alliance. It also suggests that EU citizens would approve and gladly take part in a possible European Army. Lastly, this work proposes to consider Strategic Autonomy as a responsibility to its own defense and the commitments with NATO. This means seeking full political autonomy; full capacity to defend its own territory while becoming a better ally to NATO.

In this sense, this work advises the creation of a European army composed of 10 fully mechanized army divisions, under a central command of its members. It also proposes an *ad-hoc* legal framework outside of, but parallel to, the Treaty of the European Union (TEU) for its creation and regulation, and a general narrative for its strategic thinking and operational capacity. Fully realizing a sovereign Europe, one that is a credible strategic partner for NATO and capable of guaranteeing peace at home and abroad, requires it to have its own united and

capable armed forces. This work also recognizes, however, how “Strategic Cacophony” could hinder any ambitious attempts at European defense cooperation.

The scope of this project is a policy study of European defense cooperation; therefore, it takes a holistic approach in analyzing its many themes. This work starts and ends with a legal analysis of the current EU defense and its future, but it also uses history, politics, foreign relations, and some defense studies to assert and defend its hypothesis. The result of this project will be a legal proposal of an *ad-hoc* nature to be added to current EU defense institutions and a grounded explanation for the reasons for this proposition.

It must also be said what this thesis is not about. First and foremost, it is not a war-games study. In this sense, the object is not to foresee simulated war between parties and from that extract any detailed analysis of military strategy. Limited use of papers touching on the need for a new military organization in case of conflict with Russia will be used. This project will also not be a discussion on EU or member state budgets, with only a limited reference to such matters. In the same light, although the number and quality of armaments of the different countries will be used, this is not a technological debate nor a straight comparison of weapon quality.

The main subject or object of this project is Europe and the EU, its legal framework, history, foreign relations, and security. In this light, any discussion will be viewed under the scope of the EU’s interests. Other countries such as the United States, Russia, China, Turkey, the UK, or regions such as North Africa or the Middle East are not the object of this work and will be only analyzed insofar as they relate to the central theme of EU interests.

Additionally, any conversation related to any sharing of nuclear weapons is minimal. The debate will center around the notion of conventional conflicts, subversive attacks, and

hybrid threats. Any proposition made about a new European framework of defense leaves out the nuclear question. In the same sense, this work does build on the political atmosphere of the times but it is not a full study of the political likelihood of its proposition, choosing to focus on the legal foundations and institutions. It should also be stated that any proposal presented respects international law, especially international human rights law, the UN Charter, and international humanitarian law. EU law will be also primordial in deciphering and considering any proposal, and the suggested framework is a reflection and addition to EU law and the laws of member states. This project also aims to respect the treaties that EU members have subjected themselves to outside of the EU, such as the North Atlantic Treaty, and will look to further the cooperation and fulfillment of the obligations and goals of that treaty.

This Thesis was last edited on April 4, 2022. Given that the situation in Ukraine and geopolitics at large are a fluid and fast moving, it is expected that some of the “current events” referenced in the work will be outdated by the time of publication. This does not, however, affect the overarching arguments or conclusions of this thesis.



## **Justifications**

This thesis project seeks to provide European policymakers with a study guide on how to strengthen EU defense cooperation and achieve Strategic Autonomy in a way that also strengthens the EU's relationship with NATO. In this sense, the practical application of this thesis is significant. First, it will give the reader a clear understanding of the current EU defense framework and institutions, highlighting where more collaboration and unity can be achieved. The reader will also be able to grasp the current factors and historical events that have led to a need for an autonomous Europe. For that reason, it will give the reader a full picture of the motivators for European defense, but more importantly, its various shortfalls. This thesis will also solve many questions related to Strategic Autonomy, such as what the concept is and how it can be applied. Lastly, it proposes an original and comprehensive way of implementing Strategic Autonomy and strengthening European defense systems. The transcendence of this thesis project, however, far exceeds the mere practical application it can have.

If the proposals of this thesis project were implemented, they would change the geopolitical standing of Europe in the world—and by definition change history. As it stands, the EU has some of the most stable democracies in the world and their inhabitants enjoy a very high standard of living, allowing it to achieve the aim of most states: peace and happiness for its citizens. Achieving Strategic Autonomy, at its core, is about keeping the security and peace of EU citizens. An autonomous and geopolitically powerful EU is also a power that fosters the rule of law, democracy, human rights, and international law.

Consequently, the debate around CSDP and Strategic Autonomy also coincides with competing worldviews on what the best way is for the people of the world to govern

themselves. In the post-World War II period, it has been the United States, through NATO, that has led the charge for democracy building, especially in Eastern European countries. As the world is now, more than ever autocracy and democracy are clashing, competing for the world's attention and following. Since the fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of China as a superpower, autocracy has once again become a seductive and approachable method of government. It claims that democracy is slow, ineffective, weak—and therefore failing. It argues that the time for democracy might be coming to the end, that citizens wish for effective leaders with centralized power. Concisely, autocracy advocates that to have order and peace you must sacrifice freedoms.

The free democracies of the world must be capable of handling their own security to maintain and foster democracy abroad. An EU power would be capable of ensuring international law, especially the respect of state sovereignty and territorial integrity, including in the case of Ukraine and its eastern member states. More importantly, it should be a power capable of securing its own territorial defense. This power would be also capable of guaranteeing the right of self-determination for its citizens and its states. It will also be able to more actively and consistently support its partners across the globe, including NATO, providing humanitarian assistance and carrying out peacekeeping operations whenever needed.

The conversation for European Strategic Autonomy is more relevant today than ever before for three main reasons. The first and the most indirect cause is Brexit. As of January of 2020, the United Kingdom was the first country to leave the EU. With that withdrawal, the EU lost its most powerful military force. While this meant a big loss for Central Europe, it also meant that other EU member states stopped having an unreliable ally and gained more

time in the spotlight. This led to countries like Germany, France, and Poland being even more conscious of their own defense, and indicated to the EU that defense was now truly an issue it had to handle on its own.

The second reason is U.S. domestic politics and leadership in the world. The Trump Administration left most EU member states shaking and worried, forced to consider a world where the United States would not be a reliable ally. It made them look inward, contemplating a standalone defense and finding their many heavy defense shortfalls. The Biden Administration has tried to assure its European allies that “America is back”,<sup>12</sup> but that has not halted the conversation on what to do about defense by and for Europe. This is guided by the fact that since the Obama Administration an American pivot to Asia has ensued. AUKUS was the latest iteration of this shift in focus<sup>13</sup>. It also seems that the Biden Administration and the United States at large feel that an interventionist America that acts as the world’s policeman is over. A more inward-looking United States is on the horizon. For Europe, this means that while the United States will not stop being a security guarantor or leader in foreign policy, that the EU itself must be capable of shouldering more of the weight of its own defense. This coincides with the last point: the volatile situation with Russia.

As is discussed extensively in this thesis project, tensions between Russia and the West are at an all-time high. Many analysts suggest that Russia today is Europe’s biggest

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<sup>12</sup> The white house, *Remarks by President Biden on America’s Place in the World*, February 4, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/02/04/remarks-by-president-biden-on-americas-place-in-the-world/> (accessed February 12, 2022)

<sup>13</sup> Steven Erlanger, *The Sharp U.S. Pivot to Asia Is Throwing Europe Off Balance*, The New York Times, September 17, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/17/world/europe/biden-china-europe-submarine-deal.html> (accessed February 12, 2022)

security threat since World War II, and this thesis agrees<sup>14</sup>. Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and 2022 all-out invasion of Ukraine is the greatest threat to European security since the inception of the EU. These events have revitalized NATO (a deep contrast to the so-called "braindead" NATO Macron talked about during the Trump years), showing a unified voice and assertive action in the face of the illegal Russian invasion. Even when the United States repeats that any discussion about Europe will be done with Europe and with Ukraine, the EU's influence on the current diplomatic efforts has been limited to an observatory role. Some EU states wish they had a more significant role in the negotiations, especially France, but others seem comfortable allowing the United States to continue taking the lead, often acting as a compromiser and dealmaker among Europeans. Europeans often have divergent security interests and priorities, something that was showcased before the Russian invasion of Ukraine in areas such as sanctions on Russia, the sale of arms of Ukraine, and the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. Since the invasion began, however, such disagreements have fallen by the wayside as the EU has mostly come into alignment in the face of Russian aggression.

France's role is a recurring factor and makes the timing of this thesis project even more relevant. The French are Europe's most interventionist actor and with its six-month presidency of the Council for the EU, it holds more agenda-setting power. This fact generated attention from the media in Europe regarding achieving Strategic Autonomy. A summit on defense is to be expected at the beginning of 2022 and with it a possible defense union.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> David Child, Mersiha Gadzo, *Latest Russia-Ukraine updates: US says Putin may face sanctions*, *Aljazeera*, January 25, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/25/us-troops-on-high-alert-over-ukraine-war-fears-liveblog> (accessed February 12, 2022)

<sup>15</sup> Recent events refocused the Strategic Compass Summit that was due to take place. These events will be addressed in the Conclusion.

Adding to the timing, the 2022 French presidential election is on the horizon, and with it, a referendum on Macron's strong pro-EU views. This very much adds to the initial discussion surrounding the role of the West in pushing for democracy and globalization.

If the proposal of this thesis were implemented it would both save the EU billions of dollars a year and strengthen NATO. A longtime criticism of European members of NATO has been that their defense budgets are smaller than the 2% called for in the North Atlantic Treaty. If a possible European Army were created, it would save money for each individual state and greatly improve the quality and capability of all EU armed forces. Thus, a Europe with better defense, with a unified strategic compass, and a possible European army, would also strengthen NATO as a consequence, something that will improve the overall geopolitical strength of the West. As this thesis argues, such efforts do not undermine NATO or duplicate efforts

The importance of this transcends the merely practical, as it will shape notions of EU "statehood". Further defense cooperation and a possible unified armed forces for the EU will break with what is considered a function that should be left to each state, as defense is currently still reserved for each individually. By creating a fully-fledged defense union of the EU, the protection of the EU's external borders and response to any other threat will fall upon the shoulders of Brussels. In doing so, the EU would achieve what many see as a step towards the EU becoming a federal state. This point will undoubtedly spark much controversy and be difficult to achieve in practical terms, but such a discussion will be saved for the results section of this thesis. The importance of this thesis project is one that far exceeds the boundaries of the EU. It can create an impact both abroad and towards the future. If

implemented, the recommendations of this thesis project can influence the practical, geopolitical, and the legal statehood of the EU.

## **Objectives and Aims**

The main objective of this work is to provide the reader with a policy study on current European Defense efforts, with a focus on cooperation, Strategic Autonomy, and the possibility of a European Army. To this aim, the specific objectives of the work will be as follows.

First, it provides the reader a brief historic recollection of events related to European defense cooperation from the end of the Second World War to the date. The objective is not to give a full historical recollection, but only to understand the events that led to CSDP.

Second, it offers a detailed exposition of article 42 of the TEU and another legal basis for CSDP. The emphasis is on the common defense clauses, but an account of possible legal issues facing any defense union are also covered. The aim is to explain EU defense obligations and drawbacks.

Third, this work explains the aim, composition, legal basis, and relation to EU Strategic Autonomy and its defense institutions of PESCO, CARD, and the EDF. An explanation on how they each relate to each other will be offered alongside an analysis of the issues facing them.

Fourth, this thesis discusses European defense problems relating to duplication, fragmentation, and waste, while also asserting how cooperation, pooling, and sharing could solve said problems. This section aims to uncover current issues in European defense in relation to operational capability.

Fifth, it analyses the U.S.'s foreign policy towards European Strategic Autonomy, revealing its misjudgments, and asserting that an EU common defense will not hamper

NATO commitments. It shows how a dichotomy between CSDP and NATO could arise and how a stronger Europe means a stronger NATO.

Sixth, this work reviews both existing postures on European defense capacity, giving a frank opinion on how they could spell problems for Strategic Autonomy while also reviewing Europe's defense shortfalls. This realization will be used to compute Europe's actual need for more operational capacity. A discussion of what is called strategic cacophony will be made, including how it could be a constant issue in political autonomy.

Seventh, it offers a short assessment of European citizens' posture towards an EU more involved in Strategic Autonomy and common defense, while suggesting Europeans would in fact participate in a European Army. This analysis uses EU polling.

Eighth, it also explains what Strategic Autonomy is, analyzing its degrees and visions, while also saying what is not. A discussion about the current debate surrounding the concept is made, and why it should depart from its ambiguity. A more robust and practical concept for Strategic Autonomy is proposed.

Ninth, it outlines the arguments against the formation of European armed forces and proposes different potential models for such an organization, explaining which is the best option considering all previous sections of this thesis. Finally, it argues how this model would balance or nullify the negatives while achieving Strategic Autonomy and quelling European defense problems.

Lastly, it offers conclusions based on current events that retake the arguments made throughout the thesis. Recommendations are provided on how to achieve the objectives of Strategic Autonomy, while also offering a realistic assessment of the possibility of it coming into existence. The main conclusion is that although the road towards Strategic Autonomy is



complicated, it is needed, and its achievement will ultimately depend on the EU's attitude towards NATO and its ability to reconcile the problems presented by strategic cacophony.

## Literature Review

The research done for this work includes sources on many areas of the social sciences, such as, constitutional law, defense policy, international relations, history, political science, and some statistics. The purpose was to gain a contemporary and full understanding of all the issues at play with European defense policy. Many types of sources were used, with the main ones being government publications, treaties, commentaries, reports, essays, academic articles, working papers, surveys, and news articles. Below are the main sources consulted, their object of study, their proposals, and how they are used in this work.

For the historical section, the *Comparative Historical Study of the Development of a European Army* by Stadnik was used. This report does a review of the development of a European army starting at the end of the Second World War. It includes the various summits that formed the EU, and with it, the CSDP. It does this by analyzing the cases when states or actors tried to achieve a European army, analyzing them under theories of historical institutionalism and neo-functionalism. For this thesis, it was used as a historical reference, especially for the historical phase pre-EU.

