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MAIN CHARACTERS OF THE EU DEFENSE AND SECURITY POLICY WITHIN THE CURRENT REALITIES

Abstract

The main purpose of the research is to analyze the European Defense and Security Policy, decision-making instruments, and processes. In the historical context, there are reviews of how the Europeans shaped their defense and security policies. Furthermore, there are described in detail some important historical events that have made a significant contribution to the development of the EU's total Defense and Security Policy, as well as the history and activities of the European Councils. We consider the history, goals, and objectives of the European defense and security policy, the global security strategy, foreign relations, and a security policy, as well as the essence of the European security and defense policy, threats, and the EU involvement in several spheres of the security sectors.

The scientific novelty of the research lies in Understanding the scientific methodological foundations in a new way, is studied in-depth, and analyzing in detail the history of the development of the EU defense and security policy and the main priorities of the organization in this field in the modern period.

Keywords: EU, Defense, Security, Crisis Management, Foreign Policy

Introduction. The actuality of the topic

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the world communist system, a period of cardinal changes began in the world. In parallel with the radical geopolitical changes that have taken place on the planet, there have been changes in the structures and functions of various international organizations, as well as political, economic, and regional contradictions that have harmed the international system. In this regard, the role and importance of international organizations in the anarchist international system have increased, and several universal or regional organizations have gradually emerged as important global players actively participating in security reform projects, especially in conflict and post-conflict countries, and playing an important international role. If any organization or association claims to promote peace in different parts of the world, they should mention the European Union (EU), which is a unique economic and political organization in the context of cooperation and interdependence of European states, which contributes to peace and stability. In the 21st century, the defense and security of the EU have become especially important in light of recent events. As a result of Russia's aggressive policy, Europe still faces security and defense issues that should play an important role in strengthening the political and economic stability of its member states. Europe needs to mobilize the appropriate resources to protect its geopolitical and strategic interests and formulate a common security and defense policy. The EU Common Defense and Security Policy is part of the youngest EU policy that was formulated before it officially became part of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. The Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) allows the EU to play a leading role in peacekeeping (civilian and military) missions both in Europe and around the world, as well as in crisis management and/or reform of the public sector, both civilian and military. It is an integrated approach based on appropriate resources (European Union, 2020).

The EU is one of the most important international regional institutions in the world, both politically and economically, as well as in terms of defense and security. Recently, especially after the referendum on secession from the United Kingdom, despite a certain Euroscepticism, the EU still retains its role as a major player in the

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world, and interest in it is constantly growing. This institution is involved in all current political, economic and cultural processes in the world and has a serious impact.

The interests of integrating a number of post-Soviet republics, including Georgia, into European structures contradict the strategic interests of Russia, since the Kremlin seeks not only to maintain, but also to strengthen its influence in the post-Soviet space. As a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as well as the occupation and annexation of the territories of Georgia and Ukraine several years ago, EU partner countries were faced with the dilemma of ensuring security in the post-Soviet space and protecting their national interests, thereby providing the stability and peaceful de-occupation of the territories of Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova.

Purpose and objectives of the study: The main purpose of the study is a comprehensive study and analysis of EU policy in the field of defense and security based on the historic, political and legal aspects. The study examines the history of the formation of a common foreign and security policy and the factors that determined and put on the agenda the need for such a policy. Based on existing approaches and to achieve the above goal, the following sub-objectives were set:

• Analysis of the role of the European Union in ensuring world security;

• Study of EU policy in the field of defense and security.

• Analysis of the global and regional aspects of new EU security challenges.

Main research questions of the article

With the help of this study, we will try to answer the following research questions that have been developed to solve these problems:

1. What is the SDP of EU or what are the roles of EU institutions in the field of security and defense?

2. What are the main stages of the EU Defense and Security Policy Development?

3. What are the main priorities of the EU Defense and Security Policy?

European Defense and Security Policy: Goals, Stages of Development, Tools, and Decision-Making Processes

