Upside Down

Reframing European Defence

Abstract

Since the end of the Cold War, the study of European defence has been dominated by a 'CSDP-centric' approach, while largely neglecting the comparative analysis of national defence policies. This article makes the case for turning the dominant research prism of European defence studies upside down by returning the analytical precedence to the national level. This approach privileges the comparative analysis of national defence policies and armed forces, before focusing on the trans-/supra-national level. The case for this conceptual turn is made in three steps. First, it addresses the different historical stages in European defence integration and the transformation of national armed forces in Europe. Second, it questions the predominance of CSDP in the scholarly literature on European defence. Finally, it seeks to demonstrate the fruitfulness of such a demarche by empirically substantiating common patterns and intra-European divergences in the evolution of national defence policies and armed forces since the end of the Cold War. In conclusion, the article suggests avenues for research focused on European national defence policies and armed forces.

Introduction

In summer 2016, the European Union (EU) released *A Global Strategy* for its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Under the heading "Security and Defence", it calls on Europeans to "take greater responsibility for our security. We must be ready and able to deter, respond to, and protect ourselves against external threats" (EU, 2016; see also Council of European Union, 2016). This is probably the boldest among a number of the strategy's ambitions. Even though some leading European foreign and security policy pundits have tried to portray the document as a good starting point to make the CFSP more effective (Biscop, 2016), its weaknesses and unrealistic call for "strategic autonomy" have attracted sharp criticism (Techau, 2016).[1] Despite the EU's foreign and security policy achievements, notably within the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP)/Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), strategic autonomy remains a distant ideal. Not only has European defence integration been limited (Hyde-Price 2018), but it is also evident that the era of enthusiasm for European security and defence following the Franco-British Saint-Malo Declaration of 1998 (Joint Declaration, 1998) and, especially, the first and preceding EU security strategy – *A Secure Europe in a Better World* – of 2003 (EU, 2003) has ebbed away (Fiott 2014: 11-12; Rynning 2014). Moreover, the European project itself has come under increasing pressure and Britain, one of Europe's major military powers, is in the process of exiting the union (Heuser, 2017; Kienzle and Hallams, 2016; Lequesne 2018). Ultimately, and despite the questioning of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) strategic rationale after the end of the Cold War, the US-backed Atlantic Alliance has remained the cornerstone of European defence and armed forces transformation (King 2011: 61; Terriff, Osinga and Farrell, 2010), and has even extended its security umbrella well beyond the former Iron Curtain (German 2017).

In light of the still limited defence integration in Europe, this article makes the case for turning the dominant, 'CSDP-centric' research prism of European defence studies upside down by returning the analytical precedence to the national level. This conceptual approach privileges the comparative analysis of national defence policies and armed forces, before focusing on the trans-/supra-national level for two interconnected reasons. The first one is historical. Since the end of the Cold War, defence and security policy in Europe has witnessed two concurrent trends towards European integration and national transformation. On the one hand, European defence integration through the ESDP/CSDP (hereafter CSDP) has undergone a pattern of emergence, rise, and gridlock during the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s respectively. Despite significant institutional development, the political and military reach of CSDP remains limited and hampered by diverging national interests (Major and Mölling, 2013; Simón, 2017a, 2017b). Moreover, while national security concerns and priorities have always trumped European defence integration since the end of the Cold War, Europe has recently witnessed a trend towards a renationalisation of defence policy (Keohane 2016). In this article, renationalisation refers to the renewed focus on territorial defence and the related national defence capabilities, the ever-decreasing enthusiasm for European defence integration and, as a corollary, a clear return to defence cooperation through NATO and a growing reliance on ad hoc minilateral arrangements. On the other hand, Europe's national defence policies and armed forces have experienced significant qualitative, quantitative, and organisational changes in response to NATO's US-dominated transformation agenda, a resurgent Russia, transnational terrorism, cyber-security challenges, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), civil wars and neighbouring failing states. Accordingly, the combination of the rise and decline of the CSDP on the one hand, and of persistent national defence transformation throughout the post-Cold War period on the other, calls for a renewed attention to national defence policy as the analytical starting point in the study of European defence and security.

The second reason pertains to the extant literature on European defence. In this twin movement of European defence integration and national transformation, the literature has overwhelmingly privileged the CSDP at the expense of the cross-European comparative study of national defence policies and armed forces. In fact, an inverse correlation exists between, on the one hand, the relative depth and breadth of historical change in European defence integration versus national defence policies and, on the

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[1] For a discussion of the EU 'Global Strategy', see also the different contributions in Dijkstra, 2016.

other, the extent to which they have been respectively covered in the literature. Despite the limited scope of the CSDP and the persistence in the process of national defence transformation since the end of the Cold War, the literature on European defence has been dominated by a focus on the CSDP, and by a neglect of the comparative study of national defence policies and armed forces in Europe. The time is thus ripe to lift the 'fog' of European defence integration, which has distracted from the more significant national-centred defence cooperation in Europe.

Addressing this imbalance by re-emphasizing the crucial importance of cross-European comparisons of national defence policies and armed forces does not equate to abandoning the study of the CSDP and of the trans-European integrative patterns in the field of defence and security. Instead of discarding the in-depth study of the CSDP, this article argues that a renewed focus on the national level allows to unearth the fundamental challenges and obstacles that have hampered European defence integration. Reinvigorating the national level as a key unit of analysis, and in a comparative approach, is in fact a condition *sine qua non* for investigating defence cooperation in its multiple configurations (bilateral, minilateral, multilateral) and levels (intergovernmental and trans-/supra-national), but without losing track of the foundational dimension of the national level. Despite the overwhelming focus on the literature on the CSDP, it has in reality only played a relatively limited role within the complex patchwork of national defence policies and of bilateral and mini-/multi-lateral arrangements that compose Europe's security architecture.

In light of the imbalance between the historical record and the focus of the extant literature, the aim of this article is to make the case for refocusing the attention on, and giving analytical precedence to, national defence policy and armed forces in Europe in three steps. The first addresses the different historical stages in the rise and decline of CSDP and in the continued transformation of national armed forces in Europe since the end of the Cold War. The second then questions the seemingly unjustified predominance of CSDP vis-à-vis the comparative study of national defence policies in the literature on European defence. The third section seeks to demonstrate the fruitfulness of such a demarche by empirically substantiating common patterns and intra-European divergences in the evolution of national defence policies and armed forces since the end of the Cold War. The article concludes by suggesting some avenues of future research in the study of European defence and security through a focus on national defence policies and armed forces.

