EU Army: The Uphill Struggle for a Capable Defence Policy

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1. Introduction

In 1991 Mark Eyskens, Belgium’s Foreign Minister, made the rightly famous statement that ‘Europe is an economic giant, a political dwarf, and a military worm’. Not much has changed since then. At the moment, Europe is the second largest economy in the world (CIA, 2017). The Union’s political influence is negligible on the global scale, and its military ambitions remained ambitions. However, these strong ambitions go back until the end of Second World War. Whereas Britain has always been obstructing the European defence integration and, in more general, the European project, actually many consider Winston Churchill, a former British Prime-Minister during the Second World War, as the inventor of the modern idea of the European Army when he said that:

“here must be created, and in the shortest possible time, a real defensive front in Europe. Great Britain and United States must send large forces to the Continent. I have already made my appeal to Germany. France must again revive her famous army… All…must bear their share and do their best… we should make a gesture of practical and constructive guidance by declaring ourselves in favour of the immediate creation of a European army under a unified command, and in which we should all bear a worthy and honourable part. Therefore…I beg to move that: The Assembly…calls for the immediate creation of a unified European army subject to proper European democratic control and acting in full cooperation with the United States and Canada” (Kasonta, 2015).

Decades-long struggle followed Churchill’s words which involved the Pleven Plan, the biggest defence proposal and failure, in European history, five wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria to which the Union was unable to react on its own or at all, numerous smaller defence proposals and initiatives, such as the Western European Union, the Petersburg Tasks, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), the Helsinki Headline, the Berlin Plus agreement; which all have very limited success. Renaming the ESDP from European to Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) can be recognised as another bad sign. However, the idea of the European Army has never died.
The latest resurgence of the European Army idea was in 2015 when Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, said that: “An army like this would help us to better coordinate our foreign and defense policies, and to collectively take on Europe's responsibilities in the world” (Kasonta, 2015). Which is undoubtedly true, but history shows that the European defence integration is not an easily achievable goal. First of all, defence matters are one of the core elements of sovereignty, and none of the twenty-eight Member States (MSs) are willing to give it up. Although this argument in its simplicity is, of course, true, the issue of the lack of proper European defence integration is a much more complex than that. The European integration on defence matters is blocked by NATO-reflexes, different strategic cultures and the lack of military market integration, but due to the current global developments, it could gain a considerable momentum.

The methodology of the paper is based on analysis of previous scholarly works and official papers with a political and historical approach. Moreover, the structure of the paper is the following: in Chapter two, I will present the on-going debate revolving around the
European Army, showing both the pro- and anti-side, and provide a summary of the most important actors, institutions, concepts and mechanism of CSDP. Chapter three will give a detailed assessment of the previously identified obstacles, i.e. NATO-reflexes, the different European strategic cultures and the lack of military market integration. Chapter four goes on and contemplates on how the ‘Brexit’, Trump’s election as the President of the United States and other geopolitical developments affect and influence the Union and more specifically the CSDP. It also provides a short evaluation on how the European military integration could move forward.

2. The Progress of the CSDP So Far

2.1. ‘Do We Need a European Defence Policy?’ – The Debate Around the CSDP

The European Defence Policy has been slowly moving forward to achieving more cooperation since 1950, during which the contentious question of ‘do we need it?’ rekindles time and time again. What is as actual and lively debated as it was decades ago. There are two main camps divided on this question, a firm approval and a firm rejection, who cannot seem to be reconciled with each other.

Jan Techau (2015) refers to the two groups as Atlanticists and Gaullists. The former represents the no side, and the latter stands for the yes wanting more independence from the US. He argues that the Atlanticists have already won the debate because the supreme actor in European security is not the EU Member States (MSs), but the US who deters any threat with its nuclear arsenal. Moreover, even if the Union embarked on creating its own efficient military capabilities, it would be dangerous to pursue its goals without the approval of the US. Firstly, they cannot take responsibility for independent Union actions; secondly, the Union will never have the same nuclear deterrence power. Sten Rynning’s (2005) line of thought revolves around the same idea. His main argument is that the Union has not developed an adequate strategic culture and never will because the Union is inevitably a pluralist construction that will never acquire complete political unity and a sense of purpose. Moreover, this construction will become fragmented politically, if the Union counters the national decision-making on a sensitive sovereignty matter. He concludes that the Union was intended to be a peace project and it should remain this way, because the fragmentation can mean the end of the European project, and also that defence policy ambitions should be left to those who have the capacity to behave in such a way. Altough, Jan Zielonka (2015) admits that the Union can help its MSs to rationalise their defence spending, improve their cooperation and planning, and even to integrate armies, but he thinks that it should not lead to the creation of a supranational European
army. Firstly, he cannot see that who would give their lives for the Union and what ambitions could be achieved by it, because the peace-keeping missions are already successful and Russia cannot be deterred without nuclear weapons. Secondly, Zielonka argues that it is more advantageous for the Union to be a civilian power than that of a military. That way the Union, for instance, managed its enlargement to the East without Russia seeing it as a military threat and the military power status would bring great responsibility to the Union for which it is not ready – yet as some would add.

