



**Explaining European Military Integration:  
Theoretical Perspectives in Relation to the Building of a Common Defence**

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## **Abstract**

The present dissertation aims to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the process of European defence integration (EDI), utilising the theoretical perspectives of realism, neofunctionalism (NF), and liberal intergovernmentalism (LI). It seeks to evaluate the extent to which these perspectives shed light on the implementation of significant initiatives, specifically the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the European Intervention Initiative (EI2), and the recent Strategic Compass (SC).

To examine the mechanisms of European integration and disintegration within the realm of defence, this study employs theory-building and theory-testing methods, making use of scholarly literature, policy documents, official reports, and existing interviews.

The results of the research show that realism is the theoretical framework that provides the most comprehensive elucidation for the activation of PESCO, EI2 and the SC, placing emphasis on the importance of external threats and security challenges. The neofunctionalist perspective posits that the integration process across different sectors, such as economics, holds the capacity to produce a spillover effect. However, the examination of the influence of economic integration on defence initiatives is intricate due to external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Liberal intergovernmentalism prioritises the engagement of influential interest groups, including the European Commission, Private Military and Security Companies (PMSC), and national governments, in advocating for enhanced defence integration. However, the European Union's growing inclination towards NATO presents potential challenges to the integration of European defence, primarily due to the prevailing dominance of the Transatlantic Alliance.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations

CARD: Coordinated Annual Review on Defence

CFSP: Common Foreign and Security Policy

CSDP: Common Security and Defence Policy

DG: Directorate-General

EAEU: Eurasian Economic Union

EAF: European Armed Forces

EATF: European Air Transport Fleet

EC: European Commission

ECs: European Communities

EDA: European Defence Agency

EDC: European Defence Community

EDF: European Defence Fund

EDI: European Defence Integration

EDIDP: European Defence Industrial Development Programme

EDTIB: European Defence Technological and Industrial Base

EEAS: European External Action Service

EI2: European Intervention Initiative

ENISA: European Union Agency for Cybersecurity

EP: European Parliament

EPC: European Political Cooperation

EPF: European Peace Facility

ESDP: European Security and Defence Policy

ESRP: European Security Research Program

EU: European Union

EU RDC: Rapid Deployment Capacity

EUISS: European Union Institute for Security Studies

EUMC: European Union Military Committee  
EUMS: European Union Military Staff  
GoP: Group of Personalities  
HR: High Representative  
LI: Liberal Intergovernmentalism  
MAC: Mutual Assistance Clause  
MFF: Multiannual Financial Framework  
MSs: Member States  
NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization  
NF: Neofunctionalism  
OSCE: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe  
PA: Preparatory Action  
PADR: Preparatory Action on Defence Research  
PESCO: Permanent Structured Cooperation  
PMSC: Private Military and Security Companies  
PSC: Political and Security Committee  
QMV: Qualified Majority Voting  
RD: Research Design  
SC: Strategic Compass  
TEU: Treaty on European Union  
UN: United Nations  
US: United States  
WEU: Western European Union

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## **Introduction**

In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in the discourse surrounding European integration within the context of common security and defence. Several European Union (EU) member states are currently reassessing this pivotal sector, recognising the necessity of a synchronised and collaborative strategy to tackle evolving security issues. The Union has achieved notable advancements in domains such as economic integration and policy coordination. However, the process of military integration has frequently encountered delays, primarily attributable to the intricate and delicate characteristics of national defence capabilities. Nevertheless, novel advancements, such as changes in the worldwide security environment and the evolving dynamics between Europe and North America, have indicated a dedication to enhancing the process of European military integration.

Following the unsuccessful establishment of the European Defence Community (EDC) during the 1950s, Europe has encountered difficulties in constructing a cohesive framework that integrates the distinct military capacities of its member states within the European Union. The objective of the EDC was to create a supranational entity that would possess a unified military force, operating under the jurisdiction of a centralised organisational framework. Yet, this ambitious endeavour encountered setbacks as member states exhibited hesitance in relinquishing their sovereignty pertaining to defence affairs.

The emergence of transnational security challenges, including but not limited to terrorism, cyberattacks, and hybrid warfare, alongside the uncertainties surrounding the United States' dedication to European security, have prompted the European Union to reevaluate its defence capacities and pursue enhanced strategic independence. In light of the aforementioned challenges, the Union has undertaken various initiatives, starting from the implementation of the



Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) until the recent formulation of the Strategic Compass of 2022 aimed at providing direction for the establishment of a unified defence vision and strategy.

The primary objective of this dissertation is to examine the factors that contribute to the varying levels of military integration in Europe, utilising theoretical frameworks derived from the discipline of international relations. This study will shed light on the driving forces behind European integration and disintegration in the defence realm by examining the main legal initiatives in European Defence Integration from the inception of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European Intervention Initiative (EI2) in 2017 to the establishment of the Strategic Compass in 2022. The forthcoming analysis will centre its attention on three notable theoretical perspectives, namely realism, neofunctionalism, and liberal intergovernmentalism.

The research questions will be addressed through the combination of theory-building and theory-testing approaches. Theory-building begins by examining existing knowledge and empirical observations to identify variables and establish relationships. It is a continuous and iterative procedure, allowing for the testing and refinement of ideas through empirical investigation. As new evidence and data come to light, theories have the potential to undergo modifications, expansions, or rejections, thereby contributing to the progression of knowledge within the specific domain of European defence integration.

In contrast, theory-testing, also known as hypothesis testing, involves the systematic investigation of established theories or hypotheses through the acquisition and scrutiny of empirical data. For this dissertation, precise hypotheses derived from the theoretical predictions of realism, neofunctionalism, and liberal intergovernmentalism will be formulated.

Following this introductory section, this work will present an alternative explanation examining the existing literature on the selected theories.

Realism is a theoretical framework that places significant emphasis on the nation-state as the primary actor in international relations, prioritising its pursuit of security within a global system characterised by an absence of overarching authority. Based on realist assumptions, states are considered autonomous entities motivated by self-interest and a fundamental need to safeguard their security and survival. Within the realm of European military integration, the realist perspective posits that the process of integration will be catalysed by the emergence of an external threat. An illustration of this phenomenon can be observed in the context of external security challenges, which often prompt member states to pursue heightened military collaboration to bolster their collective defence capabilities. On the other hand, a decrease in external challenges or a change in national priorities could result in a decline in the efforts towards integration.

Neofunctionalism, which emerged from the scholarly contributions of Ernst Haas and Leon Lindberg, argues that the process of regional integration in particular policy domains has the potential to produce functional and political spillover effects. Functional spillover pertains to the inadvertent outcomes of integration within a particular sector, which subsequently generates the impetus for additional integration in interconnected domains. Political spillover, conversely, arises when collaborative efforts in a particular sphere foster a collective perception of identity and a more extensive aspiration for enhanced integration. In the realm of European military integration, the neofunctionalist perspective posits that advancements in economic integration, such as the establishment of a shared defence market or collaborative defence industry initiatives, have the potential to extend their influence into the political domain. This, in turn, can foster enhanced levels of coordination and

cooperation in the realm of defence policy. The establishment of economic stability, prosperity, and interdependence among member states may foster a favourable climate for the advancement of defence integration.

Liberal intergovernmentalism, a theoretical framework formulated by Andrew Moravcsik, places emphasis on the influence of state interests and intergovernmental negotiations in determining the course of European integration. From this particular viewpoint, it is argued that states assert and engage in discussions regarding their interests, which are shaped by domestic interest groups that operate within their societies. Within the framework of European defence integration, liberal intergovernmentalism affirms that the progression of the integration process will be influenced by the alignment or disparity of interests among various groups, including military establishments, politicians, and defence-related companies. These groups exert a substantial influence on the promulgation of national defence policies and can either advocate for enhanced integration or argue in favour of maintaining sovereign control over defence capabilities.

The significance of this work within the academic domain stems from its contribution to the preexisting corpus of knowledge regarding European defence integration. The primary emphasis in both contemporary and historical research has been on the security policy of the European Union, with a notable tendency to conflate security and defence within a unified framework.

The findings of realist scholars emphasise the significance of evolving global dynamics and the imperative for Europe to take on increased accountability for its security. The neofunctionalist perspective highlights the inherent linkages between economic and military security, whereas liberal intergovernmentalism emphasises the role of interest groups and intergovernmental negotiations in shaping outcomes.

## **CHAPTER I: Explaining European Defence Integration**

### **1.1 An Elucidation of the Concept of European Defence Integration**

The European defence integration process has been one of the most complex and ambitious aspects of the European Union throughout its history. The very nature of security and defence, intrinsically linked to national sovereignty, has made harmonisation and cooperation between member states quite arduous.

The debate on European integration has recently been rekindled in view of the fact that several EU countries are looking at this important sector with renewed interest. Since the distant failure of the European Defence Community in the 1950s, Europe has tried several times to provide itself with a common structure that would bring the EU's individual military instruments closer together, but national will have often held this process back, finding a balance only in the Atlantic Pact.

The majority of recent and past studies on the subject of defence integration in the EU have mostly concentrated on CSDP missions and have combined security and defence into one bracket. As a matter of fact, academia has placed more of an emphasis on EU "security" policy than on "defence" policy (Fontaine, 2014).

Nevertheless, the political logic behind integrating defence within the EU is not something undiscovered within the Union. Hans E. Anderson, Chief Administrative Officer and a Senior Lecturer in Political Science at Södertörn University, for instance, noted that the notion of supranational European defence cooperation traces back to the starting stages of initiatives in Europe after World War II, when French Prime Minister Rene Pleven demanded the formation of EDC and the creation of a European army under a supranational authority in October 1950, to be supported by a European defence budget.

The concept of defence integration has therefore always existed, but "more

frequently than not, defence and military matters were the subjects of exceptions and derogations to the norms, especially with regard to finance (no EU budget) and voting procedures" (Fiott, Missiroli & Tardy, 2017).

This "exceptionalism" treatment of the defence sector may have led to less attention being paid to defence and more propulsion to security research.

## **1.2 Alternative Explanation - Literature Review**

### **1.2.1 Realism**

The theory of realism offers a useful perspective on the role of power and security in shaping European defence integration. Morgenthau emphasized the importance of the balance of power for maintaining world peace. He believed that the only way to contain the danger of "nationalistic universalism," the belief that one state has the authority to impose its standards and values on all other nations, was to ensure that the balance of power was functioning efficiently (Morgenthau, 1946). The realist approach posits the autonomy of states, which are viewed as separate entities within the anarchic international system where no actor interferes in the affairs of others. In a zero-sum game, any gain by one state results in a loss by another actor in the international arena. Thus, the primary objective of states is to maintain their security, and as a result, foreign policy is predominantly fashioned with the use of military force and diplomacy. Realists are generally sceptical of international cooperation, particularly in the military sphere, since cooperation often requires the relinquishment of national sovereignty (Bessner & Guilhot, 2015). This scepticism is particularly relevant to European Defence integration, which has been facilitated in part by the creation of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy.

With this in mind, several scholars have argued that realist theories are not useful to explain EDI since national security interests will always take precedence over supranational ones (Jørgensen & Jørgensen, 2021).

Nevertheless, Daniel Fiott has attempted to examine the CSDP from the perspective of realist theory. He holds that the CSDP represents an “experiment” by the EU to reconcile its commitment to multilateral cooperation with the realist emphasis on state power and competition (Fiott, 2013).

He further explains that this approach stresses the importance of national self-interest, highlighting the role of power politics in the international arena. By evaluating the impact of these concepts on European defence integration, he concludes arguing that defence policy remains an area of key sovereign power for individual states. These will always prioritize their security interests over supranational considerations. Therefore, the integration of the defence sector in the EU will depend largely on the strategic calculations of member states, who will seek to maximize their power while minimizing that of their rivals. The scholar foresees an integration in the case of external threats, considering these as the only driving force behind defence integration in Europe.

On another note, Anders Wivel has attempted to examine the relationship between globalization, European integration and the preservation of state sovereignty in the context of realist theory. He argues that political leaders in Europe have strategically managed the process of integration within the EU in ways that preserve state sovereignty, despite the pressures of globalization which challenge the concept of the nation-state itself. He suggests that European integration is driven by power politics, rather than by the pursuit of shared goals, as states seek to position themselves within the European order and to protect their interests vis-à-vis other states in the region, as well as the larger global community (Wivel, 2005). Wivel evaluates the role of

globalization in the context of European integration, proposing that globalization serves to intensify competition between states, which reinforces the desire to preserve state sovereignty. Additionally, he explains that including policy areas like defence and security has a profound impact on power dynamics by creating a hierarchical power structure among Member States. This complicates their interrelations as they compete for influence in the broader context of European and global politics.

In the ongoing discussion, an interesting topic is Nikolay Pavlov's scholarly perspective on reevaluating Political Realism in the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy after the Ukraine conflict. Pavlov (2022) suggests a limited incorporation of the realist perspective in the study of the CSDP. This study focuses on the advancement of civilian capabilities and civilian CSDP, with limited attention given to power dynamics. The author highlights the importance of the European Union's ability to introspect and its research-focused policies. The EU stands out from other international organisations due to its strong dedication to evidence-based policy formulation. The EU's research policy is comprehensive and unparalleled in its breadth and depth. However, a possible drawback of this approach is that the focus on reflection and contemplation might overshadow concrete and practical implementation. Pavlov questions the feasibility of European Realism and its potential contributions to research in the politically-sensitive areas of CSDP, conflict prevention, and integration. The author analyses the compatibility between Classical and Structural Realism and the theory and practice of the CSDP.

He supports a greater emphasis on European Armed Forces, exploring the possibilities of Realist theories like Morgenthau's Classical Realism and Waltz's Structural Realism. The author criticises the EU's conceptual foundations for developing defence capabilities, which have traditionally

relied on the idea of the EU as a "civilian power" that avoids power politics. Due to shifting geopolitical dynamics, the relevance of this approach has diminished. The notion of the EU as a civilian power is closely associated with liberal peacebuilding, which is ill-suited for the current volatile geopolitical environment. The author proposes adopting a Realist approach, specifically Biscop's Realpolitik with European characteristics, in accordance with the EU's Global Strategy. This strategy highlights the EU's essential interests and underscores the importance of "hard power" and increased cooperation (Biscop, 2016).

### **1.2.2 Neofunctionalism**

The theorisation of European integration has mainly been articulated within different models of analysis, among which the most peculiar is the supranational paradigm. This is distinguished by two different approaches: functionalist and neo-functionalist.

The former approach, introduced by David Mitrany, seeks to create non-territorial functional agencies to supersede the state's system (Theiler, 2022). Relations between states evolve in a functionalist sense because technical expertise, available within these agencies, became increasingly indispensable. Each agency only has authority in specific areas that are initially limited, and then the cooperation gradually extends, controlling the states to the point of expropriating them of sovereignty. The feasibility of this model depends, however, on the areas of cooperation: functionalists are particularly cautious about the political dimension, as the approach can only work in technical-functional areas to solve a specific problem. Institutions must remain technical and not political, as the latter no longer seem competent to oversee the well-being of society.



Recognising the limitations of this approach, neo-functional scholar, between the 1950s and 1960s in conjunction with the first phase of the integration process, further developed the previous theory (Bardini, 2021).