Conceptually, turning the dominant analytical lens upside down permits to address hitherto unanswered questions. The comparative analysis of national defence policies and armed forces is notably key to comprehending the national security preferences that underpin ~~the~~ European defence cooperation patterns?? within and between NATO and the EU member states; the relative importance of NATO and the EU as enablers and shapers of the defence policies and the transformation of armed forces of European states; the various forms of bilateral, minilateral, and sub-regionally specific defence cooperation arrangements in Europe; the national preferences for different frameworks to launch military operations – bilateral, minilateral, NATO, EU, and/or UN; and the role of neutrals or militarily non-aligned countries in European defence. Yet, ultimately, the reframing of European defence studies ~~should~~ allows to know the component parts in order to understand the whole, namely to study first the national defence policies and armed forces of European major, medium and lesser powers, and then how their differences and similarities have affected defence cooperation in Europe. Only this reversed but logically coherent analytical process from the component parts to the whole allows us to understand the shortfalls of European defence and why a truly integrated European defence has so far remained an elusive quest.

Chronological Convergence vs. Qualitative Divergence

The evolution of Europe's national defence policies and armed forces since the end of the Cold War has been closely connected to, and frequently been overshadowed by European defence integration. This should not come as a surprise, because the overcoming of the Cold War order went hand in hand with European integration. The processes of European defence integration and national armed forces transformation largely converged chronologically but diverged qualitatively. The EU, its member states, and the other European powers have shared the same regional threat environment, albeit with sub-regional and local differences, and the rise of CFSP provoked a significant degree of enthusiasm within

Brussels, the think tank world and, notably, academia. Yet, as stated above, analytical precedence should be given back to Europe's national defence policies and armed forces. Not only because fully integrated European armed forces have failed to emerge, but also because the pendulum has swung back towards a national approach to defence in Europe (Keohane 2016). Finally, the transformation of European armed forces since the end of the Cold War has been significant. In order to reframe European defence, what follows is a brief presentation of the three different stages in the twofold evolution of, respectively, European defence integration and national transformation, and of the main drivers of change.

CSDP: Emergence, Rise, Gridlock

The foundations for the emergence of European defence integration were laid with the end of the Cold War. In exchange for French President François Mitterrand's acceptance of German reunification, Chancellor Helmut Kohl agreed to accelerate European political and monetary integration. This paved the way for the Maastricht Treaty and CFSP in 1993 (Sarotte, 2014: 147). The latter proved, however, to be largely ineffective in addressing the protracted wars in the Balkans that haunted Europe in the 1990s. In order to gain the capability and capacity to deal with crises in Europe and its neighbourhood, the EU decided – in close consultation with NATO – to move ahead with European defence integration. Following the Franco-British Saint-Malo Declaration, the 1999 Cologne Summit officially established ESDP by absorbing the Western European Union (WEU), which had proved ineffective despite resuscitation attempts after the Cold War (Howorth, 2014).

Thereafter began the second stage and 'golden age' of European defence integration. The EU institutionalised ESDP, strengthened its military capabilities, promoted interoperability and integrated defence procurement, agreed on its first European security strategy (ESS) (European Council 2003), and launched a number of peace support and crisis management operations (Krotz and Wright, 2018). The European Defence Agency (EDA) was also created in 2004 to enhance capacity development and intra-European armaments cooperation. By the mid-2000s, the enthusiasm for such developments led some analysts to go as far as to stress that Europe would become the next superpower and challenge American primacy in world politics (Reid, 2004; Leonard, 2005). This process culminated in the rebranding of ESDP as CSDP through the Lisbon Treaty of 2007, which entered into force in 2009 and aimed at streamlining the hydra-like structure that had emerged over the years (Howorth, 2014). The Military Committee (EUMC) and the Military Staff (EUMS) were integrated in the newly born EU External Action Service (EEAS, 2017). But despite an improved organisational functioning of CSDP, a third stage, marked by disillusionment, has since set in.

With the notable exception of EU NAVFOR Operation Atalanta, more muscular European military operations have become increasingly rare (Mattelaer and Marijnen, 2014). Moreover, the operational record and effectiveness of the EU's more ambitious military missions such as EUFOR RD Congo and EUFOR Chad/CAR have been questioned, and most European powers, as illustrated by the Malian crisis, have no stomach for new major EU-led military operations. The era when the EU optimistically launched its first military mission outside of Europe with Operation Artemis in 2003 seems far away, and the focus has increasingly shifted to civilian missions and capacity building (Greco, Pirozzi and Silvestri, 2010; EEAS, 2017b; Krotz and Wright, forthcoming; Mattelaer and Marijnen, 2014).

Finally, largely because of the persistence of diverging national interests and threat perceptions, a truly integrated European defence has yet to materialise and most EU member states share a growing disillusionment vis-à-vis the CSDP (Menon, 2011:88). This trend has been reinforced in the aftermath of the 2011 intervention in Libya, undertaken within a NATO rather than a CSDP-framework (Howorth, 2014: 137-142). In the words of Adrian Hyde-Price, "despite the progress made in institutionalising the CSDP, the military effectiveness and operational performance of the EU missions have been disappointingly poor"; they have primarily engaged "in small-scale humanitarian, training and rule of law operations in a largely benign, consensual environment. […] The military output of the CSDP has thus been very low indeed". This leads him to ask whether the pundits' debates surrounding the CSDP are "much ado about nothing" (Hyde-Price, 2018).

To be sure, it is not impossible that the combination of Brexit, Russia's increased assertiveness, the American preoccupation with China and the Asia-Pacific more generally (Green, 2017; Meijer, 2015),

and the Presidency of Donald Trump – who has cast doubts over US defence commitments to Europe – might provide a partial impetus for small and incremental steps in European defence integration. The 2017 decision to create an EU Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) within the EU military staff, tasked with the command of non-executive military CSDP missions (European Council, 2017), and other initiatives, including the European Defence Fund within the framework of the European Defence Action Plan (European Commission, 2016), the strengthening of the 'permanent structured cooperation' mechanism, or PESCO (European Council, 2017:5; EEAS 2017; Fiott, Missiroli and Tardy 2017), as well as the discussions around the resuscitation of the longstanding ambition of creating a common EU army (Juncker in Reuters, 2015), have indeed generated considerable expectations and debate among pundits (Kayß, 2017; Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2017). But the persistence of major intra-European national divergences in terms of threat perceptions, the imbalances in capabilities, relative gains considerations, and the consequent challenges of defining a shared hierarchisation of the main security challenges and military tasks, shed considerable doubt on the prospect of a truly integrated European defence (Hyde-Price, 2018; Simón, 2017a, 2017b). These factors suggest that, all the recent hype surrounding PESCO notwithstanding, a common European defence policy appears to be a distant hope rather than a present reality.