For the legal foundations of defense cooperation in Europe, a host of references were used, primarily *The Treaty on EU (TEU): A commentary* by Blanke and Mangiameli. This commentary is an extensive analysis of each article of the Treaty of the European Union (TEU). For this thesis, its analysis on article 42 formed the basis for the legal foundations of this work. The authors give a thorough review of the scope of application, the different controversies, possible applications, and a brief historical review of both article 42 of the TEU and the CSDP. This commentary is highly relevant in understanding the legal

implications of each section of the TEU and sheds light on how a European army could be created and its possible legal complications

To understand the inter-governmental cooperation and institutions linked to CSDP, the working paper *The Current Legal Basis and Governance Structures of the EU's Defense Activities* was used. Although it also has some historical elements, this paper seeks to unravel the interactions of all the entities associated with defense policy in the European Union. For this work, it was used to understand the entities associated with article 42 of the TEU and other mechanisms to common defense policy. This paper also gives legal background to its institutions.

One of the most relevant new European defense projects is PESCO. To gain a grasp on this mechanism, *Differentiated integration within PESCO – clusters and convergence in EU defense* by Blockmans and Macchiarini was used. This research report focuses on PESCO's differentiated integration but also explains the nature and purpose of the project. The report also highlights current PESCO projects, per-country engagement, and interest in cooperation within the framework. The report gives insights on the “friendships” or working partnerships member states are willing to create inside PESCO. It also explains the different stages of growth within PESCO projects and state membership in each. For this thesis, the report was used to highlight current PESCO projects, understand the purpose of PESCO, and analyze state interest in the project.

*Can France and Germany Make PESCO Work as a Process Toward EU Defense?* by Billon-Galland and Quencez is also referenced for this topic. This policy paper retakes PESCO as a current topic in Brussels political circles and its challenges. It proposes that France and Germany, as the EU's main actors, need to overcome technical difficulties to

improve and expand PESCO. For this thesis, this paper was used to understand France's and Germany's attitude to PESCO and defense policy at large. It proposes Germany as a reluctant partner on militarism and defense policy and France as more keen on an assertive defense policy.

*Reflection Paper on the Future of European Defense* by Mogherini and Katainen is an insightful reflection paper. It does a general overview of the state of European defense and its policy. It talks about the key trends occurring in defense policy and political drivers. It also gives a comparison between Europe and other countries on defense expenditure and efficiency. It was used to get a general overview of the state of European defense and to understand the challenges it faces. Specifically, it aided in drawing up comparisons between European and other powers. It demonstrated that the EU has duplication in defense, highlighting the numerous types of defense materials used.

*A New Way Forward for Trans-Atlantic Security Relations* by Bergmann and Lamond was the first item consulted for this thesis and very much formed the backbone of the thinking behind Europe's need for defense cooperation. The authors propose that European defense is in a dire state of disrepair, due to fragmentation and duplication because of its many small armies. It also shed light on the errors of American foreign policy towards Europe's defense integration and Strategic Autonomy. It proposes a new way forward for Washington on EU defense policy, one that permits the EU to take care of its own defenses. It also counters the U.S.'s historical reasons to not support any EU defense cooperation. For this thesis, this article is utilized to understand the U.S.'s policy towards EU defense and the state of its own defense. It also borrows the thinking on the new way forward for the transatlantic relationship, one that supports EU defense cooperation as a way to strengthen NATO itself.

It is also used to understand the EU's inherent problems with policymaking and how it leads to many defense policy compromises that fall short of a robust defense system.

*Mutual Reinforcement: CSDP and NATO in the face of rising challenges* is a study by Brustlein on the relationship between CSDP and NATO. It proposes that choosing either Strategic Autonomy or NATO defense commitments is a false dichotomy. In this sense, it suggests that it has led Europeans to believe that they must choose one over the other. It recommends that Europe can achieve both making them mutually beneficial. It boldly acknowledges that NATO will not be weakened by more EU cooperation, but instead that the United States' role in NATO might be affected; a unified and assertive Europe would be capable of competing with the United States within NATO. Therefore, for this thesis, this paper provided a clear reason on why a unified defense policy and even a European army will not hinder NATO commitments or goals, but rather support them.

Posen sets out to prove what most believe unviable by suggesting that Europe can defend itself against a Russian intervention without the support of the United States in his essay *Europe can defend itself*. To do this he proposes conditions on which a campaign might take place, compares the militaries of the EU and Russia, and other such factors that might influence a conflict. The essay concludes that Europe can defend itself against Russia and even win a prolonged defensive campaign. For this thesis, this very remarkable paper is used to argue that Europe might be in a position to defend, but not to guarantee the safety of, Europeans and their political goals. It is also used to highlight various defense shortfalls of the EU.

Meijer and Brooks in their essay *Illusions of autonomy: Why Europe cannot provide for its security if the USA pulls back* argue the opposite of Posen. They propose that Europe

cannot defend itself against Russia without an American defense umbrella. It argues that different European states have different threat perceptions of Russia, causing diverging security interests, with the author going so far as to call it “Strategic Cacophony”. This concept will be a common theme across the thesis and it is the main reason hampering the EU’s ability to develop a coherent and unified defense policy and possible EU army, although such dissonance seems to have faded somewhat since the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, at least temporarily.

*Standard Eurobarometer 89* is a survey of 25 different EU member states about different EU policy topics. In this case, the results towards a unified CSDP policy are used to show a positive attitude among Europeans towards EU defense cooperation.

*European Strategic Autonomy: A Cacophony of Political Visions by Libek*, is a blog post on a security forum that displays how different EU officials have very different understandings of Strategic Autonomy. It is used to highlight that this concept still lacks a clear understanding and diverging opinions have made the concept be more a buzzword than an applicable concept.

*France, Germany and the Quest for European Strategic Autonomy* is a report by Kempin and Kunz that introduces the notion of Strategic Autonomy having three different levels: operational, political, and industrial. It is used to explain which areas should the EU look for to gain strategic anatomy.

*Strategic Autonomy: towards ‘European sovereignty’ in defense?* by Fiott is a very interesting report that suggests that there are three different degrees to Strategic Autonomy: responsibility, hedging, and emancipation. This concept is used to correlate them to the

different themes of Strategic Autonomy and suggest what degree of autonomy should be achieved.

*European Strategic Autonomy: Which Military Level of Ambition* by Coelmont is a very novel article. It suggests to what degree of military autonomy should Europe strive to achieve to be able to take care of its own defenses. It is the only paper that in concrete military material terms recommends how Strategic Autonomy should be established to properly defend mainland Europe. The proposals in the article are used to suggest the military ambition and operational capacity that any EU army should have.

*European Strategic Autonomy in security and defense: Now the going gets tough, it's time to get going* by Zandee, Deen, Kruijver, & Stoetman, offers a conceptualization of Strategic Autonomy as is commonly referred to in the political rhetoric. The definition provided by the essay is developed as one of the factors that goes into the definition of Strategic Autonomy offered in this thesis.

*The legal foundations of a European Army* by Trybus is a legal analysis, the only one on its specific topic. It sets out to describe three different legal models for a possible EU army. It suggests under what legal regime and governmental institutions could these models occur. It falls short of providing detailed descriptions for each but it is the only paper that does do so in legal terms. Such information is used to analyze under what legal foundations for the European or EU army model could be formed.

*Envisioning European Defense: Five Futures* by Andersson, Biscop, Giegerich, Mölling, & Tardya is a futuristic working paper that sets out to envision five different futures of European defense. All of them showcase different scenarios and events that led to a certain policy decision within the defense. One of those futures envisions the creation of a unified

European army. It prescribes its causes, its governmental model, its mandates, and benefits. This vision of Europe is used to examine and suggest characteristics of a possible European army.

*Their Own Army? Making European Defense Work* by Gordon is the oldest source in this thesis. This reflection paper was written about the time the Helsinki Summit (1999) created the EU battle groups. It reflects on the political drivers behind Europe's biggest push on defense since the EDC. It reveals why Europe sought to create the so-called European Rapid Reaction Force and why it could fail. This paper is used to show how Europe faces the same political and operational challenges on defense in 2000 and in current times, and is used to argue that the EU has often chosen political practicality and consensus over increased defense unification.



## **Methodology**

For this thesis work over forty different sources were consulted to arrive at the results and conclusion. Only sources dated from 2016 and forwards were consulted, with some exceptions for historical facts. This thesis very much relies on current events to address the issues at hand. A practical and empirical analysis was conducted therefore, following the methodology of the social sciences. The procedure was a policy study analysis. First, the conceptualization of the problem was inferred. To do this, numerous sources were examined and their main ideas derived. The goal was to gain a thorough understanding of the subjects before deriving conclusions. These sources include, but are not limited, to working papers and articles by renowned think tanks and research centers that specialize in defense, government publications made by different branches of the EU, and historical articles. Afterward, the main ideas were correlated to current events.

From this first look, a general review of European defenses was drawn. This panorama was then contrasted to the goals and standards that the EU itself proposed and what authors suggest the capacities of European defense should be. This concluded the first part of the policy studies, arriving at identifying the problem.

Subsequently, the second and last part of the analysis was conducted: the formulation of the solution. First, several different solutions were considered as a possibility for the problem. Second, the most complete and ambitious solution was chosen and tailored to the specific issue at hand. This solution was modeled using the legal and institutional frameworks of the EU. Lastly, this solution was critically critiqued and its shortfalls analyzed, but always demonstrating the positive effects derived from the solution.

The writing of this thesis was conducted in four stages. First, the current state of defense policy was analyzed, including the *Brief History of Europe's Defense Cooperation*, *Legal Foundations*, and *Current Defense Cooperation Mechanisms* sections. Second, the sections titled *Issues with EU Defense Duplication, Fragmentation, and Waste: Europe's Defense Problem*, *Washington's View on Strategic Autonomy*, and *Can or Can't Europe Defense Itself Against... Russia* were written. The third stage involved developing *European Attitude towards Strategic Cooperation*, *Strategic Autonomy: A Concept*, and *European Army*. The final stage of writing was the adjective parts, including objectives, justification, introduction, methodology, literature review, and lastly, conclusions.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **I. A Brief History of Europe's Defense Cooperation**

Europe's cooperation on defense and security starts at the end of the Second World War. Under a looming expansion of Communism and a divided Germany, the Western Union Defense Organization (WUDO) was created in 1948 by the United Kingdom (UK), France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. Eventually, all of these countries, the United States, and six other countries created the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).<sup>16</sup> The idea was to expand regional security thus including the United States' powerful influence to counter Soviet influence.

At the same time, a French statesman by the name of Jean Monnet sought to reconcile longtime enemies France in Germany and created the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951.<sup>17</sup> Eventually, under the Pleven Plan, the French prime minister sought to create a European supranational army, meaning that soldiers would have a common uniform and one command structure. They saw the opportunity in gaining political power, and a unified armed forces was the most expedient way to do it. Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands signed the then-called European Defense Community (EDC) in 1952, but eventually, it did not pass France's parliament, dooming the EDC. An economic union was met with great fervor, but a defensive union did not have the political will. Many were reluctant to take any steps that could lead to the creation of a federal

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<sup>16</sup> First members of NATO: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the USA.

<sup>17</sup> This would be the catalyst to the EU.

Europe. The EDC meant a significant loss of state sovereignty, thus Europe decided to guarantee its defense through NATO alone.<sup>18</sup>

After the failure of the EDC, WUDO countries entered the Western European Union (WEU) alliance in 1954, which importantly incorporated West Germany. This union would continue to grow in many areas such as agriculture, social, cultural, and education cooperation. It shied away, however, from any talk on defense and security. In 1957 the Treaty of Rome created the European Economic Community (EEC), and eventually in 1992 with the Maastricht Treaty, that organization became the EU. These developments laid the origins for a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as the second pillar of the latter treaty.

During the years between the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 and the Lisbon Treaty of 2009, two important summits related to common defense policy occurred. The first was the Petersberg Declaration of 1992, which allowed the various member states of the European Community to use their military units for the Petersberg Tasks, which included humanitarian action, peacekeeping, and conflict management. The second relevant summit occurred in 1998, called the St. Malo Summit, where France and the United Kingdom proposed the development of an autonomous military capacity, which would be the origins of European Strategic Autonomy.

With the Maastricht Treaty, the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) was launched and later renamed Common Defense and Security Policy (CSDP) under the Lisbon

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<sup>18</sup> Snezhana Stadnik, *A Comparative Historical Study of the Development of a European Army*, E-International Relations, May 12, 2016, <https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/63596> (accessed February 13, 2022).

Treaty of 2009. The Lisbon Treaty also included a common assistance clause, thus replacing the WEU. Neither sought to create a supranational armed forces, but they did give the EU a more independent foreign policy. Under this CSDP, further European defense integration occurred, birthing PESCO and the EDA.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *Timeline: EU cooperation on security and defense*, European Council, 25 March 2022, from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/defense-security/defense-security-timeline> (accessed March 29, 2022).

## II. Legal Basis for EU Defense Activities

### A. *Principles and Purpose of Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP)*

Article 42 of the Treaty of the European Union (TEU) sets out the core principles for the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) for the Union. This treaty contains the greatest emphasis on defense and security since the inception of the EU. The main goal of the CSDP is to guarantee the operational capability of both a civilian and military nature.<sup>20</sup> The CSDP is within the more general Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the EU. Both of these points are represented in article 42(1) of the TEU:

The common security and defense policy shall be an integral part of the common foreign and security policy. It shall provide the Union with an operational capacity drawing on civilian and military assets. The Union may use them on missions outside the Union for peace-keeping, conflict prevention, and strengthening international security in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter. The performance of these tasks shall be undertaken using capabilities provided by the Member States.

The goals of CSDP are in line with the Petersberg Tasks.<sup>21</sup> The Union primarily seeks, as stated in article 21.2(a)-(c) of the TEU, to:

- (a) safeguard its values, fundamental interests, security, independence, and integrity;
- (b) consolidate and support democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and the principles of international law;
- (c) preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, with the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and with the aims of the Charter of Paris, including those relating to external borders.

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<sup>20</sup> European Parliament, *Common Security And Defense Policy*, 2021, Fact Sheets on the EU, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU\\_5.1.2.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/en/FTU_5.1.2.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> Humanitarian and rescue tasks; conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks; tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking; joint disarmament operations; military advice and assistance tasks; post-conflict stabilization tasks. Glossary of summaries *Petersberg Tasks*. EUR-Lex, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/petersberg\\_tasks.html](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/petersberg_tasks.html) (accessed February 13, 2022).

Therefore, the goal of CSDP is to increase operational capacity with the end goal of securing the borders, ensuing peace, guaranteeing democracy and human rights while respecting international law. It also seeks, in article 21.2(h) of the TEU, to “promote an international system based on stronger multilateral cooperation and good global governance”—essentially, to foster these values in the rest of the world.