Neofunctionalism stems from the theorisations of Ernst Haas and Leon Lindberg in which, according to the classical view of the concept, the spillovers of regional cooperation activity in the economic sphere (functional spillovers) are taken into account, which, given the benefits they can bring to citizens, induce states to cooperate in the political sphere as well (political spillovers) (Schmitter, 2005). With regard to the characteristic elements of such a system, it is worth emphasising that the neofunctionalist view proposes a conception of gradual integration in small steps inherent to individual technical sectors, with regard to which there is no conflict between partners and with specific strategic and economic importance (Castaldi, 2007). This would be capable of triggering, within the members themselves, the need to proceed to a greater and gradually increasing attribution of weight to supranational entities capable of promoting these dynamics and, consequently, ensuring their development. Essentially, “it is the process of generating new political goals” (Cini, 2004:45). Despite the spillovers being the natural consequences of integrating specific inter-national policy areas, they nevertheless generate the need for further harmonisation of policies (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni & Verdier, 2005:123).

Moreover, the spillover has been categorized into three subclassifications: functional, political, and cultivated. The first occurs when further integrative actions are necessary to ensure a specific objective. The interaction between policy sectors and issue areas leads to integrative pressures, promoting related actions to secure the original objectives (Lindberg, 1963: 10). The second refers to the transfer of political expectations, efforts, and loyalties from national elites to a new European centre. The proliferation of working groups

and committees at the European level allows for the development of mutual trust and esprit de corps among officials, facilitating socialization processes (Juncos & Pomorska, 2006). Finally, cultivated spillover describes the role of supranational institutions seeking to expand their powers and become agents of integration. They act as policy entrepreneurs and leverage their positions of centrality or authority to direct the dynamics of relations with various actors (Niemann, 2017).

In the case of European Defence Integration, neofunctionalism highlights the importance of economic interdependence and the role of EU institutions in promoting cooperation across policy areas. This framework is particularly useful in analyzing the changing nature of EDI, as it suggests that further integration may be driven not only by security concerns but also by changes in economic interdependence and increased demand for cooperation across policy areas.

So far, very few studies have been advanced in the analysis of EDI through the lenses of neofunctionalist theory but it is also interesting to note that several scholars have diffusely started their investigation from neofunctionalist premises.

For instance, Sassen argues that the internationalization of the economy, transnational exchanges, and increased judicialization of European politics have deteriorated state sovereignty and strengthened supranational cooperation (Sassen, 2006). Moreover, scholars have noted that the role of supranational institutions in promoting defence integration is increasing through treaty revision and legislative action (Niemann, 2016).

Following this route, Calle Håkansson's article, *European Commission's new role in EU Security and Defence Cooperation: the case of the European Defence Fund (EDF)*, is particularly interesting since he scrutinizes the innovative expanding role of the institution in the field of European security

and defence cooperation. He claims that the Commission has become more involved in the coordination of defence policies and the development of EDF by nurturing defence integration among Member States (Håkansson, 2021:6). He then provides a practical application of neofunctionalist learnings since he demonstrates how the expansion of multi-annual financial budget has been a catalyst for further development of EU defence initiatives such as PESCO and EDF.

Taking the same example of the European Defence Fund, Pierre Haroche evaluates the potential of neofunctionalism in analyzing the Fund's impact on EDI. His study unpacks the EU's increasing ability to facilitate the joint procurement of military hardware, as neofunctionalism proves to be coherent with the EU's current defence initiatives, supporting the process of creating a supranational system. The EDF initiative represents a resurgence of supranationalism in an area that was considered immune to this dynamic, during a time of intergovernmentalism. The neofunctionalist mechanisms in the EDF allowed the Commission to adapt and increase its level of ambition to intervene in an area of high politics. The functional spillover effect enabled the Commission to pursue new defence-related objectives, beyond existing single-market-related objectives (Haroche, 2018:866).

Similarly, Arne Niemann applies neofunctionalist theory to an examination of EU internal security policies, highlighting how the Union has enlarged its capacities in internal security issues, particularly since the 2009 Lisbon Treaty came into effect.

In his academic work, the author introduces a revised neofunctionalist framework as an adaptation of the early neofunctionalism theory. This new framework suggests multiple modifications to the original theory, and it provides a wider ontological scope than what was previously proposed. Additionally, the revised framework explains integration as a conditional,

context-dependent, and dialectic process that should be regarded as a product of both dynamics and countervailing forces that may either stagnate or oppose its development (Niemann & Ioannou, 2015). Niemann also introduces two countervailing forces that may hinder the process of integration; they are described as sovereignty-consciousness and domestic constraints and diversities. The first force opposes the delegation of competencies to the supranational level based on national traditions, identities, and ideologies. The second force outlines the circumscription of national governments' autonomy to act due to constraints by certain actors, such as lobby groups or coalition partners, or structural limitations (Niemann, 2016). Furthermore, in his theoretical groundwork, the scholar elaborates on the dynamics of integration by expanding the scope of functional spillover beyond economic linkages alone. He suggests that functional structures do not impose their deterministic ontology on actors, but they must appear plausible for actors to become actively involved in the integration process. Moreover, the framework redefines the concept of political spillover and argues that the quality of interaction impacts cooperative norm socialization and learning processes.

The scholar concludes that integrative endeavours are contingent on various conditions such as a commonly shared lifeworld, uncertainty and insufficient knowledge, the possibility for lengthy discussion, and low levels of politicization. These factors, when present, can predispose actors toward deliberation and communication as a method of decision-making, rather than simple bargaining. The author's revised neofunctionalist framework suggests a new approach to understanding the process of integration that considers contextual factors and political dynamics.

It is compelling, and certainly worthy of mention, Sıla Turaç Baykara's insights on the study of neofunctionalism and its application to new legal initiatives within the EU. She investigates the transformation of the European

Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) towards the Common Security and Defence Policy, acknowledging that neofunctionalist theories offer an effective framework for analyzing the defence integration process. However, external forces and actors beyond the EU, such as the United States and Member States' domestic politics, could hinder the success of neofunctionalist integration initiatives. She affirms that the development of the ESDP was a result of spillover effects leading to supra-nationalization, as EU Member States have benefited from integration through economic and monetary union and are willing to progress further (Turaç Baykara, 2021:210). The EDF, launched by the Commission to take part in high politics issues, demonstrated the functional spillover effect in the defence area and had a significant impact on political cultivated spillover logic. This bureaucratic spillover shifted defence bureaucracies and industries' loyalties and expectations from states to new central authorities in this field. Member States support the formation of ESDP, as it provides benefits like defence expenditure, professionalization, specialization, common defence procurement, and increased industrial cooperation. The Lisbon Treaty's new tools and initiatives, such as EUGS, PESCO, and EDF, could lead to long-term results in bolstering the EU's defence capabilities. CBSD is another example of contemporary integration and coherence in the security and defence area, as the EU aims to fund the equipment and infrastructure of the armed forces of the EU Member States. Consequently, the CBSD initiative fits neofunctionalism's functional and cultivated spillover logic (Turaç Baykara, 2021:212).

Finally, Julian Bergmann's contribution is extremely prominent since he applies neofunctionalist theory to assess the effectiveness of EU integration policies, particularly in capacity-building programs aimed at strengthening security in third countries. In his article *Neofunctionalism and EU external policy integration: the case of capacity building in support of security and*

*development*, he illustrates how neofunctionalism is useful to verify whether these development policies have empowered EU Member States and beneficiary countries, and how they have led to better coordination of their respective security strategies.

### **1.2.3 Liberal Intergovernmentalism**

Liberal intergovernmentalism was developed in the 1990s by Andrew Moravcsik. This thought is rooted in international relations theory with specific reference to liberal theoretical approaches.

It is based on the idea that states bring forward and negotiate their interests in a way that they are the result of the views of interest groups operating in society (Kleine & Pollack, 2018).

Andrew Moravcsik argues that no single overarching theory can account for European integration, as different theories have varying assumptions regarding the dynamics for further integration. In his view, state governments play a primary role in driving European integration based on their interests, rather than geopolitical factors or functional, technical, nor political spillover. Moravcsik's theory is a state-centric framework that draws on Neorealism and assumes that state governments base their preferences on rational and objective calculations of their national self-interests and the material costs and benefits of their decisions (Schimmelfennig, 2018). This rationalist framework is in contrast to constructivist frameworks that assume state preferences are based on identities, cultures, and norms. Moravcsik also affirms that the economic advantages of integration, along with patterns of relative bargaining power, are the main drivers of European integration. He contends that his rational mid-range theory is more useful in explaining the nature of European integration than grand theories, such as Intergovernmentalism and Neofunctionalism (Akilatan, 2020).

It is thus clear that the European integration process has not been driven by unintended consequences resulting from technocratic practices. Moravcsik asserts that there is no technocratic advantage for EU officials over state representatives in the bargaining process that would give supranational actors an edge. Instead, the asymmetry of preferences on various issues has a decisive impact on negotiation outcomes. As a result, states are the only decisive actors in the integration process, and the negotiations take place in a non-coercive environment. If the integration process is perceived as detrimental to the interests of any state government, it cannot proceed (Moravcsik, 1993).

According to LI, the first step in explaining the outcomes of international negotiations is to identify the preferences of the negotiating parties, which refers to an ordered and weighted set of values placed on future substantive outcomes (Andersson, 2016). Preferences reflect the objectives of groups that can influence the state apparatus and the state's preferences. There is a distinction between preferences and policies, where the former are exogenous and the latter are instrumental in achieving preferences. Geopolitical and economic interests are the two broad sources of motivation that have shaped preferences for and against European integration. Nevertheless, LI claims that a successful analysis of the dynamics of European integration must recognize the relative weight of geopolitical and economic preferences during the negotiation process (Moravcsik & Schimmelfennig, 2019). After preference formation, the interstate bargaining process identifies how the state governments' different preferences are converged into a predictive outcome. The focal point in the negotiations is related to the comparative gains among the state governments in this process. The results reflect the intensity of the governments' interests rather than just the sum of their preferences because

each state tries to influence the negotiations to ensure that the results are as close as possible to their preferences.

The discipline offers an alternative perspective on the role of nation-states in shaping European Defence Integration. Advocates of this theory argue that nation-states remain the dominant actors in international relations, but that they are more likely to cooperate when it serves their interests. As such, LI is particularly useful in analyzing the specific policy choices that have contributed to European Defence and military integration over time, such as the activation of the Permanent Structured Cooperation.

For instance, the book chapter *Liberal Intergovernmentalism and EU External Action* by Andrew Moravcsik and Cassandra Emmons discusses how the theory of liberal intergovernmentalism can be applied to understand the external actions of the European Union.

The authors explain that the theory is useful to investigate the EU's external actions because it captures the complex interplay between domestic and international factors. They suggest that the EU's external actions are the result of intergovernmental negotiations among Member States, influenced by domestic institutions and interest groups (Moravcsik & Emmons, 2021). This approach is a more nuanced and realistic way to understand the EU's external actions than alternative approaches that either overemphasize the role of supranational institutions or downplay the role of Member States. According to their insights, the European Defence Agency was created through intergovernmental negotiations, reflecting the preferences of member states with different security priorities and defence industries.

On another note, Dover exemplifies the theoretical eclecticism of Europeanisation theory. In his study of the Europeanisation of British defence policy, he employs a liberal intergovernmentalist approach to explain the formulation of British preferences on CSDP and the formal "bottom-up"



dimension of Europeanisation that occurred at the St Malo initiative of 1998 and the Treaty of Nice. The primary focus of liberal intergovernmentalism is on the role of government in aggregating domestic policy preferences, where domestic interests act as a filter between the international system's incentives and national preferences (Dyson & Konstadinides, 2013). However, Dover emphasizes that a lack of domestic interest groups on CSDP necessitates the identification of structural pressures, particularly the "transatlantic security preference," in informing British preferences on CSDP. He also identifies an "epistemic community" centred upon the Prime Minister's Office and Cabinet Office as the central drivers of the preference formation process. However, Dover notes that the root of British preferences for ESDP is not driven by domestic concerns but by the need to respond to the new security dynamics of the post-Cold War era and the requirement to avoid abandonment by the United States (Dover, 2007).

Out of the background of liberal intergovernmentalism theory, Janne Harland Matlary's contribution is extremely noteworthy. In her study of the development of CSDP, Matlary adopts Putnam's model of two-level games. This is a framework for analyzing the interactions between domestic politics and international negotiations. The model consists of two levels: the international level, where negotiations take place between states, and the domestic level, where policymakers must consider the interests and demands of various domestic stakeholders (Putnam, 1988). According to Putnam, negotiators face a dilemma when trying to balance international agreements with the demands of domestic politics. On the one hand, they must secure the best possible outcome for their state in international negotiations and they must also consider the political constraints and preferences of domestic interest groups such as industries, labour groups, and politicians (Da Conceição-Heldt & Mello, 2017).

Starting from this, Matlary argues that the rise of professional forces in the face of new security challenges and the dominance of the ideology of the "service state" have weakened the link between the nation and the military (Matlary, 2013). During the Cold War, loyalty to the nation was the critical factor in mobilizing military force. Nevertheless, in the post-Cold War era, the main enabler of the generation of military power is capital. She also claims that the growth of "wars of choice" has amplified the importance of public opinion and strengthened the impact of domestic actors such as NGOs and the media. Legitimacy is thereby vital in gaining public support for military intervention. She continues by saying that intervention is driven by the need to address human security rather than state security. Also, the deployment of the military tool is no longer endorsed in existential survival but advocates for values such as democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

The scholar shows how these developments have led to the emergence of a new national interest in multilateral defence and security policy, where post-Cold War national interests and postmodern values offer the opportunity for states to move towards governance in defence. Nevertheless, domestic interests still dominate and policymakers seek political survival at home, influence abroad, and the resolution of security issues in theatre, in that order of preference (Dyson & Konstadinides, 2013).

Finally, Matlary distinguishes between strong states like France and the UK, whose governments have greater freedom in defence policy due to the formal powers of the core executive in defence and security culture, and "weak states" like Germany and Italy, whose fragmented decision-making structures and anti-militaristic political culture make them use international commitments under NATO to bind domestic opposition.

As a last remark, it is noteworthy to observe that the motivation behind defence contractors and manufacturers supporting defence integration arises

from the potential to enhance their business activities and promote cooperative initiatives. Industry stakeholders have advocated for the integration of defence companies as a means to improve their market penetration and secure contract acquisitions. According to Faury (2022), Airbus, a prominent European aerospace and defence corporation, has expressed its public endorsement for increased defence collaboration within the European Union. The impact of lobbying endeavours and policy stances by defence companies can have implications for the process of integration. If defence firms are successful in exerting influence over policies and gaining support for integration, this will probably contribute to a more efficient and coordinated process. The process can be impeded by conflicting interests and opposition from defence companies or member states (Bryan, 2018).

The utilisation of exploratory data analysis plays a crucial role in facilitating the process of defence integration among member states within the EU. It eases increased cooperation in the domains of defence research, capability development, and joint procurement. The primary objective of the European Air Transport Fleet (EATF) is to facilitate the augmentation of military transport aircraft collaboration and consolidation among its constituent member states (EDA, 2023). The efforts of the European Defence Agency and the cooperation of member states have the potential to significantly influence the process of integration. Enhancing integration in the EDA can be achieved through the implementation of effective collaboration and consensus-building strategies. The occurrence of disagreements or a lack of cooperation among member states has the potential to lead to an uneven process.

