Part I

POLICY AND TECHNOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Chapter 1

The EU's Common Security and Defence Policy in the Context of European Strategic Autonomy

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Abstract

In the wake of a worsening global security environment, the concepts of European strategic autonomy, open strategic autonomy, strategic sovereignty or the European Defence Union are becoming increasingly relevant. In addition to economic power, there has been a growing demand in recent years for the European Union (EU) to become a military power, thereby enhancing its ability to act autonomously. It is important to emphasise that these concepts cover not only the defence sector but also the fields of economy, digitalisation, and technological innovation.

In this chapter, I will first briefly introduce the historical background of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). I will then provide an overview of its theoretical background by examining the concept of the European Defence Union. Following this, I will elucidate the current state of new initiatives related to European defence in connection with the accelerated integration process. Finally, I will map national defence policies regarding European strategic autonomy. As the concept of the European Defence Union has been promoted primarily by EU institutions and finds no mention in Member States' strategic documents, the aim of the last subchapter is to analyse Member States' perceptions regarding the concept of European strategic autonomy (EU-SA). This part of the research is based on secondary literature and an analysis of the latest national security strategic documents, particularly those of Member States.

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Member States have expressed diverse opinions regarding EU-SA, which was originally associated with security and defence policies. Today, it has an extended meaning that includes economic, technological and energy policies. The National Security Strategy (NSS) of one group of Member States (such as France or Italy) has prioritised EU-SA, while another group (such as the Netherlands) has developed the concept of open strategic autonomy (OSA), and the documents of a third group (such as the V4 countries) neither mention EU-SA nor OSA. The last group of Member States represents a more transatlanticist view of security and defence.

Keywords: European strategic autonomy, European Defence Union, defence initiatives, security, power

1. Introduction

The Hungarian presidency of the Council of the European Union and the 25th anniversary of the European Union's (EU) Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in 2024 provide an opportunity to review the development of this special policy area within the EU. Over the last few decades, not only the institutional system, decision-making processes, and crisis management structures of the CSDP, but also the concepts of the European Defence (and Security) Union and European strategic autonomy (EU-SA) have repeatedly emerged. The unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine has accelerated this process, enhancing the defence characteristics of the EU and strengthening transatlantic relations.

Considering the deteriorating global security environment, the concepts of EU-SA, open strategic autonomy, strategic sovereignty, or the European Defence Union (EDU) have become more relevant than ever. Furthermore, in addition to the EU's economic power, there has been growing demand for the EU to become a military power, enabling it to act autonomously. It is important to emphasise that this concept covers not only the defence sector, but also the fields of economy, digitalisation and technological innovation.

First, I will briefly introduce the historical background of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP); second, I will provide an overview of its theoretical background. I will discuss the following theories and concepts: differentiated integration, intergovernmentalism versus supranationalism, the power perception of the EU from normative to smart power, strategic autonomy, and European sovereignty. The theoretical section examines the concept of the EDU. Third, I will introduce the current state of new initiatives related to European defence in connection with the accelerated integration process. Finally, I will map national defence policies surrounding EU-SA. As the concept of EDU has primarily been promoted by EU institutions and is not mentioned in Member States' strategic documents, the aim of the last subchapter

is to analyse Member States' views on the EU-SA concept. This part of the research is based on secondary literature and an analysis of the latest national security strategic documents, particularly those of Member States.

2. Historical background

European integration has always been considered a security or peace project. On the one hand, following the devastating experience of the two World Wars, it was intended to prevent another war between Western European States; on the other, it was clearly developed in the shadow of the Soviet military threat. During the 1950s, especially after the failure of the Pleven Plan for the creation of the European Defence Community (EDC) in 1954, traditional areas of diplomacy, security and defence were not initially included in the treaties establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (1951) or the European Economic Community (1957). These areas remained entirely within the competence of Member States. The integration process essentially began in the economic field with the Treaties of Rome (1957). Despite this, various external relations instruments, such as enlargement policy, trade policy, development or humanitarian aid, and crisis response coordination, have steadily evolved since the creation of European Communities.

The EU was created by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, establishing its three pillars: European Communities, Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and cooperation in the fields of Justice and Home Affairs. The first pillar is based on community decision-making, while the second and third concern intergovernmental decision-making. In 1997, the Treaty of Amsterdam introduced the position of High Representative for the CFSP, who was also the Secretary-General of the Council (SG/HR) of the EU, to strengthen the effectiveness of CFSP and to form a unanimous opinion in international relations. The EU's first High Representative for the CFSP was former North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Secretary-General and former Spanish Foreign Minister Javier Solana, serving between 1999 and 2009. The Treaty of Amsterdam also established the concept of constructive abstention in CFSP. This flexible instrument allows the EU to proceed with a decision even when a Member of State abstains.

2.1. Crisis management structures

In parallel with the development of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the issue of security and defence gradually became a part of the integration process. Following intense discussions surrounding European defence, the debate regarding the future role of Western European Union (WEU) commenced. The Yugoslav wars in the 1990s highlighted the fact that, practically, the EU did not have

the right tools for crisis management outside its borders. The devastation following these wars prompted European leaders to initiate the integration of European defence, breaking the taboo on closer defence cooperation that developed after the failure of the EDC in 1954.[1] The Yugoslav wars became the driving force for deeper cooperation. A milestone in this process was the Saint-Malo Declaration by France and the United Kingdom in 1998, which emphasised that the EU must have the capacity for autonomous action.[2] In 1999, the European Council began discussions on the creation of a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP).

The integration of the WEU into the EU led to the establishment of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). In the early 2000s, with the Treaty of Nice, the establishment and institutionalisation of the ESDP began. Within the decision-making structure of the Council of the EU, military and civilian crisis management decision-making bodies were established: the Political and Security Committee (PSC), European Union Military Committee (EUMC), Civilian Crisis Management Committee, European Union Military Staff, and Political Military Group (PMG). The CSDP is the latest policy area of the EU. In 2003, the EU launched its first CSDP mission and operations, and the first European security strategy was adopted the same year. The creation of ESDP in the early 2000s led to the development of the EU Battlegroup (EUBG). The origin of the EUBG concept can be traced back to several bilateral summits and declarations (Franco–German, Franco–British, UK–Italy) but especially to a Franco–British proposal inspired by the successful implementation of the first autonomous EU crisis management operation, the Artemis military operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo[3]. On 17 May 2004, the Council of the European Union adopted the "Headline Goal 2010", which was endorsed by the European Council in June 2004. This document set a target for establishing EUBGs and achieving full operational capabilities by 2007.[4] The final Battlegroup concept was completed in 2006. The EUBG is a multinational integrated force of at least 1,500 personnel, deployable within 10 days and up to 6,000 km for a minimum of 30 and a maximum of 120 days. In 2004, Member States offered to establish a total of 13 EUBGs. Within the framework of the Lisbon Treaty, EUBGs can be used for conflict prevention, initial stabilisation, humanitarian intervention and rescue operations, crisis management, and peacekeeping tasks. It is worth mentioning that, for financial and political reasons, the EUBGs have never been used for CSDP operations.