Although the Gaullists, or the yes side, agrees on that we need a common or at least more cooperation on the defence policy; they also admit that at the moment achieving it is beyond the capabilities of the Union and there is a long road ahead of us with hard and difficult choices. Anand Menon (2015) mentions that while little progress has been made with the European army, which is regarded as a born dead idea by the Atlantisicts, it seems remarkably resilient as it is still on the agenda after 70 years and many failed attempts. He has two main reasons for the (yet) unachieved European Army. Firstly, the NATO, aka the US, is still doing the heavy lifting. Secondly, the European military market is inefficient which is rooted in the stubborn assumption that national budgets must be spent on a domestic level without any collaboration among the MSs. On the one hand, armies are the core element of sovereignty, but on the other hand, that way the European military market cannot benefit from economies of scale. At the same time, Tomáš Weiss (2016) points out that the European military decision-making is working basically on an ad-hoc basis. He argues that this a consequence of deeper problems at national levels which are the shrinking defence budgets and its inefficient spending and the poorly organised defence sector. Biava, Drent and Herd (2011) argues that the Union can become a military power due to the fact there are successful CSDP missions where the Union used military force to achieve political objectives. Therefore, they say that the question is not whether the Union can become a military power or not, but how it will realise its potential in the future based on the magnitude, frequency and purpose of its missions.

2.2. The Current State of the CSDP

Although, it seems like the Union has not made much progress in the field of CSDP, as a matter of fact nowadays the Union has more than ever before, but it is also important to mention that they often do not meet the expectations.

The Union’s common defence and military ambitions are encoded in the Treaty on European Union (2009). Firstly, Article 24(1) allows for creating policies that could lead to a European Army. That phrase is never actually used, but they refer to it as a common defence
which is only vaguely defined. Article 42(1) states that the CSDP will be an integral part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and it will provide operational capacity drawing on civilian and military assets. In the case of armed aggression on one of the MSs Article 42(7) calls for a collective defence where MSs obligated to assist each other by all means in their power; however, this article also states that NATO remains the foundation of MSs defence.

Also with the new Treaty, the position of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR) was created. This person holds this position of the Commissioner for External Relations and a Vice-President in the Commission. The HR conducts and contributes to the CFSP and ensures the implementation of the adopted decisions. Also, the HR represents the Union in matters relating to CFSP, maintain communication with third parties on the Union’s behalf. The HR unique role and work is assisted by the European External Action Service (EEAS) (Article 27(3) TEU), they prepare policy proposals and implement them after the approval of the Council. It also works as a network that links the Council, the Commission and the MSs, but it has autonomy from these institutions and actors (Rehrl, Weisserth, 2013).

Another important agency in the field of CSDP is European Defence Agency (EDA) which was established in 2004 under joint Council initiative (EDA is based on Articles 42(3) and 45 TEU). EDA is under the control of the Council, and the Head of the Agency is the HR. The agency’s decision-making body is the Steering Board which is composed of the twenty-six Defence Ministers\(^1\) of the MS and the Head of Agency (HR). Moreover, EDA has four main tasks: 1. Enhance defence capabilities; 2. Promotion of Defence research and technology; 3. Promotion of military cooperation; 4. Creation of a European Defence Equipment Market. The general objectives of these tasks can be summarised as a more integrated approach that pushes for more cooperation which will result in an industrial restructuring and a continental-wide demand and supply market (Rehrl, Weisserth, 2013).

Another important ingredient of the CSDP is the battlegroups. The Battlegroup Concept is relatively new as it was agreed on in 2004 and by 2007 it reached its full operational capability. A Battlegroups is a small battalion-sized force with combat support with approximately 1500 personnel. It is an effective, credible, coherent force capable of stand-alone operations and most importantly it is rapidly deployable (see the figure below). The Battlegroups are on standby for six months, and they should be sustainable for thirty days which

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\(^1\) This due to the Danish opt-out on defence matters.
can be extended to hundred and twenty days (European Council, 2009). However, they have never been deployed so far.

