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The Spectre of Fear: The Impact of Crises and Threat Perception on European Defence Integration

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The Spectre of Fear

The Impact of Crises and Threat Perception on
European Defence Integration

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Abstract

In the annals of European integration, one of the least remarked upon stories is the progress made in defence policy. Indeed, for much of the EU's history, little headway has been forged in elevating European autonomy in the area of defence, fraught as it with concerns over national sovereignty. In recent years, however, tentative steps have been made in attempts to coordinate the capabilities of member states or develop an embryonic form of EU-level operations. Often, too, this has come in the wake of major security crises impacting the European Union, suggesting that perhaps some relationship intersects crisis with defence integration. Now, as Russian tanks ride upon Ukrainian soil, imminent and tangible security threats are beginning to appear on the doorstep of the European Union, and the means in which defence integration is justified seem all the more pertinent. Seeking to empirically apply the theory of crisis-led integration, this paper will seek to identify the relationship between an emerging security crisis and a subsequent policy change in the realm of European defence. By looking at the policies initiated since 2014, and crucially the motivations behind them, it searches to determine the process in which crises leads to further integration. By looking at strategic direction, defence developments, and operations, the paper identifies the key element of threat perception in determining the extent to which integration is possible as it battles against national sovereignty. With security threats seeming to continually escalated, the paper aims to establish groundwork for further investigation on the ways in which crises and threat perception are formed and impact policy, with a prediction that maximalist integration would require the most severe form of threat perception: military conflict.

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“The danger, though in different degrees, is therefore common. And the means of guarding against it ought, in like manner, to be the objects of common councils and of a common treasury.”

Alexander Hamilton

“I did not doubt that a Franco-German war must take place before the construction of a United Germany could be realised.”

Otto von Bismarck

Introduction

I.1 – In Search of a Hard Edge

In the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell Fontelles was convinced that “the EU must be more than a soft power: we need hard power too” (2022). Six years prior, his predecessor, Federica Mogherini, declared that “For Europe, soft power and hard power go hand in hand” (2016, p. 4). Five years prior to her, Catherine Ashton remarked that “the EU has soft power with a hard edge” (2011). This slow and gradual change in acknowledging the role of a harder, more assertive European foreign and security policy has coincided with minor progress towards greater European cooperation in the security sphere. However, the realm of security and defence nonetheless remains particularly stunted compared to grander projects such as the Single Market or the Eurozone. Indeed, it is understandable why such a delicate policy area has seen little movement towards integration, as the security of one’s nation closely linked to national sovereignty (Strikwerda, 2017, p. 22; Paulo, 2008, p. 11). As such, the minimal movement of European security and defence coincides with a minimal desire of member states to surrender their independence in such a crucial national competence. In turn, the political appetite for European security integration has remained low.

However, European integration has often seen periods of lethargy followed by rapid change. Simultaneously, the European Union has also had to wrestle with significant crises that either question its usefulness, or even threaten its existence. As a result, investigations and analyses abound in seeking to understand what exactly motivates major policy change in favour of more European integration. One such avenue is to consider the impact of exogenous events upon the wider process. If periods of lethargy have been followed by rapid change after a major crisis, then it may indicate the importance of them in spurring integration forward at critical points in time. This has developed into a particularly notable theory of European integration as a whole, where the incomplete policy arrangements established by intergovernmental bargaining leave room for crises to cause significant harm, which in turn

prompts further bargaining to resolve it, ultimately resulting in greater incremental integration. With the realm of European defence receiving continually heightened attention in academia, policy spheres, and public media, an investigation into how something as insecure as a crisis affects a security-obsessed competency such as defence would prove enlightening.

This paper will thus seek to investigate and understand the relationship between crises and threat perception on European integration in defence policy to identify the following research question: ***what is the impact of crises on European defence integration?*** Specifically, it seeks to determine whether crisis is required before significant policy change is implemented that bolsters the European Union's collective capabilities in the realm of security and defence, and if so the process in which it affects it. In order to do so, this paper looks at the timeline of European defence policy from the beginning of 2014 to May 2022, identifying both significant security crises and significant policy change. In also assessing the status quo in defence policy before any identified crisis, it will seek to determine to what extent the trajectory and speed of security integration was altered as a direct result of any given crisis. The paper will thus focus solely on the defence policy of the European Union, meaning the actions of its institutions or member states in relation to establishing EU mechanisms and responses in the realm of security and defence. In so doing, it identifies the importance of threat perception in the process of crises converting to a degree of policy exchange. Similarly, the extent to which threat perception is felt in any given crisis, and not necessarily the real threat itself, corresponds to the significance of policy change observed. Crises are subsequently seen as enablers to break down previous barriers in intergovernmental bargaining, enabling steadier integration to progress after the crisis has subsided.

I.2 Chapter Outline

The structure of the paper is as follows. To begin, it will explore the literature surrounding European integration and European security integration in particular, identifying the limited investigation on the latter as a general process and the factors driving it forward. After thus observing the potential utility in using crisis-led integration theory to attempt to explain security integration, the paper will explain its theoretical framework in greater detail. Here, the nature of crisis-led integration theory and how it will be used will be elaborated upon, alongside defining other key concepts such as crises, threat perception, and what may

constitute policy change. From here, the methodology of the paper is laid out, explaining further the process tracing method deployed to test whether crises are what is necessary to spur security integration.

Following this, the paper commences its analysis. Chapter one establishes crisis-led integration theory in greater detail, defining its use and objectives and utilising the comparative case of the EU's COVID-19 response as a brief example in what expectations for analysis shall be. The following three chapters then analyse different aspects of defence policy in turn, specifically by assessing their development since 2014 and the impact of crises upon the decisions that have been made. Chapter two looks at the EU's strategic direction, specifically focusing on its publications on security strategy over time to identify any shift in priorities or change in the salience of threats to the European Union. Chapter three investigates the EU's defence development in the realm of industry and research projects, seeking to determine whether security crises have pressed the need for better coordination and autonomy in its developments. Chapter four completes this section by considering changes in direct and indirect operations conducted under the EU's command, once again to see if there is a correlation between crises and policy shifts. From here, chapter five coagulates the findings of the prior three chapters, identifying specifically the importance of threat *perception* in the process of crises leading to policy change alongside truly understanding the nuance behind the extent to which defence integration has progressed in the wake of notable crises. Finally, chapter six considers the repercussions of this paper's findings, determining ultimately that the perception of threat generated by crisis is ultimately necessary for European integration in defence policy to progress. As a result, it should be expected that any maximalist final outcome of European integration (at least in this area), would require either an extreme security crisis, such as large-scale war, or an otherwise extreme level of threat perception for the Europeanisation of security to be executed to its full extent.

Literature Review

While European security integration has only recently grown in contemporary political salience, the topic has a notable – if varied – literature. In particular, academic debate has grown since the end of the 1990s. Nevertheless, a particular increase in volume can be noted within the last half decade. Ultimately, literature has focused primarily on evaluating the process so far or on specific initiatives. On the occasions where this is not the case, investigations on its causes revolve around a specific level of observation, both within a specific country and either concerning national policy or public preference. What is thus particularly lacking is a merging of these different domains to gain a more holistic understanding of a theory that may succinctly explain military integration.

Underlining discussions on the process of European military integration is that of the wider motivations behind pursuing it in the first place. In both academic and non-academic literature, a common avenue is either the advocacy or belittlement of pursuing further integration, with the former being noticeably more common (Braw, 2018; Bochert, 2020). While a large degree of this has historic investigation at its heart, much of this line of thinking refers to the traditional perspectives of European integration by investigating a single or multiple theories of wider integration. The wider academic debate on European integration in general concerns wider theories of international politics such as realism or constructivism, but more commonly focuses on established theories such as neofunctionalism and its associated spillover theory as well as Moravcsik's liberal intergovernmentalism (Rosamond, 2000; Moravcsik & Schimmelfennig, 2009). While these are applicable to military integration, the present literature in this field more commonly avoids typical integration theories in favour of specific explanations for any given initiative, circumstance, or phenomenon.

