



Research Commons

Publisher

Sustainability for Regions

INSIGHTS INTO TRANSFORMATION OF EUROPEAN SECURITY POLICY IN THE LIGHT OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE AND ESCALATING GEOPOLITICAL CHANGES

Radoslav Ivančík ¹, Jiří Dušek ²

^{1*} Constantine the Philosopher University, Faculty of Arts, Department of Philosophy and Political Science, Hodžova 1, Nitra, Slovakia

² The College of European and Regional Studies, Department of Department of Public Administration and Management, Žižkova tř. 1632/5b, České Budějovice, Czechia

E-mails: ^{1*} rivancik@ukf.sk (Corresponding author); ² dusek@vsers.cz

Received 14 September 2025; accepted 12 January 2026; published 30 March 2026

Abstract. This article analyses the transformation of European security policy resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the deteriorating global security environment, and ongoing geopolitical shifts. The author aims to identify the principal strategic, institutional, and geopolitical challenges faced by the European Union in pursuing its security policy, and to assess its capacity to respond as a respected, autonomous actor in a multipolar world. The research employs a qualitative, theoretical, interdisciplinary approach, based on content analysis of political and security documents, critical analysis of secondary sources, and scholarly literature. The author highlights the fact that the war in Ukraine has significantly accelerated the EU's geopolitical maturation process; however, its practical capacity for action is limited by internal fragmentation, the unanimity-based decision-making mechanism, and a persistent dependence on transatlantic ties. Simultaneously, the study points to the tension between the EU's normative ambitions and its actual ability to project security from both a regional and a global perspective. This study contributes to the academic discussion on the redefinition of the European security order and the EU's position in an era of worsening regional and global security environments and escalating geopolitical change.

Keywords: European Union; security policy; security order; institutional challenges; war in Ukraine; multipolarity; rivalry; fragmentation; geopolitical transformation

Reference to this paper should be made as follows: Ivančík, R., Dušek, J. 2026. Insights into transformation of European security policy in the light of the war in Ukraine and escalating geopolitical changes. *Insights into Regional Development*, 8(1), 10-25. <http://doi.org/10.70132/c8725828569>

JEL Classifications: F50, F52, H56, P16

Additional disciplines: Political Science, International Relations, Security

1. Introduction

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 represents a watershed moment in the contemporary history of the European region. This violent breach of international law simultaneously undermined several fundamental principles of the European security architecture, including respect for territorial integrity, the refraining from the use of force, and the peaceful settlement of disputes, all enshrined in the UN Charter and the OSCE Helsinki Final Act. Russia's aggression against Ukraine also exposed the unpreparedness of the vast majority of European states for a high-intensity conventional military conflict and subjected the Union to both a strategic and an existential test of its ability to act as a security and defence actor (Zakharchenko et al., 2021; Brhlíkova, 2022; Riddervold & Rieker, 2024; Ivančík & Andrassy, 2025).

The war in Ukraine is unfolding during a period of rising regional and global uncertainty, deepening multipolar competition, and the fragmentation of the international order. European states are consequently facing not only traditional threats, but also hybrid, societal, cyber, and energy challenges. This combination of factors has led to a revitalisation of the discussion surrounding the concept of European Strategic Autonomy and the necessity of redefining existing EU security and defence policies to reflect the reality of the 21st century (Miró, 2023; Maurer et al., 2024). A new geopolitical configuration has thus emerged, in which the European Union strives not only to protect its own space, but also to strategically re-evaluate its position in the global context.

According to some authors, the EU's response to the war in Ukraine constitutes a "geopolitical awakening" and a fundamental transformation comparable to a "Zeitenwende"—an epochal shift in the perception of security in Europe (Scholz 2022; Blockmans, 2022; Bunde, 2022). This transformation has manifested across several areas—from the unprecedented rapid adoption of sanctions packages and the mobilisation of financial instruments like the European Peace Facility (EPF), to providing direct support to Ukraine through military materiel, training, and the reception of millions of refugees (Riddervold & Rieker, 2024). Crucially, the decision to grant Ukraine candidate status signals a shift in understanding EU enlargement as a strategic tool of security policy (Håkansson, 2023; Alcaro & Dijkstra, 2024).

From a security and defence perspective, this situation has prompted a reflection on existing deficits in defence capabilities and capacities, as well as the limited possibilities for coordinated European decision-making in crisis situations (Michaels & Sus, 2024). Although the transatlantic partnership remains the foundation for securing European security, primarily thanks to NATO guarantees, there are increasingly vocal calls for Europe to assume greater responsibility for its security and defence and to be capable of acting independently where necessary (Varma, 2024). This pressure has resulted in new initiatives that reflect this ambition in a changing world order (Kazanský & Andrassy, 2019; Jurčák & Marek, 2019; Jurčák & Ivančík, 2023; Hrnčiar & Kompan, 2023).

Simultaneously, it is evident that security issues are increasingly intertwined with areas such as energy, digitalisation, communications, industrial policy, and the protection of critical infrastructure (Kavan et al., 2020; Trifunović et al., 2021; Majchút, 2024; Andrassy & Ondruš, 2024; Dirma et al., 2024; Ivančík et al., 2024; Okunevičiūtė Neverauskienė et al., 2025; Menshikov et al., 2025).

