Crisis as a Catalyst: The Influence of Russian Aggression in Ukraine on the development of the European Union as a Security Actor

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Introduction

Before the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, war in Europe had been deemed unimaginable by many (Dempsey, 2014). The Russian-Ukraine crisis in 2014 was the most serious conflict in Europe since the civil war in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, and the most significant conflict between the West and Russia since the end of the Cold War (Cross & Karolewski, 2017). With the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, war has returned to European soil. The EU's response to the 2022 Russian war against Ukraine has been widely described as unprecedented in scope and unexpected speed, displaying a sense of unity among its member states that had rarely been seen before (The Economist, 2022). It has caused the European Union (EU) to take actions that have been described as the EU's "geopolitical awakening"(De Hoop Scheffer & Weber, 2022) and as French President Emanuel Macron has said, it constituted a "turning point for our societies, our peoples and our European project"(Le Monde Diplomatique, 2022). Most scholarly investigations into the European Union as a foreign and security policy actor primarily examine internal factors that drive integration, such as the EU's internal politics and processes, but often neglect the impact of external transformations and crises in shaping the EU's exercise of power (Cross & Karolewski, 2017, p. 3). To help fill in this gap, this thesis will examine this shift in the EU security policy by asking the question: how has Russian aggression in Ukraine affected the EU as a security actor? The main hypothesis of this thesis is that Russian aggression in Ukraine has acted as a catalyst for the development of the EU as a security actor. This hypothesis is derived from the literature that agrees that Russian aggression in Ukraine has caused a major shift in EU threat perception and subsequently a shift in the EU's security priorities (Cross & Karolewski, 2017, Kelemen & McNamara, 2021, Kuzio, 2017). This research will test the hypothesis by evaluating the extent to which this shift can be observed official EU policy through the analysis of three key aspects of EU security policy and how they changed in response to Russian aggression in Ukraine: the development of EU defence spending, the development of official EU policy documents regarding security and defence and the development of the key EU defence institutions.

First, the thesis will explain the key concepts needed to understand the EU as a security actor before Russian aggression in Ukraine and provide an overview and analysis of the academic debate surrounding the EU as a security actor and the EU's response to Russian aggression in Ukraine. Second, the research method and method of analysis will be explained. Third, the

results of the analysis will be presented and interpreted. The last section of the thesis will consist of a conclusion, the limitations of this research and suggestions for avenues of further research.

Literature review and theoretical framework

The EU as a security actor

According to prevailing beliefs, European security is typically associated with the concept of the "positive state." (Majone, 1997). This view suggests that the state is the sole political authority that holds the power to make binding decisions collectively and possesses the operational capabilities needed for their implementation (Genschel & Zangl, 2014., Mérand, 2008., Ripsman & Paul, 2005). This model of the positive security state is characterized by political entitlement and direct control over coercive capacities, such as armed forces (Tilly, 1985, Weber, 1978). By this definition, when applying this perspective to the EU, it becomes evident that the EU does not fully embody the characteristics of a security state. Political authority in security matters remain with the individual member states, the EU's authority in security matters is limited and its operational capacities remain scarce compared to traditional security states (Bellanova et al., 2022., Genschel & Jachtenfuchs, 2014).

According to Kelemen & McNamara (2022), This can be explained by the fact that the European Union's political progress has primarily been driven by economic factors, through gradual market integration processes in the absence of war or immediate military threats. Possibilities of military threats were addressed through NATO in cooperation with the U.S. The prevalence of market-oriented motivations and prioritizing economic considerations over security concerns has shaped the European Union's development through incremental and voluntary approaches, relying on legal frameworks. This is in stark contrast with classical instances of state-building, which is characterized by rapid consolidation of power and institutionalization of authority (Kelemen & McNamara, 2022).To illustrate this, The European Security Strategy (ESS) published in 2003 can be best summarized with these two sentences: "The best protection for our security is a world of well-governed democratic states. Spreading good governance, supporting social and political reform, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the rule of law and protecting human rights are

the best means of strengthening the international order" (European Council, 2003, p. 10). According to Biscop (2015, p. 213) the ESS codifies a European way of foreign policy that is: "preventive, addressing the root causes of insecurity; comprehensive, tackling the security, political, and economic causes simultaneously; and multilateral, in partnership with other organizations and states." This is also evident in the fact that, before Russian aggression in Ukraine, the main focus of EU military operations was peacekeeping external military operations (Schilde, 2017, p. 37).

