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War as external cause: Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the theorising of European integration and EU politics, and the EU's arduous formation in foreign and security policy

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ABSTRACT

Russia's war in Ukraine from February 2022 has had massive effects on Europe's Union and its member states, prompting changes in policy, new policies, discussions of options and potential future trajectories, and (limited) formal-institutional integration. However, given different domestic conditions and contexts, Russia's war's impact varies considerably across member states and Union policy stances. We distinguish and examine four main areas: supporting Ukraine through the war; policies confronting Russia via economic means; the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and related matters; and novel nuclear discussions. While documenting significant effects on European foreign policy, security, and defence, we do not witness an instant creation of a unitary European actor or Europe take on (super)state-like features in these realms.

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Introduction

Historically, analysis and theorising on European integration and the political affairs of the EU and its predecessors have predominantly focused on causes internal to Europe – its history, politics, economies, and societies – particularly in the domains of political economy, economics, and various dimensions of law and regulations.

With Russia's full-on war in Ukraine, along with an internationally ever-more assertive China and uncertainty in transatlantic relations, the 'external world' has gained major prominence in European integration and EU politics.

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Correspondingly, factors and forces (causes, variables, 'stimuli') 'external to' or 'outside' Europe that scholars explicitly consider as drivers or barriers to European integration and EU affairs have arrived with vehemence. And, substantively, foreign policy, security, and defence – domains marginal or feeble for the majority of the European project post-World War II – have fully and sharply moved centre-stage. Common catch-phrases such as 'the return of geopolitics,' 'the rise of geoeconomics,' or '*Zeitenwende*', only echo the two-fold shift.

Classically, International Relations researchers have examined the causal impact of 'second-image-reversed,' 'outside-in' factors, such as the international economy and international economic relations, political-military rivalries, military or other security pressures, and war (Gourevitch, 1978) on the politics, policies, and polities of modern territorial states. Now, war as an 'external' factor or cause demands scrutiny in its impact on the regional affairs of European integration, EU politics, and the relations among the Union and its members.

This article explores the impact of Russia's war in Ukraine as an 'outside-in' factor on Europe's formation in security and defence, with the aim of capturing the shock of the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and investigating developments until the beginning of Donald Trump's second presidency of the United States in January 2025. We address the question of whether, to what degrees, and why Russia's full attack on Ukraine has affected integration and its politics in European security and defence, and redefined EU security policy in international affairs.

Consistent with the general framework of this special issue, we focus on the multifaced components of *level*, *scope*, and *extension* of integration.[1] To that end, we analyse the evolution of integration in EU security policies by disentangling the continuities between Russia's forcible annexation of Crimea and expansion in Donbas region of 2014, and the considerable changes following the full-scale invasion in February 2022.

In investigating integration in the overall area of EU security and defence, we analyse the major areas tangibly connected to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Thus, we consider (1) EU policy toward Ukraine; (2) EU policy toward Russia; (3) institutional developments in EU foreign, security, and defence policy related to the war; and (4) discussions of potential European nuclear policies. We thus establish comprehensive, macro-level patterns, considering and transcending previous studies that investigated such aspects at the individual level (e.g., Genschel *et al*., 2023).

Empirically, we draw on a variety of primary materials, including original documents, databases on weapons deliveries, economic aid, and sanctions, as well as on EU policy documents (directives, regulations, formal declarations, etc.) and official EU online webpages. We complement these sources

with pertinent policy studies and think tank work, along with a wide range of secondary materials.

Policy toward Ukraine. We find that support for Ukraine by the EU and its member states increased massively with the start of the full-scale invasion in 2022. Some measures were taken at the Union level, including the provision of profits from frozen Russian state funds to Ukraine and support via the Ukraine Facility and the European Peace Facility. Military support for Ukraine was extensive, but largely conducted bilaterally and through NATO-associated frameworks. While the EU's policies in these areas proved consequential, little formal-institutional integration took place. Furthermore, between the member states, the extent of bilateral support to Ukraine, as well as the costs of, and engagement in Union-level support for Ukraine varied widely.

Policy toward Russia. The EU and its member states broadened sanctions that they had started to impose in 2014 and made them more severe, mostly via Union-level frameworks agreed upon at an intergovernmental level. They also increased Europe's economic resilience vis-à-vis Russia. Again, there as wide variance in how these policies affected member states.

The EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and related domains

We observe limited yet significant Union-level institutional integration through policy-making activities and the extension of institutional solutions to enhance supranational cooperation, derived from experiences of previous crises. While in the military field the member states found in the EU an actor to coordinate their support to Ukraine under the security strategy set by NATO, various military-related activities were conducted at the EU level, leading to a progressive deepening of integration. The Union established a new civilian mission in the area (EUMAM Ukraine) and reinforced existing ones. Furthermore, it significantly expanded common financial resources, enhancing mechanisms that superseded the ATHENA mechanism of financing (Terpan, 2015), and introduced new regulatory frameworks and institutions to oversee cybersecurity and military-industrial production. This renewal has also involved existing EU institutional bodies and regulations. The war in Ukraine accelerated the development of security branches established in the early 2000s, such as cybersecurity and weapons production and supply, which complement the military sector. In these areas, EU institutions have aimed for a leading role.

Nuclear discussions of options for a future shield

Russia's war and repeated nuclear threats also triggered entirely new sorts of debates, including extending France's nuclear umbrella to other Union members, a nuclear deterrent at the Union level, and/or additional national nuclear forces – in combination with or partially replacing reliance on the United States and NATO. Novel and remarkable in their basic nature and range, these discussions have transpired entirely as debates without short-term policy changes or new policy trajectories, l*et al*one steps toward formal institutional integration.

Unlike its 2014 aggressions on the Crimea peninsula and in the Donbas, Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022 prompted massive changes in threat perceptions – with Russia increasingly seen as an irresponsible, dangerous, and aggressive actor, and Ukraine as a victim of unjust aggression. Although this shift translated into notable impetus in the positioning, stances, and policies of the EU and its member states, actions and reactions have been considerably uneven.

Yet, even in the face of immense security pressures such as war, we see no instant creation of a pan-European international political actor through swift 'bellicist integration,' nor has the EU readily emerged as a unitary international actor to take on more (super-)state-like features in these realms (Kelemen & McNamara, 2022).