Beyond this wider conceptual analysis of the process of European military integration, literature commonly pays particular attention to specific case studies. Specifically, this can take two forms: specific initiatives concerning military integration, or specific EU member states. In the case of the former, focus varies from contemporary initiatives such as PESCO (Frau & Tira, 2020) and the wider CSDP (Wouters & Raube, 2012; Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2014; Tardy, 2018; Chappell et al., 2020), to lessons from the past with the failures of the European Defence Community (Dwan, 2001; Gavin, 2008; Fleischer, 2013; Stöckmann, 2021). On the

other side of the coin, the latter investigates individual national stories concerning military integration, either revealing quantitative study on national opinion (Irondelle, 2015; Graf, 2020) or nation-specific circumstance in certain policy areas or the entire process itself (Irondelle, 2003; Gavin, 2008; Bunde, 2021). Concerning specific initiatives, discourse commonly seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy or institution in question, from which future foreign and defence policy can be refined. As briefly mentioned, three core initiatives are focused upon: PESCO, the CSDP, and the European Defence Community. The latter is particularly unique, however, in that it seeks to present a post-mortem into how an early but ambitious attempt at European military integration was unsuccessful, going beyond the procedural reason of a failed French ratification. In contrast, analysis of PESCO and the CSDP, by virtue of their contemporary nature, is far more multivariate, from the role of institutions (Chappell et al., 2020) to assessing an initiative's development (Tardy, 2018). To this end, literature in these areas explores both wider effectiveness and success as well as the forms in which European military integration is currently taking place (see Berdud, 2018; Reykers, 2019). While all such analysis is grounded and detailed, a natural assumption appears to be common that study of European military integration is effectively an observation of a set process at a certain point in its evolution. While current initiatives are correctly balanced and evaluated, the key factors pushing integration forward are not often explicitly mentioned or explored in detail. This notion of a lack of an overarching narrative is also present in nation-based case studies. In this regard, evaluations of a Europeanisation of the French military (Irondelle, 2003) or German public opinion surrounding a European army (Graf, 2020) provide potential extrapolations for both the process of integration and what is stopping it from going forward. However, such aspects and ideas are not the focus of these papers and thus remain unexplored. Thus, the academic debate does involve some assumptions without delving fully into understanding what has allowed current integration to have occurred, and critically what has meant it has not gone as far as it could. The specific case of the European Defence Community serves to reveal that retrospection has been pursued and is indeed valid in understanding how integration can progress by acknowledging past failures. What can naturally follow is also the potential of wider historical comparison to identify any lessons of historic integration outside of the European Union. Thus, a specific gap lies in explicitly and concretely identifying and explaining what is causing military integration to remain incomplete in today's political climate.

Continuing this point, and as an aside to typical case-based studies in the field, some historical case studies have also been utilised to draw comparisons to contemporary Europe. While not prolific, such studies typically refer to either German unification (Hallerberg & Weber, 2002) or American federalism (see Marks, 1997). The key importance of such literature is in identifying if any trends can be identified among similar processes of political integration, and subsequently allow for extrapolation and prediction towards the future of any projects at an earlier stage in development (such as the European Union). By virtue of this, tentative parallels can be drawn to the process of European military integration and that of real-world examples that fit closest to the trajectory the European Union finds itself in. To this end, specific focus on historic military integration would reveal more “timeless” contributing factors to the process seen today.

While conceptual and case-based analysis dominates the debate, notable empirical efforts have also been made, almost entirely focussing on public support for a European army. As such, there is significant ground trodden both concerning general opinion for such integration, as well as specific conditions and variables leading to further support. While the contribution of quantitative study is unique and important in grounding European integration as a whole, one cannot say that there is a plethora of quantitative assessments in the realm of European military integration. In this area, remits are focused to individual nations, while such studies are small in number altogether. Furthermore, these quantitative studies particularly focus on public or group opinion (Mérand, 2003; Irondelle et al., 2015; Graf, 2020). While this is perhaps the most demonstrable means in which to deploy empirical methods in this field, there is nonetheless an opportunity to explore these areas across the EU on both a national and European level. Regardless, existing studies do indeed help reveal certain factors that may affect the process of integration. Among these, the factor of threat perception is of particular interest, and is indeed a notion shared by other qualitative studies (Graf, 2020; Hoijtink & Muehlenhoff, 2020). Conjoining this alongside wider discussions of European integration being crisis-led (Jones et al., 2016; Bergmann & Müller, 2021), a cleavage can be observed within the literature in adopting select empirical methods to be applied beyond specific national case studies, specifically to develop the potential impact of crises and threat perception on the process of military integration. The potential impact of one’s security upon defence policy is naturally self-evident, and the added fact that no

previous studies have had the opportunity to study the effect of a real security threat also provides greater opportunity for academic progress, given the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In light of the general literature on understanding European integration as a process, and specific initiatives in the realm of defence, a gap thus exists between the two in looking at the process of defence integration as a whole. The idea of crisis-led theory is one such perspective to take when attempting to identify the means in which integration not only takes place but is altered by, and indeed a sensible one to identify the impact of shocks and exogenous events upon the EU. Ultimately, literature surrounding European military integration has oft focused on understanding motivations behind integration; analysing its progress; or assessing quantitative factors driving it on a limited level of analysis. What is seemingly lacking is a more comprehensive investigation on specific factors that could plausibly serve as necessary conditions for integration to move forward. Further still, the academic debate would further benefit from an attempt to look more holistically across the wider Union, not just specific national case studies. A more holistic study, which nonetheless focuses upon one key factor would allow for more empirical analysis to be introduced to the study, and attempt to go beyond the theoretical when seeking to understand integration. For such a security-related study as defence policy, focus upon threat perception and security crisis could prove to be of particular interest. The use of aforementioned empirical analysis would be further amplified by contemporary data concerning the factor in question. Subsequently, a desirable contribution would be in utilising integration theory with empirical assessments of national and European defence policy. Setting this as a form of groundwork on the issue of crisis and threat in particular, study going forward would ideally benefit from it as a point of reference in going beyond theoretical discussions on integration or evaluating specific cases. Instead, future study would be able to look further at conditions as there are, and what needs to be done to change it. As such, the posed research question is suited to perform precisely this function, and provide a more grounded and holistic setting for European security discourse.

Theoretical Framework

While European integration theory has received significant academic attention, this paper seeks to apply a theory-informed empirical investigation. Further still, it seeks to incorporate current theories of crisis-led integration alongside a more typically unexplored sector in European defence integration. Critically, it aims to provide an observable analysis behind the understanding of European military integration alongside a general theoretical discussion based upon the process so far and upon its current trajectory. Crucially, as integration theory most commonly approaches the area by assessing its evolution, the nature of this study will observe a potential significant necessary condition for the process to evolve. As its underlying focus, the framework revolves around the imposition of crises alongside the influence of individual threat perception on the process of European military integration. This focus therefore helps ground integration theory with more categorical data on such a key element as shocks and crises. While several theories abound concerning integration in general, this focus on crisis and threat is arguably most relevant in a field as threat-driven and crisis-led as military and defence policy. It is with this proposed framework that the study assists in providing relevant and contemporary insight into a potentially fundamental factor behind a policy development as consequential and existential as European defence. With a merging of empirical analysis and qualitative assessment, the study aims to be a suitable foundation for more applicable integration theory in a novel policy space. In so doing, it seeks to also propose questions on how far security motivates political decisions and organisation.

On broad terms, the wider theoretical integration theory taken in this paper is intergovernmentalist in nature. As such, the drivers of integration are seen to be primarily the states, which would be actualised in reality mainly through either treaty change or Council decisions. Particularly considering the embryonic nature of European defence policy, and its sensitive surrounding questions of national sovereignty, the importance of member states in shaping policy response is hypothetically both more easily found and logically consistent. Outside of this, however, is a respect for the new institutionalist respect for the polity as a whole. Because of the youthful nature of the European defence policy debate, an acknowledgement of the potential importance of the institutions themselves is important in itself to ensure that the identification of policy changes is not missed by focusing solely on

the perspectives of member states. Further, *historical* institutionalism's use of path dependency and critical junctures (Christiansen & Verdun, 2020) proves significant in attempting to develop a timeline of critical junctures involving crises that lead to a further Europeanisation of defence. The notions and strands of attempts to explain European integration are in their multitudes, but these two in particular serve as positions to begin to understand the beginnings of a relatively new European policy area, and one where national sovereignty is of key contention.

Ultimately, the prevailing argument of the thesis shall be that the presence of a significant and pervasive security threat is required to enable significant European security integration. The study will also investigate the critical (inter)governmental level to European integration, pursuing the preliminary argument that a similar shift in support for military integration is only seen among national governments and European institutions following a major security threat. As such, the intended arguments will provide a grounded and rather holistic analysis of the means in which security and threat spurs military integration. Specifically, it concerns two primary lines of thought: critical junctures and the intergovernmental bargaining involved in EU crisis management. The latter concerns the impact of path dependence, where at specific moments in time key decisions alter the trajectory of a given process (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007). The former more specifically addresses the EU context, where incomplete policy agreement due to said bargaining leads to crisis in the future, which in turn warrants further LCD (lowest common denominator) agreements that continues integration. While this paper uses both as a base, it seeks to place more investigation into the crises themselves alongside considering the institutionalist theory of policy development. Similarly, while this continued jockeying of intergovernmental bargaining has continued merit in this field, the framework of this paper considers crises from the lens of external shocks that the EU's current institution solutions cannot resolve, and thus lends a degree of autonomy to them. To ensure a wider understanding of the process, both should be investigated further in the realm of defence policy, but this paper seeks to explore solely from the perspective of the crises themselves to better investigate to what extent crisis-led integration theory applies when used as such.

