

The “Train Has Stopped Again”: Common European Defense and Relations with NATO

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Abstract

The present paper aims to investigate the evolution and stages of the concept of European defense after the Treaty of Lisbon. Any reference to European security and defense policy is always an open challenge that highlights the complexities of the past in this area, as well as the present. The constant crises, the increasing and/or decreasing armaments of member states, the role of the Atlantic Alliance, the constant aggression of various states against others, the limitations of its intergovernmental system and unanimous decision-making rules are always evolving and subject to further analysis. On the other hand, the lack of strategies for member states, including those within NATO, powers like the United States and its rival China, are challenges that demonstrate the lack of true European military autonomy. An autonomy that perhaps is unnecessary given the focus on a common operational structure that places the management of external military missions within the framework of European defense integration, viewing it as a stage in the Union’s ongoing evolution.

Keywords: European Union law, territorial sovereignty, ReArm Europe Act, mutual defense clause, hotbeds of war, CFSP, CSDP, CARD, EDF, PESCO, SAFE, NATO

1. Introduction

The continuing flashpoints of recent years, culminating in the one between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, as well as the ongoing fear, through official declarations by Germany and Poland, of a world war in Europe in the coming years, increasingly open the door to a discussion of defense and security policy within the European context (Liakopoulos, 2024). Expectations of peace in such a challenging geopolitical context are forcing military policy and collective security to retrench, even in American policy, which, after the re-election of President Trump, has renegotiated the role of NATO through special funding. Since its

inception, the EU, through the European integration project, has built a European institutional architecture based on a belief in a stability that has proven insecure and a general illusion, especially in recent months, placing the continent under widespread fear and continuous crises in this area.

Whether this is a legal and/or political crisis is a question that, according to those who study these matters, can answer themselves. What we all know and agree on is that Russia’s unilateral annexation of Crimea in 2014 marked the beginning of a stressful situation that culminated in the 2022 war. This event, like other similar situations in the past, was underestimated at the

time, preventing the EU and some member states from maintaining significant economic and energy dependence on the Russian Federation.

The large-scale military operation against Ukraine, European support through all means and the dynamic persistence of competing geopolitical powers have forced European circles to seriously reflect on collective defense and European security from the outset. However, the entire EU began its birth process based on this reality and necessity, given the end of World War II and the reconstruction of Europe (Fabbrini, 2025). Political considerations through political discourse are never-ending, especially given the emergence of the ongoing contradictions within a fragmented, organizationally decision-making system. Within this sphere, the EU has sought a strict sanctions regime as a global response to those who do not follow legal rules and respect international law, as well as to any state that seeks to exploit the territory of other states in any way possible (Fabbrini, 2024a). From a theoretical standpoint, this position seems correct, understandable even for those who do not believe in international law and especially in the European context, where a legal conclusion has been reached regarding armaments, namely the European Peace Facility (EPF) (Fabbrini, 2023; Frei, 2025), as an institution for the EUNAM Ukraine-type military assistance mission, as well as investments in munitions production and defensive capabilities. Progress within the CSDP and the CFSP surpasses past dreams and opens the way for continued European integration (Fabbrini, 2024b). The ongoing crises and the Union's response of imposing structural limits as an autonomous guarantee of continental security have resulted in the evolution of a conflict that has confirmed the essential role of NATO as the foundation of all member states that form part of a European security order.

International challenges have provided a structured European response to a series of clashes and institutional and political criticisms aimed at establishing the Union as a strategic player of global inspiration (McGarry, 2022).¹ The central issue of the decision-making structure as an expression of supranational coexistence was difficult to reconcile. Thus, the structure appears inadequate to meet the needs

of coherence and speed in an effective defense and security policy, with fewer criticisms in the face of daily needs and realities. The Treaty of Lisbon was a step forward but also chaotic in the sector under investigation. The marginal role of two bodies such as the European Parliament and the European Commission, as well as the overlapping competences that have fragmented the predictability of external action, have shown us the reluctance of member states to cede a prerogative of sovereignty, such as an important issue of national armed forces, with the prospect of progressive integration into a coordinated framework. Military cooperation has been a step towards a rationalization of the CFSP and the relative overcoming of a fragmented strategy. Interoperability between national defense systems has made the technologies available to implement their own CSDP instruments, thus favoring a common policy based on Article 42, par. 2 TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024), while also facilitating a gradual overcoming of an intergovernmental method perceived by member states as a guarantee of national control. Within this spirit, NATO has sought to play a fundamental role, namely that of guaranteeing European security. Cooperation within NATO was not sufficient to meet the strategic needs of the Union's member states, also considering the divergences in institutional identity that the Union's political priorities, especially after Brexit, have forced the Union to become one of the most important military actors, reducing its overall strategic weight due to its subordination to a Euro-Atlantic framework (Svendsen, 2019).

In this spirit, the joint EU-NATO declaration of 10 January 2023 reaffirmed the shared interest in strengthening a European defense dimension by placing the escalating Russian-Ukrainian crisis in constant competition with China. Current challenges require a level of operational coordination, integration and defensive capabilities that are no higher than that guaranteed by existing mechanisms (Dobbins, Shatz & Wyne, 2019; Aktoudianakis, 2020). The elements that the United States believes are hindering the development of European strategic autonomy have strengthened the spirit of the Union's defensive capacity and once again

¹ European Commission, Joint statement on supporting Ukraine in its proceeding at the International Court of Justice, STATEMENT/22/4509, Bruxelles, 13 July 2022: <https://www.icj-cij.org/node/203013>

positioned American policy as the primary guarantor of peace in Europe by allocating resources to internal priorities in different geostrategic areas with common interests (Shifrinson, 2021; Torres Sandoval & García Ramírez, 2024). Thus, the construction of a common European defense does not represent an ideological aspiration and an illusion for visionary dreamers towards a strategic necessity that seems to be imperative to protect collective security and consolidate the international credibility of the Union.