(Regarding the Battlegroups, the European Council, 2009, p. 2)

Even though displaying the capabilities of the Battlegroups remain for the future, it does not mean that the Union has not taken part in military and civilian operations. As a matter of fact, since 2003 the Union launched twenty-nine missions of which eleven is still on-going. Operations have been taking place in Africa and Asia (the Middle-East) and Europe (the Balkans, Mediterranean Sea). If we leave aside the civilian operations, there are nine military and one hybrid mission. Currently, there are five running missions out of the total ten. These are EUFOR ALTHEA (since 2004 and this is the hybrid mission as it was originally a NATO operation), EUTM Somalia (since 2008), EU NAVFOR Atlanta (since 2010), EUTM Mali (since 2013) and EUTM RCA (since 2016) (Giumelli, Cusumano, 2015; European External Action Service, 2016). The Union decided to acquire the competence to intervene and sustain its presence outside of its borders when its leaders had realised that they are unable to address emergencies even in their close neighbourhood after the Kosovo occurred between 1998-1999 (Giumelli, Cusumano, 2015). These operations started before the Battlegroups Concept; the first operation was launched in 2003 under the name of EUFOR Concordia in Macedonia.

It is also worth mentioning that the military and civilian operations are financed through the ATHENA mechanism which was established in 2004 and based on Article 41 TEU which forbids the financing of these operations through Union budget. The MSs provide the funds which are based on GNI scale. Currently, the contributions are ranging from 0.5% to 20% per MS. Thus, it is logical that a Special Committee, composed of representatives of the MSs, manages ATHENA by unanimous decisions. Moreover, an administrator and an accounting officer are appointed for three years by the Secretary General of the Council. Their task is to help the work and functioning of ATHENA (Rehrl, Weisserth, 2013; European Council, 2014).
3. The Obstacles in the Path

3.1. NATO-Reflexes

NATO was established in 1949 serving as a collective defence organisation for Europe most of which protection is provided by the US. The collective defence mechanism is based on Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which states that:

“an armed attack against one or more of [the NATO members] in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them […] will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.”

Article 5 is the main reason why Europe has not perceived any direct military threat to its territories since the end of the Second World War. NATO allowed for the European nations to rebuild their countries in peace which made NATO invaluable for Europe and it still is in the 21st century. However, the US doing the heavy lifting the resulted in the dismantling of the European militaries after the Second World War. This is not a new phenomenon, in 1956 the Suez Canal Crisis already showed that the European powers (France and the UK) were unable to execute foreign military operations on their own successfully. Since then the situation has only been spiralling down.

Meanwhile, NATO and the US became pivotal parts of the European security, Europe does not contribute much to the US defence policy. Some voices in the States argue that the rich Europeans can pay for their own security and they do not add much to American firepower anyway (Keohane, 2012). Others, such as the newly elected president of the United States, Donald Trump, continuously call upon the NATO members that their spending does not reach the 2% benchmark. However, this not new, for instance, in 2011 Robert Gates, Secretary of Defense during the first Obama administration warned Europe that the post-Cold War generation could abandon its European allies if they do not start increasing their military spending and consequently their military capabilities (Traynor, 2011). This seems like to happen as the economic importance is shifting from West to East and the US is pivoting to Asia increasing its powers there while reducing those in Europe (Keohane, 2012; European Commission, 2015).
However, it would be premature to declare that the Union is left alone. There are at least three reasons. Firstly, the “security and prosperity of Europe is vital for the [US as] the transatlantic economy accounts for half of [the] global GDP and nearly a third of [the] global trade” (Keohane, 2012, p. 2). Secondly, Middle-East will remain a key region for the US for which Europe serves as a base to project its power. Lastly, the added power of NATO deters Russia from any direct attack on NATO members (Keohane, 2012).

The question arises here: can NATO defeat Russia in an armed conflict? According to the simulations of the RAND Corporation “NATO’s current posture is woefully inadequate” (Shlapak, 2017, p. 1). The fastest victory of the Russians was achieved in a day and a half, while the longest NATO forces were able to stand their grounds was sixty hours. Their estimate is that NATO needs

“seven brigades, including, importantly three armor-heavy brigades—armor brigade combat teams (ABCTs), in U.S. Army parlance—in addition to the national defense forces of the Baltic states, and properly supported with fires, fixed- and rotary-wing aviation, engineering, logistics, and other enablers, and with adequate headquarters capacity for planning and command” (Shlapak, 2017, p. 4)
to hold off the Russian offensive for 28 days on the capitals of Latvia or Estonia. Of course, to counterattack and restore the pre-war borders NATO needs another nine to fourteen brigades with the proper support and enablers. However, the required force is hardly achievable at the moment, because most European NATO armies are unprepared to generate such force on short notice (Shlapak, 2017).