The thesis revolves around three core concepts. The most primary of these concerns European (security) integration as a general idea and theory. Rosamond points out the

difficulties of defining integration due to it being influenced by the perception of any one theory (2000, p.186-189). Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study it can be defined broadly as *the process in which European nations have relieved sovereignty and decision-making to a transnational, European level*. More specifically for the aims of the research question, this shall concern the process in which European nations have relieved sovereignty and decision-making in the realm of security and defence policy in particular. Additionally, the concept of crisis-led integration (Bergmann & Müller, 2021), where crises have been a primary spur in European integration, is adopted in the realm of defence. Thus, this paper defines it as *the theory that European integration is primarily spurred on in response to largescale shocks or crises*. Outside of these main theoretical concepts, however, the concept of threat perception is also worked upon, to identify how general feelings of threat and specific inciting incidents create such a crisis that may cause European military integration. As discussed in the literature review, Graf (2020) provides an example of this investigation, and is defined for the purposes of this study as *the presence, or a belief in the presence, of a significant threat to personal or public security*. It is ultimately this aspect that the paper focuses on to determine its impact upon the others.

Methodology

Case Selection

As inferred from the research question, the methodology of the paper seeks to observe the impact of security crises upon European security integration. To do this, it looks for two primary aspects. Firstly, it shall identify what constitutes a security crisis. For the purposes of this paper, a security crisis is defined as an event or exogenous shock that has the reasonable potential to undermine the security interests of the European Union and its member states. Secondly, it shall determine whether a significant change in defence policy was made that can be considered a progression in security integration. For analysis, this paper conceptualises defence policy into three specific areas: strategic direction, defence development, and military operations. Such significance will be determined by whether it amended a process (first order), or established something entirely novel (second order). In the middle of these definitions lies an investigation as to when these security crises have emerged, and what form of change (if any) followed.

The focus of this paper will be on the actions of the European Commission, European Council, and Council of the European Union concerning defence policy, explicitly identifying change before and after defined shocks. In addition to being the principle decision-making bodies of the European Union, their importance is particularly emphasised whenever the EU is concerned with security and defence. Due to this focus on the impact of crises on policy, this paper also does not focus on changes in rhetoric or language used by institutions or agencies in its analysis outside of policy papers and directives. Thus, the paper levels its focus on the core decision-making bodies and the existing instruments that may instigate change.

Analysis and Data

The paper conducts process-tracing as a method of empirical theory-testing, maintaining crisis-led integration theory as a key anchor behind it. Initially, the nature of crisis-led integration theory is explored, in order to aptly identify its key stages for effective analysis of it for the remainder of the paper. As part of this, the means in which crisis-led theory can manifest are noted before explicitly declaring what would be expected should crisis-led theory be provable in the context of security and defence. After exploring the

theory, the paper engages directly with the policy responses observed following European security crises since 2014. Specific instances since 2014 are selected as explicit security crises to be analysed for the subsequent policy response. Namely, these are: the invasion of Crimea and the beginning of the war in Donbas in 2014; the 2016 Brexit referendum and election of Donald Trump; and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. These cases have been chosen due to their easily definable nature as security crises - they each represent a high-profile exogenous shock that have a demonstrable or evident potential impact on the security and defence arrangements of the European Union and its member states. To analyse policy developments, the primary sources consulted are regulations and resolutions passed by the European Commission and Council, alongside publications of the EU Global Strategy and Strategic Compass. Ancillary to these are public documents concerning the operations and updates of specific initiatives. Conducting a process tracing method, each of the three defence policy areas mentioned previously are looked at in turn to first confirm the relation of any of these security crises to policy change in the given area. Firstly, a general timeline of key policy developments and initiatives are recorded, before then firmly establishing the state and nature of the policy area in January of 2014 compared to May 2022. After this, crisis-led integration theory is applied in earnest to theory test the impact of the three identified security crises upon policy change. During this process, the extent of any change can be noted, along with the ultimate question as to whether any policy decisions would have been made had the preceding crisis not occurred. The paper then reflects upon the overall development of European defence policy to identify any key defining features, and crucially whether crisis-led integration theory explains the form that defence integration has taken. Lastly, the paper reflects upon its findings to explore how necessary or sufficient security crises and the threat perceived from them is for defence integration to take place. Thus, it speculates as to what would be required for European defence policy to continue to progress, and what policymakers may be required to do for it to happen.

Limitations

While this multifaceted approach has merits, it does also amplify the risk of greater shortcomings. In general, with a primary focus on crisis-led integration theory, it spends little time on considering other established theories on European integration, or on alternative wider factors contributing to integration in the realm of defence and security policy. As such,

approaching the same puzzle from the lens of other theoretical frameworks would be valuable in assisting to pinpoint the extent to which crisis drives military integration.

Additionally, the definitions of what may constitute a security crisis can be debated. This paper has generally sought to choose exogenous shocks with a more clearly defined timeframe. The inclusion of the 2016 Brexit referendum and election of Donald Trump could otherwise be defined as a different form of security crisis to the others, or arguably not a formal crisis at all. The latter indeed encompasses a broad period from 2016-2020, thus the inclusion of it as a crisis could be argued as misleading. This paper opted for its inclusion, but further analysis on these areas could prove fruitful, including on the defining of exogenous security shocks. Similarly, the paper's focus on more demonstrable evidence of policy change may overlook certain trends or incremental changes. Nonetheless, as this paper seeks to see the effect of crises on general trajectory, this should not prove a significant shortcoming, as important a point of future analysis it may be.

Ultimately, the intention of the methodology is to be a first attempt at investigating different aspects of crisis-led integration theory in the realm of European security. As such, it has sought to establish the means in which it can be applied to the policy area, before attempting to engage with policy developments since 2014. Thus, while much of it is nebulous, this should allow for potential future study by taking different avenues, while the theory behind it remains a satisfactory starting point for further investigation in specific initiatives, additional crises, or a wider timeframe.

Chapter 1

Threat-Based Theory

1.1 – Crisis-led European Integration

Translating this threat-based decision making into policy, European integration can be observed through a particularly crisis-driven lens. As discussed in the literature review, a notably theory of integration sees progress as being driven by responses to any given crisis (see Jones et al., 2016, and Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007). In brief, this explanation of integration unsurprisingly sees specific crises or exogenous shocks as inciting significant policy change in favour of further European integration. Dissecting this theory places three core components: an inciting incident; a subsequent critical juncture; and an ultimate policy response. Crises and exogenous shocks act as inciting incidents within the theory by creating a dramatic change in circumstance, political or otherwise, upon the European Union. By being so substantial, this incident warrants a re-evaluation of the status quo in EU policymaking. Thus, it subsequently leads to a critical juncture, as this re-evaluation reveals that the pre-shock status quo was insufficient to either prevent or deal with the shock that has been experienced (Jones et al., 2016). With this critical juncture thus comes a notable policy response that is identifiably a major change from the previous policy arrangements deployed by the European Union or its member states.

Thus, the core of crisis-led integration theory rests upon major turning points when institutions feel the need to respond to a crisis or exogenous shock. The basis of this theory is thus logical, and the confirmation of it depends upon identifying critical junctions in the EU's history where a major crisis resulted in major policy changes. Johns, Kelemen, and Meunier's piece on crisis theory remarks upon several of these, including "the Eurozone crisis, the refugee crisis, Brexit, and rule-of-law backsliding" to argue these presented opportunities where EU competency ultimately grew (2021, p. 1519). At this point, however, it must be acknowledged that there is an underlying assumption that such crises must be considered significant enough to warrant a change. Care must thus be made when utilising this theory to have some degree of focus on what would constitute a crisis, and further what is a suitable

level of significance to constitute such. In truth, an attempt to qualify this would be exceedingly difficult, and so more emphasis should be placed on the perception of significance by key decision makers, most notably EU institutions along with their interactions with national governments.

To best understand the adoption of this theory, the example of the COVID-19 response can be used. Johns et. al mention in passing the potential for the COVID-19 Pandemic to be another example of a crisis prompting notable integration (2021). With the advent of time, this crisis can be touched upon to identify any notable factors of the theory in practice before concerning military threat. Naturally, the inciting incident at play was an exogenous shock in the spread of a highly contagious virus that placed a significant proportion of the population at risk of death. In the case of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the impact of this crisis was two-fold. In the health sector, there was naturally an imminent health element to the crisis. As the virus began to spread in Europe, diverging travel restrictions within the Schengen Area led to inconsistencies and loopholes that could allow for the virus to spread within the Union, as well as also compromising freedom of movement (Rausis & Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik, 2021). Simultaneously, there was an imminent concern that there would be a frantic scramble for vaccine supplies as soon as they were developed; if individual member states were left to themselves to acquire them, it may crowd out smaller members or otherwise prevent efficient dose allocation within the EU. Herein lies one of the critical junctures of the pandemic, whereupon a greater collectivisation of powers at the European level was warranted for the greater interest of the member states. The ultimate response subsequently saw EU-wide external travel restrictions agreed in March 2020 (ibid), alongside the European Commission procuring vaccines on behalf of all member states a day later (Decision C(2020) 4192). Perhaps an even more demonstrable shift in European competencies, however, came in the financial response to the pandemic-induced recession. In this capacity, the Next Generation EU recovery plan has entrusted the EU with significant responsibility in issuing large amounts of debt *and* grants (de la Porte & Jensen, 2021). In the years preceding the crisis, such discussion of financial evolution at the European level had made little to no progress. Following the logic of crisis-led integration theory, it was the precise imposition of a major financial crisis that served as another critical juncture that enabled major economic policy decisions to be made. The actions and sentiment of national leaders serves to

corroborate this thinking, with the NGEU being advocated as a necessary method for ensuring a faster and balanced recovery from the pandemic. Furthermore, health-based policy responses implicitly aimed to tackle the pandemic, or otherwise learn lessons from it to better prepare for potential pandemics in the future.