This ties into the broader debate of what kind of power the EU exercises with regard to foreign policy. Duchene (1973) first conceptualized the EU as a civilian power. They state that the EU is a unique actor in international relations because it pursues its foreign policy through economic and political means rather than military means. Manners (2002) built further upon this theory by introducing the idea of the EU as a normative power. He argues that the EU pursues its foreign policy by promoting its norms and values (Manners, 2002, pp. 252-253). Empirical evidence for this argument has been found Riddervold, 2010.,).While the concept of the EU as a civilian or normative power is a highly debated and contested concept (Diez, 2005., Sjursen, 2006., Moravcsik, 2010., Bull, 1982., Hyde-Price, 2006), it is clear from the literature that the EU's identity as a security actor is not that of the classic security state. Even the most sceptical realist scholars agree that the EU pursues its foreign policy based on economic and political coercion rather than military coercion (Hyde-Price, 2006).

To conceptualize the EU as a security actor, the idea of the EU as a Regulatory Security State (RSS) has recently emerged in the scholarly debate. The concept of the regulatory state, first popularized by Majone (1997), is defined by Levi-Faur (2023, p. 1462) as: "an institution that claims a monopoly on the legitimate use of rule-making, rule-monitoring, and rule-enforcement in a given territory". It refers to a mode of governance where security is pursued through the regulation and coordination of various actors and policies rather than relying solely on direct command and control of coercive capacities (Kruck & Weiss, 2023). In their article, Kruck & Weiss (2023) challenge the earlier mentioned idea of European security being the sole domain of the positive security state. They introduce this concept of a regulatory state into EU security politics. They argue that both the EU and its member states have become more important as regulatory security states rather than positive security states. Schilde (2023) agrees with Kruck & Weiss (2023) with regard to the increasing importance of the regulatory aspect of the EU as a security state, but finds that European defence

governance has been shaped by the EU's regulatory security governance in addition to the positive security of member states, rather than instead of it (Schilde, 2023, p. 1270). Genschel & Jachtenfuchs (2023) disagree with Kruck & Weiss (2023). They challenge the idea that the regulatory state can effectively replace the positive security state based upon three arguments: First, they argue that although regulation and epistemic authority play a significant role in security provision, they rely heavily on the resources and political authority that only the positive state can offer. Second, they argue that the concept of a regulatory security state is built upon the foundation of the positive state and cannot exist independently. Finally, they argue that the emergence of the regulatory security state in recent decades is a result of specific historical circumstances rather than a universal trend. The circumstances they refer to are the relatively low geopolitical tensions in Europe and the strong inclination towards regulation within the framework of EU integration (Genschel & Jachtenfuchs, 2023, p. 1449). While their arguments regarding the regulatory security state being impossible without the foundation of the positive security state are sound, their last argument does not take into account the fact that these low geopolitical tensions in Europe and the strong inclination towards regulation within the framework of EU integration are only possible because the EU has served as a RSS. It is not a sound argument against the prominence of the RSS. Levi-Faur (2023) responded to both these papers by adding further nuance to the EU as a RSS. He argues that the RSS is not replacing the PSS, like Kruck & Weiss (2023) say, but that the old RSS is evolving into something new. In his article, he introduces the conceptualization of the RSS as a risk state. He argues that the old RSS had only the risk of violence to manage, and that in these modern times the RSS has to manage a large number of different types of risks. He urges scholars to see the EU as a security state from a multifaceted perspective, not as a singular rational actor with a consistent and unchanging rationale, but as a historical institution that has evolved through various political arrangements, instruments, institutions, and compromises, each adding layers of complexity (Levi-Faur, 2023, p. 1469).

To summarize, it the EU's identity as a security actor is complex and multifaceted, shaped by historical, political, and institutional factors. The importance and actorness of the EU as a security actor is a contested subject, but most of the literature agrees that the EU is not a traditional security state but a security state that relies on the promotion of its norms, values, rules, regulations and economic prowess to address its security concerns. To understand how

this identity as a security actor is changing in response to Russian aggression in Ukraine, the next part of the thesis will provide an overview and analysis of relevant literature regarding the EU's response to Russian aggression in Ukraine.