Stages of development of the European defense and security policy

It is noteworthy that work on European defense and security began in the early 50s of the last century, in particular, in 1950, French Prime Minister Pleven presented the so-called "Pleven plan (Kapanadze, 2006), Which, under the leadership of the Joint Command, provided for the creation of a single European army. In 1950-1952, for economic growth, as well as for military security, this plan became the subject of discussion and negotiations in the European Coal and Steel Union. The creation of the European Defense Union, including the creation of a pan-European army, has become practically a reality. In December 1950, the NATO Council simultaneously decided to dissolve the Western Organization (Brussels Pact) after its integration with the NATO military organization. However, in August 30, 1954, by the decision of the French National Assembly, the plan to put into practice the idea of a single European army was rejected. The reason was a possible reduction of the sovereignty of European countries in the field of defense and security in case of the fulfillment of Rene Pleven's plan. France in 1961 once again offered to create a political union. At this stage, it was supposed to be an organization based not on the principles put forward by the superpowers, but on forms of interstate cooperation. Its functioning was to be determined based on the principles of the Diplomatic Conference, the purpose of which was to harmonize the field of foreign policy between the Member States, which, in turn, meant strengthening the overall defense capability of the Member States, protecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of cultural cooperation. However, a specific initiative within the framework of its activities should not violate the national sovereignty of the member states, etc. The idea of a political union, according to which the member states would delegate a significant part of their sovereignty, was actively supported by the small countries of the European Union. They hoped that unions of such associations of a federal type, endowed with appropriate powers, would be able to overcome the selfishness of large countries, which, in turn, were

part of this union and for the most part took their interests into account. France opposed the strengthening of the Commonwealth and the weakening of the powers of member states to maintain control over integrated decision-making. Fouche's first plan of 1961 for a framework agreement establishing a European political union was supported by Charles de Gaulle with the aim of "developing a common foreign policy on matters of common interest to the member states" (Hill, Smith, 2003). In 1983, the Stuttgart Declaration on the European Union was adopted, calling for "the progressive development of common principles and objectives and the establishment of common interests to strengthen the capacity for joint action in the field of foreign policy." At the Luxembourg Summit in 1970, the D'Avignon Report was presented, which formed the basis of European Political Cooperation (EPT), and later, in 1987, was officially incorporated into the Pan-European Act. The D'Avignon Report has been a key document in EU political cooperation for many years. The main feature of European political cooperation was consultations between member states at the level of foreign ministers, during which foreign policy issues were discussed (Kapanadze, 2006).

A report on European political cooperation was presented at the Copenhagen Summit in 1973. Within the framework of the EPT, a group of European experts was created, consisting of junior officials from member states. They were responsible for monitoring the activities and communications of the EPT in the EU countries. Thanks to this format, human rights issues were brought to the fore, which contributed to political changes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, but there were also issues on which representatives of different states could not agree, and this was quite adequate since at that time the countries Europe had different interests. In 1987, a small EPT secretariat was established in Brussels and it was agreed that the secretariat and European representatives (correspondents) would operate under the leadership of the European Council. European political cooperation was a forum where member states could consult on international affairs, but these would only be consultations and recommendations since there were virtually no mechanisms for legitimizing different positions and putting them into practice. The European Union, created as a purely economic union, has become an organization with competencies in such areas as ecology, education, health, international relations and security, law, and migration. For more than half a century, the EU has ensured peace, stability, and prosperity in the world, as well as contributing to a higher standard of living.

After the end of the Cold War, one of the most important areas for the development of the European Union was the policy of the EU in the field of defense and security. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Islamic Revolution in Iran once again convinced the Europeans of the weakness caused by the lack of a unified position in foreign policy. During the collapse of Yugoslavia, Europe played a less active role in resolving bloody wars and preventing conflicts. As a result, it turned out that Europe is incompetent in military matters and, both during the Cold War and at later stages, was forced to depend on the United States and NATO. After the end of the Cold War, the appropriate conditions were created for the EU to develop a defense and security policy. In 1992, an agreement on the European Union, known as the Maastricht Treaty, was signed in Maastricht. With the signing of this document, the European Economic Union was transformed into the European Union and acquired not only an economic but also a political aspect. The Maastricht Treaty was amended and combined into one document all the previous Paris Treaties, Rome Treaties, and the Single European Act (Chitadze, 2011).

The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the EU is based on the Maastricht Treaty, Article B which states that the Union seeks to "strengthen its identity on the international stage, in particular through the implementation of a common foreign and security policy." It was further strengthened on 1 November and then by treaties such as the Treaty of Amsterdam (1999), the Treaty of Nice (2003) of the Treaty of Lisbon (2007). Within the framework of these agreements, the EU also acquired the status of an international organization. One of the objectives of the Intergovernmental Conference, which preceded the drafting of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1996, was to strengthen the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and increase the role of the Union in international politics. Another step towards the development of the CFSP was the creation of a European security and defense policy, which, following the Lisbon Treaty, was called the Common Security and Defense Policy (NATO, 2006).