2.2. Capability development

However, from its early phase, the CSDP included not only crisis management but also capability development processes. Originally, the rules related to the internal

1 de Vasconcelos, 2009, pp. 15–26.
2 *Saint-Malo declaration*, 1998.
3 Missiroli, 2003, pp. 36–39.
4 Consilium, 2004.

market did not extend to the defence industry; thus, it remained fragmented, and the gradual integration of this economic field became necessary to create an open market and a competitive and effective defence industry. The first step was taken in 2003 when the European Commission initiated the gradual creation of a "European Defence Equipment Market" as an objective by establishing a more open market among Member States, which was of strategic importance for the reinforcement of the European defence technological and industrial base.[5] The most important result of the institutionalisation of this area at the European level was the establishment of the European Defence Agency (EDA) in 2004. From the beginning, EDA played a decisive role in the development of Member States' defence capabilities and the creation of a competitive market for European defence equipment.[6] In 2007, the EDA issued its strategy for the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB). The objective of the strategy adopted by Member States was the gradual integration of national-level capability development and the defence market to improve supply security, thus creating capability improvement at the European-level to reduce fragmentation. The creation of a better-coordinated, more competitive defence market with less duplication was among the goals to better serve European defence policy.[7] However, during the first two decades of this century, EU Member States fulfilled these strategic objectives only to a limited extent. According to Schnitzl,[8] although in recent decades, EU Member States decided on a number of regulations inciting cooperation, for instance, defence procurement (European Parliament 2009/81) and guidelines for transfers inside the EU (European Parliament 2009/43), the level of cooperation did not help achieve the planned goals.

2.3. The Lisbon Treaty

The Lisbon Treaty (2007) can be considered a significant milestone in the development of CFSP and CSDP. It abolished the pillar structure of the EU, while providing the EU legal personality, so that it could conclude its international treaties. Following the Lisbon Treaty, the competence of EU and its Member States were clearly separated. One of the most significant features of the Lisbon Treaty was that it promoted a more transparent separation of competences between different levels of governance in the field of external policies. By abolishing the pillar system, the CFSP was no longer clearly separable from other external actions, yet it remained a special policy, which was an exception to all the general rules of functioning of the EU, according to the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) (Title V, Articles 21–46 TEU)[9].

5 Commission of the European Communities, 2004.
6 Council of the European Union, 2004.
7 European Parliament, Directorate-General for External Policies, 2013.
8 Schnitzl, 2023, p. 8.
9 *Treaty on the European Union*, Title V, Articles 21–46.

With the new Treaty, a closer link was established between EU's external policy areas. The changes to EU's institutional setup and decision-making processes brought greater coherence between the common commercial policy, development and cooperation policy and CFSP (and as an integrated part of it, the CSDP). At the institutional level, closer cooperation and coherence were guaranteed by the new post of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (also Vice President of the European Commission, HR/VP) and the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS). Not only was this policy area renamed from ESDP to CSDP, the Lisbon Treaty also introduced several significant provisions regarding CSDP (e.g. Article 42(7) on mutual assistance and Articles 42(6) and 46 on permanent structured cooperation (PESCO)).[10]

3. Theoretical background

The role of the EU as an international actor is determined by the fact that, according to the Treaties, intergovernmental cooperation remains the dominant form of decision-making in the fields of CFSP and CSDP. The dynamics of the European integration process have been defined by the duality between intergovernmentalism and supranationalism. Although in some areas of external action, for example, in the case of common trade policy, the EU decision-making processes are based on the community (or union) method; this is not applied to CFSP and CSDP, which continue to be ruled by unanimity (intergovernmentalism) as very sensitive policy areas for Member States. The contradiction in this duality promoted the development of the EU as a new hybrid political organisation characterised by a supranational entity. The Lisbon Treaty reinforced the hybrid political character of the EU through the creation of EEAS and the new position of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Although CFSP and CSDP are among the least integrated policy areas of the EU, the Commission's role has started to grow steadily in recent years. Despite growing support for a more credible European defence, the period before the Global Strategy (2016) saw deeper cooperation mainly restrained amid concerns related to sovereignty and lack of trust among partners within the EU.[11]

One of the most important innovations of the Lisbon Treaty was the extension of differentiated integration to the field of CSDP. The Treaty created PESCO as a new, flexible instrument for enhanced cooperation with the aim of promoting interoperability, reducing capability shortfalls, and strengthening cooperation in the field of capability development. According to Article 42 (6) TEU, Member States with

10 Molnár and Csiki Varga, 2023.
11 Cîrlig, 2015, p. 5; Molnár, 2022; Molnár, 2023.

enhanced military capabilities that meet higher standards may establish PESCO. This type of partnership offers the possibility of enhanced cooperation and various forms of differentiated integration within the EU. Differentiation is a flexible solution that allows a certain number of Member States to proceed with deeper integration into a specific policy area, bridging the gap between the diverse political opinions of Member States.[12] The field of defence has always been characterised by the diverse political opinions of Member States. The creation and launch of CSDP missions and operations and the *à la carte* approach in taking part in the capability development projects of the European Defence Agency have been determined by differentiation; thus, it has been considered a pragmatic solution, enabling the EU to move ahead in the field of defence.[13]

The EU has been labelled a *sui generis* international organisation or a supranational form of integration.[14] According to this definition, the EU is a unique political entity that is different from any other international organisation, comprising sovereign states that share part of their sovereignty.[15] The EU is not a great power in the classical sense as it was created in opposition to the ideas of great powers. It has been described as a "civilian"[16] or a "soft" power.[17] Up until the launch of ESDP, in the early 2000s, the EU could not be conceptualised as a hard or military power. Manners describes it as "normative" power, which promoted the diffusion of the EU's norms in international relations.[18] Over the last few decades, it has been conceptualised as an ethical[19] or liberal power[20] in international affairs. With the introduction of ESDP/CSDP, the EU has been labelled as a smart power, which can combine "soft" and limited "hard" power tools.[21] However, the hybrid power of this foreign policy actor nevertheless provokes disputes.[22] In many cases, concepts related to the EU cannot be clearly isolated, but are often overlapping.

Following the launch of ESDP at the beginning of the new millennium, and especially after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty (2009), the perception of the EU has changed significantly. According to Smith (2005), civilian power is 'non-military, and includes economic, diplomatic and cultural policy instruments'. Therefore, she also claimed that the EU was no longer a civilian power, but 'somewhere along a spectrum between the two ideal-types of civilian and military power'.[23] In 2010,

12 European Parliament, 2018.
13 Törő, 2014, p. 66; De Neve, 2007; Von Ondarza, 2013; Howorth, 2019; Grevi et al., 2020; Blockmans, 2017.
14 Phelan, 2012.
15 Wallace, 1999; Brack et al., 2019; Bifulco and Nato, 2020; Phelan, 2012.
16 Duchêne, 1973, p. 19; Duchêne, 1972; Stavridis, 2001.
17 Hill, 1990.
18 Manners, 2002; Manners, 2006.
19 Aggestam, 2008.
20 Wagner, 2017.
21 Cross, 2011; Nye, 2023.
22 Tocci, 2008; Phelan, 2012; Moravcsik, 2010.
23 Smith, 2005, p. 17.