2. History and Law Within the Concept of Common European Defense

It is with great pleasure that I read the words of former French Prime Minister René Pleven when he presented the Pleven Plan during the early years of the EU's founding. It was an important step and a pioneering idea to create an integrated European army, seeking to merge the armed forces of the first six founding states. But it also served as a tool for overseeing a European defense ministry with supranational political authority, implementing an open, technically debatable vision that was entrusted as a development project in the European Defense Community (EDC), signed in Paris on 27 May 1952. It was a structural and conceptual project that envisioned a common armed force for national armies and the delegation of strategic decisions to a shared institutional system, the main elements of which were the jurisdictional body, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU). Within this spirit, a parliamentary assembly framed a mutual defense clause which, according to Article 2, paragraph 3, contained the obligation for member states to intervene in cases of aggression against a member state of the Union (Pollman, 2023; Poederly, 2025). Ratification by the French National Assembly did not prevent the entry into force and did not abandon the military integration project.

The European unification project followed the economic path, while the continent's defense remained solely the responsibility of NATO. Within this framework, we saw the ambitious project of the Western European Union (WEU) from October 1954 as a compromise of the time and a foundation for the further development of

an autonomous defense structure that also included the Atlantic Alliance in a subsidiary capacity (Blockmans, 2013). The member states of the time initiated European political cooperation as an attempt to coordinate foreign policy for the future of the CSDP, despite the structural limitations that remained outside primary law. Their aim was to set narrow objectives, affording broad discretion to states and thus imposing minimal consultation obligations on defense matters that remained excluded. Following the Single European Act of 1987, the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, which more precisely institutionalized defense issues and affirmed the identity of this policy as an international science through the implementation of a common foreign and defense policy, also included the definition of an important arm for the development and integration of NATO and the EU at a purely European level. The story continues with the Treaty of Amsterdam of 1997, through the Petersberg tasks of humanitarian missions, peacekeeping and combat missions to crisis management, also including elements in *communis* of international law such as peace and international security, i.e., NATO's cornerstones for ensuring European security (Masło, 2025).¹

An important and developmental step was the Declaration of Saint-Malo of 1998 as a basis for a necessity of the time for the Union and as a response to the war in the Balkan area due to the insufficiency of European action in the absence of an autonomous capacity and recognition only of the role of the Atlantic Alliance.² A decisive impulse was that with the Treaty of Nice, which led to progress in phasing out the WEU, which was dissolved in 2011 thus reinvigorating the Treaty of Lisbon, which through Article 42, paragraph 7 TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024) and the mutual assistance clause has questioned cases of direct aggression

¹ Petersberg Declaration made by the WEU Council of Ministers (Bonn, 19 June 1992): https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/petersberg_declaration_made_by_the_weu_council_of_ministers_bonn_19_june_1992-en-16938094-bb79-41ff-951c-f6c7aae8a97a.html

² Joint Declaration on European Defence. Joint Declaration issued at the British-French Summit (Saint-Malo, 4 December 1998), par. 2: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:92000E003784>

(Blockmans, 2013; Poederly, 2025).¹ The political, civil, military instruments and the management of external missions according to Article 43 for this type of operations include disarmament actions, humanitarian missions, conflict prevention, peacekeeping and military interventions as regards general objectives of external action according to Article 21 TEU (Wouters, 2004; Eeckhout, 2012; Wessel & Van Vooren, 2014; Wouters, Hoffmeister, De Baere & Ramopoulos, 2021; Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024).

The lack of permanent common tests as in the case of the Battlegroups of 2007 led to political and institutional difficulties (Potteau, 2014; Meyer, Van Osch & Reykers, 2024).² On the financial level, military expenditures excluded the Union budget according to Article 41 TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024). For this reason, a European instrument for peace was created, an extra national budget which was intended to support armament supplies for Ukraine.³ Finally, the creation of the European Defence Agency (EDA) in 2004, recognized by the Treaty of Lisbon in 2004, harmonized needs to support technological research to strengthen the industrial bases thus contributing to the military capacity of the member states as provided for by Article 42, par. 3 TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024) and the related action that slows down political resistance at European level (Koutrakos, 2013; Fonfría & Vicente Oliva, 2024).⁴ Since 2017, we also note the Permanent Structure Cooperation (PESCO),⁵ which has been organized and structured by Articles 42, par. 6 and 46 TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin,

2024) and by Protocol No. 10 seeking to strengthen cooperation in the field of capability development and research for defense expenditures due to the lack of binding unanimous rules (Blockmans, 2018).⁶

3. Limits, Development and Future of the CSDP

The main decision-making mechanisms in both European security and defense are similar and primarily concern the establishment of missions. These mechanisms are based on the adoption of decisions and principles by unanimity, thus allowing for circumstances, as was evident from the outset with the Treaty of Maastricht (Wessel, 2018). An exceptional mechanism allows the Council to decide by qualified majority on procedural matters for the implementation of joint actions, which are adopted and contain the authorization clause for the use of majority voting. This practice was established through Articles J.8 and J.3.2 of the Treaty of Maastricht, but without any specific results. Although the principle of constructive abstention under Article 23 TEU provided for qualified majority decisions during the Treaty of Amsterdam, these instruments remained marginal in the legal framework. Constructive abstention established the practice for the state to bind the principle of sincere cooperation towards the Union and the other member states. As a result, perhaps the ninth obstacle to common action: qualified majority decisions, allowed for the use of the emergency brake and the possibility of action when each state requested the vital, precise reasons for its national policy and referred its arguments to the European Council. No decision was adopted by majority, despite the military

¹ Council Decision 2001/78/CFSP of 22 January 2001 setting up the Political and Security Committee (PSC). 2001/79/CFSP: Council Decision of 22 January 2001 setting up the Military Committee of the European Union, OJ L 27, 30.1.2001, pp. 4–6. Council Decision of 22 January 2001 on the establishment of the Military Staff of the European Union, OJ L 27, pp. 7–11. Council Decision 2014/401/CFSP of 26 June 2014 on the European Union Satellite Centre and repealing Joint Action 2001/555/CFSP on the establishment of a European Union Satellite Centre, OJ L 188, 27.6.2014, pp. 73–84. Council Joint Action 2001/554/CFSP of 20 July 2001. Council Decision 2014/75/CFSP of 10 February 2014.