### **1.3 Methodology**

The objective of this investigation is to examine the primary legal initiatives on European Defence Integration. The primary areas of interest will focus on

the Permanent Structured Cooperation of 2017, the European Intervention Initiative of 2017, and the more recent development of the Strategic Compass of 2022. The examination of these initiatives will be conducted using the analytical frameworks provided by three prominent theories in the field of international relations, namely realism, neofunctionalism, and liberal intergovernmentalism.

The primary objective of this undertaking is to examine the hypotheses formulated within various theoretical frameworks to elucidate the underlying forces that propel both the process of European integration and disintegration. This dissertation aims to offer a comprehensive response to the subsequent inquiries:

- In relation to the European Common Defence, what are the aspects that contribute to the advancement and decline of integration?
- In what manner do realism, neofunctionalism, and liberal intergovernmentalism explain the underlying factors that propel the dynamics of integration and disintegration?

The employed methodology integrates both theory-building and theory-testing approaches to analyse the underlying forces driving European integration and disintegration.

Theory building is a systematic and iterative process employed by researchers to construct novel theories that elucidate phenomena or establish theoretical frameworks to provide guidance for analytical endeavours (Wacker, 1998). The process entails the development of conceptual frameworks, identification of variables, and establishment of relationships grounded in pre-existing knowledge and empirical observations. The primary objective of theory construction is to establish a conceptual framework that facilitates the comprehension and interpretation of a specific phenomenon or a collection of phenomena (Kamasak et al., 2017).

The process of theory building is characterised by iteration, necessitating the testing and refinement of ideas through empirical investigation. Theories have the potential to undergo modifications, expansions, or rejections as additional evidence and data are brought to light. The aforementioned statement posits that it is a continuous and iterative procedure that plays a pivotal role in the progression of knowledge within a specific domain (Neuman, 2011).

Theory testing, alternatively referred to as hypothesis testing, encompasses the systematic investigation conducted by researchers to assess the soundness and relevance of established theories or hypotheses through the acquisition and scrutiny of empirical data. It entails the development of precise hypotheses derived from theoretical predictions, followed by empirical investigation to assess their confirmation or refutation (Mills et al., 2012).

This process facilitates the assessment of the explanatory efficacy and predictive aptitude of theories, thereby furnishing empirical substantiation for the validation or scrutiny of extant theories. Moreover, it supports researchers in the enhancement or formulation of novel theoretical frameworks (Fisher & Aguinis, 2017).

The research design (RD) employed in this dissertation has been carefully constructed to effectively address the research questions and accomplish the research objectives. The integration of qualitative analysis techniques will be applied to both primary and secondary sources. These encompass a variety of materials, such as official documents, policy statements, scholarly articles, and pertinent literature. Theoretical frameworks such as realism, neofunctionalism, and liberal intergovernmentalism serve as the basis for the interpretation of data and the formulation of hypotheses. The RD comprises three primary phases: the development of a theoretical framework, the collection and analysis of data, and the testing of hypotheses.

In the process of developing a theoretical framework, the first step entails conducting a thorough examination of three chosen theories and their capacity to explain integration and disintegration phenomena.

To collect pertinent data, a methodical and all-encompassing approach is employed. The collection of primary sources includes official documents, policy statements, and speeches made by key actors involved in the developments under examination. Furthermore, to obtain a more comprehensive comprehension of the topic at hand, supplementary sources such as scholarly articles, books, and reports are consulted.

About the formulation and testing of hypotheses, the analysis of three developments and theoretical frameworks informs the process of formulating hypotheses that seek to explain the driving forces behind European integration and disintegration. These assertions include the primary arguments derived from the theoretical frameworks and serve as the foundation for empirical testing of the theories. The testing procedure entails the comparison of empirical observations with the predictions made by each theory, assessing the extent to which the data provide support for or pose challenges to the corresponding hypotheses.

In conclusion, it is vital to recognise the constraints and boundaries of this research approach. The study primarily utilises qualitative analysis, potentially constraining the extent to which the findings can be generalised. While this methodology facilitates comprehensive comprehension and profound contextual observations, it is imperative to acknowledge that the analysis is limited to the chosen advancements and theoretical frameworks. Furthermore, the study is carried out within a designated period, with a particular emphasis on the chosen advancements. Finally, ethical considerations are a fundamental component of the research methodology employed in this study. All data sources have been accurately cited and referenced, thereby upholding

intellectual property rights and preventing any instances of plagiarism. The preservation of confidentiality and anonymity is upheld in the context of referencing individuals or organisations, while adherence to ethical principles governing data collection and analysis is rigorously observed. The study aligns with the tenets of scholarly integrity and the conscientious practice of research.

#### 1.4 Summary Table with Hypotheses and Supportive Evidence

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Supporting Evidence</b>
<b>Realism</b>	EDI will be primarily driven by external threats and security challenges, with national security interests taking precedence over supranational considerations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased collaboration in response to international terrorism, migration crisis, conflicts, hybrid threats and unstable geopolitical situation in the MENA region.</li> </ul>
<b>Neofunctionalism</b>	EDI will operate more expeditiously when there is integration in other sectors, such as economics, leading to a spillover effect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased implementation of economic measures and initiatives within the EU, in order to foster economic growth and further integration among member states.</li> </ul>
<b>Liberal Intergovernmentalism</b>	EDI will proceed smoothly or unevenly depending on the direction in which key interest groups, such as the European Commission, defence companies and military organizations, exert their influence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased role of Institutions such as the European Commission;</li> <li>• Defence companies' lobbying for deeper integration;</li> <li>• NATO towards the hegemony of the Atlantic Alliance.</li> </ul>

## **CHAPTER II: The History of European Defence**

### **2.1 Earliest Approaches to Europe's Common Security and Defence**

Since the Middle Ages, Europe has been viewed as an essential guarantee for the pacification of the continent, with many intellectuals devising peace projects, which were mostly abstract and utopian. Kant's political, legal, and historical-philosophical writings marked a turning point in the pursuit of peace in Europe. In his work *Toward Perpetual Peace*, the philosopher challenged international law and the balance of power, arguing that peace could only be realized through a federal state where independent governments articulated sovereignty. The federal state served as a guarantee of peaceful relations between nations while federalism represented the political formula for associating nations, with each state surrendering the power to wage war (Byrd et al., 2009).

Nevertheless, contemporary global and regional powers rearming, cyberattacks, and terrorism targeting cities in Europe and around the world, have made citizens look toward their Union for protection. Consequently, today more than ever, defence and security measures play a more crucial role in the European project if the European Union wants to continue fulfilling its promise of sustaining peace for generations to come. If on one hand, the EU's approach of combining soft and hard power, alongside diplomacy, sanctions, and development cooperation, has shown to be effective in conflict prevention, the criticalities experienced by European governments in creating a shared security policy, together with the difficulties in taking agreed decisions on the use of military capabilities, have negatively affected the perception of the Union as an international actor in the field of foreign and defence policy (Morelli, 2020).



The return of war on European soil following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 is threatening the balance of peace established more than seventy years ago by Robert Schuman. His proposal on 9 May 1950 represented a significant milestone in the peace process in Europe. By combining their coal and steel production, European countries paved the way for greater economic integration. Also, the solidarity of production established by pooling resources would have made any war between France and Germany not only unthinkable but materially impossible (DG for Communication of the European Union, 2023).

“ The pooling of coal and steel production... will change the destinies of those regions which have long been devoted to the manufacture of munitions of war, of which they have been the most constant victims.” (Schuman Declaration, 1950). These words explicitly tied the economic integration of Europe to the larger goal of avoiding future wars, recognizing a united Europe which was essential for maintaining long-term peace.

The very first origins of cooperation in defence and security in Europe are to be found in the long process of adaptation that has led the continent to become the guarantor of shared cultural, historical, social and economic foundations. This common essence is what has driven, since the 18th century, the need to seek instruments and organisations that guarantee an efficient response in the defence of common interests, as well as joint commitments with international partners.

The earliest approach to Europe's shared security and defence framework emerged from the 18th century when the continent was shaken by great commercial and industrial rivalry, and there was a strong growth in military influence in pursuit of foreign policy objectives. The signing of the *Treaties of Utrecht and Rastatt* in 1713 and 1714 brought about a territorial political

reorganisation and the establishment of peace on the continent (Britannica Encyclopedia, 2023).

After the *Congress of Vienna* (1816), following years of conflicts in the last quarter of the century on the European continent driven by the Napoleonic wars, Europe established the need to create a coalition for automatic response to possible aggression, the so-called Metternich System (Sofka, 2009). Collective responsibility to maintain order and stability was to be sought for the European foreign policy approach and the ideological basis of the League of Nations.

This approach took the form of an alliance in favour of the balance of power as a guarantee for greater stability, which would be based on shared legitimacy for agreement and the establishment of common actions. The "practice of Congresses" was thus adopted as an instrument of mediation and agreement on common interests in Europe through the periodic holding of conferences, in which the most powerful nations with the strategic capacity for influence and decision-making would participate. This system represented a major step forward in European cooperation and joint security actions (Clark, 2007).

Thus, in Europe, alliances<sup>1</sup> were forged to guarantee this balance of power which, although it did open up spaces for dialogue and negotiation, did not prevent the polarisation of the continent and the clash of interests between the different blocs created.

It was US President Thomas Woodrow Wilson who promulgated the concept of the "Commonwealth of Nations" to establish a common commitment and responsibility for collective security and stability (Sisson, 2018). It was a call following the events of conflict that shook the European continent to ensure a joint response to any country's challenge to the established order. In 1920, the

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<sup>1</sup> The Double Alliance, the Triple Alliance, the Armed Peace between the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente, and finally the Entente Cordiale.

*League of Nations Pact* was signed between Great Britain, France, Italy and the United States, the basis for the constitution of a "League for Peace" and, after World War II, an efficient collective security framework based on the establishment of economic relations between countries as open as possible: the *General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs* created by the Havana Charter by the United Nations in 1947, and the *Organisation for European Economic Cooperation* in 1948 or the subsequent *European Coal and Steel Community* in 1951 (Gorman, 2010).

During this period, emphasis was placed on the need to organise a system of governance in which there would be a political and power balance, constituted by the peaceful resolution and dialogue of international conflicts under the protection of international law so that no state could impose itself on the others. Global security became a goal in itself. While it provided a suitable multicultural forum for the exchange of ideas and the search for technical solutions, it failed to implement collective security and the prevention of war (Gorman, 2010).

The opening of the Cold War period with the Soviet Union pushed Europe to create instruments to guarantee collective defence and contain the Soviet threat to European territory.

It was in 1948 that the European Defence and Security Organisation was set up between France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, which guaranteed that, at the request of one of the contracting parties, consultations would be opened to provide a common response anywhere in the world to a threat to the peace or economic stability of the allies (Dumoulin, 2016). Subsequently, in 1949, the *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* was launched with the United States, Canada and the countries

of the Western European Union (WEU)<sup>2</sup>, which shared the goal of ensuring a common security space for economic development and the consolidation of democratic values. In this period, NATO took over responsibility for the defence of Western Europe, in the absence of approval and progress with the proposal for a European body responsible for the security and defence of the Union (in 1951, the *European Defence Community* and the *Fouchet Plan*, promoted by France, in 1961) (Lenaerts et al., 2021).

Subsequently, the Arab-Israeli conflicts pushed the international role of the European Union, which prompted the creation of *European Political Cooperation* (EPC), in favour of foreign policy coordination within the European Communities (ECs). The *Helsinki Act* of 1975 established political, military, economic and environmental obligations, as well as a series of commitments linked to respect for human rights, which represented the essence of the process of implementing the European identity in its foreign policy (Dyson and Konstadinides, 2013:34).

The conflicts in the Middle East and the events of the Kosovo War in 1990 emphasised the need for intra-European defence, integration and strengthening of the European pillar of NATO. In addition, the destabilisation of the Union's eastern border, with the collapse of the USSR and the outbreak of conflicts on its eastern flank, accelerated the need to create permanent institutions and a new European operational capability. The *Petersberg Tasks* were to form the basis of the EU's *European Security and Defence Policy*, a mechanism for intergovernmental cooperation with the establishment of military and/or civilian operations beyond the organisation's borders (Dyson and Konstadinides, 2013:63).

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<sup>2</sup> The Western European Union (WEU) was a former alliance between ten countries, namely Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. It functioned as a platform for the coordination of issues concerning European security and defence from 1955 to 2011.

A new collective defence system was created, with instruments to assess the costs and benefits derived from the military agreements and obligations assumed within the shared security and defence organisations. New budget lines were opened, such as assistance to peace missions and the reorganisation of the military structure to adapt to new international challenges.

## **2.2 The 1992 Maastricht Treaty and the Creation of a New Collective Defence System**

It is only with the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 that the subject of defence makes its appearance in primary law. The *Common Foreign and Security Policy* (CFSP) is established as part of what has long been known as the second pillar of post-Maastricht European integration. Among the objectives of the newly created European Union is in fact: “to assert its identity on the international scene, in particular through the implementation of a common foreign and security policy including the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence” (Art. B TEU, 1992).

As early as 1996, the US was already considering that the European Union could use some of NATO's assets in its peacekeeping operations, subject to a right of first refusal, and also to ease the burden of US responsibility for scenarios of EU interest (Arnould et al., 2009). This historically favoured the agreement between the United Kingdom and France on the creation of a European security and defence policy that would include a European military force capable of acting autonomously. This was the basis for the *Cologne Summit* in 1990, which called on Member States to voluntarily deploy a joint force with military capabilities within the Petersberg tasks. A deadline of 2003 was set for the creation of a European force of up to 60,000 troops and a force catalogue was established.

It is the beginning of the political elaboration of the so-called European Security and Defence Policy, whose birth coincides with the 1998 *St. Malo Joint Declaration* by French Prime Minister Jaques Chirac and British Prime Minister Tony Blair. They reaffirmed the need for the Union to have “the capacity for autonomous decision-making and action, backed up by credible military forces, in order to respond to international crises when the Atlantic Alliance is not involved”(Franco-British St. Malo Declaration, 1998).

The EU-WEU defence relationship was strengthened by the *Treaty of Amsterdam* in 1999, which provided for closer institutional cooperation between the organisations, also with a view to the future absorption of the latter into the EU. Several institutional steps were then taken, aimed at giving the Union the political/military powers to manage the new functions, based on the model of NATO governance: the Political and Security Committee (PSC), the EU Military Committee (EUMC), an EU Military Staff (EUMS) including an operations room for information gathering, and an EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) (Bailes & Messervy-Whiting, 2011).

The 9/11 attack in the United States led to a rethink of all the defence strategies of states and shared security and defence organisations. It was the first international attack of a Jihadist terrorist nature that had the greatest impact on the concept of contemporary international security. This threat and the deployment of the NATO defence mission in Afghanistan prompted the creation of the first Joint Security Strategy by the European Union in 2003, which was based on the objective of achieving a more active Europe and increasing defence capabilities with the emergence of the ESDP and the European Defence Agency (EDA).