Moravcsik claimed that the EU has become a superpower, which is 'able to exert global influence across the full spectrum of power, from "hard" to "soft".' He claimed that Europe is the only region in addition to the United States that projects intercontinental military power and possesses a range of effective civilian instruments for power projection.[24] In 2016, Federica Mogherini, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, also characterised the EU as a superpower, which emerged as a global player relying on its economic power.[25]

Over the last few decades, the security environment and international systems have worsened significantly. Power competition has become a norm in international politics. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, hybrid and traditional war returned to Europe. It is no coincidence that the EU had to adapt to major changes in international relations. The Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy (Global Strategy or GS), adopted in 2016, is the first tangible sign of this adaptation, referring to the EU's civilian or soft-power character, while also underlining that this soft power is no longer enough (European External Action Service 2016b, 44). GS represented a pragmatic approach, focusing on the state and societal resilience of the neighbourhood, and introduced the concept of "principled pragmatism" and the need for strategic autonomy. It uses the concept of strategic autonomy in connection with security and defence.[26] Although the 2016 Council Conclusions have already provided definitional guidelines, an official definition of the concept of strategic autonomy has yet to be developed at the EU level. This concept can be summarised as enabling the EU to ensure its own security and act autonomously on land, in the air, at sea, in space and cyberspace. In addition, the EU must be capable of projecting power, responding to external crises, and making independent decisions in the field of defence policy.[27] Member States have different interests and positions regarding these concepts.[28]

French President Emmanuel Macron introduced the concept of European sovereignty in September 2017. Instead of "strategic autonomy", Macron used the terms autonomous operating capability and European sovereignty in a general sense in the field of defence. According to his views, there are six key elements of European sovereignty: 1) security and defence, 2) control of borders, 3) partnership with Africa, 4) ecological transition, 5) digital technology and 6) industrial and monetary economic power.[29]

The 2018 State of the Union address by Jean-Claude Juncker, then president of the European Commission, attributed European sovereignty to the geopolitical situation. Juncker stated that it was time for Europe to seize the opportunity and play the role of a Union, in shaping global affairs as a more sovereign actor in

24 Moravcsik, 2010, p. 91.
25 European External Action Service, 2016a.
26 European Parliament, 2022, p. 2.
27 Biscop, 2017; Biscop, 2018; Varga, 2017; de Sutter, 2020, p. 14; Jones, 2020; Fiott, 2018.
28 Weitershausen et al., 2020; Grüll and Lawton, 2020; Recchia, 2020; Silva and Zachary, 2020; Molnár, 2022; Molnár, 2023.
29 Macron, 2017; European Parliament, 2022.

international relations. According to him, European sovereignty is derived from Member States' national sovereignty, and does not replace it. Shared sovereignty strengthens this relationship. He also emphasised that this process does not mean the militarisation of EU; it means becoming more autonomous and living up to the EU's global responsibilities.[30]

In 2019, the new President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen proposed to lead a "geopolitical Commission" and Josep Borrell, the High Representative of the Union (HR/VP), indicated that the EU needed to 'learn the language of power'. Although the historical connotations of geopolitics are controversial, the new Commission embraces this concept.[31]

In 2022, the Strategic Compass adopted by the Council highlighted the need for creating strategic autonomy and technological sovereignty.[32]

4. The concept of European Defence Union

Analogous to the development of crisis management structures and the debate on EU's relations with NATO, the concept of a EDU and strategic autonomy has repeatedly emerged. In the last decade, various EU institutions and Member States have supported the acceleration of European security and defence cooperation. This cooperation was also strengthened by the fact that 23 EU Member States are also NATO members.

This accelerated process is driven by both external and internal factors. First, the events of the Arab Spring; second, Russia's invasion of Ukraine; third, mass migration and refugee crisis triggered by turmoil and armed conflicts in the EU's southern neighbourhood; and fourth, the growing hybrid threats. The worsening relationship between the EU and the United States during Donald Trump's presidency can also be considered an accelerating factor. The Brexit referendum is another essential reason for this process. Finally, the changing and deteriorating global security environment, which has led to new power competition in the arms race, cannot be overlooked.

The concept of EDU can be traced back to the European Convention on the Future of Europe in 2002, which prepared draft treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (Constitutional Treaty). During a debate on the Constitutional Treaty, France and Germany proposed the creation of a European Security and Defence Union (ESDU). Although Belgium and Luxembourg supported this idea, more Atlanticist

30 Juncker, 2018.
31 Fiott, 2020, p. 1; Molnár, 2022; Molnár, 2023.
32 Council of the European Union, 2022.

EU Member States rejected it.[33] Therefore, the draft treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe did not mention the ESDU.[34] Following the failure of the Constitutional Treaty, the Lisbon Treaty was much less ambitious but introduced significant changes regarding CSDP.

In December 2013, the European Council held its first thematic meeting dedicated to defence, identifying priority actions for stronger cooperation.[35] In the coming years, the idea related to European defence that attracted immense public attention and debate was Juncker's announcement in March 2015 regarding the need for a common European army to face external threats.[36] The 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris also served as a stimulus for further support, as France pushed for activating the EU Treaty's mutual assistance/defence clause.[37]

The Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (GS), adopted in June 2016, a few days after the British referendum, expressed the goal of strategic autonomy and strengthening the EU as a security community.[38] After years of immobility in the field of defence integration, the implementation of the GS commenced (e.g. the European Defence Action Plan (EDAP), NATO–EU cooperation, and the European Defence Fund (EDF)). These steps were further supported not only by the main EU institutions,[39] but also Member States.[40]

In 2017, the European Commission published the 'Reflection Paper on the Future of European Defence', highlighting that 'the foundations of the ESDU are gradually being built', and that it 'should encourage a stronger alignment of strategic cultures', as well as a common understanding of threats and appropriate responses. It will require 'joint decision-making and action, as well as greater financial solidarity at the European level'.[41] In September 2017, Juncker, in his annual State of the Union address, expressed that by 2025, the EU should become a full-fledged EDU.[42] Although the definition of ESDU or EDU remains unclear, the gradual realisation of deeper European defence cooperation began after the adoption of GS.

33 Nováky, 2017; Consilium, 2003.
34 *Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe*, 2004.
35 Consilium, 2013.
36 *EU-Kommissionspräsident Juncker für europäische Armee*, 2015; *NATO is not enough, EU needs an army*, 2016; European Parliament, 2015, p. 5; European Commission, 2019.
37 European Parliament, 2016a; Molnár, 2018; Molnár, 2022.
38 European External Action Service, 2016b.
39 Juncker, 2016; European Parliament, 2016b.
40 Ischinger, 2013; *Im Wortlaut, Pressekonferenz von Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel und Präsident Emmanuel Macron beim 19. Deutsch-Französischen Ministerrat* [Text of the press conference by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Emmanuel Macron at the 19th Franco-German Council of Ministers], 2017; Renzi, 2018; Partito Democratico, 2018; Grevi, 2016.
41 European Commission, 2017, p. 11.
42 Juncker, 2017.

