Order, integration and the development of European security and defence

Key uncertainties and future scenarios

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Executive summary

Over the past decade, European security and defence has been characterised by uncertainty, fragmentation and reluctance. This report maps out possible future scenarios by identifying and analysing four key uncertainties thought to shape the future of European security and defence policy: order, integration, capabilities and cohesion.

First, the liberal world **order** is becoming increasingly fragmented, partly as a result of increased US transactionalism and reluctance to act as the main security provider for the West. In addition, increased Russian aggression and an outward-looking China are causing unrest and division in Europe. At the same time, European **integration** has been hampered by the politicization of international cooperation and the rise of populism and nationalism in EU member states. As the effectiveness of areas of intergovernmental policy has been dependent on the political goodwill of member states, the EU has had difficulty forging common positions on some of the most challenging transboundary issues. The self-evident need to cooperate more with each other without sufficient political capital to do so has thus led to a 'paradox of integration'. At the same time, EU member states have largely ignored the state of their military **capabilities** since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The sharp decreases and lack of coordination in member states' defence spending have led to a situation in which only a few countries retain the capacity to execute the so-called high end of the Petersberg task spectrum, most notably peace enforcement operations. Finally, as a result of diverging strategic cultures, **cohesion** among EU member states on the means and ends of common European military action has been woefully lacking. EU member states have been unable to agree on whether the largest strategic threat lies to the South or the East, and joint action has suffered as a result.

These factors have had profound effects not only on the strategic autonomy of the EU, but also on the national autonomy of its individual member states. Elaborating on these key uncertainties, the report suggests four possible scenarios for European security and defence over a 10–15 year period: (1) a fragmented union, (2) European coalitions of the willing, (3) a flexible security union and (4) a defence union. The scenarios are ordered by the increased level of EU 'security actorness' that each scenario would result in. These scenarios are not mutually exclusive in the sense that each aspect of a scenario can only occur in that specific scenario, nor should they be understood as definite outcomes. Instead, they should be viewed as plausible futures or what *could* happen depending on variations in the above-mentioned key uncertainties. The scenario analysis raises a number of questions for how EU member states should act in terms of strengthening the EU's security actorness. Some of these questions and common themes are discussed below.

- With regard to territorial defence, the USA is likely to remain the main security provider for the West for the foreseeable future, through continued support of NATO's article 5. However, there is a serious risk that a security vacuum could arise in the

South if future US administrations continue the trend for disengaging from the global and Euro-Atlantic orders and their principles. The EU will face a big challenge in filling this vacuum, which first and foremost requires the capacity to conduct high-end military crisis management (peace enforcement) operations. Will EU member states have sufficient political will to jointly fill a security vacuum if one arises in Europe's neighbourhood?

- The long-term sustainability of the EU's security actorness is conditioned on a high degree of political unity and, consequently, of political goodwill to maintain that unity. Flexible integration would increase the EU's security actorness as the effectiveness of the EU's military capacity would no longer be dependent on goodwill. A member state's opt-out out from a certain project or operation would then only have a marginal effect on the effectiveness of the smaller group's collective action. Considerable capability development and European strategic capacity can thus only be achieved by allowing increased differentiation. Does the current ambition of political unity between EU member states stand in contrast to greater military capacity?

- The current emphasis on political unity over 'ambition' is likely to cause a reduction in military capabilities and lead to EU defence cooperation migrating outside of EU structures. If future initiatives continue the current trend, it is likely that European crisis management will mostly be carried out through 'minilateral' formats such as the European Intervention Initiative (EII), the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) and the Framework Nations Concept (FNC), rather than the multilateral Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The aim of strengthening unity among member states by creating new political institutions and structures may thus lead to the opposite outcome—fragmentation and disengagement from the EU. A key question is therefore whether EU member states will be able to incentivise larger countries to migrate minilateral structures such as the EII and the FNC back within the EU framework.

- The EU-UK relationship post-Brexit will to a large extent be driven by EU member states' military capacities, their willingness to intervene and the perception of whether or not new initiatives and projects should aim to strengthen EU strategic autonomy. If the EU focuses principally on strengthening the strategic autonomy of Europe as a whole rather than that of the EU, the UK will have greater incentives to contribute to EU-led missions and operations. A final question is thus the degree to which initiatives aimed at strengthening Europe's military industry will be open to third country participation, and whether the EU and the UK will be able to agree on a comprehensive security and solidarity pact post-Brexit.

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Keywords

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Introduction

European security and defence policy has long been a victim of Europe's 'crisis upon decline' – self-made crises linked to the economy and migration management on top of a structural shift in power and resources to Asia have crippled European efforts in several areas.[1] The defeatist phase peaked with President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker's 2016 State of the Union address, with its focus on the continent's 'existential crisis', which summed up the period from the 2008 financial crisis to the 2016 referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union (EU). A year later the tone was radically different: the EU had wind in its sails and only unity of direction was needed to capitalize on this momentum. The election of US President Donald J. Trump, the misfortunes of the Brexiting Brits, the perceived defeat of populist forces in some European countries and the election of pro-European politicians such as French President Emanuel Macron explain the upbeat mood in Brussels.

In the area of security and defence this translated into a rapid process of implementing the ambitions set out in the European Union Global Strategy. In June 2017 High Representative/ Vice President Federica Mogherini stated that more had happened in this field in the past 10 months than in the previous 10 years (EEAS 2017). At the end of the year, this momentum in European military cooperation had resulted in quite a few innovations in the already crowded acronym space: a Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), a Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), a military planning and conduct capability (MPCC) as well as the establishment of a new European defence fund (EDF) for research and joint procurement.

This rapid development of mechanisms for cooperation has accentuated expectations of a Europe that can take more responsibility for its own and the region's security. But will the EU develop into a stronger security actor? And will such 'actorness' translate into strategic autonomy – a concept that has long been debated and contested. Any answer to these questions cannot rest on either the short-term dynamism of military cooperation or the current strategic setting in which Europe finds itself. In this report, the focus is rather on the underlying structural forces shaping European military cooperation. How do factors such as order in the international system and the logic of overall European integration interplay with military capabilities and strategic cohesion? By identifying such critical uncertainties, and the way they can shape different futures of European military cooperation, we aim to demonstrate plausible pathways in which cooperation can develop from a 10–15 year perspective.

Section 1 identifies and discusses four 'critical uncertainties' that are viewed as instrumental to the future development of European security and defence policy. Section 2 presents four scenarios, ranging from a fragmented union devoid of any strategic capacity to the more

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[1] For a discussion, see Youngs (2011).

potent – but rather unlikely – defence union. The third and final section suggests a few lessons from this scenario analysis and discusses their implications for the actors involved.

Key uncertainties of European security and defence

While it is evident that a lot happened in 2016 and 2017 it is far from clear where events are leading us. This section suggests four critical uncertainties that are likely to shape the medium- and long-term development of the EU security and defence field. The first is the turbulence in the international order and how it affects the EU as a security actor. The second is the overall trend for integration in Europe and how regional gaps and variations in the appetite for integration will be reconciled in the coming years. The third is the the question of capabilities: to what extent will the ongoing and likely future measures to enhance the resources at the EU's disposal deliver results? Fourth, the level of cohesion in the security field, or the extent to which member states see eye to eye on threats and interests. These four critical uncertainties, and their possible impact on European security and defence, are discussed below.

Order

The European Union has benefited greatly from the liberal world order. In Trump, the United States for the first time has a president who is unwilling to invest in this order and fails to see the benefits it offers his own country. This further accentuates the trend of fragmentation, where pockets of cooperation and governance exist in specific fields and in different constellations of states and non-state actors. This fragmentation forces the EU to rethink its global political commitments as well as its regional role as a foreign and security policy actor.

Scholars of foreign and security policy stipulate that the surrounding context is a key variable in determining the status of any specific actor. Context shapes 'actorness' by recognizing the specific actor and being more or less accommodating to the interests pursued by that actor.[2] In the case of the collective foreign and security policy actor that is the EU, the most salient contextual factor is the nature of the international order. The EU has thrived under the (mostly Atlantic) liberal order that was established in 1945, and revised and expanded into a world order following 1989. This liberal order fused the existing state centrism of the pre-existing Westphalian order with principles of international relations that essentially mirror the internal principles of liberal democratic states: the rule of law, free-trade, a market economy, strong institutions and cooperation.

The tensions between sovereign states as the main entities of the order and the norms of multilateralism, cooperation and international institutions were evident from start. Indeed, US

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[2] For a seminal discussion on actorness, see Sjöstedt (1977). For elaboration on the role of context, see Brattberg & Rhinard (2012) and Groen & Niemann (2013).