The EU in times of crisis

According to Tamuz et. Al., (1989, p. 10), a crisis poses a significant threat to the fundamental structures and values of a social system, forcing critical decisions to be made under time pressure and uncertain circumstances. In the same vein, Haas (2001, p. 11,581) argues that new ideas are often considered and adopted in the aftermath of crises as they prompt politicians to take action and gather information about their interests and options. While crises introduce uncertainty and expand the range of possible actions, Capoccia and Kelemen (2007, p. 343) suggest that they also provide powerful political actors with a broader set of choices and potentially significant consequences. According to Seeger et al. (2003, p. 232), crises are necessary for organizational development, offering opportunities for change and improvement. Rochlin (1996, p.) further adds to this argument by arguing that crises expose errors and facilitate the creation of better-designed organizations. For this thesis, the most important argument regarding the influence of external crises on international organizations is provided by Cross & Karolewski (2017). They argue that "in the international context, such change does not only depend on the crisis itself, but also on how the EU reacts and relates to the crisis and the actors involved, that is, relational power" (Cross & Karolewski, 2017, p. 11). This is based on the argument that the response to a crisis could have permanent consequences for the future of EU power.

EU's response to the Russian annexation of Crimea 2014

The main academic debate surrounding the EU's response to the 2014 crisis in Ukraine is about whether the EU's foreign and security policy was constrained or enabled by the crisis. After the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, the EU unanimously agreed on a severe sanctions package against Russia (Sjursen & Rosén, 2016). This is in line with the general idea that the main way the EU uses coercive foreign policy is through economic means (Hyde-Price, 2006). The EU's ability to respond in a unified way was unexpected. It was generally assumed that The EU only demonstrates the ability to act collectively on matters of low significance in international politics, but its unity tends to dissolve when confronted with

significant crises (Bull., 1982., Gegout 2010., Hyde-Price, 2006., Menon, 2013, Sjursen & Rosén, 2016). Sjursen & Rosén (2016) argue that Member States' ability to reach a consensus in this situation could not be solely explained by security concerns, as anticipated by realist theory (Bull, 1982., Hyde-Price 2006.,), or the institutionalization of a norm of cohesion, as expected by constructivist theory (Juncos and Reynolds, 2007; Meyeret al.,2006). Instead, Sjursen & Rosén (2006) argue that the unanimous agreement was forged based on the shared belief that the Ukrainians' right to self-determination was violated. According to them, this finding is theoretically significant because it demonstrates that norms can override interests in EU foreign and security policy (Sjursen & Rosén, 2016, p. 20). This ties into the earlier mentioned debate regarding the role of norms and values in EU foreign policy, it provides support for the conceptualization of the EU as a normative power. Schilde (2017) also agrees that the Russia-Ukraine crisis enabled EU foreign policy, arguing that it caused some states to increasingly invest in territorial security. Natorski & Pomorska (2017) are also on the enabling side of the argument, but focus on how the crisis enabled an unexpected increase in trust between EU actors, specifically between member states and EU institutions.

On the other hand, Orenstein & Kelemen (2017) emphasize how the EU's response to the first Russia-Ukraine crisis underlines the weakness in EU foreign policy, arguing that the EU could not prevent certain member states, that they define has "Trojan Horses" from pursuing an independent foreign policy with Russia. They also argue that because the sanctions remained economic in nature, it showed that with regard to military security the EU remains dependent on NATO and the U.S. (Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017, p. 98). This supports Genschel & Jachtenfuchs (2023) earlier mentioned argument that in the end, security policy within the EU remains with the political authority of member states, and therefore the positive security state. Kuzio (2017) also argues that the EU's response to the Russia-Ukraine crisis showed the constraint of EU security policy. They argue that the EU's response was too weak and that it showed the limitations of the EU's approach towards its neighbourhood in general. Finally, Howorth (2017) argues that the EU's response to the Russia-Ukraine crisis in 2014 was constrained because, while it showed a façade of unity by adopting economic sanctions, the EU was unable to formulate a meaningful diplomatic relationship with Kyiv and failed to influence the outcome of the occupation of Crimea. This argument is often overlooked by other authors. Despite the EU adopting a surprising cohesive sanctions package, the EU failed to influence the outcome of the Russian annexation of Crimea

(Howorth, 2017) and therefore I argue that the 2014 Russia-Ukraine crisis showed a major constraint of EU security policy.

Russian invasion of Ukraine 2022

Genschel & Jachtenfuchs (2023) argue that the EU's response to Russian aggression in Ukraine marks the return of the PSS, they point to the fact that a more assertive Russia and the strained relationship between the US and Europe have brought back traditional geopolitical issues to the forefront of European discussions. They point to the calls for European sovereignty, strategic autonomy, and the establishment of a European army as evidence (Genschel & Jachtenfuchs, 2023, p. 1454). Anghel & Jones (2022, p. 781) Agree with Genschel & Jachtenfuchs (2023), arguing that the EU's response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine showed that political authority regarding security and defence remains with the member states and therefore with the PSS . Kruck & Weiss (2023) counter that the influence of the RSS has permeated even the realm of military security, which would traditionally falls under the domain of the PSS. They point out that the EU's response employed a combination of military and economic measures to exert pressure on Russia. They point to how governments encouraged private weapons contractors to supply weapons to Ukraine instead of building national military capabilities. Their second argument is that instead of adopting traditional sanctions, the EU restricted Russian banks from access to SWIFT, essentially cutting them off from the global financial system (Kruck & Weiss, 2023, p. 1206). It is clear from these articles that both the regulatory and the positive security aspects of the EU were employed in the EU's response to the 2022 invasion, therefore I argue that