Thus, as might already be self-evident, the Pandemic demonstrates through the lens of crisis-led integration theory that a crisis in a given sector or policy area would, given enough severity, spur a notable push in European integration in the same realm. This perceived significance on its economic and health effects motivated action in the related policy areas; as the COVID-19 Pandemic impacted both health policy and national economies, the integration push would be seen in these areas too. Naturally from this, a given military crisis can be expected to invigorate substantial military integration. The example of the COVID-19 Pandemic crucially stresses, however, that crises are not one-dimensional. Subsequently, it is in fact the areas that the crisis impacts that will lead to the areas where any policy response is felt. While seemingly obvious as well, this is important when analysing any given crisis, to acknowledge the full extent and impact of the crisis before observing policy response.

1.2 – The Prevailing Theory

Having explored the nature of threat-based decision making, and the wider theory of crisis-led European integration, one can establish an embryonic theory to be tested throughout the paper. As crisis-led integration theory lends itself well to the realm of defence in the shape of external threats. This is in no small part due to particularly unambiguous demonstrations of what may constitute a military crisis or threat. Following the logic of crisis-led integration theory, the emergence of such a crisis may be expected to produce some form of military integration. To determine this, one can seek to observe various instances of defence crises in the EU's (modern) history, in that an inciting incident impacted the functioning of defence policy. From this the theory can expect some form of European integration in the realm of defence. Just as the COVID-19 Pandemic's health and economic impact resulted in significant change to European health and economic policy, a similar mirroring would be expected in the realm of defence and security. Continuing this, the significance of the crisis would naturally be expected to have a positive relationship with the significance of the policy response; should the crisis be existential, it is predicted that the response should be in kind. Furthermore, as a military crisis undoubtedly deals with subjects

and events more explicitly threatening, the significance of the crisis is equivalent to the level of threat felt by individuals, national governments, and EU institutions. This ultimately means that threat perception one feels as a result of a defence crisis should lead to a proportionate response in European defence policy. Put plainly, the more fearful one is, the greater European security integration can be expected to progress.

Chapter 2

Strategic Direction

2.1 – A Timeline of Strategic Direction

The European Union's security and defence doctrine has seen significant developments with three separate publications. The first of these was the European Security Strategy, adopted in 2003 under then-High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana (see Biscop, 2016). In this document, five main threats to Europe were identified: terrorism; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; regional conflicts; state failure; and organised crime (Council of the European Union, 2003). Its self-proclaimed repercussions for defence policy are relatively vague, but speak of the need to encourage the sharing and pooling of defence assets among member states, and praises the establishing of a defence agency (what would become the European Defence Agency the following year). Outside of this, explicit policy initiatives were not mentioned, opting instead to express the need for better cooperation, if not encouraging EU activity in areas of foreign policy not concerning defence.

The second publication came with the European Union Global Strategy in 2016, under Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. A far lengthier document, the EUGS also stresses the need for cooperation with external partners, but spends far more capital upon making the case for greater EU autonomy in the realm of security and defence. Explicitly, it stresses the "need to move towards defence cooperation as the norm" (European External Action Service, 2016, p.45). Going further, the EUGS directly considers the wider global security order, directly acknowledging the state of affairs in Eastern Europe concerning Ukraine; conflict and instability in the Middle East and Africa; the transatlantic alliance; the European relationship with China and the rest of Asia; and the need for continued cooperation in the Arctic (ibid, p. 33-39). With this, 2016 begins to reveal a notable shift towards a specific acknowledgement of the need to not only formulate a European security strategy, but make concrete steps towards defence integration in particular. The language within the EUGS makes it clear that "Member States remain

sovereign in their defence decisions” (p. 45), and thus the intentions of integration are rather in interoperability and cross-member cooperation, but this is nonetheless far less nebulous than the rhetoric seen thirteen years prior. Bolstered by this is the ancillary Implementation Plan on Security and Defence in the same year, which reaffirmed the need for the EU to assist in “(a) responding to external conflicts and crises, (b) building the capacities of partners, and (c) protecting the Union and its citizens” (Council of the European Union, 2016, p.3) More crucially, it set out several proposals in the realm of European defence policy, including: the establishment of a Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (ibid, p.22), establishing a Permanent Structured Cooperation in military projects (ibid, p.29); and the possibility of a European Defence Fund to finance common capabilities (ibid, p.20). As such, while 2016 saw a focus on member state cooperation and coordination, it also notes a significant evolution of some forms of defence being best utilised at a European level.

The most recent publication was released in March of 2022, in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the outbreak of war on the EU’s doorstep. Mogherini’s successor, Josep Borrell, oversaw the publishing of the EU’s Strategic Compass, in the works since 2021. Notably, this involved the first ever threat analysis in 2020 that involved EU member states and their intelligence services, alongside relevant experts (Council of the European Union, 2022, p. 7). The volume of the Strategic Compass further eclipses that of the EUGS, and is unambiguous in its focus on security threats, an increasingly complex and uncertain international environment, and a resolve to preserve “the European Security Order” (ibid, p.5). Crucially, however, it is the most explicit and detailed in both the security order the European Union now faces and individual policy actions that should be enacted to best protect the Union and its member states. In just specific acts, it advocates boosting the mandates of civilian and military CSDP missions; developing an EU Rapid Deployment Capacity of 5000 troops; and the strengthening of command and control structures (ibid, p.3). The Strategic Compass touches upon specific defence initiatives such as these, alongside intelligence, cyber defence, defence-industrial independence, and bilateral partnerships. Should the ambitions of the Strategic Compass be realised, it would be a significant bolstering of European defence integration (Blockmans et al., 2022).

2.2 – Before & After

The direction of the development of a European security strategy and doctrine are clear when comparing the 2022 Strategic Compass to its predecessors. Just from beginning a comparison from 2014, the maturing of the EU's security assessment and policy plans under the High Representative have become remarkably more tangible. Whereas before the basis for it remained the Security Strategy developed in 2003, with vague remarks of unplaceable threats and general aspirations of integration, one now sees explicit threats to a named European security order, and direct policy goals to preserve it. Not only have the headline publications of the High Representative become bolder and more detailed, the demonstrable approval of the member states with its release shows a continued escalation in the approval of such measures beyond Brussels. While there generally remains no major spoken steps towards any measures compromising national sovereignty, the possible scope of European competencies below this level has undoubtedly increased. Ultimately, compared from 2014 to 2022, the trajectory of European defence integration has continued in favour of *more*, not *less*.

Admittedly, it is important to stress that the publications do not necessitate a subsequent policy response. Indeed, to an extent it would be unfair to compare the 2022 Strategic Compass' ambitious plans to the policy proposals that followed the 2016 Global Strategy. This is an important clarification and a necessary trap to avoid. As such, just by comparing the change from 2014 to 2022 in terms of its sophistication in its defence strategy and the specificities of envisioned policy, the appetite for an enhanced European defence policy is distinctly greater than that of 2014.

2.3 – The Impact of Crisis

Conveniently, one of the constants in each of the three strategic publications is the analysis of threats to the Union. The scope and the detail may change, but a surveying of the threats posed to the EU remains consistent in the development of its strategic direction. Furthermore, at each turn we see greater and greater specificity in the threats facing the European Union. It is on the uncertainty and threats facing the European Union that both the Global Strategy and Strategic Compass have based their recommendations on, and with the former being published in 2016 and the latter 2022 different crises can be identified as

preceding them: the EU referendum in the United Kingdom in 2016, and the crisis and ultimately war in Ukraine in 2022.

The wider security arrangements of the European Union are significantly altered with the departure of Britain. Summarised bluntly, it would find itself in a weaker position and being more vulnerable to outside threats. The withdrawal of Britain from the European Union similarly limits the European union's strategic capacity and defence capability on the member state level, while paradoxically removing a highly vocal opponent to integration in areas such as defence (Biscop, 2016, p.432). Thus, the climate of the Global Strategy was one in which steps had to be started to begin the process of European cohesion in the realm of defence. Whereas the events of 2016 concerned uncertainty over allies, the deterioration of the situation in Ukraine in 2021 and the ultimate invasion by Russia in 2022 saw significant concern placed upon the EU's neighbours. The climate in which the Strategic Compass was compiled so the continuingly assertive China and in particular increasingly aggressive Russia, both of whom named explicitly in the final document (Council, 2022, p.7-8). With the ultimate invasion of Ukraine, it was thus finally demonstrable that war and conflict were still plausible realities in Europe in the 21st century. The scale of the invasion brought with it tangible risks destruction hitherto unseen since the Second World War (risks which have indeed been realised). Here, rhetoric and perceptions are demonstrably heightened, with the unambiguity of a full-scale armed conflict in Europe. EU and national leaders have expressed concern about the risk of escalation and a spill-over into other states. This is aided not in the least by the statements of Russian officials that implicitly or explicitly involve other nations, including EU members such as Finland, the Baltic states, and Poland. Thus, the invasion can lead to an otherwise unthinkable potential outcome: armed conflict between the European Union and a great power in Russia.