² European Parliament, Report on the implementation of the Common Security and Defense Policy-annual report 2021, 1 October 2021.

³ Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/509 of 22 March 2021 establishing a European Peace Facility, and repealing Decision (CFSP) 2015/528, ST/5212/2021/INIT, OJ L 102, 24.3.2021, pp. 14–62. Council Decision (CFSP) 2022/338 of 28 February 2022 on an assistance measure under the European Peace Facility for the supply to the Ukrainian Armed Forces of military equipment, and platforms, designed to deliver lethal force, OJ L 60, 28.2.2022, pp. 1–4.

⁴ 2004/551/CFSP Council Joint Action 2004/551/CFSP of 12 July 2004 on the establishment of the European Defence Agency, OJ L 245, 17.7.2004, pp. 17–28. Council Decision (CFSP) 2015/1835 of 12 October 2015 defining the statute, seat and operational rules of the European Defence Agency (recast), OJ L 266, 13.10.2015, pp. 55–74.

⁵ Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/2315 of 11 December 2017 establishing permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) and determining the list of participating Member States, OJ L 331, 14.12.2017, pp. 57–77.

⁶ Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/340 of 6 March 2018 establishing the list of projects to be developed under Permanent Structure Cooperation-PESCO, OJ L 65, 8.3.2018, pp. 24–27.

and defense implications.

Instead, with the Lisbon Treaty, the subject matter unified fundamental rules for the CFSP without substantial changes. The general unanimity rule was also confirmed according to constructive abstention and emergency brake mechanisms according to Article 31 TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024). Thus, the European Parliament maintained a marginal role of a limiting nature to regular consultations, especially for the High Representative and on aspects that concerned key aspects for the CFSP and CSDP according to Article 36 TEU. The conclusion of international agreements pursuant to Article 218, paragraph 10 TFEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024) was a reality. The work of the CJEU excluded the control of acts in this area except for decisions of the CFSP on acts in this area and for its own decisions, which imposed individual restrictive measures relating to Articles 24 and 40 TEU and 275 TFEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024). Except for the Commission, which lost the power of its own initiative, the negotiations of the CFSP, together with the European Council and the President, were based on Article 15, paragraph 2 TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024).

Decision-making rules remained at the center of institutional debate. This was because the founding states of the Union, such as Germany and France, proposed the qualified majority voting as a general rule during the work on the Constitutional Treaty. Ultimately, however, this proposal was rejected. This was an orientation that, in the position of Working Group VII on External Action, favored the use of the majority method. The resulting compromise with Lisbon introduced new qualified majority voting positions, as provided for in Articles 31, paragraphs 2 and 3, and Articles 45, paragraph 2, and 46 TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024). The bridging clause was also introduced, allowing the Council of Europe to unanimously establish a decision adopted by qualified majority without formally amending the treaties pursuant to Article 48 TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024). In this regard, the clause included some important limitations such as: - the activation which required unanimity and b)

the non-application of decisions that had implications at the military level and on one's own defense according to Article 31, par. 1 TEU (Peers, 2012; Böttner, 2016; Kotanidis, 2020; Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024).

The result was a substantial change in the decision-making rules in the defense sector, which required the revision of the collateral treaties. The High Representative and the European Commission included a non-activation clause as well as the persistence of the European Council's veto power, which neutralized its effectiveness in this regard (Laïci, 2021).¹ It was not suitable for bringing about a substantial change in the integration process, which required a parallel strengthening of an integration policy as well as adequate constitutional safeguard mechanisms. The lack of majority rule guaranteed the operational efficiency of the CFSP, despite the difficulties that arose due to the relative use of Battlegroups. Thus, it determined a structural change in the reasoning of the integration process, which required the governance of the CFSP to be conceived from a democratic and jurisdictionally controllable perspective. Managing the Ukrainian crisis in a unified manner within the framework of unanimity allows member states to act cohesively in the face of a common threat, under circumstances that confirm the adoption of restrictive measures, as we saw in the case of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. The unanimity requirement conferred particular political weight on decisions as well as the need for effective and rapid tools. The risk of decision-making paralysis arose from individual states' vetoes, compromising collective security and challenging majority decisions (Pomorska & Wessel, 2021).

At the same time, in the area of defense, the activation of the relevant mechanism provided for in Article 42, paragraph 6 of the TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024) allowed states to meet high standards in terms of military capabilities, allowing for a structured, permanent cooperation based on the institution of PESCO (Prieto, 2018). This demonstrates the effectiveness of an instrument that is elitist in nature and effectively embraces all member

¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Council, the European Parliament and the Council. A stronger global actor: a more efficient decision making for the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy of 12 September 2018, COM (2018)647.

states. On the other hand, it is argued that the institution represents integration into a defense field where the then President of the Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, defined it as the Sleeping Beauty of the Treaty of Lisbon.

This is an instrument that, from the perspective of intergovernmental methods, prevailed over differentiated forms of cooperation. Thus, the examples of Articles 42, paragraphs 3 and 5 TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024) did not respectfully allow states to make available to the Union civilian and military capabilities, including multinational forces, nor did the Council allow member states to entrust missions to groups for the member states pursuant to Article 44 TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024). The introduction of PESCO and the limitations associated with the need for unanimity among participating states. The lack of enforcement instruments constituted an important step for the integration of European defense. This created an institutional framework for the progressive integration of military capabilities, also promoting interoperability and reducing resource rationalization. The continued interest of Member States in increasing the projects being developed within the framework of PESCO was demonstrated by Decision (CFSP) 2023/995, a concrete sign of the desire to strengthen military cooperation.