Rather, we find important while varying policy changes, new policies of the EU or its member states, new debates, and limited integrative institutional development in the key areas of security and defence generating new and diverse mixes of levels, scope, and extension across security policy fields. Our focus and examinations of Russia-EU relations, continuities and change also with comparisons across time, and assessments of policy paths within central security areas expands upon or complements the extant and emerging literatures (Fiott, 2023; Genschel *et al*., 2023; Hoeffler *et al*., 2024).

We find that the trajectory of changes in EU integration in the security and defence realms is overall consistent with the issue editors' argument on the role of external pressures, here Russia's war. The observed extent of EU integration in security and defence reflects the Russian attack of 2022 signifying to nigh-all member states that Russia poses a threat to European security and values. However, the uneven, at times reluctant nature of these (mixes of) integration processes within the period covered here suggest that member states are very unevenly exposed to (and perceive) current or potential Russian aggression; that member states' bilateral histories with Ukraine and Russia differ strongly; and that they had and have vastly divergent economic ties with Ukraine and Russia. Europe's formation in security broadly is ongoing, and it remains arduous.

The next section offers theoretical and conceptual groundwork. The subsequent sections, in turn, examine how, before and after the start of the full-scale invasion, the EU and its member states enacted policy toward Ukraine and Russia; how the CSDP and other security-related institutional frameworks developed; how novel nuclear discussions emerged in European contexts, and how all of this has affected European integration and EU politics. We briefly conclude by tying together our findings.

Second-image-reversed and domestic modulation in the study of European integration and EU politics

In the most prominent strands of integration theory, factors or causes outside or external to Europe itself have played only subordinate roles. In the traditional dichotomy between different versions of neofunctionalism and supranationalism on the one hand, and variants of intergovernmentalism on the other, 'external' factors hardly figured. Neo-functionalists and supranationalists focused on regional spillover effects; supranational logics; transnational processes within Europe; and the impact of new regional European institutions (Haas, 1968 [[1958]]; Sandholtz & Sweet, 2013; Schmitter 1970).

In diverse ways, different types of intergovernmentalism have concentrated on the relevance of EU (and predecessor) member state governments, their positions and preferences; the origins of their preferences and positions; regional interdependence; and the logics of intergovernmental dynamics in shaping EU politics and policies (Bickerton *et al*., 2005; Hoffmann, 1966; Moravcsik, 1998; Schirm, 2018). Again, 'outside' factors played only minor or negligible roles.

Recent postfunctionalist investigations, by their very nature, focused on politicisation and politics at the domestic level (Hooghe & Marks, 2009, 2019). With the beginnings of an EU foreign and security policy, scholars employed mostly factors internal to Europe to analyse the EU's external actions and postures (thus practicing the 'inside-out' of traditional foreign policy analysis).

Factors 'external' or 'outside-in' Europe, however, remained not entirely absent in studying important aspects of the European project. Some historians and political scientists find many aspects of the European integration project intertwined with (while hardly reducible to) the Cold War and its manifold implications and impediments, for example in EC/EU enlargement politics (Karamouzi, 2019) and its Mediterranean affairs (Calandri, 2019). Ludlow (2019) coins the intuitive metaphor of photography, where the Cold War is present in most snapshots of European integration decision making until 1990 yet 'seldom in focus, rarely in the centre of the picture' (p. 15), but rather on the side or somewhat blurred. The Cold War has been contentious, both as an input and background condition, or simply as one

among several factors co-shaping European integration and EC/EU politics during the period.

Russia's full-fledged attack on Ukraine beginning in 24 February 2022 is an 'external cause' of a different quality and magnitude. For European politics, it moves 'second-image-reversed' thinking centre stage.[2] Three sets of widely varying domestic conditions and contexts of Union member states, however, shape differing degrees (and sorts) of politicisation in urgency, threats, or threat perceptions, which subsequently translate into significantly varying member-state postures, positionings, preferences, and policy inclinations and thus wide-ranging effects across policy domains. These three aspects are expected to modulate and mediate the external impetus and impact of Russia's war on European integration and EU politics.

First, depending on geographic proximity and exposure, historical experiences especially regarding relations with Russia, territorial and political vulnerabilities vis-à-vis Russia, along with own military capabilities or limitations, and perceived national interests, EU member states varyingly perceive the importance and urgency of helping Ukraine to withstand or even roll back Russian advances, or otherwise confronting Russia.

Second, depending on member states' highly different pre-existing economic and trade ties to Russia, notably in energy and raw materials, and the sharply uneven economic costs of reducing, freezing, or interrupting economic exchange with Russia, even the full invasion causes differing degrees of concern about these ties and the implications for their own economy and society.

Third, the more a member state's government and elites perceive the war's potential as negatively affecting their own standing in their state's domestic politics, the more they push for EU-wide policies that mitigate these effects. This can include varying exposure to immediate war-related effects; the financial, political, and societal consequences of providing shelter care for refugees; financial aid to Ukraine; and taking on perceived risks in conflict management.

Such pre-existing domestic conditions and contexts vary widely among member states. Union-members perceived threats, urgency, and the need to react in different ways – some felt a strong urge to act, while others took more low-profile stances – and their stances and preferences toward Russia varied greatly, thus also wielding varying EU positions. Union positions at times, but not always, reflected the diversity of reactions, at times taking minimal common denominators among its members (cf. Driedger & Krotz, 2024).

For example, some member states on the Union's eastern fringe, not least the Baltics and Poland, have historically been dominated by Russia or integrated into the Soviet Union or its sphere. Renewed Russian aggression and expansion for them intertwine with historical experiences and geographic exposure, generating highest politicisation of existential dimensions. Others, such as France and Italy, who never lived under Russian or Soviet rule and are less directly exposed to Russian aggression, are less deeply

economically interlinked with Russia (as Germany was during the decades leading to 2022), and have significant means to defend against Russia (cf. Driedger, 2022; Driedger & Krotz, 2024).

Yet others such as Portugal, Spain, or Ireland, which are geographically fairly removed with weak prior economic ties with Russia, largely feel protected or safe with NATO and thus perceive much less pressure or necessity to act, are taking low-key stances. While some states, like Germany, have the means to make a difference in the war, this is less the case for smaller and poorer member states. Depending on geographic location and initial policy, some member states host millions of refugees and put significant resources into Ukraine's support, whereas others do not.[3]

Patterns of societal views in EU member states on Russia and Ukraine are largely consistent with our framework. For example, in 2023, the extent of Russia's 2022 aggression correlated with a consistent view among EU societies that Russia is responsible for the war (a constellation that Freudlsperger & Schramm, this issue, have as 'even external politicization') and that Ukraine should not be urged to forfeit territory to Russia. Support for Ukraine and hard-nosed policies toward Russia was highest in countries nearby Russia (e.g., Finland, Poland, the Baltics) and significant, yet lower in countries that bought significant amounts of natural gas from Russia (Germany, Italy) as well as in the most authoritarian member state, Hungary (cf. Thomson *et al*., 2023).