This was preceded by the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997, which strengthened the foreign and defense policy of the EU and determined the ways of developing its military potential and forms of participation in peacekeeping operations. Although the Treaty of Amsterdam introduced many significant changes in the overall process of foreign policy development, this process was still not considered complete, largely because these changes

were not backed up by common protection. The following are some of the important events that have played an important role in shaping the EU's common defense policy.

The 1998 Saint-Malo Summit was an informal meeting between President Jacques Chirac and Tony Blair that resulted in the Declaration of Saint-Malo being presented to the public. It says that the time has come for Europe to play an appropriate role in the international arena. It should "work step by step on the provisions of the Amsterdam Treaty in the field of Defense and Security Policy, including the development of a common defense policy framework." The adopted declaration focuses attention on the indispensable role of NATO in the defense of Europe. He also stressed that Europe should contribute to the modernization of NATO. But Europe must also be "capable of acting in situations where the alliance is not involved." In Saint-Malo, France and the UK indicated that they would join forces to enable the EU to achieve these goals. The 1998 meeting in Saint-Malo went down in history as a turning point in the revival of the EU's common defense. The European Union is recognized as the so-called soft power in world politics, and its main goal is to maintain peace, which includes issues such as election observation missions, humanitarian assistance, political dialogue, mediation, and much more. However, the EU needed to create a "hard power" and from there lay the foundation for a common defense or CSDP. The Cologne Declaration of the Council of Europe of June 1999 took into account the content of the Declaration of Saint-Malo and almost completely accepted the agreements reached there. This time, the desire of all EU member states to develop a common defense was formally confirmed (NATO, 2006). The European Council in Helsinki (December 1999) established the Police and Security Committee, and at the Nice Summit in 2000 it was given permanent institutional status, resulting in:

1. Keeps track of international events to which the provisions of the Common Foreign and Security Policy apply;

2. Participates in the process of determining the common foreign and security policy;

3. Monitors the implementation of the decision of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

Following all of the above, the Maastricht, Amsterdam, and Lisbon treaties, among other things, establish conditions for conflict prevention. In 1999, the European Council in Helsinki decided to create a Rapid Reaction Force. According to the decision, member states should be able to mobilize up to 60,000 military personnel within 60 days, who will take part in operations based by *Petersberg* tasks for at least one year. In addition, since 2005, a mobile group of 1,500 to 2,000 servicemen has been created, who will be able to mobilize within 10-15 days and take part in operations from 30 to 120 days. Member states of the European Council of Santa Maria de Feira (June 2000) agreed on a major civilian task, the development of the civilian component of ESDP, and that by 2003 the Union had to have up to 5,000 police officers to deal with crises. Accordingly, Saint-Malo and subsequent European Councils laid the foundation for the common defense, i.e. the European Security and Defense Policy (EEC), formally introduced into European institutions by the Treaty of Nice. The Nice Treaty also created the structure of the OSCE, which consists of three new components: the Political and Security Committee (PSC – COPS – PUK) and the EU Military Committee (PSC), the EU Military Staff (EU). Although the EU is not a military organization, it is more focused on conflict transformation than traditional defense (ESDP) (Chitadze, 2011).

Gradual Developmet of the European Foreign Defense and Security Policy

One of the most pressing issues at the current stage of the work of the EU is the common foreign and security policy of the EU. The signing of the Brussels Agreement by France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg in 1948 was the first institutional attempt at interstate cooperation among Western European countries. The treaty also contained an article on joint defense, which became the main basis for the creation of the Western European Union. The Western European Union operated under the auspices of the Security and Defense Dialogue in Europe with NATO until the 1990s, after which it was fully integrated into the EU legal system. Starting from this period, various options for cooperation were considered, which were supposed to lead to political rapprochement and integration of the member states of the Union (European Council, 2009).

The EU's common foreign and security policy and its common security and defense policy are an integral part of the EU's broader foreign policy, referred to as "the collective set of policies adopted by EU member states to deal with external problems and manage relations" (Webber, 2011). The high level of relations between EU

member states was characterized by such areas as the economy, trade, labor movement, agriculture, and law, although cooperation in foreign policy and defense was relatively less effective. For this reason, in 1991, Belgian Foreign Minister Marc Aikens strongly criticized the effectiveness of the EU outside the trade area, calling the EU an economic giant, a political dwarf, and a military worm (Bossuyt, 2007). It is because of this publicly exposed weakness that Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom decided that it was time for Europe to develop its military capabilities to be even more worthy on the international stage. This was a 180-degree reversal of British policy, as in the past the UK had vehemently opposed the creation of autonomous military mechanisms by Europe (Kapanadze, 2006).