Member States' governments and institutions elaborated on the first threat analysis in 2020, which led to the adoption of the Strategic Compass in 2022.[43] In February 2021, the President of the European Commission, at the video conference of the European Council, emphasised the need to create an EDU on building blocks such as PESCO, financially supported by EDF.[44] In 2021, the State of the Union address referred to the need for EDU, stating that, although the EU has started to develop a European defence ecosystem, there is nevertheless room to proceed.[45]

In March 2022, the Council of the EU adopted the Strategic Compass, a new strategic document. Germany and France played key roles in initiating and finalising it. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the process started in 2020 under the German Presidency of the Council of the EU and concluded in 2022 under French Presidency. The Strategic Compass, which focuses on the main issues of European defence incorporating reflections on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, covers four "baskets": crisis management, partnership, resilience and capability development. Based on a common threat assessment, the document sets out objectives for the EU and its Member States for the next 5–10 years. The Strategic Compass provides strategic guidance in the four areas based on an analysis of a common European understanding of threats and challenges. In light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, during the informal meeting of the European Council on 10–11 March in Versailles, EU heads of state and the government adopted the Versailles Declaration, an outcome of which concerns the strengthening of European defence capabilities and the defence industry.[46]

Member States are facing increasingly complex security threats, and the level of the EU's "security and defence ambition" is increasing. Despite not being a genuine European military White Paper, the Strategic Compass was the first document designed to provide clarity, guidance, and incentives for the completion of a truly common security and defence policy (EDU). EU institutions and High Representative play key roles in the process driven by Member States.

In 2023, the State of the Union Address noted that the EU has launched efforts to create an EDU.[47] In November 2023, Ursula von der Leyen, in her speech at the European Defence Agency's annual conference, reiterated again that the EU needs to become a full-fledged EDU. Accordingly, the European Commission began to develop a European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS), which was accepted in March 2024.[48]

43 Fiott, 2020, p. 7.
44 European Commission, 2021.
45 von der Leyen, 2021.
46 Consilium, 2022.
47 European Commission, 2023a.
48 EDA, 2023.

5. The current situation of new initiatives

The acceptance of the EU Global Strategy in 2016 can be considered a turning point in the CSDP development process. Since 2016, this process has been built on at least seven pillars:

1. establishment of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC);
2. introduction of the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD);
3. establishment of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO);
4. creation of the European Defence Fund (EDF);
5. establishment of the European Peace Facility (EPF);
6. development of Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC);
7. regulations on Common Procurement.

It is worth mentioning that the MPCC created a permanent command structure for EU (non-executive) military operations. With the creation of EDF, it became possible to fund research and joint development defence projects from the EU budget, which allowed for the provision of weapons to third countries involved in military operations for the first time. These achievements were unimaginable a decade ago.

The deteriorating security situation in Europe, created by Russian aggression in Ukraine, led to the strengthening of the military aspects of the Union. Military equipment was provided to Ukraine through EPF. Therefore, the available amount increased significantly. Approximately 60,000 Ukrainian soldiers were trained by the EU Military Assistance Mission as of the end of 2024. In 2022, in the shadow of the war, the EU adopted its first-ever military concept, the Strategic Compass. This document highlights the need to create strategic autonomy and technological sovereignty.[49]

6. The main pillars of closer defence integration/building blocks of EDU

Military Planning and Conduct Capacity – MPCC

The establishment of MPCC in 2017 was one of the pillars for closer defence cooperation. It can be considered the basis for a permanent military command structure in the EU. Since 2017, the MPCC, established within the EU Military Staff, has provided permanent strategic command to non-executive military missions. It holds command of the EU Training Missions (EUTM), currently in operation in Mali, Central African Republic, Somalia, Mozambique and Ukraine.[50]

49 European External Action Service, 2022.
50 Consilium, 2017a; European Parliament, 2016c; Howorth, 2017; Reykers, 2019.

In November 2018, the Council decided to strengthen the staff and responsibilities of the MPCC. According to the decisions of Member States, by the end of 2020, the MPCC should have been ready to provide permanent operational planning and build a structure to command and control an executive military CSDP operation.[51] In April 2019, the EEAS prepared a concept regarding further development of the MPCC for the EU Military Committee, detailing the planned command and control structure.[52] Negotiations on new tasks of MPCC continued in the following years.[53]

The MPCC has been responsible for the operational planning and conduct of non-executive military missions (EUTM) in Mali, Somalia, the Central African Republic, and Mozambique, and the EU Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM) for Ukraine. It was established to further increase civilian and military cooperation, as it works in close cooperation with the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability through the Joint Support Coordination Cell at a strategic level. The MPCC reports to PSC, which provides political control and strategic direction for CSDP military operations and informs the EUMC. The Director General of the EU Military Staff plays a dual role; he is the Director of the MPCC as well as the Mission Commander for all non-executive military missions.[54]

The EU Strategic Compass (2022) describes the MPCC as the preferred military strategic level C2 structure:

> Military Planning and Conduct Capability is fully able to plan, control, and command non-executive and executive tasks and operations, as well as live exercises. In this context, we will ramp up personnel contributions and ensure that we have the necessary communication and information systems, as well as required facilities. Once the Military Planning and Conduct Capability reaches its full operational capability, it should be seen as the preferred command and control structure. This will not affect our ability to continue using the pre-identified national operational Headquarters.[55]

In October 2023, the first live exercise (LIVEX 23) of the Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC) was organised and led by MPCC.[56] According to these plans, all non-executive military missions, two small-scale or one medium-scale executive operation(s) and live exercises could be led by the MPCC command by 2025.[57]

51 Consilium, 2018.
52 Consilium, 2019.
53 Consilium, 2020b.
54 European External Action Service, 2023.
55 European External Action Service, 2022, p. 28.
56 Borrell, 2023.
57 European External Action Service, 2023.

6.1. Coordinated Annual Review on Defence – CARD

At the Council meeting in November 2016, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy presented an implementation plan for security and defence of Member States. It included 13 proposals to achieve the new strategic objectives laid down in the Global Strategy, including the CARD initiative.[58]

Contrary to the original idea of the "European Defence Semester" process (similar to the European Semester), Member States accepted a more flexible model based on voluntary consultations. The EDA, in cooperation with EEAS, developed elements of the review process. The EU Military Committee and competent authorities of Member States also discussed the policy document detailing CARD elements. Consequently, the final draft was prepared based on wide-ranging consultation. On 18 May 2017, the EU Council of the EU approved the rules for establishing CARD. The EDA, in cooperation with EU Military Staff, provided the CARD Secretariat. In 2018, the EDA led the first trial operation of CARD. The aim of the de facto two-year process is to provide a comprehensive overview of national defence planning and development to address existing shortfalls, identify opportunities for further cooperation and ensure the coherence and optimal use of defence spending. Recommendations are detailed in the final report, presented to defence ministers.[59]

Following the first CARD cycle between 2019 and 2020, the first full report was completed and presented to defence ministers in November 2020, providing an overview of the national defence planning and capability development efforts of 26 EDA Member States. The document recognised collaborative opportunities for Capability Development and Research & Technology.[60]