### **2.3 The 2009 Lisbon Treaty and the Common Security and Defence Policy**

The *Lisbon Treaty* of 2009 completed the final absorption of all aspects of the ESDP into the Treaties. The *Common Security and Defence Policy* constitutes the Union's operational arm, enabling it to dispose of civilian and military means to be used in missions with the objective of peacekeeping and conflict prevention. The CSDP aims to promote peace and stability through a comprehensive approach that encompasses political, diplomatic, economic, and military instruments. It is also designed to support the development of partner countries' institutional and governance capacity, to ensure lasting peace and stability. After previous endeavours like the 1999 Helsinki Headline Goal had become ineffective, in 2011 the EU Battlegroups emerged as the most crucial example of European countries' ability and readiness to create European military capabilities (Barcikowska, 2013). Member States have perceived Battlegroups as a significant contributor to the transformation of armed forces. There is a possibility that these groups could serve as a foundation for future EU military structures and even form the basis for establishing a European army. Nevertheless, a lot of criticism has been raised regarding their effectiveness since they have never been deployed (Major & Mölling, 2011).

One of the most important new features of the Treaty in the area of CSDP is the introduction of the mutual defence and solidarity clause. Article 42 of the *Treaty on European Union* states that: "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." (Art. 42, Par. 7, TEU, 2009). It must be emphasised that the rule in question does not amount to a de facto mutual defence clause, as the creation of a military alliance strictu

sensu is not envisaged within the Union. Therefore, it should be considered in its symbolic and political significance rather than in a practical sense.

On the financial level, according to Art. 41 TEU, operational expenditure arising from operations with military and defence implications cannot be charged to the Union budget, as is the case for other CFSP initiatives, but must be borne by national contributions. This limitation has led Member States to create common funding mechanisms, but separate from the EU budget, to accelerate support for EU actions with military and defence implications. Today, this mechanism is called the *European Peace Facility*: a portfolio composed of national contributions to provide shared support for EU peacekeeping actions outside its borders, either in the form of CSDP missions with military or defence implications or in the form of assistance to the military capabilities of third countries (Maletta & Heau, 2022).



## **CHAPTER III: The Permanent Structured Cooperation and the European Intervention Initiative of 2017**

### **3.1 PESCO Overview**

The Lisbon Treaty established the institution of PESCO, which is governed by primary law and aims to facilitate enhanced cooperation among Member States within the framework of the CSDP. Despite the anticipation of its prompt implementation, the activation of PESCO was ultimately delayed until December 2017. Presently, PESCO encompasses the participation of 25 member states within the EU (Cozar Murillo, 2022).

According to the European External Action Service in 2023, PESCO is considered the primary mechanism within the framework of European Union law for the collaborative advancement of defence capabilities, including 68 cooperative projects spanning multiple sectors. The objective of this provision is to facilitate differentiated integration within the realm of security and defence, specifically for member states that express a desire to engage in closer cooperation and meet elevated criteria in terms of military capabilities. MSs are obligated to collaborate to attain agreed-upon objectives regarding defence equipment investment expenditure. They are also required to foster greater convergence in their defence equipment, improve the accessibility, interoperability, flexibility, and deployability of their forces, and, when deemed suitable, contribute to the development of joint or European large-scale equipment programmes within the European Defence Agency framework (TEU, 2009).

Furthermore, in accordance with Decision CFSP 2017/2315, member states are obligated to augment their expenditures on defence investment and collaborative initiatives about strategic defence capabilities. The stakeholders intend to enhance collaboration in the realm of cyber defence by establishing a

resilient tool that is exclusively accessible to Member States and contributing countries. This tool will enable the swift registration of readily deployable capabilities, thereby streamlining and expediting the process of generating forces. PESCO members will offer significant assistance to the operations and missions of the CSDP (Biscop, 2020). This assistance will encompass various aspects such as personnel, equipment, training, exercise support, infrastructure, and more. Additionally, PESCO members will contribute to the interoperability of their forces by identifying shared evaluation and validation criteria, thereby benefiting CSDP Battlegroups and EDA.

Moreover, it can be argued that PESCO is a supplementary endeavour that aligns with two other significant undertakings, namely the European Defence Fund and the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD).

The aforementioned regulation, known as *Regulation (EU) 2021/697*, seeks to enhance the competitiveness, efficiency, and innovation potential of the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) across the European Union. This objective is aligned with the Union's pursuit of strategic autonomy and the preservation of its freedom of action (Miglio & Perotto, 2022).

The CARD, however, is a tool that was officially supported at the European Council in May 2017. Its primary purpose is to facilitate the identification of potential areas for cooperation among Member States, particularly within the framework of PESCO projects (Zandee, 2018). The secretariat function within the CARD is carried out by the EDA and the EU Military Staff. The initiation of the second cycle of the CARD occurred in December 2021, during which the secretariat actively participated in a sequence of one-on-one discussions with Member States. The purpose of these meetings was to gather pertinent data, enabling the creation of a comprehensive report and the formulation of suitable recommendations (Blockmans, 2018).

### **3.2 European Intervention Initiative Overview**

President Emmanuel Macron, during his speech at Sorbonne University in September 2017, presented the European Intervention Initiative as a way to put down roots in a "sovereign, united, and democratic Europe" (Macron, 2017). Some observers viewed this proposal, which operates outside existing structures like the European Union, as the establishment of a European intervention force. However, the true objective of EI2 is to bring together European countries to enhance their preparedness for future crises, not by creating a new standby force, but by fostering a shared strategic culture. At France's invitation, ten European countries have joined the initiative.

The French initiative surprised many, as several new actions to strengthen European defence had already been launched following the EU Global Strategy in June 2016 (Zandee & Kruijver, 2019). However, France had namely two reasons for proposing EI2. First, the Mali crisis in 2013 revealed differences in the security understandings between France and its European partners, emphasizing the need for improved intelligence sharing and contingency planning. Second, France was trying to build a new supporting tool to strengthen the recent PESCO within the EU (Engberg, 2021).

Contrary to initial interpretations, EI2 does not aim to create a new European intervention force. Its ultimate goal is to develop a common strategic culture that enhances the participating European states' ability to respond to future threats and crises, enabling better and faster protection of European security interests within existing institutional frameworks such as the EU, NATO, the UN, and the Coalitions of the Willing<sup>3</sup>. Achieving this aim involves

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<sup>3</sup> The "Coalitions of the Willing" is a term used to describe informal alliances or partnerships formed by countries willing to cooperate on a specific issue or pursue a common objective. These coalitions typically involve countries that share similar interests or concerns and are willing to contribute their resources, military forces, or political support to address a particular challenge or pursue a specific goal. Unlike formal treaty-based alliances like NATO or the UN, coalitions of the willing are often ad hoc and flexible in nature.

developing a common doctrine and improving interoperability among the armed forces. The flexibility, pragmatism, and non-binding nature of EI2 allow it to support the existing institutional frameworks and facilitate direct defence-to-defence contacts between capitals, circumventing EU bureaucracy. Before the signing of the EI2 letter of intent by nine EU member states' defence ministers in June 2018, the selection of invited countries might have appeared random, but underlying reasons can explain these choices. Denmark, which has an EU defence opt-out, and the UK, which was in the process of leaving the EU, have significant experience in crisis management deployments, providing added value to EI2. Germany's participation is crucial for the success and legitimacy of EI2, and it presents an opportunity for France and other EI2 countries to influence German strategic culture. Italy was initially invited to join EI2 but decided not to after the installation of the new Italian government. However, in September 2019, Italian Defence Minister Lorenzo Guerini officially communicated to France and the countries already part of the initiative its willingness to join EI2. More specifically, the Italian government committed to providing its peculiar expertise in the defence and security sector in the Mediterranean region. In the aftermath of the signature, Minister Guerini commented: "The initiative was born from a strong political will and intends to strengthen the EU and NATO, both of which are indispensable to guarantee the security of Europe and Europeans" (Italian Ministry of Defence, 2019).

Spain and Portugal, with their extensive experience in NATO and multinational operations, bring valuable expertise and capabilities to EI2. Belgium and the Netherlands, as EDA's founding members, have a strong tradition of defence cooperation and are key contributors to NATO missions. Finland and Estonia, located in the Baltic region, offer valuable insights into the security dynamics in Northern Europe and bring their expertise in hybrid

warfare and cybersecurity. Finally, Sweden, a non-EU member, is highly regarded for its contributions to international peacekeeping and its advanced defence industry (Zandee & Kruijver, 2019).

To develop a shared strategic culture among these diverse countries, it is essential to evaluate their current national strategic cultures and identify areas of convergence and divergence. National security and defence strategies provide insights into each country's priorities, threat perceptions, and military capabilities (Mi, 2022).

### **3.3 Analysis Through the Lens of Realist Hypotheses**

Realist hypotheses argue that European defence integration is primarily driven by external threats and security challenges. One compelling piece of evidence supporting this perspective is the heightened collaboration in response to international terrorism, the geopolitical situation in the MENA region, China's increasing power, Trump's presidency and Brexit.

All these factors have exposed the vulnerability of European nations and underscored the need for a coordinated defence approach. Thus, PESCO should be seen as a platform for member states to pool resources, expertise, and intelligence, enhancing their collective capacity to safeguard national security interests.

Europe is currently facing multiple and multidimensional systemic pressures. The global order is transitioning from a unipolar system that emerged after 1989 to an increasingly multipolar one, primarily due to China's rapid rise in economic, military, and political power, along with the relative decline of the United States. This transition was expedited by the US military struggles in Afghanistan and Iraq, controversies surrounding the Global War on Terror, and the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, which exposed flaws in the American economic model and shifted economic power towards Asia (Schweller & Pu,

2011). Additionally, the polarization and gridlock in the US political system during Barack Obama's presidency weakened American strength and global influence. The America First policies of the Donald Trump administration further isolated the United States and impacted its economy through trade conflicts, potentially reducing US power and influence (Zakaria, 2019).

For Europe, one consequence of this power shift is the need to address China's increasing economic and political influence, such as the Belt and Road Initiative<sup>4</sup> and the 16+1 diplomatic initiative<sup>5</sup> (McBride, Berman & Chatzky, 2023). Moreover, the US strategic and foreign policy priorities have been influenced by the Obama administration's planned Pivot to Asia, aiming to reduce US involvement in the Middle East and transfer more security responsibility to European allies. However, budget constraints, ongoing military engagements, and Russia's actions in Ukraine limited the pivot's implementation. Nevertheless, concerns arose in Europe regarding a potential loss of US interest in European security.

Transatlantic relations deteriorated further after the election of President Trump in November 2016. Trump expressed scepticism towards NATO and questioned the US commitment to the alliance. He also criticized the EU, accusing it of exploiting the US in trade. The Trump administration imposed tariffs on European exports, withdrew from international agreements

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<sup>4</sup> The Belt and Road Initiative is a comprehensive infrastructure introduced by the Chinese government in 2013. The new expansion policy comprises a massive plan of investment and international cooperation and it aims to redesign the world's economic and geopolitical balances.

<sup>5</sup> The 16+1 diplomatic initiative, also known as the "China-Central and Eastern European Countries Cooperation," is a framework for cooperation established in 2012 between China and 16 Central and Eastern European countries (CEE). The initiative aims to enhance economic, political, and financial ties between China and the participating countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia). Critics of the 16+1 initiative worry about economic disparities and China's investments' conditions and hazards. Some EU nations worry the initiative could weaken EU cohesiveness and laws.

supported by the EU, and adopted a critical stance towards international institutions. These actions created increased uncertainty in Europe regarding US foreign policy, the hereafter of transatlantic relations, and Washington's attentiveness to European security (Langlois, 2018).

Adding to the complexity, Europe faces a deteriorating regional security environment. Russia's assertive policies, demonstrated by the annexation of Crimea and military support for separatist rebels in Ukraine, challenge the sovereignty and borders of former Soviet states, raising concerns about the post-Cold War security order in Eastern Europe (Åtland, 2016). The Arab Spring uprisings in the south led to persistent insecurity in Libya and a protracted civil war in Syria, which spurred migration and stoked concerns about radical Islamic terrorism. This has encouraged populist-nationalist groups opposed to the EU and liberal democracy and added to a sense of unease (Villa, 2020). While Turkey's authoritarian turn under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has strained relations with Europe, corruption and instability continue throughout the Western Balkans, increasing the possibility of ethnic and nationalist conflict (Barnes & Cooper, 2019).

Furthermore, the EU itself has been weakened by a series of crises since 2010. The Eurozone debt crisis, the influx of refugees, terrorist attacks, and the rise of populist nationalism and Euroscepticism have all diminished the EU's strength (De Ayala, 2017). The Brexit referendum in June 2016, in which the UK voted to leave the EU, further showcased the bloc's vulnerability and initiated a period of political turmoil (Sweeney & Winn, 2022). These crises have contributed to the EU's decline in regional and global influence at a time when global power is shifting, regional security is threatened, transatlantic ties are eroding, and the assertiveness of Russia and China in European affairs is growing. However, these crises have also motivated EU leaders to pursue new integration projects, particularly in the realm of security and defence, to

demonstrate the EU's ongoing relevance, strengthen internal cohesion, and address mounting insecurity and centrifugal pressures.

These circumstances have prompted key actors within the European Union to assert an independent stance. As German Chancellor Angela Merkel asserted: “Europeans have to take their fate into their own hands, of course in friendship with the United States of America, in friendship with Great Britain, as good neighbours wherever possible. Europeans must fight for their future themselves, for their destiny.” (Merkel, 2017). On the same path, French President Emmanuel Macron expressed his support affirming that: “Europe can no longer entrust its security to the United States alone. It is up to us to assume our responsibilities and to guarantee European security and thereby sovereignty. We must fully take on board the consequences of the end of the Cold War. Allies today are still extremely important, but balances, and sometimes the reflexes on which they were built, need to be reviewed. And that also means that Europe should also act accordingly. This enhanced solidarity will involve a review of the European defence and security architecture.” (Macron, 2018).

These declarations, as well as external threats, imposed pressure on the EU legislative sector, making necessary further integration in the field of defence. The pressures emanating from the inability to effectively respond to the threat of Russian aggression on European borders, coupled with the imperative to establish robust mechanisms for safeguarding EU citizens against internal security menaces. Notable figures such as former President of the Commission Jean-Claude Juncker and the actual President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen advocated for increased integration within the European defence sector in response to these developments (Lehne, 2023). Before the activation of PESCO, member states of the EU faced two options: relying on Article 5 of the NATO framework or invoking the Mutual Assistance Clause



(MAC) outlined in the Lisbon Treaty. However, neither of these options proved logical in light of the emerging constraints. Starting with the NATO framework, Article 5 stipulates that an armed attack against one member constitutes an attack on all, and it calls for the parties to take necessary action, including the use of armed force, both individually and collectively (NATO, 2023). The invocation of Article 5 entails that NATO allies can provide assistance based on their judgment, thus granting each ally the responsibility to determine the extent of their contribution. Considering Article 5 allows individual member states to exercise judgment, combined with President Trump's scepticism regarding the longevity of NATO, it would be imprudent for European states to continue relying on NATO's framework and entrust their security to an alliance lacking confidence in their cooperation (Ringsmose & Webber, 2020). Moreover, combating the internal security threat posed by sleeper cell terrorism primarily falls within the purview of the EU (Piernas et al., 2017). Closer cooperation among European intelligence agencies strengthened control of external borders, and enhanced interoperability of national task forces are inherently the responsibility of the EU, not NATO or the United States. Given the uncertainty surrounding NATO due to President Trump's remarks, coupled with Russian armed aggression on European borders and the need to address terrorism, it is illogical to persist in relying solely on Article 5 of NATO.