Georgian scholar E. Akobia In his article "EU Foreign Policy" analyzes two circumstances of slow integration into EU foreign policy and defense. First, is foreign policy and defense, which traditionally fall under the jurisdiction of the state and are associated with the sovereignty of the country, the degree of independence, and national interests. According to the author, the EU member states have always had a problem in terms of developing a common position in the field of foreign affairs, security, and defense. The second reason is the concern of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for the security and defense of European countries. According to the author's position, the EU member states considered it inappropriate to create a purely European structure that would compete with NATO and cast doubt on its necessity. However, member states have concluded that EU diplomacy is less effective due to a lack of military power and that the creation of a NATO-independent security and defense policy was based on the desire for a defense mechanism and increased influence (Akobia, 2006). European leaders sought to bolster the EU's defenses and avoid threats in European countries such as a revanchist Russia and increased terrorist attacks. Strengthening the joint actions of the EU will allow European countries to start to understand what they are going to defend against. Because of this, there have been various attempts to implement this idea. The foreign and security policy of the EU is based on the 1993 EU Treaty and aims to:

• Protecting the values, fundamental interests, security, independence, and integrity of the EU;

• Strengthen and uphold the principles of democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and international law;

• Maintaining peace, preventing conflicts, and strengthening international security;

• Assistance to the population, countries, and regions in the fight against natural and man-made disasters (European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia, 2022).

The EU plays an important role in the Middle East peace process and the organization has troops, police, and judges who help save lives and stabilize conflicts around the world in different countries and regions. The Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 proved to be more effective in terms of decision-making, but the Lisbon Treaty of 2007, which gave the EU legal subjectivity, is of particular importance. The agreement primarily aimed to create a universal system among the EU member states, based on a relatively simple decision-making system (Turunen, 2018). According to the Lisbon agreement (Information Center on NATO and EU), The positions of President of the Council of the European Union and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy have been established. They sought to simplify the decision-making process at the EU level, which became more and more complex over time, given the number of member states. Changes were also made to the voting procedure, the principle of unanimity was replaced by the principle of a qualified majority in more than 45 constituencies.

In 2003, the EU launched the European Security Strategy, which states: "We must increase the benefits of economic and political cooperation with our neighbors in the East, and we must fight the political problems that exist there. "Now we need to show a stronger and more active interest in the problems of the South Caucasus"(Turunen, 2018). According to the strategy, "the essence of foreign and security policy, as well as European security and defense policy, is that we are stronger when we work together..." (Turunen, 2018). In the 2003 Security Strategy, the EU emphasized the need to show a stronger and more active interest in the problems of the South Caucasus, which, of course, includes neighboring regions (Mirianashvili, 2015). In 2008, the European Security Strategy was amended to include the following issues: energy security, cyber security, and climate change. The document outlines the goal of transforming the EU into a more active, efficient, and capable organization both in the international arena and in the neighborhood (Solana, 2009). The Foreign and Security Policy Strategy, presented by EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini on 8 January 2016, is the second foreign policy document. "A common vision, joint action, a strong

Europe in which to prevent or neutralize various threats, we need more than all the tools that the EU should have, and differentiate resources and defense policy and strengthen resources and policies (Zurabishvili, 2016). This document was approved by the European Council on June 28, 2016. According to the Global Strategy, the EU has identified five key priorities: Union security, state and social resilience in the south and east of the EU, an integrated approach to conflict, regional cooperation initiatives, and global governance in the 21st century. The European Security Strategy identifies five major threats to EU security: terrorism, proliferation, regional conflicts, failed states (primarily Somalia, Libya, and Taliban-ruled Afghanistan), and organized crime. The European Security Strategy aims to prevent these threats. The document pays special attention to "three groups of strategic goals: the first is to counter threats and neutralize them, the second is to establish a zone of the friendly neighborhood around the EU, as well as cooperation with international organizations and partner countries, including Russia. Third, to strengthen cooperation with the United Nations and the Security Council, given the fact that the latter has a key responsibility for ensuring international peace and security (Butorina, 2011). The security of the European Union is a priority of the global strategy. It provides citizens with the opportunity to enjoy unprecedented security, democracy, and prosperity. Strategic sovereignty emphasizes the EU's ability to act, recognizing that transnational threats can only be addressed within the framework of national sovereignty. The concept focuses on the legitimate ambitions of the Europeans to be sovereign strategic players without a hint of a relationship with the US. Strategic sovereignty emphasizes the EU's ability to act and recognizes that transnational threats cannot be transferred to national security and act in principle. "Together when you can, alone when you need to." Of course, such a concept could not be supplemented by the lack of strategic priorities, which means that there was a need to address political issues as well (Quencez, 2020).