The concept of so-called Open Strategic Autonomy, championed notably since 2020, is thus acquiring new significance, becoming a unifying framework for developing resilience against external shocks. Strategic partnerships and the redefinition of global relations are becoming a key element of the Union's geopolitical orientation (Palárik et al., 2018; Lenovský et al., 2019; Kompan & Hrnčiar, 2021; Ferreira-Pereira & Smith, 2021), with the EU striving to combine its normative values with pragmatic geopolitical thinking (Jurčák & Martaus, 2021; Ivančík & Andrassy, 2025).

In light of these shifts, it is evident that the current security environment in Europe is not merely a reaction to a specific conflict, but a reflection of a deep systemic transformation. This necessitates not only the adaptation of the EU's institutions and capabilities, but also a revision of security thinking, strategic documents, and, crucially, scholarly reflection in the form of critical research into European security policy under new geopolitical conditions.

The dynamic nature of European security policy post-2022 confirms that the European Union can no longer be viewed solely as a normative actor grounded in multilateralism, economic integration, and civilian power. It must also be examined as an actor with the potential for strategic action, geopolitical responsibility, and defence engagement (Borrell, 2024; Maurer et al., 2024). Consequently, the war in Ukraine has opened up the fundamental question of the extent to which the EU is capable of transforming its structures and policies to effectively confront the challenges of a multipolar world and hybrid confrontation with authoritarian regimes

(Riddervold & Rieker, 2024; Alcaro & Dijkstra, 2024). These changes transcend the scope of routine crisis management and require rigorous scholarly scrutiny of the EU's strategic adaptation as an actor in the shifting regional and global security order.

Analysing the Union's security and defence policy now requires an approach that moves beyond traditional dichotomies between inter-state and supranational decision-making, civil and military power, or normative and strategic logic. Conversely, it is necessary to examine the EU as a dynamic entity operating at the intersection of geopolitical imperatives and value commitments, facing a plurality of actors, asymmetries in defence capabilities and capacities, and diverse strategic cultures among member states (Sus & Michaels, 2024; Maurer et al., 2024; Varma, 2024). The growing recognition of the need to integrate security, economic, and technological strategies into a unified paradigm, as exemplified by the concept of Open Strategic Autonomy (Miró, 2023), significantly contributes to this.

Scholarly examination of European security and defence policy is also vital for understanding the EU's internal cohesion during times of crisis and challenges that test the Union's capacity to act as a unified actor. Specifically, processes such as the coordination of arms deliveries, the joint adoption of sanctions, the development of military capabilities via PESCO, the utilisation of the EPF, and the implementation of the Strategic Compass represent new forms of collective decision-making that warrant systematic academic attention. Moreover, geopolitical changes and pressure on transatlantic relations reopen the question of the extent to which the Union can be an autonomous security actor and where its limits lie—a theoretically and empirically substantial research challenge (Helwig, 2024).

From the perspective of scholarly relevance, the current investigation into the security situation in the European region and the EU's security and defence policy is therefore not only timely but also conceptually and analytically indispensable. This is because fundamental security concepts are undergoing transformation, the roles of state and supranational actors are being redefined, and the importance of "geopolitical literacy" in political and academic discourse is increasing. Given this, the aim of this article is to contribute to the current scholarly discourse on EU security and defence policy post-2022 through an analytical reflection on four key dimensions: geopolitical transformation, strategic autonomy, institutional challenges, and the Union's global security relations. This research thus provides a theoretical and practical contribution to deepening the understanding of security dynamics in the European region during a period of strategic uncertainty.

Methodologically, the article is based on a qualitative analysis of relevant documents, secondary literature, and expert studies, utilising an analytical-descriptive and interpretative approach. This theoretical and methodological framework allows for a holistic comprehension of the issues surrounding the EU's security transformation and the identification of its consequences for the European and global order. The combination of analytical rigour, interdisciplinarity, and empirical grounding ensures the relevance of the findings not only for academic debate but also for public policy-makers and the security and defence expert community.

2. The Geopolitical Transformation of the EU following the Russian Invasion of Ukraine

Russia's invasion of Ukraine represents not only a direct security threat to neighbouring states and the wider European space, but also a fundamental geopolitical rupture that has thoroughly tested the European Union's capacity to respond as a security and geopolitical actor. While the EU was often criticised before 2022 for its sluggishness, lack of coordination, and deficiency in strategic culture, events following February 2022 revealed a significant degree of political and strategic mobilisation, suggesting a process of the Union's transformation from a normative power into a geopolitical entity (Alcaro & Dijkstra 2024; Ivančík & Andrassy, 2024; Maurer et al., 2024). This transformation manifested in the rapid implementation of sanctions packages against Russia,

unprecedented military and financial aid to Ukraine, and a fundamental strengthening of security and defence policies at the EU level.

A core element of this geopolitical response was the unparalleled utilisation of the European Peace Facility (EPF), which was activated to finance the supply of military equipment to the Ukrainian armed forces—a move that historically represented a breakthrough in the perception of the EU as an exclusively civilian actor (Riddervold & Rieker, 2024). Equally remarkable was the coordination in adopting economic sanctions, which targeted key areas of the Russian economy, including the energy sector, financial institutions, and technology exports (Ivančík & Andrassy, 2024). These measures signal not only a strategic reaction but also the EU's willingness to act decisively and uniformly, despite the differences among member states.

The geopolitical dimension of this transformation is also closely linked to a shift in the EU's discourse and identity. Following February 2022, terms such as the "geopolitical Union" and "strategic responsibility" became part of the official statements made by the European Commission, the European Council, and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Commission President Ursula von der Leyen herself declared that the EU must learn to act geopolitically in crises (European Commission, 2022), confirming the need for a change in both mindset and practice. The EU's Strategic Compass, adopted in March 2022, explicitly addresses the new security reality, naming Russia as a threat and defining concrete steps to strengthen the EU's capabilities in crisis management, defence, and resilience (Jurčák & Ivančík, 2023).