4. Strengthening the Union Through Relations with NATO

The evolutionary paths of the Union and NATO are designed to protect defense interests within a Western bloc and a context of a confrontation with the Russian Federation and its allies, which continues to operate within a geopolitical framework conditioned by a nuclear weapons policy and the Russian Federation's strategic competition with China: "(...) as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance. This agreement effectively ensures that NATO remains the primary framework for European security as long as Europeans find themselves under the shadow cast by the large nuclear arsenal of the Russian Federation (...)" (Lindstrom & Tardy, 2019). The organizations' interests continue to be shared by a significant number of member states of the Union, including the Atlantic Alliance (Ewers-Peters, 2021; Anagnostakis, 2025).

The legal nature of the alliance and the ongoing global military threats, along with Islamist

terrorist attacks and political and social instability, have led many countries taking defensive responses that go beyond the regional scope of the Union requiring the involvement of other members of the Atlantic Pact. Within this perspective, the weak moment that occurred during the Berlin Plus agreements of 2003 allowed the EU to implement crisis management operations in Bosnia and Macedonia. The EU continues to use external command structures to subordinate the Atlantic Pact and highlight a democratic deficit in its institutional structure, in relation to its autonomous crisis management capacity. Strengthening and coordination between the two organizations began in 2001, based on interinstitutional cooperation mechanisms that have proven fragmented, limiting joint missions and failing to address key issues for crisis management in Afghanistan and the ongoing fight against international terrorism. This choice responded to a need to avoid the Union's excessive subordination to NATO and in particularly sensitive areas. Thus, the strengthening of the Union's autonomy, as early as 2006, established a military and civilian operational unit within the Union General Staff with the potential capacity to autonomously plan and manage its own ongoing missions.

The geopolitical objectives of the Union and NATO did not fully coincide with structural divergences. This was primarily due to the years-long "struggle" with Turkey, a NATO member outside the Union, and with Cyprus, a member of the Union outside the Atlantic Alliance. The divergences were full, precise and continually increasing after Brexit, given the centrality of the Anglo-American axis, which risked its orientation toward NATO and the strategies of distinct objectives that the Union respects to

pursue autonomously (Shifrinson, 2021).¹

Resolving the intervention with a strategic approach of a legal-institutional nature, based on strengthening the Union's competences and on the constitutionalization of institutional structures and the definition of the implementation of this policy, positions the process of strengthening the CSDP as a true acceleration of the United Kingdom's exit from the EU. This is an event that previously marked and determined the relaunch of the related discussion on common European defense. This is a clear shift that, according to the content of the Berlin Agreements of 2003 and the EU-NATO Joint Declarations of 2016 and 2018, as well as the EU-NATO Declaration of 2023, which were being fully implemented, paved the way for principles of solidarity and subsidiarity that reaffirmed and strengthened the Union's role in the relationship with NATO within an equal cooperation that respected autonomous strategies in a reciprocal manner (Hamon, 2019). In this spirit, we also consider the first EU-NATO Declaration of 8 July 2016, adopted a few days after the presentation of the Union's global strategy, demonstrating a qualitative leap in the Union's international projection. The strategic autonomy that demonstrated at the international level a greater focus, especially on substantial economic investments and, above all, institutional resources, acted as a single actor speaking with a single voice, with the possibility of a single representation of member states within NATO. This perspective presupposed the CSDP's submission to a supranational political leadership for the institution in an effective and politically responsible manner.

¹ Shifrinson affirmed that: "(...) United States ought to prepare for a broader recalibration of political responsibilities in Europe. Precisely because the United States has other domestic and international obligations (...) NATO's European members are increasingly disenchanted with U.S. predominance, conditions are ripe to empower the European allies (...) strengthen intra-European solidarity and cooperation while the United States steps back from active management of European security. The United States should pivot toward becoming the pacifier of last resort rather than the manager of early squabbles (...)".

The Treaty of Lisbon introduced a direction with an impact that essentially translated into a partial European position on the intergovernmental method within the scope of the CFSP. This tension was aimed at the Union's ambition to impact security and defense on an institutional framework that seemed inadequate to achieve this objective. Article 43 of the TEU already highlighted the relative merits of establishing a European military force, which established that the Union's missions would include conflict prevention missions within the scope of peacekeeping and joint and combat missions for crisis management, including peacekeeping missions and operations to stabilize its own conflicts. Within this significant framework, the Treaty of Lisbon left unresolved the issues that were effectively linked to decision-making procedures and the identification of centres of political responsibility (Liakopoulos, 2018) and to the lack of mechanisms for democratic-parliamentary control of a supranational nature in reference to decisions that employed European armed forces in conflict scenarios.

5. Towards the Fight for Strategic Autonomy

Since 2013, a further awareness of the need to acquire strategic autonomy in the defense sector has been a reality.² This autonomy has been part of the Union's global strategy since 2016. The document introduced an integrated approach addressing the protection of the Union's interests and fundamental values, addressing threats at various levels. These include international terrorism, instability in neighboring regions,

² Conclusions of the European Council of 19 and 20 December 2013, EUCO 217/13, par. 1-22: "(...) needs a more integrated, sustainable, innovative and competitive defense industrial and technological base (EDTIB) to develop and sustain defense capabilities. This can also strengthen its strategic autonomy and ability to act with partners (...)". High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy to the Council entitled A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, 28 June 2016, 10715/16, pp. 5-45, and especially in par. 3: "(...) the strategy promotes the European Union's ambition for strategic autonomy. This is necessary to promote the common interests of our citizens as well as our principles and values (...)" and in par. 7 it is noted that: "(...) an appropriate level of ambition and strategic autonomy is important for Europe's ability to promote peace and security within and beyond its borders (...)" and in par. 41 it is also noted: "(...) a sustainable, innovative and competitive European defence industry is essential for Europe's strategic autonomy and for the credibility of the CSDP (...) it can stimulate growth and jobs (...)".

hybrid threats, the violation of human rights,¹ energy problems, market volatility, climate change, and so on. These concepts, which were not limited to the narrow military dimension, extended to the dependence on external actors that compromised the Union's ability to act on its behalf. This is an extension of the concept of multilevel technological, digital, energy, industrial, food and economic dimensions, which was guided by the European Commission to a strategic transformation of the main common policies.