The European military inability to act is also a result of the American policy which is called the ‘three Ds’ which stands for decoupling, discrimination and duplication. The term itself was introduced by Madeleine K. Albright, Secretary of State during the Clinton administration, in 1998. She argues that we have to avoid these by all means necessary. Firstly, NATO is the expression of the transatlantic link, and if Europe goes off its own it will loosen the common sense of purpose and interest. Secondly, the unnecessary duplication of NATO forces and infrastructure with the limited and declining European security budgets which would be everything, but efficient (Kapchan, 2010). Thirdly, Europe cannot discriminate against European states that are not EU members. While these American principles and perspective have been tying the hands of the Europeans, their fragmented security strategies and visions also stand in the way of starting their closer defence cooperation outside of NATO.
3.2. Different National Security Strategic Cultures and Dropping Military Spending
The most salient difference between the US and the Union regarding defence and security is that the US has a common strategic culture, the Union has 28 different national defence strategies. The 28 European security strategies come with various objectives and preparedness. Not to mention that most of these documents are “incoherent, derivative and devoid of the sense of a common European geostrategic situation, and often long out-of-date” (De France, Witney, 2013, p. 1). It is virtually impossible to harmonise the defence cultures of the MSs while there are “28 independent national command structures with the same number of national support structures and infrastructure, [and] each of the 28 European armed forces trains in its particular, independent way, following national doctrines and idiosyncrasies” (Ballester, 2013, p. 30).

The following table shows the comprehensiveness and the currency (which is based on their publication date) of the European national security strategies. They are put into six categories, which are: grand strategists, strategists, globalists, localists, abstentionists and drifters.

![European security strategies by comprehensiveness and currency](image-url)

(de France, Witney, 2013, p. 8)
No surprise that France and the UK have the most far-reaching strategies, earning rightly so the Grand Strategists title. Given the fact that they were colonial powers not so long ago, they retained the ability to think globally and the will to act globally. The French strategy assesses the geostrategic trend which is the power shift to the East and decline of the traditional Western powers and the growing involvement of non-state actors in security. It identifies risks threats and opportunities, and it aims to find the suitable role of the French armed forces. Similarly, the British strategy shows what role the UK wants to take on the global stage, but the ends and the means are less clear than in the French one. It identifies cyber security and terrorism as the two major threats – although their solution involves aircraft carriers for which they were criticised. Both strategies realise that the line between internal and external security are more and more blurry, if not even relevant anymore. Another commonality is that they wish to be able to execute autonomous actions and project force outside the national borders (De France, Witney, 2013).

Although Strategists and Globalists do not reach the level of France and the UK, they manage to present some innovative analysis and strategic thinking. However, these strategies tend to list risks and threats that feature in EU, NATO and UN documents, and they fall short on giving answers of how to react with their armed forces (De France, Witney, 2013).

The Localists’ main concern is to keep their countries territorial integrity intact to which Russia is either named as a threat or as a potential partner – Sweden also identifies Russia as a threat. These countries’ strategies usually rely on the leading NATO and EU wisdom, which means in practicality that the risks and threats identified by those organisations are added to them, but they are not dealt with at all. Moreover, any strategic planning outside of their borders involves the NATO and the US (De France, Witney, 2013).

Lastly, Abstentionists and Drifters are those countries who decided to call off any defence and security thinking and strategic planning. Austria, Malta and Luxembourg went to such extent that they do not even possess fully-fledged defence ministries. However, those who have are not doing any better either: the Greek strategy was published in 1997, Italy’s was in 2002, but they do publish a yearly report on allocation of resources on defence matters. The Belgian and Luxembourgian strategies are just summaries of statements by defence ministers and lists of defence laws. Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg and Portugal have not even translated their strategies into English. (De France, Witney, 2013).

Seeing this state of affairs makes crystal clear that the Union’s MSs cannot decide on a single European strategy as long as their security goals are deeply fragmented on the national level. While France and the UK want to project power outside of Europe, others do not have
such high aspirations. On the one hand, the Baltic countries, Poland and Sweden’s main concern is to be safe from the potential Russian aggression, on the other hand the Southern and Southern-Eastern MSs “focus more on the increasing security challenges in North Africa and the Middle East” (European Commission, 2015, p. 4). At the same time, Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal, Italy, Greece, Bulgaria give up on any military ambition, and the remaining countries are more or less just trying to maintain the make-believe. MSs cannot agree on the need for the military force and how it should be used until they give up the idea that the European security strategy should be based on their national strategy.