An important aspect of the geopolitical transformation is the redefinition of the perception of the neighbourhood and its security importance. Ukraine, along with Moldova and Georgia, gained a new status in European policy—not merely as partners within the Eastern Partnership, but as countries with a genuine membership perspective, confirmed by the granting of candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova in June 2022. This step reflects a shift in understanding EU enlargement from an instrument of normative influence to a strategic tool of geopolitical stability (Schramm, 2025). This very shift indicates that the EU is beginning to recognise the need to actively shape its strategic environment rather than passively adapt to it.

Part of the EU's geopolitical awakening is also a broader discourse on European security and defence identity within the framework of transatlantic relations (Bergmann, 2020). While NATO remains the foundational pillar of Europe's collective defence, the invasion of Ukraine highlighted the risks of unilateral dependence on the United States, particularly in the event of political change in the American executive (Michaels & Sus, 2024). In this context, the question of European strategic responsibility acquired a new dimension—not as an alternative to NATO, but as a complementary pillar that strengthens the EU's capacity to act autonomously within its immediate geopolitical neighbourhood.

A crucial symbolic and practical aspect of the EU's geopolitical transformation is the "Zeitenwende"—a term adopted from German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's February 2022 speech, signifying a turning point in German and European security policy (Scholz 2022). This term quickly established itself as a concept describing an epochal shift in security thinking that has permeated the discourse of European institutions. The so-called "spirit of the Zeitenwende" thus symbolises the aspiration for a more realistic grasp of the security environment, a higher level of investment in defence, and a move away from the naïve belief in long-term stability based solely on norms and diplomacy (Bunde, 2022; Mello, 2022).

Another significant aspect of the EU's geopolitical transformation is the deepening understanding of the nature of hybrid threats and their implications for defence and security policy. Russian aggression was not just a conventional military attack but a complex hybrid operation, encompassing disinformation, cyber-attacks, energy pressure, food security manipulation, and political interference in the internal affairs of member states (Müftüler-Bac, et al. 2024). These experiences have forced the EU to accelerate the development of strategic instruments in

cyber security, critical infrastructure protection, and strategic communication, thereby strengthening its ability to comprehensively respond to diverse threats and pressures.

The shifts in the EU's geopolitical orientation have also been reflected in the evolution of strategic planning. The adoption of the Strategic Compass represents a pivotal step towards greater consistency, predictability, and coordination of EU defence initiatives. This document, approved in March 2022, defines four basic pillars: the ability to act, securing safety, investing in capabilities, and partnerships (EEAS, 2022). Its objective is to provide a common framework for member states in shaping defence priorities and building compatible and interoperable forces. The Strategic Compass also constitutes a paradigmatic shift in the understanding of security—from reactive crisis management to proactive strategic thinking (Nitoiu, 2024).

The EU's geopolitical transformation is not, however, without limitations and paradoxes. Despite the apparent mobilisation and activism, fundamental differences persist among member states regarding the depth of their commitment, threat perception, strategic priorities, and investment capacity (Helwig, 2024). Significant divergences between Eastern European, Nordic, and Western European states in perceiving Russia as an existential threat illustrate the continuing plurality of security cultures within the Union. While this plurality reflects the reality of diversity in the EU, it simultaneously hinders the emergence of a truly unified strategic culture and complicates consensual decision-making in times of crisis.

A further challenge is the sustainability of political will and the EU's long-term ability to act geopolitically (Bergman, 2020). The dynamic response to a shock may, over time, be replaced by "crisis fatigue," fragmentation, or a return to previous preferences for passive multilateralism. Moreover, a geopolitical Union requires not just reactions to existing threats, but the shaping of its own environment—through foresight, prevention, and strategic leadership. This is a challenge that the EU has so far only partially addressed, particularly given the limits in accessing intelligence, defence technologies, and the joint planning of operations and missions (Håkansson, 2023; Varma, 2024).

Despite these limitations, it cannot be overlooked that the war in Ukraine has significantly accelerated the EU's geopolitical maturation process, which had long been hindered by a normative ethos, internal fragmentation, and institutional vagueness in foreign and security policy. This development is not merely evident at the rhetorical level but also in concrete policy and strategic documents and initiatives concerning the defence industry, digital sovereignty, and energy security (European Commission, 2022; EEAS, 2022). Furthermore, the growing consensus on the need to increase defence spending across the Union and the revision of priorities within the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework signal a new awareness of the connection between security, economic sovereignty, and technological development (Müftüler-Bac et al., 2024).

This geopolitical maturation is accompanied by the gradual integration of traditionally separate sectoral policies—such as climate transition, energy policy, the digital agenda, and trade diplomacy—with the logic of strategic competition and security imperatives (Belan, 2023; Tvaronavičienė, 2024; Kavan et al., 2025; Okunevičiūtė Neverauskienė et al., 2025; Dušek, 2025). This "geopoliticisation" of policies, which was perceived as incongruous or even contradictory to the EU's core values only a few years ago, now represents a fundamental prerequisite for the Union to operate effectively in a multipolar and values-fragmented world (Adriaensen et al., 2025). An integrated approach, in which the security, economic, and technological dimensions are viewed as inseparable components of overall strategic capacity, is becoming a necessity. Without this linkage, the EU will be unable to face global challenges that extend beyond the scope of conventional military threats and include the areas of artificial intelligence, energy vulnerability, global supply chains, and informational sovereignty (Csernatori, 2022; Balfour et al., 2024).

