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## Wasted Crises? Finland, Sweden and Post-1995 CSDP Development

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WASTED CRISES? FINLAND, SWEDEN AND POST-1995 CSDP  
DEVELOPMENT

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## Introduction

In the middle of the Baltic Sea lies the Swedish island of Gotland. When one takes the ferry from the mainland, the historic Hansa town of Visby comes into sight after several hours. While today's Gotland is known as an unhurried, sheep-filled vacation destination, the magnificent medieval fortifications of Visby tell a different story. During its troubled past, Gotland has been occupied by Danish and German invaders before eventually falling into Swedish hands. As part of a military non-aligned state, Gotland was demilitarized after the Cold War (Heinikoski, 2019, p. 162). Now, there is a new threat on the horizon, one against which Visby's stone walls are unlikely to offer any protection. Ever since Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, worries about Gotland's security have resurfaced (Milne, 2022; Reuters, 2022). When the author visited the island himself in 2020, locals openly voiced their worries about 'the Russians', while ominously pointing eastwards.

Ever since, the Russian threat has only increased, culminating in the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. This pushed Sweden and neighboring Finland to drop their military non-alignment policy in exchange for an official NATO application on 18 May 2022 (NATO, 2022a). Two weeks later, Denmark joined a different framework of security cooperation by voting to abolish its opt-out on the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (European External Action Service, 2022a). This pattern of Scandinavian states joining new security structures in reaction to an external threat raises questions. What is the link between external threats and security cooperation? How do states combine security cooperation with military non-alignment? And what is the relationship between the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and NATO?

Finland and Sweden are selected as research subjects of this thesis because they have faced such a clear security dilemma in recent times. The urgency of this dilemma is caused by a shared geographic proximity to Russia, which other neutral EU Member States lack. The Finnish and Swedish switch from neutral to NATO created a case study of the way in which the EU and its Member States balance short-term national security interests and long-term supranational integration. The choices that Finland and Sweden make tell us something about changing security policy in times of increased threat, about the relationship between both countries and about the

way in which CSDP and NATO relate to each other. These are the themes that this thesis aims to explore. This will be done in a European context, showing how international upheaval shapes political dynamics between different states and between the international organizations they choose to be engaged in. To provide the analysis with structure it will aim to answer the following research question:

*How has the relationship between the EU's CSDP and the military non-aligned status of Finland and Sweden developed between 1995 and 2022?*

The research question will be answered through a case-study of Finnish and Swedish engagement with CSDP, from when they joined the EU in 1995 until the Russian invasion in 2022. In chapter one, the (IR) theories of neorealism and historical institutionalism are presented through a literature review which places them within the IR academic tradition on European security and defence. It will also be explained how the theoretical interrelation of these theories fits into the research design.

In the second chapter, the way in which the EU, Finland and Sweden reacted to systemic change<sup>1</sup> will be analyzed with a mix of primary and secondary sources. Using neorealism, it will be argued that both CSDP integration and NATO application are driven by the same global conjuncture of a transitioning international system. Systemic transition from uni- to multipolarity is presented as the overarching characteristic of geostrategic developments in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Historical institutionalism is subsequently used to explain how the EU failed to adapt to this systemic transition, and which role Finland and Sweden played in this process. The awkward relationship between systemic transition and European security and defence integration forms the arc of this research.

The case will be made that due to path dependency, the EU was unable to translate increasing international urgency into momentum for deeper European security and defence integration while the downsides of security dependency on the US grew increasingly obvious. The Finnish and

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<sup>1</sup> This concerns the supranational policy made by the EU as a whole and the national policies made by Finland and Sweden as autonomous states.

Swedish role in this process is representative of most EU Member States in that they worked actively to confine CSDP to the area of crisis management and prevent far-reaching reforms regarding collective defence. It will be argued that this is a problematic situation; if the EU indeed wants to be able to autonomously protect its values and interests, the gap between a more ambitious CSDP and the comfort of NATO's American security umbrella needs to be bridged.

The writing process of this thesis coincided with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, an event that considerably impacted the set-up of this research. Therefore, the third chapter serves as an epilogue by describing the implications of 24 February 2022 for this research. The invasion has provided IR research on themes such as European security and defence policy, strategic autonomy, collective defence and neutrality with renewed relevancy (Koppa, 2022, p. vii). Furthermore, it will be argued that instead of obstructing the research set-up or outdated its conclusions, the invasion rather underlines the applicability of neorealist analysis and provides a critical juncture that fits well with the historical institutionalist analysis of chapter two.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that this research does not intend to create a false dichotomy between European security and defence integration and NATO-membership. After all, the EU and NATO are predominantly complementary institutions and can be seen as "two pillars of a single construct" (Koppa, 2022, pp. 36, 37, 202). Therefore, the epilogue will discuss how the Russian invasion provides a critical juncture that might stimulate policy makers to push for a new course. The concept of a European NATO-pillar represents a compromise that would institutionalize overlapping elements.

## Chapter 1

This literature review introduces and embeds the theories of neorealism and historical institutionalism. The two theories are used in complementary ways. While neorealism explains why certain policy choices were made, historical institutionalism zooms in to show how they were made. The interconnection between the theories is based on the assumption that external historical events matter because they inherently shape policy choices. The same major event that causes or signals a change of international system may provide a critical juncture at EU policy level (Koppa, 2022, pp. 17, 42). Neorealism observes the systemic level and historical institutionalism zooms in on the supranational policy level. In chapter two, the application of these theories will reveal an inherent tension between the two levels.

### *(Neo)realism and alternative IR approaches*

Multiple IR theories cover the themes addressed by the research question. Realism is a prominent branch which generally holds that Member States are destined to dominate EU security and defence (Hoffmann, 1966, pp. 862, 864, 881-912; Hyde-Price, 2006, pp. 217-220, 231, 232; Rynning, 2011, pp. 28-38). Intergovernmentalism shares this state-centered focus but specifically identifies influential Member State consensus-building as integration driver (Bickerton, Hodson, & Puetter, 2015, pp. 705, 711-717). This thesis recognizes the importance of Member State competence and interaction but concludes that regarding EU security and defence, this is more a constraining factor than an integration driver (Kirchner, Christiansen, & Juncos, 2013, p. 21; Piechowicz & Szpak, 2022, pp. 66, 67).

At the same time, institutionalist academics emphasize that since its establishment, CSDP has drifted away from national control and has taken on a life of its own. Institutionalism emphasizes the role of international organizations as independent actors that orchestrate agenda setting, coalition formation and political action (Kauppi & Viotti, 2020, p. 74). From this perspective, the EU is an international organization established by states who restrict themselves to certain principles, rules and procedures and provide the organization with the capacity to act politically and judicially (Kauppi & Viotti, 2020, pp. 74, 75). Through 'Brusselisation', new supranational structures gain bureaucratic and preparatory competences (Kirchner et al., 2013, pp. 21, 39;

Piechowicz & Szpak, 2022, p. 68). Chapter two demonstrates that this process is partly applicable to CSDP. The EU is clearly capable of integration regarding security and defence; this thesis just argues that this process has not evolved parallel to the systemic transition that neorealism dictates.

Neorealism is built on the assumption that anarchy, meaning the absence of an overruling global authority, is the defining characteristic of international politics. Because of anarchy, states will pursue national security as their number one priority. Power and capabilities define the extent to which a state can attain such security, and the global distribution of these factors determines the shape of the international system in a unilateral, bilateral or multilateral shape (Kauppi & Viotti, 2020, pp. 34-37; Tarzi, 2004, pp. 116, 119). In opposition to the IR theory of constructivism, neorealism tends to observe security policy with an exogenous perspective, seeing it as a manifestation of state interests formed through external forces in the international system (Agius & Devine, 2011, pp. 370-373; Koppa, 2022, p. 181).

#### *Alliance formation and balance of power theory*

Military non-alignment or other expressions of neutrality do not fit naturally with neorealist thought (Joenniemi, 1993, p. 295; Müller, 2019, pp. 14, 15; Palo, 2019, pp. 7, 8). Neorealism describes state interaction as either confrontation or accommodation. A neutral state might act as a bridge-builder but when capabilities are unequally distributed and aspiring states are in a position to upset the balance of power, neorealism holds that neutrality comes under threat. This is because neutral states are either endangered by larger powers or are expected to balance or bandwagon in alliances with them. (Agius & Devine, 2011, p. 374; Morgenthau, 1938, pp. 111-116; Waltz, 2010, pp. 102, 113, 126, 163). Consequently, neorealism holds that neutrality effectively mirrors the state of the international balance of power (Morgenthau, 1938, p. 111; Raymond, 1997, pp. 127, 128; Sundelius, 1987, p. 14). For example, Andrén (1991) argues that “the Swedish policy of neutrality in its practical application is strongly (...) influenced by the international environment at the time” (p. 79). This is recognizable when observing the Finnish and Swedish NATO application.