The second CARD cycle was realised between 2021 and 2022, following a bilateral dialogue between participating Member States and EDA regarding their defence characteristics and plans within the EU framework. Recommendations for further collaboration in European capability development were developed for individual Member States. The Ministers of Defence approved the second CARD Report in November 2022. The report found that the growth in Member States' defence spending because of Russian aggression against Ukraine can be considered both as a sad opportunity and a challenge for the EU.[61]

6.2. Permanent structured cooperation – PESCO

One of the most important innovations of the Lisbon Treaty was the extension of enhanced cooperation in the field of CSDP. The Treaty created a permanent structured cooperation as a new and flexible instrument to promote interoperability,

58 Jones, 2020.
59 EDA, 2016.
60 EDA, 2020.
61 EDA, 2022; EDA, no date.

reduce capability shortfalls and strengthen cooperation in the field of defence. The EU Treaty did not link the establishment of PESCO to a minimum number of Member States. Following the decision of Member States, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy gives an opinion on Member States' intentions. The EU Council makes the final decision based on a qualified majority. The European Parliament must be informed of this process. PESCO's development followed the German inclusive approach rather than the French exclusive approach.[62] After the decision of Member States, in December 2017, the EU Council decided, by a qualified majority, to launch PESCO with the participation of 25 countries. Denmark, the United Kingdom and Malta decided not to take part in the new initiative. In June 2022, Denmark joined CSDP following a successful referendum abolishing the opt-out on European defence cooperation. In March 2023, the Danish Parliament voted in favour of the country's participation in PESCO and EDA. The Foreign Affairs Council (with defence ministers) voted for Denmark's participation in PESCO at a meeting on 23 May 2023.[63]

The EEAS and EDA jointly provide for the PESCO Secretariat. One of the main tasks of EDA is to formulate proposals based on the CARD to achieve the goals of the Capability Development Plan. Compared with the previous activities of EDA, the significance of PESCO is demonstrated by the fact that the commitments of Member States regarding the projects have become accountable.[64]

Following these five waves, 68 PESCO projects are currently ongoing. PESCO has developed a two-level governance system. On the one hand, there are common rules, and on the other, participating Member States decide the details of each project. The fact that PESCO projects can receive additional funding from EDF makes cooperation sustainable. However, the success of PESCO projects primarily depends on the political will of participating Member States,[65] as it has received criticism regarding its implementation.[66]

6.3. European Defence Fund – EDF

In September 2016, President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker announced the establishment of EDF. As part of the EU Global Strategy implementation process, the European Commission presented EDAP in November, which already contained concrete proposals for the creation of the fund. The European Commission started testing the EU-level defence cooperation with the Preparatory Action on Defence Research programme between 2017 and 2019 and the European Defence Industrial Development Programme between 2019 and 2020.

62 Fiott, Missiroli and Tardy, 2017.
63 Danish Ministry of Defence, 2023.
64 Molnár, 2018; Molnár, 2019; Consilium, 2017b.
65 Biscop, 2020.
66 Blockmans and Macchiarini-Crosson, 2019.

According to the European Commission's initial proposal, the new fund provided 90 million euros per year between 2017 and 2019 during the testing period of the mechanism and around 500 million euros per year for the budget period 2021–2027 to support the defence industry. This fund was intended to complement the national resources available for defence research, procurement and prototype development. The novelty of this programme was that, for the first time, it became possible to use EU budget resources for the development of the defence industry. The legal basis for establishing EDF is Articles 173 and 182 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU). According to Article 173, 'the Union and Member States shall ensure that the conditions necessary for the competitiveness of the Union's industry exist.'

In June 2018, the European Commission announced a proposal for a multiannual financial framework between 2021 and 2027. The Commission planned to enhance EDF's budget to 13 billion euros to boost EU-SA and its global role. The fund, which co-finances projects with a minimum of three participants from at least three Member States, aims to serve as a catalyst to build an innovative and competitive industrial and scientific base and strengthen small and medium enterprises. Collaborative projects realised under PESCO can receive an additional 10% co-financing from the fund. After heated debates, in December 2020, the Council adopted and the European Parliament consented to the EU's multiannual financial framework for 2021–2027. The EDF received a budget of 7.9 billion euros.[67]

6.4. European Peace Facility – EPF

In 2018, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy presented a proposal to create a 10.5 billion-euro instrument, the European Peace Facility (EPF). The new off-budget financial instrument became part of the EU's crisis management toolbox. It aims to make the EU 'a more efficient and responsive global security provider'. The new instrument replaced the African Peace Facility and the Athena Mechanism and was funded by Member States' annual gross national income-based contributions. The budget is available for the Common Costs of CSDP military operations and Assistance Measures in support of third countries or international organisations. According to the original targets, 35–45% of the operational costs of military operations should be covered by this fund. In addition, it allows financial support for partner countries in Africa and EU neighbourhoods to strengthen their resilience.[68] It is planned to facilitate rapid deployment outside the EU and support flexibility.[69] The EPF has made it easier to finance CSDP military missions.

In December 2020, the EU Council reached a political agreement to utilize EPF to finance military- or defence-related external activities. Compared to the original proposal, the new instrument could count on much less – only five billion euros

67 Consilium, 2020a.
68 Deneckere, 2019; European External Action Service, 2018.
69 Puig-Soler, 2021.

– between 2021 and 2027. The EPF, together with the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument, supports partner countries in prevention and management of crises, and strengthening their resilience.

Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, triggering a deteriorating security environment, set the EPF in motion. Accordingly, the total budget increased, reaching more than 17 billion euros between 2021 and 2027. This has become one of the most important tools for Ukraine to defend its territorial integrity and protect its citizens from Russian aggression. In the framework of EPF, 5.6 billion euros was mobilised for the military support of Ukraine.[70] In March 2024, the Council of the EU decided to increase the financial resources of EPF by 5 billion euros and secure support for Ukraine by creating the Ukraine Assistance Fund inside the EPF.[71] It is worth mentioning that the flexible decision-making tool of constructive abstention was used by neutral countries (Austria, Malta and Ireland) and by Hungary during decisions regarding EPF.

6.5. EU Rapid Deployment Capacity – RDC

As mentioned previously, EU BGs have never been deployed and there have been serious doubts about their applicability. A large body of literature highlights the problems surrounding BGs.[72] The main obstacles to their deployment are the lack of political will and substantial funding opportunities of Member States. It is no coincidence that the idea of extending the Athena Mechanism to this area has been discussed as well. This process also entailed rethinking the entire financial system. Consequently, in 2021, the EPF succeeded the Athena Mechanism and African Peace Facility.