This process was influenced by a variety of internal and external factors, such as Brexit, which affected the composition and balance of institutions. On the other hand, the redefinition of global geopolitical structures was directed towards a more peaceful orientation of American foreign policy. The American pressure in Europe was assuming greater responsibility in the security sector (Liakopoulos, 2018). These factors highlighted the progressive deterioration of a stable framework for the Union's external borders. Within this context, defense integration was accelerating and speeding up, as evidenced by the establishment of PESCO, the Coordinated Annual Review on Defense (CARD), the strengthening of permanent control capabilities and the command of the CSDP through the Military Planning and Conduct Capability.

Within this spirit, the policies that were regulated by the Treaty of Lisbon can be noted. They are oriented towards a common strategy and objectives in CSDP and CFSP (Koutrakos, 2022; Morelli & Peluso, 2025). And all this within the military mobility plan and the related action plan for synergies in civil, defense and space industry.² Within this framework, the European

Defense Fund (EDF) is also referred to, which began in 2021 and had as its objective collaborative research and joint and progressive development of capabilities among member states (Liakopoulos, 2025).³ The direct application of the military research commission is also involved, which made possible the progressive expansion of competences in the field of technologies and the use of space applications (Martins & Ahmad, 2020; Hakansson, 2021). Such technologies and applications have begun to advance the European defense market as regulated by the application of Article 346 TFEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024).⁴ The European Commission has assumed a strategic role for the use of EDF and the Capability Development Plan of the EDA, which was part of the CARD environment. As a final objective, the Directorate General for Defence Industry and Space (DG DEFIS) was created with political-institutional functions. Space policy was regulated by Article 189 TFEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024), demonstrating its importance and evolution in practice. Regulation 2021/696 already established the Agency for the Management of the Space Programme of the Union, which placed alongside and partially replaced the ESA as a guarantee of in-house management of its programmes. The recognition offered by the relevant Decision CFSP/2021/698,⁵ which developed the connectivity programme based on space technology, perhaps as a new

¹ JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats a European Union response, JOIN/2016/018 final.

² Regulation (EU) 2021/1153 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2021 establishing the Connecting Europe Facility and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1316/2013 and (EU) No 283/2014 (Text with EEA relevance), PE/52/2021/INIT, OJ L 249, 14.7.2021, pp. 38–81. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS Action Plan on synergies between civil, defence and space industries, COM/2021/70 final.

³ Regulation (EU) 2021/697 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing the European Defence Fund and repealing Regulation (EU) 2018/1092 (Text with EEA relevance), PE/11/2021/INIT, OJ L 170, 12.5.2021, pp. 149–177.

⁴ Interpretative communication on the application of Article 296 of the Treaty in the field of defence procurement {SEC(2006) 1554} {SEC(2006) 1555}, COM/2006/0779 final. Directive 2009/81/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 on the coordination of procedures for the award of certain works contracts, supply contracts and service contracts by contracting authorities or entities in the fields of defence and security, and amending Directives 2004/17/EC and 2004/18/EC (Text with EEA relevance), OJ L 216, 20.8.2009, pp. 76–136. Directive 2009/43/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 May 2009 simplifying terms and conditions of transfers of defence-related products within the Community (Text with EEA relevance), OJ L 146, 10.6.2009, pp. 1–36.

⁵ Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/698 of 30 April 2021 on the security of systems and services deployed, operated and used under the Union Space Programme which may affect the security of the Union, and repealing Decision 2014/496/CFSP, ST/10108/2019/INIT, OJ L 170, 12.5.2021, pp. 178–182.

path for European defence and beyond.¹

From a legal standpoint, Regulation (EU) 2021/696 sought to establish and create new contracts relating to the European space program, while limiting the participation of third countries.² Regulation (EU) 2019/452 had already highlighted the control of foreign direct investments in strategic sectors. The European Commission was recognized as having consultative power over national proceedings that were connected to space programs and financial projects of the Union.³ This position protected European industry and hostile takeovers, thus reaffirming the orientations on investments coming from Russia and Belarus after the aggression against Ukraine (Poederly, 2025).⁴ Fragmenting defense markets in the face

of high cost inefficiency and technological dependence aims to partially maintain national capacity, which favors European programs, such as the FED,⁵ increasing thus cooperation in a balanced manner. The experience from ESA was already based on the relative principle of fair return, representing a relative reference model (Von Der Dunk, 2015; Hansen & Wouters, 2015; Jacobs, 2024; Smith, 2025).

This path has enhanced the strategic compass since 21 March 2022,⁶ thus outlining the vision of a common Europe for security and defense, also updating the aggression against Ukraine (Poederly, 2025).⁷ Furthermore, the Council has highlighted some priorities such as the operational capacity and the capacity to strengthen the industrial base. This change in the

¹ Regulation (EU) 2023/588 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2023 establishing the Union Secure Connectivity Programme for the period 2023-2027, PE/65/2022/REV/1, OJ L 79, 17.3.2023, pp. 1–39. In particular see also recital 9 that affirmed: “(...) It should ensure the provision of resilient (...) guaranteed and flexible satellite communications solutions for evolving government needs and arrangements, developed on a Union technological and industrial basis, in order to increase the resilience of the operations of Member States’ and Union institutions (...)”.

² Regulation (EU) 2021/696 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing the Union Space Programme and the European Union Agency for the Space Programme and repealing Regulations (EU) No 912/2010, (EU) No 1285/2013 and (EU) No 377/2014 and Decision No 541/2014/EU, PE/21/2021/INIT, OJ L 170, 12.5.2021, pp. 69–148.

³ Regulation (EU) 2019/452 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 March 2019 establishing a framework for the screening of foreign direct investments into the Union, PE/72/2018/REV/1, OJ L 79I, 21.3.2019, pp. 1–14.