According to constructivism, neutrality is not a strategic choice but rather inspired by a collective identity (Agius & Devine, 2011, pp. 370, 371, 376, 377, 380; Devine, 2011, pp. 335, 336; Goetschel, 1999, pp. 116-118, 121, 132). This view is hard to sustain when one observes the relatively compliant reaction of the Finnish and Swedish public in response to their nation's NATO applications. If a neutral identity indeed existed in Finland and Sweden, its roots were apparently not very deep. This sentiment is echoed by constructivists like Devine (2011, p. 360) who declared European neutrality in the post-Lisbon era dead.

If European neutrality has indeed gone extinct, a typical neorealist would hold the international system responsible. Chapter two's analysis will largely follow this line of reasoning, asserting that the replacement of military non-alignment as an expression of neutrality is one of the consequences of increased anarchy in an international system that is transforming towards multipolarity. This transition towards multipolarity was acknowledged by the EU itself in 2022's Strategic Compass (European External Action Service, 2022b, 17). In times of increasing anarchy, states will seek for short-term ways to guarantee national security. Neorealism lists alliance formation as one of the available instruments. When engaging in alliance formation, neorealist balance of power theory holds that a state can either balance or bandwagon (Kauppi & Viotti, 2020, p. 268; Van Evera, 1998, pp. 16-21, 33, 34; Walt, 1985, pp. 4, 7, 8; Waltz, 2010, p. 195).

Balancing is when a state joins forces with other states, who might be less powerful, to oppose a state that is disproportionately growing in power. Neorealists like Art (2004, pp. 180, 181, 207), Paul (2005, pp. 47, 70, 71), Posen (2004, pp. 10-15), Walt (2013, pp. 147, 148, 161, 164, 178) and Rosato (2011, pp. 23, 24, 26, 33, 46, 47, 57) differ in their precise characterization of CSDP, with some referring to 'soft' or 'hard' balancing. This research views CSDP as soft balancing, which means that a state acts to prevent that a powerful state could cause security problems in the future. Kurowska and Breuer (2012) correctly state that "the (...) unreliability of US unipolarity provided the exogenous stimulus to ESDP" (p. 32). Soft balancing, for example through the concept of strategic autonomy<sup>2</sup>, is not pursued because the US is regarded as a security threat but rather because the EU is (slowly) learning that defence free-riding may no longer be the sole

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<sup>2</sup> For further discussion on this concept, see sections 'Crimea 2014' and 'Brexit and Trump 2016'.

answer to current and future security challenges (Art, 2004, p. 180; Murphy, 2020, pp. 154-156). This shows that Brussels acknowledges the changing international security environment and is making policy to react and adapt to it. By being skeptical of these policies the US is acting like one would expect from a hegemon that faces some sort of balancing.

When a state chooses to bandwagon, it allies with a growing power to avoid being attacked or profit from expected gains (Kauppi & Viotti, 2020, p. 268; Schroeder, 1994, p. 117; Walt, 1985, pp. 4, 7, 8). Bandwagoning is an attractive option for European states, who view the US as a good-natured hegemon (Posen, 2004, pp. 8, 9). However, Mearsheimer's concept of buck-passing is even more applicable here. Buck-passing is when a threatened state shifts the responsibility of defence or deterrence on to another state. According to Mearsheimer (2001), "there is a strong tendency to buck-pass (...) inside balancing coalitions" (p. 159). Post-WO II European security, with defence outsourcing to NATO's American security guarantee, is a fine example of buck-passing.

By using categories of alliance formation, the inherent contrast in policy paths between the EU on the one hand and Finland and Sweden on the other hand becomes visible. These three actors are simultaneously balancing and buck-passing. This is not necessarily an unproductive or detrimental situation. After all, the actors involved share overlapping sets of norms and values, political and societal designs and institutional structures. However, by using categories of alliance formation it does become clear that regarding collective security and defence, the EU and its Member States are executing non-complementary policies. An EU Member State that applies to join NATO effectively affirms CSDP's path-dependency as a policy undermined by security consumerism. It would be unproductive for the EU if Member States like Finland and Sweden only applied increased momentum for collective defence to NATO. That is why chapter three suggests a European NATO-pillar as a potentially productive compromise.

### *Historical institutionalism and alternative IR approaches*

Observing these developments through the lens of other IR theories is difficult. Academics from the liberal spectrum have provided alternative views on collective defence and alliance formation (Gstöhl & Schunz, 2021, pp. 872, 873). They prefer to observe CSDP in the context of a shared

liberal consensus which is shaped by diverging national preferences and political cultures (Pohl, 2013, pp. 356, 357, 367, 368). From the liberal branch of intergovernmentalism, Moravcsik emphasized how the rational stances of European states and statesmen, formed by their history and political culture, influenced negotiations on the development of European security cooperation. (Moravcsik, 1998, pp 18-24, 27-35, 451). While Moravcsik's study zooms in on political agency and negotiation history, this research uses neorealist concepts to study a wider range of international geostrategic developments.

Neofunctionalist Haas proposed a 'liberation' from balance of power theory and instead focused on the concept of spillover, which describes how integration in one area inherently requires and leads to integration in other interlinked fields of policy (Haas, 1964, pp. 69, 75, 76; Kauppi & Viotti, 2020, p. 70; Piechowicz & Szpak, 2022, pp. 61-63). However, spillover fails to apply to post-WO II European defence integration because ever since the abortion of the EDC<sup>3</sup>, defence and security has fallen behind other fields of European integration and was not stimulated by major European treaties (Piechowicz & Szpak, 2022, p. 69). The liberalist branch inherently assumes a high degree of mutual trust and global cooperation. But actors like Russia and China have adopted foreign policies focused on multipolar great power competition and they disregard Western values and multilateral institutions. When big actors refuse to play by the Western rulebook, liberalism unfortunately becomes dysfunctional as a perspective on foreign policy. With its focus on systemic change and power distribution, neorealism is better suited as an analytical framework here.

Departing from this neorealist systemic level, the theory of historical institutionalism zooms in towards policy analysis. As an institutionalist branch, this theory offers instruments for deconstructing institutional development over time (Cottey, 2013, pp. 465-467; Pierson, 2016, pp. 131, 132). The 'historical' part indicates an emphasis on historical context for policy development. By looking back through time, the researcher can identify events and decisions that make up a path of policy development. The assumption is that the process of European integration and the historical legacy of Member States is crucial in understanding how the EU

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<sup>3</sup> The 1952 European Defence Community (EDC) aimed to create a pan-European defence force but its treaty was left unratified by the French parliament. In its place, the Western European Union (WEU) would eventually be founded.

perceives and handles security today (Koppa, 2022, p. 15). Decision-making from the past creates institutions that influence or constrain actors in ways that initially may have been unintended. (Piechowicz & Szpak, 2022, p. 66; Wiener, Börzel, & Risse, 2019, p. 109). Pollack (1996, p. 440) argues that such institutional ‘stickiness’ is caused by uncertainty about alternatives, transaction costs and high procedural barriers for institutional reform. All three are applicable to CSDP (Martins & Ferreira-Pereira, 2012, p. 550; Piechowicz & Szpak, 2022, p. 73). Historical institutionalism is specifically applicable to EU external policy because its development has been “incremental rather than innovative” (Kirchner et al., 2013, p. 22).

In chapter two, it is argued that CSDP has become resistant to changing policy environments, or ‘path-dependent’ (Pollack, 1996, pp. 437, 438, 440). This occurs when “the entrenchments of certain institutional arrangements obstruct an easy reversal of the initial choice” (Pierson, 2000, p. 252). The potential consequences of this process are inflexibility and inefficiency: real institutional change becomes costly and unattractive (Koppa, 2022, p. 16). EU politics has various characteristics that make the occurrence of path-dependency likely: a central role for collective action, high density of institutions, asymmetry of power and inherently complex dynamics (Kirchner et al., 2013, p. 39; Piechowicz & Szpak, 2022, pp. 66-68; Pierson, 2000, p. 257).