Accordingly, the main objective of the EU's defense and security policy is to ensure peace and security, democracy, and human rights, not only in its member states and in the immediate neighborhood, but also the hotspots of the world.

EU foreign policy is seen as a child of European integration, and defense and security policy as a grandchild (Techau, 2020), Although this area of cooperation, is seen as a step towards the most dynamic institutional development of EU policy. Keukeleire and Delreux, in his famous book, The European Union's Foreign Policy, notes that the EU's foreign policy is multifaceted, multidisciplinary, and multilevel. There are also three main episodes in the development of foreign policy: the first, the post-World War II period – the origin and formation of the European project, and then the following decades; Second, the late 1980s and early 1990s – the end of the Cold War and new opportunities for rapprochement between Western and Eastern Europe; and the third, beginning of the 21st century – the shift in the balance of power (Keukeleire, 2021). On 13 November 2017, the Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs of 23 EU countries signed the Permanent Structural Cooperation (Pesco) in the field of defense and security (EU, 2020), Which is the main mechanism in the process of transformation of the EU into hard power. Also in June, the European Commission set up a European Defense Fund (EU Commission, 2020), For which 5.5 billion euros were allocated annually for the modernization of modern armaments technologies in the member states.

The European Union Council has also supported the development of another defense and security instrument, "the Military Planning and Capacity Building (MPCC)" (MPCC) (EU Commission, 2022).

It became focused on training operations and crisis management. The MPCC carries out EU training missions in three African countries, Somalia, Mali, and the Central African Republic. The European Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) has become part of the EU's foreign policy, which aims to use its military and civilian resources. The fundamental principles of the European Union are indeed mentioned in both the 2016 Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy and the 2003 European Security Strategy, but in reality, their role in foreign policy decisions is relatively insignificant. The main reason for this is that the EU's foreign policy and security are often considered to be the competence of the member states, not at the supranational level, and in many cases, their national interests do not coincide. It is noteworthy that during the first decade of CSDP operation, a gap between capabilities and expectations was observed. Any EU military or civilian operation depends on the willingness of member states to provide material, financial, military, and civilian assistance to a particular country if necessary. The EU is involved in the security sector, which includes policing and military operations, strengthening the rule of law, and improving judicial and penitentiary systems.

The Role of EU Defense and Security Policy in the current period

At the present stage, the European Union is one of the largest economic and political players in the world. It may be highlighted that its economic achievements are at a supranational level, while its foreign and security policies are still refined. Among the reasons given, it is possible to consider various hindering factors.

• Recognizes that resolving both internal and external conflicts, in turn, requires a different approach. Wrong policies can cause great damage to the state and lead to political regression. Internal political controversy is often the cause of external conflicts.

• The European Union alone can not be a guarantor of international peace and conflict resolution between countries, nor can it be the sole driving force of economic development if, in the first place, domestic political and economic processes are not resolved by specific countries.

• In the global context, of course, we can confidently say that the EU is a successful, progressive organization in the world that is actively involved in ensuring peace, democracy, stability, and conflict resolution in Europe and the world as a whole. Taking into account Russia's aggressive policy, it can not be mentioned the same about the conflicts in the post-soviet space. Military confrontations and tensions in Ukraine, Moldova, and the South Caucasus are far more complex than some other conflicts, for example, conflicts in the Balkan Region, where the mediator and peacekeeping roles are taken by NATO and EU and not by Russia.

• The 2008 Georgian-Russian war brought Georgia and the countries in the European part of the post-Soviet space closer to the EU, as exemplified by the EU's Eastern Partnership program approved in 2009. However, despite the involvement of the EU peacekeeping mission in the conflict resolution process following the end of the Russian-Georgian war, it proved powerless to deal with external threats and conflicts as a third force – the Russian Federation – was involved.

• We think that before the Russia-Ukraine war, the European Union was partly more concerned with its internal problems than with world conflicts, and the position of leader in specific regions (Afghanistan, Iraq) was ceded to the United States. However, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the EU, along with the United States and other countries in the world democratic community, is actively seeking to impose sanctions on Russia, even though EU member states are economically and energetically dependent on Russia and before the Russia-Ukraine war. For the sake of interests, they were forced to cooperate with an authoritarian state like Russia.