⁴ Communication from the Commission Guidance to the Member States concerning foreign direct investment from Russia and Belarus in view of the military aggression against Ukraine and the restrictive measures laid down in recent Council Regulations on sanctions (Council Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia’s actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine (OJ L 229, 31.7.2014, p. 1) and its amendments and Council Regulation (EC) No 765/2006 of 18 May 2006 concerning restrictive measures concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Belarus (OJ L 134, 20.5.2006, p. 1) and its amendments.) 2022/C 151 I/01, C/2022/2316, OJ C 151I, 6.4.2022, pp. 1–12: “(...) The risk that foreign direct investments by Russian and Belarusian investors may pose a threat to security and public order has significantly increased (...) investments should be systematically screened and examined with the utmost care. The risks may be exacerbated by the size of Russian investments in the EU and the intensity of previous trade relations between Russian and EU companies (...) pay particular attention to the threats posed by investments made by persons or entities associated with, controlled by or subject to the influence of the two governments, as the latter have a strong incentive to interfere with critical activities in the EU and to use their ability to control or direct Russian and Belarusian investors in the EU to that end (...)”.

⁵ See artt. 3 and 12, lett. e) of Regulation (EU) 2021/696 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing the Union Space Programme and the European Union Agency for the Space Programme and repealing Regulations (EU) No 912/2010, (EU) No 1285/2013 and (EU) No 377/2014 and Decision, op. cit.

⁶ Joint Communication from the Commission and the High Representative on the Defence Investment Gap Analysis and Way Forward, 18 May 2025, COM (2022) 24 final. EIB Approves Strategic Europe Security Initiative, Confirm Ukraine Disbursement and Backs € 543 million Business and Clear Energy Investment, 10 March 2022). Regulation (EU) 2023/2418 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 October 2023 on establishing an instrument for the reinforcement of the European defence industry through common procurement (EDIRPA), PE/40/2023/REV/1, OJ L, 2023/2418, 26.10.2023. Regulation (EU) 2023/1525 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 July 2023 on supporting ammunition production (ASAP), PE/46/2023/REV/1, OJ L 185, 24.7.2023, pp. 7–25.

⁷ Joint Communication of 15 February 2022, JOIN(2022)4; Commission Communication of 15 February 2022, COM(2022)60. Versailles Declaration of 11 March 2022 following the Informal Meeting of Heads of State or Government of the European Union on 10 and 11 March 2022.

European approach sought to designate China and Russia as the main strategic players, also qualifying China as a rival partner with greater competition.¹ Another step dating back to May 2025 was the creation of the related SAFE (Security Action for Europe) fund intended to support the European defense industry in key sectors such as cybersecurity and military mobility.²

6. War Crisis Pressures and Strategic Autonomy

Since March 2025, we have unsurprisingly heard from European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen about the ReArm Europe plan,³ a mechanism of proposals that seeks to leverage the financial instruments available to the Union to enable member states to significantly increase defense procurement. Its presentation paved the way at the European Council on 6 March, where member state leaders initiated a discussion that concluded the work on this project.⁴ On 11 March, the President presented the European Parliament with overwhelmingly positive feedback, albeit some reservations.⁵ The European decisions since March 2025 have allowed the European Commission to formalize its initiatives under a new title entitled “ReArm Europe Plan/Readiness 2030”, despite requests for member states to abandon the rearmament deadline and the defense package, which has included an official communication for the proposed regulation. On the same day, Kaja Kallas, High Representative of the CFSP, also

presented the White Paper for European Defence Readiness 2030, seeking to provide a political and strategic framework for an operational implementation program that will guide member states in rebuilding European defence capabilities operationally ready for complex scenarios. The initiatives discussed included the European Council confirming its support for leaders to initiate urgent implementation of the proposed measures.⁶

The ReArm Europe Plan directly presented the geopolitical changes and declarations for the continent’s defense, thus positioning the US President Donald Trump’s decision to indefinitely suspend military aid to Ukraine. It was American defense policy that increased Europe’s contribution to the NATO budget, also expressed in its GDP. It is a plan that reflects on Europe’s responsibility and on typical logics for the past and the near future as a response to ending the years of deterrence. The continuous collaboration and evolution of the European Commission over a long period has pushed member states to assume responsibilities in the defense sector (Liakopoulos, 2018). This has fragmented national armed forces as well as the relative inadequacy of European armies, which resulted from several important factors such as reliance on the work performed by NATO and the reduction of defense budgets after the 2007-2013 financial crisis. The Union has pursued its objectives to reverse the trend of strengthening

¹ European Council conclusions, 29-30 June 2023, On 29-30 June 2023, the European Council adopted conclusions on Ukraine, economy, security and defence, China, external relations, Eastern Mediterranean and other items.

² Council Regulation (EU) 2025/1106 of 27 May 2025 establishing the Security Action for Europe (SAFE) through the Reinforcement of the European Defence Industry Instrument (Text with EEA relevance), ST/7926/2025/INIT, OJ L, 2025/1106, 28.5.2025. and in recital 11 we noticed that: “(...) SAFE instrument should enable urgent and major public investments in the European defence industry, with the aim of rapidly increasing its production capacity, improving the timely availability of defence products, and speeding-up its adjustment to structural changes (...) exceptional and temporary response to an urgent and existential challenge, the financial assistance provided under it should only be made available for the purpose of addressing the adverse economic consequences of the deteriorating security situation and the immediate procurement needs of Member States contributing to increased defence industrial readiness of the EDTIB (...) instrument should be part of an overall effort (...) resources to defence industrial investments to respond to the crisis situation arising from the current security threats. Additional measures should be pursued in parallel, at Union and national level, to support that effort, including the activation of the existing flexibility within the framework of the Stability and Growth Pact (...)”.

³ Press Statement by President Von der Leyen on the Defence Package, 4 March 2025.

⁴ Conclusions of the extraordinary meeting of the European Council, 6 March 2025, EUCO 6/25.

⁵ MEPs debate future of EU defence and support for Ukraine of 11 March 2025: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20250310IPR27219/meps-debate-future-of-eu-defence-and-support-for-ukraine>

⁶ European Council Conclusions of 20 March 2025, EUCO 1/25.

national military capabilities in an effort to improve interoperability (Vanholme, 2021), a mandatory condition for the development of synergistic cooperation and a perspective on a true common defense according to Article 42, paragraph 1, TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024). This objective remains distant from decisions regarding defense and the management of armed forces, which remain stable, as well as national and Union prerogatives for the purpose of exercising a supporting, coordinating, and financial support role.

