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**RECONCEPTUALISING THE EUROPEAN
UNION'S COMMON SECURITY AND
DEFENCE POLICY: SCRIPTING THE
ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN ARMY**

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Thesis summary:

In a context where war doctrines are unfortunately still useful in making credible deterrence of potential adversaries, and where states such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are openly threatening the United States of America, or the Russian Federation is conducting real war theatres in Ukraine, on the eastern border of the European Union, the latter is facing relatively limited results in terms of progress of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Established since 1999 with the aim of strengthening the European Union's military capabilities through concrete actions of cooperation and strategic integration, its progress after more than two decades still seems limited and lacks the capacity of regional military autonomy. Despite the recent defence initiatives such as PESCO, CARD, EDF, or the Strategic Compass – classified as a whole new level of ambition for the European Union in assuming its defence responsibilities, the ultimate goal of CSDP still remains uncertain. In this respect, the paper aims to clarify the extent to which cultural barriers, political interests, and the tendency toward individual state sovereignty will still continue to fuel the dependence on the United States in military defence matters, as well as the desirability or even the necessity for the European Union to build up its own army.

From a methodological point of view, the paper is of a qualitative type, proposing through an exploratory approach (carried out between February 2021 and July 2022) the inclusion of data and forecasts for testing such a major administrative approach as the scenario of creating the European Union Army. The proposed practical analysis is divided into two sections: 1) a qualitative one, based on a wide range of official data and forecasts obtained through interviews with various academic and institutional personalities, whose expertise is intended to make a substantial contribution to the argumentation of the questions raised in this paper; and 2) a quantitative one, using research and data collection tools such as questionnaires. The latter aimed at gathering the degree of understanding of the current security and defence context of Europeans, as well as the desirability of implementing such a common defence scenario.

In order to limit the perspective of the research and to position it as clearly as possible within the spectrum of the main theories of international relations, the paper proposes to present its findings through the filter of liberalism, a theory that favors institutionalization and integration processes. Also known as complex interdependence theory or liberal internationalism, liberalism

is based on the belief that the current international system is much more capable of generating a peaceful world order than relying on direct force (such as military action), with an emphasis on international cooperation as a means of promoting the interests of individual nations. Liberals believe that the total negative consequences of force, such as economic and human losses, far outweigh its potential benefits, given that in today's increasingly globalized society the use of economic tactics (such as multilateral trade agreements and international diplomacy) can be far more effective in advancing political interests than the threat of force – but indeed, unfortunately not always enough. Still, promoting clear established values and international institutions that regulate this order, liberalism points out that the broad ties between states have made it difficult to define national interest and have diminished the usefulness of military power, while globalization, the rapid growth of communications technology, and the intensification of international trade have meant that states can no longer rely on simple power politics to decide over issues, and therefore international cooperation in as many areas as possible will remain a primary interest.¹ In terms of its time limits, the paper extends its theoretical approach approximately to March 2022, but does not cover theoretical or practical notions following the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation.

The list of bibliographical references that make up the theoretical foundation of the research is based on a number of 14 general works and 59 books, studies, and specialized articles written by recognized personalities such as Alessandro Dal Lago, Maxime H. A. Larive, Jolyon Howorth, Sven Biscop, or Sverre Lodgaard, and published by renowned publishing houses such as Routledge or Taylor & Francis. The research also includes 10 official documents such as the Maastricht Treaty, the Amsterdam Treaty, the Lisbon Treaty, the Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, EUR-Lex – Access to European Union Law, Eurostat public finance statistics, and UN Security Council Resolutions. Moreover, it also contains a number of 52 electronic sources composed mainly of official pages of institutions such as the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of the European Union, the Council of Europe,

¹ *Online source*, „Norwich University Online / Academic Programs / Resources / Key Theories of International Relations”, <https://online.norwich.edu/academic-programs/resources/key-theories-of-international-relations>, accessed in 08.06.2022.

the European Defence Agency, the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the European Defence Fund (EDF), or the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD).