President Harry S. Truman elaborated on them in his 1945 San Francisco speech when discussing the need for sovereign entities to display restraint. When the liberal order was strengthened following the end of the Cold War – in both its scope and its liberal principles – these tensions were accentuated. Post-Cold War novelties such as the International Criminal Court (ICC), the norm of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and regional institutional developments such as the EU's Maastricht Treaty all tilted the balance away from the primacy of sovereign states and towards the liberal and – to use a current term – 'globalist' elements of the order. The updated post-Cold War liberal order would soon be put under stress. The role of the USA as hegemon after the break-up of the Soviet Union was challenged both from within and by other actors, which preferred developments towards a multipolar order. To a large extent this was a question of systemic level issues, or meta order, such as the legitimacy of governing structures, the role of hegemony and the representation of new power centres, rather than a challenge to the norms underpinning the order itself. This focus on a potential challenge to the leadership structure by prominent non-western countries such as Brazil, Russia, India and China – the BRICS – obscured the fact that the liberal order was increasingly being challenged from inside the west.

Three manifestations of liberal disorder
For Europe, this challenge manifests itself in in three mutually reinforcing ways. First, there is the current US president and his abdication from the leadership role within the liberal order. The common thread that runs through his disdain for multiparty trade agreements, collective defence arrangements, regional integration projects such as the EU and negotiated settlements such as the Iran deal is a basic unwillingness to sign up to the key principles of the liberal order: multilateralism, free trade, the rule of law and international institutions. Rather, he and his close advisers have heralded a return to an order characterized by competition rather than cooperation, great power bargaining rather than multiparty negotiation and untamed state sovereignty rather than managed interdependency. This creates uncertainty for Europe on two levels. It has a direct effect on the transatlantic order – the arrangement whereby the USA has supported European integration, which also increased resilience in the face of Soviet/Russian influence – and on the security guarantees provided in return for European loyalty vis-à-vis US leadership of the overarching liberal order. While the USA still has an interest in living up to its security guarantees and having troops deployed in Europe, the reciprocity of the Atlantic order has changed: A US president who does not fear Russian assertiveness and is less interested in leading a liberal world order will rather be paid in cash than in integration and loyalty. Transactionalism rather than principles will uphold the order in the short term. Europeans are also indirectly affected as Trump's lack of interest in a rules-based global system threatens the strategic environment – multilateral negotiations, multi-actor agreements and comprehensive problem-solving – for which the EU is optimized, and shifts the global political logic towards a form of power politics to which the EU is ill-suited.

The second manifestation of liberal disorder is the UK's decision to leave the EU and 'take back control'. While there have certainly been some liberal voices backing this decision, for

example using ideas about a more global Britain, the main result will still be an exit from the largest free trade area and the organization that manifests the principles of a liberal order in Europe. The net effect will be a further fragmentation of the liberal order in Europe.

Finally, the liberal values that underpin the order are increasingly being challenged within the societies and governments of Europe. The governments of Poland and Hungary have been open about the ideological basis of their 'cultural counter-revolution', which aims to overhaul the EU (Foy 2016). At home their path towards preferred 'illiberal states' have seen attacks on domestic institutions balancing executive power and, in the case of Hungary, conspiracy-fuelled campaigns against non-governmental organizations such as the Soros Foundation (Mahony 2014). These developments question the way integration consolidates democracy as well as the status of the commonly agreed values that are supposed to offer strength to the EU.

In a worst-case scenario, the fragmentation of the liberal order in Europe could be aggravated by tacit cooperation and alignment among the actors described above. For example, Trump was quick to offer the British Prime Minister, Theresa May, a post-Brexit trade deal, although the nature and scope of UK-US trade would make it difficult for such an arrangement to smoothen the UK's exit from the EU. Theresa May has also been reluctant to criticize Donald Trump, while other European leaders have been far more vocal. In a similar vein, the UK has at times been more understanding in its dealings with policy outliers such as Poland and Hungary, perhaps as an indication of a possible future balancing strategy between such outliers and Western Europe.[3]

Together, this fracture and fragmentation of the liberal world order as well as the liberal European order will place the EU in a position fraught with uncertainty. For a long time, the debate on Europe and the world order centred on the extent to which the EU could claim pole position in an emerging multipolar order. Today, this order is becoming increasingly multiplex rather than multipolar, with different combinations of actors cooperating on different spheres of governance while other areas see little effective governance at all (Acharya 2017). The question therefore arises: to what extent is the EU prepared to act more resolutely to support the liberal order in the absence of US leadership? Furthermore, is this a role that EU member states want the EU to perform? How the global order continues to evolve and what role the EU will play in the shaping of this order are perhaps the most consequential questions when considering the EU as a future foreign and security policy actor.

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[3] The December 2017 visit of Theresa May to Warsaw and the signing of a new UK-Polish defence pact at the same time as the Commission presented new article 7 measures against Poland can be viewed as a case in point. See also the discussion at https://www.ft.com/content/7742a102-4132-11e7-82b6-896b95f30f58

Integration

European foreign and security policy is sometimes, mistakenly, seen as an independent policy field detached from the general development of the EU and shaped mainly by external events and conditions. In reality, the development of mechanisms within the Common Foreign and Security policy (CFSP) and the CSDP are closely linked to the needs created by the general direction of EU integration. Indeed, the idea of 'EU actorness', often tied to its role as a foreign policy actor, originated from the need of the European Economic Community to manage the common external interests that resulted from internal economic cooperation. Hence, the future direction of integration is a key determinant of the future of European security and defence cooperation – and the future direction of integration is in turn dependent on member states finding a way out of what could be called a paradox of integration.

A paradox of integration
Rarely has the scale of the transboundary issues challenging national decision makers been so evident: migration, climate change, security, economic performance and regional security. At the same time, however, any EU efforts to collectively increase or even use its collective capacity to act are distracted, diluted or even aborted by populations and governments sceptical about integration. The Wallonian hijacking of the free trade agreement with Canada and the Dutch rejection of the Ukrainian Association Agreement in a referendum are only two examples of this tendency. Populists and nationalists of various brands are strengthened by wider societal hesitance towards cooperation which further fuels resistance. This paradox of an obvious need for cooperation but a lack of political capital to deliver can largely be seen as a product of the way in which European integration has developed over the past decades.

In the early days of European cooperation, the development of European integration went fairly smoothly as cooperation evolved from one rather technical area to another in line with functionalistic ideas. Relying on either ignorance or passive consensus, national executives could pool and delegate tasks to the EU largely undisturbed by their domestic audiences. However, cooperation eventually closed in on areas that were both dear to national public opinion and considered core state powers by political leaders: money, security and borders. While earlier cooperation regimes such as customs and regulation preserved national autonomy and delivered genuine collective goods, such as efficient problem-solving, they were rather weak on domestic democratic participation. These new more sensitive policy areas demanded a different mix of integrative ingredients. Hence the creation of what we now know was three fair-weather regimes: a currency with no fiscal capacity to back it up, a common border without an effective common asylum policy and a security policy that was fully dependent on high levels of cohesion and political goodwill among all members. There were several reasons for these inadequate policy designs but a key determinant was the general ambition of member state governments to delegate authority to the EU while retaining sovereignty (the right to further develop and decide on the use of this authority) and capacity

(measures to implement, execute and manage the externalities of activities within a specific field). [4] In this way, EU member states could continue to claim formal autonomy while at the same time enjoying some level of real autonomy, since delegation to the EU allowed them to control transboundary problems, global financial developments and diffuse flows that would have been difficult to regulate at the national level. The problem with this 'minimal effort collective action while maximizing national autonomy-strategy' is that it failed to create resilient policy regimes that could withstand exogenous shocks that caused more stress than anticipated at the time of the institutional bargaining and design. Hence, the euro system had great difficulties in managing a banking crisis since much of the sovereign decision making and financial capacity were left at the national level. Similarly, the Schengen system could not manage the migration flows of 2015–16 since the policy tools were asymmetrically divided among the EU level and member states. Finally, the EU's security and defence policy could not develop in sync with the grave security situation on Europe's borders as decision making and leadership were lacking. The levels of investment and delegation in the policy field were insufficient, but to increase integration in response to these challenges would be difficult. These are areas of core state power as discussed above, while in addition international cooperation and European integration have been increasingly politicized in domestic constituencies. The permissive consensus that allowed for fairly undisturbed acts of delegation in the early decades of European integration has been replaced by active resistance and surging nativism. In response to this politicization of international cooperation, member states have introduced elements of direct democracy and popular referendums, which open the door to participation but also to negative integration loops. Ironically, the European integration that was designed to allow EU member states to maintain control in the face of transnational challenges is now being threatened because a few politicians are willing to trade actual common control for illusory national control.