Transforming National Armed Forces

Russia, as the post-cold war successor to the Soviet Union, has, by contrast, had a more significant effect than the European integration project on national security and defence policies in Europe. More generally, the evolution of the European security environment over the last three decades seems to have had in some ways an almost diametrically opposed effect on national armed forces to that on European defence integration. Whereas the absence of a major conventional threat from Russia benefited European defence integration in the late 1990s and early 2000s, it also led to declining national defence budgets and a shift away from territorial defence. Similarly, the Kremlin's subsequent increased military assertiveness has led European capitals to rediscover the importance of territorial defence. Consequently, national defence policies and armed forces in Europe have roughly also experienced what approximates to a three-stage process since the end of the Cold War. In this process, NATO has had an overarching influence acting as both a key enabler and shaper of national defence policies and military transformation in Europe.[2]

After the withdrawal of the Red Army from Central and Eastern Europe following the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union, Western Europe was left without a major conventional military threat (Zubok, 2007: 302-35). Moreover, the decline of Russia seemed to continue unabated for the remainder of the 1990s (Kotkin, 2001). The 'unipolar moment', with the United States as the sole remaining superpower, seemed confirmed (Brands, 2016; Krauthammer, 1990, 2002). Meanwhile, the American-backed NATO umbrella was continuously expanded eastwards, ahead of the future expansion of the EU (Lašas, 2010). This set the stage for the first transformation phase of European armed forces, which lasted until the turn of the century. Initially, the European powers cashed in the so-called peace dividend, and reduced their military personnel and equipment without fundamental strategic, doctrinal, or material reorientations. The lessons of the 1991 Gulf War, which was a showcase for US military power and the on-going Revolution of Military Affairs (RMA), the subsequent Balkan Wars and the emergence of transnational threats stimulated a military transformation process in most European countries (Adamsky and Bjerga, 2012; Edmunds and Malešič, 2005; Farrell and Rynning, 2010; Farrell, Rynning, and Terriff, 2013; Forster, 2006: Ch. 2; Futter and Collins, 2015; Grissom, 2006; King, 2011; Loo, 2009; Sloan, 2008: Ch. 4-5; Terriff, Osinga, and Farrell, 2010). This led to a strategic and doctrinal shift away from territorial defence to humanitarian and peace support operations, further troop reductions, professionalization, the abolition of conscription (in most cases), increased operability, and standardisation of doctrine (Haltiner and Klein, 2002: 7-11). This

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[2] Membership of NATO, the prospect of it, or the participation in the Atlantic Alliance's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme has led to a partial convergence in the national security strategies, forces structures, and contribution to multinational operations (King, 2011: 62; Terriff, 2013; Terriff, Osinga and Farrell, 2010).

doctrinal shift went hand in hand with the emergence and expansion of the CDSP in the 1990s and 2000s given the latter's focus on PSOs.

These developments overlapped with a second phase, which began with the military interventions in Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, and continued with the resulting counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in both countries. This first completed the shift towards expeditionary warfare (Farrell, Rynning, and Terriff, 2013: 6-7), and then led to what has been called a "new counterinsurgency era" (Ucko, 2009). As a result, the countries participating in the two invasions and/or the counterinsurgency campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq did not only rediscover and develop past counterinsurgency doctrines (Kilcullen, 2006), but also continued the transformation of their armed forces to enable them to fight alongside allies abroad. This accelerated the process of what Anthony King (2011:10) has called "concentration" and "transnationalisation" to create smaller yet more capable, and internationally connected armed forces. In an increasingly generalised trend, European armed forces were re-organised into a modular and thus more flexible structure, further reduced in size and professionalised, and re-equipped with new weapons platforms and communication equipment in the aim to improve their reaction time, force projection capability, operational sustainability, interoperability, and effectiveness. Yet this transformation process was impeded by persistent budget pressures on Europe's armed forces and marked by inconsistency because of different security outlooks, political priorities, and strategic cultures in Europe. This led to what has been called a "transformation gap", not only between the United States and its European allies,[3] but also within Europe (Terriff, Osinga and Farrell, 2010). Moreover, the enthusiasm for expeditionary warfare and COIN was not shared across the entire continent, and some non-allied or neutral countries, for instance, focused instead on domestic tasks as a substitute for territorial defence (Wyss, 2011; Agius and Devine, 2011).

Meanwhile, the pendulum has swung back with a third and on-going transformation phase. This current phase, which overlapped with the second, set in following a double-crisis that emerged towards the end of the last decade. On the one hand, the lengthy campaign and lack of progress in Afghanistan led to disillusionment with COIN, and a desire to avoid having to fight an insurgency on the ground in the future (Ucko and Egnell, 2013, 2014). On the other, the global financial crisis was followed by cuts to already overstretched defence budgets (Giegerich, 2010). As a result, not only did the European appetite for expeditionary warfare dramatically decline, but also the capabilities and capacities of Europe's armed forces were further reduced (O'Donnell, 2012; Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union, 2011). This 'strategic retreat' did not last for long, and was transformed into a 'strategic reorientation' as soon as the European economy was on its way to recovery and the continent seemed to be confronted with new threats and challenges. Simultaneous to a widespread disillusionment with the EU and a resurgence of the nation-state (Grygiel, 2016:94-101; Lequesne, 2018), many European powers have increasingly seen themselves challenged by a militarily resurgent and assertive Russia – especially in the wake of the Ukrainian Crisis and the annexation of Crimea (Matlary and Heier 2016) – together with an Islamist terrorist threat on their national territories (Byman, 2015), and cyber security challenges (Kello, 2017; Rid, 2013). Even though defence spending as a percentage of GDP remains historically low and often well below NATO's two percent target, this increasingly tense European security environment has led to higher defence budgets after decades of cuts (Tian, Fleurant, Wezeman and Wezeman, 2017; International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2015). As a consequence of these shifting threat perceptions, as shown below, the trend points towards a 'renationalisation' of defence policies and a renewed emphasis on territorial defence – in some cases even with a focus on domestic security. Not only the threat of terrorism, but also that of conventional war – as announced more than a decade ago by Colin Gray (2005) – is again real. This overall trend towards the renationalization of national armed forces, with a return to territorial defence – and mostly in the context of NATO – has contributed to further de-emphasizing the relative importance of CSDP in European defence and security.