Initiated with the aim of making a scientific contribution to the Common Defense and Security Policy of the European Union, the work is structured into five large sections (namely an introductory part, two theoretical parts, a practical part, and the final section allocated to conclusions), uses the survey method as a methodological research tool and is structured around three basic questions:

1. Does the creation of a European Union army really represent an opportunity for political, economic, and social stability, or would such a military force lead to a certain extent to regional isolation and even more international differences and tensions?

2. What would be the global diplomatic impact of the European Union Army on the current military alliances and what mitigating measures of possible negative effects could be applied?

3. To what extent is the current Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Union affected by the exit of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Brexit) from the EU?

In line with the aspects mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, the introductory part begins therefore with methodological notions that set out the directions and objectives of the research, and present its fundamentals such as the motivation and interrogations of the research, the limits, the expected results, as well as the possible risks associated with the selected topic, and is continued by two theoretical chapters.

The first theoretical chapter provides an overall perspective on European security and defence, using not only direct historical landmarks on the evolution of CSDP consultations and various notable EU successes in this respect, but at the same time adjacent notions with an indirect impact on it, such as the influence of political decisions on climate change, nuclear non-proliferation and counter-proliferation, or theoretical parameters and limits of cooperation, interdependence, and institutional integration.

According to specialists, the capability of military action is ideally rooted in a strategy, which has the particularity of specifically outlining its objectives and means of action. Whether it is peacekeeping operations, separation of parties by force, or humanitarian assistance, the positive result will always be the right mix between a strategy that offers options for capacity development, institutional command structures, and effective military deployment capability.² So should military strategy actually be the European Union's biggest shortcoming? The 1990s conflicts in the Balkan region could support this hypothesis, because, despite the fact that Europe had more than 2 million active soldiers, it was not able to mobilize promptly, requesting NATO support.³

At the same time, it cannot be denied that at the conceptual level the Member States still have many divergences based on extremely complex historical and geopolitical circumstances, for instance: 1) while Eastern Europe still perceives the Russian Federation as the most real threat to its existence, Western Europe is concerned instead about terrorism; 2) of what kind of merger are NATO (whose existence depends to a certain extent by its perpetual activity) and the CSDP actually capable of, is also a topic seen quite differently at the level of the European Union; 3) the common strategy for managing political instability in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is further another cause not only for concerns, but also for political controversy; 4) the position of the European Union towards the transition from a unipolar global order to a multipolar one, by the worrying rise of countries such as Brazil, Russia, India, and China, are again issues perceived extremely differently. Even so, in the context of the European Union's inability to take a firm decision to create European Armed Forces – in part due to the slow progress of negotiations based on significant cultural and economic disparities between Member States – the trend that is followed by other states shouldn't be overlooked, especially when it comes to the great powers: 1) the Russian Federation, for example, has been undertaking since the end of the Cold War the largest program of military reform, the results of which have already been demonstrated both in battle training, but also on the battlefield; 2) the United States is currently exploring ways to develop artificial intelligence, robotics, biotechnology and materials science technologies for integration into the next generations of military capabilities; 3) the People's Republic of China has been

² Ettore Greco, Nicoletta Pirozzi and Stefano Silvestri, *EU Crisis Management: Institutions and Capabilities in the Making*, Roma, Quaderni IAI, 2010, pp. 11 – 12.

³ Branka Magaš i Ivo Žanić, *The War in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina 1991–1995*, Abingdon, Frank Cass Publishers, 2001.

engaged, since 2015, in a military reform program that involves complete modernization by 2035 and reaching the highest global standard by 2050 at the latest.⁴ Consequently, despite a slightly holistic approach, this section of the paper provides a broad theoretical background to the many challenges facing the European Union in terms of cohesion and increased military integration at the Member State level and reiterates that it must embrace its past and define as soon as possible a path towards tangible development at the institutional level, where common military formations are justifiable concepts.

The second theoretical chapter proposes a more specific and up-to-date approach toward all the notions with a relevant meaning for the research, institutional bodies, or military formations related to the security and defense of the European Union, with the aim of completing as objective as possible the theoretical foundation of the selected theme. The section covers through its six sub-chapters areas such as the sovereignty of the European Union, its foreign policy, European military cooperation structures, economic and monetary policy aspects of the CSDP, commitments and public statements of European leaders, or official forecasts of Europe's future in terms of security and defence.