Path-dependency can be interrupted by a ‘critical juncture’ (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007, p. 368). A critical juncture represents a decisive moment of change and action within an otherwise self-reinforcing and rigid process (Argomaniz, 2009, pp. 153, 154; Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007, pp. 341, 342; Koppa, 2022, pp. 25, 26). Pollack (1996, p. 438) proposes three criteria for a critical juncture, that will be used in chapter two: a major change in policy environment, a change in relative power of actors or better-quality information about alternatives. Critical junctures are analyzed by observing how the reaction of influential actors to impactful events is reflected in subsequent policymaking.

It can be hard to analyze the impact of a critical juncture from an academic perspective, for example because of the opaque character of political decision-making. Regarding CSDP, large parts of the decision-making processes occur behind closed doors, whether in Brussels or in

national capitals. In chapter two, primary sources like EU legislative documents and government reports and secondary sources like academic analyses and interviews with policymakers are used to get insight into the considerations of CSDP policymaking. Furthermore, it can be hard to link a critical juncture to specific institutional progression on a timeline. In many cases, a sequence of trigger events instead of one specific occurrence creates the political momentum required for institutional change. This is emphasized throughout chapter two's analysis. Still, primary sources may refer to specific events when discussing the context or lead-up to institutional development. And while complete certainty about which events lead to which institutional outcome is rare, a causal relationship between critical juncture and new institution can often be determined with relative certainty. Moreover, an established lack of political reaction to a critical juncture can also be a valid outcome of historical institutional analysis. Chapter two shows that CSDP is a fitting example of this.

## Chapter 2

In this chapter, neorealism and historical institutionalism are used to analyze how the EU, Finland and Sweden reacted to five post-1995 critical junctures for European security. Each one of these represents the transformation of international system from uni- to multipolarity and forms a window for CSDP policy development. It is important to emphasize that there are more potential CSDP critical junctures than the three listed here, for instance 9/11, the 2008 Russo-Georgian war, the 2011 Libyan crisis or the 2015 European migrant crisis (Koppa, 2022, pp. 26, 27). However, the events selected here best match the three criteria that Pollack describes: a major change in policy environment, a change in relative power of actors or better-quality information about alternatives. Neorealist concepts provide the international context and external stimulus for every critical juncture. Historical institutionalist concepts subsequently analyze the measurable impact that the critical juncture had on policy course and the institutional mark it left behind.

### *Yugoslav Wars 1991-2001*

#### *Critical juncture criteria*

As an exogenous critical juncture, the Yugoslav Wars match two of Pollack's criteria. Firstly, as the first post-WO II wars and genocide on European soil they represented a clear change in policy environment. After the Cold War, the American incentive to protect its European allies in a bilateral struggle was decreasing. That is why initially, the Europeans positioned the Western European Union (WEU) instead of NATO as the primary intervening actor in the Balkans (Howorth, 2014, p. 33; Koppa, 2022, pp. 70, 71; Meijer & Wyss, 2018, p. 394). When it became clear that the EU lacked the means and expertise for peacekeeping, NATO was asked to send in the cavalry. This revealed a change in actor power: the EU was largely irrelevant throughout the conflict, while the US became less interested in helping out (Chappell, Galbreath, & Mawdsley, 2019, p. 88; Koppa, 2022, pp. 67-72). Europe's security dependability in a transitioning international system was exposed, which created momentum for EU soft balancing through a more autonomous security and defence policy (Bradford, 2000, p. 75).

### *Historical institutionalist analysis*

Initially, it seemed like the young EU was a fast learner. Following the Yugoslav Wars, the WEU, perceived as inefficient and too complex, was phased away into institutional irrelevance (Heinikoski, 2019, p. 163; Meijer & Wyss, 2018, pp. 394, 395; Piechowicz & Szpak, 2022, p. 65). This was formalized by the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty, which also incorporated the Petersberg tasks<sup>4</sup> into the EU and created the function of High Representative, who was to lead the overarching Common Foreign and Security Policy (Official Journal of the European Communities, 1997, pp. 7, 12, 13). The HR function constituted Brusselisation because it promoted supranational coordination of the EU's foreign policy and security realm (Bradford, 2000, p. 23; Kirchner et al., 2013, pp. 28-33; Koppa, 2022, p. 72).

The ensuing 1998 St. Malo conference between France and the UK was a breakthrough for European security and defence. The UK lifted its veto on CFSP, effectively enabling the creation of the European Security and Defence Policy (Howorth, 2014, pp. 8, 9, 79, 87). St. Malo “kicked off the process of building an autonomous EU military capacity” (Kirchner et al., 2013, p. 22). The US reacted with relative mistrust, which is understandable when observing ESDP as a form of soft balancing (Koppa, 2022, p. 77). St. Malo was followed by the 1999 Helsinki European Council, which established the goal of creating an EU rapid reaction force. The EU Military Committee (EUMC) and EU Military Staff (EUMS) were created to execute strategic planning for the Petersberg tasks. The subsequent 2001 Nice Treaty created the Political Security Committee (PSC), a permanent body made up of national ambassadors to provide security and defence policy with advice (Official Journal of the European Communities, 2001, p. 8). These new Nice bodies also show elements of Brusselisation, establishing supranational continuity in preparatory and consensus-shaping tasks (Howorth, 2014, pp. 41-47; Piechowicz & Szpak, 2022, pp. 65-67). Over time, PSC has become “arguably the key institution in CSDP decision-making” (Howorth, 2014, p. 47).

Overall, 1995-2001 can be qualified as CSDP's formative period. Koppa (2022) concludes that “the Yugoslav legacy did yield a workable European collective security framework” (p. 78). This

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<sup>4</sup> The Petersberg Tasks were a collection of WEU responsibilities/competences. They originally included the execution of peacekeeping, crisis management and humanitarian operations.

framework was designed to support the EU as a security provider (Chappell et al., 2019, pp. 87-89; Howorth, 2014, p. 9; Meijer & Wyss, 2018, pp. 395-400). The progress remained conservative at heart: St. Malo and Helsinki were not legally binding, the Petersberg tasks were designed to prevent interference with NATO competences and Amsterdam's Article J.13 prevented serious reform. Still, the EU seriously adjusted its post-EDC Atlanticist path dependency. Despite considerable uncertainty about alternatives due to American skepticism, high procedural barriers for institutional reform were lifted through bilateral negotiations, specifically at St. Malo. The EU showed institutional flexibility, replacing the failing WEU with the ESDP framework in a matter of years. The new High Representative and PSC added supranational administrative and coordinating competences. The Yugoslav Wars provided fertile ground for this period of growth. In this sense, the wars constitute a critical juncture acted upon. The conflict guided the EU towards an alternative path of security and defence integration on which it at least set a couple of steps (Meijer & Wyss, 2018, pp. 396, 400).

### *Finland and Sweden*

Sweden's history of neutrality stretches back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Finland was coerced into a neutral status by the Soviet-Union during the Cold War, a process which infamously became known as 'Finlandization'. However, in 1994, Finland and Sweden formalized their increasing NATO engagement by joining the 'Partnership for Peace' (NATO, 2022b, 2022c). When they joined the EU a year later, the mutual defence clause in Article 42(7) TEU<sup>5</sup> (Official Journal of the European Union, 2008, pp. 38, 39) further diluted their post-WO II neutrality policy (Cottey, 2013, pp. 454-456). Helsinki and Stockholm nevertheless actively sought to promote their military non-aligned identity and interests on the European level. Initially, Finland was more eager than Sweden to play an active role within CSDP. For instance, Sweden opposed the creation of the EUMC and EUMS at first (Lee-Ohlsson, 2009, p. 128). The Finnish reasons to pursue this active course were twofold: Finland always believed in the EU as a security community and was thus interested in a dynamic CSDP. Moreover, as a small country and new Member State, Finland wanted to avoid marginalization by focusing on international security cooperation (Seppo & Forsberg, 2013, pp. 115, 116).

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<sup>5</sup> For further discussion on this article, see section 'Iraq War 2003'.