In sum, given the rise and decline in European defence integration and the persistence in the process of national defence transformation since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the historical evolution of, and recent trends in, European defence and security thus call for a renewed attention to national defence policies and armed forces.

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[3] On the implication of US military innovation and its 'Third Offset Strategy' for Europe, see Simón, 2016.

A Glaring Imbalance: The Literature on CSDP and National Armed Forces

A second central reason for refocusing on national armed forces in studying European defence is that, in this twin movement of European integration and national transformation, the overwhelming majority of the literature has focused on the CSDP while largely neglecting, with only a few notable exceptions, the comparative evolution of national defence and security policy and armed forces at the cross-European level.

Despite its very limited military output, the CSDP has been the focus of a burgeoning body of scholarly literature (for an overview, see Howorth, 2011; Menon, 2012; Mérand, 2008). This seemingly paradoxical phenomenon resulted, partly, from the enthusiasm for European defence integration in the wake of the rise of CSDP and the at times wishful thinking of some scholars and pundits – despite empirical evidence to the contrary. Yet, more importantly it also resulted from the concomitant decline of defence- and military-focused Strategic Studies at the expense of Security Studies, following the broadening of the concept of security and the focus on its non-military dimensions (Buzan and Hansen, 2009; Krause and Williams 1996), and the consolidation of European Studies as an academic sub-discipline (Bindi and Eliassen, 2011; Keeler, 2005; Wallace, 2000) – which jointly contributed to the neglect of the study of national defence policy and armed forces in Europe. Without attempting to provide an exhaustive review, which goes beyond the scope of this article, it is possible to identify five clusters of inquiry in the literature on the CSDP. Firstly, a large body of works seeks to explain the drivers of the rise and evolution of the CSDP by applying theoretical approaches from political science and international relations. They put forward competing explanatory factors derived from realism (Art, 2004; Hyde-Price, 2012; Jones, 2007; Rynning, 2011; Posen, 2006), constructivism (Howorth, 2004; Kurowska and Kratochwil, 2012; Meyer, 2001; Meyer and Strickman, 2010), or neo-institutionalism (Hofmann, 2011; Menon, 2011; Smith, 2004; Weiss, 2011), among others.[4] A second strand in the literature analyses the decision-making processes and the institutional arrangements of the CSDP. This body of research aims to assess whether Europe's institutional architecture in the field of defence and security is intergovernmental, supranational, or consists of a multilevel security governance (Howorth, 2012; Irondelle, Frédéric Mérand and Hofmann, 2010; Irondelle, Mérand and Hofmann, 2011; Mérand, 2012; Mattelaer 2014; Webber, Croft, Howorth, Terriff and Krahmann, 2004). A third cluster focuses on the aggregation of military capabilities under the CSDP, on intra-European arms cooperation and on the persistence of the so-called 'capabilities–expectations gap' (Hill, 1993, 1998).[5] Focusing on the demand side, these works examine the institutional framework that has emerged over time to develop joint European defence capabilities, including the *Organisation Conjointe de Coopération en Matière d'Armement* (OCCAR) or the European Defence Agency (EDA) (Biscop and Coelmont, 2013; DeVore, 2014; Giegerich and Nicoll, 2008; Jones, 2007; Reynolds, 2007; Shepherd, 2015; Trybus, 2014). The external operations, both civilian and military, undertaken by the European Union under the CSDP banner constitute a fourth major research area. These works examine the drivers and effectiveness of the range of operations conducted by the EU in South-Eastern Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia since the early 2000s (Attinà and Irrera, 2016; Greco, Pirozzi and Silvestri, 2010; Grevi, Helly and Keohane, 2009; Krotz and Wright, 2018 forthcoming; Engberg, 2014; Pohl, 2014; Rodt, 2014; Tardy, 2015).

Finally, the literature delves into the contentious relationship between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the CSDP in the provision of security on the continent. It analyses issues such as the potential development of Europe's 'strategic autonomy' vis-à-vis NATO, the transatlantic burden-sharing and capability gap, or the question of geographical/functional division of labour – and more broadly the patterns of cooperation and competition – between the two organizations (Howorth, 2014, 2017; Howorth and Keeler, 2003; Hulsman, 2000; Hunter, 2002; Lagadec, 2012, Ch. 8). While scholars disagree on the extent to which the EU has fully emerged as an actor in military affairs on the

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[4] For an overview of the theoretical approaches applied to Europe's common foreign, defence and security policy, see Howorth, 2014: Ch. 6; Jørgensen, Aarstad, Drieskens, Laatikainen, and Tonra, 2015; Krotz and Maher, 2011; Kurowska and Breuer, 2012. For a critique of the lack of sufficient theorization of CSDP, see Bickerton, Irondelle and Menon, 2011.

[5] The concept of 'capabilities-expectations gap' refers to the discrepancy between the expectations surrounding European integration and Europe's actual capabilities (Hill, 1993, 1998).

world stage (Biscop, 2011; Howorth, 2010; Jones, 2007; Krotz, 2009; Norheim-Martinsen, 2013; Zwolski, 2012), these five different clusters of literature all share a tendency to focus on a trans-/supranational level of analysis.

Throughout the post-Cold War period, the scholarly literature on European defence and security has thus adopted a predominantly 'CSDP-centric' perspective. Accordingly, of the two main trends that have characterized Europe's defence since the end of the fall of the Berlin Wall, namely European integration and national transformation, the latter has been significantly neglected. Indeed, in comparison to the volume of the CDSP-centred literature, significantly fewer cross-national studies have analysed and compared the evolution of national defence policies and the transformation of their armed forces across Europe; and, when doing so, they have focused only on a small selection of major European powers, such as Britain, France and Germany – and seldom on medium or lesser powers, e.g. Poland, Spain or Norway (Edmunds and Malešič, 2005; Farrell, Rynning, and Terriff, 2013; Heuser and Shamir, 2016:part I; Matlary and Petersson, 2013; Murray and Viotti, 1994; Terriff, Osinga, and Farrell, 2010). Moreover, several of these studies have focused specifically on the contributions of individual major powers to the CSDP, therefore using the CSDP as their organizing compass (e.g. Dyson, 2016: section 3; Giegerich, 2008; Gross, 2011). Meanwhile, in such comparative studies, many lesser European powers are often absent altogether, such as Albania, Ireland or Slovakia, just to name a few. Finally, the very few comparative studies that include a '*large N*' of European countries tend either to focus only on specific issues or aspects (e.g. strategic culture) (Biehl, Giegerich and Jonas, 2013) or to provide year-by-year snapshots (e.g. the annual reports IISS Military Balance or SIPRI Yearbook).