Considering member states' varying historical, economic, and strategic ties with Russia as well as the likely uneven effects of the invasion on elites' domestic standing, we expected that no full integration would occur in EU foreign, security, and defence policy. With formal-institutional integration requiring the highest amount of commitment from all member states, we expect the *level* of integration to progress less substantively than along the other dimensions of integration (see Freudlsperger & Schramm, this issue). Rather, we expected integration to occur largely at the levels of *scope* and *extent*. Such changes in policy, new policies, and discussions of options and potential future policy trajectories require less Union-member congruence or homogeneity, as they are more reversible, less resource-intensive, and allow for some member states to become more active than others. In the subsequent sections, we investigate actual changes in EU policy and EU policy integration.

Supporting Ukraine through the War

EU support for Ukraine increased significantly with the start of the full-scale invasion, far exceeding the levels following the 2014 Maidan Revolution (for an overview, see European Council/Council of the EU, 2024e). Reflecting the EU's largely intergovernmental structure in foreign and security affairs, military support for Ukraine was primarily conducted at the member-state

level and through NATO-associated frameworks, while the Union played a much more consequential role at the economic level. The EU also provided various additional and unprecedented support measures, such as granting Ukraine membership perspective and actively supporting the accession process. The Russian attack and EU military support for Ukraine also caused the EU to facilitate various processes to increase synergies among EU defence firms as well as raising EU defence spending and domestic defence production, albeit with limited tangible policy change and integration observable up until mid-2024.

Military support for Ukraine

Prior to the full-scale invasion, military support for Ukraine had remained comparatively minor. Furthermore, this support largely took place bilaterally and within NATO-associated frameworks. Between 2015 and 2019, this included a British mission training some 10,000 Ukrainian troops and high-level training seminars on countering hybrid warfare hosted by Poland and Lithuania (King, 2019). EU member states shied away from sending weapons to Ukraine, with a few exceptions in the immediate run-up to the full-scale invasion in early 2022. Within NATO, the United States was the main provider of military training and weapons to Ukraine, prominently including Javelin anti-tank missiles and launchers (Driedger, 2020).

Military support for Ukraine by the EU and its member states soared after the start of the full invasion in 2022. Such support did not include EU member states sending national troops to fight alongside Ukraine. Calls by French President Macron to this effect did not result in tangible action (France 24, 2024). Furthermore, strategic coordination was largely conducted via NATO-associated frameworks (Genschel *et al*., 2023, pp. 352–355). Rather, aside from the training of Ukrainian soldiers in and by EU member states (see section below on CSDP), EU military support for Ukraine largely consisted in bilateral weapons deliveries from EU member states to Ukraine.

The member states are the clear focus regarding the EU-wide provision of military goods to Ukraine. The Ukraine Support Tracker maintained by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy indicates that, by spring 2024, around €38 billion had been provided for military support. In total, by April 2024, EU member states had committed about €57 billion, jointly exceeding the volume of by far the largest individual provider of military assistance, the United States, with about €50 billion (Trebesch *et al*., 2024).

There is, however, a noticeable disparity among member states regarding the volume of military assistance, even when controlling for population size or wealth (cf. Table 1). For example, France's contribution amounts to only a quarter of Germany's. Hungary did not provide any military assistance. Germany is by far the largest EU provider of military assistance to Ukraine,

Table 1. Total value of weapons, military equipment, and items donated to the Ukrainian armed forces as well as financial assistance tied to military purposes (Jan 24, 2022- April 30, 2024) (Trebesch *et al*., 2024).

EU Countries (Selection)	Military allocations to Ukraine in € billion
Germany	10.2
Denmark	5.6
Netherlands	4.35
Poland	3.0
France	2.69
Finland	2.03
Italy	1.0
Spain	0.55
Estonia	0.51
Hungary	0
Non-EU Countries (Selection)	
United States	50.37
United Kingdom	8.8

but Denmark – whose population amounts to about 6 percent of Germany's – provided over half as much military aid to Ukraine than Germany did.

The EU itself has not supplied any weapons. However, through the EU Peace Facility, it financed around €11 billion in weapons deliveries to Ukraine (European Council / Council of the EU, 2024c).[4] Funds have also been provided for mine clearance and nuclear safety. Several thousand power generators and transformers have also been sent to Ukraine (EU Neighbours East, 2023).

The EU had long set out to encourage a 'European preference' in defence projects due to the long-term geostrategic pivot of the United States toward Asia and increasing security challenges in its own neighbourhood. One might expect this approach to solidify after the start of the full invasion. However, this was not the case. Rather, in areas of arms collaboration, arms procurement, and offsets, fragmentation and non-EU dependencies actually increased in the two years following the start of the full-scale invasion (Anicetti, 2024). As Genschel (2022) argues, rather than centralising member states' core state powers at the Union level, member states' have been strengthened with the support of EU institutions. This can be read as a form of intergovernmental integration, but not as a move to EU-statehood.

Economic support for Ukraine

Since the beginning of the 2022 invasion, Ukraine has received significant economic support from both the EU and its member states. EU member states have contributed €12.2 billion through grants, loans, and guarantees, with half of this amount distributed by the end of April 2024. Up to this time, the Union itself had also provided €33 billion in financial assistance

to Ukraine (Trebesch *et al*., 2024). Furthermore, the EU decided to use revenues generated from Russian state funds frozen on EU accounts to aid Ukraine's war efforts in May 2024 (European Council / Council of the EU, 2024d). Their volume was estimated between €15 and 20 billion after taxes until 2027 (Strupczewski, 2024).

At the Union-level, the EU also set into motion the so-called Ukraine Facility, earmarking €50 billion from 2024 to 2027, comprising €33 billion in loans and €17 billion in grants. This initiative is structured around three pillars: the Ukraine Plan, which outlines Ukraine's reform and investment agenda; the Ukraine Investment Framework, aimed at facilitating investments in Ukraine; and Union accession assistance, which includes support measures related to Ukraine's potential future integration into the EU (European Commission, 2024b).