In 2021, 14 EU Defence Ministers (Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, and Spain) asked Josep Borrell (HR/VP) to establish a new rapid military response capacity (called First Entry Force) for crisis management outside the EU.[73]

The Strategic Compass (2022) indicated the creation of an EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC). According to the EU's first-ever military strategy, an RDC will be fully operational and swiftly deployable by 2025. EU Member States decided to agree on operational scenarios in 2022 and organise the first live exercises in 2023. The Compass declared that the RDC 'will consist of substantially modified EU BGs and pre-identified Member States' military forces and capabilities'.[74]

Although EUBGs are considered the building blocks for RDC, there are major differences between them. In opposition to EUBGs, the RDC will be a modular force of

70 European Commission, 2023b; European Commission, 2023c.
71 Council of the European Union, 2024.
72 Balossi-Restelli, 2011; Reykers, 2017; Ringsmose and Rynning, 2017; Tsitsikostas, 2021; Meyer, Van Osch and Reykers, 2022.
73 Barbosa-Lobo, 2021; Meyer, Van Osch and Reykers, 2022, p. 4.
74 European External Action Service, 2022.

5,000 troops, including land, air and maritime elements, and strategic enablers (such as cyber-defence, satellite communications, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities).[75] Another difference between the two is the length of the rotation period. Currently, it is panned to extend the six months to one year.

According to Meyer, Van Osch and Reykers, the EU RDC cannot be considered a 'single force of 5,000 troops but rather as a toolbox of force packages with land, air and maritime components, plus strategic enablers (such as strategic airlift and intelligence for target acquisition)'. This means that EUBGs are supposed to be substantially modified 'in line with the single set of forces principle'.[76]

Since the beginning, it has been planned that MPCC will provide C2 capacities for live exercise and the first RDC. In October 2023, the first live exercise (LIVEX 23) of RDC was conducted in Cadiz (Spain) under the control of the MPCC.[77]

6.6. Regulations on Common Procurement

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 highlighted the weaknesses of the European defence industry in terms of fragmentation and underfunding. On 11 March 2022 at their informal meeting in Versailles, members of the European Council committed themselves to strengthening the European defence technological and industrial basis and requested that the European Commission continue planning in the policy area.[78]

The war in Ukraine posed a great challenge to the European defence industry, which was undersized and faced problems. In the wake of increasing demand and shortage of assets leading to procurement from outside the EU, and hindering the attainment of the European objectives concerning the European defence technological and industrial base, in July 2022, the European Commission proposed two legal incentives to procure defence products jointly: in the short term, the approval of the "European Defence Industry Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act" (EDIRPA), and in the long term, the EDIP. Owing to increased demand, on 3 May 2023, the EC submitted another proposal for adopting the Regulation on Establishing the Act in Support of Ammunition Production (ASAP). After reaching a political agreement, the European Parliament and the Council adopted the ASAP regulation, which was published in the Official Journal of the EU on 20 July 2023. This new regulation complements EDIRPA.[79] The purpose of ASAP is to support an increase in the ammunition and missile production capacity of the EU in the interest of Ukraine and EU Member States. The European Parliament and the Council adopted the EDIRPA Regulation in the autumn of 2023. The new regulation was published in the Official

75 Zandee and Stoetman, 2022, p. 2.
76 Meyer, Van Osch and Reykers, 2022, p. 4.
77 Borrell, 2023.
78 Consilium, 2022.
79 *Regulation (EU) 2023/1525 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 July 2023 on supporting ammunition production (ASAP)*, 2023.

Journal of the EU on 26 October 2023, and entered into force the day following its publication.[80] After the State of the Union address of President von der Leyen in 2023, the EC initiated a consultation process to develop a new EDIS, which was published in March 2024.

7. Mapping national defence policies regarding European strategic autonomy

As the concept of EDU is promoted mainly by EU Institutions and is not mentioned in Member States' strategic documents, the aim of this subchapter is to analyse Member States' views on the concept of EU-SA. This part of the research is based on an assessment of secondary literature and analysis of the latest national security strategic documents, particularly the national security strategies of Member States.

Within the EU, there are several traditional clusters promoting defence cooperation (i.e. the Franco–German alliance, Weimar Triangle, Benelux countries,[81] NORDEFCO,[82] V4 countries and Baltic countries[83]). Among them, the Franco–German axis is perhaps the most significant. It was originally established by the 1963 Elysée Treaty and reinforced by the 2019 Aachen Treaty.[84] In 2021, Italy and France created a similar alliance, signing the Quirinal Treaty for Strategic Relationships that came into force on 1 February 2023.[85] France, Italy and Spain, along with Germany are considered the "defence frontrunners" in Europe.[86] These countries are involved in most of the EDF and PESCO projects. Originally, the so-called Four Big European countries were France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom; however, after Brexit, Spain could be considered one of the four big countries that intended to play a decisive role in the development of defence integration in Europe. This is demonstrated by the fact that in 2020, the Ministers of Defence in France, Germany, Italy and Spain proposed starting the elaboration of the *Strategic Compass*, beginning the process with a threat analysis.[87]

80 *Regulation (EU) 2023/2418 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 October 2023 on establishing an instrument for the reinforcement of the European defence industry through common procurement (EDIRPA)*, 2023.
81 Meijer and Wyss, 2018.
82 See: https://www.nordefco.org/the-basics-about-nordefco (Accessed: 21 June 2024).
83 Republic of Estonia, Ministry of Defence, 2015.
84 French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2019.
85 Governo Italiano, 2021.
86 Blockmans, 2021.
87 Zandee et al., 2020, p. 24.

Among the Big Four countries, French President Macron has become the most important political supporter of EU-SA and European sovereignty. France has historically backed the idea of EU-SA to reduce dependence of Europe since the late 1990s.[88] The last revision of the French NSS occurred in 2022, triggered by the Russian aggression. The promotion of EU-SA is one of the ten priorities of the French National Strategic Review. The document indicates that the defence of French security interests 'is built on three pillars, that is, strengthening of strategic autonomy; attaining European sovereignty and consolidation of alliances; and preservation of a stable international order based on respect for the law and multilateralism'.[89] According to strategic objectives of the document, France intends to be the driving force behind EU-SA.[90]

Germany has adopted its first comprehensive NSS in 2023 (Robust. Resilient. Comprehensive. Integrated Security for Germany). According to the strategy, European integration was first viewed as a peace project. Although the text does not explicitly mention EU-SA or sovereignty, it claims that strengthening the EU's ability to act is one of the main interests of Germany. Germany wants to strengthen the European pillar of NATO, further develop CFSP and implement the Strategic Compass. The CSDP is an important tool for crisis management outside of the EU. Although NATO is considered the primary guarantor of protection against military threats, the text claims that Germany's commitments not only to NATO but also to the EU's mutual assistance clause (Article 42(7) TEU) are unshakeable.[91]

Despite the presence of various official documents related to security and defence, Italy does not have a NSS. The White Paper on International Security and Defence from 2015 can be interpreted as a type of NSS. The Italian Ministry of Defence publishes the Multi-Year Defence Planning Document (Documento Programmatico Pluriennale, DPP) annually. This annual decree can also be considered a short-term strategic document for Italian security and defence policy. The current document for 2023–2025 highlights Italy's support for NATO as an organisation guaranteeing the security of the Euro–Atlantic space. Simultaneously, it emphasises that Italy will strengthen its contribution to the initiatives and operations of the EU CSDP, supporting its ambition of growing strategic autonomy.[92] Although the Trans-Atlantic relationship is extremely important for Italy, its government supported it and played a decisive role in the elaboration of the EU GS under the work of Federica Mogherini as former HR/VP. The EU-SA is seen in the country as a complementary tool for national- end European security and not as a tool for reducing dependence on Trans-Atlantic relations.[93]

88 Libek, 2019.
89 République Française, 2022, p. 19.
90 République Française, 2022, p. 27.
91 Federal Government of Germany, 2023, p. 31.
92 Governo Italiano, Ministero della Difesa, 2023, p. 16.
93 Zandee et al., 2020, p. 38.