The EU's geopolitical transformation following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, therefore, does not merely represent a series of reactive measures in response to an external shock, but can be understood as a profound and gradual process of redefining the Union's strategic identity. This redefinition is taking place on multiple levels: at the normative level (e.g., the revision of foreign policy and enlargement objectives), within the institutional framework (e.g., the development of mechanisms for strategic coordination and collective planning), and in the practical execution of policies (e.g., strengthening defence capabilities and reaction capacities) (Ivančík & Andrassy, 2025). The dynamism of this process is shaped not only by external security pressures but also by internal factors—such as the political preferences of member states, the state of public opinion, the readiness of institutions, and pressure from civil society.

This constitutes one of the most significant qualitative shifts in the history of European integration since the end of the Cold War, reopening the question of the future nature of the European project—whether it will remain primarily normative, or if it will become a fully-fledged geopolitical actor capable of exercising both hard and soft power in line with its strategic goals. In this context, it will be crucial whether the Union manages to consolidate itself as a coherent, proactive, and resilient security actor capable not only of responding to crises but also of shaping the international environment through a strategic vision, value consistency, and the ability to build reliable partnerships (Jurčák & Ivančík, 2023; Riddervold & Rieker 2024; Müftüler-Bac et al., 2024). This objective, however, remains contingent not only on the strength of its external action but, crucially, on its internal capacity to overcome fragmentation, strengthen solidarity, and achieve strategic foresight in an environment of increasing global uncertainty.

3. Strategic Autonomy in EU Security and Defence Policy: Progress and Contradictions

The concept of Strategic Autonomy (SA) has, over the past decade, become one of the most frequently used yet most highly debated topics in the discourse of European security and defence policy (Fiott, 2018; Biscop, 2022; Miró, 2023; Ivančík & Andrassy, 2025). From its original focus on defence capacity independence, the term has expanded to encompass a wider understanding of the EU's geopolitical, technological, and economic sovereignty, reflecting the growing complexity of threats and the pressure to reduce dependencies in critical areas (Csernatori, 2022). Strategic Autonomy gained new urgency particularly after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, which exposed not only the reliance of many member states on the American security umbrella but also vulnerability in supply chains, energy, arms manufacturing, and strategic decision-making capacities (Biscop, 2022; Riddervold & Rieker, 2024; Balfour et al., 2024).

Under the influence of these events, EU initiatives aimed at strengthening defence capabilities and capacities and reducing reliance on external actors have been accelerated. Central to this effort is the development of instruments such as PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation), the EDF (European Defence Fund), the CARD (Coordinated Annual Review on Defence), and the EPF (European Peace Facility), which constitute the pillar of the EU's defence reinforcement strategy (Ivančík & Andrassy, 2025). Their objective is to support the joint development of defence technologies, streamline investment, eliminate duplication, and create the conditions for collective capacity for action. Despite the progress, however, the implementation of these mechanisms remains selective, slow, and uneven, lacking sufficient impetus for coordination among member states.

PESCO, established in 2017, originally aimed to be an instrument for deeper defence integration, yet current projects are characterised by significant variability in objectives, pace of realisation, and qualitative standard. The EDF, launched in 2021, offers funding for military technology research and development but faces challenges regarding absorption capacity, technological compatibility, and industrial integration. CARD, as a coordination tool, has the potential to improve synergy between national plans, but its effectiveness depends on the political will of member states to share sensitive information and adopt common decisions. All these instruments,

therefore, constitute necessary but currently underutilised components in building the EU's autonomous capacities.

The Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, adopted in March 2022 in response to the rapidly changing security environment and the war in Ukraine, holds a specific position in this process. The document defines concrete goals at the level of capabilities, resilience, partnerships, and the readiness to act. It includes a commitment to create an EU Rapid Deployment Capacity by 2025, as well as to increase defence investment and the ability to counter hybrid, cyber, and space threats (EEAS 2022; Borrell, 2024). Despite these ambitions, some authors warn that the Strategic Compass largely remains a declaratory framework without executive guarantees for its fulfilment (Biscop, 2022; Maurer et al., 2024).

A fundamental problem remains the tension between Strategic Autonomy and transatlantic commitments. Several member states, particularly those in Eastern and Northern Europe, view NATO as the key framework for their security and remain sceptical of any initiatives that could lead to a weakening of the transatlantic link (Michaels & Sus 2024). This position contrasts with the demands of other states and European institutional representatives who see SA as a necessary precondition for the EU's sovereignty and its capacity to act where NATO is not present or willing to intervene. The result is an ambivalent stance, where the EU declaratively commits to autonomy but remains practically dependent on the military-technological capacities of the United States, intelligence support, and NATO's operational command.

The contradictions surrounding the efforts to strengthen Strategic Autonomy reflect a deeper political and ideological divergence among EU member states. Some governments, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, perceive Strategic Autonomy as a potential weakening of the transatlantic link and fear it might undermine the coherence of NATO as the primary guarantor of collective defence. Other states, notably France, but increasingly also Germany and Italy, emphasise the need for an independent European capacity pillar capable of ensuring defence even in the event of weakened US commitments (Howorth, 2019; Rieker & Giske, 2024). This dichotomy is not new, but the war in Ukraine has added a new dimension—while it strengthened confidence in NATO on the one hand, it exposed Europe's strategic vulnerability in the event of a change in American security priorities on the other (Fiott, 2023).