While the EU and its member states had supported Ukraine, specifically since the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbas in 2014, these measures were small compared to the period after the start of the full-scale invasion (cf. King, 2019).

Other Union-level support for Ukraine

With the start of the full-scale invasion, the EU deepened its support to Ukraine in various areas and extended it to others. Four months into the war, on 23 June 2022, the EU granted Ukraine EU membership perspective by unanimous decision of all 27 EU member states. Since then, various accession negotiations, EU reports, and financial support have been issued to aid Ukraine in its accession process (European Commission, 2024c), thereby also signalling to Russia the EU's commitment to Ukraine. The decision to grant membership perspective was made partly to stabilise Ukraine and facilitate security-building mechanisms (Anghel & Džankić, 2023). Other measures of support include EU investigations alongside Ukrainian ones into Russian war crimes (European Council/Council of the EU, 2024b). In contrast, the 2017 Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA), sparked by the Maidan Revolution in 2014, did not entail a path to membership perspective.

EU economic statecraft toward Russia: From 'all just business' to sanctions and resilience

Due to sanctions and war-related reforms, economic relations between the EU and Russia have undergone a significant transformation since the start of the full-scale invasion in early 2022 (see also Demirci *et al*., this issue). The EU and its member states broadened and intensified the sanctions that it had started to impose in 2014 following the annexation of Crimea, mostly via Union-level frameworks adopted at an intergovernmental level.

The imposition of these new sanctions largely stemmed from EU actors' changed view of Russia as an increasingly irresponsible, dangerous, and aggressive actor, and Ukraine as a victim of unjust aggression. Furthermore, the attack shifted EU views on the risks and benefits associated with EU economic ties to Russia, which were increasingly viewed as a strategic liability, opening up EU member states to Russian blackmail and coercion. This caused significant changes in EU commercial ties and policies. However, despite the severity of EU sanctions since 2022, we see little formal institutional integration. Moreover, Russia has successfully circumvented part of these sanctions, and various direct and indirect commercial ties have persisted between the EU and Russia.

EU sanctions against Russia

Following the Russian annexation of Crimea and the start of the Donbas war in 2014, the EU imposed a range of sanctions on Russia. However, these sanctions were put in place only after extensive rounds of intra-EU politicking and were designed to be easily reversible and to exempt most areas of key interest to EU member states (Driedger & Krotz, 2024, cf. pp. 496-500).

Since the start of the full-scale invasion by Russia in 2022, the EU and its member states have imposed additional, stronger, and far more wide-ranging sanctions. The overarching aim was to make it as difficult as possible for Russia to finance, organise, and continue the war (European Council/Council of the EU, 2024a). In the financial sector, individual asset freezes were initiated for over 2,200 high-ranking Russian decision-makers. The EU also tried to make it much more difficult for Russia to conduct international transactions, not least through banning Russian use of the SWIFT system (European Council/Council of the EU, 2024a). The export sanctions in the trade sector aim particularly at dual-use goods and technology, with the aim of preventing the EU and its member states from ultimately supplying goods that allow for the continuation of the war by the Russian side (European Council/Council of the EU, 2024a).

Consequently, EU exports into Russia dropped significantly, specifically when compared to the levels between 2014 and 2021 (see Figure 1). As energy-related goods have long been among the EU's most important imports from Russia, sanctions focused on this area. Especially robust measures targeted crude oil and refined petroleum products. A price cap was also introduced for Russian oil to keep Russia's export profits as low as possible. In addition, new investments in the Russian energy sector, particularly with regard to technical support and knowledge transfer, were prohibited (European Council/Council of the EU, 2024a).

However, a plethora of anecdotal evidence suggests successful sanction evasion. For example, the decline of Russian imports of sanctioned EU

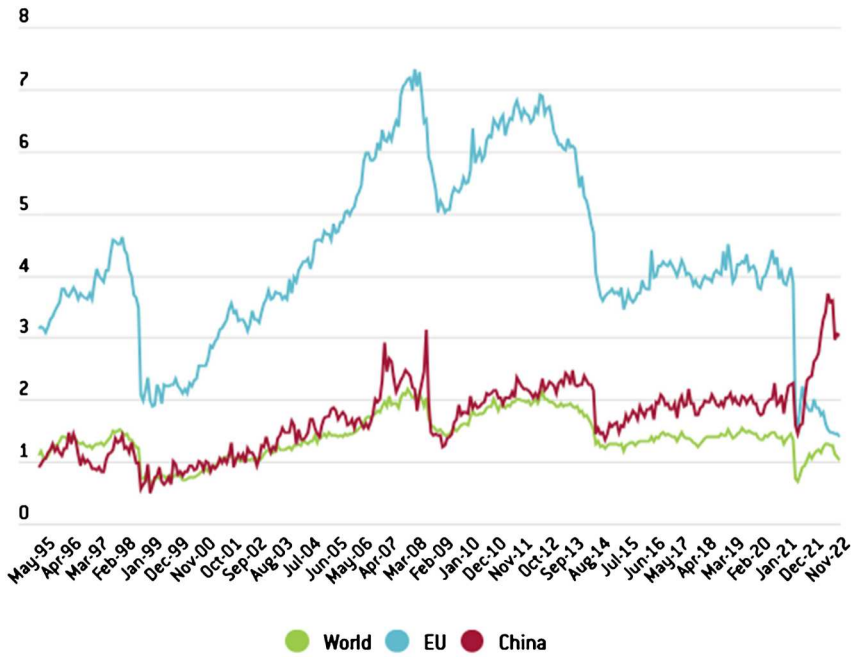

Figure 1. Share of total exports going to Russia (excluding intra-EU exports), percentages, January 1995 to October 2023 (from Darvas *et al*., 2024).

goods correlated with rapid increases in Russian imports of these very same goods from non-sanctioned countries that maintain friendly ties with Russia (Astrov *et al*., 2024, pp. 17–18). Conversely, sanctioned Russian gas has been flowing into the EU via Azerbaijan and Turkey (van Rij, 2024).

Nonetheless, the sanctions have significantly affected Russian macroeconomics, although their exact effects are often difficult to distinguish from the simultaneous effects of the war and Russia's war-related policies on the Russian economy. However, available evidence indicates that Western sanctions have had significant and lasting negative effects on various sectors of the Russian economy (cf.Matveev, 2022; Schott, 2023; Taran, 2024).