Spain elaborated on its latest NSS in 2021. According to this document, Spain has a more comprehensive view of the EU-SA. As stated in the document,

> Spain is committed to greater European strategic autonomy, combining the promotion of the CSDP and the area of freedom, security and justice with the improvement of health security progress in energy union or the greater role of the European Union in the management of cross-border crises are also part of the broad spectrum of policies aimed at strengthening European security and the role of the Union as a global actor.[94]

It is no coincidence that Spain, along with the Netherlands, published a non-paper on EU-SA, which claimed that it is important to combine an open economy with the reduction of some strategic dependences to avoid protectionism. The document promotes the concept of open strategic autonomy (OSA).[95] In 2023, the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU prepared a non-paper in close consultation with the 27 Member States and EU institutions to contribute to the development of 'a comprehensive, balanced and forward-looking approach to ensure OSA and global leadership by 2030'.[96] It is important to highlight that the Spanish presidency identifies OSA as a tool for reindustrialisation of Europe, and not as a tool exclusively for CSDP.[97] OSA aims to guarantee that:

> the EU has the capacity to cope alone if necessary but without ruling out cooperation whenever possible. It goes some steps beyond smart supply chain management by taking into account geopolitics as well as economic factors. It relies on foresight to identify threats and ensures resilience by anticipating the required responses.[98]

Since 1991, France and Germany have cooperated with Poland within the framework of the Weimar Triangle (WT). Although the creation of "Weimar Plus" was proposed by the foreign and defence ministers of Spain and Italy in 2012, this form of cooperation has not been developed.[99] Within the WT, Poland's Atlanticist views affected diplomatic relations among the three countries. Following the Polish parliamentary elections of 2015, which resulted in the victory of Law and Justice (PiS), Poland played a more active role in V4 cooperation. This is illustrated by the fact that no WT foreign minister meetings took place between 2016 and 2020.[100] The joint declaration issued in January 2020 did not refer to foreign, security or

94 Presidencia del Gobierno, 2021.
95 Kingdom of the Netherlands, 2021.
96 Spain's National Office of Foresight and Strategy, 2023.
97 Orłowski, 2023.
98 García-Higuera and Weichert, 2023.
99 Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères, 2024.
100 Federal Foreign Office, no date.

defence policies.[101] As a consequence of dynamic economic growth and military developments, Poland can be considered an emerging European power. Owing to Russian aggression in Ukraine, cooperation within the WT gained impetus. At the WT Summits in 2022, 2023 and 2024, leaders of the three countries expressed solidarity with Ukraine. In a joint press release in 2023, the leaders expressed their commitment to continue the implementation of the Versailles Declaration and the Strategic Compass, focusing on strengthening the European defence technological and industrial base, and reinforcing the complementarity between European defence and NATO.[102] Despite the strengthened cooperation within WT, the previous Polish government criticised the concept of EU-SA and instead proposed a strategic partnership between the EU and the United States.[103] In February 2024, the Joint Statement of WT Foreign Ministers stated that:

> extraordinary times require extraordinary measures. Against this background, it is our goal to make the European Union more united, stronger and able to respond to today's security challenges, on a path towards a security and defence union, living up to our citizen's expectations. We are also committed to a strong and united NATO.[104]

Until now, not only Spain and Poland but also the Netherlands, East–Central Europe, Baltic and Scandinavian countries, and Portugal have criticised the concept of EU-SA or European Sovereignty. Several Member States have been distrustful of the concept of the potential promotion of protectionism, and have been wary of undermining the Transatlantic alliance and NATO. Therefore, the Member States have proposed the concept of OSA.[105]

In 2021, 12 EU Member States – led by Denmark and consisting of Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands, Ireland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Malta and Spain – prepared a joint non-paper on OSA, emphasising the importance of the EU's openness to trade and investment.[106]

Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands, Portugal and Slovakia prepared another joint non-paper about OSA in 2023, highlighting that:

> a geopolitically fragmented world demands a strong and resilient Union that is able to safeguard and promote its core interests, strive for a rules-based, open, and interconnected economy and champion multilateralism and international cooperation.

The concept of OSA was introduced to achieve just that.

101 French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2019.
102 Élisée, 2023.
103 Besch and Varma, 2023.
104 Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères, 2024.
105 Torreblanca and Jorge-Ricart, 2022, pp. 3, 17.
106 Van den Abeele, 2021, p. 21.

It also declared that the EU and NATO should be mutually reinforced and cooperation between the two organisations should be deepened.[107]

Although Benelux countries have traditionally supported deepening integration in the field of CSDP, they have also supported the concept of OSA. According to the Dutch security strategy, the Netherlands aims to strengthen the EU's open strategic autonomy policy to reduce strategic dependence. The document underlines that, within the EU context, strengthening CSDP, as outlined in the EU Strategic Compass, will also help strengthen NATO.[108] Belgium has developed its first NSS in 2022. Regarding the concept of the EU-SA, the document underlines that there is no consensus on the concept of autonomy and highlights the importance of OSA, which does not lead to protectionism.[109] According to Luxemburg's latest defence guidelines, the achievement of EU-SA in defence issues while promoting EU–NATO cooperation represents a major challenge. Being members of both organisations, it is challenging to avoid duplication.[110]

Scandinavian Members of the EU have traditionally criticised the concept of EU-SA. Denmark used to hold a special position within the EU, which was attributed to its national opt-out on CSDP. Having a dominantly Atlanticist view, the country intensely contested the idea of EU-SA. Finland originally had an ambiguous opinion of EU-SA. While strongly supporting the EU in becoming a global player and security provider, it insisted on the importance of involving non-EU partners in the realisation of CSDP. Finland also supported the concept of OSA.[111] As Sweden has also been concerned about the weakening of Transatlantic relations, it expressed a critical opinion about the EU-SA, as the maintenance of global free-trade rules represents common interests for Scandinavian countries.[112] Russian aggression in Ukraine has had a significant impact on the security and defence policies of Scandinavian Member States, considering that in 2022, Sweden and Finland decided to leave behind neutrality, and both countries are now members of the NATO. Denmark also made historic decisions. At the successful referendum on 1 June 2022, voters backed Denmark's participation in all elements of the EU's CSDP by abolishing the Danish opt-out on defence. Consequently, Denmark decided to contribute to military operations ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 2022, and to the EU's EUMAM.[113] The most recent Danish foreign and security policy strategy was published in May 2023. The document emphasised that Denmark intends to achieve strengthened resilience through closer European cooperation. Countries require an EU that can act quickly and decisively. Denmark is committed to strengthening its EU position through OSA.[114] Swe-