Another dimension of tension lies in the differing perceptions of the degree and nature of European sovereignty. While the concept of "Open Strategic Autonomy," favoured by the European Commission, emphasises the interconnectedness of autonomy with cooperation and global trade, some member states prefer an approach based on "self-sufficiency" in key strategic areas (Miró, 2023). This difference is evident, for instance, in the defence industry, where tension persists between supporting national champions and the need to build a European industrial base through cross-border projects supported by the EDF. Consequently, the defence industry remains one of the most fragmented areas of Common Defence Policy, with considerable capacity overlap, varying levels of interoperability, and a limited volume of joint development programmes (Fiott, 2023; Sabatino, 2024).

Moreover, the hybrid nature of contemporary threats demands autonomy not only in the conventional domain but also in the digital, space, and cyber domains. In this context, there is increasing discussion about the necessity of so-called technological sovereignty, which would allow the EU to reduce dependence on American or Chinese platforms, technologies, and infrastructures (Calcara et al., 2025). Despite several initiatives, such as cyber defence exercises, the development of cyber rapid response teams, and European satellite programmes, technological autonomy remains more of an ambition than a reality. Critics point out that without strategic investment in research and development, streamlining public procurement, and removing barriers to innovation, the EU will continue to rely on external technology providers, which weakens both its Strategic Autonomy and its geopolitical position (Jurčák & Ivančík, 2023; Fiott 2023; Michaels & Sus, 2024; Calcara et al., 2025; Scazzieri, 2025).

The war in Ukraine has simultaneously contributed to a fundamental revision of several EU member states' attitudes towards common security and defence initiatives. While prior to 2022, progress in defence integration was hampered by political concerns over the erosion of sovereignty, domestic political limits, or a lack of strategic consensus, the unprecedented nature of Russian aggression created new security imperatives that spurred a shift in the mindset and political behaviour of several states.

In this context, it must be highlighted that the increase in defence budgets—though important—is not in itself a guarantee of Strategic Autonomy. The crucial factor is the extent to which these investments are coordinated at the Union level, directed towards synergistic areas of research and development, and subordinated to a common strategy for defence industrial development. Initiatives such as the Joint Procurement Task Force, established after the outbreak of the war to coordinate the purchase of ammunition and equipment, are steps in the right direction. However, they are currently encountering the residue of national protectionism, diverse defence doctrines, and concerns over weakening control of key capabilities (EEAS, 2023; Scazzieri, 2025).

The coordination of weapons deliveries to Ukraine via the European Peace Facility (EPF) is a practical example of the EU's ability to flexibly utilise innovative mechanisms to secure military support. Yet, it also raises the question of the limits of sustainability and replenishability of these capacities in the event of a prolonged conflict. The creation of common stockpile funds, the support for interoperable platforms, and the linking of military and civil capabilities within the EU's hybrid defence framework are key elements that must be developed to forge long-term Strategic Autonomy.

Despite these positive trends, a core challenge remains ensuring that the current changes are not merely reactive responses to the immediate security crisis but become part of a systematic and sustainable strategic shift. Without deeper institutional integration, long-term planning, and the creation of political consensus on key security priorities, there is a risk that following the abatement of the acute threat, there will be a return to the inaction, discontinuities, and investment deficit that have long undermined the EU's defence potential (Fiott, 2018; Biscop, 2022).

In conclusion, Strategic Autonomy for the European Union has become a conceptually and politically indispensable response to the turbulent evolution of the global and regional security environment in the 21st century. However, its practical realisation continues to face several constraints, including the differing perception of threats among member states, the fragmentation of the defence industry, the absence of a unified strategic framework, and the lingering uncertainty regarding the future evolution of transatlantic relations.

Ultimately, the EU's Strategic Autonomy will depend not only on technical and material capabilities but, most importantly, on the ability to politically articulate common interests, strategically anticipate, and act collectively. If the Union manages to transform its security culture, decision-making processes, and approach to burden-sharing, it can become a fully-fledged, autonomous, and responsible security actor capable of shaping its geopolitical space in line with democratic values and its own strategic goals.

4. Institutional and Domestic Political Challenges to EU Security Policy

Despite the shift in political ambition and the declared desire for Strategic Autonomy, the practical realisation of the EU's Common Security Policy remains largely conditioned by the internal institutional framework and the political dynamics between member states. Strategic Autonomy is not just a matter of military capabilities or technologies; it is fundamentally about the capacity to take decisions that are fast, legitimate, and consensual. Therefore, it is essential to analyse the extent to which the current institutional architecture, decision-making rules, and domestic political factors influence the efficiency, effectiveness, expediency, and coherence of the Union's security policy.

One of the main factors limiting the European Union's capacity to act as an effective security actor is the persistent complexity and fragmentation of its institutional and domestic political framework. Unlike federal states that possess centralised decision-making in security and defence, the EU treats this area as one belonging to the sphere of intergovernmental cooperation, requiring a high degree of consensus among member states. This institutional design, enshrined in the Treaty on European Union (Articles 42–46 (EU, 2012)), has long constrained the efficiency of decision-making processes and created an asymmetry between the Union's ambitions and its ability to act effectively, efficiently, and flexibly.

Decision-making within the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) still relies on the principle of unanimity in the Council of the EU, which practically means that every member state has a *de facto* veto right. While in other Union policies, Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) is the common decision-making mechanism, consensus is preferred in the case of security and defence. This frequently leads to paralysis or the significant watering-down of resulting decisions (Borrell, 2024). This situation is further complicated by the growing political heterogeneity among member states, where diverse strategic cultures, national interests, geopolitical orientations, and levels of defence capacity fundamentally influence their willingness to participate in common commitments (Dutardre, 2024).