### **B. CSDP Decision Making**

The CSDP does not make its policy decisions in the same fashion as the Council of the EU, where a qualified majority is the general norm.<sup>22</sup> CSDP requires unanimity by the Council after a proposal by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy or a Member State (MS). In CSDP, recommendations are accepted by the Commission, and the Parliament has no formal power over CSDP decisions, but acts as an informal co-legislator, being consulted and thus having some influence over the policy.<sup>23</sup> The reason for this, which is a recurring theme and consistent legal challenge throughout this thesis project, is that member states are still the main actors of any defense policy. CSDP is not tied to any supranational law and has only an intergovernmental nature, more analogous

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<sup>22</sup> When the Council takes a vote on a proposal made by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, qualified majority is reached when 55% of MS countries vote in favor (15 out of 27) and 65% of the population of the EU supports the proposal. *Qualified Majority*, Council of the European Union. EU, October 13, 2021, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/voting-system/qualified-majority/#:~:text=When%20the%20Council%20votes%20on,means%2015%20out%20of%2027.>

<sup>23</sup> Viktor Szép, Ramses A. Wessel, Ester Sabatino, Carmen Gebhard & Edouard Simon, *The Current Legal Basis and Governance Structures of the EU's Defense Activities*, ENGAGE Working Paper Series; Vol. 4. p. 16, December 2021, <https://www.engage-eu.eu/publications/the-current-legal-basis-and-governance-structures-of-the-eus-defense-activities>, p. 1226.

to an *ad-hoc* policy forum.<sup>24</sup> Defense, therefore, is still a power reserved by the individual member states and is considered an inalienable right tied to national sovereignty. Thus, to make any use of troop deployment requires the unanimous approval of the member states, expressed via a Council vote. Such requirement is stated in article 42.4 of the TEU:

Decisions relating to the common security and defense policy, including those initiating a mission as referred to in this Article, shall be adopted by the Council acting unanimously on a proposal from the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy or an initiative from a Member State. The High Representative may propose the use of both national resources and Union instruments, together with the Commission where appropriate.

### ***C. CSDP and Its Relationship to Other Actors***

The CSDP's relationship with the United Nations Charter is clear under article 42.1 of the TEU, which explicitly states that any actions of the EU in this area shall be in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

The UN Charter prescribes to the principle of the prohibition of the use of force, to the principle of non-intervention, equality of states, and state sovereignty. The Union can only engage in military operations with a Security Council mandate, but also under the scope of self-defense and therefore following article 51 and respecting article of article 2(4) both of the UN Charter. Moreover, the Union is also an entity of values and thus seeks to ensure and respect rule-based world order and humanitarian interest. It would therefore be foreseeable for military operations of a humanitarian nature.

The relationship with NATO is explicitly regulated by article 42.2 of the TEU:

The policy of the Union in accordance with this Section shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defense policy of certain Member States and shall respect the obligations of the certain Member States, which see their common

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<sup>24</sup> Hermann-Josef Blanke, Stelio Mangiameli, *The Treaty on EU (TEU): A commentary*, 2013, p. 1207.



defense realized in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), under the North Atlantic Treaty and be compatible with the common security and defense policy established within that framework

This clause is especially relevant to the 21 member states who are also members of NATO, adding another layer to the purpose of CSDP. This policy is not meant to supplement or override NATO agreements. The policy is made in accordance with, and in support of, NATO obligations. NATO has priority; if there is a conflict between CSDP and NATO, the latter would be prioritized. Primary law seeks to harmonize NATO and CSDP policy and objectives. The Union may act intervene autonomously where NATO is not already present.<sup>25</sup> This is not a matter of law but of policy. The Union can also under the Berlin Plus agreement draw on assets from NATO, making it able to carry out operations using NATO's capabilities.<sup>26</sup>

#### **D. *Mutual Assistance Clause***

It has taken many years for member states to embrace a mutual defense policy, but such a policy is now a reality in the TEU. The Mutual Assistance Clause of Article 47.7 of the TEU states:

If a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. This shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defense policy of certain Member States.

Compared to other such defense clauses it is a rather weak one. This clause came after the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, leaving many neutral member states wary of any

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<sup>25</sup> Hermann-Josef Blanke, Stelio Mangiameli, *The Treaty on EU (TEU): A commentary*, 2013, p. 1207

<sup>26</sup> Nicholas Williams, *NATO-EU Cooperation: Don't forget berlin plus!*, European Leadership Network, March 26, 2018 <https://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/commentary/nato-eu-cooperation-dont-forget-berlin-plus/> (accessed March 25, 2022).

hard defense obligations. The clause highlights the constant pragmatism in security and defense policy, choosing a weak but achievable obligation. It is considered weak due to its scope of application and language.<sup>27</sup> The clause activates only under an “act of armed aggression” rather than the term “armed attack” used in other treaties such as the UN Charter. This language resembles that used in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which suggests that to apply this clause would require a higher degree of violence, intensity, or any other such factor.

This clause also leaves open the question of whether it applies to attacks by a non-state actor. Article 222 of Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU), known as the Solidarity Clause, provides:

The Union and its Member States shall act jointly in a spirit of solidarity if a Member State is the object of a terrorist attack or the victim of a natural or man-made disaster. The Union shall mobilize all the instruments at its disposal, including the military resources made available by the Member States

Consequently, there is a general acceptance that article 222 might be the *lex specialis* in case of an attack by an armed non-state actor, acknowledging there is an overlap between these articles. Former French President François Holland invoked article 42.7 of the TEU in the aftermath of the Paris terrorist attacks in 2015, adding to the confusion about what the scope of application of article 42.7 is.<sup>28</sup> Another limitation to the scope of application is geographical. The article refers to “armed aggression on [the] territory” of a member state. Many European countries have extra-continental possessions such as French Guyana or the

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<sup>27</sup>Szep, *The Current Legal Basis and Governance Structures of the EU's Defense Activities*.

<sup>28</sup> European Parliament, *Activation of Article 42(7) TEU France's request for assistance and Member States' responses*, European Parliament, July 4, 2016, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS\\_BRI\(2016\)581408](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2016)581408) (accessed February 12, 2022).

Netherlands Antilles. Further complicating the situation are territories that are part of a member state, such as Greenland, but that are formally outside the EU. This clause may only apply to such places if EU law applies.<sup>29</sup>

The degree to which member states are obliged to support their fellows in case of an attack is left in an ambiguous position.<sup>30</sup> It shies away from any explicit reference to military operational support, but it does refer to article 51 of the UN Charter, so the principle of self-defense is explicit. Moreover, a German Supreme Court<sup>31</sup> decision suggested that this article does not reach the same level of obligation as NATO's Article 5.<sup>32</sup> From this, it can be inferred that it is left to each party and their means to decide to what extent they wish to provide aid and assistance, but it is also understood that full assistance in their power of the states should be given.<sup>33</sup> Recently, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said that under the mutual

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<sup>29</sup> Blanke, *The Treaty on EU (TEU): A commentary*, p. 1201-1237.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1227.

<sup>31</sup> European progressive political foundation, *Ruling of the German Constitutional Court on the Lisbon Reform Treaty*, July 11, 2009, <https://www.feps-europe.eu/resources/news/135-ruling-of-the-german-constitutional-court-on-the-lisbon-reform-treaty.html#:~:text=Ruling%20of%20the%20German%20Constitutional%20Court%20on%20the%20Lisbon%20Reform%20Treaty&text=On%2030th%20June%202009%20the,Approving%20the%20Treaty%20of%20Lisbon> (accessed March 30, 2022).

<sup>32</sup> The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area. Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall immediately be reported to the Security Council. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.

The North Atlantic Treaty, 24 August 1949, art. 5, <https://treaties.un.org/pages/showDetails.aspx?objid=080000028016226c>.

<sup>33</sup> Blanke, *The Treaty on EU (TEU): A commentary*, p. 1226.

defence clause, Germany would come to the defense of Sweden if it were attacked by Russia.<sup>34</sup> Thus adding a possibility of military direct military assisted to this clause.

### **E. *Untouchables Clause***

A final dimension to CSDP is how it tries to reconcile with opt-outs or country-specific laws. Article 42.2(2) of the TEU explicitly states that these obligations “shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defense policy of certain Member States.”

This clause is called the untouchables clause or the Irish clause because it applies (although not specifically stated) to Ireland, Finland, Malta, Austria, Sweden, and Cyprus. It allows these states to withdraw from any security policy or defense obligation in the EU. Another such case is Denmark,<sup>35</sup> where it has completely opted out of any possible defense cooperation or security policy, although that policy is being reassessed in 2022 in light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

### **F. *Common Defense Policy v. Common Defense***

Common defense policy and common defense are two distinct concepts. Common defense policy is CSDP, a formal part of current EU law. Common defense, however, is a reference to the union of armed forces, something that is currently outside the EU’s competencies. Nevertheless, a reading of article 42.2 of the TEU suggests that Common Defense Union is the final goal of CSDP:

The common security and defense policy shall include the progressive framing of a common Union defense policy. This will lead to a common defense, when the European Council, acting unanimously, so decides. It shall, in that case, recommend to the Member States the adoption of such a decision in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements.

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<sup>34</sup> Burchard, Hans von der, *Scholz Signals EU Would Help Defend Sweden If Russia Attacks*, POLITICO, March 28, 2022. <https://www.politico.eu/article/germany-olaf-scholz-sweden-eu-assistance-in-case-of-russia-attack/> (accessed April 3, 2022).

<sup>35</sup> Blanke, *The Treaty on EU (TEU): A commentary*, p. 1216.

Due to the mutual assistance clause, this notion of Common Union of defense is not only referring to a mutual defense clause like the one for NATO, but rather the organization of a common military force. In this sense, it refers to the transfer of sovereignty over at least some military matters from the member states to the EU. This could happen in a sort of European Army or if the EU had more power to decide on matters of defense. The step towards common defense is a possibility under the treaty but is not required. For this common defense to occur an amendment to the Treaties would be required to make this clause obligatory, thus requiring a unanimous vote of the Council. Afterward, each member state would need to adopt the change under their own constitutional laws and ratify the decision. It is unclear if this simple change in the text would suffice or pose limitations. Many agree that, for a unified armed force to exist, a substantive change to the treaties would be required, a change requiring matters of defense be placed under the Union's exclusive or shared competencies. Specifically, article 48.2 of the TEU would require amendments. This change, the creation of a supranational army, could also currently be unconstitutional under the national legal frameworks of some member states.<sup>36</sup>

Lastly, the Union can ask a group of member states to form a so-called "coalition of the willing" for external defense action. As is stated in article 42.5 of the TEU, "The Council may entrust the execution of a task, within the Union framework, to a group of Member States in order to protect the Union's values and serve its interests. The execution of such a task shall be governed by Article 45."

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<sup>36</sup> Blanke, *The Treaty on EU (TEU): A commentary*, p. 1231.

This allows for what is commonly known as differentiated integration, a mechanism the EU has used in the past both in terms of defense and in other areas, as will be seen in later chapters of this work. The idea is to guarantee the defense of the EU through only some member states, thus being a more efficient and faster force for external action. The planning and execution of military operations is a complicated process; the number of independent military defense secretaries of the member states only augments these complications. This coalition of the willing, therefore, limits the number of participants and thus enhances overall capabilities. Any mission carried out by this coalition under the framework of the Union must respect the objectives of the Union as per article 3 of the TEU and its interest as per article 42.5 of the TEU.

### III. EU Defense Institutions and Current Cooperation

The European Defense Agency (EDA) is part of Europe's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) and is anchored in article 42.3 of the TEU:

The Member States shall undertake progressively to improve their military capabilities. The Agency in the field of defense capabilities development, research, acquisition, and armaments (hereinafter referred to as 'the European Defense Agency') shall identify operational requirements, shall promote measures to satisfy those requirements, shall contribute to identifying and, where appropriate, implementing any measure needed to strengthen the industrial and technological base of the defense sector, shall participate in defining a European capabilities and armaments policy, and shall assist the Council in evaluating the improvement of military capabilities.

Its main tasks are to improve the operational capabilities of each MS. Participation is still voluntary, however. It promotes all collaborative defense efforts of the Union, some of which are Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the Coordinated Annual Review on Defense (CARD), and the European Defense Fund (EDF).<sup>37</sup> The legal background, purpose, current status, and relation to Strategic Autonomy of each of these will be analyzed below in turn.

#### A. *Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)*

The Permanent Structured Cooperation was established by the European Commission in December of 2017 to further cooperation between the different countries of the EU in matters of Security and Defense.<sup>38</sup> Instead of having isolated projects on defense for each member state, PESCO sets out to create a platform where countries can choose projects on which to participate. It helps develop military capabilities but also furthers the creation of a

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<sup>37</sup> European Defence Agency, *EDA's annual report 2021 is out!* <https://eda.europa.eu/> (accessed March 25, 2022).

<sup>38</sup> Europa, *PESCO Information*. PESCO. <https://pesco.europa.eu/about/> (accessed October 15, 2021).

common military doctrine, foreign policy, and operational approach. It works in conjunction with CARD and the EDF. PESCO by itself is a framework that gives way to binding commitments, but it is not binding by itself. It is a list of projects where countries can choose the area of cooperation, such as defense investment expenditure; harmonization, capability specialization, and training/logistics cooperation; or force availability, interoperability, flexibility, and deployability. After choosing the project, the MS can then choose the partner countries to cooperate with.<sup>39</sup>

This system was built under article 42.6 of the TEU<sup>40</sup> in conjunction with protocol number 10 on PESCO. The TEU states that “Those Member States whose military capabilities fulfill higher criteria and which have made more binding commitments to one another in this area with a view to the most demanding missions shall establish permanent structured cooperation within the Union framework. Such cooperation shall be governed by Article 46.” This language opened the door for European countries to funnel investment into

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<sup>39</sup> Full list of projects of PESCO: TIGER Mark III (FR, DE, ES) • European High Atmosphere Airship Platform - Persistent ISR Capability (IT, FR) • European Military Space Surveillance Awareness Network (IT, FR) • European Patrol Corvette (IT, FR) • Electronic Warfare Capability and Interoperability Programme for Future JISR (CZ, DE) • EU Cyber Academia and Innovation Hub (PT, ES) • CBRN Defense Training Range (RO, FR, IT) • EU Beyond Line of Sight Land Battlefield Missile Systems (FR, BE, CY) • European Training Certification Centre for European Armies (IT, GR) • Armored Infantry Fighting Vehicle/Amphibious Assault Vehicle/Light Armored Vehicle (IT, GR, SK) • Counter Unmanned Aerial System (IT, CZ) • Airborne Electronic Attack (ES, FR, SE) • European Global RPAS Insertion Architecture System (IT, FR, RO) • Indirect Fire Support (Euro Artillery) (SK, IT, HU) • Joint EU Intelligence School (GR, CY) • One Deployable Special Operations Forces Tactical Command and Control Command Post for Small Joint Operations (GR, CY) • Helicopter Hot and High Training (GR, IT, RO) • Deployable Modular Underwater Intervention Capability Package (BL, GR, FR) • EU Network of Diving Centers (RO, BL, FR).