Reducing economic dependence

Driven by an increased perception of energy and trade ties with Russia as threatening, the EU implemented a 'REPowerEU Plan' to phase out Russian fuel imports (European Commission, 2022). These efforts, combined with war-related measures and the sanctions, caused a significant decrease in EU-Russian economic relations. Mutual trade in goods dropped from a total of €253 billion in 2021 to €89 billion in 2023. In those years, trade in services fell from €35 billion to €17 billion (European Commission, 2024a). EU foreign

direct investment (FDI) in Russia dropped significantly. In 2019, the EU was Russia's largest investor. In 2022, EU FDI outward stock had slumped from €311 billion to €208 billion (European Commission, 2024a).

Generally speaking, EU imports from Russia are focused on a few products, mainly energy and raw materials (see also Herranz-Surrallés, this issue). While the former is primarily petroleum oil and gas, the latter category includes nickel, fertiliser, iron, and steel. EU imports of Russian oil, non-liquified natural gas, and nickel dropped substantially between 2021 and 2024, while the respective imports from other countries increased (particularly Norway, Saudi Arabia and the United States). Liquified natural gas and fertilisers form an exception, where initial post-invasion drops in EU imports from Russia saw partial or complete recovery in later years (Eurostat, 2024).

These concerted EU efforts to reduce economic and energy dependence on Russia stand in stark contrast with the period between 2014 and 2021. Then, EU-Russian trade, particularly in the energy sector, went largely unchanged, with Germany and Russia taking major steps to enhance energy trade through the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline system against the objections and efforts of the United States and various EU member states (cf. Driedger, 2021, p. 105).

Deepening security cooperation: institutional formation and empowerment in CSDP and beyond

The Russian invasion of Ukraine had the potential to disrupt the progress of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), as it exposed significant mismatches between the EU's structure and its functions in this policy domain. From this perspective, the war represents a moment of crisis for the Union. However, this external threat also provided renewed impetus for further integration in the CSDP, following an 'integration through policymaking' strategy (Di Mauro & Memoli, 2025). This dynamic aligns with patterns previously observed during the financial crisis, the 'refugee reception' crisis, and the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic (Krotz & Schramm, 2022; Schramm & Krotz, 2024).

The evolution of the CSDP and related fields since 2022 demonstrates significant progress toward a more coordinated and integrated overall architecture. Driven by the impetus of the war in Ukraine, security and defence have been strengthened at the EU level through the establishment of new institutional bodies, the creation of regulatory and coordination frameworks, and a revitalised role for the European Commission in the realm of security.

In the military field, Sperling and Webber (2017) argue that a process of 'collective securitization' of Europe against the Russian Federation began following the first invasion in 2014. Since then, Ukraine has undergone a profound transformation in its military capabilities – including equipment,

personnel, and overall preparedness – with substantial support from NATO and its member states. In 2014, the Ukrainian armed forces comprised approximately 121,000 personnel, which had risen to about 204,000 by 2017. According to The Military Balance reports[5] from these years, this growth has been remarkable, not only in terms of personnel but also in weapons and equipment.

Behind this transformation was a clear intervention of the United States and European states, providing military support for equipping and training the Ukrainian army. The United Kingdom's Operation Orbital[6] was one example of this, but states also directly provided weapons to the Ukraine army (Mills, 2023). 'Whether individual or collective, the support provided by states to the Ukrainian armed forces appears to align with NATO's overarching strategy. While the United States has taken the lead in this process, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany have converged on the new strategic framework' (Sperling & Webber, 2017; see also Pabriks & Kudors, 2015). Since the 2022 invasion, EU member states have consistently regarded the NATO framework as the most effective means of ensuring collective self-protection against Russian aggression. In March 2022, the European Council affirmed this position, stating: 'A stronger and more capable EU in the field of security and defence will contribute positively to global and transatlantic security and is complementary to NATO, which remains the foundation of collective defence for its members' (Versailles Declaration, March 2022).

Both member states and EU institutions have repeatedly reaffirmed NATO's leading role in the military domain. However, while exponentially increasing military and civilian aid (see the previous section on the Ukraine Support Tracker, Trebesch *et al*., 2023), they have simultaneously developed an EU-level framework for crisis coordination and management.

In the realm of military aid, EU collective action has aligned with a global coordination effort spearheaded by the International Donor Coordination Centre (IDCC) (see Mills, 2023).

If, in the military domain, European countries have demonstrated strong coordination under NATO's umbrella, the European Union has played a primary role in activities complementary to military action. According to this view, the EU developed at least five important aspects as part of its military initiative, namely: (a) coordination on civilian/military-associated activities (capacity building, training, etc.); (b) financial resources to maintain Ukraine state capacity and allies' actions; (c) the affirmation of EU democratic and strategic principles; (d) the protection from collateral (Russian) attacks and unconventional warfare; and (e) the coordination between civil and military industry. Within each of these fields underpinning military initiatives, European states have empowered the EU as the most effective institutional organisation, assigning it a leading role in coordination and strategy.

CSDP missions in Ukraine

The first complementary aspect of the military field that was significantly strengthened at the EU level pertains to CSDP civilian interventions. EU civilian missions were present on Ukrainian soil before Russian aggression, with about 100–150 units of personnel supporting (including mentoring, training, and capacity building) the reform of civilian security sector (European Union Advisory Mission – EUAM) and border control and cooperation (European Union Border Control – EUBAM) (Di Mauro *et al*., 2025). EUAM and EUBAM scarcely dealt with the Russian aggressions of 2014, by adopting a low profile on security until the 2022 invasion (Nováky, 2015). While these interventions continue to operate under the original mandates, since 2022, they have enlarged their scope consistently with the activities on the military field and within the perspective of Ukraine's future EU membership. EUAM adapted to the war scenario, extending its scope to new needs such as war crimes, border management, refugee flows (Koukakis, 2022; see also Council Decision 2022/452), and capacity building in reconquered territories. EUBAM, since Russian aggression, has also been involved in assistance to refugees,[7] training of border officers, and assistance in emergency situations (caused by war attacks).[8]

Along with these two missions, in October 2022, the Council established (Decision 2022/1968) the European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine). EUMAM is aimed at 'strengthening the capacity of the Ukrainian Armed Forces to defend Ukraine's territorial integrity'[9] and is mainly focused on coordination among member states in training Ukrainian soldiers. Compared with past interventions, the mission has introduced some innovation since it trains soldiers within an ongoing conflict indirectly involving EU states. Moreover, its training activities are conducted on EU soil and employ common funds to train soldiers using 'lethal weapons' (Moser, 2024). In 2023, the mission was funded with approximately €55 million from the European Peace Facility (EPF).