Consequently, the Union is unable to produce a strategy which would serve at least as a guideline to the MSs. The European Security Strategy was published in 2003, but it did not bring any real impetus to the developments, but it was rightly praised in its time. Although, there were attempts on the behalfs of the Commission, Parliament and France to revalue the European strategy the MSs always secluded the idea since then an unofficial European Global Strategy was released in 2013, financed by Italy, Poland, Spain, and Sweden (De France, Witney, 2013). However, in 2016 The Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy was presented by Federica Mogherini, the current HR. It identifies five priorities for EU foreign policy, these are: “[1.] the security of the Union; [2.] state and societal resilience to the East and South of the EU; [3.] the development of an integrated approach to conflicts; [4.] cooperative regional orders; and [5.] global governance for the 21st century” (Legrand, 2017). Undoubtedly, this is an important development, but it seems like there cannot be a single European strategy until the MSs are willing to at least assign some common goals.

On the top of all that European governments gradually decrease their military budgets, while the rest of the world has engaged in an arms race, especially Russia, China and Saudi-Arabia. Nevertheless, the Union is still the second largest military spender, with €210 billion, after the US, with €460 billion, but its military strength does not translate anywhere near that of the US or Russia. That is due to the lack of common European objective and fragmentation of military structure and market.

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2 Interestingly, the total Asian military spending, roughly €257 billion, already exceeded the Union’s in 2012 (MacDonald, 2013).
3 Both in 2014.
3.3. Lack of Military Market Integration

While the European project gradually broke down the various economic barriers between the MSs, the defence markets have remained excluded from the process of integration. MSs have a preference for their national markets for procuring defence supplies. Also, they are reluctant to give up their strategic industrial base, technology, other information, and a high number of jobs which are probably highly specialised. Therefore, the acquisition of defence equipment and armaments is profoundly different from purchasing goods from the civil sector. It is understandable because security is one of the core elements of sovereignty, has always been a sensitive subject since MSs’ defence and freedom depend on it (Briani, 2013). However, how is this possible, as in theory the European project should have opened every market within the Union? Well, Article 346 TFEU, present and unchanged since the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (1957), allows for the preservation of information and supplies in the security sector. It states that:

“(a) no Member State shall be obliged to supply information the disclosure of which it considers contrary to the essential interests of its security;

(b) any Member State may take such measures as it considers necessary for the protection of the essential interests of its security which are connected with the production of or trade in arms, munitions and war material; such measures shall
not adversely affect the conditions of competition in the internal market regarding products which are not intended for specifically military purposes.”

Although Article 346 should be only be used in a legitimate case of confidentiality and security breach, due to its vague wording calling upon it, MSs can avoid opening up their defence market for the Union. This resulted in the fact that there is no European single defence market, but twenty-eight national markets (Briani, 2013).

Consequently, these markets cannot benefit from economies of scale, pooling and sharing and R&D and R&T cooperation, at the same time they duplicate (or rather multiple) the military structures and HQs which leads to inefficient spending. There are indications that the cost of non-Europe in the defence field may cost the Union €120 (more than half of the total budget) billion annually (Briani, 2013, Ballester, 2013).

The differences are eye-catching if we compare the spending and the efficiencies of the European and American militaries. According to the Heritage institution’s data, the efficiency of the European forces only 15% that of the US. Which would not be a problem if Europeans had 15% of the US budget at their disposal. However, Europeans spend €170-210 billion annually on their defence which is a little less than half of the American budget, €380-460 billion. Ideally, this 15% efficiency should come with 15% of the same budget, which would be €57-69 billion (Ballester, 2013).

These numbers are even more shocking if we consider that the US had cut its expenditure on military personnel by approximately 35%. Their aim was to create a slimmer, more flexible and more deployable army, which was followed by the French and British armies, most of the European countries struggle to make the transition from the traditional Cold War armies which were focused on static territorial defence to the model of deploying troops abroad. Although, their personnel numbers decreased by 40% since 1990, the proportion of expenditure has remained on the same level (Ballester, 2013). More than half of the total of European military budget is still spent on personnel, while for instance only 20% is spent on Equipment Procurement and R&D or R&T. What is more is that since 2006 R&D and R&T funds dropped by almost 30% and there is no collaboration on these matters as roughly 90% of these investments are single national programmes which are not efficient own their own (European Commission, 2015).
While EDA’s task is to enhance the cooperation in this field, it faces severing limitations by its current low funding. EDA’s available funds were expended from ~€20 million (2005) to ~€30-31 million (since 2010 up to date). However, since most of EDA’s budget is spent on the personnel, from €7,45 million to €17,70 million; EDA can only allocate €2,49-7,37 million for

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4 Due to the low quality of the original figure, I decided to recreate it.
research projects and studies (European Defence Agency [EDA], 2008; EDA, 2016), which definitely not qualifies as adequate budget for such an important task. Therefore, it is not a surprise that they have difficulties increasing the numbers of European collaborations. Increasing EDA’s relevance is blocked by certain MSs, especially the UK, whose aim is to keep the agency around as a meeting place for MSs on defence matters (Briani, 2013).