Steven Blockmans, Dylan Macchiarini, *Differentiated Integration Within PESCO – Clusters And Convergence In EU Defense*, CEPS, 20–22. December 2019, [https://doi.org/https://www.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/RR2019\\_04\\_Differentiated-integration-within-PESCO.pdf](https://doi.org/https://www.ceps.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/RR2019_04_Differentiated-integration-within-PESCO.pdf).



common technologies, organize military exercises, and encourage the member states to work closely with the European Defense Agency. It remains clear that this is a framework for states to voluntarily submit themselves to legally binding commitments in areas of defense and security. In other words, it remains flexible to the interests of each country.

PESCO itself is currently comprised of 25 EU countries,<sup>41</sup> including four of the countries considered neutral and not members of NATO.<sup>42</sup> Only two countries, Denmark and Malta, have not joined. This system has come in three waves. The first wave included 17 different projects with 130 participations. Italy, Spain, and Greece had the most participation. In the second wave, total participants decreased to only 66 projects and then to 47 in the third wave. Participations have decreased due to the most relevant projects already being underway rather than a lack of interest from the MS. Most of the bigger more ambitious projects were started in the first rounds, leaving fewer and the smaller projects for the following rounds. Italy and Germany showed initial enthusiasm, but in the next waves, participation from Romania, Hungary, and Sweden increased. France always maintained the most participation and led the most projects.<sup>43</sup>

Willingness to cooperate with other countries also correlates to certain groups of member states within PESCO, states who may share interests, geography, or politics. Baltic countries are more likely to cooperate among themselves and the big four (France, Italy,

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<sup>41</sup> Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Republic of Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.

Blockmans, *Differentiated Integration Within PESCO – Clusters And Convergence In EU Defense*, p. 30.

<sup>42</sup> Austria, Finland, Ireland, and Sweden.

<sup>43</sup> Blockmans, *Differentiated Integration Within PESCO – Clusters And Convergence In EU Defense*, p. 8.

Germany, and Spain) with each other. We can also observe how Ireland has the least participation with only two projects. In the same sense, the types of projects member states choose reveal their military culture. France, the Netherlands, Greece, and Poland show a willingness to project force and are strong advocates for both the EU and NATO, participating much more in power projection projects. Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, and Portugal are contributing above their weight by being strong supporters of the EU—but are not willing to use military force.<sup>44</sup> How these postures change given the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine remains to be seen.

The EU has been a place for differentiated integration in numerous areas of policy throughout its history. This system of opt-outs has permitted a certain few countries to adopt primary EU law and other countries to follow or adopt their own vetoes, secondary law, or opt-out completely. The Schengen system of free travel and the Eurozone are the most notable examples of this “opt-out” coordination.<sup>45</sup> PESCO by its very nature takes this approach, minimizing the concerns that legally binding obligations create and the difficulty posed by the need for political consensus. PESCO therefore aims to have a multi-level approach to defense integration, which means each country can decide to what extent they are willing to cooperate with other member states within PESCO. This system of governance gives an insight into the way military cooperation is decided. Each country can choose with whom and in what areas they wish to collaborate. Within the project, member states must agree by unanimity on any decision.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, p. 31.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22.

<sup>46</sup> In accordance with Article 5(3) of Decision (CFSP) 2017/2315, the project members shall agree among themselves by unanimity on the arrangements for, and the scope of, their cooperation and the

The EU has always had in some sense *status quo* countries, that is, member states hesitant to move too fast or too far in one or more areas of policy. In PESCO, without opt-outs, this would likely be Austria, Finland, Ireland, and Sweden, states not so willing to cooperate with others on defense. This, however, is the brilliance (and arguably also a key weakness) of PESCO: its big push for an inclusive operation based on the interest of each member party. The EU also already hosts various other regional and bilateral multi-sectoral and operational defense cooperation mechanisms, such as the Lancaster House Treaties (the UK and France), the Élysée/Aachen Treaties (France and Germany), the Nordic Defense Cooperation (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden), the Visegrád Group (Poland, Hungary, Czechia, Slovakia), the Benelux Defense (Belgium, Netherlands, Luxemburg), and the Baltic Defense Cooperation (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania).<sup>47</sup>

Initially, France was keener on defense cooperation built on a “coalition of the willing” focused on stronger, more ambitious member states with greater military capabilities. This is rooted in France's militarization after the end of World War II and its historical willingness to pursue a more independent foreign policy. In the end, however, the German push for inclusivity won, arguing that very high French standards would alienate

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management of the project. 2. These arrangements may include the necessary contributions needed to participate in the project and its requirements, the decision-making process within the project, conditions for leaving the project or for other participating Member States to join the project, and provisions relating to the observer status. These arrangements may also cover the matters referred to in Article 7.

Official Journal of the European Union, *Council Decision (Cfsp) 2018/909*, 2018, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018D0909&from=ES>.

<sup>47</sup> Blockmans, *Differentiated Integration Within PESCO – Clusters And Convergence In EU Defense*, p. 18.

many countries. This gave Europe its most ambitious push on defense cooperation to date.<sup>48</sup> This has historically been a common trend in Strategic Autonomy policy: France seeking a more assertive and independent military doctrine and Germany's overall reluctance to become more militaristic. Germany is not immobile, however, as it deployed its first warship to the Indo-Pacific region in August of 2021.<sup>49</sup> The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has also pushed Germany to reassess its positions on defense.<sup>50</sup>

In conclusion, PESCO is not perfect. It was nevertheless the easiest project to sell to the member states with different defense interests and different capabilities. It is in a sense a bureaucratic compromise, shy about gathering political consensus for a stronger defense union. Regardless, it demonstrates three things. First, that European countries are willing to cooperate on defense if they can choose their partner and their project. Second, that the clustering around projects shows a different mindset to foreign policy and military doctrine amongst the member states. Finally, that if further binding steps towards a defense union were taken, certain countries would be unlikely to follow, and the trend of differentiated integration would eventually be reaffirmed. Whether and how much that calculus has changed in each member state since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 remains to be seen, especially once the initial shocked reaction wears off.

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<sup>48</sup> Billon-Galland, Alice, Martin Quencez, *Can France and Germany Make PESCO Work as a Process Toward EU Defense?*, German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep18774>.

<sup>49</sup> *German warship sets sail for Indo-Pacific region*, DW, August 02, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/german-warship-sets-sail-for-indo-pacific-region/a-58733630> (accessed October 15, 2021)

<sup>50</sup> *German chancellor Olaf Scholz announces paradigm change in response to Ukraine invasion*. DW, February 28, 2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/german-chancellor-olaf-scholz-announces-paradigm-change-in-response-to-ukraine-invasion/a-60932652> (accessed March 28, 2022).

## **B. *Coordinated Annual Review on Defense (CARD)***

In November of 2016, the EU called for a global strategy for the foreign and security policy of the EU (EUGS) implemented in an annual review of defense. The European Defense Agency under article 45 of the TEU was mandated to identify objectives and evaluate existing commitments and future projects. Specifically, it states that: “The European Defense Agency referred to in Article 42(3), subject to the authority of the Council, shall have as its task to (a) contribute to identifying the Member States' military capability objectives and evaluating observance of the capability commitments given by the Member States...”. The Coordinated Annual Review on Defense (CARD) came into active existence in 2017 on that basis. The idea is to have a yearly review that does not criticize or judge member states' actions, but instead has a forward-looking attitude on the possible improvement of EU defense.<sup>51</sup>

CARD, therefore, is a voluntary member process that monitors the defense policy of member states with the goal of finding better ways of spending resources and identifying possible collaborative projects. If PESCO is the framework under which projects are realized, CARD establishes the information and ideas about where PESCO should move forward. CARD's 2020 review recommended, among other things that member states:

1. Stop fragmentation through coordinated efforts in areas of defense spending, defense planning, and defense cooperation;
2. Increase their military capabilities to complete CSDP goals;

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<sup>51</sup> European Defense Agency, *The Coordinated Annual Review on Defense (CARD)*, [https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/EU-defense-initiatives/coordinated-annual-review-on-defense-\(card\)](https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/EU-defense-initiatives/coordinated-annual-review-on-defense-(card)) (accessed October 15, 2021).

3. Increase their overall number of active military personnel;
4. Develop next-generation military capabilities in certain technologies, including main battle tank, soldier systems, European Patrol Class surface ships, counter-UAS-anti-access/area-denial, defense in space, and enhanced military mobility;
5. Increase operational capacity concerning power projection;
6. Reduce fragmentation and duplication of efforts, technologies, and spending;
7. Increase overall defense expenditures to achieve NATO's 2% GDP goal.<sup>52</sup>

In short, CARD clearly finds that Europe's biggest issue in defense planning is the fragmentation of efforts and duplications of military production due to diverging national interests. The way to deal with fragmentation and duplication is through a coordinated effort on spending, the creation of technologies, power projection, a common CSDP agenda, and an overall defense collaboration. It recommends European states use the PESCO framework to continue coordinated efforts.<sup>53</sup>

### ***C. European Defense Fund (EDF)***

The European Defense Fund (EDF) is an initiative created by the Commission in June 2017 to support collaborative defense research and development. The Fund gives money to the industrial base hoping to create and sustain the most advanced defense technologies. This Fund, comprised of a total of 8 billion euros, is given to mostly small and medium sized European companies. Preference is given to projects that are collaborative between member

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<sup>52</sup> European Defense Agency, 2020 Card Report Executive Summary, 2020, <https://eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/reports/card-2020-executive-summary-report.pdf>.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

states and that match the properties of the EDA, CSDP, and NATO.<sup>54</sup> The goal of the EDF is to guarantee European strategic technological autonomy through the state of the art defense technologies. It is an effort to stop depending solely on the United States' technologies for defense.<sup>55</sup> In conclusion, if PESCO provides the framework and CARD the projects and properties, the EDF gives the necessary funding, all in a collaborative effort aiming for Strategic Autonomy.

These projects form the backbone of the EU's efforts on a collaborative defense. This, however, this does not mean Europe has a solid and or modern Security apparatus. It is also clear that Europe has not taken all the measures possible to form one cohesive defense policy or armed forces. These will be topics are addressed in depth in the following chapters.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> European Commission, *The European Defense Fund (EDF)*, [https://ec.europa.eu/defence-industry-space/eu-defence-industry/european-defence-fund-edf\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/defence-industry-space/eu-defence-industry/european-defence-fund-edf_en) (accessed October 15, 2021).

#### IV. Strategic Autonomy: A Concept

The general concept of Strategic Autonomy is not new. A longstanding debate about what this concept is has, ironically, made this idea ambiguous, multifaceted, and therefore mostly impractical in its application. The term is politicalized and used with varied interests, reducing it to a buzzword related to sovereignty and hard power, but also a byword for the independence of military capacity. The term was more strongly defined as a “capacity to act autonomously when and where necessary and with partners wherever possible” in a November 2016 Council conclusions.<sup>56</sup> This definition is quite neat yet void of substance.

Due to the ambiguous definition of Strategic Autonomy, even EU officials and politicians give very different connotations to the concept. For the French, the term is associated with the use of force quickly and assertively. Although linked to a decreased dependence on others in both an ideological and material sense, it does not advocate a distance from allies but rather the strengthening of partnerships themselves. The French, it seems, have the clearest view on the term. The Dutch, on the other hand, see it more linked to an open defense cooperation; they wish to see more cooperation in CSDP, making it more effective. Their stance coincides with their participation in PESCO. They also advocate more for strategic responsibility but not necessarily autonomy. German officials see Strategic Autonomy as good but are careful to associate the autonomy to any independence from NATO, fulfilling their role as a mediator in the transatlantic relationship. They also prefer a

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<sup>56</sup> European Council of the EU, *Council conclusions on progress in implementing the EU Global Strategy in the area of Security and Defense*, European Council of the EU, March 6, 2017, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/03/06/conclusions-security-defense/> (accessed February 2, 2022).



soft power rather than a hard power approach, a position that coincides with Germany's general military reluctance. Finally, the Eastern European countries such as Finland or Estonia do support the general development of European defense capability. Many like Estonia, however, do not wish to decouple from NATO and are hesitant to achieve much defense autonomy without its longstanding reliance on the United States.<sup>57</sup>

This cacophony of strategic visions very much relates to the cacophony of strategic interest seen in the previous chapter. How countries approach the political rhetoric of Strategic Autonomy is a reflection of threat perceptions, political identity, and geography. It is not a surprise, therefore, that politicians also have given the term many different meanings.<sup>58</sup> EU Council President Charles Michel said, "European Strategic Autonomy is goal No. 1 for our generation ... Autonomy is not protectionism; it is the opposite." Emmanuel Macron, on the other hand, said, "consensus is emerging in light of this crisis to strengthen European Strategic Autonomy, meaning our sovereignty, our ability to reduce our dependence vis-a-vis the rest of the world, strengthen our production companies."<sup>59</sup> Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel said, "many global players can also emerge from the EU.

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<sup>57</sup> Elina Libek, *European Strategic Autonomy: A Cacophony of Political Visions*, the International Centre for Defence and Security (ICDS), December 19, 2019, <https://icds.ee/en/european-strategic-autonomy-a-cacophony-of-political-visions/> (accessed February 2, 2022).

<sup>58</sup> European Council of the EU, 'Strategic Autonomy for Europe - the aim of our generation' - speech by President Charles Michel to the Bruegel think tank. European Council of the EU, September 28, 2020, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/09/28/1-autonomie-strategique-europeenne-est-l-objectif-de-notre-generation-discours-du-president-charles-michel-au-groupe-de-reflexion-bruegel/> (accessed February 2, 2022).

<sup>59</sup> Emmanuel Macron, *Emmanuel Macron : « Renforcer notre autonomie stratégique », FIGARO Live*, April 23, 2020, <https://video.lefigaro.fr/figaro/video/emmanuel-macron-renforcer-notre-autonomie-strategique/6151652923001>.