While these two crisis periods are both motivators in the strategic publications published in their wake, the substance of them is remarkably different. In the crises of 2016, no novel external threat had emerged. Instead, it was the concern over an unreliable key ally and the loss of a critical military power in Europe as a member state. By comparison, 2022's crisis tested the development of a far more tangible threat to European security, by virtue of being a conventional war on the continent. Nonetheless, we do see both being attributed to an increasingly uncertain and insecure global security order, just on different scales. Indeed,

what we can see from 2016 is an uncertainty of how the EU could tackle external threats on its own in the event of conflict, whereas what we can see from 2022 is a fear of outright kinetic warfare (Council, 2022, p.5). The stakes are significantly higher in the latter, and by virtue of it being an ongoing situation, final conclusions cannot be met. However, neither present situations that are physically impacted security of the European Union (Schreer, 2019, p.10). Instead, they have heightened concern and raise the perception of key threats to the European Union. In turn, this raises attention to whether the EU is suited to prevent them. With the increasingly forceful rhetoric and more specific policy recommendations in the Strategic Compass compared to the Global Strategy, it is demonstrable that this threat perception has become more tangible.

To a large extent, this is the critical juncture at play concerning the EU's overall strategic direction. Naturally, by virtue of dynamic and changing world, one would expect a dynamic and changing assessment of the international security order and the EU's place and priorities within it. It is nonetheless the specifics of these changes that warrant a certain response, and the critical juncture exists in whether the European Union recognises notable threats and proposes policy change to combat it. The evolution of the language and direction of the strategic publications is indicative of the decision by the EU to make decisive reactions to emerging threats. With the two instances since 2014 following security crises which are in turn mentioned in the subsequent publication, it is demonstrated that the EU strategic direction finds its justification following these crises and the relative threat that they produce.

In summary, the process in which the EU strategic direction has been shaped by crises can be easily noted from the publication years of strategic documents alongside the motivations and scene-setting mentioned within them. In both cases, while the invasion of Ukraine is more explicit in the threat that it poses to the EU, neither of the crisis periods mentioned have physically or directly impacted the EU's security in the realm of defence. Thus, if crisis-led integration theory can indeed explain European defence integration, there must be greater nuance in the impact crises can have upon faith in institutions to successfully resolve them. In both cases, it is the fear – or threat perception – that set them as motivators for changes in strategic direction. As the next two chapters explore other aspects of defence policy, this indirect element of crises will be taken into account further.

Chapter 3

Defence Development: PESCO, CARD, and the EDF

3.1 – A Timeline of European Defence Development

With much of the strategic positioning discussed emphasising the need for great member state cooperation in defence matters, a significant aspect to observe is in how military projects and defence planning has seen greater European coordination. In this area, little discussion is made of it at the beginning of 2014, and it is only following the publishing of the 2016 Global Strategy that initiatives begin to take shape. These are almost exclusively initiatives based on proposals named in the EUGS, with 2017 seeing three key developments: the activation of PESCO; the establishment of CARD; and the launching of the EDF. To best understand defence development, it is best to understand each and their development in turn.

PESCO (*Permanent Structured Cooperation*) is a formal structural mechanism to coordinate European military projects between consenting member states, driven by the Council and with the European Defence Agency and EEAS performing as its secretariat (Council of the European Union, 2017). Within the mechanism, both kinetic and operational projects are coordinated by (typically) one member state with others opting to join in assisting in the completion of specific military hardware capabilities or in wider operational improvements. While initiated in 2017, the grounds for PESCO are found in the Lisbon Treaty (Art. 42(6), and protocol n^o. 10), meaning its technical origins date to 2009. From an initial seventeen projects, four waves have led to sixty projects being established under PESCO as of 2022: seventeen more were adopted in 2018, thirteen more in 2019, and most recently fourteen in 2021 (Council of the European Union, 2022). Thus, to date sixty active projects are being operated under PESCO,¹ ranging from kinetic hardware such as the TIGER III attack helicopter to operations and logistics such as the European Medical Command and Military Mobility (PESCO, 2022). The involvement of member states in these projects is not binding, and thus

¹ One project, the European Union Training Missing Competence Centre, was closed due to perceived duplication, leaving the current total of active projects at sixty

membership of individual projects varies substantially. However, the commitments of member states *are* legally binding upon participating in any given project. Nonetheless, participation does remain an opt-in affair, as indeed does PESCO as a whole, with Malta and Denmark opting out of joining (Guardian, 2022). In sum, the establishment of PESCO in 2017 marked a significant shift in coordinating military projects of member states, not least to maximise efficiency. Since its activation, developments have only been seen in an increasing number of projects of varying nature and scale, alongside an indirectly related Danish referendum in June 2022 on removing their opt-out privileges in defence. As such, while its activation is of notable acknowledgement in the timeline of European military projects, little can be seen in developments since beyond the continued inflation of projects under its umbrella.

CARD (*Coordinated Annual Review on Defence*) is a monitoring system operated by the European Defence Agency and EU Military Staff that observes the “existing defence capability landscape in Europe” in order to provide recommendations in areas best suited for coordination and cooperation between member states (EDA, 2022). Unlike PESCO, CARD was a novel idea from the EUGS with no prior treaty basis, but was similarly implemented in 2017. Following a trial cycle in 2017/2018, CARD was fully set in motion for the first time in 2019-2020 and is currently in operation for 2021-2022. As such, aside from it being greenlit to proceed following its trial, CARD has seen little fundamental change since its establishment, rather improving its own internal processes from one cycle to the next. With its own admission that its value will grow over time as it develops “a comprehensive picture of the European defence landscape” (EDA, 2020), the timeline of defence planning from the perspective of understanding European defence capabilities has been rather unitary since the establishment of CARD, which nonetheless remains a substantial pillar in assisting in establish the military projects framed under PESCO.

The EDF (*European Defence Fund*) acts as the financial buttress to CARD’s recommendations and PESCO’s projects. Similarly established in 2017, it serves as a funding source for collaborative defence research and capability projects under the direction of the Commission (Commission, 2018 & Besch, 2020). Similar in ways to the timeline of CARD, the development of the EDF has been one of anticipated procedure rather than consecutive enacted policy. While established in 2017, two consecutive programmes preceded its de facto beginning. The

Preparatory Action on Defence Research (PADR) was run from 2017 to 2019, funding research projects during the period, whereas the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP) concerned direct development projects from 2019 to 2020. This was all operated within the confines of the pre-determined 2014-2020 Financial Framework; with the start of the 2021-2027 Financial Framework, the EDF was established in earnest, incorporating the activities of PADR and EDIDP with a significantly increased budget of €8 billion,² compared to the close to €600 million total of the precursor programmes over three years. With the official establishment of the EDF proper in 2021, the direct EU funding of military research and capability projects has thus been beefed up significantly in terms of its financials. Considering that the EDF's entire function is to facilitate the financing of such defence initiatives, there is distinct progress in the EU's involvement in the funding of European collective defence. While, once again, novel policy change is not easily observable after 2017 given that the EDF was planned to take over from the PADR and EDIDP, the scale of financial backing to the EDF was not necessarily considered in the same manner.

3.2 – Before & After

Unlike the EU's strategic direction, European military project cooperation has not seen much sustained evolution since 2014. Nonetheless, the landscape of 2022 is significantly more developed due to the implemented trio of PESCO, CARD, and the EDF. The European defence landscape today thus enjoys an explicit EU mechanism to facilitate coordination and project development, an EU function to identify and present recommendations for areas of cooperation, and dedicated funding to make research and development a reality. As a result, this defence package can be correctly seen as a significant stage in enabling the development in facilitating efficient military cooperation and coordination on a European level. Nevertheless, this should not be exaggerated, as the initiatives have more so enabled more effective member-state coordination rather than autonomous EU decisions on military projects. Just as before, member states remain at the forefront of decision making when it comes to developments in their own military hardware and operations. With PESCO, it is at the whim of the member state whether to participate, and the projects concerned do not come close to compromising national sovereignty in the sense that major defence integration

² €5.3 billion assigned to capability projects, €2.7 billion to defence research (European Commission, 2020)

would result in. Further, CARD is a mechanism to present recommendations, and the EDF can only fund what has been approved. Subsequently, while it is certainly not a firm establishment of EU control over military projects and natural defence apparatuses, it has marked a significant first step in streamlining those of the member states, with an intention that such projects and plans will lead to great interoperability and more effective decision-making in the future as it develops. Indeed, all three initiatives discussed go together in establishing significant first steps in the different aspects to defence planning, with built in ability to develop. This is seen with PESCO approving more and more projects, CARD continuing regular assessments, and the EDF developing in both its sophistication and funding. While there is no novel policy change beyond these three initiatives, the initiatives themselves have room to breathe and develop. To some degree, it can thus be seen as helping to open the door to further integration in the future in a manner no previous policy prior to 2017 can be seen doing. A breakdown of the key elements to the three initiatives is seen in **Table 1**.