Domestic political factors play a crucial role: several states have historically used their position to block consensual statements or political actions by the EU that they deemed contrary to their national interests. Furthermore, there is strong residual nationalism in defence, manifesting in fears of transferring competences to the supranational level, particularly concerning the control of armed forces, the selection of operational priorities, or budgetary decisions (Kirpsza, 2023; Högenauer & Mišík, 2024). Consequently, the political will to act jointly often concentrates only during a moment of immediate crisis and rapidly dissipates after its resolution, undermining the sustainability and continuity of strategic initiatives.

Among the weaknesses of the institutional framework is the absence of a unified strategic command and planning for EU operations and missions. Despite the establishment of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) in 2017, its mandate, capabilities, and capacity remain limited—especially compared to NATO's integrated structures. Coordination between civil and military components within the CSDP is often *ad hoc*, lacking systematic integration and long-term planning synergy. Simultaneously, the problem of redundancy persists among various agencies and institutions whose mandates partially overlap, leading to the inefficient use of resources and delays in decision-making.

Although the role of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy has been strengthened in recent years, this position still faces considerable limitations, as it lacks its own mandate to act independently of member states. The High Representative is largely bound by the political mandate of the Council and can only mediate agreement between member states—making their authority dependent on the political dynamics within the Council and the European Parliament. Moreover, given the absence of a unified European strategic culture, there is no common perspective on the objective of the CFSP/CSDP—whether it should be primarily normative, focused on crisis management, or geopolitically oriented towards power balancing.

The effectiveness of the Common Foreign, Security, and Defence Policy is also restricted by occasional friction between EU institutional actors, particularly between the European Parliament, the European Council, and the European Commission (Demke et al., 2020). Although the European Parliament has only limited competences in the area of CFSP/CSDP, it plays an increasingly important role in political oversight, strategic reflection, and the budgetary framework. In recent years, Parliamentary Committees for Foreign Affairs and Security have sought to strengthen transparency in decision-making regarding civilian missions and defence investments, highlighting the need for democratic legitimacy in an area traditionally dominated by executive power (Csernatoni & Lațici, 2020).

Conversely, the absence of direct legislative competence in the CFSP/CSDP leads to a situation where a "democratic deficit" exists—decisions taken in the Council, often under considerable time pressure and without broader public debate, may not reflect complex deliberation or the legitimate preferences of EU citizens (Rubbens, 2024). This problem gains particular significance in the current geopolitical context, where the EU is expected to demonstrate not only strategic effectiveness but also normative consistency and transparency towards the public. Without ensuring these, there is a risk of weakening trust in common defence policies and their perception as technocratic or elitist projects.

An important dimension of the domestic political challenges is the uneven ability of member states to mobilise public and political support for the EU's strategic initiatives. While some states have stable parliamentary majorities and long-term strategies supporting the CFSP/CSDP, others are characterised by volatile political configurations, internal political disputes, and Euroscepticism, which significantly limits the room for manoeuvre for governments at the Council level (Varma, 2024; Maurer et al., 2024). Furthermore, the issue of capacity imbalance arises—smaller member states, in particular, have limited diplomatic, military, and administrative capacities, placing them in an asymmetric position concerning co-decision-making and the implementation of complex security projects.

One of the discussed solutions to these limitations is the move from unanimity to Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) in certain aspects of security policy. The European Commission, as well as several analysts, has repeatedly recommended extending QMV to areas such as sanctions, civilian missions, or certain types of military cooperation—which would increase the EU's flexibility and speed of response in crisis situations (Navarra & Jančová, 2023). However, the transition to QMV in CFSP/CSDP requires the unanimous consent of member states under the 'passerelle clause' of Article 31(3) TEU, which practically means that the path to changing the mechanism is blocked by those interested in preserving the *status quo*.

An alternative is flexible integration or so-called "coalitions of the willing, which allow a group of member states to progress in certain areas without the need for the involvement of all (Genini, 2025; Dimitrova et al., 2025). Examples from PESCO and EDF defence projects show that such an approach can lead to pragmatic progress in areas where full consensus is unrealistic. Yet, there is also the risk of fragmentation and a two-speed Europe, where some states remain at the periphery of strategic initiatives and their security interests are not fully reflected. It can be concluded that the institutional and domestic political challenges represent a fundamental and long-standing limitation to the development of the European Union's security policy. Despite the fact that since the beginning of the 21st century, the EU has invested in building a complex institutional architecture for security policy—including the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS), the strengthening of the High Representative's position, and the introduction of tools like PESCO, CARD, EDF, and EPF—its ability to act as a strategically coherent and timely security actor is still constrained by internal contradictions, the complex distribution of powers, and the lack of political unity among member states (Håkansson, 2023; Riddervold & Rieker, 2024).

The level of CFSP/CSDP effectiveness is therefore conditioned not only by the legal and institutional framework but, crucially, by the political will to overcome national egoisms, deepen strategic trust, and create mechanisms for genuine collective responsibility. In practice, this means not only removing the blockages caused by unanimity but also fostering a culture of timely coordination, anticipatory strategic planning, and the effective utilisation of existing instruments and agencies (Michaels & Sus 2024; Maurer et al., 2024). Equally important is ensuring continuity and institutional memory, so that security policy does not become exclusively reactive but acquires a proactive and long-term dimension corresponding to the specifics of a multipolar and crisis-saturated world.