The number of published academic articles regarding the EU's response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine is limited. This is logical, because the war is still an ongoing conflict and started a little over a year ago. As a consequence, a large number of articles and publications regarding its influence on the EU as a security actor are either normative or speculative. A large part of them also pertains to EU Strategic Autonomy, which is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, a short overview of this debate is relevant to this research because they contain speculations about how the EU as a security actor is influenced by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which is the central question to this thesis. Most scholars agree that the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 caused a significant turning point for the EU as a security actor (Hoeffler, 2023, Koenig, 2022, Braw, 2022, Bergmann et al., 2022). However,

many are sceptical as to the extent to which this will take place (Braw, 2022, Bergman et al., 2022., Caulcutt et al. 2022). Their main arguments can be best summarized by the EU being heavily reliant on the U.S. and NATO for security and defence and reluctance by EU member states to transfer sovereignty regarding matters of security and defense towards the EU (Braw, 2022, Bergman et al., 2022., Caulcutt et al. 2022).

Research design

The central question that this thesis tries to answer is: how has Russian aggression in Ukraine affected the development of the EU as a security actor? From the literature it is derived that the shift of the EU as a security actor as a consequence of Russian aggression in Ukraine is caused by enhanced threat perception of Russia and war returning to Europe, which in turn caused a great urgency in policy making regarding security (Schilde, 2017., Sweeney & Winn, 2017, Koenig, 2022). Therefore, the hypothesis of this thesis is that Russian aggression in Ukraine has acted as a catalyst for the development of the EU as a security actor. To test this hypothesis, a mixed-methods approach is adopted. To study the effect of the independent variable, which is Russian aggression in Ukraine, on the dependent variable, the development of the EU as a security actor, .

First, changes in EU defence spending since Russian aggression in Ukraine will provide a quantitative measure of the influence of Russian aggression in Ukraine on the development of the EU as a security actor. The increase in defence spending that followed the 2014 Russia-Ukraine crisis has been cited by scholars as a direct consequence of increased threat perception and urgency in security policymaking caused by Russian aggression in Ukraine (Béraud-Sudreau & Giegerich, 2018). Besides an absolute increase in defence spending, evidence has been found that the EU shifted the focus of these increased funds towards regional security as opposed to overseas peacekeeping (Schilde, 2017). Therefore, both the trend in increased defence spending and how these funds are spent will be researched using primary and secondary sources, as they are an important indicator of how Russian aggression in Ukraine has influenced the development of the EU as a security actor.
Second, a qualitative analysis of three major EU policy documents regarding EU security and defence will provide insights into how the shift in threat perception and urgency in policymaking can be observed in officially formulated EU policy. The first document that

will be analysed is the European Security Strategy (ESS) from 2003. The ESS is the first official, comprehensive document on a unified EU security and defence strategy that attempts to give meaning to the EU's role as a security actor (Becher, 2010, p. 346) the revised version released by the European Council in 2008 is important to include, because it includes new sections about EU-Russia relations following the Russia-Georgia conflict in 2008. The second document is the European Unions Global Strategy (EUGS) released in 2016. This is the most comprehensive document regarding security and defence that attempts to define the EU's role as a security actor (Giusti, 2020, p. 1452) formulated after the first Russia-Ukraine crisis. The third and final document used for the analysis is the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence (SCSD), which is seen as the most complete and realistic framework for the EU as a security provider in the history of the Union (Koenig, 2022, p. 1). By analysing and comparing the role of the EU as a security provider, threat perception, and urgency in policymaking framed in these three policy documents that were adapted within the three different timeframes of the two instances of Russian aggression in Ukraine, this thesis will provide insight into how a shift in the EU as a security actor is evident in officially formulated EU policy.