In other words, by predominantly focusing on the CSDP, the extant literature has neglected a fundamental analytical dimension, namely the systematic comparison of national defence policies and armed forces across Europe in the post-Cold War era. This imbalance further demonstrates the need to move beyond a 'CSDP-centric' perspective and to re-emphasize the cross-European comparative study of national defence policies and armed forces.

The Evolution of National Defence Policies in Europe: Common Patterns versus Divergences

Giving analytical precedence to the national level in the study of European defence, and in a comparative perspective, allows to empirically substantiate cross-European trends as well as intra-European divergences in the evolution of defence policies and in the transformation of armed forces in Europe. This section synthesize the overall findings of a two-year long project that brought together close to sixty authors from around the world to provide a geographically and thematically comprehensive analysis of the evolution and current state of the national security and defence policies, strategies, doctrines, capabilities, and military operations, as well as the alliances and security partnerships of European armed forces, in response to the security challenges Europe has faced since the end of the Cold War (Meijer and Wyss 2018). As shown below, the rich and diverse portrait of the shifting patterns in European defence that emerges from this study contributes to the literature on military transformation (Adamsky and Bjerga, 2012; Edmunds and Malešič, 2005; Farrell and Rynning, 2010; Farrell, Rynning, and Terriff, 2013; Forster, 2006: Ch. 2; Futter and Collins, 2015; Grissom, 2006; King, 2011; Loo, 2009; Sloan, 2008: Ch. 4-5; Terriff, Osinga, and Farrell, 2010) though with a broader focus. This military transformation literature has hitherto shown how, selectively emulating the United States, including via NATO standards (Dyson, 2016: ch. 1; Dyson and Konstadinides, 2013: 9-10, 38, 152-4; Forster, 2006: 69; Schmitt, 2017),[6] European armed forces have been reorganized, in the post-Cold War period, along three distinct innovations aimed at improving military effectiveness. These innovations have been networking forces through information and communications technologies; developing effects-based operations (EBOs), which links the destruction of targets to intended military, political, and psychological effects; and forging a modular and flexible force structure for expeditionary missions (Farrell, Rynning and Terriff, 2013: 8, 64). Furthermore, it has been shown that military interventions have a feedback-loop effect on the transformation of national armed forces through processes of adaptation in wartime (Farrell, 2010; Farrell, Osinga and Russell, 2013; Harkness and Hunzeker, 2015; Murray, 2011). Refocusing the study of European defence on the national level can contribute to this literature by also showing subregional or

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[6] On emulation see also Cottichia, Moro (2016) and Farrell and Rynning (2002).

national variations. But it can also allow going beyond this literature by shedding light not only on military transformation but also on the broader evolution of defence policies, including threat assessments, decision-making institutional architectures, changing nuclear doctrines, the expansion of the mission spectrum, or the thickening of international defence cooperation (including through minilateralism) in Europe.

Major Powers
Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the threat perceptions of the four major powers in Europe (the UK, France, Germany, and Russia) have expanded beyond the Cold War concerns over large-scale conventional warfare towards a more diffuse and diversified threat assessment, increasingly including asymmetrical, non-state, and transnational security challenges. However, starting in the 2010s, and in particular after the Ukrainian crisis and Moscow's annexation of Crimea, the three West European major powers have also gradually factored Russia's newly assertive behaviour—and the prospect of conventional war—back in their threat assessments. Reciprocally, Russia's perception of continued Western military–technological superiority and the growing tensions over Ukraine have given new urgency to its sense of insecurity and encirclement (Rynning and Schmitt, 2018; Dorman, 2018; Kraft 2018; Zysk, 2018).

Concomitantly, the force structures of both Western major military powers and Russia have followed a partly similar trajectory, though with uneven capabilities and national idiosyncrasies, towards a modular, more flexible force structure with an emphasis on joint, network-centric forces (Futter and Collins, 2015). The mission spectrum of Western major powers has significantly broadened, from cold-war territorial defence to a crisis-management and expeditionary force, with a focus on multinational combined forces and interoperability. Meanwhile, France is the only major power to deploy armed forces on its national territory for domestic security purposes (Tenenbaum, 2016), though the United Kingdom briefly deployed troops in the wake of the Manchester attack of May 2017 to support police forces (Guardian, 2017). Yet all three major West European powers appear to have responded to rising tensions with Russia by re-emphasizing territorial defence as a core mission, largely within a NATO framework (Rynning and Schmitt, 2018; Dorman, 2018; Kraft, 2018; Zysk, 2018). It is this renewed focus on territorial defence that has reinvigorated NATO's traditional role as the backbone of European defence, but simultaneously laid bare the dramatic shortfalls in the national defence capabilities of major European military powers. This was, for instance, vividly illustrated by an official German report in early 2018, according to which less than 50 per cent of the German armed forces' major weapons systems were ready for training or deployment (Deutsche Welle 2018).

The institutional architectures governing national defence policy vary significantly across these four major powers, ranging from tightly centralized decision-making systems (Russia), high executive autonomy (the UK and, especially, France) or strong parliamentary oversight (Germany). Since the 1990s, Western major powers have enhanced their participation in multinational interventions ranging from low- to high-intensity operations (Gowan 2018; Krotz and Wright 2018; Lindley-French 2018; Zajec 2018). Despite Germany and France's non-participation in the Iraq War, this trend is apparent in all major West European powers, even in Germany, where a significant development has been the growing involvement in international military operations despite the domestic constraints on the use of force. Russia has instead tended to privilege unilateral interventions in its near abroad, as attested by her interventions in Chechnya, Georgia, Syria and Ukraine (Sutyagin 2018). Of the three nuclear powers, the nuclear doctrines of France and the UK have gradually converged towards a rebalancing of the mix of conventional/nuclear forces in their overall defence policies in favour of conventional forces, and towards the acceptance of ballistic missile defences (Schmitt and Rynning, 2018: 44). In contrast, Russia has sought to compensate for its conventional inferiority vis-à-vis NATO by elevating the role of nuclear weapons in its defence policy, by abandoning the no-first-use pledge, by envisaging the possible use of limited nuclear strikes to de-escalate a conflict, as well as by pursuing non-military means (for example, cyber and electronic warfare, information campaigns, and covert operations) (Zysk 2017). While Europe's major Western powers face the common challenge of how to finance defence efforts given significant budget and resource constraints, Moscow's defence budget has steadily increased. This increase has

come, however, from a very low post-Cold War defence-spending level, and Russia's modernization efforts have been undermined by socio-economic and demographic challenges, among other factors (Zysk 2018).