This is particularly important in the digital sector where the EU must become ‘sovereign.’<sup>60</sup> A Polish diplomat related the term to Napoleonesque militarism, while an EU diplomat called it “a license to kill small and medium enterprises,” referring to the regulation France and Germany would create in the industrial sector.<sup>61</sup>

The political comments show that Strategic Autonomy is related to not only defense, but also a strong trade market, economic regulation, digital independence, militarism, and protectionism. There is a need, therefore, for a clear and practical definition for this term. This definition must unite the most visions of what Strategic Autonomy is, quell ambiguity, define its scope, and lastly, be explained in material, objective terms.

Strategic Autonomy is often described as having three different dimensions: political autonomy, operational autonomy, and industrial autonomy. Political autonomy is the capacity to make security policy decisions and act upon them. This factor relates to the creation of a common strategic culture and therefore having compatible strategic interests. This is the reason the EU Strategic Compass is in development. Its objectives are the creation and adoption of a common strategic culture, which as the timeline suggests will be adopted in March of this year.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Guy Chazan, *Angela Merkel urges EU to seize control of data from US Tech titans*, Financial Times, November 21, 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/956ccaa6-0537-11ea-9afa-d9e2401fa7ca> (accessed March 25, 2022).

<sup>61</sup> Paola Tamma, *Europe wants ‘Strategic Autonomy’ — it just has to decide what that means*, Politico Europe, October 15, 2020, <https://www.politico.eu/Article/europe-trade-wants-strategic-autonomy-decide-what-means/> (accessed February 12, 2022).

<sup>62</sup> External Action Service, *A strategic compass for the EU*, EEAS, [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/106337/towards-strategic-compass\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/106337/towards-strategic-compass_en) (accessed February 2, 2022).

Current events have changed the focus the Strategic Compass, and thus will be addressed in the conclusions.

Ronja Kempin, Barbara Kunz, *France, Germany and the Quest for European Strategic Autonomy*, Notes du Cerfa 141, December 2017, p. 10,

Operational autonomy relates to the institutional framework to create and plan civilian or military actions, and carry out these plans in an independent manner. This factor is what has often been referred to in this thesis as capability building, such as conducting operations in conflict zones, crisis management, or peacebuilding situations. Operational capability also relates to the effective use of military assets, that is, truly deployable and modern armies. PESCO seeks to build on the framework of operational capability but the EU has seldom carried out an autonomous conflict operation. CARD also makes sure that operational objectives are compatible with the overarching goals.<sup>63</sup>

Lastly, Industrial autonomy relates to access to defense technology and material. This term is synonymous with defense assets including research, design, creation, and business. Due to its nature, it is a sector related to profits and a high degree of regulation.<sup>64</sup>

The EU must have full political autonomy, a high degree of operational autonomy, and some industrial autonomy. It must have a fully-fledged and unified political autonomy as the building block for the rest of Strategic Autonomy. It must be capable of making its own choices and leading in global policy. Operational capabilities should be strong and reliable but avoid alienating NATO. Thus, its capacities must complement NATO while at the same time fulfilling its political autonomy. Lastly, some industrial dependency is practical. Developing a full range of homegrown technologies capable of challenging Russia would take a generation and is unlikely to occur on any realistic timeline. Industrial

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[https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/ndc\\_141\\_kempin\\_kunz\\_france\\_germany\\_european\\_strategic\\_autonomy\\_dec\\_2017.pdf](https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/ndc_141_kempin_kunz_france_germany_european_strategic_autonomy_dec_2017.pdf).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

dependency on the United States, therefore, is only practical. The degree to which Strategic Autonomy should be achieved, however, is better explained by its visions.

There are three visions of Strategic Autonomy: responsibility, hedging, and emancipation. Responsibility is equal to burden sharing between European states and NATO. Under this vision, autonomy is the freedom to conduct missions and operations autonomously rather than the freedom from dependencies, such as to be able to undertake military plans in its neighborhood and globally. This vision usually also advocates a subservience to the United States, especially to its weapons industry. Therefore, this vision defends a bilateral relationship with NATO and fears duplication of efforts with the alliance.<sup>65</sup>

The hedging vision foresees a possible decoupling of U.S. and European defense, and therefore advocates a gradual buildup of defense capacities to be able to take a range of military actions, similarly to what the United States does. This vision does not want separation from NATO or the United States and can coexist with these actors. It is, therefore, the freedom to act, and freedom from American political authority and defense-industrial interests. Hedging also plans for a European power, one that could be a loyal ally of NATO but that can also stand-alone if desired.

Lastly, emancipation is the more radical vision of the term and thus sees hedging as settling for being a second-tier power to the United States. In this sense, emancipation seeks to be able to conduct the full spectrum of military operations all over the globe, with European-made materials and technologies. These visions want to be completely free of

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<sup>65</sup> Fiott, Daniel. "Strategic Autonomy: Towards 'European Sovereignty' in Defence?" European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep21120>.

dependencies of any kind from any power—whether it is the United States, China, or anyone else.

Responsibility, hedging, or emancipation represent different degrees of Strategic Autonomy. Most EU elites would never vouch for full emancipation, especially given that strategic dependency has in many ways worked well for the EU. That leads to the perception that full emancipation would be unwise and unhealthy. The degree of autonomy sought, therefore, is somewhere between responsibility and hedging. This work, as has been mentioned, advocates that any realization of strategic antinomy should be in complete tandem with, and in fulfillment of, NATO commitments and goals.

Having analyzed the themes and degrees of Strategic Autonomy, we will recommend to what level of military ambition European Strategic Autonomy should aim. The EU should be capable of crisis management and the Petersberg Tasks,<sup>66</sup> but also of territorial defense and power projection across the spectrum for as long as necessary as to fulfill its political goals. The EU should be capable of conducting this operation alone in its immediate neighborhood and with allies all across the globe. It should be able to conduct campaigns like the one in Libya in 2011 or Yugoslavia in 1991 alone, while the campaigns in Iraq and Syria would happen alongside a strong ally. The EU should be also capable of defending against and possibly winning a conflict with Russia. It must therefore have modern fighter jets, the full spectrum of intelligence capabilities, and a permanent centralized command with several

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<sup>66</sup> Humanitarian and rescue tasks; conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks; tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking; joint disarmament operations; military advice and assistance tasks; post-conflict stabilization tasks. Glossary of summaries *Petersberg Tasks*. EUR-Lex, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/petersberg\\_tasks.html](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/petersberg_tasks.html) (accessed February 13, 2022).

deployable army corps with their corresponding naval and air forces. Europe needs to assume first responsibility for its own territorial defense.<sup>67</sup>

Lastly, this work presents a full and integrated definition of Strategic Autonomy within the propositions presented herein: in essence, European Strategic Autonomy<sup>68</sup> is the capacity for the EU to make its own decisions on an independent security and defense policy framework and act upon those decisions to achieve its political goals. This manifests itself as the capability to carry out the full spectrum of military operations independently within its own neighborhood and jointly with allies across the globe. This definition stems from the well-developed industrial base that materially supports such operational capacities but still has a working relationship with other industrial bases, such as with the United States. European Strategic Autonomy has the objective of shouldering its own responsibility for the territorial defense of Europe and ensuring its interests abroad—all while becoming a better and stronger ally to NATO.<sup>69</sup>

In short, Strategic Autonomy should be understood in terms of security and defense as the capacity to act with the intention of shouldering its own weight of responsibility and not as emancipation. As such, the degree of Strategic Autonomy is the freedom to act to ensure the safety of the Union and have political independence from any other actor while

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<sup>67</sup> Coelmont, Jo, “European Strategic Autonomy: Which Military Level of Ambition?”, Egmont Institute, 2019, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep21389>.

<sup>68</sup> Zandee, Dick, Bob Deen, Kimberley Kruijver, and Adája Stoetman, “Conceptualising European Strategic Autonomy”, *European Strategic Autonomy in Security and Defence: Now the Going Gets Tough, It’s Time to Get Going*, Clingendael Institute, 2020, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep27515.5>.

<sup>69</sup> Nathalie Tocci, *European Strategic Autonomy: What It Is, Why We Need It, How to Achieve*. *Istituto Affari Internazionali*. February 2, 2021, <https://doi.org/978-88-9368-178-0>.

still maintaining useful dependencies and fulfilling the obligations to important alliances<sup>70</sup>. Strategic Autonomy in this sense looks for the EU to be able to act alone if needed, but still looks to the support of its allies and thus seeks to become a better ally itself.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Concilium Europa, *Strategic Autonomy, Strategic Choices*, Issues paper, February 5, 2021, <https://doi.org/https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/49404/strategic-autonomy-issues-paper-5-february-2021-web.pdf>.

<sup>71</sup> Drent, Margriet, *European Strategic Autonomy: Going It Alone?* Clingendael Institute, 2018. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep21311>.

## V. Duplication, Fragmentation, and Waste: Europe's Defense Problem

The EU member states collectively spend about 200 billion euros on defense each year. Despite that investment, the state of their armed forces is at an all-time low readiness level.<sup>72</sup> Russia spends around 60 billion dollars on defense each year and manages to obtain one of the world's most battle-ready army, with enough capabilities to launch offensive operations. Russia procures most of the weapons itself and therefore gets much more procurement out of each ruble spent.<sup>73</sup> The EU collectively spends a staggering amount for what it gets. This funding should be enough to buy the world's second most formidable defense system after the United States, and yet the EU member states have little to show for it. So the question arises, why does the EU get so little out of 200 billion Euro on defense?

The answer is duplication, fragmentation, and waste. Defense spending is still a function left to each individual state, and for many national political elites, defense should always remain a power left to sovereign countries rather than to the Union as a whole. The result of this are 27 individual countries paying for 27 different armed forces and archiving little in the process. The EU has 17 different types of main battle tanks while the United States has one. The EU has 29 different offensive military vessel types compared to the four types used in the United States. It operates 20 different fighter planes; the United States operates six. The United States spends more money on each soldier, around 100,000 Euro,

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<sup>72</sup> Eurostat, *How much is spent on defense in the EU? How much is spent on defense in the EU?*, Eurostat, May 18, 2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/EDN-20170607-1> (accessed October 16, 2021).

<sup>73</sup> Michael Kofman, Richard Connolly, *Why Russian military expenditure is much higher than commonly understood (as is China's)*, War on the Rocks, December 15, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/12/why-russian-military-expenditure-is-much-higher-than-commonly-understood-as-is-chinas/> (accessed October 16, 2021).



creating well-equipped and trained personnel; the EU spends one-quarter of that on each soldier, yet that amounts to 50% of its overall budget.<sup>74</sup>

Added to this, most EU equipment and personnel are simply not battle-ready, meaning they are not deployable. The point was proven in 2011 in Libya, an officially NATO-led effort, where France and the United Kingdom were supposed to be the lead countries. Nevertheless, they quickly ran out of cruise missiles and by the second week required American support to continue the fight. Another example was the US pullout from Afghanistan, where the UK was unable to hold Kabul airport without help from American Marines. This left NATO allies, including supposed powerhouses like the UK and France, recognizing that they are all too dependent on American enabling capabilities. The same is true in France's North Africa Sahel operation. France's armies are one of the world's most battle-ready fighting forces, yet still need the United States to help with air to air refueling and intelligence support. It is self-evident that even Europe's most formidable forces cannot project power alone, even when they should be capable to do so given the amount spent on their militaries.<sup>75</sup>

In short, 27 different countries are all individually buying their own weapons systems and training their own troops, resulting in fragmented efforts. Each one has different types of weapons that meet the same function, resulting in a hodgepodge of duplicated systems. Both

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<sup>74</sup> Mogherini, F , Katainen, J. Reflection paper on the future of European defence European Commission, 2017, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2775/35435> (accessed October 16, 2021).

<sup>75</sup> Max Bergmann, James Lamond, Siena Cicarelli, *The case for EU Defense, A New Way Forward for Trans-Atlantic Security Relations*, Center for American Progress, June 1, 2021, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2021/06/01/500099/case-eu-defense/> (accessed October 16, 2021).

of these factors create a lot of waste in defense spending, and therefore fall short in the goal of EU Strategic Autonomy. The answer to this problem is “pooling and sharing”; if EU countries were to spend together, make joint acquisitions, and carry out collaborative training operations, it would result in a much more cost-effective and deployable military force.

To provide an example, we will assume all countries in PESCO were to operate one type of main battle tank. When negotiating the acquisition of this tank, they would have more leverage and get a lower price due to the increased number of units they would purchase. When deploying the tank, all armies would know how to operate it, making it much easier to share assets. If one tank were to break down and needed extra parts, it could easily acquire them because all member states would be using the same spare parts. Another added advantage is that all of that spending would go directly into EU companies and not foreign-bought assets, making them highly beneficial for the economy. In this way, the possible advantage of “pooling and sharing” is a unified EU industrial base resulting in a cheaper mass production of a modern army.

Different reports claim that if pooling and sharing fully occurred it could save EU countries around 30 billion euros a year. PESCO and the EDF are a step in the right direction but stop short of harvesting the full advantages of pooling and sharing effort. The EDF does try to develop an industrial base and some PESCO projects have involved joint acquisition, but nothing like a complete EU-level joint acquisition and training. Another option is force integration; some member states have started this on a small scale and in a discrete manner.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Elisabeth Braw, *Germany is quietly building a European army under its command*. *Foreign Policy*, Foreign Policy, May 22, 2017, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/05/22/germany-is-quietly-building-a-european-army-under-its-command/> (accessed October 16, 2021).

The Netherlands placed two of its three brigades under German command, while Romania and Czechia have integrated some brigades.

In conclusion, the current situation on the ground makes four points clear. First, fragmented efforts create duplication in assets, making the defense system very wasteful and stopping the EU short of its Strategic Autonomy goal. Second, pooling and sharing saves money and makes for a larger, better equipped modern army. Third, PESCO and the EDF are important but minute steps in the road to full military integration. Lastly, joint efforts in weapons acquisitions and training makes for a better overall defense.

## VI. Washington's View on Strategic Autonomy

During the George W. Bush and Bill Clinton Administrations, EU multilateralism signaled to Washington that the EU had left hard power, deciding rather to take a pacifist, inward-looking approach on foreign relations. They saw the EU as incapable of having or exercising hard power and reluctant to assertive action due to German anti-militarism. A more objective view and recent events have shown the EU more than capable of taking a more active posture when needed. France is one of the world's most interventionist powers, especially under Macron's tenure. NATO allies also participated in the Balkans and Afghanistan. Perhaps more critically, the EU migration policy with Frontex has not shied away from forceful actions in recent years.<sup>77</sup> The EU might be bureaucratic and slow to deploy, but it is definitely not antagonistic to hard power when it chooses to use it.