Financing military activities and state maintenance in Ukraine

The financial framework represents one of the main innovations of post Russian invasion. Within the financial area, the EU was committed to two main tasks to support military activities: sustaining the expenses of Ukrainian government (also from the perspective of reconstruction) and coordinating state financial support for military and non-military activities to resist invasion. As the EU was the arena of governance designed to ensure those tasks (increase in *level*), it needed to overcome the limits of its own institutional asset. In particular, there was the necessity to replace the ATHENA mechanism of financing with a new framework enlarging the scope and

magnitude of funding in the CSDP. The EPF was approved in 2021[10] as 'an off-budget funding mechanism for EU actions with military and defence implications under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)' for about 17 billion for the period 2021-2027.[11] The EPF is an institution based on strict intergovernmental logic. Article 9 of the Council decision 2021/509 establishes that 'Operations and assistance measures shall follow the strategic priorities set by the European Council and the Council, including in their relevant conclusions, for Union actions under the CFSP.'

Specifically, the EPF is managed and directed by a Facility Committee (art. 10) composed of a representative of each Member State (art. 11) that 'shall act by unanimity of its members' (except for procedural matters, art. 11, p. 14). Countries may also refrain from contributing to operations (if abstained in the Council) or military supplies within operations (art. 5). The administrator of the Committee, and deputy administrators for each operation, are appointed by the Secretary-General of the Council (art. 12) and '*shall be authorised, for matters pertaining to his or her responsibilities, to adopt any measures*' (art. 12, p. 8). The governance of the EPF is strictly intergovernmental. When mentioned, EU bodies such as the High Representative and the Commission have a supporting and/or consulting role. The peace facility mechanism is fully funded by member states governments, but, more importantly, 'each member state still maintains full control of where its share of the funding is directed' (Fabbrini, 2023, p. 54).

Despite this, the EPF 'illustrate[s] the growingly bold European external policy ambitions, including in the domain of military cooperation' (Deneckere, 2019, p. V). After approval, the EPF was used to support the Ukrainian army. In 2022 the Council assigned, through several directives,[12] more than half of the EPF budget of 2021-2027, but the EPF proved too limited for the financial needs of the support to Ukraine (despite an increase of €2 billion). The Council and the EP Parliament approved the Macro-Financial Assistance Instrument (MFA+) for Ukraine: a €18 billion fund provided to Ukraine in the forms of loans from 26 member states, excluding Hungary which vetoed the first proposal. 'The general objective of the Instrument is to contribute to closing the funding gap of Ukraine in 2023' and for reconstruction (REGULATION 2022/2463). The MFA + remained confined to 2023 and has been successively substituted by the Ukraine Facility (UF) of 2024.

Like the MFA+, the UF is an instrument to support Ukrainian spending in the areas of reconstruction and post-war EU membership. The budget was established at €50 billion for the 2024–2027 period: €33 billion in loans and €17 billion in grants.[13] As in the case of MFA+, the Ukraine Facility was approved by the Parliament and the Council (REGULATION 2024/792) circumventing Hungary's veto. The UF is not an instrument specifically intended for military purposes, but it has some clear security implications. First of all, the UF provides assistance to the Ukrainian state within a situation of military

aggression from another state. Within this context, loans and grants have security implications. Additionally, reg. 792 clearly mentions some objectives to be implemented through the plan, namely demining and other mine action efforts and strengthening security against hybrid threats (cybersecurity/misinformation).

In the area of defence, article 41.2 (TEU)[14] strongly limited EU institutions, giving the control of resources to member states. The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine produced deep changes related to this principle, as the EU took the lead to coordinate and collect financial resources for Ukrainian resistance. Within a practice already implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic (Fabbrini, 2023), the Union was able to attract and manage resources from member states, moving them to its own budget and circumventing possible vetoes. Although this practice ceded to the EU a leading role in finance management during the crisis, it has not yet led to EU taxation nor to structural changes marked by a new treaty.

Strategic EU positions and protection from collateral (Russian) attacks and unconventional warfare

In the broad area of unconventional warfare, the EU set out crucial strategic positions aspiring toward united action under the Union's flagging principles and rules. Moreover, it provided crucial institutional bodies and regulative tools to strengthen EU state capacity for resistance to cyberattacks.

On 25 March 2022, the European Council established the 'Strategic Compass for Security and Defence' (SC). This initiative stemmed from the acknowledged need 'to make a quantum leap forward and increase our capacity and willingness to act, strengthen our resilience and ensure solidarity and mutual assistance.' It represents the common desire to address the 'need to be able to act rapidly and robustly whenever a crisis erupts, with partners if possible and alone when necessary' (7371/22, Annex). Accordingly, the SC 'will strengthen CSDP missions and operations for a faster deployment, also in complex environments' (7371/22, Annex). It represents a 'mid-range strategy' addressing mainly civilian issues but also military ones (Sweeney & Neil Winn 2020, p. 196).

The SC is the heritage of EDA's effort through the European Defence Capability Plan and includes strategies to protect EU states from hybrid/cyberattacks. Accordingly, the Compass includes the EU Rapid Hybrid Response Teams, the EU Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox, and the development of the EU's Cyber Defence Policy Framework (Håkansson, 2022). Within this domain the Commission was a policy entrepreneur searching for the lead (Brandão & Camisão, 2022). The EU's institutional role in cybersecurity was particularly reinvigorated after the Russian invasion of 2022.[15] The European Cyber Resilience Act (CRA, reg. 2019/1020) represents a regulation effort to shield EU

cyberspace from possible attacks within hybrid warfare scenarios. It implemented the EU policy initiative of the last decade in the field, adapting the Cybersecurity Act and European Union Agency for Network and Information Security (ENISA)[16] to the new war scenario.