While this paradox of integration has been evident for quite some time, it has been accentuated by the changes of the international order described above. The need to cooperate is even clearer as other world powers such as the USA engage less with Europe and with global governance. At the same time, the illiberal tendencies within some European societies and the nativist ideal of taking back control – ignoring the fact that it was lack of national control that drove integration in the first place – have made the strengthening of cooperation even more difficult. Currently, three political and institutional divergences characterize the debate on future integration and the possible way out of the integration paradox.

Membership
The first considers membership: who should be part of the future European Union? The decision by the UK to leave the EU was a setback, both in itself and for the domino effect it was feared it might unleash. While the EU and more clearly the UK will suffer from

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[4] For a good overview of autonomy, authority and member state calculations, see Schimmelfennig (2017).

disintegration, any contagion effects have so far failed to materialize. On the contrary, public support seems to have been strengthened in several member states when faced with the costs of unravelling cooperation in an interconnected continent. While the UK is leaving, others are still tempted to join, which is another membership issue dividing existing member states. The Western Balkans is a case in point, where any vacuum left by a lack of commitment from either the Balkan or the EU side is doomed to be filled by more geopolitically charged actors such as Russia. If member status is not on the table, some other tangible solution will have to be offered in order to maintain, and in some cases restart, reform momentum. A third ring of associated members – outside of an inner core of euro-states and an outer ring of non-euro EU member states – might be a future membership format that could match integrative ambitions in countries such as Turkey, Ukraine and the UK.

Differentiation

A second integration question regards the level of differentiation among the members of the EU. As discussed above, the EU is already divided between euro-countries and non-euro countries, as well as in other areas such as Schengen, the CSDP and Justice and Home Affairs where several member states have opt-outs. While this has been a reality for quite some time, the political debate regarding the appropriateness of differentiation and the extent to which it should prove the model for the future is still ongoing. What seems clear is that flexibility, or differentiated levels of integration, will have to increase if cooperation is to be strengthened. There will simply be only limited room for ambitious new policy manoeuvres if 27 member states have to participate to the same extent. Differentiation also makes sense from a democratic viewpoint. While the Lisbon Treaty incorporated a 'get-out clause' for member states unhappy with the direction of integration, Brexit has proved that option to be so cumbersome and costly that its democracy-enhancing credentials must be questioned. Hence, a level of integration that is more fine-tuned to national public opinion seems to be a more democratic path forward. Any differentiation, however, comes with risks of fragmentation. Two models of differentiation stand out in this regard. A structured and cemented division between a core and a periphery would eventually lead to a general loss of cohesion and cast a shadow over ideas such as equal EU citizenship. Cooperation outside of EU structures but with the aim of strengthening or developing EU integration – such as the fiscal compact meant to shore up Economic and Monetary Union during the euro crisis – is also risky as it decouples integration from the European institutions and treaties. In sum, a treaty differentiation that is open and does not cement current gaps and policy differences – such as negotiated opt-outs and mechanisms like Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and Enhanced Cooperation – would be preferable.

Leadership

The last area of contestation and uncertainty is that of leadership. Who will lead the EU forward and out of the integration paradox? The Lisbon Treaty led to a strengthening of intergovernmental bodies such as the European Council, and the following years of crisis management accentuated this trend further – adding momentum to intergovernmental decision

making. Even traditionally steadfast supporters of the common institutions, such as Germany, have taken a more intergovernmental turn in recent years. Among analysts of European affairs there is strong support for the notion of a 'new intergovernmentalism' with increasing levels of member state engagement and control over European affairs. Having member states in the driving seat does not equal leadership however, as the dismal development of the CFSP has illustrated. Much hope has recently been tied to the re-emergence of the German-French engine of integration, especially since the energetic and largely EU-positive Macron won the French presidential election. Indeed, the Macron campaign can be seen as offering of a way out of the integration paradox by linking future integrative gains to the needs of domestic audiences currently sceptical about cooperation and globalization. What the French-German axis can deliver on the three fragile integration projects that have haunted Europe for the past decade remains to be seen. On euro issues and economic governance, the deepest cleavages run right along the Rhine; on security the two powers diverge on strategic culture and orientation, as is discussed below. The area of migration offers better prospects for common German-French ground but that in turn would risk developing a gap between western and eastern Europe. Finally, the institutions are not made powerless by European integration, especially at its current perceived momentum, but rather than the traditional engines of integration being empowered by spillover and entrepreneurship, as suggested by supranational theories of integration, the institutions of today have been empowered by the increasing levels of oversight authority and enforcement power delegated to them during the years of crisis management. The 'new intergovernmentalism' and the 'new supranationalism' thus evolved in tandem rather than in competition. This makes it harder to suggest clear paths forward in relation to the paradox of integration as even strong leadership by the membership produces new powers for the institutions rather than renationalization.

Capabilities

European defence capabilities have stagnated over the past 20 years. Most European states radically cut their defence spending – mostly as a result of reduced threat perceptions and then the eurozone debt crisis. In addition, defence spending in the EU member states has been largely short-sighted, focused on minimum national needs rather than the key long-term capabilities for common European defence efforts, such as anti-access and area-denial, intelligence and surveillance, logistical support, drones and air-to-air refuelling. While one of the main goals of the EU Global Strategy Implementation Plan on Security and Defence is to increase the 'coherence and convergence' of EU member states' military capabilities, the current state of the EU's CSDP is better understood as fragmented (EEAS 2016). According to *The Military Balance 2017*, the EU currently boasts 17 different types of battle tank, 29 types of destroyer and 20 different types of fighter jet – a total of 178 different weapon systems across the EU, compared to only 30 in the USA (IISS 2017). The large number of different weapon systems leads to a lack of military interoperability between the EU member states, reducing the effective compatibility of member states' military forces. This

fragmentation and the lack of interoperability of military systems and defence markets also impose a large opportunity cost on EU member states, which the European External Action Service estimated to be at least €30 billion in its June 2017 reflection paper on European defence.

The fragmentation of the CSDP is perhaps best exemplified by a series of tweets in 2015 by Geoffrey Pyatt, the former US Ambassador to Ukraine, who suggested that Russia-backed rebels in eastern Ukraine 'were now better armed than some NATO countries', despite the fact that the total military expenditure of EU member states is roughly three times larger than that of Russia.[5] In addition to the lack of military interoperability between EU member states' militaries, the absolute level of military capability in member states has also clearly decreased in the past two decades. This is most clearly shown by reductions in key military equipment. For instance, between 2000 and 2015, the number of main battle tanks in EU member states' militaries decreased by 70 per cent, multi-role and transport helicopters decreased by 38 per cent, submarines by 21 per cent, and patrol and coastal naval ships by 54 per cent. In addition, the overall level of defence spending within the EU member states fell by 14.5 per cent between 2007 and 2015 (Andersson et al. 2016).

Current developments
After many years of stagnation and fragmentation, there is now almost complete agreement on the need to strengthen defence capabilities and increase defence spending. More than half of all EU member states have already started to spend more on defence and most, if not all, wish to see increased cooperation on defence equipment research and development. The difference in rhetoric is perhaps best demonstrated by the threat perceptions described in the two European security strategies – the European Security Strategy (ESS) of 2003 and the Global Strategy of 2016. While the ESS stated in its introductory remarks that 'Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure or so free' the Global Strategy states that: 'we live in times of existential crisis, within and beyond the European Union'. In other words, the perceived need to strengthen military capabilities is the greatest it has been in a long time.

A number of proposals to strengthen EU military capabilities have been put forward in the past two years, most notably on fostering joint capability development and procurement. Among the more significant proposals are a European Defence Fund (EDF), a Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and PESCO. The Foreign Affairs Council also decided in June 2017 to establish a military planning and conduct capability (MPCC) within the current EU Military Staff – the military headquarters that the UK has opposed for such a long time. In addition, there is a plan to review Athena, the institution that oversees the financing of CSDP operations, towards the end of 2017. All of these institutional changes are aimed at increasing the interoperability of national armed forces, both through common procurement

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[5] €227 billion (EU) compared to €69 billion (Russia) in 2016, according to the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database.

and research and development of defence capabilities, and through specific projects that will mitigate some of the main shortfalls in European defence – mainly 'strategic enablers' such as intelligence and surveillance assets, air and sea transport, drones and deployable medical resources. It is also believed that the establishment of a military headquarters and a review of the Athena mechanism will make it easier to deploy the EU Battlegroups – the rotating standing battalion-sized rapid reaction forces (of 1500–2500 troops) that as of 2017 have not been deployed since reaching full operational capacity in 2007.