The future of security and defence policy will depend on whether the EU succeeds in finding a functional balance between two seemingly contradictory principles: on the one hand, the need for swift and flexible strategic capacity for action, and on the other, the commitment to legitimacy, inclusiveness, and democratic control. An excessive focus on effectiveness may undermine public political support and raise concerns about the democratic deficit, while over-reliance on formal procedures without the capacity to act could lead to a loss of credibility in the eyes of partners and rivals.

It will therefore be crucial for the EU to make a strategic decision on which areas of security and defence policy can and should be subject to deeper integration and common decision-making, while simultaneously identifying areas where it is appropriate to preserve room for flexibility and diversity. In this respect, existing mechanisms of differentiated integration can be inspirational, allowing a group of states to move forward without jeopardising the unity of the EU as a whole. Such an approach may represent a realistic way to overcome political barriers while respecting diversity within the Union.

If the EU is to be perceived as a credible security actor on a global scale, it must transform its internal dynamics to become not only a space of values but also a space of strategic capabilities and capacity. The foundation of this transformation lies in the reform of decision-making processes, the cultivation of political responsibility, and the strengthening of the participation of democratic institutions, which can ensure lasting legitimacy and public support for the Common Foreign, Security, and Defence Policy. Only then will the EU be capable of facing the challenges of the 21st century as a unified, confident, effective, and respected geopolitical actor.

Conclusion

The war in Ukraine represents a fundamental watershed moment in modern European history, which has accelerated several pre-existing trends while simultaneously exposing new challenges and weaknesses in the EU's approach to security, defence, geopolitics, and strategic action. From a comprehensive analytical perspective, it can be stated that the EU's response to Russian aggression against Ukraine was not merely reactive but, in many respects, transformed the fundamental principles of its strategic behaviour. The Union has shifted from normative caution to a more ambitious geopolitical stance, relying on a broader spectrum of tools—from sanctions and military aid to Ukraine to the redefinition of security and defence objectives within the Strategic Compass.

The analysis of the geopolitical transformation showed that while the EU still faces significant capacity and political limits, the war in Ukraine has forced it towards greater coherence, coordination, and political activation. The principle of "Zeitenwende" denotes not just a shift in German policy but a broader paradigmatic change within the entire EU—towards enhanced strategic literacy, the ability to respond to military challenges, and more active international engagement. The result is a redefinition of the Union's strategic identity as a political actor that must simultaneously confront security threats, preserve its value base, and maintain unity among diversely oriented member states.

Regarding Strategic Autonomy, it is clear that this concept can no longer be seen as an academic or ideological dilemma—it is a practical necessity related to increasing uncertainty in the global and regional environment, the potential decline of US commitment to ensuring European security and defence and deepening multipolar rivalry. Nevertheless, the implementation of autonomy in practice is proven to be significantly constrained—the fragmentation of the defence industry, the political heterogeneity of member states, and the absence of strong institutional mechanisms impede tangible progress. The challenge remains to build not only technological and military autonomy but also a common strategic culture that would enable the convergence of security and defence priorities among all member states.

The research findings confirm that domestic political and institutional barriers play a critical role in the (in)effectiveness of European security policy. The principle of unanimity in decision-making, the asymmetry of capabilities and capacities among member states, and the weak position of the European Parliament in CFSP/CSDP matters significantly limit the Union's ability to act strategically, timely, and with legitimate public support. Reform proposals such as the extension of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) or the strengthening of the "coalitions of the willing" model represent potential ways forward, yet their realisation encounters political unwillingness and divergent national preferences.

Finally, the analysis of the global dimension of EU security policy demonstrated that the multipolar environment with intensified great power rivalry places new demands on the EU in the areas of strategic communication, building credible partnerships, and projecting normative influence. Partnerships with the US, NATO, and other countries/organisations are declared but are often limited in practice by a lack of cohesive policy and capacity. Nevertheless, they constitute important pillars of the EU's global presence, which must be further professionalised, deepened, and adapted to the challenges of the 21st century.

Current developments in European security policy show that the Union faces not only pragmatic challenges in security, defence, and geopolitical action but also fundamental normative questions about the nature of its identity, values, and responsibility within the international system. The war in Ukraine has revealed that the EU can no longer act solely as a civilian power built upon economic influence and multilateral instruments but must redefine its role as a geopolitical actor with the will to enforce its values through hard power and coercive instruments when the situation demands.

However, this transformation must not lead to a loss of the EU's identity as a normative actor. It is precisely the ability to combine power instruments with a value framework—based on democracy, the rule of law, and human rights—that represents the uniqueness of the European security model. The Union's normative credibility in the coming period will depend on how it approaches complex dilemmas: for example, in the export of arms to risky regions, the support of states with authoritarian elements, or in the reaction to disinformation campaigns that test the boundaries between freedom of expression and the protection of the democratic order.

From a political perspective, it is imperative that the EU becomes not just a reactive but a proactive actor capable of shaping its strategic environment. This requires the creation of an effective and efficient early warning system, the strengthening of analytical capacities at the strategic level (e.g., within the EEAS), and the ability to swiftly take decisions based on a comprehensive situational picture. Political cohesion among member states must simultaneously be supported by public legitimacy and an inclusive strategic discourse, as only then can a lasting consensus on the area of ensuring European security and defence be forged.