The European defense industry needed to reduce its dependence on external suppliers.¹ This capacity was strengthened after the aggression against Ukraine, an event that accelerated European initiatives in response to the decision to support Ukraine militarily. The conclusions of the European Council of December 2013 introduced the concept of strategic autonomy as a response to the reduction of the American military presence in Europe (Larres, 2014; Fiott, 2024). Already in 2016, the Council defined strategic autonomy as a necessary action with potential partners that is linked to the development of an industrial base for support and integration.² A further step towards consolidation was taken through the identified principles of instruments that strengthen military cooperation, namely CARD, PESCO, and EDF. In this spirit, the ReArm Europe Plan was based on a natural evolution of previous initiatives that called for the strategic compass to prepare by 2030. The envisaged measures were under discussion and the European Commission invited the states to make use of the national safeguard clause provided for by the reform of the Stability and Growth Pact with the allocation of defence resources.³

In exceptional circumstances, expenditures exceeding the 1.5% annual GDP limit for a four-year period monitored by the European Commission and the Council are excluded from the deficit/GDP calculation. This raises concerns about the sustainability of public finances, especially in the United States, which has a high level of debt. Another measure was the establishment of the aforementioned SAFE and

access to loans, subject to the required conditions for six months and to exclusive use for defensive and critical projects regarding procurement procedures with member states, candidate countries, or Ukraine. The legal basis was identified in Article 122, paragraph 2 TFEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024). Similar to SURE, was the choice of a debate requesting explanations from the CJEU. Other measures have to do with cohesion funds and defense spending as future incentives, strengthening the role of the ECB in broadening eligibility criteria and defense projects and the Savings and Investment Union to mobilize savings-oriented private capital towards strategic sectors, including defense.

Emergency situations. Problems with the institutional framework established by the government for the CSDP-CFSP.

The Treaty of Lisbon introduced an institutional architecture for the Union, seeking to overcome the traditional division of a single supranational entity. The reform impacted decision-making processes related to the former second pillar, namely the CFSP, also introducing elements of the community method. A classic example is the High Representative, the President of the Foreign Affairs Council and the Vice-President of the European Commission, who participated significantly in the development and implementation of decisions for external missions. The Treaty provided for the use of qualified majority voting for decisions relating to the Council, to a limited extent.

The unanimity rule and the intergovernmental method were based on the introduction of the passerelle clause and on the constructive abstention pursuant to Article 31 TEU, as tools aimed at avoiding decision-making blockades. Even before the reform, the Councils adopted a patchwork of special acts, such as common strategies, positions and joint actions. These have been implemented since 2009 and focused on Council decision-making instruments, which were extended to the European Council, with a predominance of conclusions. The decision-making structure of the CFSP and CSDP remains fragmented lacking democratic accountability.

¹ Communication from the Commission. Defence Action Plan, 30 November 2016, COM(2016) 950 final.

² Council Conclusions on the implementation of the EU Global Strategy in the area of security and defence, 14 November 2016, 14149/16. European Defence Agency, Defence Data 2023-2024.

³ Regulation (EU) 2024/1263 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2024 on the effective coordination of economic policies and on multilateral budgetary surveillance and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1466/97, PE/51/2024/REV/1, OJ L, 2024/1263, 30.4.2024.

Reasoning is based on the excessive distribution of powers and on the exclusion of legislative acts within the CFSP, leaving the European Parliament and the European Commission with discretionary power to define strategic choices. According to Article 22, paragraph 1, for example, the European Council is responsible for establishing the Union's strategic interests and objectives. The High Representative, on the other hand, makes use of the European External Action Service, also presenting joint proposals to the Council on the subject of CFSP. The European Commission has retained a role in sectors relating to external action according to Article 22, paragraph 2 (Lepeu, 2014; Molnàr, 2024).

Article 24, paragraph 1, established for the CFSP a developed definition of the common defence policy, which was defined and implemented by the European Council and decided by the Council unanimously according to the Treaties. Article 26 assigned the European Council the relevant function of identifying strategic interests and general orientations. The Council was responsible for developing and implementing the policy along lines that follow the general objectives of the CFSP, based on a joint definition of the tasks entrusted to the European Council and the overall responsibility of the Council. Thus, the Treaty of Lisbon distinguishes between general and implementing decisions according to Article 31, paragraph 2 TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024). Implementation powers are also shared with the High Representative. Article 24 TEU implemented the CFSP. Instead, Articles 26, paragraph 3 and 27 reaffirm and attribute to the High Representative the external representation for the Union in the field of the CFSP.

Article 42, paragraph 4 of the TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024) mandate the Council to unanimously decide on military and civilian missions following a proposal from the High Representative and a member state. Article 43 expands the missions to include military crisis management. Article 44 allows the Council to entrust execution to a small group of member states, in coordination with the High Representative and with periodic reporting obligations, thus avoiding deviations from the established objectives. This model risks favoring coalitions within the Union (Kreps, 2011). The role of the Council was central to PESCO, allowing participating states to make progress that did not involve major decisions taken by

their own governments. The overall framework of the CSDP and the CFSP remains complex and fragmented, thus hampering its coherence and accountability (Blockmans, 2025; Andersson & Britz, 2025).

NATO has oriented itself towards a political and military summit, while the Union has opted for a system based on the democratic principle. This is limited to the fact that the TEU excludes the adoption of legislative acts in the field of the CFSP, assuming, according to the European Parliament, an information and consultation role according to Articles 27, paragraph 3 and 36 TEU, but without decision-making and veto powers. Within this framework, the CJEU has viewed the competence of Article 275, paragraph 2 TFEU in a restrictive manner (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024) and the compliance control which, according to Article 40 TEU, included restrictive measures aimed at natural and/or legal persons (Garbagnati Ketvel, 2006; Van Elsuwege, 2017; Schmidt, 2020). In this way, it highlights for member states a jurisdictional scrutiny and a jurisprudence that allows for the possibility of expansion based on Article 19 TEU (Schmidt, 2020). Accordingly, CFSP-CSDP appears as an asymmetric structure of a strategy that remains exempt from effective democratic and jurisdictional control, also highlighting the tensions between regulatory architecture and decision-making practice. Lastly, Article 21 TEU calls for respect for democratic principles and for external action aimed at legitimizing the policy of one's own choices.