Perhaps the most important – or at least most talked about – of the above-mentioned initiatives is PESCO, an instrument that allows an increased level of defence cooperation within a smaller group of member states if they live up to 'binding commitments' and 'higher criteria'. These include (1) increasing defence spending, although not specifically to 2 per cent of GDP as previously proposed by France and Germany; (2) increased levels of joint defence equipment procurement; (3) enhanced availability, interoperability, flexibility and deployability of forces; (4) addressing capability shortfalls; and (5) taking part in joint development programmes led by the European Defence Agency. Although not legally binding, these criteria will be followed up by a regular assessment mechanism that aims to ensure a high level of ambition among PESCO participants. In addition to enabling more politically ambitious projects, PESCO also creates a financial incentive for participating member states as the European Commission will co-finance 10 per cent of the cost of all PESCO projects that are also funded by the EDF. As of March 2018, 25 member states have decided to join the PESCO framework and 17 projects are set to be to launched during the beginning of 2018.

However, looking back at the decrease in EU military capabilities over the past two decades, it is useful to wonder why there has been such a sharp change in the level of ambition among EU member states to strengthen the CSDP. While some argue that external factors such as the questioning of the transatlantic link by the current US President, Russian aggression towards Ukraine and increased instability in the southern neighbourhood are the main instigators of this strengthened ambition, others may regard it as mainly driven by internal factors – such as Brexit, increased levels of public approval for a CSDP and a strengthened determination in France and Germany to deepen EU integration. The launch of PESCO, EDF and CARD, and the increased levels of ambition within EU member states to strengthen military defence capabilities, is therefore best understood as a result of both internal and external factors.

While few of the diplomats and experts based in Brussels believed in 2015 that it would be conceivable to launch PESCO before the end of 2017, the notion of a Permanent Structured Cooperation is not new. There were, for instance, discussions back in 2003 about how a vanguard core group of member states should be allowed to conduct and implement more ambitious missions and projects. In addition, the possibility of launching a Permanent Structured Cooperation was formalized in articles 42 and 46 of the Lisbon Treaty – in other words, 8 years prior to its implementation. For instance, article 42.6 of the Treaty explicitly

states that PESCO is aimed at enabling a core set of member states to manage 'the most demanding' crisis management missions.

The notion of 'the most demanding missions' can be traced back to the main objective of the Helsinki Headline Goal of 1999, in which it was stated that by 2003 member states should be able to rapidly deploy (within 60 days) up to 60,000 troops capable of carrying out 'the full range of Petersberg Tasks (…), including the most demanding'. Among the Petersberg Tasks were humanitarian and rescue operations, peacekeeping missions and the use of combat forces in crisis management operations (peace enforcement), and the latter can be understood as the most demanding. The Helsinki Headline Goal was also largely based on the St Malo declaration by the UK and France of 1998, which stated that the EU must develop a military force 'capable of autonomous action' in order to respond to international crises. The St Malo declaration, the Helsinki Headline Goal and the increased ambition in EU defence that they both symbolized were mainly driven by the lack of action by EU member states in response to the Kosovo crisis in the late 1990s.

While the current 'relaunch' of PESCO and other EU defence initiatives could indicate that the EU has been largely unsuccessful in carrying out the Petersberg Tasks since 2003, this is not necessarily the case. The EU has launched 35 civilian or military missions and operations in the past 14 years, 17 of which are still active. Many of these operations focus on peacekeeping efforts and strengthening governance and institutions in the security sector – for instance the training of law enforcement and maritime security officers, border guards or soldiers. Others aim to strengthen the rule of law in a country, for instance by supporting the judicial authorities or by enforcing borders and peace agreements. The naval force missions EUNAVFOR Med (Operation Sophia) and EUNAVFOR Somalia (Operation Atalanta) are the two main ongoing military missions. Among the 35 CSDP missions that have been launched to date, two are often listed as positive examples – Operation Atalanta and EUFOR RCA. Operation Atalanta has succeeded in practically eradicating piracy off the coast of Somalia, and EUFOR RCA was able to efficiently stabilize the situation in Bangui, CAR – despite the mission's quite modest mandate and strength – until the UN-led operation MINUSCA took over a year later.

However, while the EU has engaged in 'soft' crisis management in the past 15 years, with varying degrees of success, no CSDP operations have so far been targeted at the 'high end' of the task spectrum – peace enforcement through the use of combat forces. This can mainly be understood as a result of the low level of ambition and a lack of political will. As Thierry Tardy argues, CSDP operations should be understood as 'expressions of what the EU and its member states are ready to do in response to a given conflict or crisis' – not necessarily the ideal response to a certain crisis or conflict (Tardy 2015: 43). This begs the questions: do current developments in EU defence suggest that the level of ambition in crisis management is likely to change? And what is the likelihood that the EU will be capable of launching peace enforcement operations – i.e. the most demanding missions – in the short to medium term?

These aspects are largely dependent on the ability of EU member states to agree and implement a common vision of what the CSDP should be. The next section takes a closer look at the possibilities for increased cohesion within the EU on security and defence.

Finally, a point should be made on the prospects of the EU filling the main 'gaps' in European defence through the above-mentioned initiatives. The first 17 projects to be initiated through PESCO are relatively broad and aim first and foremost to strengthen the logistics of CSDP military and civilian operations.[6] PESCO should thus be foremost understood as a possible enabler of EU strategic autonomy to conduct peace enforcement operations, and not as a possible enabler of EU strategic autonomy in terms of territorial defence. Whether the EU's member states can also strengthen their territorial defence capabilities will largely depend on the political will among the member states to create a common and competitive European defence technological and industrial base (EDTIB), primarily through the European defence fund (EDF). Both France and Germany see the capacity to autonomously develop and manufacture their own armaments as essential to fully achieving EU 'strategic autonomy'. In other words, and as outlined in the the European Commission's communication of July 24th, 2013, '*Toward a more competitive and efficient defence and security sector*', 'the EU should be able to ensure the security of supply, access to critical technologies and operational sovereignty (…) without depending on the capabilities of third parties'. However, some states oppose such a development. As many of Sweden's defence companies are partly owned by third states (mainly the UK and the USA), the aim to create EU strategic autonomy in terms of armaments development would risk Sweden's bilateral ties to those states. Sweden is also wary of the creation of a European defence industrial base leading to the consolidation of European defence companies, from which mainly France and Germany would benefit. The 2015 merger of the German KMW and the French NEXTER into the new KMW+Nexter Defense Systems (KNDS) shows that this fear is not unfounded. In July of 2017 France and Germany also announced that they will jointly develop the next generation European fighter aircraft to replace the Eurofighter Typhoon and the Dassault Rafale, further consolidating the two countries' defense industries. If the EDF does not allow third party inclusion, and third party owned Swedish defense companies are excluded from the EDTIB, the aim of creating European strategic autonomy could thus pose a risk to Swedish *national* strategic autonomy.

Cohesion

In order to understand the possibilities of enhanced cohesion within the CSDP, we must first understand the main dividing lines in member states' willingness to cooperate and act together within the area of security and defence. As mentioned above, the CSDP has over the past 15 years mostly been oriented towards civilian crisis management – i.e. the 'low end' of the

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[6] An overview of the first PESCO projects can be found here:
https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/32082/pesco-overview-of-first-collaborative-of-projects-for-press.pdf

Petersberg Tasks. This can mainly be explained by a lack of political will among the EU member states to militarily intervene in crises around the world, especially in the Middle East, and North and Central Africa. However, this lack of political will is not uniform in all member states. France, for example, has a long tradition of military interventions in its former colonies in North African and the Sahel, such as Mali, the Central African Republic (CAR) and Chad. The French *Operation Sangaris* in 2013–16 was the seventh French military intervention in the CAR since its independence in 1960, and France is currently also leading a multinational counterinsurgency operation in five Sahel countries named *Operation Barkhane*. The French ambition to strengthen the CSDP must therefore be understood in this context – a strong political will to use combat forces for peace enforcement in its former colonies.

Similarly, the deep-seated German aversion to military intervention is also a result of the country's history – the genocide and military aggression of the Nazi regime still plays a large role in the German public's attitude to the use of military force abroad. This became strikingly apparent in 2009 when an airstrike ordered by a German colonel in Kunduz, Afghanistan led to the deaths of over 90 civilians. Public outcry and the resignation of the German Defence Minister, Franz Josef Jung, followed. More significantly, the image of the Bundeswehr as a 'force for good' was tarnished, and scepticism over increased military spending and military intervention increased (Becker 2014:70). However, another core aspect of German foreign policy before 1945 was the German *Sonderweg* (special way), the nationalist belief that Germany has and should develop differently than the rest of Europe. In reaction, Germany has chosen to closely integrate itself with the EU and NATO, partially in order to stem such nationalist tendencies and also to gain the trust of its European partners. The German position towards the CSDP must therefore be understood as a result of two core beliefs among the German public: anti-militarism/pacifism, and the importance of cooperation through multilateral frameworks.