According to official figures provided by Eurostat and the UN Statistics Division, the contribution of the most developed regions to the global GDP – namely the United States, the European Union, Japan, and the United Kingdom – recorded together for the period 2004 - 2015 a progressive loss of 14% of global GDP, a market gained by 71.5% by the People's Republic of China (with an effective percentage of 10% of GDP), the remaining 4% representing the contribution of all the other states of the world, in turn increasingly productive, competitive and economically efficient. So even if the European Union is indeed a well-recognized economic power at the international level which has managed over time to resolve most of the political tensions through diplomatic channels, the effectiveness of the soft power instruments cannot, unfortunately, last indefinitely and for sure cannot fully cover all possible risk scenarios. Moreover, given the variety of threats that continue to loom on the horizon (especially from North Africa, the Middle East, or Asia regions), and that cover various areas of interest such as social, political, nuclear, or economic ones, a similar approach of the European Union will clearly set in

⁴ Ian Anthony, *Military Dimensions of a Multipolar World: Implications for Global Governance*, Taylor & Francis, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2018.1463957>.

motion a phase of decline of its sovereignty. Though being a highly innovative development center well supported by a quality-oriented organizational culture, with many interoperable bodies of its own and plenty of international cooperation agreements, it is still unfortunately not enough to maintain its position as a top leader in the world hierarchy, and the evolution of the monetary basket in the table below is as descriptive as possible in this respect: while the United States, the European Union, and the United Kingdom are losing a significant percentage of their foreign exchange contributions to the international money market, the Japanese yen and especially the Chinese yuan are gaining ground at an even worrying rate.

But the existence of external threats at the level of certain countries, as well as the nature and severity of those threats, together have the capacity to create, maintain and strengthen defense coalitions, as well as to give them a direction in the future. Not only does the European Union seem to be increasingly aware of the nature and severity of these threats in recent years, but it is also becoming increasingly aware of the lag generated by its far too slow progress in the recent decades compared to other regions or countries, as well as the potentially disastrous scenarios that could unfold in the future in the absence of firm and immediate actions. Therefore, one can appreciate that the recent momentum and soar gained by it has a good chance to continue and be supported by adapted policies to the EU's military consolidation initiatives and processes, as well as to those of deeper integration of the CSDP.

The third chapter represents the practical, exploratory part of the work, which uses the survey method as a research technique, and presents both a qualitative and a quantitative analysis section. The qualitative research part is based on official forecasts and opinions obtained in eleven interviews with representatives of various institutions – such as NATO, the Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA), Ghent University, the Royal Institute for International Relations in Brussels, the Romanian Ministry of National Defence, Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris III University, the French Institute of International Relations, the Faculty of International Economic Relations, the Romanian Military Representation to NATO and the EU, the University of Oxford, or the European Security and Defence College in Brussels, and aimed at collecting directly the views of highly expert academic and institutional experts. The interview was a semi-structured one, lasted between 45 and 105 minutes, and the responses were shaped around ten main themes: 1) Classification of current threats to the European Union, 2) Recent developments in the EU's

Common Security and Defence Policy, 3) National sovereignty and economic interests, 4) Conflicts in the European Union neighborhood, 5) NATO's perception of CSDP and current regional military cooperation alliances, 6) The complementarity of EU and NATO actions, 7) NATO's global role and legitimacy, 8) The ideal formula of NATO – CSDP cohesion, 9) European Armed Forces / European Union Army, and 10) The impact of Brexit on EU security and defence. The quantitative part was based on the results of 526 responses to an EU-wide online questionnaire, which was available in English, French, Romanian and Spanish and gathered participants from all EU Member States. It aimed to collect the general perceptions of the population on EU defence and security, and addressed topics such as the current threats to the European Union, the perceived level of military security, the usefulness of military cooperation, the expectations in the sphere of military cooperation, the usefulness of NATO at European level, the usefulness of the Common Security and Defence Policy, the ideal formula of NATO – CSDP cohesion, the opportunity of creating an EU Army, or the impact of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on the security and military defence of the European Union; all this while also trying to collect respondents' level of knowledge in this area.