	PESCO	CARD	EDF
Original Source	Lisbon Treaty	EUGS	EUGS
Year Initiated	2017	2017	2017
Jurisdiction	Council	Council	Commission
Secretariat	EDA & EEAS	EDA & EEAS	-
Policy Change Since Implementation	No	No	No
Growth Since Implementation	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 1: Key Factors of PESCO, CARD, and the EDF

3.3 – The Impact of Crisis

As can be devised above, the defence package of PESCO, CARD, and the EDF all serve a wider interest of streamlining European defence research and capabilities, servicing in turn a wider goal of greater autonomy in European defence development. Having all been established or initialised in 2017 at the behest of the 2016 Global Strategy, all three initiatives were born in the shadow of two pervasive crises the year prior that revealed the risks of the current landscape of Europe’s defence capabilities: Brexit and the election of Donald Trump. In the mentioning of crises, Mogherini exclusively notes the British case by name in the foreword of the Global Strategy (Council, 2016). In this framing, the departure of the United

Kingdom is a clear demonstrable thought in the development of the three initiatives (Sweeney & Winn, 2020).

These two crises in particular present a significant challenge to European security in the realm of defence development: the diminishing of member-state hard power, and the risk of an absent hegemon. In the case of the former, the British withdrawal also equated to the departure of one of the key military powers in Europe, and its defence developments along with it. Indeed, Brexit presents a degree of complexity to both the ability and political will for defence integration within the European Union. On one consideration, it has weakened the defensive capabilities of the European Union with the departure of a significant military power. On another, it is also interpretable as removing a key barrier to defence integration, as defence policy was an area the United Kingdom fervently defended national sovereignty in (Svendsen, 2019). These two considerations thus paint Brexit as either spurring the Union and its member states into action, or finally removing the hurdle that prevented defence integration from truly getting started. When placed together with the latter case of America, however, the alarmist case for defence integration is more easily identified. The rhetoric and language adopted by Trump before and after his election indicated a souring of relations vis-à-vis the post-war security arrangements in Europe. Explicit disdain for the lack of defence investment among European countries was adopted by the Trump administration, with enduring European concern about the United States' subsequent commitment to the defence of the continent (Lanoszka & Simón, 2021). With the election of Donald Trump, and the American commitment to NATO and European security being questioned (Kaufman, 2017), the entire strategic calculus of the European Union warranted significant attention to be placed on achieving autonomy in the event that they were left alone in a major conflict. Because of the dependence upon America to ensure European security, its absence would require comprehensive planning and strategic depth for the European Union to fill its place. An absent US would mean a European Union left to defend itself, all the while deprived of one of its strongest military members and an inefficient, disjointed industrial and operational defence environment.

As also mentioned in the previous chapter, what is fundamentally lacking in these crises is any physical change in the direct threats to the European Union's security. Despite at times heightened animosity, Britain and the United States have remained aligned with the European

Union on security and defence interests, especially on the continent. Furthermore, despite threats and ambiguities from the Trump administration, no withdrawals or cutbacks were ultimately seen. Rather, what had changed was a change in perception concerning the security of the European Union's position in world affairs, in rendering more salient the vulnerability the Union had surrounding its own defence capabilities. Unambiguously, European member states relied (and indeed continue to rely) upon the United States for their collective defence, and were all the more in a riskier position with the absence of Britain as a major military member as some minor counterbalance. Thus, the tangible weaknesses and shortcomings in European defence capabilities had not been worsened by these crises, but were instead given amplified attention due to a realisation that complacency and the status quo might no longer be sufficient.

Herein we identify the critical juncture of Brexit, Trump, and defence development. Given the withdrawal of a key military member of the Union, and the potential unreliability of the key security provider in Europe, the European Union was placed to make a key decision as to whether to make progress on Europeanising defence development. Should nothing be done, member states would continue to operate inefficiently as they had done, not least observed by the existence of seventeen different tank systems as of 2017 – the United States, by comparison, has one: the M1 Abrams (Besch, 2019). What must also be taken at the same time is the puzzle that the movement seen in defence integration in the realm of development and capacity building is one that is both significant and relatively minor. While PESCO, CARD, and the EDF could be dismissed as not fully satisfying an EU-directed autonomous industrial and research environment, this must be reconciled with the fact that next to *no* progress had been attempted prior to it. The initiation of PESCO is thus a critically important one to assess not just because of its nature but because of its origins; reasons must be found as to why member states only decided to activate it in 2017, despite having the option to do so since the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. The plainest answer to this is thus that member states did not consider it necessary, as its establishment ultimately binds participants to commitments concerning individual projects. With heightened uncertainty following the crises of 2016, the inefficiencies of the defence industry and research were thus a more definitive problem that could prove disastrous should a military conflict emerge where the Americans were absent and the European defence industry were unprepared. With the grounds for Council

agreement on PESCO, CARD, and the EDF all coming from the Global Strategy that stressed the present zeitgeist as one of “unprecedented crisis” (Council, 2016), it is thus clear that a culture of threat forms a strong undercurrent to the three initiatives. The major crises of 2016 in turn posed no imminent new threat to European security, but instead shone a spotlight upon the current state of defence development in the European Union where the risks of maintaining the status quo could undermine EU security in the future. With these risks thus more visible, the threat perception from member states was thus amplified, as an even greater crisis could threaten the nation’s themselves, and thus their own national sovereignty. Greater strategic autonomy would be necessary to resolve Europe’s defensive shortcomings that were only paid credence to as a result of the crisis making the wider security arrangements of the EU less certain.

At present, this section has explained the process in which crises (in this case, Brexit and Trump) did not necessarily threaten the Union but heightened the threat perception and the risk beholden to member states if defence development were not streamlined and coordination heightened. In turn, it was this perception of a threat, even if the physical circumstances had not changed, that warranted a policy response towards greater European integration in defence. The final task lies in understanding the scale of the policy response in relation to the crisis. As mentioned, the defence package of PESCO, CARD, and the EDF was both significant but particularly low-scale; the system revolves around project proposals and recommendations with optional member state participation, and certainly is not on the level of treaty change. Nonetheless, it acts at significant first steps where previously none on this level had been taken. Now taken in hand with the crises that preceded it, which in and of themselves were not existential, we see a degree of proportionality. 2016 saw the Global Strategy acknowledge the link between external crises and the need to develop defence capabilities, as well as the first instances of what can be genuinely described as a direct security crisis for the European Union. With these crises not requiring an immediate, sweeping response such as with COVID-19 and the NGEU fund, but nonetheless heightening threat perception within the EU, the policy response that followed clearly demonstrated a new chapter in defence integration while not seeking extreme competencies for any EU institution or agency. Instead, these are initiatives that work within the treaties and in a manner that does not significantly compromise national sovereignty, but nonetheless set the

groundwork for expansion into the future. Indeed, that is what we have thus seen in all three initiatives, taking on more projects, continuing more detailed reviews, and expanding available funds. In sum, the policy response in defence development is relatively proportional to the perceived urgency of a given security crisis. What it nonetheless enables at the same time, however, is significant policy to be established where there was little headway previously, even if by relative standards it is not of maximalist ambition.

Chapter 4

Direct and Indirect Operations

4.1 – A Timeline of Direct and Indirect Operations

The most explicit of imaginations see European defence integration as ultimately concerning European troops under a European banner conducting operations in the interest of the European Union itself. Such extremes are not a present reality, but there has been a notable drive towards establishing a European level of defence operations. The realm of European military operations in 2014 was rather threadbare; the European Military Staff (EMS) was already existing under the External Action Service, but primarily serving an advisory role in the realm of strategy for the CSDP. As repetitive as it seems, 2017 saw change in response to the 2016 EUGS, with the establishment of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC). Coming under the EMS, the establishment of the MPCC allowed for a permanent body to conduct the direct planning of operations and conduct capability in the military sphere (EEAS, 2018); as part of this structure, the Director General of the EMS would have direct authority in command and control operations in non-executive military missions.³ Similarly, the initiative also opened the ability for a small number of military personnel to be deployed in such missions under the authority of the Director General. Under the MPCC, three non-executive training missions were adopted that were already in place: Somalia since 2010, Mali since 2013, and the Central African Republic since 2016 (ibid). Genuinely new developments were nonetheless seen in 2018, as the MPCC was granted the ability to conduct one executive operation, inheriting this ability from the European Union Operations Centre (Council of the European Union, 2018). Compared to the Centre, the MPCC was a functional and *permanent* operational headquarters, establishing a persistent operations setup by the European Union. While it has been authorised to command an executive military operation, and with it a force the size of an EU Battlegroup, this has yet to materialise. Indeed, the ability to establish a Battlegroup has been in place long before 2014, but has never been initialised. Regardless, the operational aspect of physical displays of European defence integration can

³ Non-executive missions only involve an advisory role to the host nation. Executive missions would allow the MPCC to assume direct control, including areas of combat.

be noticeably observed as progressing since 2017, if in a comparatively minor fashion to other aspects of EU policy. The auspice of the 2022 Strategic Compass further stresses the desire of boots on the ground, with an EU Rapid Deployment Force of 5,000 troops by 2025 (Council, 2022, p. 14). This would likely come under or heavily involve the MPCC, as is referenced in the Strategic Compass, which also stresses the desire to enhance the EU's command and control capabilities, so much so that the MPCC becomes the "preferred command and control structure" (ibid, p. 16). Implicit in the document is the view that the MPCC is not yet fully operational, as well as that there is a clear drive to establish it as the default space for driving military operations. As these are all proposals for the time being, it cannot be considered in the same manner as the policies that have been established. Nonetheless, future policy in line with the Strategic Compass would prove a far more significant step in placing a permanent EU presence in the realm of direct military operations.