Regarding the Mutual Assistance Clause outlined in Article 42(7) of the Lisbon Treaty, as previously stated, while member states of the EU have an obligation to provide aid and assistance if a fellow member faces armed aggression, the clause remains strictly intergovernmental (Rehrl, 2015). Activating the MAC would necessitate bilateral agreements between the victim of aggression and other European states, specifying the nature of the aid and assistance each state is willing to offer. The situation wherein the EU

cannot fully trust NATO and is burdened by the need to negotiate intergovernmental agreements in the event of armed aggression renders the current status quo of European integration in the defence sector untenable.

The Common Security and Defence Policy within the framework of the Lisbon Treaty was originally designed with NATO's role in protecting the European region in mind, allowing the CSDP to remain strictly intergovernmental. However, given the uncertainties surrounding NATO, the decision to maintain the defence clause as intergovernmental has become obsolete. The EU now faces limited options for the integration of its defence sector due to the path dependence resulting from prior integration decisions. Thus, PESCO and EI2, under realist lenses, shall be seen as the logical step to pursue integration at the European level.

### **3.4 Analysis Through the Lens of Neofunctionalist Hypotheses**

In line with neofunctionalist theories, European defence integration operates more effectively when there is integration in other sectors, such as economics, leading to a spillover effect.

More specifically, functional spillover occurs when further integration actions are required to achieve specific objectives. In the case of European defence integration, the implementation of the European Defence Fund is to be seen as the catalyst for the activation of PESCO and EI2.

Political spillover involves the transfer of political expectations, efforts, and loyalties from national elites to a new European centre. As neofunctionalism suggests, the proliferation of working groups and committees at the European level creates opportunities for mutual trust, socialization, and the development of an esprit de corps among officials (Juncos & Pomorska, 2006). In the context of PESCO and EI2, it can be asserted that economic integration efforts have led only to a partial and contained willingness among national elites to

transfer their focus and expectations to the European level. Nevertheless, this blend of political expectations and loyalties, because of its limited nature, cannot be considered as the trigger of the activation of defence integration initiatives.

Cultivated spillover refers to the role of supranational institutions in expanding their powers and becoming agents of integration. Neofunctionalism claims that supranational institutions act as policy entrepreneurs, leveraging their centrality or authority to direct the dynamics of relations with various actors (Niemann, 2017). In the case of PESCO and EID, the European Defence Fund could exemplify cultivated spillover. The European Commission, as a supranational institution, initiated the fund to support defence-related projects and further enhance defence integration. By actively driving the development of defence initiatives, the Commission exerted its influence and expanded its role as a central authority in European defence affairs.

The expansion of the Commission's role in the defence industry and the promotion of the European Defence Fund demonstrate a new political leadership aimed at achieving this objective. Initially, member states exempted the defence industry from the rules of the single market and kept it outside the scope of the Community method (Haroche, 2018). However, the Commission attempted to intervene in defence research by using the existence of dual-use technologies<sup>6</sup> as justification. This was met with resistance from member states, who saw it as an encroachment on intergovernmental matters (Papatzikas, 2021). Another attempt was the establishment of the European Security Research Program (ESRP) in the early 2000s, but it had to be focused solely on civilian security research due to member states' opposition

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<sup>6</sup> Dual-use technologies refer to advanced technologies that have applications in both civilian and defence sectors, serving military and commercial purposes. In recent times, European land forces have increasingly embraced emerging technologies, leveraging their integration to facilitate the digitalization of military capabilities.

(Mawdsley, 2018). The task of supporting defence research and development was assigned to the intergovernmental European Defence Agency. However, the Commission, with the help of the European Court of Justice, pushed for the establishment of transparent rules for defence procurement, which allowed it to surpass the EDA in defence market integration.

In 2013, when the European Council decided to discuss defence matters, Commissioner Michel Barnier proposed the idea of a Preparatory Action on Common Security and Defence Policy-related research, which was supported by the European Council. The new Commission under Jean-Claude Juncker made defence a priority, in contrast to his predecessor. Juncker's commitment to defence was driven by his personal conviction and the desire to present the Commission as addressing real issues fundamental to EU citizens (Peterson, 2017).

The idea for the Preparatory Action on CSDP-related research came from mid-ranking Commission officials, while the idea for the EDF came from the top of the Commission's hierarchy. Elżbieta Bieńkowska, Commissioner for Internal Market and Industry, suggested the idea of a Defence Fund in a note that was eventually accepted by Juncker. She affirmed: "Europe must become a security provider. The Fund will support collaborative research in defence and the joint development of defence capabilities. It will therefore be a game-changer for the EU's strategic autonomy and the competitiveness of Europe's defence industry— including the many SMEs and mid-cap companies forming the European defence supply chain" (EC Press Corner, 2017). This top-down approach was evident in the surprise of Directorate-General GROW officials when the announcement was made, leading them to integrate it hastily into the European Defence Action Plan. While there was a demand for new defence initiatives following Brexit and the publication of the Global Strategy, member states were taken aback by the EDF, which was not anticipated. Nevertheless,

Juncker's strong political commitment allowed the Commission to demonstrate a high level of ambition. The internal debate within the Commission in 2017 strengthened the process, and the Commission's services were authorized to define spending targets for the EDF in advance of the presentation of the 2021-27 Multiannual Financial Framework.

Furthermore, the Commission expanded its role in defence by taking advantage of the dysfunctional intergovernmental cooperation and the functionality of its instruments, as well as the functional connection between its economic competencies and defence-industrial cooperation. This offensive spillover enabled the Commission to export supranational governance to the defence sector. The Commission's objective was not to fix an already integrated policy but to undertake a new task. The EDF marked a transition from an economic approach to a strategic approach to the defence industry. While the Commission initially justified its interest in defence based on both the economic impact and the EU's strategic autonomy, the 2017 Communication focused exclusively on security-related motivations. It aimed to position Europe as a security provider. Its intervention in the defence sector was intended to address the persisting lack of investment, unnecessary duplication of capabilities, and the decline of cooperative programs, which implied criticism of the EDA's performance. The intergovernmental method was deemed ineffective, and member states were viewed as having performed poorly in defence matters. The EDA relied on voluntary national contributions, leading to difficulties in financing projects (European Defence Agency, 2019). The EC justified the EDF by emphasizing the link between its legal authority in the fields of research and the issue of the defence industry. The main obstacle to the Commission's involvement in defence was Article 41.2 of the Treaty on the European Union, which prohibited the use of EU funds for military or defence-related operations. The EC's Legal Service and DG

GROW engaged in an internal debate regarding the interpretation of this article. The Legal Service argued that the broad wording of Article 41.2 obliged the Commission to adopt a strict interpretation, while the Preparatory Action on Defence Research (PADR) managed to overcome the legal barriers established by the Legal Service. Economic justifications were presented to support the funding of defence research, highlighting its value, impact on competitiveness, and job creation (Haroche, 2018:862). In the case of the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP), the Commission relied on Article 173 as the legal basis, emphasizing its industrial nature. For the post-2020 EDF, the Commission drew upon Article 173, as well as Articles 182, 183, and 188 related to research. The Commission faced ambiguity by simultaneously asserting that the EDF was a strategic initiative rather than merely a legal framework. Despite concerns raised about the influence of the defence industry, the Commission successfully defended its position. However, this situation created a dilemma for the Commission, balancing its legal competence with its political objectives (Vranken, 2017).

The legal framework of the EDF enabled the Commission to extend the Community method, characterized by its initiative power and decisions made through qualified majority voting (QMV) in the Council and co-decision with the European Parliament (EP), to the realm of defence. This transition represented a significant cultural shift for defence officials from member states accustomed to the intergovernmental method. Initially, some member state representatives in the Council Friends of the Presidency Group expressed uncertainty about the presence of Commission officials in their meetings (Haroche, 2018:963). Over time, the Commission gradually reduced the role of EDA in the governance of the programmes. The 2015 Preparatory Action (PA) aimed to test the cooperation between the EDA and the Commission, resulting in an agreement in November 2015 that allowed the EDA to

implement the programme (European Defence Agency, 2023). However, subsequent agreements, such as the one in May 2017 for the PADR, provided less clarity on the EDA's role. The Commission sometimes established national expert groups for specific calls for proposals, duplicating the EDA's technical specifications. In the case of the EDIDP, the EDA was involved only as an observer in providing expertise. Despite member states' demands to delegate implementation to the EDA, the Commission decided to directly manage the EDIDP with the support of the EP. This shift to the Commission's competencies brought the application of comitology rules<sup>7</sup>, with the Commission holding the authority to adopt implementing acts assisted by a member state Committee through QMV (European Commission, 2023). The Commission's ability to swiftly arbitrate among different topics through QMV, compared to the consensus decision-making prevalent at the EDA, led to the marginalization of the EDA. However, the Commission made concessions by consulting the EDIDP Committee not only on the work programme but also on the selection of projects, and by requiring explicit qualified majority support for adopting a work programme. The Commission's successful defence of its role during the EDIDP negotiation can be attributed to the offensive spillover, which transferred comitology rules to the defence domain and limited member states' autonomy. The Commission capitalized on divisions among member states and the link between its legislative and implementation roles, as member states sought to maintain a good relationship during the implementation phase. These consequences led towards a bureaucratic spillover since the establishment of the European Defence Fund has prompted the European

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<sup>7</sup> Comitology is a regulatory process that comes into effect when the European Commission is granted the authority to implement laws. As stipulated in the legislation, the Commission is required to seek assistance from a committee in formulating the specific measures outlined in the resulting implementing act.

Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) to enhance their bureaucratic capacities and foster further initiatives.

Initially, the Commission faced a lack of technical expertise in the defence domain since it was not traditionally involved in defence matters. To address this issue, the Commission outsourced expertise by creating the Group of Personalities (GoP) in 2015. This group, consisting of defence industry CEOs, research institute presidents, and politicians, provided valuable insights on how the Commission should handle defence research (Oliveira Martins & Mawdsley, 2021). The target funding amount of €500 million per year for the post-2020 defence research program originated from the GoP's recommendations.

However, the EC later decided to strengthen its internal expertise, recognizing the need for direct involvement. Directorate-General (DG) GROW, which already had one unit working on defence matters, established a second unit in January 2018. One unit focused on the European Defence Industrial Development Program and the post2020 EDF, while the other unit was dedicated to the PADR. To bolster their expertise, the Commission also recruited defence experts from national administrations.

The EDF has also intensified the bureaucratic cooperation between the Commission and the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini.

She affirmed: "We have different tools, we have different institutions, we have different frameworks in which the work in defence and security can be carried out and the fact that we have worked in a team, perfectly well together, with good and concrete results, I believe, is also a test of the Lisbon Treaty and to the capacity we have to put together different institutions for a shared objective. In particular, it will be important to work together - the Commission, the Council, and the European Defence Agency that is one of the



frameworks in which we can develop this cooperation. By the way, I will be visiting in a couple of hours a European Defence Agency helicopter exercise as an example of the kind of defence cooperation that is already existing in the European Union framework” (EEAS, 2016). Along with this strong statement, she proposed an even more ambitious project called the European Peace Facility (EPF), which aimed to finance EU military operations and provide military support to partners. The proposed budget for the EPF amounted to €10.5 billion for 2021-2027, aligning with the initial amount proposed by the Commission for the EDF (European Commission, 2023). This move by the HR was seen as an attempt to balance the Commission's influence and establish herself as a significant financial actor (Haroche, 2018:865).

This emerging bureaucratic spillover indicates that while supranational actors may not necessarily have an ideological commitment to strengthening their power, they are driven by bureaucratic logic that encourages them to enhance their capacities and consolidate their position and credibility. In a way, this observation aligns with the neofunctionalist assumption that once integration in another sector is initiated, it becomes a relatively autonomous process and it expands into other fields, in this case, the one of defence.

However, it is important to note that while the EDF may serve as a mechanism for economic spillover, contributing to the interconnectedness of economic security and military security in the conventional sense, it should not be regarded as the main driving force behind PESCO and the EII. Rather, it should be considered as a factor that needs to be taken into account to establish a cohesive framework.

### **3.5 Analysis Through the Lens of Liberal Intergovernmentalist Hypotheses**

Liberal intergovernmentalism encompasses two fundamental elements: interdependence and intergovernmental bargaining (Merlingen, 2012). While governments are the primary actors influencing state behaviour, their actions are simultaneously motivated and restricted by domestic and transnational political forces and interest groups (Moravcsik, 1993). Assuming rational decision-making, governments consider national preferences and costs, similar to realist perspectives. However, the distinction lies in the fact that preferences are primarily shaped by domestic societal pressures rather than the aim to survive in an anarchical system (Moravcsik, 1993).

For instance, from a liberal perspective, the establishment of the Common Security and Defence Policy has to be attributed to the escalating level of security interdependence, involving numerous nations and actors engaged in global security management. In this new environment, novel types of security challenges have emerged, including terrorism, climate change, energy scarcity, and economic volatility (Italian Defence General Staff, 2021). These threats necessitate collaborative responses from international institutions since states cannot tackle them individually. Hence, liberal accounts do not perceive these security threats as existential, but rather as by-products of globalization and the negative externalities resulting from interconnectedness.

The central liberal intergovernmentalist hypothesis contends that the process of European defence integration will not unfold uniformly, but rather exhibit variations depending on the extent of influence exerted by key interest groups, namely the European Commission, defence companies, and national governments. These influential actors are expected to play pivotal roles in shaping the trajectory of EDI, either facilitating or impeding its progress.

Applying LI theories, one key implication for PESCO is the anticipation of enhanced cooperation in defence policy. This arises from a convergence of national interests driven by the growing negative externalities experienced in an interconnected world. PESCO can be perceived as an acknowledgement of the escalating costs associated with providing security and prosperity independently by individual states (Molenaar, 2021). Between 2010 and 2017, the broader European neighbourhood witnessed a significant rise in insecure conditions, such as political instability following the Arab Spring, civil wars, the emergence of terrorist groups like ISIL, Boko Haram, or al-Shabaab, the Ukrainian crisis, the migratory emergency and new forms of cyberattacks. These examples exemplify instances where the consequences for European states can be viewed as negative externalities of insecurity.

States are viewed as primary actors in the analysis of political integration, while the international context is seen as highly anarchic. Policy-making processes within the EU are constrained to intergovernmental negotiation and bargaining, assuming that states interact as rational actors. Rationalist assumptions suggest that states will choose actions that best serve their domestic agendas when faced with multiple options (Frieden & Walter, 2018). Political integration, particularly in the form of common policy changes, relies on the political will of states rather than centralized enforcement. Initiatives to establish common institutions or adhere to mutual agreements result from strategic rational choices made by interdependent states during intergovernmental negotiations.

As states' interests often differ from the collective interest, coordination is necessary to ensure mutually beneficial outcomes and avoid suboptimal results. The collective outcome and the extent of cooperation depend on the relative bargaining power of participating actors (Rieker & Eriksdatter Giske, 2021). States with the leverage to threaten others by withdrawing from

agreements have a greater ability to secure concessions. Additionally, states possessing more information about other states' preferences and institutional procedures are more likely to manipulate the collective outcome to their advantage.