The difference between the French and the German perspectives on military intervention can thus largely be attributed to 'strategic culture' – a nation's set of beliefs and norms regarding the strategic environment (threat perceptions/assessments) and the efficacy of the use of military force (whether military intervention can best achieve set objectives and the conditions under which the use of force is useful) (Chappell 2009; Johnston 1995). Strategic culture should therefore be understood not only as a country's willingness to use military force abroad, but also as the assessment of strategic threats – fundamentally, whether the largest threat to the state is instability in the southern neighbourhood or an aggressive neighbour in the east. For natural reasons, a member state's threat perception is thus largely dependent on its geographical situation. While member states that share borders with Russia do not see instability and increasing migration flows from North Africa as the main external threat, member states in southern Europe correspondingly do not feel as threatened by Russia.

The French and German divergence in terms of strategic culture also has a clear influence on what they want the CSDP to be. While France has historically seen the CSDP as a way of increasing the EU's strategic autonomy, or the ability 'to formulate policy independently from the United States' (Howorth 2014:7), Germany has instead seen it as a tool for increasing political integration. The French perspective was especially apparent at the St Malo Summit in 1998, where France and the UK explicitly stated that the EU must become an 'autonomous actor' in order to help resolve international crises. Since the Russian annexation of Crimea and the election of President Trump, Germany has also expressed the need for increased European strategic autonomy – albeit with a focus on territorial defence rather than crisis management. For example, both the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, and the German Defence Minister, Ursula von der Leyen, have stated that Europe can no longer fully rely on Washington for help (Birnbaum 2017).

The Franco-German differences in strategic culture have also had a clear impact on their position on the most recent proposals to strengthen military capabilities within EU member states – most notably PESCO. While France envisaged PESCO as a small vanguard of ambitious member states willing to increase their military cooperation and capacity beyond that of others, Germany has instead mainly seen it as a way to increase the political unity of the EU27 in the wake of Brexit. As a result, Germany has pushed for PESCO to have inclusive entry criteria. While France and Germany were able to agree on a relatively ambitious set of entry criteria during a Franco-German ministerial meeting in July, the end result of PESCO ultimately showed that the 'German perspective had prevailed'.[7] Interviews with French officials at Quai d'Orsay in October 2017 demonstrated French scepticism about the added value of PESCO before it even had been officially launched.[8]

However, while there are fundamental differences in terms of EU member states' perspectives on the raison d'être of PESCO, there is relatively strong unity in terms of what should be accomplished with the European defence fund. Both Paris and Berlin have expressed strong support for the creation of a European defence technological and industrial base in order to strengthen the Security of Supply (SoS)[9] for European armed forces. This can be explained partly by economic motives, as both France and Germany have large military industries, but also by a common ambition to increase the self-reliance of European defence capabilities – in terms of both joint development and procurement. However, true EU joint development and procurement is currently far from the case, as only about 10 per cent of EU member states' military research and development expenditure and 20 per cent of military equipment

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[7] Interview with desk officer at Quai d'Orsay, October 2017
[8] For instance, one French desk officer explained how Paris saw a clear risk that PESCO would only become an 'empty shell'.
[9] Security of Supply is defined 'in general terms' in the Commission's Guidance Note *Security of Supply* as 'a guarantee of supply of goods and services sufficient for a Member State to discharge its defence and security commitments in accordance with its foreign and security policy requirements'.

procurement is spent collaboratively – i.e. military equipment developed and purchased together with other EU member states (EDA 2016).

While France and Germany will be by far the most important and influential actors within the EU post-Brexit, the role of the remaining member states will be crucial in realizing any potential Franco-German axis in the area of security and defence. Two additional member states that symbolize the strategic cultural divide within the EU are Italy and Poland. Italy contributes almost twice the number of armed forces personnel to international operations compared to Germany, for instance, most of which are stationed in Africa and the Middle East – mainly around the Euro-Mediterranean region (Keohane 2017). In its 2015 White Paper on international security and defence, Italy stated that it is willing not only to join military interventions in the Euro-Mediterranean region, but also lead them. The Euro-Mediterranean region is consequently singled out as the country's main 'geostrategic focus'.

In contrast, Poland's strategic culture is fully focused on territorial defence against Russia. Poland recently announced that it would increase defence spending to 2.5 per cent of GDP by 2030, well above that of most other EU member states, with the explicit goal of increasing the self-sufficiency of its armed forces, for instance by doubling the number of armed forces personnel to 200,000 (Kelly 2017). Poland's strategic priority of territorial defence is also clearly defined in its most recent strategic review, which states that any Polish contributions to military interventions abroad should not have any negative effects on its national defence capabilities.

Sweden's strategic culture is instead largely based on its long-standing policy of military non-alignment. While Sweden is opposed to initiatives that could potentially reduce the national autonomy of its armed forces or harm its relatively strong military industry, it also strongly values multilateral cooperation. Sweden's position on PESCO has therefore so far been largely ambivalent. While initially opposed to PESCO, Sweden adopted the German stance of inclusiveness and unity over the French stance of high entry criteria and increased ambition in the spring of 2017. However, the government bill on Sweden's participation in PESCO also explicitly states that the EU should be able to autonomously carry out the entire range of crisis management efforts set out in the Petersberg tasks, including the most demanding task of peace enforcement. The Swedish position is thus based on its dual objective of both increasing the EU's capacity to militarily intervene abroad and enhancing the political unity of the EU 27. This is also clearly reflected in the Swedish bill on joining PESCO, where it is argued that there are 'European, security and defence policy reasons' for participating (Prop. 2017/18:44). These three rather broad motives, and particularly the order in which they are listed, accurately portray the ambiguity and hesitancy underlying the Swedish position.

Prospects for a European convergence of strategic cultures
The fairly divergent strategic cultures of the EU member states might paint a rather bleak picture of the possibilities for joint action in the area of security and defence. We should

therefore ask what the prospects are for a convergence of strategic culture within the EU. As mentioned above, strategic culture should be understood as both the will to use military force abroad and the perception of strategic threats. While both of these aspects are contextually bound up with the culture, history and geography of each member state, it is also plausible that we might see a convergence of the former aspect, but not the latter. For instance, it is nearly impossible to eradicate the contextual differences that arise from a country's geographic location (i.e. south vs east). As long as multiple threats exist, some states will always be more affected by one threat than another and prioritize them accordingly. Since the borders of EU member states cannot (easily) be changed, it is highly unlikely that we will see a convergence of threat perceptions between member states in the near future—provided that the EU does not become a fully fledged federal state. The strategic culture in terms of member states' threat perceptions is therefore most likely to remain diverse within the EU.

However, the contextual factors that lie behind a member state's willingness to intervene are perhaps a bit easier to change. While Germany has been plagued by its history since the end of World War II, it has also gradually become more accepting of the use of force abroad. For instance, German involvement in the NATO-led intervention in Kosovo in 1999 was described by both the former German Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, and the Green Party leader, Joschka Fischer, as a 'humanitarian necessity', signalling that Germany's perception of itself as a fully pacifist state had shifted (Der Spiegel 2006). New external threats (as in the case of the Yugoslav wars) can thus change a country's willingness to intervene and, as a result, increase the convergence of strategic cultures among those countries that are affected. The logic behind Emmanuel Macron's proposal to create a common strategic culture within the EU is somewhat similar – to give other countries experience of the same external threats as France faces by letting soldiers from other EU member states join its military. It remains to be seen how extensive and effective Macron's proposal will be. However, it is at the very least a more reasonable option than simply waiting for new crises that might unite the member states.

While the differences in member states' strategic cultures and priorities in the area of security and defence are often large, there are still some prospects for increased cohesion within the EU. However, cohesion is most likely to be created in the willingness to intervene militarily abroad, not in terms of a convergence of threat perceptions. We should thus not expect that *every* EU member state will want to join every military mission within the next 20–30 years. National sensitivities and geographic priorities will remain, but the will to act together will likely to increase for some.

The future of European security and defence: four scenarios

The previous section suggested four critical causes of uncertainty that will likely have fundamental effects on the future development of European security policy in general and the EU's CSDP in particular. This section presents four alternative scenarios for what this future might look like. Since the factors causing uncertainty (order, integration, capabilities and cohesion) are not binary, the following scenarios are not formal deductions of possible outcomes. Rather, they should be viewed as examples of plausible futures that depend to varying degrees on different variations on the key uncertainties. In addition, the scenarios should not be seen as possible end results at a set point in the future, but rather as outcomes that can take place at any time between today and roughly 15 years forward. The scenarios are linked in the sense that the 'actorness' of the EU – that is, the possibility of the EU functioning as a coherent security policy actor – increases from the first to the last.