In tandem with direct operational developments are more indirect aspects of military assistance. Outside of training missions, recent developments have been seen with the establishment of the European Peace Facility in 2021. The EPF serves as a funding mechanism to provide financial assistance to conflicts beyond the EU in both military operations and general assistance, with a ceiling of €5.692 billion for the 2021-2027 period, in line with the Multiannual Financial Framework (European Commission, 2022). Since its establishment, it has already been utilised to provide assistance to conflict zones: a total of €89 million to date has been to finance equipment, capabilities, and training in Mozambique against a jihadist insurgency; in 2021 too the EPF financed medical, engineering, and/or support equipment totalling €294 million in Mali, €31 million in Ukraine, €7 million in Moldova, and €12.75 million in Georgia (European Council, 2022). The amplification of these funds skyrocketed in 2022, however, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In direct support of Ukraine in this conflict, four separate tranches totalling €2 billion have been issued as of May 2022, along with €600 million going elsewhere to the African Union (ibid, 2022). Most significant in the recent aid to Ukraine however has been in provision of lethal equipment for the first time under the EPF. Admittedly, the EPF is in its infancy, and it always helps the ability to do so. Nonetheless, 2022 thus marks the first issuance of lethal military equipment by the European Union directly (European Council, 2022). As such, this form of indirect operations, despite

being relatively young, has already seen itself assert itself in its capabilities, not least in already utilising 40% of its assigned budget until 2027.

4.2 – Before & After

While the progress of defence operations, both direct and indirect, can be mocked as being relatively slow, there has nonetheless been a demonstrable shift since 2014. Summarised, there has been a growth and development in the EU's role in conducting missions and establishing command and control structures over the period. Whereas before the EMS simply served an advisory role, the MPCC established under it now enables the implementation of executive military missions under EU authority (Council, 2018). Simultaneously, the EU is now active in not only providing direct financial aid in external conflicts via the EPF, but also explicitly lethal equipment, thereby once again establishing direct EU involvement in security affairs. All of this is not to say that there has been an extreme revolution in operations, with the EU being granted overwhelming autonomy in conducting military missions. Indeed, for the most part, this has not significantly impacted the conduct and activities of individual member states. While this national sovereignty has not been pressed into, from 2014 one nonetheless observes a move in developing the EU's capacities in a notable, if tentative, manner. Just as in the realm of defence development, specific initiatives have been established that have the potential to be expanded in the future. As the MPCC enables the conduct of missions and a permanent headquarters, future change could see it grow in its mission count and use of said HQ. Similarly, as the EPF allows direct funding in conflict zones, future change could see its funds increase and further provision of lethal aid. The prospect of further expansion as proposed in the Strategic Compass would be another example of establishing a modest but solid footing in a given policy space, with the space and scope to naturally evolve on its own over time.

4.3 – The Impact of Crises

In the context of operations, the MPCC and the EPF have been identified as the principal policy developments since 2014. In comparison to the EU's strategic direction or defence development, however, the associated relationship with any identifiable security crisis is demonstrably more challenging. In the case of the MPCC, while it emerged as part of the recommendations of the 2016 Global Strategy, the specificity of security crises impacting

this area are slightly more complex, as the nature and extent of policy change is more reduced than that seen elsewhere in spite of the same context. This same context, of course, is the aftermath of Brexit and US foreign policy under President Trump. In the case of the EPF, concerning indirect assistance, key developments were seen in its founding in 2021 and amplification in 2022. Complexity here thus arises in the lack of any significant security crisis in 2021; the amplification in 2022 naturally follows the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

For the same two core reasons in the area of defence development does Brexit and Trump affect direct operations. The absence of a security guarantor would leave direct operations in the hands of European nations; with the withdrawal of a key military member of the European Union, the operational capacity of member states, either unilaterally or with other EU states, would be further strained. Regardless, it would not be comparable to the scale or capacity possible from the United States. Should operations be better collectivised and streamlined on a European level, with the access to material, funds, and staff on a continental scale as opposed to the national, these military operations could at least hope to fill the void left should the United States truly withdraw from Europe. In the case of indirect operations and the EPF, the causation is less inferable. Indeed, establishment of the EPF was more drawn out in involving intergovernmental bargaining (Bergmann & Müller, 2021). Furthermore, it does sit somewhat separate to more hard aspects of defence. Its hardening, however, can certainly be linked to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Beyond the easily demonstrable in that the funding of lethal equipment was given directly to Ukraine to defend itself in the war, the logic of the impact of the crisis is more logically followed. With the Russian invasion, the common recital was the realisation or the return of all out war in Europe, as mentioned in the Strategic Compass (European Council, 2022). Furthermore, it concerned a great power threatening the independence over nation seeking to align itself closer with the European Union, with the aspirations of membership.

Should the crisis of the invasion be ignored, it could very possibly lead to the capitulation and defeat of a neighbour and aspiring EU member state in Ukraine. Thus, herein lies the critical juncture concerning the EPF: in order for Ukraine to defend itself, as well as to contain the conflict to the EU's periphery, lethal aid would be required to repel the enemy. To do nothing questions the ability of the EU and its member states to defend or support other nations (including EU members) potentially at risk from further Russian expansionism. With the EPF's

establishment being one of negotiation, such a critical juncture cannot be identified, but its amplification in terms of lethal aid can. To an extent, security crises of 2016 could be constituted as providing a critical juncture for the establishment of standing operations, but in a way that is compounded by the other actions proposed in the Global Strategy. In this respect, no development of direct operations would prove a risk should the EU be left to its own security arrangements, as only a few member states would be able to plan or execute any at scale. Furthermore, it would risk a lack of cohesion should other defence developments be put in place (as they were). Thus, to an extent the classic notion of spillover can be observed even in an area as embryonic as European defence policy (see Rosamond, 2000).

Referring back to the established notion of proportionality, we nonetheless run into obstacles when pursuing crisis-led integration theory. Namely, the significance of policy developments in regard to operations is both more muted and generally slower than in the areas discussed in prior chapters of this paper. This is best explained by the varying degrees to which national sovereignty is required in the areas being discussed. In the case of direct operations, the approval of an EU force to conduct direct executive missions is already an activity typically at the discretion of nation states. Thus, there is far less leeway in integration in this aspect of defence policy so long as member states opt to preserve their own capabilities in formulating direct operations and executive military missions. The case of the MPCC subsequently best reveals the perception trade-off that is involved when progressing European defence policy. For policy to progress, it must naturally be seen by member states as beneficial (or, at least, neutral). Should it require any surrendering of sovereignty, it must not only be seen as beneficial but more beneficial and retaining the sovereignty that it must relinquish. In the case of defence policy, this must mean that the policy's effectiveness at defending the European Union is so substantial that any one member state is willing to enhance the EU's capabilities in that area. This therefore means the member states would need to feel that their current security arrangements are insufficient in comparison to EU policy proposals, and this would only be the case if their current security arrangements could not provide sufficient security. In other words, if member states *perceive* their security arrangements to be unable to meet external threats, a willingness to relieve sovereignty can be anticipated. When thus looking back at the security crisis preceding 2017, we see the scale of them being of middling significance compared to the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Thus, there has been little policy

change threatening sovereignty, and in a realm as sovereignty-laden as military operations, this explains why the MPCC has moved comparatively less than other aspects of defence policy – the threat perception of preceding crises has simply been insufficient.

Chapter 5

Overall Findings

5.1 – Perceptions Over Reality

It is perhaps to be expected that security policy would be in reaction to whatever the security threats of the day may be. What this paper has investigated thus far is how security crises enable significant steps in defence integration to take place. If crises spur integration and major policy initiatives, as explored in the example of COVID-19, the current institutional setup must be severely challenged and considered improper to deal with the current crisis at hand. However, this paper's investigation has seen instances of significant security crises that have nonetheless not posed an imminent threat to the current process of security policy within the EU, but have still seen policy responses in its aftermath. Squaring this circle has required the consideration of security shocks and the direct threat they pose, but also the perceived threat that these crises can generate, regardless how immediate such risks may be. When establishing this paper, three crisis periods were identified: the start of the Ukraine conflict in 2014; the 2016 EU referendum and election of Donald Trump; and the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. In the analysis, the initial beginning of the conflict in Ukraine is not mentioned as a key catalyst for major developments in strategic direction, defence development, or general operations. Comparing this to 2016, and especially 2022, the missing ingredient is insufficient *threat perception*.