Medium Powers

While the defence policies of Europe's medium powers share several common characteristics, there have also been significant differences in defence outlooks across south, south-east, Central, and Eastern Europe.[7] A shared trend since the end of the cold war appears to be the expansion of the concept of security in their successive national security strategy documents, with threat assessments increasingly including so-called non-traditional security challenges, such as terrorism, organized crime, and WMD proliferation. Furthermore, as with Western Europe's major powers, this broadening of the definition of 'security' has gone hand in hand with the development of the so-called comprehensive approach, aimed at blending all instruments of national power (civilian and military), and at enhancing cooperation between government departments to tackle such challenges NATO (Coticchia 2018; Michta 2018; Arteaga 2018; Gürsoy 2018; Polyakov 2018). Important differences in emphasis nonetheless persist in the hierarchization of security challenges. In particular, in contrast to southern European states—which continue to perceive a diffuse threat environment and focus on challenges on NATO's southern flank (for example, terrorism and migrant smuggling networks)—former Soviet or Soviet-controlled Central and East European medium powers have come to single out Russia as their first security concern, increasingly after Russia's war in Georgia in 2008, but even more so since the 2010s (Onderco, 2018). Given its history of recurrently falling prey to rival major powers, Poland, for instance, has consistently put Russia at the top of its security concerns throughout the post-cold-war period (Michta 2018). Ukraine's threat perception vis-à-vis Moscow, instead, has risen and fallen multiple times since the end of the cold war and its independence from the Soviet Union, leading to oscillations in Kyiv's defence policy between NATO and Russia—until Moscow's aggression in eastern Ukraine and its annexation of Crimea have led Kyiv to move resolutely towards closer ties with (Polyakov 2018).

Just as for the major powers, the range of missions of the armed forces of Europe's medium powers has expanded to include crisis-management and peace operations since the 1990s and in numerous cases counterinsurgency in the 2000s, with a force structure tailored for joint and interoperable expeditionary operations. All these medium powers have become increasingly active in multinational operations in the post-cold-war era, within a UN, NATO, and/or CSDP framework or as part of 'coalitions of the willing' (Gowan 2018; Krotz and Wright 2018; Sperling and Webber 2018). Turkey, for instance, has participated in a variety of multinational peacekeeping operations—while also conducting unilateral operations (for example, Iraq and Syria)—and Ukraine has participated in peace-support operations (PSOs) as a way to maintain readiness (Gursoy 2018; Polyakov 2018). Italy, Portugal, and Spain have also used their armed forces on national soil to carry out or support homeland security missions (Coticchia 2018; Arteaga 2018). More recently, while south European states have been less directly affected by Moscow's assertive behaviour, both Kyiv and Warsaw have re-emphasized the central task of territorial defence and deterrence. Within NATO, as Andrew A. Michta stresses, Poland has become a 'vocal advocate', together with other countries in Eastern and north-eastern Europe, 'for NATO to return to its traditional territorial defence function' (Michta 2018). The overall pattern towards a revaluation of territorial defence can also be observed among Europe's lesser powers.

Lesser Powers

Among European armed forces, those of the lesser powers display the greatest variety in terms of defence policy trajectories.[8] The hierarchization in their threat perceptions, the objectives of their military transformation processes, their propensity to use military force, or their relationship with NATO and the EU have been profoundly shaped by their history, their geographical location, and their surrounding

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[7] These medium powers are Italy, Poland, Spain, Turkey, and Ukraine.

[8] These lesser powers are Austria and Switzerland, the Baltic countries, Belarus, the Benelux countries, Bulgaria and Romania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, the states of former Yugoslavia, Greece and Albania, Ireland, Finland and Sweden, Denmark and Norway.

'local' security environment. Before we assess subregional patterns, it is possible to identify some cross-European dynamics.

In the first two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, virtually all Europe's lesser powers—just like the major and medium powers—expanded the mission spectrum of their armed forces beyond territorial defence towards crisis management and tended to blend civilian and military instruments to address a broadened range of security challenges. Since the growing tensions with Russia in the 2010s, however, a general trend appears to be the return to an emphasis on territorial defence, though with some exceptions, as will be detailed, in south and south-eastern Europe in particular. A significant common challenge has been how to manage the combination of limited or shrinking budgets and ever more complex and diverse military tasks, especially after the financial crisis in the late 2000s. While this challenge has affected major and medium powers as well, it has impacted lesser powers more severely, given that they have fewer resources. Thirdly, what emerges from the comparative analysis of evolution of national defence policies in Europe is the overarching influence of NATO as an enabler and shaper of military transformation. Membership of NATO, the prospect of it, or the participation in the Atlantic Alliance's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme have led to a partial convergence in the national security strategies, forces structures, and contribution to multinational operations. Finally, while participation in international interventions significantly expanded in the 1990s and 2000s, it has rapidly decreased in the 2010s after the perceived failures and the financial costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the 2008 economic crisis, and Russia's more assertive behaviour in the East—the combination of which has required a reprioritization of scarce resources (Andersson 2018; Baev 2018; Chourchoulis 2018; Ejdus 2018; Hedberg and Kasekamp 2018; Klinkert 2018; Mantovani and Hauser 2018; Onderco 2018; Petersson 2018; Speller 2018).

The lesser powers in north, north-eastern, Eastern, and Central Europe have been considerably influenced by their history and geographical location either as former members of the Warsaw Pact or because of their proximity to it.[9] Those countries that were Soviet Republics or members of the Warsaw Pact—that is in north-eastern, Eastern, and Central Europe—have experienced three broad stages in the evolution of their defence policies (Baev 2018; Hedberg and Kasekamp 2018; Onderco 2018).