Fragmented union

In our first scenario, a divided EU fails to live up to even minimalist expectations on the provision of security. A fragmented world **order** eventually produces a fragmented and hamstrung European Union. Continuing pressure from the Trump administration, conditioning security guarantees on defence investments and the elimination of tariffs, adds fuel to old Euro/Atlantic divides in Europe. Increasingly hostile Russian signalling and actions accentuate this trend, especially since they are perceived with differing levels of concern around Europe. In a desperate attempt to make a success out of Brexit, the UK aligns itself closer to the USA as negotiations on a future US-UK trade agreement proceed. To put pressure on the EU 27 in the post-article 50 negotiations, the UK also courts the 'illiberal' among Eastern and Central Europe to try to improve its hand vis-à-vis the EU machinery.

EU **integration** is taken forward by German-French compromises with little buy-in from Central and Eastern Europe. A few East European countries set their path towards illiberal societies with the aim of mirroring East Asian models of economic development and political control. Somewhat ironically, the Atlanticist countries of Eastern Europe also press ahead with their own transactional relations with China in order to secure benefits from China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). While transactional relations across the Atlantic as well as with China can deliver policy gains in specific areas, such as security and trade, they also run counter to any transformational agenda, which further stalls political developments in both Eastern Europe and Europe's neighbourhood. With fractures rather than transformation among the 'new' EU members in the East, the idea of further enlargement of the EU is effectively stalled by increasingly animated political debates in western European countries. Russia wastes no time and engages with overt and covert means in Western Balkans. Its influence is only checked by China that rapidly has built economical interest in the region that now needs to be protected.

This fragmentation of the EU and European security also affects the provision of **capabilities** as an overarching strategy for their use is lacking. The continuing emphasis on national autonomy and the fear of duplicating NATO does not allow any substantial joint procurement as neither military nor industrial interests are aligned at the EU level. Existing mechanisms such as the EDF and PESCO are mainly used by member states as a way to boost national efforts on territorial defence.

On security and defence, **cohesion** suffers from the diverging strategic outlooks described above. The turbulence in the world order prompts the majority of member states to increase spending on national defence. Divergence over the salience of Russia as well as over the importance of the USA as a partner lead some EU member states to invest primarily in the NATO framework, while others seek bilateral and 'minilateral' arrangements in Europe with the aim of strengthening their territorial defence. The EU plays a marginal role as divisions over the general framework of integration have eroded the trust and the solidarity that ought to underpin measures such as the Solidarity Clause and the Mutual Defence Clause. In addition, crisis management is affected by different threat perceptions and the absence of solidarity. The EU battle groups remain in their virtual barracks as unity around missions and funding is lacking. Hence, the infrequent CSDP missions still launched focus on flow management in the direct vicinity of member states' borders. As a tool of power and influence in the region, the CSDP is ineffectual. Because of the restored focus on territorial defence within NATO – and the need to prioritize spending due to US pressure – there is little appetite for traditional crisis management missions in sub-Saharan Africa and in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Individual members are also reluctant to engage as previous years of crisis management and austerity have affected the utility of forces. As security and defence is no longer a vehicle for European political integration, Germany in particular loses interests and resorts to its traditional role as a predominantly civilian power. The result is a security vacuum in the region where no western institution is catering for the sort of missions once grouped together as the 'Petersberg tasks'.

In sum, the EU is void of any security actorness in this scenario. The union as a whole as well as some of its main groupings is fragmented. A new East-West fracture and related ideological and value gaps effectively end the idea of 'Central Europe' (perceived as integrating Germany and what was historically Austrian-Hungarian territory) as a political force created by integration and reunion. At the same time, German-French cooperation runs on fumes and ad hoc solutions, rather than a strong and strategic programme. The latter is aggravated as France is tempted to play a more assertive role – emphasising its role as the sole EU member state with nuclear capacity and a permanent seat at the UN Security Council – in a region increasingly shaped by geopolitical logic. The ambition for security provision is low, as is the unity that underpins ambition. Differences among European countries and a worsening security situation direct spending towards territorial defence but via different platforms such as NATO, unilateral capacities and minilateral formats. The net effect is that

neither the EU nor any of its member states enjoy even a limited version of strategic autonomy.

European coalitions of the willing

In this scenario, external turbulence elevates unity to the main goal of integration. While unity is reached the resulting limited role for differentiation incentivizes a few resourceful EU member states to develop capacities and cooperate outside of the EU.

In terms of **order,** this scenario is characterized by the status quo. While the USA does not revitalize its interest in acting as the main security provider for the West, nor do Russia and China exploit this power vacuum to strengthen their roles on the world stage – mainly as a result of domestic constraints. Although less stable, Russia is viewed as less as of a threat – especially in Washington – and the USA as a consequence places less emphasis on Europe as a partner and ally. The fact that neither perceptions of a Russian threat nor political pressure from the USA fuels internal European divisions – as in the previous scenario – makes it easier for Europeans to achieve unity. This unity comes at a price, however, since consensus is thus prioritized and pursued to the detriment of developing autonomous capacity to conduct the 'most demanding' military crisis management operations. Divergence in terms of member states' strategic cultures persists, and EU-led peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations remain difficult to implement.

European **integration** is still plagued by the integration paradox. While member states delegate some increased authority to the EU and the European Union External Action Service (EEAS), they do not delegate any more sovereignty or capacity to implement and execute decisions regarding the CSDP. While the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as a whole is strengthened by the emphasis on unity, the lack of a common European strategic culture (i.e. consensus about what to do and how to do it in the realm of security and defence) makes the CSDP continue to under-deliver in relation to stated goals and objectives. The net result is a relatively cohesive foreign policy complemented by a weak crisis management capacity. The military capacity of the EU cannot be seen as a power tool and does not add leverage to ordinary diplomacy and development measures.

In terms of **capabilities**, the EU's main focus is on low-hanging fruit, such as strengthening logistics, common training and surveillance. Efforts to synchronize member states' defence planning fail as there is no agreement on which capabilities should be prioritized. The main 'strategic enablers' for the EU to become an autonomous crisis management actor are thus not developed. The creation of a European defence industrial base leads to France and Germany reaping most of the economic benefit. The decision not to allow companies with third party ownership to participate in EDF projects leads to Sweden's military industry becoming less competitive.

In terms of **cohesion**, the degree of consistency between member states' strategic cultures remains relatively low. As member states do not prioritize strengthening the operational military capacity of the EU, there is no additional convergence of strategic cultures through shared experience of military intervention. As a consequence, this divergence leads to a lowest common denominator that only encompasses civilian/softer crisis management operations. Instead, cohesion is strengthened in the bilateral and minilateral groupings where military action is actually taken. The NATO Framework Nation Concept (FNC), which Germany, the UK and Italy all have a version of, will become the norm for increased European defence cooperation, in terms of both joint capabilities and operations. The UK's Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) and the French European Intervention Initiative (EII) will act as the main platforms for European military interventions abroad. These frameworks, rather than the EU, will develop a level of strategic alignment.

In sum, this scenario is characterised by diplomatic unity within the EU but defence cooperation migrating outside of EU structures. Consequently, the EU will become a weaker crisis management actor which makes the UK less interested in CSDP cooperation post-Brexit. As a result of giving priority to political unity over capacity, EU member states will prevent third party participation in EDF and PESCO projects, further widening the defence cooperation gap between the UK and the EU. With regard to the **security actorness** of the EU in this scenario, the situation more or less maintains the status quo. While political unity is viewed as the key to achieving strategic autonomy, the end result is the opposite. PESCO and the EDF may lead to concrete projects on capability shortfalls such as intelligence, surveillance, command and control, logistics and cyber defence, but these capabilities do not in themselves amount to the capacity to act autonomously. Without the political will to use them, these capability initiatives barely scratch the surface of strategic autonomy. Overall European capacity might still increase, but its profile and use are largely steered by the national interests of larger countries. France, Germany, Italy and the UK will thus function as nodes in the networked coalitions of the willing that increasingly constitute European security and defence policy.

Flexible security union

In the third scenario, the EU's member states increasingly accept differentiated integration in the field of security and defence. The capacity to conduct high-end crisis management operations is given priority over political unity which incentivises resourceful members to develop cooperation within the EU framework instead of outside of it. The EU is in this scenario consequently a more capable military actor than in the previous scenarios.