Third, a qualitative analysis of primary and secondary sources regarding the evolution of EU defence institutions before and after Russian aggression in Ukraine will provide insight into how Russian aggression in Ukraine has influenced the practical implementation of the EU security and defence policy as framed by the ESS, the EUGS and the SCSD. The EUGS released in 2016 marked the revival of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) (Díaz, 2021, p. 173), which is the EU's main institutional framework for addressing security challenges (Menon, 2012, pp .587-588). The focus of the analysis will be on four major EU defence institutions: CSDP, the EDA, the EDF and PESCO. By analysing the development of these institutions the thesis will provide insight into how changes in defence spending and official EU security policy as a consequence of a shift tin threat perception and urgency in policy making are implemented in practice.

To measure the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable, the developments selected for this research will be trends and developments that either directly follow the instances of Russian aggression in Ukraine in 2014 and 2022, or mention Russian aggression in Ukraine either explicitly or implicitly.

Results and analysis

EU defence spending

Until 2014, European defence spending had been following a downward trend. However, after the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, European defence spending has been increasing for 7 consecutive years (World Bank, 2022) with defence spending reaching a record high of €214 billion in 2021 (EDA, 2022). While official data by the EU for defence spending in 2022 has yet to be released, reports have estimted that the combined military spending of the EU member states in 2022 amounted to $345 billion, which would be the highest defence expenditure as % of GDP since the end of the Cold War (SIPRI, 2023., McKinsey, 2022., VOA News, 2023). Even accounting for inflation, It is also the highest increase in % of GDP defence spending in a single year since the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 (SIPRI, 2023). This trend of rapidly increasing defence expenditure is expected to continue in the future. The most significant example is that of Germany. Germany announced its plan to increase its defense spending to over 2% of GDP. If approved by the Bundestag, this would make Germany the top military spender in Europe and the third largest worldwide, behind the United States and China (Koenig, 2022, p. 3). Besides an absolute increase in defence spending, the effect of Russian aggression in Ukraine can also be seen through a qualitative analysis of what the increase is being spent on. Schilde (2017, p. 37) provides evidence that after the Russia-Ukraine crisis in 2014 the dominant focus on defence reform shifted from peacekeeping expeditionary capability investments over the last twenty years towards a focus on investing in territorial and internal security capabilities following the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014.

EU security strategy policy documents

The European Security Strategy 2003 & 2008

Adopted in 2003 following the implementation of the CSDP, the ESS is the first official document on a unified EU security and defence strategy that attempts to give meaning to the EU's role as a security actor (Becher, 2010, p. 346). The document is characterized by optimism, evident in the first statement of the document: "Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free. The violence of the first half of the 20th Century has given way to a period of peace and stability unprecedented in European history" and the subtitle of

the document: "A secure Europe in a better world" (European Council, 2003, p. 1). The main threats to EU security identified in the ESS are Terrorism, Proliferation of Weapens of Mass Destruction, Regional Conflicts, State Failure and Organized Crime. With regard to Regional conflicts, the document mentions Kashmir, the Great Lakes Region, the Korean Peninsula and the Middle East (European Council, 2003, pp. 3-4). Besides terrorism, these key threats do not mention an internal or regional security threat to the EU. In the section "Building Security in our Neighbourhood" it is mentioned that "neighbours who engage in violent conflict" could pose a threat the EU (European Council, 2003, p. 7). The main solution the document provides is to "to promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relations." (European Council, 2003, p. 8). The language regarding relations with Russia, which is mentioned five times in the documents, is that of the importance of cooperation. It is even stated that closer relations with Russia are a "major factor in our security prosperity" (European Council, 2003, p. 7). It is significant to note that in a revision regarding the implementation of the document in 2008 it is stated that EU-Russia relations have deteriorated and that: "The EU expects Russia to honour its commitments in a way that will restore the necessary confidence. Our partnership should be based on respect for common values, notably human rights, democracy, and rule of law, and market economic principles as well as on common interests and objectives" (European Council, 2008, p. 23). This is the hardest language on Russia that is used in either the original version or the revised version. The 2008 revised version still includes the exact same mentions of cooperation with Russia as the original. As mentioned earlier, the role of the EU as a security actor as formulated in these documents can be best summarized by the following excerpt: "The best protection for our security is a world of well-governed democratic states. Spreading good governance, supporting social and political reform, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the rule of law and protecting human rights are the best means of strengthening the international order" (European Council, 2003, p. 10). The role of the EU as a security provider outlined in the ESS is mainly as a global security provider, evident by statements such as: "In an era of globalisation, distant threats may be as much a concern as those that are near at hand" (European Council, 2003, p. 6) And: "Our traditional concept of self- defence – up to and including the Cold War – was based on the threat of invasion. With the new threats, the first line of defence will often be abroad" (European Council, 2003, p. 7).