In the 1990s, they underwent complex transitions and a democratization processes combined, in most cases, with a rapprochement with NATO through the PfP programme, and their successive accession as members of the alliance. In this period, the acute sense of insecurity vis-à-vis Moscow drove the reorientation towards, and the gradual integration in, the European and transatlantic security architecture. Their armed forces were moulded by the Soviet Union's cold-war influence and priorities, and were thus largely characterized by a focus on territorial defence and conventional warfare on the continent, by ageing Soviet-designed technology, and by large conscript armies. The gradual rapprochement with and subsequent accession to NATO translated into profound reforms, including in civil–military relations with the aim of depoliticizing the military. The modernization of their armed forces was aimed at downsizing personnel and heavy machinery and transitioning towards smaller, rapid-reaction mobile forces capable of participating in NATO- and EU-led peace support operations.

In the second phase, during the 2000s, these new members of NATO and the EU pursued the modernization of their armed forces, largely influenced by NATO standards and, to a lesser extent, by the EU and its 2003 European Security Strategy. Their national security strategy documents increasingly emphasized 'non-traditional' security threats, and, concomitantly, they moved towards force structures tailored for expeditionary warfare and crisis management. By becoming increasingly engaged in international operations, as Masha Hedberg and Andres Kasekamp argue, they thus reoriented their traditional agenda of territorial security in order to make more resources available for NATO and for EU mobile needs (Hedberg and Kasekamp 2018).

By the 2010s, however, an increasingly tense regional environment, with Russia's intervention in Ukraine and its assertive stance vis-à-vis the Baltics, led these lesser powers to refocus on conventional security threats and territorial defence and to reduce their participation in multinational interventions. Interestingly, there have been some exceptions to these trends. In Eastern Europe, for instance, while

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[9] These countries include Belarus, the Baltic states, Bulgaria and Romania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway.

official documents in the Czech Republic and Slovakia reflect a rising threat perception vis-à-vis Russia, Hungary does not appear to have followed the same path (Onderco 2018).

Northern Europe has also been characterized by national variations that are attributable in part to the countries' histories before and during the cold war, and their geographical location. The two Nordic NATO members, Denmark and Norway, have clearly opted for the development of small, professional, and mobile expeditionary forces for multinational operations (Petersson 2018). The two neutral states, Finland and Sweden, remain outside NATO but have both moved gradually towards greater operational cooperation with the alliance (Andersson 2018). At the same time, while Finland has never given up its focus on territorial defence, Sweden moved from a conscript force tailored for territorial defence in the 1990s to a smaller professional expeditionary force suited for PSOs in the 2000s. This process seemed to be confirmed with the abolition of the draft in 2010. But, in response to Russia's military actions in its neighbourhood, Stockholm has shifted its focus back to territorial defence and in 2017 reinstated conscription (Sorensen 2017).

The paths followed in south and south-eastern European states have been markedly different from those in the north and the east. In the first decade after the cold war, while the former members of the Warsaw Pact were engaging in democratic transition processes, Yugoslavia—a non-aligned country during most of the cold war—disintegrated into several independent states and descended into a prolonged, decade-long series of wars. It was only in the 2000s that the countries of what had become former Yugoslavia initiated a process of military modernization away from conscript, mass-mobilization armed forces. Croatia joined NATO and embarked on a process of transformation consistent with NATO standards, towards a professional, downsized force structure. Serbia, by contrast, while seeking greater cooperation with the Atlantic Alliance, has maintained a more ambivalent position, seeking EU but not NATO membership, while pursuing close ties with Russia (Ejdus 2018).

Further south, in Greece and Albania, the threat perception has also been significantly different from that in other European subregions. Especially in the 1990s, the main security threat was perceived in Athens to come from Turkey as well as from instability in the Balkans. Accordingly, Greek armed forces focused on territorial defence and aimed at deterring conventional aggression. As Greek–Turkish tensions receded in the 2000s, Athens moved towards NATO standards, increasingly focused on 'non-traditional' security challenges (for example, international crime, piracy, or terrorism), and restructured its military towards smaller and mobile forces. Nonetheless, the defence transformations of Greece, and even more so of Albania, have been hampered by considerable budgetary difficulties, especially since the 2008 financial crisis (Chourchoulis 2018).

The lesser powers in Western Europe have perceived a much more benign and stable regional environment than their counterparts in north- and south-eastern Europe since the end of the cold war. The Netherlands and Belgium have resolutely shifted away from traditional territorial tasks to focus, through PSOs and the comprehensive approach, on a diverse and more diffuse array of non-state threats. They also share a scepticism vis-à-vis the use of military force in international affairs. While both countries are members of the EU and NATO, Belgium has put more emphasis, in relative terms, on defence cooperation within the EU, while the Netherlands has maintained a more Atlanticist perspective (Klinkert 2018).

Besides the sub-regional specificities in the evolution of defence policies in Europe, what emerges from the comparative analysis of defence policies in Europe is also what has been labelled the 'variety of neutrality' (Beyer and Hofmann 2011). The neutral lesser powers share a common legacy, originating from the cold war, of eschewing military alliances. However, their military transformation processes have been shaped by diverging threat perceptions and interpretations of what neutrality entails (Wyss 2011). This has led some neutral powers to cooperate mostly within the NATO and EU frameworks, while others have focused on domestic and homeland defence tasks. Although Finland and Sweden today face a tenser regional environment (Andersson 2018), the geographical locations of Austria, Ireland, and Switzerland have placed them far from a direct military threat since the collapse of the Soviet Union and

the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact Distant from potential threats on or from the continent, Ireland has devoted significant resources to internal security challenges, in particular in relation to the border with Northern Ireland (Speller 2018). Austria and Switzerland have downsized their forces and widened their armed forces' mission spectrum to include disaster relief and peace missions as well as counterterrorism and, more recently, cyber defence, while maintaining territorial defence as the core mission. Belarus stands as a formally neutral country, caught in the rising tensions between NATO and Russia (Hauser and Mantovani 2018). In the post-cold-war period, Minsk has perceived a more benign regional security environment than its closest partner, Moscow, and has maintained a less confrontational stance vis-à-vis the West (Splidsboel Hansen 2018). In short, the content of the status of a neutral country, and its implications for defence policy, vary significantly across Europe.