Finland and Sweden cooperated in ‘uploading’ their national security interests towards the European level to push CSDP towards course that rhymed with their own military non-alignment. This often came down to campaigning for demilitarization of the EU’s security dimension, which fitted well with the newly shaped unipolar international system in which the West faced no urgent territorial threats (Lee-Ohlsson, 2009, p. 127; Lewander, Helwig, Håkansson, Iso-Markku, & Nissen, 2021, pp. 49, 53, 58, 59). The two states cooperated “both to pre-empt the potential rise of a more traditional defense agenda within the EU and to demonstrate that the two countries were not neutral oddballs but rather fully fledged (...) EU members” (Cramer & Franke, 2021). A prime example occurred in the lead-up to the Amsterdam treaty, when Finland and Sweden cooperated in blocking the incorporation of the collective defence focused WEU into the EU, instead pleading for the mere incorporation of the Petersberg tasks. The eventual Amsterdam Treaty roughly contained their compromise, although the more militarily focused task of peacemaking was later added. The Finnish and Swedish successful lobbying campaign was regarded as a remarkable feat of ‘bottom-up’ foreign policy Europeanization (Cramer & Franke, 2021; Lee-Ohlsson, 2009, pp. 125-128; Palosaari, 2016, pp. 587, 591, 592; Seppo & Forsberg, 2013, p. 116).

### *Iraq War 2003*

#### *Critical juncture criteria*

As an exogenous critical juncture, the Iraq War matches two of Pollack’s criteria. As part of the so-called ‘war on terror’, Iraq was a big change in policy environment. The war represented American ‘imperial overstretch’ in a changing international system, draining the US of funds, capabilities and eventually the moral authority to act as a global hegemon (Burbach & Tarbell, 2013, pp. 11-13; Howorth, 2018, p. 524). Although born out of unipolarity, the war ultimately accelerated the global transition towards multipolarity (Biscop, Dessein, & Roctus, 2022; Lippert, Von Ondarza, & Perthes, 2019, pp. 32, 33; Mearsheimer, 1990, pp. 6, 14-18). It also determined the counterterrorist path of Western security and defence policy for the coming decade. The American decision to invade Iraq without a UNSC mandate split the EU’s Member States into different camps, causing a change in the relationship between Transatlantic actors. The EU thus received clear information about American prioritization of unilateral safety considerations

within the Transatlantic relationship. The Iraq War demonstrated why the EU could not afford to depend on a manipulative ally (Koppa, 2022, pp. 83-84).

### *Historical institutionalist analysis*

Iraq was followed by considerable institutional development in EU security and defence. The 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) and 2007 Lisbon Treaty are the most important. Read from today's perspective, the ESS is conservative and path-dependent. Both the original document and its 2008 review failed to grasp the systemic change that Iraq signaled (Koppa, 2022, p. 89). The ESS preaches hard security consumerism, prioritizing anti-terrorism and security management through soft power projection, humanitarian aid and civilian missions (EUR-Lex, 2003, p. 7; Howorth, 2014, pp. 22, 23; Koppa, 2022, p. 89). This was a turn away from the ambition of the late 90's and represented the stickiness of the EU's security consumerism. The EU would build on the ESS's holistic approach at least until 2016's Global Strategy. It is no coincidence that in the period in between, the Union fell into military and geostrategic hibernation and CSDP stalled. The ESS labels inter-state territorial conflict a "traditional concept" (EUR-Lex, 2003, p. 7), which was already naïve at the time but an outright blunder from today's perspective. And while the ESS does stress that "we need to develop a strategic culture that fosters (...) robust intervention" (EUR-Lex, 2003, p. 11), this passage tellingly remains an EU ambition until this day.

In 2004, the European Defence Agency (EDA) was launched with the objective of stimulating industrial policy cooperation and coordinating operational needs between Member States' defence ministers. EDA was seen as a step towards CSDP rationalization (Howorth, 2014, pp. 92, 93, 95, 96). The next year, France, the UK and Germany launched the concept of EU Battlegroups (EUGB). In theory, the battlegroups constitute the kind of rapid reaction capacity that the EU has lacked in a crisis like Crimea 2014. In reality, its military development has been disappointing. Since achieving full operational capacity in 2007, no Battlegroup has ever been deployed due to lack of Member State political agreement and funding (Chappell et al., 2019, p. 92).

The 2007 Lisbon Treaty aimed to lay a groundwork for a more ambitious CSDP (Proszowska, 2016, pp. 60, 61). The High Representative was made Commission Vice-President and boss of the new European External Action Service (EEAS), which became the EU's diplomatic service (Kirchner et al., 2013, p. 29; Official Journal of the European Union, 2007, pp. 21, 27, 34-36). This new supranational bureaucracy framework lifted security and defence preparation and coordination to a European level and constituted the only real element of Brusselisation that Lisbon entailed (Chappell et al., 2019, p. 93; Kirchner et al., 2013, p. 26; Piechowicz & Szpak, 2022, p. 67). Lisbon also introduced PESCO, a framework for the integration and detailed coordination of Member States' military capabilities (Official Journal of the European Union, 2007, p. 35). PESCO was regarded, specifically by the French, as an ambitious form of defence integration (Koppa, 2022, pp. 161, 162, 200, 208). However, it was only formalized after Brexit and, like EDA and EUBG, has since suffered from intergovernmental non-compliance (Chappell et al., 2019, p. 94; Deschaux-Dutard, 2019, p. 57; Koppa, 2022, p. 146).

The most remarkable Lisbon innovations are Article 42(7) TEU (Official Journal of the European Union, 2008), known as the mutual defence clause<sup>6</sup>, and Article 222 TFEU (Official Journal of the European Union, 2016), known as the solidarity clause<sup>7</sup>. These clauses created a legal basis for EU collective defence and, together with NATO's Article 5, make up the three pillars of Europe's collective defence architecture. As judicial instruments, they represent notable steps in Europeanizing collective security (Perot, 2019, pp. 41, 42). Still, both clauses are not legally binding and the 'Irish clause' of 42(7) ensures Member States freedom to withhold from obligation (Perot, 2019, pp. 51, 52, 60, 61).

Mentioned shortcomings generally represent the Lisbon legacy: whilst displaying the right ambitions, CSDP stalled in the post-Lisbon years. The declining momentum, especially with an increasingly obstructionist UK, was illustrated by a decreasing number of operations (Koppa, 2022, p. 146; Sweeney & Winn, 2020, p. 232). The 2011 Libyan crisis, which ticked all the boxes

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<sup>6</sup> The mutual defence clause states that 'if a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power'.

<sup>7</sup> The solidarity clause states that 'the Union and its Member States shall act jointly in a spirit of solidarity if a Member State is the object of a terrorist attack (...)', through the use of '(...) all the instruments at its disposal, including the military resources made available by the Member States (...)'

of a potential CSDP operation, nevertheless took place in an Anglo-French bilateral NATO framework. Security and defence were not brought in line with EU law, thus intergovernmental dominance remained CSDP greatest obstacle. Thus, “the Lisbon Treaty did not mark a step change in security and defense policy although it laid the groundwork for this to happen should the political will ever exist” (Chappell et al., 2019, p. 93).

### *Finland and Sweden*

Post-Iraq, Finland and Sweden faced increasing domestic criticism, for example from leftist or populist parties, on ideological inconsistencies regarding their increasing CSDP involvement. (Heinikoski, 2019, pp. 167-170). In Sweden, military non-alignment proved deeper rooted and the government thus framed PESCO as a pragmatic instrument for defence procurement (Heinikoski, 2019, pp. 167-170; Lundborg Regnér & Håkansson, 2021, pp. 6, 7; Schmidt-Felzmann, 2019, pp. 8-10, 17). The government continued uploading to dilute PESCO, cooperating with Germany to push the so-called Ghent Initiative, which aimed to replace PESCO with a less ambitious system of pooling and sharing on a project basis (Chappell et al., 2019, p. 94). In Finland, non-alignment equaled non-NATO membership, and the government could thus place PESCO in the context of the EU as a growing security community (Prime Minister’s Office Publications, 2009, p. 29). Both Finland and Sweden continued to disregard the EU as a natural arena for hard military power and defence cooperation (Meijer & Wyss, 2018, p. 346; Palosaari, 2016, p. 596).