In March 2024, the Parliament observed that 'existing Union law related to cybersecurity, does not directly cover mandatory requirements for the security of products with digital elements' and 'there is no horizontal Union regulatory framework establishing comprehensive cybersecurity requirements for all products with digital elements.'[17] Within cybersecurity, the EU action then aimed to strengthen both the private and public sectors within its own borders, but with the ambition 'to play a leading international role in the field of cybersecurity.' This role focused mainly on three areas: Cyber-crime, Cyber-defence, and Cyber-diplomacy (Sguazzini & Di Giulio, 2024). Along with regulation activity, the Union created and implemented a specific agency (the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity, or ENISA). ENISA was tasked with implementing EU law and policy initiatives by providing technical assistance and fostering cooperation in this area. It also plays a key role in disseminating information on cybersecurity, collecting data, and conducting analyses.[18] Since its establishment in 2004, it has closely followed the evolution of EU cybersecurity policy.

Accordingly, the agency's role significantly expanded following the adoption of the Cybersecurity Act and the establishment of the EU Cybersecurity Strategy in 2020 (Dunn Cavelty & Smeets, 2023). However, it became a more weighty actor in the security field after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, as part of a strategy that led EU cybersecurity policies to also support Ukrainian institutions (Fyshchuk, 2024). External factors and technological innovation have strongly driven policy initiatives in cybersecurity. More recently, EU institutions have begun to position themselves as both rule-makers and rule-takers in the field of Artificial Intelligence for security purposes (Bode & Huelss, 2023).

Coordination of civil and military industries and strengthening of Europe's defence industrial capacities

Finally, again strongly linked to the military field of intervention, the EU acquired a leading role in coordination between civil and military industries. In 2020 the Commission established the Directorate-General for Defence Industry and Space (DG DEFIS – see PV(2019) 2317 final). DG DEFIS was designed to set up common strategic rules to 'strengthen the competitiveness and readiness European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB).'[19] Its creation was timely within the dramatic events of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, since the Commission used this instrument to support military activities on a broader strategic perspective.

Following the Versailles meeting in March 2022, the Commission proposed the European Defence Industry Development Programme (EDIRPA), which came into force in October 2023 (Res. 2023/2418) with the aim of supporting member states in jointly procuring defence capabilities. Particularly, it was designed to 'substantially increase defence expenditure,' 'develop collaborative investment in joint projects,' 'joint procurement of defence capabilities,' 'boost innovation,' and 'strengthen and develop the EU defence industry.'[20] EDIRPA confirms the trend of EU leadership in the defence industry, which began more than a decade ago. It 'has generated increasing interest and consolidated the Commission's role in the field of EU security and defense' (Moser, 2024, p. 46).

The EDIRPA 'short term instrument' (Kovács, 2024, p. 233) was complemented, and partially superseded, in March 2024, when the Commission presented a proposal for a regulation to establish the European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP).

In 2023, Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen announced the European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS), presented by the High Representative in March 2024.[21] This document identifies key achievements to be reached through a common defence industry strategy, including 'defense readiness,' increases to EDTIB, helping Ukraine withstand Russian aggression, investing 'more,' 'better,' and 'European' in defence industry. While weapons deliveries have largely been conducted at the member state level, the Commission undertook steps to ensure a more institutionalised and supranational approach to EU defence production.

The goal of the EDIS and the European Defence Industry Program (EDIP), published by the Commission on March 2024, is to raise member states' investments in their defence industries, reducing dependence on third country suppliers, and increase synergies between EU defence firms. The Commission justified these measures in part by stating that 78 percent of defence goods procured by EU member states between February 2022 and June 2023 had been procured from outside the EU, 80 percent of that from the United States (cf. Bayer *et al*., 2024, pp. 70–71). The EDIS also aims to establish a 'European Military Sales Mechanism' by 2028 to better facilitate EU defence procurement and synergies.

This new instrument provides funding for over €1.5 billion in 2025–2027 from the EU budget to foster EDIPRA aims, but also to strengthen and develop the Ukrainian defence industry and structure the European Armament Programme (SEAP). The latter is one of the more recent EU initiatives in this policy area, complementing the Ammunition Production Support Act (ASAP).[22] This activity is far from regulative or normative but is quite operational in providing common structures to address the needs of the conflict scenario, demonstrating the EU's search for leadership in the regional security elements necessary for military action in the global arena.

Nuclear discussions

Russia's war also prompted entirely novel nuclear discussions in Europe. Further fuelled by the prospect and subsequent certainty of a second Trump presidency in the United States, and the ensuing uncertainties regarding the transatlantic link, these conversations resulted directly from the war in Ukraine along with Russia's repeated implicit and explicit nuclear threats against Europe or, more generally and diffusely, those supporting Ukraine. Given its history, manifold obstacles, and general reluctance against nuclear matters in parts of Europe, 'nuclear EU-Policy' may appear a particularly unlikely domain for external causes to matter.

Yet, some twenty-plus years into the new century, some eighty years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Europeans have commenced to debate a Europe more on its own in nuclear terms, and more independent from the United States. In addition to NATO and a continued, extended American nuclear umbrella, new or reconfigured options now explicitly discussed include extended French nuclear deterrence of different possible sorts; an EU-deterrent at the Union level; and additional nuclear deterrence forces at the EU member-state level – and/or various combinations thereof.[23]

Again, we see a wide variety of reactions and positionings of publics and policymakers in the EU member states and Union representatives, rooted in highly different degrees of politicisation across EU countries, geographic proximity to Russia, and historical experiences. Overall, publics, experts, and political leaders in Poland, the Baltic states, Scandinavia, and France have tended to be the most hawkish. Others, including in Portugal, Spain, Ireland, or Germany, take low(er)-profile positions.

For the time being, Europe's new nuclear considerations remain at the level of discussions. When it comes to concrete policy options or practicalities, discussions take place behind closed doors, especially if involving officials of member-state governments or Union-organs. No basic new policy trajectory (or trajectories) has yet taken shape or appeared on the horizon. But in terms of nuclear discussions and considering options, Europe has entered a new era.

Conclusion

Russia's war has exerted strong yet uneven impact on Europe's Union, among the Union's member states, and across policy domains. But we see no instant creation of a unitary actor Europe, or an EU that would swiftly take on (super)-state-like features in security or defence. Member states and Union-organs act and react in different ways, and with quite different degrees of urgency, resolution, and intensity. Table 2 summarises our findings in relation with the integration-aspects defined above and in the theoretical framework of this special issue.

Table 2. The Impact of Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine on aspects of European security and defence (February 2022 to January 2025).