During the Barack Obama Administration, the United States took a more ambivalent, even lukewarm acceptance of EU defense. Obama began what is called the U.S.'s "Pivot to Asia," yet he still called on the EU to increase spending on defense and pushed for burden sharing.<sup>78</sup> When the Donald Trump Administration came to office, it went from Obama's tacit acceptance to complete opposition to an EU-level defense effort. It was here when the United States opposed PESCO,<sup>79</sup> even when many projects would be complementing NATO.

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<sup>77</sup> Statewatch, *Frontex has failed on fundamental rights, says European Parliament Scrutiny Group*, Statewatch, July 15, 2021 <https://www.statewatch.org/news/2021/july/frontex-has-failed-on-fundamental-rights-says-european-parliament-scrutiny-group/> (accessed October 17, 2021).

<sup>78</sup> Micheal Green, *The legacy of Obama's "pivot" to Asia*, Foreign Policy, September 3, 2016, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/09/03/the-legacy-of-obamas-pivot-to-asia/> (accessed October 17, 2021).

<sup>79</sup> Aaron Mehta, *US cautiously watching EU military proposal*, Defense News, February 13, 2018 <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2018/02/13/us-cautiously-watching-eu-military-proposal/> (accessed October 17, 2021).

It was mainly concerned with the American arms industry being excluded from PESCO and the EDF. This was highly ironic, as Washington does not allow military spending on equipment made outside of the United States, yet expects the EU not to favor European companies.<sup>80</sup> Instead, the United States has constantly pushed NATO allies to spend more money on defense, meeting the 2% of GDP target called for in the North Atlantic Treaty.<sup>81</sup> The Trump Administration championed states like Poland due to their high military spending, yet was highly dismissive of EU multilateralism.<sup>82</sup> As we analyzed above in the section on “Duplication, Fragmentation, and Waste: Europe’s Defense Problem”, Europe’s lack of defense capabilities is not due to a lack of spending but rather to a lack of cooperation.

In brief, since the 1990s the United States has consistently opposed any attempted EU defense efforts, vetoing any type of EU defense union. Its main argument was that a common EU defense would undermine NATO by duplicating activities. One key example was Madeleine Albright’s three “D” s on European defense: no “diminution” of NATO, no “duplication” of existing efforts, and no “discrimination” against non-EU members. This policy was understandable; it wanted to prioritize NATO and not dilute it.<sup>83</sup> It also wanted to keep a strong presence on the continent. As a result, however, Europe became even more reliant on American hard power.

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<sup>80</sup> Bergmann, *The case for EU Defense, A New Way Forward for Trans-Atlantic Security Relations*

<sup>81</sup> BBC, *Trump urges NATO members to Double Military Funding Target*, BBC News, July 11, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-44799027> (accessed October 17, 2021).

<sup>82</sup> Josephine Joly , Leszek Kablak, *US-Poland: Trump brings Polish and American nations closer*, Euronews, October 27, 2020, <https://www.euronews.com/2020/10/26/america-loves-poland-trump-brings-polish-and-american-nations-closer> (accessed October 17, 2021).

<sup>83</sup> Bergmann, *The case for EU Defense, A New Way Forward for Trans-Atlantic Security Relations*.

Instead of the current situation, the United States could benefit from a strong, independent ally willing to take on foes in its own backyard. Overall, American opposition to EU defense amounted to a dilution of NATO's overall power. Washington did not support such an EU defense effort because it feared it would lose prominence over NATO itself. It is easier to compete with 29 small countries than with one unified defense Union.

Currently, the notion that it is either NATO or the EU's CSDP—but not both—is simply a false dichotomy. A stronger EU means a stronger NATO. “Whether EU Strategic Autonomy undermines NATO, is, therefore, a meaningless question, as meaningless as if USA's Strategic Autonomy undermines NATO. EU Strategic Autonomy could, of course, weaken U.S. prominence in NATO.”<sup>84</sup> Washington's problem, therefore, is about the EU as a stronger actor; it has more to do with the U.S.'s role in NATO and less about the Transatlantic alliance itself. A lack of EU strategic<sup>85</sup> autonomy means dependence on American foreign policy. As a result, as long as the U.S. and EU coincide in grand strategy goals, cooperation between NATO and CSPD is guaranteed.

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<sup>84</sup> Corentin Brustlein, *Mutual Reinforcement: CSDP and NATO in the face of rising challenges*, Paris IFRI Security Studies Center, October 2019, [https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/fs93\\_brustlein\\_ed\\_mutual\\_reinforcement\\_2019.pdf](https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/fs93_brustlein_ed_mutual_reinforcement_2019.pdf).

<sup>85</sup> Bergmann, *The case for EU Defense, A New Way Forward for Trans-Atlantic Security Relations*.

## VII. Can Europe Defend Itself Against...Russia?

At the time of writing, Russia had launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In doing so, it took territory on the outskirts of Kyiv and made gains in the south of the country. What had only been thought of as a power play by Russian President Vladimir Putin turned out to be Europeans' biggest security issue since the creation of the EU. This confirms what many already believe: that Russia will continue to be a threat to the peace and security of NATO and EU. Before the invasion, in November of 2021, Belarus amassed a group of mostly Iraqi and Syrian migrants at the border with Poland, with the sole intention of disrupting EU internal politics.<sup>86</sup> This is only the latest hybrid threat posed by the Russian satellite state of Belarus. These are only two examples of an array of conventional, hybrid, and covert actions that make Russia Europe's biggest security problem.

This is also clear from Russia's invasion and illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. For most of the 1990s and 2000s, Europe had largely shrunk its defense spending, but after Russia annexed Ukrainian sovereign territory, it signaled to Europe that change was in order.<sup>87</sup> Ukraine in 2012 spent around 2.5 billion Euros on defense and now spends nearly \$4 billion euros. Similarly, in 2013, Poland spent 9 billion Euros on defense, and now it spends 11.9 billion euros.<sup>88</sup> Europe now understands the dangers posed by Russia, but that

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<sup>86</sup> Al Jazeera, *Polish minister warns Belarus border crisis could last months*, Al Jazeera, November 17, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/17/polish-minister-warns-belarus-border-crisis-could-last-months> (accessed January 6, 2022).

<sup>87</sup> Emma Beswick, *EU countries increase military spend due to 'perceived Russia threat'*, Euronews, July 26, 2019, <https://www.euronews.com/2019/04/29/eu-countries-increase-military-spending-due-to-growing-perceptions-of-russia-threat-report> (accessed January 6, 2022).

<sup>88</sup> MacroTrend, *Poland military spending/defense budget 1960-2022*, MacroTrends, <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/POL/poland/military-spending-defense-budget> (accessed January 6, 2022).

was not always the case. PESCO, for example, laid unused and was only utilized after the Russian invasion and annexation of Crimea in 2014. In the context of EU-Russia military relations, then, two key questions arise, questions that have become all too immediate in early 2022. First, can Europe defend itself militarily against Russia? Second, is the perception of Russia as a threat unanimous across all EU countries?

Traditionally, there were two camps on these two issues. The first states that Europe can stand against Russia, in a prolonged, defensive campaign. The second assumes that it cannot hope to win without the aid of the United States due to its Strategic Cacophony. Barry Posen in his essay *Europe Can Defend Itself* best represents the first camp, often called the “restraint” camp by scholars. The position of both camps is analyzed below.

#### **A. *Europe Can Defend Itself***

Europe spends around 300 billion Euros a year on defense and has around 1.4 million military personnel at hand, possessing a substantial military infrastructure. It has good battle tanks and modern aircraft. Even though it does face duplication and fragmentation, this does not justify the general highly pessimistic views of European defense.

Posen proposes an optimal scenario for what is essentially a war game: a defensive mission lasting 90 days or more in the region of the Baltic States. He assesses that the EU would do well and even win against Russia in that scenario, because, even though Russia could surely invade and be quick to gain ground, the EU is prepared to deny the Russians any major offensive wins, therefore causing the conflict to become a long war of attrition. The Europeans are much better suited for such a conflict; they have more manpower than Russia, better resources, and a substantially higher GDP. Russia, therefore, is in an inferior position.



Posen prescribes that Europe does not need a far superior force to win the campaign; on the contrary, it is Russia that would need superior numbers to gain ground. This analysis assumes that Russia will need over 16 but less than 22 heavy mechanized brigades for a credible offensive. Most analysts suggest Russia has around 18 of these brigades, with about 10 of them currently in and around Ukraine. Europe has around 22 of these brigades, but the scenario assumes that only half of them are ready for an offensive battle, so 11 would be ready to defend Europe. NATO seems to be in the same line, suggesting it has around 10 brigades ready for action at any given time. Analysts also suggest that Russian brigades are smaller and less equipped than a typical European brigade is. A NATO brigade can even have twice the personnel of a standard Russian one, therefore making a straight 22 to 11 comparison incorrect.

A better assessment would credit Russia with around 14 brigades at the size and scope of the European or NATO ones. Europe is also thought to have many light brigades, some being elite infantry troops some being lightly armored fighting vehicles. When considering the defensive angle of his campaign, these light brigades can more than tip the balance, adding the crucial numbers needed to make a difference. There are about six of these light brigades, equivalent to about three heavy brigades. These projections and analysis bring relative brigade numbers to about 14 armored brigades on each side. In this scenario, Europe may already have a very good autonomous capability to defend itself.<sup>89</sup> Recent events also prove Posen correct. The Russian armed forces have so far underperformed all expectations, with low morale, low readiness, and bad leadership, leading to an unsuccessful campaign in

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<sup>89</sup> Posen, Barry R. "Europe Can Defend Itself." *Survival* 62, no. 6 (2020): 7–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2020.1851080>.

Ukraine.<sup>90</sup> Russia has largely depended on air and artillery bombings, deciding against the use of tanks and infantry that are highly susceptible to Ukrainian counteroffensives.<sup>91</sup>

### **B. *Strategic Cacophony: Why Europe Cannot Defend Itself***

The second camp, however, argues that Europe cannot defend itself successfully against Russia. The article “Why Europe Cannot Provide for Its Security If the USA Pulls Back” best represents it.<sup>92</sup> That work highlights various reasons for Europe’s defense shortfall but its argument on Strategic Cacophony is most relevant. Essentially, it proposes the idea that European countries have different perceptions of the threat level posed by Russia, therefore, creating a possible “cacophony” of strategic interest which are make a unified response to Russian aggression unviable.<sup>93</sup> The different perceptions (categories) are: (1) Russia is unimportant or not a threat; (2) Russia is a threat, but other threats are more significant; (3) Russia and other threats have roughly equal significance; (4) Russia is the highest threat, but other threats also are significant; and (5) Russia is the dominant threat by far. The different strategic interests related to the countries are shown in the graph below and are a result of a survey done with politicians, government employees, defense experts, military personnel, and citizens. While these categories seem to have shifted considerably since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, it is worth analyzing the positions of

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<sup>90</sup> Jim Garamonde, *Russian forces invading Ukraine suffer low morale*. U.S. Department of Defense, March 23, 2022, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2975508/russian-forces-invading-ukraine-suffer-low-morale/> (accessed March 25, 2022).

<sup>91</sup> Sam Jones, ‘A serious failure’: Scale of Russia’s military blunders becomes clear, *Financial Times*, March 11, 2022) <https://www.ft.com/content/90421972-2f1e-4871-a4c6-0a9e9257e9b0> (accessed March 25, 2022).

<sup>92</sup> Meijer, Hugo, and Stephen G. Brooks, *Illusions of Autonomy: Why Europe Cannot Provide for Its Security If the United States Pulls Back*, *International Security* 45, no. 4 (2021): 7–43. [https://doi.org/10.1162/isec\\_a\\_00405](https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00405)

<sup>93</sup> Recent evets have change the underpinning of this idea, this will be addresses in the Conclusion.

these countries before the invasion given that, in most cases, they represented the longstanding policy of those countries.<sup>94</sup>

Table 1. Threat Assessments in Europe

Russia is unimportant/ not a threat	Russia is a threat, but other threats are more significant	Russia and other threats have roughly equal significance	Russia is the highest threat, but other threats are also significant	Russia is the dominant threat by far
Bulgaria Greece Hungary Ireland Italy Luxembourg Portugal Serbia Spain Slovenia	Austria Croatia France Switzerland	Belgium Denmark Germany Netherlands United Kingdom	Czech Republic Norway Romania Slovakia Sweden	Estonia Finland Latvia Lithuania Poland

NOTE: The table includes European Union member states, member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, plus Serbia and Switzerland.

From this chart, we can appreciate real groupings of countries and gain deeper insights. Smaller countries and those of Western Europe do not seem to consider Russia as their most relevant threat. Led by Germany, they are more likely to consider terrorism, migrations, and WMD proliferation as a bigger threat to their security. Hungary and Bulgaria are the exceptions; they have close ties to Moscow and therefore do not perceive it as a danger.<sup>95</sup> In the second column, France's place is notorious. It sees jihadi terrorism and its role in sub-Saharan Africa as a bigger immediate threat. The middle column is striking, hosting most of Europe's firepower if the UK is included. They see Russia as an equal threat to any other due to its modernization of the armed forces and subversive actions. It seems

<sup>94</sup> Meijer, *Illusions of Autonomy: Why Europe Cannot Provide for Its Security If the United States Pulls Back*, p. 17.

<sup>95</sup> Bulgaria seems to be shifting considerably in this regard, with new Bulgarian Prime Minister Kiril Petkov, elected on a pro-Western platform, recently firing now-former Defense Minister Stefan Yanev after the latter echoed Russian talking points about the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Tsvetelia Tsoleva, Bulgarian Defence Minister Sacked over Ukraine Rhetoric, Reuters, February 28, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/bulgarian-defence-minister-be-sacked-over-ukraine-rhetoric-2022-02-28/> (accessed March 15, 2022)

appropriate for Germany to be in this middle column, not only due to its geographical location but also due to its political role as an inclusive power. Germany's deep economic ties to Russia placed it in this position as well.

The last two columns are largely occupied by Eastern European countries and former members of the Warsaw Pact. They see Russia as a very high threat or the highest threat to their security. These states have varied reasons for their intense weariness. Romania, for example, is mostly concerned about Russia's naval buildup in the Black Sea. For the Baltic States, geography and history play a significant role, as they do for Poland.