A good example of the poorly made research investments and duplication in Europe is the aviation industry. One the one hand, there were three separate European programmes to develop jet fighters, namely Gripen, Rafale and Eurofighter⁵, which all together cost €29,57 billion and resulted in 1205 aircraft. On the other hand, the American JSF programme (which also involved some European countries) cost €19.34 billion and produced 3003 aircraft. Therefore, Europe produced 1789 aircraft fewer, which are also divided among three models, for €10,23 billion more than the US (Ballester, 2013).

Ultimately, the budget and technological inefficiencies stem from the fragmentation of the European defence markets of which integration would be a crucial point of a closer European defence cooperation. While defence markets do not open up there will be twenty-seven national command structures, and the forces will be trained separately and apply different national doctrines. Working jointly on the armament programmes and using the same equipment are the first steps towards creating interoperability between the European armies.

4. CSDP in the Future

4.1. Why Do We Need a Revised Defence Policy? What Is Ahead of Us?

After the Second World War, while France, Britain and over all Europe lost their global power, America and Russia (in the form of USSR) emerged as the two new superpowers in the world. The era of Pax Britannica had ended, and Pax Americana took over which is still applies today. Eventually, the USSR fell leaving the US as the only superpower. For decades, the US has been following an interventionist doctrine by which it projected its presence everywhere in the world and promoted democracy with more or less success. What Europe felt from this is the American defence umbrella through NATO. For a long time, neither politicians nor voters have been considering defence policy important on their agenda, since they do not regard themselves being in direct military threat, which is the number one reason in defence policy. Because of this, like an unused muscle, the European militaries rapidly devolved.

³ Gripen was Swedish, Rafale was French and Eurofighter was a collaboration among Germany, France, Spain, Italy and the UK.
However, the global balance and relations have changed. On the one hand, the US is slowly returning to its protectionist behaviour from the 1920s, which will not mean the end of *Pax Americana*, but it will surely leave its mark on the global situation. During the Obama administrations, the signs were visible already as for instance the US chose to lead from behind in the Libyan conflict in 2015. At the same time, President Trump built his campaign on protectionism with populist rhetoric which earned him the presidency. What is relevant for Europe is the cancellation of the TTIP\(^6\); Trump’s repeated scolding for European countries not spending 2% of their GDP on defence\(^7\) and calling NATO outdated. On the other hand, while the US influence is declining, other non-Western countries are gaining momentum. China is on the rise both economically and military making it the next potential superpower – if it is not one already. Its aggressive claims on the South China Sea shows that China has the ambitions to become one. At the same time, Russia is trying to gain back its power and influence on the European and global stage openly and aggressively. A clear evidence of it the annexation of Crimea in 2014, or the Russian hacking and fake news interference during the 2016’s American president elections. Turkey, India and Saud-Arabia are spending unprecedented sums on their military. However, neither these countries, nor China are able to project global forces, but having widely different views than the liberal Western world, it makes harder for Europe to work together with these countries.

Lastly, migration and terrorism emerged as a severe issue for Europe in 2015 which were poorly handled by both the MSs and the Union. None of which seem to be a one-time occurring problem. Firstly, Italy and other Southern MSs still face immense pressure from Africa and the Middle-East. This pressure eased after the EU-Turkey deal was made (2016) to stop the migration outside of the Union’s borders. Secondly, since 2014 a new form of terrorism, namely Jihadist, appeared in the Union, which are inevitably connected to the ISIS in the Middle-East. Numerous attacks have been carried out in France, Belgium, Germany and the UK with hundreds of casualties. Despite all the efforts of the MSs and the Union, they cannot fight an invisible enemy hiding among the Muslim minority. In both cases the same principle applies, i.e. the European solutions only treat the visible issues. Meanwhile, the root-causes should be taken care of instead in Africa and the Middle-East.

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6 TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) was a proposed free trade agreement between the EU and the US about which the negotiations stopped after Trump’s election. Moreover, Trump withdraw with an executive order from TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership) which was an already signed free trade agreement between the US and countries in the Pacific region (such as Australia, Japan).

7 The only exceptions are Britain, Greece, Poland and Estonia.
Hence, one can rightly ask the question: where do these developments put Europe on the global stage? The Union and the States are drifting apart, the American hegemon seems to come to its end, and China is more and more active and independent. In contrast with American-led globalism, a certain segmentation is occurring where everybody walks their own paths. In this changing world which is full of uncertainty and new defence challenges and where the Union and Europe cannot count on the support of the US as much as it used to. Also, as some MSs had realised already defence is not about strict territorial defence anymore, but dealing with external and internal risks and threats as well. Therefore, security on every level is something that deserves more attention and cannot be mismanaged.