In terms of **order**, this scenario is affected by the increasing levels of regional turmoil, which result from a combination of Russian assertiveness and US transactionalism as well as

increased migration flows from the southern neighbourhood and growing jihadism in North Africa. In addition, as the USA is more interested in pursuing a more nationalist agenda than keeping order, and Russia is relentlessly focused on spoiling any attempt to uphold the West-dominated world order, regional strongmen will be given opportunities to become more assertive. The risk that smaller conflicts might spiral out of control therefore increases. However, while threat perceptions still vary among EU member states, there is a shared understanding that the increased levels of turbulence around Europe's borders and in its neighbourhood merit a more capable EU. In order to navigate a political landscape that is characterised by geopolitical rivalry as well as the logic of globalisation, EU member states see the need to back up diplomacy and normative power with military tools of influence and leverage. It is accepted that member states will see different needs for engagement and that their interests and strategic directions will diverge, so increasing levels of differentiation are accepted in order to maintain the overall capacity to intervene, influence and deter.[10]

Regarding **integration**, this scenario is facilitated by the push for deeper cooperation that follows Brexit as well as the acceptance of variable levels of engagement that flows from the accession of Montenegro and Serbia. The need and room for further integration, but with an acceptance that some policy fields function better without full member state participation, finally unlocks the paradox of integration. Cooperation in areas such as counterterrorism, intelligence and crisis management creates a public good even if a minority of member states abstain from it. The free-riding problem is now manageable as cooperating members withhold control and gain influence.

The military **capabilities** of EU member states are strengthened as increased flexibility and external threats act as an impetus for the EU to finally develop the strategic enablers required for peace enforcement. While defence planning remains a national competence, those member states which share a common strategic culture choose to synchronise their defence planning to a larger degree than others. This leads to more efficient defence spending and the possibility of developing high-end, expensive military assets. The flexible security and defence model will also lead to a burden-sharing arrangement within the EU/CSDP. Tempted by budgetary, intelligence and decision-making support, the French EII will be set up within PESCO and act as a vanguard for expeditionary military operations, mainly in North Africa, the Sahel and the Middle East. The FNC model will also be applied within the CSDP, whereby some states can more closely cooperate on either territorial defence capacities or crisis management capacities (or both). CSDP capabilities and operations are developed and executed in smaller groups that share common strategic interests. However, military operations are still kept within the EU-framework as larger member states appreciate cost-sharing as well as the added value of an

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[10] However, increased flexibility should not be perceived as something which unquestionably increases military capacity. One might envisage an alternative analogous scenario where the acceptance of flexibility becomes so great that EU member states no longer see the need of a European framework for common military action – i.e. the dissolution of the CSDP. This would rather decrease the overall military capacity of EU member states.

integrated approach to resolving conflicts and crises. Especially the aspect of cost-sharing should not be underemphasized, as many of the French initiatives currently being undertaken are more or less explicitly aimed at decreasing the French burden of costs related to interventions in the MENA region.[11]

This strengthened will to act as a result of increased external threats, in combination with a greater flexibility within the CSDP, also leads to a higher degree of **cohesion** among EU member states, mainly as a result of increased participation in CSDP operations. Strategic culture convergence is reached through joint experiences of perceived threats (for instance rising rate of terrorist attacks or Russian hostility) and shared practical experiences of military operations.[12] However, in this scenario, and in contrast to the two previous scenarios, a common European strategic culture is not a prerequisite to achieve an effective CSDP. Although not all member states will join every mission, the flexible approach will make it easier for states to join those missions that suit their national strategic cultures and threat perceptions. 'Flexible cooperation' through the EU/CSDP will also be less complicated than joining an additional institutional framework (i.e. EII/JEF) and thus facilitate greater participation in CSDP military operations – which in the long run will lead to an incremental convergence of strategic cultures among all EU member states.

In sum, as a result of increased flexibility within the CSDP, developments in this area are less hampered by collective action problems. Instead, the EU's authority is delegated on the basis of member states' shared interests rather than institutional bargaining. In other words, since high levels of cohesion and consensus are no longer a prerequisite for EU action, the effectiveness of the EU's military capacity is no longer conditioned upon political goodwill. If a member state decides that a certain project or operation is not in their interests, its opt-out has only a marginal effect on the effectiveness of the smaller group's collective action. As a result, in this scenario the **security actorness** of the EU is strengthened.

The enhanced military capacity of the EU also increases the willingness of the UK to maintain strong bonds with the CSDP. Third party participation in the EDF and PESCO will be allowed as the EU will no longer be striving to create an 'EU strategic autonomy', but rather to strengthen the strategic autonomy of Europe as a whole. From this perspective, third party participation is no longer perceived as a threat. While differentiation is accepted in the CSDP field, political unity is preserved where its failure would be most damaging – the CFSP area, including sanctions. As a result, the EU can manage the Petersberg tasks in its own region and, when unity of purpose allows, use the military tool as leverage in its general foreign policy. Since the EU will become an autonomous actor for military crisis management

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[11] This was apparent in both the French 2017 Strategic Review of Defence and National Security and during interviews with French officials at Quai d'Orsay in October 2017.

[12] See Meyer (2005) for a discussion on the factors behind strategic culture convergence.

operations – in terms of both capacity and the political will to act – a more formal burden-sharing arrangement between the EU and NATO will also be established.

A European defence union

In a final scenario, the EU develops into a true defence union with considerable autonomy regarding deterrence as well interventions. This development comes at a price in terms of integration and legitimacy. It is also dependent on fairly drastic changes regarding the key uncertainties.

In the three preceding scenarios, the USA has sustained its presence in Europe and support for NATO's article 5 based on its self-interest that Europe should be whole, free and at peace, as well as in avoiding the reputational damage to other relations that a full US withdrawal from Europe would entail. In this final scenario, the USA neither perceives Russia as a threat nor has any interest in upholding its previous standing in world affairs. The USA thus sees only diminishing returns from its European engagement. Partly as a result of this US-initiated post-Atlanticism, the German-French engine receives a vital fuel injection, which subsequently leads to considerable integration in the defence realm. As the USA backs away from Europe, the EU is independently able to fill the ensuing security vacuum ahead of Russia and/or China.

While not all EU member states perceive further European **integration** as the best response to managing a fragmented world order, most of the members of the eurozone decide to further integrate their military forces, with the 'inner six' founding members of the EU at the forefront of an 'ever closer union'. This deepened integration is mainly driven by a renewed French-German axis. While France agrees to support the German vision on eurozone reform (less centralization and greater national fiscal responsibility), in return Germany supports the French vision on a shared defence budget and the creation of an autonomous European defence technological and industrial base (EDTIB). At the bilateral level, Germany decides to fund the stationing of French nuclear weapons in Germany as a way to balance out wavering US security guarantees. For France, this further demonstrates its role as the principal de facto leader of European defence.

While the previous scenario allowed for considerable levels of differentiation and flexibility, this scenario offers a more fundamental choice of staying on the Franco-German train or getting off. This integration by directorate forces other member states to either leave the EU or integrate to a greater extent than they might prefer. As the EU increases its legal pressure on Hungary and Poland, Hungary eventually chooses to follow in the footsteps of the UK and leave the EU. The other members of the eurozone, however, feel the need to join the enhanced cooperation for the same reasons as joining PESCO – it is simply too costly not to. States outside of this accentuated 'core Europe' find themselves with considerably less political

weight than before, which pushes some of the 'semi-periphery' member states to further deepen political integration with the EU against their will, while others contemplate following Hungary out of the EU.

In terms of **cohesion**, big differences in member states' strategic cultures remain, but gradually converge as a result of increased cooperation on military operations in the southern neighbourhood. The dominance of the French-German axis leads to CSDP missions mainly being focused on former French colonies in North Africa and the Sahel. This tendency worries member states that would have liked to see more EU security efforts in the eastern neighbourhood. In addition, the creation of an autonomous EDTIB further strengthens EU military **capabilities**. High-end capabilities that are difficult to develop and procure at the national level – such as drones, air-to-air refuelling, strategic bombers and submarines – are developed and fully financed by a coordinated defence planning mechanism between the core Europe member states.

In sum, a dramatic reduction in US engagement in and with Europe, coupled with a reinvigorated German-French relationship, unleashes a process that leads to a semi-federalized defence union among a core membership. Not all the member states or their populations are comfortable with this development. Some voice their concerns, others remain at the periphery and some even choose to leave the EU altogether. However, the increased military capabilities, and a strong political will to use them, lead to a significant increase in the EU's **security actorness**. In other words, both the ambition and the political unity within the CSDP is high. By increasing its military capabilities and gradually ending its dependence on the USA, the EU becomes a politically and strategically autonomous actor capable of managing a limited form of territorial defence and high-end peace enforcement operations. The increase in capability, however, is mostly directed towards the interests of the core group – and its Franco-German leadership in particular. EU member states that abstain from this enhanced cooperation find themselves lacking in both transatlantic guarantees and the benefits of a strengthened EU defence cooperation.