While early CSDP participation was mostly characterized by uploading, Finland and Sweden also increasingly started downloading CSDP policies post-Iraq. This makes sense considering the holistic character of the ESS, which especially Finland regarded as strengthening the EU’s international actorness (Prime Minister’s Office Publications, 2004, pp. 48, 49). The Swedish interaction with the Nordic EU Battle Group is a fitting example of downloading. EUBG corresponded well with the Swedish ambition to transform its national military from territorial defence towards intervention tasks, marked by the 2004 government bill ‘Our Future Defence’ (Government Offices of Sweden, 2004, pp. 8, 14, 31; Lee-Ohlsson, 2009, pp. 127-132). The Swedish defence ministry saw the planning and leading of a EUBG as an opportunity to strengthen its ability to lead international crisis management operations. The government

effectively downloaded the non-binding plans of the ESS “as a tool (...) for introducing controversial national defense reforms” (Lee-Ohlsson, 2009, p. 134).

Finnish downloading mostly focused on Article 42(7). Finland regarded the article as being at the core of the EU as a security community and it fitted well with Helsinki’s emphasis on crisis management (Cramer, Franke, 2021; Finnish Government, 2020, p. 28). This was demonstrated when Finland, followed by Sweden, reacted as one of the first Member States when France invoked the mutual defence clause following the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks (Perot, 2019, p. 40). It remains noticeable that Finland “seems to deviate from a strict interpretation of the right to self-defence” (Åkermark, 2017, p. 272) with regards to 42(7). Sweden is less open on the operationalization of the clause but has stressed the importance of its credibility for national interest.

### *Pivot to Asia 2011*

#### *Critical juncture criteria*

The ‘pivot to Asia’ was a rebalancing of American foreign policy towards Asia, initiated by the Obama administration in 2011. As an exogenous critical juncture, the pivot to Asia matches all three of Pollack’s criteria (Gareis & Wolf, 2016, p. 133; Sverdrup-Thygeson, 2017, p. 164; Ungaro, 2012, pp. 2, 3). It changed the EU’s security and defence policy environment because it was the clearest indication yet of switching American priorities in a multipolar system. The EU was provided with a clear view on the eastwards shifting US strategy, which implied the increasing importance of CSDP as an alternative (Clinton, 2011; The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2011; United States Department of Defense, 2012). Using balance of power theory, the pivot can be seen as American balancing of China, in turn increasing the European incentive to soft balance the US (Proszowska, 2016, pp. 54, 55, 59; Sverdrup-Thygeson, Lanteigne, Sverdrup, Wright, & Moreland, 2016, p. 9). Due to its economic, demographic and military growth, the US has come to regard China as the only serious challenge to global hegemony. By relocating its priorities and capabilities the US is acknowledging that it no longer has the power nor the means to exercise global patronage, which leaves the EU on the other side of the geostrategic map (Gareis & Wolf, 2016, pp. 136-139; Sverdrup-Thygeson et al., 2016, p.

4). This affects the Transatlantic relationship as well as the balance of power between the US, Europe and China.

The pivot to Asia was seen by experts as a wake-up call for European security and defence policy (Meijer & Wyss, 2018, p. 404; Proszowska, 2016, p. 66; Sverdrup-Thygeson, 2017, p. 163; Sweeney & Winn, 2020, p. 230; Ungaro, 2012, p. 12). However, most of the academic attention turned to the scenario of a likeminded European pivot. Fewer commentators have considered how the American pivot has influenced European defence itself (Sverdrup-Thygeson et al., 2016, p. 5). Gareis and Wolf (2016) conclude that “the bottom line is that Europe must hedge for a contingency where the United States is either unwilling or incapable of protecting its European allies” (p. 146). It is also asserted that the EU initially did not make up its mind on how to deal with the pivot, as several sets of ideas divided EU policymakers on this issue (Korteweg, 2013, p. 4; Sverdrup-Thygeson et al., 2016, pp. 1, 2).

#### *Historical institutionalist analysis*

When one observes the pivot to Asia as stimulating the EU’s own relationship with Asia, there are plenty of practical actions discernable. In 2012, “an unprecedented series of EU high-level meetings, visits, and summits took place” (Sverdrup-Thygeson et al., 2016, p. 5) in Asian countries. But direct and tangible consequences of the American pivot to Asia for EU security and defence policy are harder to detect. Post-2011, CSDP was in a period of stagnation and no institutional developments are visible in the direct aftermath of the announcement of the American pivot.

However, the pivot, along with other critical junctures like the annexation of Crimea, was one of the developments that prompted the EU to come up with a new strategy. As a representation of the ongoing power shift from west to east, the pivot can be linked to the 2016 publication of the EU Global Strategy (EUGS)<sup>8</sup> and its emphasis on strategic autonomy (Song & Wang, 2019, pp. 18-20; Sverdrup-Thygeson et al., 2016, p. 19; Ungaro, 2012, p. 11). ‘Asia’ is mentioned 19 times in this document, and a focus towards “A Connected Asia” (EEAS, 2016, pp. 37, 38) is laid out.

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<sup>8</sup> Chronologically and thematically, EUGS is closer linked to other critical junctures. It will therefore be further discussed in sections ‘Crimea 2014’ and ‘Brexit and Trump 2016’.

However, most of these mentions once again take place in the context of the EU's own relationship with Asia. The EUGS fails to mention the American pivot or how this development could affect European security. This can be regarded as a serious deficiency.

Where the Iraq War represented a real breach in Transatlantic solidarity, the pivot to Asia starkly reveals how unsustainable the EU's security consumerism had become in times of systemic transformation. The American policy shift did not prompt Transatlanticist EU Member States to choose for a radical course change regarding CSDP. The existing institutional path of the policy, with incremental change after a promising start, proved to be sticky in times of uncertainty about NATO alternatives and sky-high transaction costs during the Eurozone debt crisis. Even when officially announced and documented, new American priorities could thus not push the EU towards considering a path of real security autonomy.

Due to its incremental nature, the pivot to Asia is a less striking critical juncture than, for example, the invasion of Crimea. The pivot constitutes no drastic event or military confrontation, but rather the proclamation of a strategic and diplomatic policy shift. However, as an embodiment of systemic transformation towards multipolarity, it provided one of the strongest arguments in favor of increasing European security and defence integration. Yet, the pivot has seemingly stimulated the EU to copy its patron's diplomatic shift eastwards rather than to recognize the implications for its own security and defence. The fact that in this area no real policy reaction from Brussels or national capitals can be discerned, is a sharp illustration of CSDP stagnation. In this case, Brussels itself can also be regarded as missing the boat.

#### *Finland and Sweden*

Finland and Sweden recognized the pivot to Asia as relevant for European security and defence. Helsinki described the contours of a changing international system in which the rise of China influences great power dynamics and both states also realized that this development had serious consequences for how the EU positions itself between the US and China (Finnish Government, 2020, p. 11; Lewander et al., 2021, p. 30). Sweden also saw the pivot as being to the detriment of EU security and concluded that the reaction should consist of intensifying European defence integration (Lewander et al., 2021, pp. 50, 61). However, seeing that the pivot did not incite any

real institutional change, Helsinki and Stockholm had little up- or downloading to do regarding this critical juncture.

### *Crimea 2014*

#### *Critical juncture criteria*

As an exogenous critical juncture, the illegal Russian annexation of Crimea matches two of Pollack's criteria. Firstly, it marked the return of Russia as a security threat to the EU and was thus an important representation of changing policy environment and international system (Koppa, 2022, p. 110). Russia's efforts to resist perceived Western encroachment on post-Soviet states can be seen in the context of President Putin's emphasis on a multipolar international system in which great powers have their own spheres of influence (Insight EU Monitoring, 2022). Secondly, Crimea revealed the EU's inability to deter Russia in its direct strategic neighborhood, changing its relative power towards Moscow (Sverdrup-Thygeson, 2017, p. 168; Sverdrup-Thygeson et al., 2016, p. 11). The EU had no strategy or role for CSDP in case of Russian military aggression (Biscop, 2018, pp. 5, 6; EEAS, 2022b, p. 17; 2016, p. 33; European Council, 2014; Pavlova & Romanova, 2021, p. 202). Crimea confirmed the post-2007 change in foreign policy under Putin, which focused on projecting Russia as a balancing actor against Western hegemony (Kremlin, 2007). In Putin's view, events such as the 2008 Bucharest declaration and the 2014 EU association agreement and subsequent Euromaidan demonstrations represented NATO and the EU crossing the line of Russian sphere of influence (NATO, 2008).