A final general trend in the evolution of defence policy in Europe since the end of the Cold War and cuts across major, medium, and lesser powers has been the thickening of bilateral and, interestingly, minilateral defence cooperation both within Europe and between European states and external countries (Attinà 2016; Cottey 2000; Pannier 2015; Pertusot 2015; Sundberg and Ahman 2012). This pattern is partly consistent with Antony King's findings on the 'transnationalization' of European armed forces, though he focuses exclusively on the tactical and operational level (King 2011:6;). The drivers of such developments include (in isolation or combined): the need to achieve cost efficiency through pooling and sharing in order to manage the combined challenge of an expanding mission spectrum and limited (if not shrinking) resources; the will to foster interoperability with, or within, NATO; gridlock in multilateral defence cooperation in Europe; and/or, in some cases, changing perceptions of the regional threat environment.

In south-western Europe and the larger western Mediterranean, Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, and Malta participate in the so-called 5+5 Defence Initiative with Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, and Tunisia to foster cooperation in areas such as surveillance and maritime security, air security, and training and research (Italian Ministry of Defence 2007; Núñez 2012). Portugal, meanwhile, maintains defence ties with the Lusophone world through the Community of Portuguese Language Countries, which Lisbon considers as a third defence priority together with NATO and the EU (Arteaga 2018).

In south-eastern Europe, minilateral initiatives include, among others, the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the South-Eastern Europe Defence Ministerial (SEDM) process (RCC 2018). Also, trilateral political and military cooperation has developed between Greece, Cyprus, and Israel in different areas, such as air, naval, and aeronautical exercises. Greece and Israel have also signed a bilateral security cooperation agreement (Chourchoulis 2018).

In Central Europe, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland cooperate on training, education, and the development of the Visegrád Battlegroup battalion, among other things, in the so-called Visegrád Group (also called Visegrád 4 or V4) (Kupiecki 2013; Riecker and Terlikowski 2015). The Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary have also strengthened trilateral cooperation in military sharing and joint procurement (Onderco 2018).

In northern Europe, the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEFCO) brings together Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden—and occasionally the Baltic states—in a broad range of areas, such as land, sea, and air operations, logistic support, education, and research and development, among many others. The three Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), meanwhile, have developed several trilateral initiatives, including a peacekeeping battalion (the Baltic Battalion (BALTBAT), the Baltic Naval Squadron (BALTRON), the Baltic Air Surveillance Network (BALTNET), and the Baltic Defence College (BALTDEFCOL) (Saxi 2014; Westberg 2014). At the bilateral level, Finland and Sweden have tightened their defence cooperation, including in the areas of training and exercises and in air and maritime surveillance (Andersson 2018).

In Western Europe, bilateralism trumps minilateralism. Franco-British defence and security cooperation occurred during the Cold War and until the late 2000s, but mostly in an ad hoc manner, though across the spectrum of defence sectors (such as military interventions, training and exercises, or armaments). It was only in the early 2010s that the bilateral defence partnership became institutionalised. The 2010 Lancaster House agreements bolstered defence links in different fields, most notably: training and interoperability through the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF); procurement and defence

industrial integration in the fields of complex weapons systems and unmanned aerial vehicles; participation in military interventions—, e.g. for example, Libya, Mali, and Central African Republic; as well as and in the nuclear domain (Pannier 2013, 2017). In contrast, the Franco-German defence relationship is characterised characterized by the paradox of, on the one hand, long-standing and thickening institutionalisation institutionalization since the 1960s, but, on the other, persistent divergences in strategic posture and policy preferences in a variety of domains. This tension has resulted in push-and-pull dynamics in armaments cooperation, in the nuclear domain, in the cooperation between their armed forces (e.g for example, on the Franco-German Brigade or the Eurocorps), and in military interventions (Krotz and Schild 2013; Krotz and Wolf 2018). Other bilateral security initiatives include the establishment of the Dutch–German army corps and the Belgian–Dutch cooperation (BeNeSam) in the naval domain, as well as in air policing, training, and education (Klinkert 2018).

The web of minilateral defence ties between national armed forces has thus become increasingly dense in post-Cold War Europe. This specific finding, and, more generally, the findings outlined above, not only attest to the analytical value of re-emphasizing the role of states in the study of European defence; they also constitute building blocks for assessing the evolution of the overall European security architecture since the end of the Cold War.

Conclusions

This article has shed light on the conceptual and empirical imbalance in the study of defence and security in Europe. Thereby, it has emphasised the need to turn the dominant, 'CSDP-centric' analytical lens on its head by giving precedence back to the national level. Without studying the national level in comparative perspective, it is impossible to grasp the complexities of, and divergences in, European defence and security. Refocusing the attention on national defence policy and armed forces in Europe not only allows addressing these imbalances, but it also opens up at least two major avenues for future research.

Firstly, a truly cross-European comparison of the evolution of national defence policies and armed forces remains a glaring blind spot in the existing literature. The study of European defence and security would be significantly enriched through the elaboration of cross-European comparative analyses of national defence policies and armed forces since the end of the Cold War. By focusing not only on the defence policies and armed forces of the major, but also of medium and lesser European powers, such comparative studies would contribute to assessing the degree of convergence/divergence and of continuity/discontinuity in defence policies across Europe in a variety of areas, from counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency, to air or land warfare, cyber-defence, peacekeeping, etc.

Secondly, giving analytical precedence back to the national level would allow exploring the diversity of inter-national defence and security cooperation pathways in Europe (bilateralism, minilateralism and multilateralism). Europe's security architecture today consists of a complex patchwork of interwoven bilateral partnerships, minilateral cooperation initiatives and multilateral institutions. The variety and overlapping of defence cooperation configurations in Europe arguably deserve greater theoretical and empirical attention in the scholarly research. Examining the evolution, the key drivers, and the main challenges in the post-Cold War development of these multifaceted international cooperation pathways would help answering the question of the complementary or competing logics of these different types of defence and security arrangements.

Ultimately, turning the dominant research agenda 'upside down' would significantly contribute to the future analysis and planning of European defence. In light of the rising security challenges that Europe faces, with Russian military assertiveness, conflicts on Europe's periphery and its neighbourhoods, transnational terrorism, stretched defence budgets, and tensions within NATO over national contributions, it would be risky to privilege a supra-national perspective at the expense of the detailed comparative study of national defence policies and international defence cooperation. Only by doing so does it become possible to unearth, and potentially address, the impediments to a common European defence policy.

Disclaimer

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