	Fragmented union	Coalitions of the willing	Flexible security	Defence union
Key elements	Sharp Atlanticist-Post-atlanticist divide Security vacuum in EU and neighbourhood Neither military nor industrial interests aligned Less co-operation with UK post-Brexit	Differentiation outside EU Diplomatic unity, but defence cooperation migrates outside EU (i.e. EII, JEF and FNC) Less co-operation with UK post-Brexit	Differentiation inside EU Less diplomatic unity, but defence cooperation stays in EU More co-operation with UK post-Brexit to strengthen European strategic autonomy	Semi-federalized defence union Joint procurement Limited 'Eurodeterrent' Less co-operation with UK post-Brexit
Drivers	Transactional US administration Aggressive Russian signalling German-French ad-hoc compromises without large buy-in from other MS Diverging strategic cultures	Brexit and order fragmentation leads to increased salience of diplomatic unity Diverging threat perceptions National interests hamstring the development of joint capabilities for CSDP missions	Brexit leads to acceptance for variable levels of engagement – unlocks paradox of integration Necessity of high-end crisis management capabilities	US looses self-interest in sustaining European presence German-French 'grand bargain' Necessity of considerable capability development
Autonomy & actorness	Low Emphasis on strengthening national strategic autonomy rather than EU strategic autonomy	Low-Medium EU strategic autonomy remains unchanged Diverging strategic cultures hamstrings joint action	Medium-High Emphasis on strengthening European strategic autonomy rather than EU strategic autonomy	High Substantial strategic and political autonomy Long term sustainability of actorness threatened by weak levels of political support

Conclusion

European security and defence is in a phase of rapid development, at least in terms of new cooperative mechanisms and stated ambitions. Where could this lead us, and which choices made in the near future could have lasting effects on long-term development? This report seeks to fuse short-term trends with underlying structural factors to derive the most plausible view(s) of the future. Based on four critical uncertainties for European security and defence, and the way these factors might change in the medium term, it suggests four alternative futures. The value of such a scenario analysis lies in its illustration of the interplay between longer term structural factors and choices made today. None of the suggested futures are likely to materialize as described, but each is plausible and policy planners should adopt strategies based on their preferred outcomes.

Looking at the scenarios today, some seem more likely than others. Our assessment is that the first scenario – **fragmented union** – is unlikely as the overarching common foreign and security policy is held together by a relatively strong consensus. While Europe's core countries remain split in terms of their strategic cultures, basic threat assessments are shared and the costs of disintegration and renationalization are becoming increasingly apparent. It thus remains unlikely that Europe will experience large-scale fragmentation in the next 15 years. Similarly, the most extreme scenario in terms of deepening defence integration – **defence union** – remains unlikely unless two relatively drastic changes in the key uncertainties occur simultaneously: (a) full US disengagement from the European continent as a result of no longer having a self-interest in maintaining its presence; and (b) a French-German 'grand bargain' that leads to large-scale integration among members of the eurozone. Increasing support for populist and Eurosceptic parties in most of the EU's member states also makes this scenario unrealistic. Both of the scenarios in the middle seem plausible but current developments in the area of security and defence indicate that we are likely moving towards the second – **coalitions of the willing**. This scenario is characterised by a high degree of political unity within the EU's CSDP, combined with increased levels of 'minilateral' cooperation and action outside of the EU framework.

With 2017 in hindsight, this scenario seems more likely than ever before. One clear example was the result of the negotiations on the PESCO entry requirements – the inclusion of as many member states as possible in order to block the development of a multi-speed Europe in defence. Partly in response to this outcome, France has chosen to announce the creation of a new minilateral expeditionary warfare cooperative format outside of the EU, aptly named the European Intervention Initiative (EII). This 'French PESCO' aims to achieve precisely what France wanted PESCO to be, a narrower cooperation format with a clearer focus on strengthening the EU's capacity for joint military interventions in its southern neighbourhood. In the short term it is thus likely that the trend for increased cooperation in smaller coalitions of the willing, such as the EII, the FNC and the JEF, will continue.

In the long term, it is possible that the EU will move towards increased flexibility within the CSDP. This would allow for the third scenario – a **flexible security union**. In contrast to the

previous scenario, a flexible security union would be characterised by political unity within the overarching CFSP (i.e. general foreign policy) while the CSDP (security and defence policy) would allow for greater differentiation and, by extension, smaller coalitions of the willing operating under the EU flag. However, this outcome would require some sort of cost-sharing mechanism in order to incentivize the larger and more capable countries to choose the CSDP as their primary framework for joint action, as well as an acceptance of differentiation as a more general principle of future European integration.

While scenarios do not prove anything, the dynamics that are unleashed when pairing short-term developments and structural factors can provide foresight and planning horizons for anyone dealing with the development of European security and defence. Rather than 'lessons learned', this report therefore offers a range of 'questions to be raised' by policy planners and analysts in the field.

Will US disengagement from the global liberal order transform the Euro-Atlantic order?
This report has analysed the internal order – and its fragmentation – as well as the Euro-Atlantic order. Europe has benefited immensely from both of these US-backed orders as they allow for effective international cooperation and European security respectively. Much of the discussion has focused on President Trump's commitment to European security and some of these worries have been alleviated by the reinforced European Deterrence Initiative (EDI).[13] While the initiative is certainly good news for European security, it should not lead Europeans to disregard the danger of the current transatlantic drift. First, Europe will suffer direct effects from US disengagement from the liberal order, as illustrated in several of the scenarios. While there will be opportunities for European engagement to uphold parts of this order, it would be disastrous to lose the US as an ally in upholding a rules-based multilateral order with functional international institutions. Second, less US engagement in the global order will also indirectly affect the calculus underpinning the Euro-Atlantic order, something that is often obscured. The Euro-Atlantic order is built on US security guarantees and support for European integration in exchange for European support for US global leadership as well European resilience in the face of Russian assertiveness. If the USA sees decreasing returns from its provision of global order, it will inevitably value European support for these efforts less. In parallel, if the USA is less worried about Russian assertiveness in the region, it will place a lower premium on the resilient and liberal societies that have traditionally been seen as a product of European integration. In such a scenario, there is a risk that US military engagement in Europe will be priced higher and increasingly follow a US-centric logic rather than a transatlantic one.

European strategic capacity rather than autonomy?
This report has suggested four scenarios that are linked in the sense that Europe's 'strategic actorness' increases from the first to the last. Actorness is a product of *cohesion* among the disparate foreign policy aspects of the EU, the military and diplomatic *capabilities* that are

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[13] $4.8 billion in 2018 to increase the readiness and responsiveness of US forces in Europe.

achievable and a permissive *context* to internal engagement. In order for any actorness to be strategic, the above elements must be planned and resourced in relation to each other, that is, cohesion must refer to actual policy needs in each context of engagement, capabilities should be produced to this end and feedback loops should allow for learning after any foreign policy action. Such strategic actorness in the foreign policy realm is different from the aspirational term 'European strategic autonomy', although the latter can be a product of the former. The extent to which Europe might live up to such aspirations differs between the scenarios. The question remains, however, to what extent strategic autonomy, a term frequently used in the European Union Global Strategy, is a helpful concept. While the substance usually tied to it – European capacity to plan and execute military crisis management operations – is a fully legitimate aspiration, the concept itself tends to obscure substantial questions. From a US perspective, autonomy – and some level of decoupling from the USA – is interpreted as an end in itself. The concept of autonomy also obscures the fact that in almost any situation, Europe would be dependent on cooperation with other actors – be they regional organizations, NGOs or third parties – to effectively address complex modern security issues. Security policy today, and in the scenarios in this report, is more about managing interdependency than performing autonomously. Given this fact, Europe might ask itself whether an aspirational concept closer to the strategic actorness theme discussed above would be more useful, more inclusive vis-à-vis partners and more honest in the face of modern challenges: *European strategic capacity* perhaps?

Is there a conflict between European unity and European capacity?
A recurrent theme in the scenarios is the different modalities for member state cooperation to produce the necessary levels of capabilities and political will. The ambition to keep the EU27 united is often portrayed as an end in itself, as was illustrated in the negotiations on PESCO where 'inclusiveness' prevailed. This emphasis on unity can however be challenged if it is accepted that different foreign policy areas might function according to different cooperative logics. European foreign and security policy cooperation is often analysed as pertaining to a logic of the weakest link – the sum of its part will never be stronger than the weakest part of a collective effort. This is true in many policy subfields, such as sanctions, and is exacerbated by the fact that unanimity rules allow any member state to act as a Trojan Horse for foreign interests. It is also possible to argue, however, that other cooperative logics are at play.[14] One example is the 'single best effort' – a situation where it is enough for any constellation of actors to be successful for the policy problem to be resolved for all – which is more relevant when discussing the efficacy of foreign interventions in crisis management. In this light, it would be fairly risk free to move away from a focus on unity/inclusiveness and allow more differentiation in sub-areas of cooperation where it is more important that the resourceful few are supported to solve the problem rather than that everyone participates. The alternative, pictured in scenario two, is that formal unity forces the most willing member states to act outside of EU structures, which effectively hollows out the concept of European unity.

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[14] This discussion on cooperative logics draws on Barrett (2007).

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