At the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine in 2014, the lethargy and minimised scope of the crisis meant no major threat to EU security was easily perceivable. After the Russian annexation of Crimea, any conflict was quickly confined to the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in the east of the country. Until 2022, that is where the conflict remained, thus changing little and being distant from the security concerns of the European Union. In this instance, there was no *perceived threat* by the Union or its member states to their own security arrangements. In comparison, as it has already been discussed, the crises of 2016 were not direct and imminent threats to the EU and its institutions, but they heightened concern about a real possibility of a diminished Union with the departure of the British and a vulnerable

Union should there be a withdrawal by the Americans. As a result, there was an increased *threat perception* that the current security arrangements were now insufficient. Perhaps, though, the most suitable comparison is in the situation in Ukraine in 2014 compared to 2022. In this the policy responses are starkly different, and the rhetoric of the threat posed by the conflict has decisively changed. Whereas previously the conflict had remained frontier violence contained to the same geographical areas, EU leaders now stress the need to avoid escalation and even nuclear war. Thus, just as the outbreak of direct combat between the Russian and Ukrainian militaries demonstrates a clear break from low scale separatist insurgency, so too has the catastrophising of potential outcomes been inflated by EU policymakers. The tonal response to the 2022 invasion and the literal referencing of it in policy proposals demonstrates that it is this *perceived threat* from the invasion that has caused consideration for novel steps in European military integration.

5.2 – Crisis Unto Threat, Threat Unto Taboos

The prior three chapters have sought to explain the nature of security integration following crisis periods, and thus how and why it may progress if crisis-led integration theory is valid. What it has also demonstrated, however, is that genuine policy can be initiated outside of periods of crisis, but crises have a significant effect on the process. The initiatives in defence development established throughout 2017 (PESCO, CARD, and the EDF) are notable in its policy area, but the significance of its contents remains lacklustre to more ambitious policy change in other sectors. Simultaneously, these initiatives have seen continued growth beyond the crisis context in which they were established. As a result, crisis-led integration theory must explain the manner and extent to which it helps spur policy development.

It is here that we can mature the theory of where crisis-led integration theory fits. It is demonstrable that initiatives aimed at fostering security integration occur outside of, or seemingly independent of, major security crises. While it may be in reaction to a changing environment (such as the Trump administration), it is nonetheless not always explicitly due to a key inciting incident. Instead, crises allow major *barriers* to be dismantled, and to break taboos in policy areas that the European Union hitherto had little to no access to. Thus, the notion of threat perception again is apparent, as security crises demonstrate a heightened degree of threat perception that warrants policy change. Going further, though, crises sustain

such threat perception beyond the crisis itself. It is in this manner that the migrant crisis continues to spur integration in border security seven years on. Simply put, security crises create the sufficient degree of perceived threat to institutions and member states to justify the implementation of policy changes that break significant taboos in where the competencies of the EU end. From here, it is far easier for further integration to take place, as the wall has already been torn down.

Perhaps most importantly, though, is that this also explains the limits of defence integration as has been assessed in this paper. The countervailing force to European integration as a whole, regardless of policy area, is the desire of member states to retain their national sovereignty. For the most substantial integration to take place, this hurdle must be overcome, and it is not done easily. Furthermore, defence policy places further barbed wire on the process, as few policy areas are more treasured and indicative of the nation's independence than military and defence affairs. The policies that the paper has explored, while often significant starting points, are nonetheless rather small in the grand scheme of European integration. When placing them alongside their respective crises that spurred them, it is indicative that the scale of the perceived threat generated by them is insufficient. After all, none of the three crisis periods posed (or currently pose) direct challenge to the security institutions of the European Union or its member states. Importantly, each one has been more explicitly threatening than the last, and we can subsequently observe an escalation in the defence policies being initiated (or proposed, in the case of the 2022 Strategic Compass). We can thus observe a trend where escalatory threat perception leads to increased levels of Europeanised defence. However, none have been substantial enough to lead to policy proposals that threaten national sovereignty in defence. Taking into account the general trend, it seems that a continued escalation of threat perception will ultimately reach a point in which security institutions are challenged so severely that the fear of this hypothetical security crisis outstrips the fear of losing sovereignty in defence policy.

Chapter 5

Towards a Fearful, Secure Europe

This analysis has followed three distinct stages. The basis of crisis-led integration theory surrounding EU military and defence established key processes and identifiers of an inciting incident leading to a critical juncture, where a decisive policy response was put into place. The subsequent use of this theory upon three key elements of defence policy revealed the process in which security crises generate a degree of threat to European security institutions and mechanisms. However, the realistic threat of these shocks is revealed to be of secondary importance to the *perception* of the threat to the institutions instead. While the real threat unmistakably can impact this, it means the significance of the threat has some degree of malleability.

In following the logic of crisis-led integration theory, the core aspect to definitive policy change towards integration is in the *sustained perception of threat*. It is apparent that it is necessary for policymakers, whether it be within European institutions or the governments of member states, to be sufficiently afraid of an exogenous event to be willing to suspend its sovereignty in the pursuit of European military integration. As has been confirmed, this may take one of two forms. The most obvious and common is in a direct and overt security threat risking the security of the European Union and its members. If the policy response is indeed proportionate to the extent of the threat presented, further security integration would require a greater and more substantial threat as it progresses. Should the extreme end result of European military integration be achieved, namely a singular European army, an extreme security shock would be required in turn. In other words, it would require the European Union to be at war in a large-scale conflict. However, there is also the potential for perceptions alone to be satisfactory. As this paper has seen, it is not necessarily the crisis or shock itself which instigates policy change but the perceived threat that it poses to wider security, including after an initial post-crisis response. It need not be necessary for a significant large-scale escalation if key decision makers (whom at this point in writing, remain the member states via the Council) believe their position to be existentially challenged. If the first doomsday scenario is reminiscent of the birth of Germany, the second perception of fear mirrors that of

the United States. So it becomes apparent that the member states of the European Union, so long as they remain sovereign, must be made to feel truly vulnerable if they are to fully relieve their sovereignty in affairs such as the military and break taboos in EU competencies.

Beyond the difficulties of either requiring war or cultivating fear, the public at large should not be ignored. While public involvement in European integration as a whole is particularly distant, the European Union would be wise to give proper attention to European citizens who still hold far more political power than the average German or American in centuries past. It need not be necessary to have public support, but long-term stability and support for the European Union would be well serviced by ensuring that the public also understands the significance of any given threat that warrants European military integration.

Ultimately, European military integration and the maximalist goal of a singular European army hold sizeable logistical, strategic, and economic benefits to the current status quo. Meanwhile, the principal inhibitor to progress, as it typically is in other policy areas, is the fear from national governments of losing their sovereignty. As is demonstrated in history and in current proceedings, the most effective way to traverse this fear is to supersede it with something even more terrifying. While a far cry from the optimistic values that the European Union was founded on, the reality of European integration seems to suggest this will be an inevitability.

Conclusion

With the existence of European security crises and observable policy integration already being known, this paper has sought to investigate exactly how (if at all) such crises impact the process of European integration in the realm of defence policy. By looking at the publication of strategic documents and the establishment and growth of EU mechanisms and initiatives, the key motivations behind them are acknowledgements of a changing security order as a result of key exogeneous shocks. Developments have not been consistent since 2014, but it happened at key points in time following notable events. By looking at the expressed motivations behind policy changes, it has been demonstrated but the critical element involved between the emergence of a crisis and the subsequent policy response has been in the existence of threat perception in relation to the crisis at hand. A physical threat may not be imminent, but if an invasive fear persists that security institutions are not fit for purpose, then the enhancement of European defence capabilities is observed. The level of integration in any branch of defence policy has not been revolutionary, but neither have the crises that have preceded them. Nonetheless, in comparison to their starting points in 2014, the level of change is significant for defence integration. Indeed, the threat observed of the three crises identified has increased with each instance, with the Russian invasion of Ukraine still having the potential to escalate and threaten the EU directly. The effect that these crises have served is initiating the start of tangible actions in the realm of defence policy, from which normal growth and evolution can continue once taboos of EU authority have been surpassed by the fear of any given shock.

This paper primarily serves to act as a starting point for further investigation on not only the impact of crises but the importance of threat perception as it corresponds to preserving national sovereignty. Expanding the time frame, considering other factors, and using other means to determine threat perception beyond the published motivations of policy briefings can further greater understanding as to the mechanisms at play when defence integration is being posited in times of significant security crisis. The main preliminary conclusion of this paper, nevertheless, is that the greater the threat perceived from a given crisis, the more significant the policy response shall be in leading towards European defence integration. At present, while more threatening crises have prompted more ambitious proposals, none have

yet surpassed the fear of losing sovereignty in defence. In a perverse manner, the greatest bolstering of European defence sovereignty may very well come at the moment in which Europe's security is pressed to the very brink. In the realm of defence, this may mean armed conflict, unless threat perception is adequately used to use fear rather than reality. As the world becomes more uncertain and less secure, such grim and unfortunate futures may need to be tackled head on in the interest of a common European good.

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