As such, PESCO, within the framework of liberal intergovernmentalism, relates to the shifting balance of bargaining power in favour of its supporters. This insight suggests that with Brexit, the French position advocating for increased defence within the EU has gained traction compared to the German inclination towards restraint. It can also be argued that the constraining influence of domestic politics has weakened following the French elections, granting more flexibility to President Macron, while conditions have become more challenging for Chancellor Merkel after the September 2017 Bundestag elections. However, the outcomes seem to defy expectations, as the debate regarding an ambitious or inclusive PESCO concluded with the emergence of a German perspective favouring an inclusive framework. The Sorbonne speech by Macron, which proposed the potential for parallel structures of defence cooperation, and France's reported disappointment with the development of PESCO, do not indicate an increased French bargaining power.

Under the leadership of President Jean-Claude Juncker, the European Commission has emerged as a proactive advocate for greater defence integration (Bassot & Hiller, 2019). In line with its broader agenda for a stronger and more united Europe, the Commission has actively promoted initiatives aimed at deepening cooperation among European Union (EU) member states in the realm of defence. This includes the development of frameworks and mechanisms to enhance defence capabilities, foster joint procurement projects, and encourage harmonization of defence policies. The Commission's persistent advocacy for greater defence integration signals its

determination to drive the process forward and contribute to the consolidation of a more unified European defence framework.

Former European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said:

"60 years ago, Europe's founding fathers chose to unite the continent with the force of the law rather than with armed forces. We can be proud of what we have achieved since then. Our darkest day in 2017 will still be far brighter than any spent by our forefathers on the battlefield. As we mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaties of Rome, it is time for a united Europe of 27 to shape a vision for its future. It's time for leadership, unity and common resolve. The Commission's White Paper presents a series of different paths this united EU at 27 could choose to follow. It is the start of the process, not the end, and I hope that now an honest and wide-ranging debate will take place. The form will then follow the function. We have Europe's future in our own hands" (EC Press, 2017).

In addition to the European Commission, defence companies have also played a significant role in influencing the direction of European defence integration. These companies, which possess substantial economic and strategic interests in the defence sector, have actively lobbied for deeper integration within the EU. Notably, companies like Airbus have been at the forefront of advocating for closer defence cooperation among EU member states (Csernaton, 2021). Their efforts are motivated by the potential benefits of a more integrated defence market, including enhanced opportunities for collaboration, increased efficiency in procurement, and the ability to compete on a global scale. The lobbying and advocacy efforts of defence companies exert considerable influence on policy discussions and decision-making processes related to European defence integration.

Furthermore, NATO, as the most pivotal military organization, plays a decisive part in shaping the course of European defence integration.

In European defence, the role of NATO, or rather that of the US, deserves much scrutiny since this is when the liberal governmentalist thesis starts to falter.

The US has always demonstrated a mixed stance towards the ESDP, oscillating between viewing it as an ally or competitor to NATO (Larrabee, 2009). While the US recognizes the importance of a robust European partner in managing emerging security threats, it has been cautious about ESDP's development in a manner that undermines NATO and reacts strongly to any attempts by the EU to establish autonomous capabilities disconnected from NATO.

These concerns were already evident in the US response to the Franco-British summit in 1998, where the Clinton administration supported a cohesive European partner but harboured worries that it could lead to an independent European military capability outside NATO's purview (Hunter, 2022). The concerns were partially alleviated at the EU summit in Helsinki in 1999, where the EU emphasized acting only when NATO was not involved, indicating a priority for NATO in crises and reducing fears of ESDP as a rival.

However, American concerns resurfaced significantly with the proposal to establish a planning cell at Tervuren in 2003, which raised alarms in Washington about a potential deviation from the Berlin Plus agreement. This proposal, seen as a step towards an independent European military capability outside NATO, intensified U.S. apprehensions about ESDP and a perceived French desire to establish the EU as a counterweight to NATO.

Also, operational planning has been a major concern for the US with some EU members advocating for an EU capacity independent of NATO in certain circumstances. They have traditionally opposed such arrangements, fearing complications and duplication. The dispute over Tervuren occurred in the

context of strained US-French relations over Iraq and suspicions that ESDP aimed to rival NATO.

Also, it has been argued that the US acknowledge the need for a capable European partner to address new threats and challenges, and it recognizes that the EU should have limited instances where it can act independently of NATO, especially in crises where the U.S. prefers not to be involved (Bond & Scazzieri, 2022). However, these instances are expected to be relatively limited, and the US would likely engage if a crisis significantly threatens Western interests, albeit potentially not in a leading role.

Finally, the US are concerned about the formation of a "*European caucus*" (Larrabee, 2009:57) within NATO, where EU members present a united front, potentially hindering Alliance decision-making. Such a caucus has been opposed by the U.S. due to potential complications and delays in decision-making. However, EU enlargement reduces the likelihood of a European caucus emerging, as pro-Atlanticist EU countries are unlikely to adopt positions openly opposed by the United States.

In summary, according to the theory of LI, the process of European defence integration will not follow a uniform trajectory but will vary depending on the influence exerted by key interest groups such as the European Commission, defence companies, and military organizations like NATO. The smoothness or unevenness of EDI hinges on the direction in which these influential actors shape the process. As shown, the European Commission and defence companies such as Airbus have emerged as proactive advocates for greater defence integration and have actively promoted initiatives in this regard, playing a significant role in influencing the direction of defence integration through their lobbying and advocacy efforts. On the other hand, NATO, particularly the US, has been holding a stalling position in shaping the course of EDI. American concerns about European integration stem from the potential

deviation from NATO and the establishment of an independent European military capability. Although the US recognizes the need for a capable European partner, it prefers limited instances of European independence, particularly in crises where US involvement is not preferred. The formation of a "European caucus" within NATO is also a concern for the US, as it could complicate decision-making processes. Thus, the progression of EDI will be contingent upon the interplay of these key interest groups, and any hostility from the US may hinder its advancement.

### 3.6 Conclusive Remarks and Summary of the Results

Theory	Hypothesis	Results
Realism	EDI will be primarily driven by external threats and security challenges, with national security interests taking precedence over supranational considerations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Eurozone debt crisis, refugees, terrorism, populist nationalism, and Brexit have weakened the EU. Merkel and Macron have urged Europe to take responsibility for its security;</li> <li>• Intergovernmental negotiations limit the Lisbon Treaty's MAC's internal security mitigation;</li> <li>• China's rise, Russia's assertiveness, Middle East conflicts, migration, and regional instability have contributed to Europe's insecurity;</li> <li>• Trump's scepticism of NATO and the EU raises questions about US commitment to European security. Article 5 alone is unwise given NATO's uncertainties.</li> </ul>
Neofunctionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDI will operate faster when there is integration in other sectors, such as economics, leading to a spillover effect.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The EDF may serve as a mechanism for economic spillover. However, it should not be regarded as the main driving force behind PESCO and the E12. Rather, it should be regarded as a factor contributing to the interconnectedness of economic and military security;</li> <li>• The Commission's expanded role in defence and promotion of the EDF demonstrates new political leadership aiming for strategic autonomy and competitiveness.</li> </ul>



<p>Liberal Intergovernmentalism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDI will proceed smoothly or unevenly depending on the direction in which key interest groups, such as the EC, defence companies and military organizations, exert their influence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy-making processes within the EU rely on intergovernmental negotiation and rational decision-making by states;</li> <li>• The EC advocates for greater defence integration and a more unified European defence framework;</li> <li>• Non-traditional defence companies such as AIRBUS strives for deeper European integration to benefit from a more integrated defence market;</li> <li>• NATO, particularly the US, has concerns about EDI undermining NATO and creating an independent European military capability;</li> <li>• The progression of EDI depends on the interplay of these key interest groups, and US hostility may hinder its advancement.</li> </ul>
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Realism is identified as the theoretical framework that offers the most comprehensive elucidation for the activation of PESCO and EI2 within the realm of EDI. The analysis reveals robust evidence that substantiates the realist hypotheses, which posit that the integration of European defence is predominantly motivated by external threats and security challenges, with national security interests being prioritised over supranational considerations. It has been demonstrated that a variety of external factors, including the Eurozone debt crisis, the influx of refugees, instances of terrorist attacks, the rise of populist nationalism, and the consequences of Brexit, have considerably diminished the authority and impact of the EU. Moreover, the transition from a unipolar to a multipolar global order, marked by the ascent of China and the decline of the United States, has additionally influenced European insecurity. Concerns have been raised regarding the United States' commitment to European security due to the doubts that have emerged as a result of President Trump's scepticism towards NATO and the EU. The presence of uncertainties regarding NATO and the sole dependence on Article 5 has brought attention to the constraints of the intergovernmental strategy

employed by the CSDP. This has consequently emphasised the need for European integration, which has been pursued through initiatives such as PESCO and EI2.

Furthermore, the analysis highlights the significant impact of Russia's assertive policies, conflicts in the Middle East, challenges related to migration, and regional instability as crucial elements that contribute to the state of insecurity in Europe. Collectively, these show a significant correlation with the realist perspective, which highlights the significance of external threats and security challenges in influencing the process of EDI.

The neofunctionalist hypotheses affirm that the process of European defence integration is facilitated by the presence of integration in other sectors, such as economics, which results in a spillover effect. Nevertheless, the results suggest that although economic integration contributes to the promotion of interconnections between economic and military security, it is not the predominant factor driving the establishment of PESCO and EI2. The analysis emphasises the increased involvement of the European Commission in defence affairs and the advocacy for the EDF, indicating a shift in political leadership towards achieving strategic autonomy and enhancing competitiveness. The Commission has made significant progress in integrating the defence market, surpassing EDA, despite facing resistance from member states. Therefore, although there is observable economic spillover, it is not the exclusive or prevailing catalyst behind the emergence of PESCO and EI2.

LI affirms that the process of EDI is facilitated by concurrent integration in other sectors, such as economics, thereby generating a spillover effect. The analysis substantiates this viewpoint by emphasizing the impact of significant interest groups, such as the EC, defence corporations, and national administrations.

The Commission actively promotes the enhancement of defence integration and the establishment of a more cohesive European defence framework. Furthermore, defence corporations, such as Airbus, engage in lobbying efforts to advocate for increased integration to exploit the potential benefits of a more consolidated defence market. However, apprehensions expressed by NATO, specifically the United States, regarding the potential erosion of NATO and the establishment of an autonomous European military capability could hinder the advancement of European defence integration.

Hence, LI is congruent with the endorsement of European defence integration by significant actors such as France, Germany, and defence corporations, alongside the influence exerted by pivotal interest groups. Nevertheless, it fails to fully substantiate its hypotheses, as the EDF does not emerge as the predominant catalyst behind the establishment of PESCO and EI2.

## **Chapter IV: The 2022 EU Strategic Compass**

### **4.1 Strategic Compass Overview**

The EU Strategic Compass, which was endorsed by the Council of the European Union on March 21, 2022, and subsequently adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the 27 EU countries on March 25, is a collaborative outcome of the EU institutions and member states (Council of the EU, 2022). The document represents a significant stride towards the establishment of a European defence system that possesses enhanced capabilities to safeguard European citizens, as well as to protect and advance the shared interests and values within the Union. Within the framework of a global landscape marked by geopolitical rivalry and the resurgence of conflict in Europe, the Compass serves as a tool for the EU to establish its position as a responsible participant capable of actively contributing to international security, with a specific focus on the European continent.

The significance of the SC lie in its provision of a comprehensive framework that delineates a set of tangible measures, accompanied by well-defined timelines spanning the upcoming three years (2025). These actions aim to practically enhance the CSDP, with the ultimate objective of bolstering its capabilities by 2030 (Kolotylo, 2022).

The document presents the EU and NATO as mutually supportive and mutually beneficial entities. It envisions a European defence system that serves as a crucial component of the Atlantic Alliance, with the overarching objective of fostering peace, stability, security, and cooperation both within Europe and on a global scale. This approach aligns seamlessly with the shared stance advocating for European strategic autonomy. It emphasises the importance of a Union that possesses the capability to independently safeguard its interests, without relying on external assistance.

The EU Strategic Compass represents a significant advancement; however, it should be noted that it does not signify the culmination of efforts towards establishing a defence Europe. In the forthcoming months and years, the implementation of the Compass' roadmap comprising planned initiatives, activities, and investments will be of utmost importance.

The SC facilitates the exercise and distribution of national sovereignty within the defence sector in a manner that is both efficient and forward-thinking, to safeguard the security of citizens and protect European interests. Furthermore, it enhances the ability to exert political and democratic oversight over the process of European integration (Zandee, Stoetman, Deen, 2021).

The initiatives foreseen by the SC framework are structured based on four guiding principles:

- Act by enhancing the capacity to engage in military operations during crises occurring in regions of strategic significance to the Union;
- Secure by widening the ability of European nations to withstand various security threats, with a particular focus on outer space and cyberspace, necessitating the establishment of sustainable and viable systems for institutions, businesses, and citizens. Consequently, there is a pressing need for increased frequency and enhanced systematicity in the sharing of intelligence;
- Investment through the increasing of funding in defence and security within Europe, using collaboration, leveraging economies of scale, undertaking joint projects, and fully utilising established EU mechanisms such as PESCO, the EDF, and other initiatives spearheaded by the European Defence Agency and the European Commission;
- Intensified collaboration by fostering alliances with Western nations that share common values and interests, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Norway, Canada, and Japan, as well as international organisations

including NATO, the UN, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the African Union (Council of the EU, 2022).

The initiative outlines a plan to create an EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC) by 2025. This will consist of a force of 5,000 individuals who possess the necessary capabilities to operate effectively in regions of interest to the European Union, even in environments that may not be conducive to their mission (EEAS Press Team, 2022). The current facility, characterised by its restricted size and capabilities, ought to be regarded as an initial stride towards the development of a more extensive European military intervention capacity.

Also, a provision is foreseen for the allocation of European funds towards EU military missions. This is achieved through a proposal to expand the range of shared expenses covered by the European Peace Facility.

The establishment of the EPF enables enhanced provision of assistance and support to European partners. An illustrative instance of this is the allocation of approximately 2.5 billion euros in military aid to Ukraine in 2022 (Council of the European Union, 2022).

There is also a significant focus on the matter of collaboration among military forces. One potential course of action would involve enhancing their capacity to collaborate effectively across multiple tiers, such as through regular participation in military drills. Furthermore, it is suggested that enhancing transport networks within the European Union could serve as a means to facilitate the movement of military forces.

In respect of the increased process of EU securitization, a particular concern is represented by the Eurasian Economic Union<sup>8</sup> (EAEU) which aspires to

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<sup>8</sup> The EAEU, established in 2015, is a regional trade pact aiming to enhance economic collaboration and improve the quality of life for its participating nations. The member countries of the EAEU are Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. In contrast to the EU, the EAEU does not adopt a shared currency.

enhance its capacities in relation to emerging technologies and the associated security vulnerabilities they entail. Thus, the establishment and enhancement of the European Union's cyber defence capabilities are widely regarded as crucial. Similarly, safeguarding the European Union's space assets is of utmost importance, which can be achieved through various initiatives outlined in the upcoming EU Space Strategy for Security and Defence.

#### **4.2 Analysis Through the Lens of Realist Hypotheses**

The introduction of the 2022 EU Strategic Compass signifies a noteworthy achievement in the continuous endeavour to promote the integration of European defence. The examination of the SC through the lens of realist theories presupposes that the primary driving force behind European defence cooperation is the presence of external threats and security challenges. In this context, national security interests are given greater priority over supranational considerations.

An examination of the evidence will follow by encompassing instances of Russia's unjustified aggression towards Ukraine, the increasing risks to cybersecurity, the destabilisation of the Afghan government, and the evolving dynamics of global power.