4.2. Internal Developments and Britain’s Role in the Union

The European integration has been gradually progressing to achieve more federalism since its conception in 1950. However, lately, the Europhobe voices strengthened in Eastern, Southern Europe and the UK criticising the Union for its monetary, political and decision-making problems. These criticisms are more than well-founded, but they overlook one important factor. At the moment, the Union is in a stage of integration where it is not a fully-fledged federation, but it is more than a mere intergovernmental institution. The Union is more of a federation than the Europhobes, Intergovernmentalists or Atlanticists would admit. However, being a supranational institution composed of twenty-eight MSs with growing competencies of a federation, but not being a federation leads to tensions and problems which cannot be maintained for a long time. At this point, the issues can be solved either by reversing the European project to some extent or pushing the integration forward with a consensus.

Logically, more integration eventually has to involve the defence policy as well. It has been lagging behind for decades but has survived many fail attempts. Failing and retrying is an essential part of the European project, almost nothing has succeeded for the first time. For instance, similarities can be drawn between the progresses of defence policy and the monetary integration. The plans for a monetary union was already on the table in the 1970s in the form of the Werner Plan which inevitably failed. However, the European Monetary System with the Exchange Rate Mechanism followed, which were far from perfect, but it showed that MSs need some integration monetary-wise. Then, in the 1990s, under the direction of Jacques Delors, French President of the Commission, the European leaders established the European Monetary Union (EMU) in three stages, which concluded in the introduction of the common currency in 2002. At the time, no individual European country was alone strong enough to survive the consistent speculation against their currency, which did not allow for ‘freedom’ of monetary
policy. They realised that it was better to admit that they need to cooperation and integration to be stronger and continue the EMU, or each country will face immense consequences. The circumstances provided the adequate impetus, and the same logic applies to the defence policy. No individual European country is alone strong enough to carry out any major military operations, defend its borders, or in general face with the new challenges of the new century; thus, they do not have ‘freedom’ in security or defence policy. Immense security consequences can follow suit in the future if the MSs do not admit the necessity of more cooperation and integration in defence policy. This integration has been blocked by the UK for a long time, but with its exit from the Union it can catch up with the other developments.

Indeed, the relevance of the ‘Brexit’ cannot be neglected regarding the European defence policy. On the one hand, the UK is one of the strongest members of the Union by being the fifth largest economy in the world and having the most prepared and competent military and security strategy – next to France. On the other hand, the British position has always been aiming to block or at least slow down the European integration. This goes back a long way, the British had preferred to stay out of the continental disputes and agreements, their only concern was to maintain the balance of power on the continent which allowed them to manage their empire without threats from the continent; but in the 1960s the UK applied two times for the membership of the EEC and also in 1973 when they could join finally. Their application was for the reasons that the UK’s global power dramatically declined, the EEC was economically successful, while the UK was not, the UK wished to influence the EEC policies and the UK feared to become excluded from Europe and its growth. Nonetheless, the UK has never given up on its initial behaviour and attempted to take a position where it is not fully integrated into the continental developments (the opt-out from the common currency⁸) and still can follow its ambitions as an empire, or global power at least.

Naturally, this means that a federation-like integration of European militaries is a red line for the UK. Despite its military power, the UK ranks just the fifth as a contributor to the CSDP missions; it blocks the expenditure of EDA’s budget, it vetoed the establishment of the military HQ in Brussels (Institute for Government, 2017) and it actively promotes the three Ds principle. However, all of these obstacles will be removed as soon as the UK officially left the Union. Surely, the UK is not the only MSs that more or less rigorously has been obstructing the integration on defence matters, but with the UK gone the less powerful MSs cannot exert enough power anymore to continue to do so.

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⁸ Along with Denmark and Sweden.
4.3. What Might Be the Way Forward for Europe and the CSDP?

With the populist induced Brexit and the populist Trump’s election as President shook the Union which is increasingly left alone in a more insecure global environment. However, the people of Europe and the MSs are reacting to these developments. While many prophesied the populist victories during the European elections in the Netherlands and France, these predictions were false. Geert Wilders did not repeat Trump’s performance, and France elected Emmanuel Macron as President who is a strong supporter of the pro-European movement and promised to revive the Franco-German motor and kickstart the European project again with numerous reforms.

However, how all this translates to the level of CSDP? Since the Second World War Europe had enjoyed the protection of the American hegemon and defence umbrella and could put its security on the bottom of its agenda. However, the Union must face with new circumstances that are occurring globally and locally, such as the loss of security by the American protectionist turn, China, Russia and other Eastern powers’ rise, migration, terrorism and Brexit. These circumstances also come with the hard realisation of that Europe is not independent security- and defence-wise and cannot neglect that fact anymore.