European Union Global Strategy 2016

The shift from optimism displayed in the ESS to a more concerned outlook in the EUGS is obvious in both the subtitle of the document: "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe" and in the first statement made: "The purpose, even existence, of our Union is being questioned. Yet, our citizens and the world need a strong European Union like never before. Our wider region has become more unstable and more insecure. The crises within and beyond our borders are affecting directly our citizens' lives" (EEAS, 2016, p. 3). It is notable that in the EUGS, territorial and regional security are mentioned as a policy priority for the first time: "Internal and external security are ever more intertwined: our security at home entails a parallel interest in peace in our neighbouring and surrounding regions. It implies a broader interest in preventing conflict, promoting human security, addressing the root causes of instability and working towards a safer world." (EEAS, 2016, p. 14). And also: "As Europeans we must take greater responsibility for our security. We must be ready and able to deter, respond to, and protect ourselves against external threats." (EEAS, 2016, p. 19). Language on Russia as a response to the Russian annexation of Crimea has also become much harsher in the EUGS than in the ESS. For example: "We will not recognise Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea nor accept the destabilisation of eastern Ukraine. We will strengthen the EU, enhance the resilience of our eastern neighbours, and uphold their right to determine freely their approach towards the EU." (EEAS, 2016, p. 33). Russia is clearly identified as a security threat to the EU, evident in the following statement: "However, peace and stability in Europe are no longer a given. Russia's violation of international law and the destabilisation of Ukraine, on top of protracted conflicts in the wider Black Sea region, have challenged the European security order at its core" (EEAS, 2016, p. 33). However, cooperation with Russia is still seen as an option and priority in the document: "At the same time, the EU and Russia are interdependent. We will therefore engage Russia to discuss disagreements and cooperate if and when our interests overlap." (EEAS, 2016, p. 33). The role of the EU as a security actor as defined in this document is still with a heavy focus on peacebuilding, but there is a clear shift towards the EU as a regional security provider as opposed to a global one, for example: "The EU will engage in a practical and principled way in peacebuilding, concentrating our efforts in surrounding regions to the east and south, while considering engagement further afield on a case by case basis" (EEAS, 2016, p. 33). This

supports Schilde's (2017) arguments that Russian Aggression in Ukraine has caused the EU to shift from a global to a regional security provider.

Strategic Compass for Security and Defence

Regarding the adaptation of the SCSD, there is an important note to make. In response to the urgent situation created by the Russian invasion, the EU member states and the European External Action Service (EEAS) underwent a last-minute revision and negotiation process to adapt the document (Koenig, 2022, p.1). While the initial draft primarily addressed global political changes and potential hybrid threats, the final version shifted the focus to the resurgence of war in Europe as the primary concern. In the initial draft, there were still proposals for selective engagement with Russia, regarding climate change for example (Koenig, 2022, p. 2).. However, the final document takes a very firm stance against Russia. The most significant excerpt that highlights the increased threat perception and urgency in policymaking as a reaction to Russian aggression in Ukraine is as follows: "Through this armed interference in Georgia and Ukraine, the de facto control over Belarus, as well as the continued presence of Russian troops in protracted conflicts, including in the Republic of Moldova, the Russian government is actively aiming to establish so-called spheres of influence. The armed aggression against Ukraine is showing the readiness to use the highest level of military force, regardless of legal or humanitarian considerations, combined with hybrid tactics, cyberattacks and foreign information manipulation and interference, economic and energy coercion and an aggressive nuclear rhetoric. These aggressive and revisionist actions for which the Russian government, together with its accomplice Belarus, is entirely responsible, severely and directly threaten the European security order and the security of European citizens. Those responsible for these crimes, including targeting civilians and civilian objects, will be held accountable." (EEAS, 2022, p. 17). In this document, a shift in the role of the EU as a security provider can also be observed: "The EU is a determined supporter of effective multilateralism and it has sought to develop an open rules-based international order, based on human rights and fundamental freedoms, universal values and international law. This vision of multilateralism prevailed internationally following the end of the Cold War. Today, it has come under strong questioning, through the shattering of universal values and a lopsided use of global challenges, by those promoting a strict sovereigntist approach that constitutes in reality a return to power politics. The present international reality is based on the combination of dynamics with an increasing number of

actors seeking to expand their political space and challenge the security order. The use of force and coercion to change borders has no place in the 21st century." This excerpt supports Genschel & Jachtenfuchs (2022) argument that security in Europe has once again become the realm of the Positive Security State. This is also supported by this statement: "The return to power politics leads some countries to act in terms of historical rights and zones of influence, rather than adhering to internationally agreed rules and principles and uniting to promote international peace and security." (EEAS, 2022, p. 14). The shift towards the EU as a regional security provider seems definitive with statements such as:

EU security institutions

To understand how Russian aggression in Ukraine has influenced the development of the EU as a security actor it is important to first establish a framework for the state of EU defence institutions before 2014 and then compare this to their development following the Russia-Ukraine crises in 2014 and 2022.

The Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) serves as the overarching framework for the defence aspect of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), aiming to enhance the EU's ability to address security challenges independently from the United States (Menon, 2012, pp. 587-588). However, in 2004, it became evident that apart from the UK and France, other EU member states were reluctant to increase their defence spending, consistent with the overall trend of decreasing military expenditures during that time (Sweeney & Winn, 2017, p. 4)

To improve coordination among member states and provide top-down guidance, the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) was introduced in the 2009 Lisbon Treaty (Sweeney & Winn, 2017, p. 4). However, after four years, PESCO was seen as a failure due to a lack of operational effectiveness and capability enhancement, primarily caused by insufficient support from member states. Frustrated by the lack of progress and the unwillingness of other member states to increase defense spending, the UK and France reduced their commitment to the CSDP (Sweeney & Winn, 2017, p. 5).

Then, as a consequence of both the drastically heightened threat perception outlined in the EUGS and the substantial increase in defence expenditure mentioned earlier, PESCO was formally launched with the support of 25 member states (Sweeney & Winn, 2017, p. 7). This marked the revival of the CSDP, which had been absent from the EU public agenda for a

considerable period (Díaz, 2021, p. 162). Since its establishment in 2017, PESCO has initiated a total of 60 projects related to security and defense, covering various areas such as capability development, joint procurement, and training and exercises (EDA, 2022). PESCO has emerged as the primary policy instrument for the development of the CSDP (Díaz, 2021, p. 162).

Another EU defence institution that plays a crucial role in the practical implementation of the CSDP is the The European Defence Agency (EDA). Initially, when the European Commission aimed to assume a more active role in security and defense, EU member states were hesitant to grant authority to the supranational Commission in this field. The member states preferred to keep EU defence and security policy strictly intergovernmental. As a result, the intergovernmental EDA was established (Håkansson, 2021, p. 593). Founded in 2004, the EDA's primary objective was to address the EU's previously inadequate defenc e capabilities and oversee the implementation of the CSDP (Trybus, 2006, pp. 678-679). In its early years, the EDA functioned as a hybrid entity, providing information and shaping CSDP issues through regulatory networks (Calcara, 2017, p. 382).

However, the EDA's role underwent a fundamental shift with the introduction of two pivotal CSDP institutions: the earlier mentioned PESCO and the European Defence Fund (EDF), as outlined in the 2016 EUGS (EEAS, 2016). PESCO was initiated by the EDA in collaboration with the Council (Díaz, 2021, p. 162). Consequently, the EDA transformed from an information provider and regulator to an enabler and facilitator. With the launch of the EDF, European Commission succeeded in expanding its influence in security and defence matters, overcoming previous challenges encountered with the establishment of the EDA (Håkansson, 2021, p. 593; Sweeney & Winn, 2020, p. 234). With a budget close to €8 billion for the period 2021-2027, the EDF represents one of the most significant developments within the CSDP (EDA, 2022). Therefore, through the implementation of the EDF, It has allowed the European Commission to assert its influence in the field of security and defense, as a consequence of the increased threat perception and urgency in policymaking (Sweeney & Winn, 2020, p. 234). This expansion of influence goes beyond the intergovernmental nature that was a core aspect of EU security institutions (Håkansson, 2021, p. 593). According to Hoeffler (2023), It represents a shift away from the EU's role as a Regulatory Security State, albeit not fully towards a Positive security state.

However, the 2022 invasion of Ukraine presented a major challenge to EU defense

institutions, particularly concerning the allocation of funds. According to Article 41(2) of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU), the EU budget cannot be used to deliver weapons to non-member states; it is limited to administrative costs and civilian operations (Rutigliano, 2022, p. 402)As a response, the European Peace Facility (EPF) emerged as an off-budget policy instrument, providing financial support for security and defence related operations to EU partners beyond its borders (Rutigliano, 2022, pp. 402-403). In a swift response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the EU Council approved a €500 million assistance package, including 50 million euros in lethal arms, just four days after the invasion began (Koenig, 2022, p. 2). This rapid and substantial support, making the total EU support for Ukraine €5.6 billion as of May 2023, demonstrates the unprecedented deployment and impact of the EPF (European Council, 2023).