	Aspects of integration		
Policy field or subfield	Level	Scope	Extension
Military support for Ukraine	↔	↑	↑
Economic and other support for Ukraine	↔	↑	↑
EU sanctions against Russia	↔	↑	↔
Reducing dependence from Russia	↔	↑	↔
CSDP missions	↔	↑	↑
Financial mechanisms	↑	↑	↑
Hybrid war	↑	↑	↔
Industrial capacity	↑	↑	↔
Nuclear matters	↔	↑	↑

Note: double-headed arrows indicate no particular change in integration; upward arrows indicate increases in integration.

In the fields of policy toward Ukraine and policies toward Russia, we see significant although not uniform policy changes and new policies, involving increases in scope and extension but not in the level of integration. While the Union level provided coordinating functions and encouraged common European approaches, no longer-term institutional changes evolved in these areas.

Albeit to drastically varying degrees, EU member states' actions toward Ukraine and Russia were guided by more all-European expectations, norms, and soft rules (scope). Military, economic and other support for Ukraine represented some increase in differentiated external integration (extension), while increasing sanctions and the reduction of dependence on Russia little affected extension.

In the field of CSDP and related matters, we observe increased European cooperation and important incremental – while limited – institutional integration. Without Russia's war, such changes might have emerged, yet more slowly and later. Most of the policies implemented following the 2022 invasion had already been outlined in the 2000s. Despite their limitations, CSDP missions in Ukraine were largely endorsed by most EU member states and subsequently continued (and expanded) in 2022 with the establishment of EUMAM.[24] Overall, CSDP missions expanded their scope by incorporating military and security components alongside refugee protection and capacity-building initiatives.

Similarly, a clear trajectory emerged in EU policy-making concerning hybrid warfare and industrial capacity. In these domains, the European Commission had been particularly active prior to the 2022 invasion, with member states primarily engaging in a framework of interdependence. However, the war led to a significant acceleration of integration within these areas. While the foundational structures were already in place, EU institutions notably intensified integration by shifting decision-making processes to the supranational arena (level) and establishing new rules and institutions (scope).

The most substantial changes occurred within the financial framework of the CSDP. Financial mechanisms for security interventions became increasingly centralised at the EU level and incorporated into the Union-budget. A greater share of common resources was allocated, particularly for military armaments. Moreover, the mechanisms through which these financial instruments bypassed the veto power of certain member states effectively 'extended' integration.

Europe's novel nuclear discussions would almost certainly not have begun absent Russia's invasion. They represent (incipient) increases in scope and extension, yet not in level. It remains unclear where Europe's new debates in the area might lead (or not). Yet they seem importantly tied to external pressures, causes, necessities, and their future evolution.

Notes

1. In our usage of the terms *level*, *scope*, and *extension* of integration, we follow the discussion of Freudlsperger & Schramm, this issue. Increases in '*level* begin with purely intergovernmental coordination and proceed over the pooling of sovereignty by introducing majority decisions and the delegation of tasks to supranational actors, to fully supranational modes of decision-making.' Discussions of *'scope* pertain to the coverage of previously national domains of public action with common European rules.' And '*extension* of EU problem-solving, in turn, denominate either decreases in internal differentiation, increases in differentiated external integration, or the incorporation of new members into the EU.' See Freudlsperger & Schramm, this issue.
2. On levels of analysis, including second-image-reversed matters, note Singer, 1961; Gourevitch 1978; Fearon, 1998. Note that 'external causes' of the second-image-reversed kind in the sense of Peter Gourevitch's classic work (1978) are not or not necessarily the same as 'external shocks.' SARS-CoV-2 as a virus, and the covid pandemic it triggered, for example, is an 'external shock' perhaps best understood as a transnational while partially external cause, yet not one of Gourevitch's 'second-image-reversed' sort. Here, we focus on the 'international sources' of policy, following Gourevitch's standard classic formulation.
3. For a view from general International Relations theory on European foreign and security policy, see Krotz & Maher, 2011; for various perspectives on the drivers and impediments of Europe's emergence as an actor in foreign policy and defence, see Krotz, 2009; Krotz & Sperling, 2011; Krotz *et al*., 2012; Krotz *et al*., 2019.
4. These funds are not counted as military support by the Ukraine Support Tracker (Trebesch *et al*. 2024).
5. See https://www.iiss.org/publications/the-military-balance/.
6. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-to-offer-major-training-programme-for-ukrainian-forces-as-prime-minister-hails-their-victorious-determination; see also the report on the UK, US, NATO and EU (https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN07135/SN07135.pdf).

7. https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/eu-steps-support-border-management-moldova-ukraine-border-2022-06-02_en
8. https://eubam.org/publications/eubam-annual-report-2022/
9. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eumam-ukraine_en?s=410260
10. Following the Federica Mogherini announcement in December 2017, the European Peace Facility plan was formally presented for the first time in June 2018.
11. Source https://fpi.ec.europa.eu/what-we-do/european-peace-facility_en (last accessed August 2025)
12. Decisions 2022/338, 2022/471, 2022/636, 2022/809, 2022/1285.
13. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/ukraine-facility/
14. The article reads as follows: 'Operating expenditure to which the implementation of this Chapter gives rise shall also be charged to the Union budget, except for such expenditure arising from operations having military or defence implications and cases where the Council acting unanimously decides otherwise.

    In cases where expenditure is not charged to the Union budget, it shall be charged to the Member States in accordance with the gross national product scale, unless the Council acting unanimously decides otherwise.'
15. For an overview of the evolution of cybersecurity policy, see Sguazzini & Di Giulio, 2024 and Dunn Cavelty & Smeets, 2023.
16. REGULATION (EU) No 526/2013 and 2019/881; see also Directive (EU) 2022/2555 and 2020/1828)
17. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TC1-COD-2022-0272_EN.pdf
18. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/the-eu-cybersecurity-act.html
19. https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/document/download/333faee1-a851-44a6-965b-713247515d39_en?filename=DEFIS_EDIS_factsheet.pdf
20. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/stronger-european-defence_en
21. https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/document/download/643c4a00-0da9-4768-83cd-a5628f5c3063_en?filename=EDIS%20Joint%20Communication.pdf
22. https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/asap-boosting-defence-production_en
23. Among the writings informing the considerations here are Horovitz & Wachs, 2023; Chevreuil, 2024; Vicente, 2024; Lübkemeier, 2025. On individual and collective state arming generally, see Anicetti & Krotz, 2024.
24. This operation had started with the support of 24 member states, increasing the 'extension' from previous missions (19 members).

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