The essay argues that in a case of an American withdrawal from its commitments to Europe, France would not consider Russia a bigger threat, while Germany and the UK would but would take no further actions on defense. For smaller and medium sized countries, threat perceptions seem largely based on geography, and they would therefore be unlikely to change their perception of Russia as a threat due to an American pullout. To conclude, this second camp foresees that in the case of an American withdrawal, Europe would not come together and pose a unified front, and on the contrary, due to divisions in their perceived national interests, be prone to inaction. The United States, therefore, cannot leave Europe alone, because if it does, Europe would be unable to counter the now all too real threat from Russia.<sup>96</sup>

Under the Biden Administration, the United States will not leave Europe to fend for itself nor to end its commitment to its NATO allies. Imagining defense interests in Europe separately from these organizations would, therefore, be unwise and untrue. The concept of

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<sup>96</sup> Meijer, *Illusions of Autonomy: Why Europe Cannot Provide for Its Security If the United States Pulls Back*, p. 17.

Strategic Autonomy, however, undoubtedly gained ground when the Trump Administration demonstrated that America might not always guarantee protection for the continent. Nonetheless, this survey of strategic interest should not be cause for such a pessimistic vision of defense. It is quite realistic for countries with different geography, history, and cultures to have different threats perceptions to Russia. It would be quite unreasonable to expect both Portugal and Poland to have the same concerns, for example. It must not be assumed, therefore, that Strategic Cacophony equals complete division and inaction in the face of Russian aggression. On the contrary, the unified EU and NATO response to Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine seems to indicate that, despite diverging interests and the so-called "Strategic Cacophony", both organizations can act in concert when faced with a real and present threat. Whether this unity will persist in the coming months and years, or whether these countries will revert to their longstanding positions on Russia, remains to be seen.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the analysis above. First, Europe can defend itself against Russia in optimal conditions with a defensive perspective in a prolonged campaign. Second, Europe has many defense shortfalls already exposed in previous chapters that must be addressed by the EU and its member states. Third, the United States is still a committed member of NATO under the Biden Administration, and therefore any push for EU Strategic Autonomy should consider the American role in NATO and more generally in European defense. Fourth, while the various countries of Europe have different defense interests, that does not mean they have no will no defend the continent collectively. It only means that the Union faces additional threats far beyond Russia, even in light of the recent invasion of Ukraine. Fifth, whatever sort of new defense union is reached, it must have this

Strategic Cacophony in mind and be significant enough to confront it and address the heavy brigade shortfall theorized by Barry Posen.

### VIII. European Attitude towards Strategic Cooperation

The EU is not only a multilateral organization but also acts in some respects as a state. It went from being an economic community of countries to a true union with the Lisbon Treaty of 2009. This last step, amongst a host of other changes, gave the organization an international legal personality. During the Covid pandemic, for the first time in its history, the EU decided on acquiring joint financing for the post-pandemic recovery.<sup>97</sup> The Union is governed and leads like a state yet it is without an army. This essential and historical function of the state, protecting its citizens, still rests primarily with each individual member state of the Union. As the EU behaves more like a state, however—acting as a political entity, creating institutions, and unifying the different policies of its members—the same citizens of the member states also tend to expect security from the EU.<sup>98</sup>

Currently, the citizens from each member state are both citizens of the nation-state to which they belong and of the EU. This reality is also one that European citizens believe in. A Eurobarometer survey in 2018 found that most Europeans felt dual citizens of both the EU and their countries. That feeling ranges from 93% in Luxembourg to 51% in both Bulgaria and Greece.<sup>99</sup> The member states also no longer perceive their neighbors as a threat. Historically, France and Germany fought many wars, but are now the backbone of the Union. The security threat is no longer within Europe, but without. The Union itself has become the

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<sup>97</sup> Strupczewski, Jan, *EU Leaders to Take Step to Joint Financing of Post-Pandemic Recovery*, Reuters, April 22, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-eu-summit-idUSL5N2CA7QY> (accessed January 6, 2022).

<sup>98</sup> Bergmann, *The case for EU Defense, A New Way Forward for Trans-Atlantic Security Relations*.

<sup>99</sup> European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer 89*, Public Opinion in the EU, 36, March 2018 <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2180>.

entity to defend, and not necessarily the individual member states. The different states have also grown to expect security cooperation from one another. This is reflected in foreign policy; many capitals focus much more on internal affairs and leave many security foreign policies to be waged by Brussels.<sup>100</sup>

Even in light of the preceding arguments, the EU does not have an army, and the individual member states see the formation of one as politically toxic and taxing. Therefore, both European political elites and common European citizens expect more in terms of security from the EU yet do not provide it with the resources and capabilities a State should have. The Eurobarometer poll in 2018 shows this, with 75% of Europeans in favor of a common defense and security policy among the EU member states and 70% supporting the notion that the EU should act more on defense.<sup>101</sup>

Support for a common EU defense policy does not mean that citizens wish for the different member states to stop having their own individual armed forces. It means that citizens wish to see a unified EU armed forces taking care of European defense. It would be unthinkable, for example, for France to forgo its own army, something it sees as a part of its national identity. For smaller countries or countries separated from their armed forces after World War II such as Germany, this would be easier. Regardless, it is not the scope nor the intention of this work to argue for the abandonment of the individual armed forces of each member state. It argues for a different relationship on defense between the member states in the EU, one where the Union has its own defense capabilities much as a State would.

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<sup>100</sup> Bergmann, *The case for EU Defense, A New Way Forward for Trans-Atlantic Security Relations*.

<sup>101</sup> European Commission, *Standard Eurobarometer 89*, p. 32.



Individuals that want a common defense policy and feel like EU citizens might be inclined to join and fight for the EU. Europe has many young adults that feel European, adhere to its independence, and struggle to find well-paid jobs and meaningful careers. A well-funded, state of the art EU army comprised of young adults that consider themselves European does not seem an unwanted option.

## IX. European Army

There seem to be a plethora of reasons to say why any type of formation of an EU Army should not or will not occur. Some of those include:

- It would duplicate or undermine NATO's defense efforts, which is the position of NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg;<sup>102</sup>
- It would violate the Sovereignty of Member States;
- It would violate the neutrality of the “untouchables”;
- There are already sufficient defense projects, better to use those;
- Strategic Cacophony;
- It has already been tried, and it either did not work or was never used, such as with the Helsinki Initiative and the EU Battle Groups.<sup>103</sup>

These united armed forces have been called an illusion, European dreams that distract from actually managing and improving European defense. Many worry, and rightly so, that it will divide more than unite. Others argue that an EU army is beyond the range of CSDP and the scope of the principles of peace of the EU. Most seem lukewarm to the idea, recognizing its possible benefits but realizing the political nightmare it would be to implement, as well as the tedious process of application. This did not stop Angela Merkel

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<sup>102</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Joint press point with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Phillip Breedlove* North Atlantic Treaty Organization, May 19, 2015, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions\\_118046.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_118046.htm?selectedLocale=en) (accessed February 12, 2022).

<sup>103</sup> Sophia Besch, *An EU Army? Four Reasons It Will Not Happen*, Centre for European Reform, May 12, 2016, <https://www.cer.eu/insights/eu-army-four-reasons-it-will-not-happen> (accessed February 12, 2022).

from telling the European Parliament in a speech “we have to look at the vision of one day creating a real, true European army”<sup>104</sup>

Before debunking these arguments in opposition to a European army, a definition of what such an EU or European Army will be must be developed. An EU army has been a grand ambition for many European leaders and the idea is therefore ambiguous—as many leaders mean it to be, an inspiring buzzword. Similarly to Strategic Autonomy, there needs to be a clear, applicable concept.

Both an EU Army and a European Army refer to a supranational united defense corps, comprised by an army, navy, and air force, all under one single command structure. They would have flags, uniforms, a budget, an independent weapons acquisition scheme, independent recruitment and training, and all other characteristics required of a fully autonomous fighting force. It would have all-spectrum defense capabilities not only for crisis management and the Petersberg Tasks but also for territorial defense and expeditionary warfare. Most agree that a force of between 60,000 and 100,000 soldiers would be needed for it to be credible, aligning with the 10 fully mechanized divisions Barry Posen posits Europe needs to defend itself against Russia.

The difference between an EU army and European Army is very much about under what legal and institutional framework this Army is built. A European Army is an army made of European states outside the framework of the EU, such as NATO, Lancaster House Treaties, UK Élysée/Aachen Treaties France, the Germany Nordic Defense Cooperation,

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<sup>104</sup> Eszter Zalan, *Merkel calls for 'real, true' EU army*, EU observer, November 12, 2018, <https://euobserver.com/political/143375> (accessed February 12, 2022).

Visegrád 4, Benelux Defense, or the Baltic Defense Cooperation. An EU army is created within the Treaty of the EU and added to the CSDP.

There are three models for this army. The first is the EU army or European defense force. This option derives from the activation of article 42.2 of the TEU:

The common security and defense policy shall include the progressive framing of a common Union defense policy. This will lead to a common defense, when the European Council, acting unanimously, so decides. It shall, in that case, recommend to the Member States the adoption of such a decision in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements

It could use the “coalition of the willing” structure, as created by article art 42.5 TEU, where “The Council may entrust the execution of a task, within the Union framework, to a group of Member States in order to protect the Union's values and serve its interests. The execution of such a task shall be governed by Article 45.”

For either to occur, it would require a unanimous vote by the Council of the EU, something that is unlikely to happen. This option would require all states to transfer national defense forces to the Union, and thus the EU army replaces national armies entirely. Countries would have to give up a core pillar of their sovereignty, that of national defense. For some countries this would be illegal under their domestic constitutions and laws. Some scholars, for example, suggest that it might violate German constitutional law and it would surely violate the neutrality clauses of the “Untouchables”.<sup>105</sup> In the same line, some countries will never give up such a pillar of sovereignty for political reasons. This is probably the case of France; even though it is a significant proponent of Strategic Autonomy, it will not give up its own national armed forces. The same is probably true for Poland, where it is

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<sup>105</sup> Blanke, *The Treaty on EU (TEU): A commentary*, p. 1228.

unlikely to hand over its national defense to the Union. For this army to occur in practice, the assumption must be that not every EU member state will be part of it. Much like the Eurozone or the Schengen Area, differentiated integration with opt-outs such as in PESCO, is key to seeing this army realized. This option of European defense force or EU army, therefore, seems implausible.

The second model relies on the Member States voluntarily giving their battalions to the command of the Union. These battalions never stop being part of their home country's armed forces, but are only put at the disposal of the Commission for a set period. These battalions might never train together or could be integrated. This model already exists with the EU Battle Groups even though they have never been used or deployed, and despite the fact that a unanimous authorization by the Council is required for their use.<sup>106</sup>

This type of EU army model would face the same hurdles as the first, both requiring a unanimous vote by the Council, but does not have any of the benefits as the first model. This force would not be autonomous, would depend on the specific Member State capabilities, and would only be equipped for short-term, quick reaction scenarios and not for a prolonged campaign. Whichever model is chosen must have its own recruitment scheme and not depend on voluntary offerings of Member States. Finally, for it to be effective, it should not require a unanimous vote by the Council for deployment.

The third model is the most ambitious and complex—but is also the best option in the opinion of this thesis. First, individual member states should not be asked to surrender a key

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<sup>106</sup> External Action Service, EEAS homepage, <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/33557> (accessed February 12, 2022).

pillar of sovereignty. Fully ceding national defense to the Union, should not be pursued. This model seeks a sharing of the responsibility of national defense. Each Member State should conserve its national armed forces, these forces could become something more in line with a “national guard”, as such in the United States. Such a force would be able to do tasks as disaster relief, homeland defense, antiterrorism, and other such security questions within the border of the Member States. While this mechanism should not be obligatory, it should be a possibility to leave all external defense to the European Army.<sup>107</sup>

This model of the European army seeks to be capable of all matters of defense that far exceed mere internal struggles. It should be capable of full-spectrum operations and have all the characteristics stated in the first paragraphs of this chapter. This army will be able to manage all types of modern warfare including violent conflicts, hybrid warfare challenges, and sophisticated cyberattacks. It will have a modern and fully capable air force and navy. It should also have full logistical capabilities. One of its main goals should be pooling and sharing technology, resources, and manpower. It should aim to make uniform all armaments to diminish fragmentation and duplication. The idea of the national army becoming more like a national guard is to save money and to funnel that capital, otherwise used in national defense, to this new European Army. In doing so, Member States can invest in one strong, modern, and capable armed force second only to the United States instead of each member country investing in their own small militaries. This model suggests that the Member States realize that this option is the best for their defense—but also for their wallets.

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<sup>107</sup> Trybus, Martin, *The Legal Foundations of a European Army*, Birmingham Law School, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2675017>.

The model proposes that willing Member States come together and form a European Defense Union (EDU). It would be an *ad-hoc* legal arrangement created by a treaty outside the EU framework but compatible with it and NATO. It has to be outside the EU avoid the legal and political obstacles of EUs common defence mechanism's, as discussed below. This Union could be under the political control of the "High Commissioner for European Defense", chosen for a period of fewer than four years by a Council comprised of participating states and their own defense ministers. The armed wing of the EDU would be the European Defense Force (EDF), with a supreme commander and its own headquarters, bases, and command structure. These forces could be used under a mandate of the EU, NATO, the UN Security Council, or a "coalition of the willing" for self-defense or humanitarian intervention.<sup>108</sup>

For this Defense Union to be credible and strong, it should include France and Germany, but to also Poland, Italy, and Romania in order to demonstrate a united political front. It should also try to include the smaller nations of the continent but focus on the larger geopolitical players. It should also *exclude* the "Untouchables," Hungary, Turkey, and any country not in NATO.

The EDF should work very closely with NATO, and NATO should see the EDU as its closest partner. Therefore, NATO representation should be present within the EDU's treaty and command structure. In support of this idea, political rhetoric should emphasize that this EDU is about making Europe responsible for its security and not duplicating NATO.

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<sup>108</sup> Andersson, Jan Joel, Sven Biscop, Bastian Giegerich, Christian Mölling, and Thierry Tardy. "Future V: European Army." *Envisioning European Defence: Five Futures*. European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep06958.9>.

As outlined in the chapter on Strategic Autonomy, the idea is to be a better ally to NATO and to carry out defense improvements. The European Defense Union should also work with CSDP and the EDA to form a united defense policy. The hope is that the EDU can one day integrate into a new EU treaty. For this to occur, however, it is easier to start outside the EU to allow for differentiated integration. Although the ideal scenario would be for the EDU to begin within the EU framework, it is unlikely that a unanimous vote in the Council can be reached in the near future.