As for the new initiatives presented directly within the framework of the EU defense and security policy, given the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war since February 24, 2022, calls are increasingly heard in the upper echelons of the EU for the creation of a European army. Europeans believe that a modern and mutually compatible European armed forces should be created to unite security efforts. Such an army must be deprived of the shortcomings that EU troops now have and which became apparent after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. As one of he examples of such positions from the European side can be considered the report of the German Council of Foreign Relations with the title: European Defense in A New Age (German Council of Foreign Relations, 2023).

At the same time, it should be noted that various studies in the different countries have shown that most of the experts, specialists, and young people surveyed viewed the EU as one of the main forces restraining conflict and international peace.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the research, the idea of forming a European army is not a product of the 21st century. This idea has been actively circulating since the second half of the twentieth century. For a clearer perception of the picture, it will not be out of place to once again review the brief chronology of the main stages in the direction of defense and security of the European Union.

The process started in 1950 with the proposal of the French Prime Minister, René Pleven, which meant the creation of a European defense union. The agreement did not enter into force due to the refusal of the French parliament to ratify it, but the idea did not disappear. The next important historical moment was the Maastricht

Agreement of 1991, based on which the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) was established and the Common Defense Policy was established. This was followed by the development of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) in 1999 and the signing of the Berlin Plus Treaty in 2002, based on which the EU could use NATO structures and mechanisms in the implementation of ESDP missions (Chitadze, 2011).

The next steps were: the establishment of the European Defense Agency in 2004 and the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007, which made significant changes in the defense policy, in particular, the ESDP was transformed into the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), as well as the formation of PESCO, which will be discussed later. In the same year, the combat units of the European Union were formed, which, unfortunately, have not been used until now (Chitadze, 2011).

Before it is mentioned directly about the significance of the 2022 Russia-Ukraine war, the society should also touch on other events that have prepared the ground for ensuring more openness of the member states to the integration of the European Union in the military sphere.

First of all, it was preceded by Donald Trump's foreign policy, which resulted in the alienation of the US from its traditional allies, accompanied by constant criticism, especially of Germany, for its obligation to spend at least 2% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on security (Keukeleire, Delreux, 2021). Trump's position was extremely hard on those who were "free-riding" at the expense of the US – taking security guarantees as a given, but contributing insufficiently or disproportionately to maintaining this security. This made Europe realize that the US security umbrella is not a given and that Europe needs its autonomous tools to effectively respond to the threat created on the continent.

The second outstanding event was the exit of Great Britain from the European Union. Brexit has eliminated the main opponent of the idea of the EU's defense union, therefore, the camp of the opponents has weakened significantly, and this has naturally created new opportunities.

As the history of European integration shows us, one of the hindering factors of the integration processes was the constant search for consensus. This became more and more difficult as the number of member states grew, and it increased the chances that decisions would come dangerously close to the red lines of at least one state's national interests, and in the search for consensus virtually every state's veto had the power to block the process. After realizing this, the rule of making decisions by a qualified majority was established in several directions, although the rule of consensus was maintained on the most important decisions. For example, this was also one of the reasons behind the EU's ineffective response to the influx of migrants and the Euro crisis.

This helped the society to rethink the integration process. Although the state was a member of the European Union, it was not necessary to be involved in all integration projects. This would prevent process blockages, and deepen integration, which is seen in the example of the Schengen Agreement. It should be noted that the European Commission often refers to the idea of a defense union as a defense Schengen, that is, integration in this direction is voluntary. This is one of the dimensions of the multi-speed Europe idea, which increases the autonomy of the member states to decide where and how much they will be involved. As a result, we are already talking about differentiated integration.

On the other hand, the idea of a multi-speed Europe was followed by the fear that the said policy could lead to the exclusion of the member states left out of the processes and contribute to the formation of more or less integrated groups. The formation of such groups is contrary to the EU's desire to maintain unanimity, which is an integral prerequisite for the EU to act with one voice in the foreign arena.

The events taking place in Ukraine finally woke up Europe, although as mentioned, the preparation of the ground for integration processes started in 2016.

Currently, the traditionally passive member states are actively planning to stimulate their military potential, and the unanimity of the West is unprecedented in recent times. The extent to which these steps will be transformed into collective political will to launch the integration processes in the field of security and defense with renewed energy remains questionable.

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