Interpretation

Quantitative data has provided evidence that since the 2014 Russia-Ukraine crisis EU defence spending started increasing significantly. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the data shows that this increase in defence spending has reached record heights. From the qualitative analysis of EU security strategy policy documents, it can be clearly seen that the drastically increased perceived threat of armed conflict in Europe caused by Russian aggression in Ukraine has caused a great urgency in policymaking to strengthen and unify the EU as a security actor. It has also caused the EU to shift its focus towards a regional security provider as in addition to a global peacebuilder. The analysis of the practical implementation of this new role for the EU as a security actor through EU defence institutions also showed that these developments have revived EU defence agencies. Through the EDF, the European Commission has succeeded in introducing a supranational element to EU Security and Defence Policy since the first Russia-Ukraine crisis. Also, the use of the EPF as an instrument to circumvent the EU's rules and regulations around providing military support implies a shift away from merely regulatory security. This, combined with increasing calls for a more decisive and firm EU as a geopolitical security actor, claims about the return of power politics and the diminishing importance of rules, institutions and international law in EU security strategy documents supports the idea that the EU intends to move away from its security identity as a Regulatory Security State towards a Positive Security State. While it is premature to say that it indicates an impending supranational EU Security and Defence policy or a European Army, I argue that the fact that these EU strategy documents had to be

approved unanimously by all Member States is a clear indicator of the seriousness of these intentions. The data provided in this thesis has shown how significant and unprecedented the changes EU defence spending, EU defence institutions and the EU's official policy regarding security have been in response to Russian aggression in Ukraine. I argue that these developments are clear evidence that Russian Aggression in Ukraine has acted as a catalyst for the EU's to become a stronger, more coherent and geopolitically effective security actor.

Conclusion

To summarize, this thesis found evidence that supports the hypothesis: Russian aggression in Ukraine has acted as a catalyst for the development of the EU as a security actor. Before the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, the EU addressed its security concerns through the promotion of its norms, values, rules, regulations and economic prowess to address. It seemed that the most important aspect of EU security was that of the EU as a Regulatory Security State. This is logical, because the EU was founded as an economic integration project, forged in the absence of war and immediate security threats. The findings in this thesis support the notion that Russian aggression Ukraine caused the EU to drastically increase the perceived threat of war returning to Europe. As a consequence a great urgency in policymaking to strengthen the EU as a security actor became evident within the EU. The thesis has found support for this argument by conducting an analysis of three indicators of the EU's development as a security actor. First, the drastic increase in defence spending in both an absolute sense and an increase in defence spending on regional and territorial security support the notion that the EU intends to take on a more serious role with regard to security and defence. Second, the analysis of three major policy documents on security strategy, released before Russian aggression in Ukraine, after the 2014 annexation of Crimea and after the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine clearly indicates that with each document, the EU's threat perception and urgency in policymaking to address its security challenges becomes more evident. The documents also provide clear evidence for the EU's intentions to take its role as a regional and territorial security provider in addition to a global peacebuilding one. Through the rapid evolution of major EU defence agencies as a response to Russian aggression in Ukraine these intentions can be clearly observed in the EU's practical implementation of its Common Security and Defence policy. In addition, while the EU's response to the annexation of Crimea was constrained in a military sense, the surprising unity among member states and the use of an extrabudgetary instrument through the EPF to

provide considerable military support show that the 2022 invasion has caused the EU to be a more effective regional security actor. Although it seems that final political authority regarding security and defence will remain with the member states in the foreseeable future, the increasing supranational element of EU defence through the European Commission and language of the geopolitical awakening of the EU in officially formulated EU policy raise questions as to what direction EU security and defence will take in the future. In short, while the direction the EU as a security actor will take remains uncertain, the findings of this thesis suggest that Russian aggression in Ukraine has acted as a catalyst for the EU's transformation into a stronger, more coherent and geopolitically effective security actor.

The first clear limitation of this research is that the Russian invasion of Ukraine happened so recently and is still ongoing. Therefore, there is no definitive outcome yet to be studied. When the Russia-Ukraine war ends, further research could attempt to discover the effectiveness of the EU's response in influencing the outcome to provide insights into the development of the EU as a security actor. The second major limitation is that this thesis mainly researched official EU policy documents and developments in EU institutions. In EU foreign and security policy, there is often an intentions-capabilities gap (Lai et al., 2022). to provide a more holistic view of the EU as a security actor further research is needed into the effectiveness of the EU as a security actor by analysing the gap between wat the EU intends to do and what it accomplishes.

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