The available corroboration substantiates the claim that Russia has displayed aggressive conduct towards Ukraine. At dawn on 24 February 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin gave the order to invade neighbouring Ukraine. The decision came shortly after the recognition of the separatist Donbass republics located on Ukrainian territory, Donetsk and Lugansk, and the sending of troops on the official grounds of a peacekeeping initiative (Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, 2023). However, the crisis between Russia and Ukraine did not erupt suddenly. The conflict has been openly going on for eight years: ever since, in 2014, after the Euromaidan Revolution culminated

in the ouster of then president Janukovyč, Moscow invaded and annexed the Crimean peninsula and supported separatist movements in the Donbass region in eastern Ukraine. After Russia went on the attack, Europe and the United States did not sit idly by. Indeed, Ukraine lies on the eastern borders of the European Union and NATO (of which Russia fears further enlargement to the East) and is a crucial crossing point for Russian gas supplies. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine have brought to light the susceptibility of European states, thereby emphasising the necessity for a more collaborative defence strategy. The primary objective of the Strategic Compass is to efficiently tackle the external challenges faced by European nations and safeguard their national security interests through the enhancement of their defensive capabilities.

The assertion is substantiated by Mearsheimer's evidence, wherein he elucidates that realist theories place significant emphasis on power dynamics and the inherent likelihood of interstate conflicts (Mearsheimer, 2014). The proactive measures taken by the Russian government towards the Ukrainian government can be perceived as an embodiment of the existing power dynamics, thereby presenting a direct menace to the security of the European region (Kostelka, 2022).

In an epoch marked by profound interconnectedness, the issue of cybersecurity challenges has emerged as a significant cause for apprehension. The rise in cyberattacks targeting European institutions and enterprises provides empirical evidence that aligns with the realist hypothesis. This hypothesis asserts that national security interests hold greater significance compared to those of supranational organisations. Based on reports issued by the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) and Europol, there has been an observed increase in both the frequency and complexity of malware infections and ransomware attacks (ENISA, 2022).



Empirical data supports the notion that realist perspectives recognise the inclination of nations to prioritise their security interests when confronted with emerging threats (James, 1995). The report conducted by ENISA regarding malware infections and the assessment conducted by Europol on ransomware attacks underscores the imperative for European nations to engage in collaborative efforts in the realm of cybersecurity and enhance their combined defensive capabilities. The growing prevalence of cyberattacks underscores the importance of endeavours such as the Strategic Compass.

As already stated, the formulation of the Strategic Compass is significantly influenced by geopolitical transformations. Realist assumptions propose that nations, when faced with threats originating from neighbouring regions, tend to prioritise their own security needs. The potential impact of the destabilisation of the Afghan government, along with the subsequent increase in security risks such as terrorist attacks and refugee crises, on European security is a matter of concern.

On 15 August 2021, the Taliban (re)took control of Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, and two weeks later, the American forces stationed there permanently abandoned the country that was the symbol of the war on terror that started in the aftermath of the 9/11 attack. The 31 August withdrawal thus marked the end of the very long star-studded commitment in the country (and to some extent in the region) and also one of the biggest military, political and intelligence failures ever recorded by the United States and the Western World (Puglierin et al., 2021).

The country was left in the hands of the Taliban, who immediately overthrew the incumbent government and established their regime, thus wiping out 20 years of relative progress in Afghanistan in terms of social and human rights; one of the most dramatic points concerned the condition of women in the country, who saw all those hard-won gains over the past decades taken away

from them. Another aspect that characterised the return to power of the students of the Koran was the carrying out of real purges against Afghan men who had collaborated with the Americans and the Washington-backed government: they were tracked down and imprisoned and the vast majority were never heard from again.

Nowadays, the Taliban movement sees itself as the main provider of security to Afghan citizens and that if it wants to strengthen its legitimacy as a government, it must, just like any other state, be able to provide those security guarantees to its people that are deemed indispensable to being the actor that holds the monopoly on the use of force on the ground.

In a fragmented and extremely unstable theatre like Afghanistan, this is one of the most difficult objectives for the Taliban to achieve, as there are still several armed formations in the country that seek to undermine their leadership. At the moment, there are two main threats to the government, located respectively in the east and north of the country; in the east of Afghanistan, the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-KP), a regional spin-off of the Islamic State, has its stronghold, while in the northern region, the Taliban's adversary is represented by a set of actors associated with the now former Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the political order that existed until 2021, the most active of which is the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan (European Union Agency for Asylum, 2023).

While it is true that these two armed groups pose security challenges to the Taliban, it is important to note that they do not currently pose vital threats to the very existence of the new Afghan government. The Taliban's response to armed threats has so far always been quite brutal, continuously resorting to violent repression of any kind of adversary. In some regions of the country, this approach has proved adequate, as levels of armed opposition have significantly declined.

In this scenario, the potential ramifications of the Afghan government's overthrow on European security are noteworthy due to the possibility of a domino effect of destabilising events, including heightened terrorist activities and an influx of refugees. The Strategic Compass reflects a realist viewpoint that emphasises the utmost importance of national security interests. This perspective is evident in the recognition of the challenges faced and the dedication to addressing them by bolstering European defence capabilities.

On another note, to comprehend the very nature of the Strategic Compass, it is imperative to analyse its correlation with the ever-changing dynamics of global power. Realist theories of international relations place significant emphasis on power dynamics and self-interest within the realm of global politics. The integration of European defence may be significantly impacted by various factors, including the changing global distribution of power, particularly the emergence of China as a major player, and the evolving dynamics of the transatlantic alliance.

The European Union and China have always had a common interest in pursuing a constructive and stable relationship. Despite the diplomatic formulas, European countries are discussing China a lot (and heatedly) in these hours and weeks, marked by the attempt to define a common European approach in relations with the Asian country.

At the end of March 2023, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, dictated the line by inviting member countries to reduce the risks (so-called de-risking) towards the Asian giant (O'Carroll, 2023). That is, China must remain a trading partner of the EU, but there are some areas in which Beijing's trade and investments put European and national security at risk, so it must be defended.

China is the third-largest market for goods from the EU and the world's largest supplier to the single market. In 2022, trade in goods between the EU and

China reached more than 600 billion, almost equal to that of the US (Eurostat, 2023). Ten years ago it was less than half. In the last decade, European imports from China have grown twice as fast as exports to it. And the more imports from China grow, the more the major European economies depend on China. Also, the energy crisis of the past months, triggered by cuts in Russian gas supplies, has taught the EU a valuable lesson: depending on a single supplier, mostly outside one's circle of alliances, can have serious consequences. And on Beijing, the EU depends on raw materials, certain types of semiconductors and critical technologies for the energy transition. Suffice it to say that 74% of all batteries imported into the EU are of Chinese origin. Beijing has already shown that it knows how to leverage its commercial weight to defend its geopolitical interests (Politi, 2023).

Thus, the rise of China as a significant global power and the evolving dynamics of the transatlantic relationship have prompted European nations to reassess their defence strategies and seek increased collaboration.

To sum up, when subjected to a realistic analysis, the examination of the 2022 EU Strategic Compass yields significant insights regarding the fundamental causes and dynamics driving the process of European defence integration. The existing body of evidence, which encompasses Russia's assertive behaviour towards Ukraine, the increasing cybersecurity vulnerabilities, the collapse of the Afghan government, and the evolving global power dynamics, lends support to the realist viewpoint that places greater emphasis on external threats and national security interests rather than supranational considerations. The Strategic Compass is an initiative aimed at proactively addressing the aforementioned challenges by enhancing European defence capabilities and safeguarding the ongoing security of member states. The nomenclature of this entity is derived from its intrinsic capacity to operate as a navigational instrument. Policymakers possess the ability to effectively navigate the

intricate security landscape and pursue national security objectives by leveraging the Strategic Compass, contingent upon their acknowledgement of the importance of realist components in the establishment of European defence integration.

#### **4.3 Analysis Through the Lens of Neofunctionalist Hypotheses**

According to neofunctionalist theories, the effectiveness of European defence integration is contingent upon the presence of integration in other sectors, such as economics, which subsequently triggers a spillover effect.

Nevertheless, the period from 2020 to the present day is a special timeframe as the whole world had to deal with the covid-19 pandemic. This has had profound economic effects, making it difficult to evaluate economic endeavours and their potential effects on defence integration. COVID-19 has disrupted economies worldwide, including those in the EU. Lockdowns, supply chain disruptions, and economic downturns have necessitated a variety of economic recovery measures, shifting priorities and resources away from defence integration. The pandemic has raised awareness of the EU's vulnerabilities and interdependencies. Global supply chain disruptions and public finance burdens have highlighted the need for greater resilience and self-sufficiency. To protect member states, a strong and cohesive European economy is crucial.

The long-running conflict between Russia and Ukraine has also had a major impact on Europe's complex geopolitical dynamics. The conflict has created new security issues and exacerbated old ones. As a result of the conflict, immediate security concerns may influence defence initiatives and priorities. Given current circumstances, economic integration may be temporarily sidelined as resources and attention are redirected to resolving the security crisis.

Thus, the complex relationship between EU economic initiatives and security requires careful analysis. Assessing the immediate impact of economic initiatives on defence integration during the COVID-19 pandemic is difficult. However, the long-term effects and theoretical perspectives of this complex issue must be examined.

Economic stability and prosperity are crucial to EU security. A strong economy allows member states to invest in defence, infrastructure, and R&D. Trade agreements, investments in key industries, and a unified market help the EU increase economic integration. These initiatives boost EU security and economic cohesion (European Commission, 2023).

Economic integration can also boost collective defence capabilities. Economic initiatives promote research, innovation, and technological advancements in key industries by facilitating defence technology convergence and procurement harmonisation. They help bring defence technologies and procurement practices together by supporting these activities. Convergence can reduce costs, improve interoperability, and help address emerging security issues. Cooperative defence projects, military exercises, and defence infrastructure can strengthen economic security.

Economic initiatives can also foster EU collaboration and information sharing. This can improve non-traditional security measures. Non-traditional security threats cross borders in the modern world. Cyberattacks, terrorism, and climate change require a holistic approach that considers economic and defence aspects. A multifaceted threat requires a comprehensive strategy that integrates sectors and disciplines to ensure a robust and resilient response.

In March 2022, former President of the European Central Bank Mario Draghi affirmed that Europe was not in a war economy but should prepare (Maugeri, 2022). This war economy is becoming clearer, and European countries must continue to analyse it to better assemble.

EU growth dropped 0.5% in the first weeks of the Russia-Ukraine war. The worst-case scenario was a 2% GDP slowdown. Still less than Russia (-10%), but a considerable slowdown (Gourinchas, 2022).

The commodities shock seems to be subsiding compared to March 2022, but prices are still substantially higher than at the start of the crisis and have been rising sharply for at least a year.

The conflict's indirect repercussions, especially energy prices, are hurting European industries, especially energy-intensive ones. Stagflation is growing and its duration will determine the fate of the European economy.

Europe had just started to glimpse the light at the end of the epidemic tunnel when the Russia-Ukraine crisis shattered the economic recovery. The war will almost probably hurt the Eurozone economy, according to the latest European Central Bank prediction.

The first week of invasion cut growth by 0.5% (from 4.2% predicted at the start of the year to 3.7% today). Sanctions tightening will decrease growth by 1.4% more than today's "optimistic" projections (ISPI DataLab, 2022). Also, the war affects Eurozone growth. First, the energy and commodities (mining and agricultural) supply shock is driving prices up and keeping inflation high. The new supply chain "bottlenecks" are also producing challenges for European manufacturers, especially automotive and agri-food. Finally, this crisis and geopolitical uncertainty will keep financial markets volatile, deterring company and fund investment.

The post-pandemic commodity recovery has been accelerated by the Russia-Ukraine war. In the battle, export blockades and the prospect of supply interruptions in numerous essential commodities create a supply-side shock. First, energy commodities: spot prices for Dutch gas (Dutch TTF) more than doubled in the days after the Russian invasion, reaching a record EUR 345 per Megawatt-hour on 8 March, ten times the value at the start of 2021 (Ibidem).

The sanctions on Russia made the market lose interest in Russian oil (Ural), pushing Brent prices up and even bringing coal back into fashion: its price has climbed by more than 50% since the invasion (Ibidem).

Nickel, essential to the steel industry, also surged, leading to two London stock exchange suspensions. Finally, Ukraine and Russia's role in global food production raised wheat prices by nearly 20%. In addition to rising commodity prices, economic actors are burdened by the high volatility of Russian commodity indices, which creates uncertainty that costs all economic operators.

Moreover, since Russia supplied 40% of EU demand before the crisis, we have concentrated on natural gas prices in Europe (Ibidem). However, a shock to the oil market might confront Europe and the world.

The conflict's indirect effects on European countries include rising energy prices, both globally (oil and coal) and regionally (natural gas, since Russia dominates the market). European spot natural gas prices are five times higher than at the start of 2021.

Energy-intensive industrial and manufacturing companies will suffer the hardest. Chemical and petrochemical industries, non-metallic mineral processing (ceramics, glass, cement, etc.), and wood and paper manufacture are examples. These sectors provide 5% of the European GDP. Transport equipment and construction, which account for 10% of the EU-27's GDP, are low-energy-intensive but influenced by growing input prices (Ibidem).

Stagflation is one of the worst economic conditions. In this scenario, inflation is high and GDP growth is low or negative. The result is a stagnant or recessionary economy that must deal with a broad price increase that reduces consumer purchasing power. This was predicted as a likely outcome for European economies in 2023. As a matter of fact, energy and food prices have



continued to rise and inflation exceeded 7% in 2022 and lower-middle-income households (which are financially more vulnerable) have been hardest hit.

The preceding analysis elucidates that the concurrent circumstances of the global pandemic and the ramifications arising from the conflict between Russia and Ukraine have exerted considerable pressure on the economies of European nations. The implementation of various economic initiatives has thus been undertaken to rectify the profound circumstances engendered by these two significant occurrences.

Hence, it is evident that the underlying assumptions of neofunctionalist theory are inadequate in elucidating the implementation of the strategic compass, as there is a lack of evidence to support the occurrence of an economic spillover. Nevertheless, it has sparked a renewed discussion regarding the relationship between economics and security.

However, economic efforts alone cannot guarantee EU security. Defence integration must be pursued concurrently to address traditional security challenges. If it is true that economic integration promotes international cooperation, defence-specific measures are needed to build a complete security architecture. These include developing shared defence strategies, joint military capabilities, and resilient crisis management mechanisms.

#### **4.4 Analysis Through the Lens of Liberal Intergovernmentalist Hypotheses**

Liberal intergovernmentalism, as a theoretical framework for comprehending regional integration, places significant emphasis on the influential role played by key interest groups in shaping the trajectory of European defence integration. These interest groups, which include prominent entities such as the Private Military and Security Companies (PMSC) and military organisations such as NATO, wield considerable power in driving the process of European

defence integration. By acknowledging the pivotal role of these interest groups, LI offers a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics at play within the realm of regional integration, particularly concerning defence matters. Within the framework of the SC, it is imperative to comprehend the significance of these groups to evaluate the trajectory and velocity of European defence integration. Moreover, it is crucial to acknowledge the significance of PMSC and their support for European strategic autonomy, as this introduces a novel dimension to the present analysis.