Whereas upgrading every MSs militaries is virtually impossible both economically and politically, increasing the cooperation and integration of the CSDP is a viable way under the direction of Germany and France. What is more, the Benelux countries, Italy, Spain, Poland and Hungary are also supportive of the idea (European Commission, 2015). Even though MSs has been keen on rejecting the idea of the European defence integration for a long time; they cannot maintain much longer their stubborn stand on it, because the costs of the segmentation are gradually moving them to the direction of forced integration (Briani, 2013).

However, how should this progress go? Clearly, it should start on the economic level and let so-called ‘spill-over’ effect exert its influence. Therefore, first and foremost, the integration should start with boosting the funds of EDA and opening up the European defence markets. By this EDA could harmonise the investments and collaborations of R&D and R&T programmes, and the Union could benefit from the economies of scale. Just these two steps would help the Union to harmonise the military equipment and manufacture more units while it would stop a lot of unnecessary spending and help to bolster up the interoperability between the national armies.

Secondly, the decision-making process must be simplified for a more efficient and easily controllable European force. At the moment, decisions on CSDP are made by the Council and
the European Parliament by unanimity (Legrand, 2017) which means initiatives can be easily blocked even by one MSs or the Parliament. Moreover, the CSDP’s mission planning is overly complicated with two stages of independent multi-level planning by various bodies, like Political and Security Committee, General Affairs and External Relations Council, EU Military Staff, Political and Security Committee and there is more (Mattelaer, 2008). The lengthy decision-making creates a situation where it is almost impossible to give a rapid reaction to a crisis. For this reason, the Battlegroups, which are theoretically deployable in two weeks, has never been used. If the MSs and the Union want to achieve a capable defence policy its decision-making process much change, which will mean an aching loss of sovereignty, but a more secure Europe. While the Quality Majority Voting system showed that it works very well within the European Framework and makes decision-making much faster and smoother, it could also be applied to CSDP.

Lastly, as once the armies are converging to each other in interoperability and on the technological and equipment level, it would make sense to create a new European security strategy that is contributed and, hopefully, endorsed by every MSs. Not developing national strategies could also push the integration forward. It is crucial to understand that the European security is deeply interconnected: if a crisis, for instance, hits the Southern MSs it will affect the Northern and Eastern MSs as well and vice versa. However, if not every MSs is on board with the integration of the European militaries, Article 42(6) TEU can be called upon, which states that:

“Those Member States whose military capabilities fulfil higher criteria and which have made more binding commitments to one another in this area with a view to the most demanding missions shall establish permanent structured cooperation within the Union framework”.

This allows for the willing MSs to start their integration while other MSs cannot hold them back. It is highly possible other MSs sooner or later would join this initiative. However, it has not happened yet (European Commission, 2015).

5. Conclusion

While the closer European defence cooperation and integration has always been struggling since the 1950s, the idea itself has never died even though many failures occurred along the way and Britain constantly blocked these initiatives. The most common argument against the
European military integration is the loss of sovereignty which has solid foundations. However, the situation is much more complex which requires historical, political and economic approaches. The European defence integration faces three obstacles. Firstly, since the Second World War, the US provided the European security by its nuclear umbrella and unrivalled global army. Later on, the US tried to keep the integration down by the three Ds. At the same time, as security was not important for the European leaders and people, the European armies gradually dismantled and most of the MSs do not even have a capable security strategy. Moreover, the different MSs have different problems to face, France and the UK desperately wants to be able to project power outside of Europe, The Baltic and other Northern and Eastern countries see Russia as the biggest risk and threat to themselves and Europe, the Southern countries and struggling with migration crisis and Belgium, France, Germany and the UK has to face with an increasing number of terrorist attacks. At the same time, some MSs, for example, Austria, completely gave up on maintaining an army. Lastly, due to Article 346 TFEU, MSs refuse to open up their defence markets and prefer their own national military manufacturers. Also, they do not conduct joint R&D and R&T programmes. Consequently, they cannot benefit from the economies of scale, and European armies face interoperability issues, as each national army uses its own equipment.

However, current global and local developments, such the American protectionist turn, Brexit and the rise of the Eastern powers, who spend an unprecedented amount of money on their militaries expansion and development, put the Union in a truly new position. As the American security umbrella is gone and one of the strongest economic and military power of the Union decided to leave, they are without any capable defence power.

The question is how the Union will handle this situation. While the debate among Federationists and Intergovernmentalists on how the Union should function resurfaced regarding the European Army. However, the Union is further down on the road to become a fully-fledged federation than many would admit. Therefore, the only reasonable way forward seems to narrow the European defence integration which will not be easy, but if MSs wants to keep their security, they have to work jointly on the interconnected European defence and security.


North Atlantic Treaty.


Treaty on the European Union.

Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.