As regards the final part of the paper, namely the one allocated to the conclusions, it acquires with the support of the theoretical and practical content, the ability to respond in the most punctual, objective, and closest way to the likely future reality, to the research questions. In short, the paper concludes the following:

1. With regard to its first question, the research finds appropriate the structural evolution of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy, up to the level of military integration in the form of an EU Army. Such an initiative would have the potential to create a whole new level of cohesion within the EU, while smoothing out existing Member State differences (whether generated by different complex historical contexts or by national regional and economic interests), and would significantly enhance European security and defence capabilities, while also giving the European Union the opportunity to take a leading role in conflicts in the neighborhood of its borders and in external missions to protect them – thus also increasing the confidence and perceived security of its citizens. However, there is more to it than that when it comes to actually achieving such a goal, which is why the progress – even when it's described as an extremely rapid one – still seems to be

lasting quite a long time when compared to the timescales of political mandates, or the immediate expectations of a generation.

2. Regarding the second question, the results of the research indicate the fact that the European Union can and should do more in the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy, while respecting all the commitments undertaken within the North Atlantic Alliance. As regards the developments of other regional military cooperation organizations within the EU, they should align their objectives with the CSDP and NATO agendas, which are basically the overriding ones, and which represent in an absolutely indisputable manner the true guarantor of the current collective defense. Given the progress and direction of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy, therefore, the "European Union Army" is an initiative that is already being worked on indirectly, even if 1) such an objective has not yet been officially formulated or established, 2) the current format of cooperation still differs far too much to be able to speak of such a level of cohesion, or 3) most of the sovereign nations involved are not yet ready even at a conceptual level for such a scenario. However, despite such a framework, I appreciate that the much-touted "European pillar within NATO" of the French President Emmanuel Macron is only one of the first (still inconsistent) formulations of such an ambition, which directly pursues the strategic autonomy of the EU and even seems to be embraced by the members of the Alliance.

3. Even though the United Kingdom has remained and promises to remain a faithful ally of the European Union and civilized countries, and NATO's integrity has not been affected by Brexit, the collective concern shared about this unfortunate rupture – arising in the research from both the theoretical and practical sections – remains a fully justified issue. And not necessarily from the point of view of the intrinsic defence of the Union while NATO remains the supreme guarantor of allies' defence, but from the point of view of the impact on the dynamics and pace of the CSDP; which in the EU-27 format had to be totally rethought, and where the European Union had to find and allocate in the medium and short term numerous resources to compensate for the absence of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland – and this only in military or common defence terms. Thus, concerning the third question, the paper concludes that Brexit represents through the lens of democratic values, a regression of political and social cohesion, which has substantially affected the pace and effectiveness of CSDP, but which also has the secondary capacity to provide, on the

basis of the lessons learned, a new vision of the necessary format for global peacekeeping, especially with the evolution of events after February 24, 2022.

Despite all the achievements, the creation of a European Union Army still remains an extremely complicated task when it comes to putting it into practice, even in the context of a thorough evolution of the CSDP. Even if in theoretical terms it may seem to be a matter requiring a pragmatic approach and based on negotiations favorable to a common agreement, when it comes to concrete commitments in this respect, the major differences between the levels of development of the potential Member States, as well as their quite different cultural policies, make their presence keenly felt – and the materialization, or at least the conclusion of such an idea is unfortunately still left on pending. However, the lack of its materialization leaves even more room for outside opinions and scientific research in this regard, where the sum of all visions and innovative solutions on as many possible scenarios could contribute substantially to the deepening of the current integration process, and ultimately even to the realization of such a joint military force; or in the event of a contrary choice (an unlikely scenario in the author's view), to its definitive invalidation.

Keywords: CSDP, DEFENCE, SECURITY, MILITARY, ARMY, CAPABILITIES, COOPERATION, INTEGRATION, EU.

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