#### *Historical institutionalist analysis*

Regarding the institutional influence of the Crimea critical juncture, Koppa (2022) argues that post-Crimea there was "no institutional breakthrough in articulating a strategic vision, prioritizing threats and deploying capability" (p. 184). It is true that clear CSDP deepening following Crimea is hard to identify. Nevertheless, some innovations in the period 2014-2016 are discernable. Russia's hybrid warfare tactics prompted the EU to focus on cybersecurity threats, which eventually resulted in the 2019 Cybersecurity Act that provided a mandate for the new EU Agency for Cybersecurity (Koppa, 2022, p. 117). The earlier mentioned EUGS is also linkable to the Crimea critical juncture (Sweeney & Winn, 2020, p. 226).



The EUGS is the effective successor of the ESS (Biscop, 2018, p. 14; Chappell et al., 2019, p. 95). Renewed momentum for EU security and defence was, according to Commission officials themselves, instigated by several external developments, amongst which “the crisis and war in Ukraine (...) and the changed geopolitical situation following the revival of great power competition” (Håkansson, 2021, p. 595). High Representative Josep Borrell (2020) also linked the new strategy to systemic change and shifting American strategic priorities. The EUGS clearly states that “Russia’s violation of international law and the destabilization of Ukraine (...) have challenged the European security order at its core” (EEAS, 2016, p. 33). The EUGS presents the concept of strategic autonomy as one of the answers to the internal and external threats the EU faces (EEAS, 2016, pp. 4, 9, 19, 46). This is no new concept and the ambition to achieve it might even be traced back to the 1952 EDC (Lippert et al., 2019, pp. 5, 6). The EUGS does not provide a strict definition of strategic autonomy, but Borrell describes it as “capacity to act autonomously when and where necessary and with partners wherever possible” (2020).

But what are the institutional implications of strategic autonomy? The publication of the EUGS was followed by a remarkable spike in institutional innovation. However, it would be too easy to attribute this progress solely to the EUGS and its concepts, seeing that Brexit also took place in 2016.<sup>9</sup> Still, the vision that the EUGS promotes, emphasizing strategic autonomy and resilience, renewed the 90’s CSDP momentum that had been lost since 2008 (Chappell et al., 2019, pp. 87, 97). Indeed, the biggest gain of the EUGS might have been that, notably fueled by the shock of Crimea’s annexation, it expressed a clear acknowledgement that the EU needed to become more resilient in a changing world (Lippert et al., 2019, p. 10).

### *Finland and Sweden*

Crimea represented the most significant change thus far in 21<sup>st</sup> century Finnish and Swedish security threat assessment (Andrén, 1991, p. 79; Biscop et al., 2022). Although it was not sufficient to definitively pursue NATO membership, it provided strong incentives for increasing defence cooperation and started a process of rearmament (Meijer & Wyss, 2018, p. 347). The main reason was that Russian actions in Ukraine proved that Moscow posed a direct threat to the

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<sup>9</sup> See section ‘Brexit and Trump 2016’ for further analysis.

territorial integrity of both countries (Cramer & Franke, 2021). Post-Crimea Russian violations of Finnish and Swedish airspace and waters only added to this perception and matched Finland's assessment of increasing security risks due to systemic transformation (Adams, 2016; Lewander et al., 2021, p. 30; Reuters, 2016). Consequently, Finland strongly regarded strategic autonomy as promoting its security interests and Helsinki has thus supported the post-EUGS joint defence initiatives (Finnish Government, 2021, pp. 16, 41, 42; Prime Minister's Office Publications, 2017, pp. 6, 9, 17). Finland also refocused on hybrid threats, establishing the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki, and supported increased QMV on CFSP issues and a role for the High Representative in foreign EU representation (Lewander et al., 2021, p. 40).

In Sweden there initially existed broader skepticism about the concept of strategic autonomy. Initiatives like PESCO and EDF were perceived to pose a threat to the privatized Swedish defence industry (Lewander et al., 2021, pp. 49, 50). Motivated by its strong relationship with the US and UK, Sweden stressed that strategic autonomy should in no way interfere with NATO. But over time, events like Crimea increasingly warmed Stockholm to the concept. Lundmark (2021) asserts that "the Russian military aggression towards (...) Ukraine in 2014, paired with Russia's military build-up and aggressive security rhetoric, changed the Swedish posture and doctrine" (p. 406). The post-Iraq transformation of Swedish defence policy was once again reversed, now refocusing on national territorial defence and bringing back national conscription. This is for instance illustrated by the decision to regarrison Gotland in 2016 (Lewander et al., 2021, p. 63; Meijer & Wyss, 2018, pp. 352, 353).

### *Brexit and Trump 2016*

#### *Critical juncture criteria*

In this section, the UK's departure from the EU and Donald Trump's election as American president will be discussed as one critical juncture for several reasons. Firstly, these events show similarities in their rejection of the EU's perceived elitist norms and values and bureaucratic and constraining structures, voiced through populist rhetoric (Aggestam & Hyde-Price, 2019, p. 114). Secondly, they took place shortly after one another, with the Brexit referendum on 23 June 2016

and Trump's presidential election on 9 November 2016. Lastly, both events represent critical junctures for CSDP that matches all three of Pollack's criteria (Aggestam & Hyde-Price, 2019, p. 116). While Trump's election was an exogenous critical juncture, Brexit was endogenous because it occurred within the EU.

Brexit and Trump radically changed CSDP's policy environment, ending illusions of irreversible European integration and an indestructible Transatlantic relationship. Post-WO II European integration was a product of American unipolarity, and the transition to multipolarity came accompanied with new internal and external pressures on the Union. Internal pressures such as the rise of far right and Eurosceptic parties, who fueled electoral worries about external pressures such as the European migrant crisis and the 2015/2016 terrorist attacks (Koppa, 2022, p. 148). Trump was both an exponent as well as an inspirer of the same movement in the US. His 'America First' ideology represented a rejection of multilateralism. Under the Trump administration, the US were no longer prepared to carry the burden of global patronage and the EU's legitimacy as an international actor was questioned. As Brexit did effectively the same, the EU was provided with clear information that it could no longer blindly count on reassurances or capabilities from the Anglosphere and should invest in alternatives (Aggestam & Hyde-Price, 2019, p. 116; Sweeney & Winn, 2020, pp. 229, 230).

#### *Historical institutionalist analysis*

Seeing that the EU's path-dependency of security consumerism was driven by the Transatlantic relationship, the departure of the foremost Atlanticist Member State and the confrontational course of NATO's commander-in-chief created openings for real CSDP change (Håkansson, 2021, p. 595; Koppa, 2022, p. 146). Trump's presidency "can be viewed as constituting a European moment that can galvanize EU action in foreign, security and defence policy" (Aggestam & Hyde-Price, 2019, p. 116). Academics have identified clear efforts to seize upon these two critical junctures to push European defence integration forwards (Aggestam & Hyde-Price, 2019, pp. 116, 122; Deschaux-Dutard, 2019, p. 54; Martill & Sus, 2018, p. 851; Sweeney & Winn, 2020, pp. 225, 238). The Franco-Germanic intergovernmental tandem was to be the policy entrepreneur of renewed European defence and indeed several notable institutional innovations were achieved in the second half of 2016 and throughout 2017 (Martill & Sus, 2018,

pp. 851, 852). These constitute the launch of EDF, CARD, MPCC and the formalization of PESCO (Aggestam & Hyde-Price, 2019, p. 122; Håkansson, 2021, p. 589; Howorth, 2018, p. 527). The European Defence Fund (EDF) aims to overcome diversification of capabilities through a ‘Multiannual Funding Framework’. The EDF certainly represented elements of Europeanization and it has been argued that “through the EDF, the Commission is now gaining influence where supranationalism was practically nonexistent” (Koppa, 2022, p. 160). As part of the EDA, the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) constitutes an annual reviewing process of European defence, aiming to lay-out existing collaborative opportunities (European Defence Agency, 2020). Although hampered by involuntary Member State participation, CARD is regarded as an important mechanism for European defence priority-setting (Koppa, 2022, p. 161).

The Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) was established as the EU’s command structure at military-strategic level (Council of the European Union, 2017, pp. 3, 4). It is responsible for operational planning and conduct of non-executive CSDP missions and can thus be seen as the EU’s ‘semi-military’ headquarters. A Brussels-based EU military headquarters constituted a remarkable development for CSDP and its establishment “was one of the clearest institutional exponents of the ambition to make the EU more responsive” (Reykers & Adriaensen, 2022, p. 2). Clearly connected with the EUGS’s focus on responsiveness, the value of the MPCC has nevertheless proven mostly symbolic due to competition with national headquarters and NATO (Reykers & Adriaensen, 2022, pp. 1, 2, 9, 15). Post-EUGS, the dormant Lisbon provisions on PESCO were also activated. (Official Journal of the European Union, 2017). The PESCO activation fitted in the French focus on output-driven security policy. PESCO decisions are nevertheless still taken by unanimity and there is no sanctioning mechanism for non-compliance in projects (Koppa, 2022, pp. 161, 162).

Overall, the legacy of post-EUGS bodies is a mixed bag. On the one hand, “PESCO, CARD and EDF could be seen as stepping stones towards a substantial defence union” (Koppa, 2022, p. 162). The UK had been vetoing innovations like these in the preceding decades and Trump’s confrontational course emphasized the idea that the EU was on its own here, showing the worth of these critical junctures as an enabler of CSDP deepening (Håkansson, 2021, p. 589; Shea,

2020, p. 89; Sweeney & Winn, 2020, pp. 234, 235). Especially the EDF embodies increasing supranational entrepreneurship (Bergmann, 2018, p. 1267; Riddervold, 2016, pp. 359-366).

On the other hand, any initial post-EUGS momentum for CSDP deepening was largely lost in the following years, mainly due to discrepancies in national interpretations of strategic autonomy (Deschaux-Dutard, 2019, pp. 63-66, 68; Sweeney & Winn, 2020, p. 236).

The new institutions are still tormented by Member State conservatism, obstruction and free-riding, ensuring continuing institutional rigidity at a time of drastic geostrategic developments (Reykers & Adriaensen, 2022, p. 15; Sweeney & Winn, 2020, p. 225). Howorth (2018) states that these institutions “express the EU’s strong desire to emerge as a significant military player, but they will not (...) change anything fundamental” (pp. 527, 528). PESCO, for instance, remains path-dependent on intergovernmental whims (Sweeney & Winn, 2020, p. 227). Martill and Sus (2018) rightly conclude that CSDP projects “do not challenge the fundamental premise of national control over militaries, or the intergovernmental nature of CSDP decision-making” (p. 852). As a result, two seismic critical junctures that simultaneously revealed the EU’s internal and external vulnerability and substantially lowered procedural barriers for CSDP reform, were not enough to make the EU reconsider its path of security consumerism and provoke real institutional innovation.

### *Finland and Sweden*

Cramer and Franke state that “paradigmatic change in Finnish defense thinking coincided with (...) the Brexit vote in 2016” (2021). Finland indeed strongly supported CARD, EDF, MPCC, PESCO and the Strategic Compass (Finnish Government, 2021, pp. 16, 41, 42; Prime Minister’s Office Publications, 2017, pp. 6, 9, 17). Sweden specifically focused on EDF due to the large Swedish military industrial base. Such projects reduced initial Swedish reluctance to engage with strategic autonomy-related projects. Together with Germany, Sweden presented the Civilian CSDP Compact in 2018, which forms the new framework for civilian crisis management (Lewander et al., 2021, p. 60). However, Sweden continued to emphasize the intergovernmental aspect of these processes (Cramer & Franke, 2021; Lee-Ohlsson, 2009, p. 138). Finland also continued to maneuver carefully, constantly emphasizing NATO’s position and guarding its military-industrial relationship with the US and Norway (Finnish Government, 2021, pp. 16, 42-

45; Lewander et al., 2021, p. 37). As Forsberg and Vaahtoranta (2007) assert, Finnish and Swedish “Atlanticism rather than non-alignment sometimes explains why these countries do not want to hasten the construction of the EU’s defence dimension” (p. 74). In the end, 2016 thus changed nothing fundamental about the Swedish and Finnish conviction, shared by most Member States, that any extent of CSDP deepening was to be confined by areas of NATO expertise.

### Chapter 3 – Epilogue

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This chapter is devoted to offering transparency on the implications that the invasion has for this research. To begin with, during the writing process the invasion date was set as the end point of the research question. The reason to do so was that the invasion provided a clear breaking point for all the themes discussed in this thesis. It deeply impacted the foreign and security policy of EU Member States, the European security order and the shape of the international system. Furthermore, the military action that ensued from February 2022 onwards is still very much ongoing. This means that the outcome of the conflict and its geostrategic consequences are unclear and academic interpretations might be premature. Lastly, it is important to note that the invasion has outdated the research question of this thesis. The ‘neutral status’ mentioned by the research question is no longer applicable. Although this does affect the contributing value of some sources, it is not necessarily problematic seeing that it remains academically relevant how Finland and Sweden related to CSDP in the lead-up to their decision to join NATO.

It is important to clarify the relationship between 24 February and the two IR theories used in this research. In chapter two, neorealist concepts are used to argue that the post-Cold War international system is transitioning from uni- to multipolarity. But the Russian invasion provides two potential counterarguments to this assertion: one could argue that the invasion has botched Russia’s potential claim to belong to the ranks of multipolar contestants, leaving the US and China in a bipolar system. Moreover, the comprehensive American financial and military assistance to Ukraine can be said to have reaffirmed American commitment to European security, easing fears of shifting American geostrategic priorities.

There are several ways in which these arguments can be countered. Regarding the first, barely a year has passed since the Russian invasion. A protracted conflict remains a probable future scenario and any conclusions on the outcome are unsure (Dettmer, 2022). Furthermore, by inciting war in Ukraine, Russia is instigating precisely the kind of aggression, illegality and anarchy that characterizes a multipolar world. Regarding the second argument, although it is true that the American aid has strengthened Transatlantic faith, several aspects are important to

consider here. The Biden administration's National Security Strategy (2022) cites Russia as an 'immediate threat' (p. 8), whereas China is regarded as a systemic competitor (p. 8, 17). For now, the US is killing two birds with one stone by protecting its European allies while simultaneously demonstrating resilience to China. However, it is unlikely that the war in Ukraine will incite the US to backtrack on its medium- to long-term pivot to Asia (Simón, 2022). Thus, the American support to Ukraine should not be regarded as a reason for the EU to relax its pursuit of strategic autonomy and continue buck-passing its security to the US.

Using a historical institutionalist perspective, the Russian invasion undoubtedly constitutes a critical juncture for European defence. As Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin said in April 2022: "Everything changed when Russia invaded Ukraine. (...) People's mindset in Finland, also in Sweden, changed (...) very dramatically" (CNN, 2022). But will the invasion finally provide the catalyst to push CSDP's path-dependency towards security provision? 24 February is generally regarded as the end of the post-Cold War European security order and the biggest stimulus yet for European strategic autonomy in defence (Binnendijk, Hamilton, & Vershbow, 2022; Bunde, 2022, pp. 517, 521, 524; Leali & Moens, 2022; Meister, 2022). German policymakers have stated that "the annexation of Crimea caused a shock but that the true turning point came only in 2022" (Liik, 2022). In his foreword to 2022's Strategic Compass (EEAS, 2022b), High Representative Borrell outlines unique momentum for European security and defence because "the difference this time lies in the speed at which the geopolitical context is changing" (p. 7). Recent unprecedented policy changes in the field of EU security and defence would have been hard to imagine without the invasion. Amongst these are the unique provision of lethal weapons to a third country through the EU's EPF fund, a substantial increase in EU Member States defence spending across the board, Denmark's CSDP referendum, the German 'Zeitenwende', including its €100 billion Bundeswehr investment and Ukraine becoming a EU candidate member (Bunde, 2022, pp. 517, 519; Fiott, 2022; Moser, 2022).

However, one can also select a more pessimistic stance regarding the invasion as a definitive breakthrough for CSDP. American financial support to Ukraine easily trumps the EU's, suggesting continued Transatlantic free-riding (Fix & Mankoff, 2022; Tamma, 2022). Furthermore, while the addition of Denmark boosted CSDP's democratic legitimacy, no real



changes or proposals regarding its internal structures to enable real policy reformation have been made. Thus, the jury is still out on whether the EU can seize the momentum that 24 February has provided.