The generalized restructuring of the Armed Forces has entailed a profound transformation of the military sector, in most Western countries. The construction of professional armies, making it necessary to use means with greater economic efficiency, has given ample room for outsourcing military activities (Signorini, 2022).

In this context, Private Military and Security Companies, have started to provide military and security-related services in the international arena and have emerged as new major players in theatres of operation, alongside national armies and multinational contingents. The elimination of the firm has also freed up and made disposable in the marketplace a large cohort of ex-military personnel, which has acted as a conduction to the expansion of the phenomenon, allowing the commercial unscrupulousness of the corporate dimension to mate with the strategic thinking and operational and technical skills of men trained in military academies (De Groot & Regilme, 2022). Today's warfare has thus, increasingly been organized as a business, according to rules, that is, primarily commercial, and has become a game played on the front lines by private companies, led by managers and consisting of consultants, addestrators, technicians and combatants, workers, all, with contracts to honour. PMSC cover a wide and varied typology of activities, providing all possible services needed for war. They range from mere logistics

(canteens, laundries, construction of buildings, facilities, and roads), to the operation of penitentiaries, maintenance of information technology and complex weaponry, specialized military training and education, and the performance of demining and land reclamation, intelligence, espionage, and actual combat operations (El Mquirmi, 2022).

Beyond the need for public consensus management, through the use of PMSC, many states that cannot, or can no longer, economically cope with all the demands of modern warfare, or find themselves in need of bridging their technology gap, are able to participate in conflicts and sometimes, to honour, or continue to honour, their international obligations. However, in the face of the advantages that outsourcing and the use of PMSC in a wide variety of sectors can present, the phenomenon is, in reality, much more complex, where one considers that it conceals several problematic issues.

It is necessary to take into due consideration certain critical issues that go beyond political expediency or economic efficiency requirements and that highlight the seriousness of the possible consequences of a massive, unconscious and inadequately coordinated deployment of PMSC, especially in situations involving direct engagement actions. At the legal level, there are a variety of difficulties in terms of regulatory framing, in terms of identifying the applicable legal regime and the status to be accorded and treatment to be given to members of such private enterprises (so-called contractors). The figure of the private contractor, in fact, does not have its precise legal status and straddles several figures provided for in international humanitarian law, such as that of the "mercenary," that of the member of a "paramilitary organization" or of an "armed service in charge of enforcing order," when legitimately incorporated into the armed forces of one of the parties to the conflict, sometimes that of the "spy," or that of "civilian personnel accompanying the armed forces" (Cameron, 2006). The problem is even more

serious when it comes to conflicts of an internal nature, where no distinction is made between "legitimate combatants" or "illegitimate combatants."

Hence, the role of key interest groups has garnered significant attention, as the theoretical framework of liberal intergovernmentalism posits that the trajectory and pace of European defence integration are heavily influenced by the involvement of key interest groups.

In this scenario, it is worth investigating NATO and its role in hindering the process of EDI.

According to Professor Alessandro Somma, the relations between the European Union and the Atlantic Alliance do not seem to have changed at all. The Union finds reasons for unity through military engagement under the umbrella of NATO, and thus of the United States (Somma, 2022). This is because Atlanticism has always been the glue of European unity since the Cold War years.

In the first place, the Treaty on European Union vigorously reaffirms NATO's military hegemony in Europe' under Article 42.2.

Secondly, even in all official and unofficial documents of both organisations, it continues to be taken for granted that the emergence of an eventual European defence is nothing more than a "crutch" that NATO can use in the event of conflicts affecting the Old Continent or, in any case, outside its current main strategic objectives (Salmoni, 2022).

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the Alliance's main area of interest has no longer been Europe, but Asia, which has generated a contrast in perspectives with the EU. For the United States, in fact, the emergence of new global threats and the changing geopolitical and geo-economic power relations led to a decisive decrease in interest in the Old Continent, which was relegated to a mere "power projection hub" outside of it, where the new threats to US national security lay (Colombo, 2021). Nonetheless, neither NATO nor the

United States has ever been willing to leave Europe to its own devices, because if the Union had acquired real strategic autonomy, it could have become a further potential competitor, especially after China concretised its plans to modernise its defence, which, especially in the field of artificial intelligence applied to the weapons industry, has acquired a significant technological advantage over the United States. This is why NATO has focused on the development of the European defence industry, which is the only way to ensure that the European Union can be a force to be reckoned with in the future.

It is for this reason that NATO has aimed to strengthen its alliance with the EU, aware of the fact that European defence can only be conceived strategically because of the divisions within the Union, and because of the objective difficulty of establishing a stateless army (Marrone, 2021).

This is also expressly stated in the *EU-NATO Joint Declaration* of 2018 where it is reiterated that European defence and NATO action must be complementary and not mutually exclusive. Former Italian Minister of Defence, Lorenzo Guerini, stated that “strategic autonomy does not mean devitalising collective defence but, with a view to burden-sharing, it means being able to contribute to strengthening cooperation between the EU and NATO, and not disengaging from the collective security framework, successfully provided by the Alliance for over 70 years” (Italian Ministry of Defence, 2022). In other words, European defence, far from representing the seed from which the tree of political Europe should sprout, is nothing more than the European pillar of NATO. This confirms that the collective defence of the continent, or the so-called top-of-the-spectrum defence, is primarily the responsibility of the Atlantic Alliance and, while enhancing the role of the EU, relegates its coveted strategic autonomy to a secondary position vis-à-vis both NATO and the United States.

In light of this analysis, it is without a doubt that strategic alliance formation exhibited by certain entities can exert a profound influence on the determination of priorities and subsequent execution of defence integration initiatives (Engberg, 2021). Therefore, the sphere of European defence integration is not solely confined to supranational institutions and intergovernmental organisations. The perception of European Defence Integration by PMSC views as a propitious prospect for heightened engagement in defence contracts and the advancement of European defence capabilities.

On the other hand, military organisations such as NATO, encompassing national armed forces and defence ministries, exert a considerable degree of influence over this process. Their involvement and participation in shaping the trajectory of European defence integration cannot be overlooked or underestimated. The contention is that the pursuit of strategic autonomy has the potential to engender a propitious milieu wherein NATO can make substantive contributions to the defence industry.

#### 4.5 Conclusive Remarks and Summary of the Results

Theory	Hypothesis	Results
Realism	EDI will be primarily driven by external threats and security challenges, with national security interests taking precedence over supranational considerations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The realist view is supported by Russia's aggressiveness towards Ukraine and cyberattacks on European institutions;</li> <li>• Destabilisation of the Afghan government might intensify terrorism and refugee crises, stressing the need for stronger defence;</li> <li>• The rise of China and changing transatlantic relations force European states to rethink defence strategy.</li> </ul>

Neofunctionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDI will operate more expeditiously when there is integration in other sectors, such as economics, leading to a spillover effect.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The COVID-19 pandemic makes it difficult to analyse economic efforts on defence integration;</li> <li>• The Russia-Ukraine conflict has raised security worries and diverted resources from economic integration;</li> <li>• Economic stability and prosperity enable member states to invest in defence, infrastructure, and R&amp;D, ensuring EU security;</li> <li>• Given the paucity of data, neofunctionalist theories regarding economic spillover cannot fully explain the strategic compass's implementation but it creates a nexus for the Economics-Security discourse.</li> </ul>
Liberal Intergovernmentalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDI will proceed smoothly or unevenly depending on the direction in which key interest groups such as PMSC exert their influence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outsourcing military activities and PMSC have resulted from armed forces reorganisation, since PMSC empower states without economic or technological resources to fight and fulfil international obligations;</li> <li>• Even if using PMSC without sufficient coordination raises legal issues and worries regarding private contractors in conflicts, these interest groups can be seen as likely shapers of the SC;</li> <li>• Since NATO represents the military alliance of excellence, it could be an obstacle to EEDI since the Union leans more towards the Transatlantic Alliance.</li> </ul>

Realism emerges as the theoretical framework that offers the most comprehensive elucidation for the activation of the Strategic Compass in 2022, specifically within the realm of European defence integration. The results of the analysis provide robust support for the realist hypotheses, which propose that the integration of European defence is predominantly motivated by external threats and security challenges. In this context, national security interests are given greater importance than supranational considerations. The analysis uncovers various crucial factors that are consistent with the realist

perspective and enhance comprehension of the activation of the Strategic Compass. The increased level of aggression exhibited by Russia towards Ukraine, which encompasses cyberattacks targeting European institutions, has notably amplified security apprehensions within the region. These actions serve to underscore the significance of maintaining a strong defence stance to effectively address external threats. Moreover, the analysis reveals that the destabilisation of the Afghan government possesses the capacity to exacerbate terrorism and refugee crises, thus emphasising the necessity for a more robust defence strategy. The aforementioned events have underscored the imperative for European nations to reevaluate their defence strategies and enhance their cooperation in light of evolving transatlantic dynamics and the ascent of China.

The introduction of the SC in 2022 should be seen as a response to the aforementioned challenges, aiming to bolster defence capabilities and establish a structured approach for manoeuvring through the intricate security environment.

Although neofunctionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism offer valuable insights, their explanatory power for the activation of the Strategic Compass is not as comprehensive as that of realism. The concept of neofunctionalism, which posits that the effectiveness of European defence integration is contingent upon integration in other domains, such as economics, encounters constraints arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. These circumstances present difficulties in conducting an impartial analysis of the economic landscape. Consequently, the neofunctionalist theories on economic spillover fail to provide a comprehensive explanation for the implementation of the Strategic Compass. In contrast, liberal intergovernmentalism recognises the influence exerted by interest groups, specifically private military and security companies (PMSCs), in promoting



the process of European defence integration. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the legal implications and apprehensions associated with the participation of private contractors in armed conflicts.

Furthermore, the preeminence of NATO presents a potential hindrance to the process of European defence integration, given the European Union's inclination towards the Transatlantic Alliance.

## **Conclusion**

This dissertation has explored the multifaceted realm of European defence integration, employing the theoretical perspectives of realism, neofunctionalism, and liberal intergovernmentalism. The objective was to gain an understanding of the factors propelling this intricate process. Through the analysis of the Permanent Structured Cooperation, the European Intervention Initiative, and the Strategic Compass, the investigation has tackled a profound exploration of the intricacies inherent in European defence policy.

The theoretical framework of realism has emerged as the most comprehensive approach in elucidating the activation of the three defence initiatives. The aforementioned stance places considerable emphasis on the paramount significance of external threats and security challenges as primary drivers for the impetus behind the process of EDI. The contemporary global landscape has witnessed a notable surge in acts of terrorism, regional conflicts, and assertive conduct exhibited by neighbouring states. These developments, coupled with the prevailing uncertainties surrounding the United States' commitment to European security, have prompted MSs to actively pursue intensified military cooperation. This concerted effort aims to bolster their collective defence capabilities, thereby ensuring the safeguarding of their shared interests and the preservation of regional stability. In contrast, a reduction in external challenges or alterations in national priorities may engender a concomitant diminution in endeavours towards integration. The present discourse revolves around the transition from a unipolar global order to a multipolar one, wherein the ascent of China and the concomitant decline of the United States have emerged as salient features. This transformative shift has not only impacted the global power dynamics but has also engendered a sense of insecurity within the European continent. Consequently, this has prompted a growing demand for a more autonomous European security

approach, as European nations seek to navigate the evolving geopolitical landscape.

Neofunctionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism have proven to be highly valuable in shedding light on the process of European defence integration. These two perspectives, while distinct in their approaches, offer complementary insights that contribute to a comprehensive understanding of this complex phenomenon. NF asserts that integration in one policy area will lead to integration in other areas, particularly placing significant emphasis on the linkages between economic and military security. The theory presumes that the process of economic integration can engender a series of spill-over effects, thereby fostering enhanced cooperation in the realm of defence policy. The establishment of the EDF and subsequent efforts aimed at the integration of the defence market serve as prime illustrations of advancements made in this particular trajectory. The research proceeded with the analysis of the economic spillover through the examination of the impact of external factors, namely the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. It is important to note that these aspects have posed significant constraints on the aforementioned inspection, thereby suggesting that economic spillover may not necessarily be the sole or prevailing determinant in the activation of defence initiatives.

The concept of liberal intergovernmentalism, in contrast, draws significant attention to the impact exerted by interest groups, including but not limited to the European Commission, private military security companies, national governments, and military organizations such as NATO, as they advocate for the advancement of defence integration. For instance, the manifestation of Airbus and other defence corporations' involvement in lobbying endeavours serves as a testament to the profound influence exerted by interest groups in the formulation and implementation of defence policy. However, it is important to acknowledge that apprehensions pertaining to the repercussions

on NATO and the prevailing dominance of the Transatlantic Alliance have emerged as plausible obstacles to the advancement of integration.

Nonetheless, the current research on the integration of European defence, utilising the theoretical frameworks of realism, neofunctionalism, and liberal intergovernmentalism, recognises specific constraints that necessitate careful examination. The study primarily concentrates on specific legal initiatives such as PESCO, EI2, and the SC as dependent variables, which are utilised as representative instances of European defence integration. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge the potential inclusion of alternative cases and diverse theoretical frameworks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

This work elucidates current advancements in the field by focusing namely on recent legal initiatives (2017-2022). However, the prioritisation of contemporary events may have resulted in a neglect of comprehensive examination of historical contexts and enduring patterns, potentially constraining the breadth of the study.

The selection of specific legal initiatives and theoretical perspectives for prioritisation in this study was also driven by practical considerations, such as the constraint of a limited word count. Consequently, certain facets of the research may not have been thoroughly expounded upon to the extent they merit. The limited word count may have restricted the examination of intricate connections and alternative interpretations that could have enhanced the analysis.

Notwithstanding these constraints, the current research provides significant contributions to the understanding of the dynamics involved in the integration of European defence. The emphasis placed on recent crucial legal initiatives and on the three theories highlights the significance of the research in the present era and the ever-evolving nature of security challenges in Europe. As

reiterated by Katzenstein, father of analytic eclecticism, it is useful to “complement, engage, and selectively utilize theoretical constructs embedded in contending research traditions to build complex arguments that bear on substantive problems of interest to both scholars and practitioners” (Sil & Katzenstein, 2010). By doing so, it is possible to produce a range of adaptable frameworks that are tailored to specific issues, while also recognising the ongoing effectiveness and significance of established research practices.

Undoubtedly, the ramifications of this investigation transcend the confines of scholarly dialogue. The acquisition of knowledge and understanding by policymakers and practitioners engaged in the realm of European defence policy holds the potential to yield substantial advantages. Such insights serve to enhance the quality of decision-making processes, rendering them more well-informed and efficacious in nature. The acquisition of a more profound comprehension of the fundamental factors propelling the process of European defence integration holds the potential to engender the development of a more unified and effective strategy for collective defence. The careful consideration of external challenges and shifts in the global order is of utmost importance for policymakers when formulating defence policies.

In light of future research endeavours, it is imperative to delve deeper into the realm of European defence integration by embarking upon an exploration of supplementary theoretical perspectives. Such a combination of case studies into an analytical framework would as well serve to enhance the understanding of the intricacies and nuances inherent in the process of EDI.

Finally, a comprehensive analysis of the potential ramifications entailed by the emergence of security challenges, specifically in the domains of cybersecurity and hybrid threats, concerning the intricate interplay between integration and disintegration, holds considerable promise as a fertile area of investigation for future scholarly undertakings.

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