107 Kingdom of the Netherlands, 2023.
108 Government of the Netherlands, 2023, pp. 22, 30.
109 Kingdom of Belgium, 2022, p. 31.
110 Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, 2023, p. 66.
111 Torreblanca and Jorge-Ricart, 2022, pp. 3, 17.
112 Nissen, 2021, pp. 6–7.
113 Danish Ministry of Defence, 2023.
114 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, 2023, p. 25.

den's latest NSS does not mention EU-SA, but emphasises the importance of a strong transatlantic link for Europe's security. According to this document 'the EU's role in security and defence needs to be strengthened in a way that favours transatlantic link without compromising the competence of Member States'.[115] In June 2023, the Swedish Defence Commission published its report on Sweden's Security Policy, emphasising that Sweden is best defended within NATO. NATO membership is vital for Sweden as well as for NATO, as it will strengthen security. Although the document does not mention EU-SA, it claims that the EU is Sweden's most important foreign policy arena. Sweden's responsibility towards EU Member States has also been highlighted. Article 42.7 TEU and the solidarity clause in Article 222 TEFU are important tools of joint responsibility for Europe's security. Nevertheless, NATO provides the foundation for the collective defence of its members.[116]

Within the EU, the Visegrad Four used to be considered a separate group, where, despite the different perceptions of security threats, defence ministers started to organise their regular meetings in 1999, and defence cooperation was strengthened in 2012.[117] The most significant example of cooperation in the field of defence was the establishment of V4 EU BGs. Owing to differing foreign policy goals and perceptions of Russian threats in Europe, the V4 group has gradually lost its significance.

The latest NSS of Poland emphasises the importance of a pragmatic approach to the development of CSDP (PESCO, EDF), ensuring its complementarity with NATO. EU-SA has not been mentioned in the strategy.[118] According to Czechia's NSS, the EU provides decisive contributions to its security in a broader sense. The EU's role as a strong political and security actor is mentioned as an interest of the country. Czechia supports efforts to reinforce the EU's CSDP while respecting the complementary approach to NATO's key role in collective defence. Czechia promotes the consistent growth of EU–NATO cooperation. The document also emphasises transatlantic relations.[119] The latest NSS of Hungary (2020) states that membership in NATO and the EU has substantially increased Hungarian security. Although the country maintains the primacy of NATO's collective defence, EU's role in the field of defence must be significantly strengthened. The document states that Hungary is interested in increasing the effectiveness of EU's CFSP and CSDP to complement the activities of NATO.[120] According to Slovakia's NSS, membership in NATO and the EU is the basic pillar of security of the Slovak Republic.[121] The concepts of EU-SA or OSA have not been mentioned in the latest national security strategies of V4 countries. It is worth

115 Government Office of Sweden, 2024, p. 29.
116 Swedish Ministry of Defence, 2023, pp. 4–5.
117 Visegrad Group, 2014.
118 National Security Bureau of the Republic of Poland, 2020, p. 24.
119 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, 2023, p. 21.
120 The Government of Hungary, 2021.
121 Slovak Republic, 2021, p. 5.

mentioning that the Czech Armaments Defence Industry Strategy (2022) mentions EU-SA.[122]

In this context, it is important to mention the Central European Defence Cooperation (CEDC), which was established in 2010, based on Hungarian and Austrian proposals. The CEDC group includes Austria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia (with Poland as an observer). This military cooperation aims to support EU's efforts towards European security.[123] The most recent comprehensive strategic document in Austria was published in 2013, underlining the EU role in security policies. The document states that Austria plays an active role in shaping CFSP and participates in the full spectrum of CSDP activities.[124]

EU countries in the Black Sea Region and the Western Balkans, like Romania or Croatia, which are also members of NATO, usually mention the EU as part of the foundation of their security without any reference to EU-SA or OSA, and in their strategic documents the complementarity with NATO is also emphasised.[125]

In Southern Europe, Portugal concluded a bilateral defence treaty with Spain in 2015.[126] Portugal published its latest Strategic Concept of National Defence in 2013, highlighting the importance of CSDP.[127] The revision of this document began in 2022, and the process has yet to be completed. In the Mediterranean region, Malta and Cyprus are not members of NATO. Malta followed the policy of neutrality and decided not to participate in PESCO. Cyprus represents a special category, as due to its territorial dispute with Turkey has a strong relationship with NATO.[128] Owing to the conflict between Turkey and Cyprus, cooperation between Greece and Cyprus was considered decisive. Since 2007, Cyprus has been a regular participant in Greek-led EU BGs. As NATO cannot be an option for Cyprus, it aimed to play a decisive role in the entire spectrum of CSDP.

The concept of EU-SA was originally associated with security and defence policies. Today, it has a much broader meaning, covering economic, technological and energy policies. Member States have developed different opinions on this concept. There were three groups of Member States. First, the NSSs of some countries have prioritised EU-SA, while others have developed the concept of OSA; in the documents of the third group, neither the EU-SA nor the OSA are integrated. The latter Member States have been confirmed by more Transatlanticists.

122 Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic, 2022.
123 Honvédelmi Minisztérium, 2020.
124 Federal Chancellery of the Republic of Austria, 2013, p. 13.
125 Romania Presidential Administration, 2020; Republic of Croatia, 2017.
126 Branco, 2015.
127 República Portuguesa, 2013.
128 *Treaty no. 5476. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Greece and Turkey and Cyprus*, 1960.

8. Conclusions

CSDP is one of the youngest policy areas in the EU. Since its early phase, this field of integration has comprised not only the development of crisis management tools and institutional structures but also initiatives related to capability development processes. During the last decade, the security environment has deteriorated rapidly and external factors have had a significant impact on the accelerated integration process. Although in this policy area, intergovernmentalism remained the decisive form of decision-making processes within the European Council and the Council of the EU, Member States have decided unanimously on a number of initiatives inciting closer cooperation in the field of European defence. Today, the dynamics of the European integration process in the fields of CFSP and CSDP are defined by the duality between intergovernmentalism and supranationalism.

However, the hybrid power character of this international actor still provokes dispute. Significant changes have taken place in the international system: great power competition has intensified again. The rise of new powers has threatened the multilateral liberal global order and multilateralism. It is no coincidence that the EU had to adapt itself to major changes in international relations that led to a new arms race. EU-SA and EDU are key elements of this adaptation process for becoming a more autonomous actor in international relations and, thus, a real global player and security provider.

Since the adoption of GS (2016), Europe's security and defence cooperation has been accelerated by external factors. Following Russian aggression in Ukraine, the ideas of EU-SA and the EU became progressively relevant. These issues have gained increasing significance in recent years with armed conflicts (traditional and hybrid warfare) in the direct and wider neighbourhoods of the EU.

Member States have developed diverse opinions regarding EU-SA, which was originally associated with security and defence policy. Today, it has an extended meaning, including economic, technological, and energy policies. The NSS of one group of Member States mentions EU-SA as a priority, while another group has developed the concept of OSA; in the documents of a third group, neither EU-SA nor OSA have been mentioned. This last group of Members of State represents a more Transatlanticist perception of security and defence.

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