This model also quells most of the arguments against an EU army. It seeks to strengthen the EU position within NATO, not undermine it. The United States may require some convincing. Additionally, this *ad-hoc* model would not infringe on the sovereignty of the different member countries, as no transfer of sovereignty over defense will occur, only a sharing of the burden. The same is true for the “Untouchables” because the EDU would be outside the EU framework, avoiding treaty changes that might violate their different neutrality clauses.

This model would be a breakthrough for European defense. PESCO only attempts some cooperation on specific projects and has never reached a level of force integration. In the same vein, the EU battlegroups have never been deployed, because it falls inside CSDPs functions and thus requires the unanimous by the Council, something this model tries to dispense with. Any type of unified armed forces, however, will always face “Strategic Cacophony” rendering it unemployable based on indecision. This model attempts to minimize this, but it is ultimately difficult to see how any model could completely dispense with the issue. For any successful unified European armed forces to succeed, harmonization of strategic interest needs to occur.



## Conclusions and Recommendations

The start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine sent shockwaves around the world, marking the greatest threat to European security since the Second World War. As such, this conclusion analyzes the arguments of this thesis in light of current events. The first half of this section will therefore be dedicated to retaking themes from the thesis and seeing how they have been molded by the renewed push for Europe as a defense actor. The second half of these conclusions will close this work as a whole, envisioning possible European defense futures and how Europe can change its course.

Before the invasion, Germany had positioned itself as a partner of and mediator for Russia. It sought to build a relationship of trust with Russia and build a stable trade relationship. Political elites across the political spectrum believed that Russia could become a modern democratic country with close ties to the West.<sup>109</sup> Germany gambled that it could convert Russia with a more comprehensive tone and economic incentives. The Nord Stream 2 pipeline project was a product of these strong economic ties that put Germany in a very tough spot as a Russian invasion loomed.

After much signaling but without ever committing to the cancelation of the pipeline, Chancellor Olaf Scholz finally ended the project on February 22, 2022,<sup>110</sup> marking a dramatic shift in its *Ostpolitik*, or the Eastern Policy, that Angela Merkel's and Gerhard Schröder's

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<sup>109</sup> Dempsey, Judy, *Russia's invasion of Ukraine changes everything: The End of The German Delusion*, Carnegie Europe, February 25, 2022, <https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/86525> (accessed March 28, 2022).

<sup>110</sup> Sarah Marsh, Madeline Chambers, *Germany freezes Nord Stream 2 gas project as Ukraine crisis deepens*, February 22, 2022, Reuters, February 22, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/germanys-scholz-halts-nord-stream-2-certification-2022-02-22/> (accessed March 28, 2022).

governments followed for many years, and which was deeply entrenched in German foreign policy<sup>111</sup>. These events ended what some have called the German Delusion and began a marked shift in its foreign and security policy, a shift ordinary Germans agree with.<sup>112</sup>

On February 27, 2022, Chancellor Scholz announced a one-time spending of 100 billion euros on the military alongside a fresh commitment to NATO's 2% GDP budget spending obligation.<sup>113</sup> In the same emotional parliamentary speech, he announced that Germany would break its traditional policy of not delivering weapons to war zones, and would send lethal aid to Ukraine.<sup>114</sup> Germany also announced it would purchase F-35 fighter jets from the United States.<sup>115</sup> All of this amounts to a seismic change, but moreover, it is a realization that German rapprochement with Russia and perhaps China failed. German reluctance to exercise hard power and fears of militarism are over. It now realizes what some have argued for decades, namely, that its security is at risk and that the world expects Germany to take a stance against acts of aggression, defend the democratic world order, and be responsible for its own defense. It is still very soon to draw any major conclusions about

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<sup>111</sup> Philip Oltermann, *Germany agonises over Merkel's legacy: Did she hand too much power to Putin?* The Guardian, March 5, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/05/germany-angela-merkel-power-to-vladimir-putin-russia> (accessed March 28, 2022).

<sup>112</sup> *Germans approve of government U-turn on Ukraine*. DW, February 27, 2022 <https://www.dw.com/en/germans-approve-of-government-u-turn-on-ukraine/a-61011528> (accessed March 28, 2022).

<sup>113</sup> *Germany commits €100 billion to defense spending*. DW February 27, 2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-commits-100-billion-to-defense-spending/a-60933724> (accessed March 28, 2022).

<sup>114</sup> *German chancellor Olaf Scholz announces paradigm change in response to Ukraine invasion*. DW, February 28, 2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/german-chancellor-olaf-scholz-announces-paradigm-change-in-response-to-ukraine-invasion/a-60932652> (accessed March 28, 2022).

<sup>115</sup> Laurenz Gehrke, *Germany to buy fighter jets from US amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine*. POLITICO, March 14, 2022, <https://www.politico.eu/Article/germany-f35-fighter-jet-ukraine-russia-invasion/> (accessed March 28, 2022).

what this will mean to European defense cooperation, but it does seem that Germany's position is moving towards France's in certain key respects.

French President Emmanuel Macron seems to have been proven right in his rhetoric on Strategic Autonomy and European independence. The crisis has demonstrated how dependent Europe is on Russian energy and American security guarantees.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, the French electorate seems to approve of Macron's geopolitics and rhetoric. Being pro-EU, pro-NATO, and willing to give arms to Ukraine seems to have positioned him well to win the upcoming presidential election.<sup>117</sup> Similarly, France, as compared to Germany, was better prepared for this event and has been proven right.

Another surprise is the dramatic underperformance of the Russian armed forces. Before the war started, analysts gave Ukraine three days before its complete rout. Instead, a months-long stalemate has ensued, one where Russia has been forced to greatly pair down its war aims. Various factors went into Russia's miscalculations and many failures in the current war; however, the point that we can take from this is that Barry Posen's assessment is correct. Europe can likely win a defensive-style campaign against Russia. This is not because of a renewed confidence in European military strength, but rather a consequence of Russian military shortfalls and weaknesses. A NATO battalion is indeed far superior, in terms of logistics, resources, and training, to its Russian counterpart. Similarly, the Russian armed

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<sup>116</sup> Catherine Clifford, *Why Europe is so dependent on Russia for natural gas*. CNBC, February 24, 2022, <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/02/24/why-europe-depends-on-russia-for-natural-gas.html> (accessed March 28, 2022).

<sup>117</sup> Mathilde Ciulla and Amandine Drouet, *How Russia's war on Ukraine is shaping the French presidential race*. ECFR, March 1, 2022, <https://ecfr.eu/article/how-russias-war-on-ukraine-is-shaping-the-french-presidential-race/> (accessed March 28, 2022).

forces have been very susceptible to this defensive style used by Ukraine, with its armored columns and infantry ineffective at taking key cities, choosing to use long-range artillery instead. This demonstrates that Europe could win a prolonged campaign against Russia. Added to this is the perhaps surprising degree of unity within NATO and the EU.

The EU and NATO are so far united in their opposition against Russia's invasion. While American sanctions were expected, the unity, resolve, and speed the EU response is remarkable. It has been able to deliver four rounds of sanctions,<sup>118</sup> agreed to phase out Russian energy dependence, and give 500 million euros in lethal aid to Ukraine, a first for the Union.<sup>119</sup> Another dramatic shift is the recently agreed "Strategic Compass", where two points directly correlate to the wider Strategic Autonomy discussion. First is the decision to form mini-coalitions of the willing under article 44 of the TEU, including a French-led initiative that seeks to deploy the armed forces of only a few countries to conflict hot spots.<sup>120</sup> Second, the EU has decided to create a 5,000-troop rapid reaction force, with Germany committing to be at the "heart" of the initiative.<sup>121</sup> The planning of this force is very new, but

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<sup>118</sup> Council of the European Union, *EU response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Policies, 2022*. Council of the European Union, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-response-ukraine-invasion/> (accessed March 29, 2022).

<sup>119</sup> Council of the European Union, *EU support to Ukraine: Council doubles funding under the European Peace Facility*, Press Releases 2022, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/03/23/eu-support-to-ukraine-council-doubles-funding-under-the-european-peace-facility/> (accessed March 29, 2022).

<sup>120</sup> Sebastian Sprenger, *EU nations circle the wagons in new 'strategic compass'*, Defense News, March 21, 2022, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2022/03/21/eu-nations-circle-the-wagons-in-new-strategic-compass/> (accessed March 29, 2022).

<sup>121</sup> Sabine Siebold, *EU to establish Rapid Reaction Force with up to 5,000 troops*. Reuters, March 21, 2022, [https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-offers-provide-core-eu-quick-reaction-force-2025-2022-03-21/#:~:text=March%2021%20\(Reuters\)%20%2D%20EU,swiftly%20deployed%20in%20a%20crisis](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/germany-offers-provide-core-eu-quick-reaction-force-2025-2022-03-21/#:~:text=March%2021%20(Reuters)%20%2D%20EU,swiftly%20deployed%20in%20a%20crisis) (accessed March 29, 2022).

its goal is to be able to deploy to hostile environments, meeting the Petersberg Tasks and more.<sup>122</sup>

Much has been made of NATO's resurgence,<sup>123</sup> and it is true: the organization has once again gained purpose. Its ability to act in unison and deploy to its eastern flank<sup>124</sup> shows that Europe is still very much very keen in maintaining its relationship with NATO and thus the United States' security umbrella. The EU, however, with its Strategic Compass, is slowly becoming Strategic Autonomous its own right. This demonstrates that a synchronous relationship between NATO and Strategic Autonomy is possible, and the one benefits from the other. In a revealing moment, the EU's response to Russian aggression goes a long way in debunking "Strategic Cacophony", at least politically. No matter their threat perceptions of Russia prior to the war in Ukraine, most Member States are acting in a strong, united manner, although some cracks are beginning to emerge in relation to Russian energy imports and leaders' personal ties to Putin.<sup>125</sup>

The EU is currently facing three large strategic geopolitical concerns. One is a Russia willing to use military means to achieve political goals, based on a historical revisionist agenda led by an autocratic president and oligarchs. The second concern is a rising autocratic China that does not share Western democratic values and is willing to compete rather than cooperate with the West. The third concern is an American partner that, although very much committed to NATO under the current presidential administration, faces constant political

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<sup>122</sup> Sprenger, *EU nations circle the wagons in new 'strategic compass'*.

<sup>123</sup> Siebold, *EU to establish Rapid Reaction Force with up to 5,000 troops*.

<sup>124</sup> NATO, *NATO's military presence in the east of the Alliance*, March 28, 2022, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_136388.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_136388.htm) (accessed March 29, 2022).

<sup>125</sup> Matthew Karnitschnig, *How Putin made the EU Great Again*. Politico Europe, February 27, 2022, <https://www.politico.eu/article/the-end-of-europes-putin-illusion/> (accessed March 29, 2022).

uncertainty and potential social upheaval, and is pivoting to Asia. These factors, alongside Europe's evident defense shortfalls, have reignited the calls for Strategic Autonomy.<sup>126</sup> Europeans' need for operational autonomy is palpable with the war in Ukraine. Disagreement will remain as to what Strategic Autonomy prescribes, as will fears of its protectionist connotation. The threat facing Europe's east is, however, bigger than those concerns. Germany's foreign policy change, if sustained, is a strong signal that the EU now realizes it must be responsible for its own security, especially in its neighborhood.

Europe must also realize that if it continues along its current trajectory of strategic shortfalls, duplication, and waste, it will lead to a defenseless Europe. A future of EU defense where countries only focus on certain aspects of their military interest and disregard an upgrade. A future where each Member State retains its own small, incapable forces supplied with outdated equipment. A future where forces and resources are stretched thin, only lasting weeks in a crisis zone. These futures are likely unless European countries individually and collectively carry out major reforms. If Europe keeps being politically divided, incapable of uniting strategic interests and without a united front, it is bound to fail in one of the most fundamental tasks any government has: the physical protection of its people and its territory. To achieve this future, Europe only needs to maintain its current course.<sup>127</sup>

To correct this, the first steps are to achieve full operational capacity. This must be done through current organisms such as CARD, PESCO, and the EDF. These institutions

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<sup>126</sup> Erwin van Veen & Rex Langenberg, *Phoenix or Icarus? European strategic autonomy in light of Ukraine*, CRU Policy Brief, Clingendael, The Netherlands Institute of International Relations, February 2022, [https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/Policy\\_brief\\_EU\\_Strategic\\_Autonomy\\_Ukraine.pdf](https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/Policy_brief_EU_Strategic_Autonomy_Ukraine.pdf) (accessed March 29, 2022).

<sup>127</sup> Andersson, "Future V: European Army." *Envisioning European Defence: Five Futures*, p. 13-17.

must be utilized and become the go-to method of defense capability cooperation. The second challenge is the political unification of strategic interests. Before the invasion of Ukraine, Strategic Cacophony was, and in some ways still is, the biggest issue facing a unified defense policy. Countries naturally have different threat perceptions. The war in Ukraine, however, has demonstrated European resolve and unity. An example of this is the policy towards refugees. Migration has always been a difficult issue for the European Union and its Member States, inviting many nationalist policies. Nevertheless, the EU has had an open door policy to Ukrainian refugees, showing great political unity.<sup>128</sup> More than that, Member States have united in condemning Russian actions and mobilized, mostly through NATO, to reinforce the eastern flank despite limited opposition from some, such as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban.

This does not mean Strategic Cacophony is resolved. What it does mean is that EU Member States are currently united around the Russian threat, but other issues such as terrorism, migration, and the attitude toward NATO will be enduring challenges. The EU must therefore be able to form political autonomy through its strategic compass, and must do so on a sizeable number of different issues. One of the most enduring legacies of the war in Ukraine is how it has and will continue to galvanize CSDP.

Despite this, a future with a European Army seems distant. Member State sovereignty and the requisite unanimous Council vote will likely stymie current and future attempts. Article 44 of the TEU, however, already permits other forms of cooperation such as the

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<sup>128</sup> Lara Jakes, *For Ukraine's refugees, Europe opens doors that were shut to others*. The New York Times, February 26, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/26/us/politics/ukraine-europe-refugees.html> (accessed March 29, 2022).

“coalition of the willing” scenario and the creation of a rapid response force. These options enhance Strategic Autonomy and are probably preferable to the EU’s more moderate and comprising nature. The EU, and Europe as a whole, must be responsible for its own security. The time is now.



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