The role of the High Representative as a national figure within supranational logics also faces structural limitations that are not inherent in the plurality of roles such as the European Commission and the Foreign Affairs Council. Just as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Union has not actually had a true common defense portfolio. Article 42, paragraph 4 TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024) thus entrusts the High Representative with proposal and coordination functions within the European Commission without granting operational autonomy (Piris, 2010; Schmid, 2012). The High Representative does not have a unitary political mandate but also risks entering into conflicts of competence. On the other hand, we have the Secretary General of NATO, who enjoys autonomy and precise functions (Hendrickson, 2014; Sperling & Webber, 2025). Title V thus highlights the scope and limits of the capacity for

strategic direction. And this is how the management of the CFSP missions consolidates and highlights the configuration of a two-headed decision-making structure model between the High Representative and the President of the European Council, with the related overlaps and fragmentations of the institutions that thus effectively weaken the external action of the Union.

7. Conclusions

From the previous paragraphs, we have understood that the CFSP and CSDP policies present elements of positive and negative evaluation. What is still missing is full implementation in this sector. The relative coexistence of all national armies and the expression of state sovereignty for governments establishing a common defense imply a compression of national military competences. For some states, there is a distinction between regimes, such as Denmark, which, according to Protocol No. 22 annexed to the treaties, declares non-participation in the development of its own decisions and the reports of the Union, which ultimately highlight its defense policy (Butler, 2020). For other states, such as Finland, Austria, Ireland, Malta and Sweden, policies of neutrality are evident, with specific limitations. This is a paradox of a strategic bond that unites member states of the Union, especially the United States. Washington has always guaranteed collective security, which strengthened the relative European dependence of states that also tend not to increase their development towards true strategic autonomy. In times of international stability, states are oriented towards the protection that comes from NATO, effectively renouncing an independent strategy on the political and operational level.

The ongoing tensions are necessary for a political and strategic understanding between Germany and France, the two powers capable of influencing the European balance of power. France, in particular, has nuclear weapons, as well as a permanent seat with veto power on the UN Security Council. The debate over overcoming the unanimity rule and decisions regarding defense remains heated. Nowadays, each government is granted the power of veto, which favors collective interests and reinforces the prohibition simultaneously expressed in Article 48, paragraph 7 TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024) as an impediment to the use of a bridging mechanism for these types

of areas.

Qualified majority voting transforms the decision-making process into a reform that requires fundamental institutional changes capable of strengthening governance, thereby guaranteeing the Union's industrial and technological autonomy, especially in the conventional sector. This creates a balance of neutral states' positions that respects their choices and compromises the overall effectiveness of a common policy. The height of the Ukrainian war has made us all understand the need for rapid decisions (Konciewicz, 2022), as well as the inadequacy of solutions based on one-size-fits-all compromises, thus improving coordination between national armies (Blockmans, 2021). The challenges lie in overcoming particular interests to prioritize common strategic choices. In an evolutionary and integrative manner, the stages of the treaties have distinguished a gradual definition of defense policy and the creation of a true common defense, which thus constitutes a further step towards a unanimous decision by the European Council, which has ratified a national level according to internal constitutional provisions, as provided for in Article 42, paragraph 1. 2 TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024). This is a univocal definition of common defense that requires member states to determine the modalities and theoretical content of creating a European army under a cooperative and coordinated military framework that respects current instruments, such as the missions based on the former Article 43 TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024).

Another important scenario that always raises questions is the replacement and integration of national armed forces for the institutional bodies responsible for decision-making rules for armaments that are under the responsibility of the Union according to Article 346 TFEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024). This relevant issue also concerns territorial defense, external operations, the use of armed forces and internal defense. This is a step towards common defense that overcomes many ambiguities in this regard, also making territorial protection compatible with an integration process already underway according to Article 21, letter a) TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024), which allows the Union to protect its security, independence and integrity. The relative defense of the territories of the member states is formally included in the main objectives of the Union,

which decides to establish a common defense. There are many legal bases that directly affects the security of the Union. As well as the treaties that allow for joint protection of national security through joint instruments. The common strategy is that of a common defense, which remains and presupposes institutional as well as political quality. This is obviously very difficult. The strategy of a horizontal defense remains distant and presupposes a large measure for national budgets, as implemented by a political consensus of public opinion. The European Commission's ongoing initiatives are adopted quickly, but discussions remain open requiring further clarification on the implementation of a predetermined and precise practice.

Finally, the White Paper for European Defence Readiness 2030 updated and included the provisions of the ReArm Europe Act 2025, a strategic operational framework to strengthen Europe's deterrent capacity. A distinction is made between short-term interventions aimed at supporting Ukraine, as well as medium-to long-term initiatives. This creates an autonomous capacity. The goal of building a European defence system for member states that retain individual responsibility leads to an additional level of collective action that exploits the opportunity for the single market established and implemented pursuant to Article 42, paragraph 2 TEU (Kellerbauer, Klamert & Tomkin, 2024), that is an important step towards defence integration. Still unresolved issues include the related issues regarding relations with NATO, especially in times of crisis and the foundation of collective defense in Europe. Each European initiative, complementary to the Atlantic Alliance, lays the foundation for a perspective that reaffirms the American administration's commitment emphasizing the relative need for a fair distribution of financial burdens among members. The implementation of its adoption over the coming years demonstrates the ongoing developments toward significant steps in the evolution and integration of a European balance and contribution through NATO. This paves the way for a partial replacement of a capability and responsibility primarily on the part of the Union and the security it can offer its member states through its choices.

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