

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.