On the spectrum between Atlanticism and defence Europeanization or between buck-passing NATO and a European army, the concept of a European NATO pillar might provide a feasible middle ground. This concept has resurfaced in the public debate around European security and defence (German Federal Foreign Office, 2020; Gotkowska, 2020; Guéhenno, 2017; Koppa, 2022, p. 72; Larik, 2009, pp. 289-291). It entails the establishment of a separate NATO platform for EU members where political and military matters regarding Euro-Atlantic security can be discussed and processed. Creating such a platform within NATO structures makes political and practical sense. As this research has demonstrated, so far no critical juncture has been able to alter the EU's path-dependency of security consumerism, while Member States continue to regard NATO as the primary arena for defence cooperation. The EU needs to increase its resilience on the short-term and working with(in) NATO enjoys the most support in European capitals. Practically speaking, the Transatlantic alliance possesses the existing military expertise, experience and infrastructure that the EU lacks. Another advantage would be that by focusing on a European platform, the military prowess of the UK could be involved. This creates a win-win situation on both sides of the Atlantic: the US gains a more resilient European ally that stops free-riding, while the EU continues to lean on Washington's security guarantee whilst increasing the cooperation, prowess, and deterrence of its Member States. A European defence pillar within NATO would shift the sentiment that NATO and CSDP are not mutually exclusive from the realm of geopolitical clichés towards policy reality.

Enough obstacles remain for this concept. Some NATO-members, especially in Eastern Europe, could fear that a European NATO pillar might put off the US. Moreover, a powerful EU Member State like France is unlikely to support this concept instead of strategic autonomy (Koppa, 2022, pp. 72, 211; Lippert et al., 2019, pp. 16, 17). Although Finland and Sweden have not commented publicly on the concept of a European NATO pillar, chapter two does provide some clues. These states are well versed in maintaining a balancing act between Atlanticism and Europeanism. Their increasing CSDP participation never diminished their Transatlantic pragmatism and

opposition to European defence idealism. (Finnish Government, 2020, pp. 21, 30-32; Forsberg & Vaahtoranta, 2007, p. 74; Möller & Bjereld, 2010, pp. 372, 377, 379; Palosaari, 2016, pp. 595-597; Ruffa, 2013, p. 349; Seppo & Forsberg, 2013, p. 118). From this perspective, the compromise of a European NATO-pillar fits the middle-ground paths of Finland and Sweden quite well.

## Conclusion

The aim of this MA thesis was to use a relevant case-study involving two EU Member States to research how European security and defence policy has developed in times of changing international dynamics. To do so, the following research question was used:

*How has the relationship between the EU's CSDP and the military non-aligned status of Finland and Sweden developed between 1995 and 2022?*

The answer to this question has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter treated the IR theories of neorealism and historical institutionalism. Neorealism is used to explain that between 1995 and 2022, the international system has been transitioning from post-Cold War American unipolarity towards 21<sup>st</sup> century multipolarity. This has far-reaching consequences for both the military non-aligned posture of Finland and Sweden as well as the EU's CSDP. Using neorealist balance of power theory, it is argued that these three actors react to this transition in uncomplimentary ways, with Finland and Sweden buck-passing and the EU soft-balancing. Although these two policy paths are not mutually exclusive, they do represent a gap between short-term security needs and long-term strategic vision. This is problematic for the EU and its Member States when taking the earlier described long-term systemic change into account.

In chapter two, the research question is carried out through an analysis of five influential moments for European security and defence. The conclusions that emerge from this analysis are threefold. The first conclusion is that during 1995 and 2022 the relationship between Finland, Sweden and CSDP can be characterized by increased involvement. In relation to the military non-alignment practiced by these states, the extent of this interaction can be considered remarkable. Both states participated actively in CSDP operations, which matches their holistic view of international security. Participation occurred through a process of institutional up- and downloading in which both states sought to profit from matching CSDP development with their national interests. Uploading was relatively successful, as Finland and Sweden cooperated to direct CSDP away from territorial or hard defence towards a policy focused on crisis and humanitarian management. Up- and downloading required ideological flexibility in both capitals.

For Finland, non-alignment meant non-NATO membership and policy makers regarded the EU as a natural security actor from the beginning. Swedish governments experienced more trouble with this balancing act, having to defend institutions such as PESCO against domestic criticism by portraying it as pragmatic instruments that helped promote national security or industry interests.

The second conclusion is that while between 1995 and 2022 the relationship between the three involved actors has grown, it has not grown enough when taking parallel systemic transition into account. This is demonstrated through the analysis of five critical junctures. Neorealist concepts show that these critical junctures are a consequence of the international system's transition from uni- to multipolarity. Historical institutionalism is used to analyze the way in which these trigger events have (failed to) shape CSDP.

Observed in a vacuum, CSDP's institutional development is impressive: in less than thirty years, an extensive framework for historically sensitive European security and defence cooperation has been set up. However, when placed against the backdrop of contemporary international developments, CSDP's development can be labelled insufficient. A series of critical junctures that undeniably indicated an increasingly unstable international system was not enough to instigate necessary CSDP reformation from security consumption towards security provision to promote European soft-balancing instead of buck-passing.

Possibly the best illustration of this problem is the critical juncture of the pivot to Asia, which sharply reveals a post-unipolar shift of American global strategy effectively left unaddressed by the EU and its Member States. Scarce elements of Brusselisation constitute the High Representative, the EEAS and the PSC, mostly bureaucratic instead of decision-making organs. Furthermore, CSDP has failed to build up a track record of countering serious regional crises and has a low military output, mostly producing humanitarian and training operations that are modest in scope. For common military capabilities, quick reaction forces and territorial deterrence, EU member states continue to lean on an ally that is rearranging its geostrategic priorities, (willfully) ignoring crystal-clear signals that it can no longer afford to keep outsourcing its defence.

The third conclusion is that Finland and Sweden are a good representation of the problematic intergovernmental enabling of European security buck-passing. Chapter two shows that the EU's supranational institutions are more proactive in recognizing and analyzing systemic change and global threats than the Member States. Despite their active interaction with CSDP, their support for new institutions such as PESCO and Finland's relatively progressive recognition of the EU as a security community, Helsinki and Stockholm were never on the forefront of policy deepening. Primary sources show that although both states signaled undergoing changes in the international system, they continued to confine CSDP to the crisis management realm of the original Petersberg tasks and were happy enough to support new CSDP institutions and concepts as long as they did not concern true defence integration.

In doing so, they represent most Member States and embody CSDP's intergovernmental obstruction. With virtually all Member States buck-passing NATO, unanimity voting enables easy obstruction of proposed integration that is regarded as too far-reaching or potentially damaging Transatlantic ties. Although St. Malo and Brexit prove that this intergovernmental emphasis can lead to institutional progress as well as obstruction, the Cold War inheritance of Member State security consumerism and intergovernmental rigidity proved too sticky a path-dependency for Brussels to overturn from 1995 until 2022, and buck-passing instead of balancing the US remains Europe's primary security and defence reflex.

In the third chapter, the implications of the Russian invasion of Ukraine for this research are discussed. The Russian invasion can be regarded as the biggest critical juncture yet for European security and defence. The EU's reaction to this window of opportunity has in many ways been unprecedented, suggesting that change might be real this time around. At the same time the most notable policy turns have taken place on the bilateral level, with no sign of far-reaching institutional innovation to support further Europeanization of security and defence. As a compromise, the concept of a European NATO pillar might move past unproductive oppositions between Atlanticism and Europeanization. Such a pillar would provide a ready-made platform for the investment of monetary and political capital into European defence industry and capabilities, while addressing American complaints about burden-sharing and European fears of a deteriorating Transatlantic relationship. It could solve the gap between the buck-passing behavior

of Member States like Finland and Sweden, and Brussels' soft balancing through strategic autonomy, with the former learning to invest in its own security and latter staying close to Washington.

Seeing the urgency that the Russian invasion has endowed upon the study of EU security and defence, there are ample opportunities for further research in extension of this one. The recent Danish CSDP referendum provides an interesting case study of how public and political postures towards European defence are developing in a relatively Atlanticist EU Member State. It could be interesting to compare the Danish process to the development of the debate in Austria, Ireland and Malta, who remain neutral Member States in times of international upheaval. Researching the future applicability of Articles 42(7) TEU and 222 TFEU through scenario building is another option. Lastly, it might be interesting to analyze the way in which the EU tries to use the war in Ukraine to centralize the purchasing process of capabilities through the EPF. After all, having been born from one, the EU should never be scared to waste a 'good' security crisis.

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