References

- Adriaansen, J., Vanhoonacker, S., & Sarkissian, I. (2025). The effect of geopoliticisation on the EU's polity: exploring institutional power shifts. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2025.2536546>
- Alcaro, R. & Dijkstra, H. (2024). Re-imagining EU Foreign and Security Policy in a Complex and Contested World. *The International Spectator*, 59(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2024.2304028>
- Andrassy, V., & Ondruš, M. (2024). The gray zone and its place in security environment. *Challenges to National Defence in Contemporary Geopolitical Situation*, 90-98. <https://doi.org/10.3849/cndcgs.2024.90>
- Balfour, R., Baroncelli, E., Bomassi, L. & Csernaton, R. et al. (2024). Geopolitics and Economic Statecraft in the European Union. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. <https://carnegie-production-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/static/files/Geopolitics%20and%20Economic%20Statecraft%20in%20the%20European%20Union-2.pdf>

Belan, L. (2023). Bezpečnosť – Riziká a ich vplyv na plnenie úloh Ozbrojených síl Slovenskej republiky. *Politické vedy*, 26(3), 159-184. <https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2023.26.3.159-184>

Bergmann, M. 2020. Europe's Geopolitical Awakening. *Foreign Affairs*. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/europe/2020-08-20/europes-geopolitical-awakening#>

Biscop, S. (2022). *Strategic Autonomy: Not Without Integration*. *The Foundation for European Progressive Studies*. <https://feeps-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Strategic-Autonomy-Not-without-integration.pdf>

Blockmans, S. (2022). The birth of a geopolitical EU. *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 27(2), 155-160. <https://doi.org/10.54648/eerr2022016>

Borrell, J. (2024). *Speech by High Representative/Vice President Josep Borrell at Forum Europa*. European External Action Service. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/defense-speech-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-forum-europa_en

Brhlíková, R. & Kočnerová, M. (2020). The multi-level governance model and the EU's common foreign and security policy. In *Economic, political and legal issues of international relations – Conference proceedings of an International Scientific Conference*. Bratislava: Ekonóm, 19, 60-69. https://fmv.euba.sk/www_write/files/veda-vyskum/konferencie-virt/2020/virt_2020_1.pdf

Brhlíková, R. (2022). The need for new security architecture in Europe. *World of Ideas and Politics*, 21(1), 133-150. <https://doi.org/10.34767/SIIP.2022.01.07>

Bunde, T. (2022). Lessons (to be) learned? Germany's Zeitenwende and European security after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 43(3), 516-530. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2022.2092820>

Calcara, A., Teer, J., & Zaccagnini, I. (2025). Technological underpinnings of European autonomy and US-China competition. *Journal of European Integration*, 47(6), 943-963. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2025.2536828>

Csernaton, R. & Lařici, T. (2020). Empowering the European Parliament: Toward More Accountability on Security and Defense. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2020/07/empowering-the-european-parliament-toward-more-accountability-on-security-and-defense?lang=en>

Csernaton, R. (2022). The EU's hegemonic imaginaries: from European strategic autonomy in defence to technological sovereignty. *European Security*, 31(3), 395-414. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2022.2103370>

Demke, C., Paulini, M., Autoniemi, J. & Lenner, F. (2020). The Effectiveness of Conflict of Interest Policies. *Directorate-General for Internal Policies of the European Parliament*. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/651697/IPOL_STU\(2020\)651697_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/651697/IPOL_STU(2020)651697_EN.pdf)

Dimitrova, A. L., Gürkan, S., & Koops, J. (2025). Stuck on the stairway of change: the EU's enlargement and security and defence policies post 2022. *West European Politics*, 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2025.2539010>

Dirma, V., Neverauskienė, L. O., Tvaronavičienė, M., Danilevičienė, I., & Tamošiūnienė, R. (2024). The Impact of Renewable Energy Development on Economic Growth. *Energies*, 17(24), 6328. <https://doi.org/10.3390/en17246328>

Dušek, J. (2025). Transformation of Settlement Structures in Europe: Trends, Challenges, and Reform Approaches. *Land*, 14(1), 167. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land14010167>

Dutardre, J. (2025). Europe, a disunited power without any compass in the shadow of the American withdrawal. *FMES Institute – Mediterranean Foundation for Strategic Studies*. <https://fmes-france.org/en/europe-a-disunited-power-without-any-compass-in-the-shadow-of-the-american-withdrawal>

EEAS. (2022). *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence*. European External Action Service. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/strategic-compass-security-and-defence-1_en

EEAS. (2023). Joint procurement: EU Task Force presents conclusions of first phase. European External Action Service. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/node/421461_fr

European Commission. 2022. State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen. *European Commission*. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_22_5493

European Union. (2012). Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union. *Official Journal of the European Union*. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

Ferreira-Pereira, L. C. & Smith, M. (2021). *The European Union's strategic partnerships: global diplomacy in a contested world*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://download.e-bookshelf.de/download/0015/2661/83/L-G-0015266183-0052915448.pdf>

Fiott, D. (2023). In every crisis an opportunity? European Union integration in defence and the war on Ukraine. *Journal of European Integration*, 45(3), 447-462. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2023.2183395>

Fiott, D. (2018). *Strategic Autonomy: Towards 'European Sovereignty' in Defence?* In European Union Institute for Security Studies. https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief%2012_Strategic%20Autonomy.pdf

Genini, D. (2025). How the war in Ukraine has transformed the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. *Yearbook of European Law*, 00, 1-43. <https://doi.org/10.1093/yel/yeaf003>

Håkansson, C. (2023). The Ukraine war and the emergence of the European commission as a geopolitical actor. *Journal of European Integration*, 46(1), 25-45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2023.2239998>

Helwig, N. (2024). The EU's accidental geopolitics: Europe's geopolitical adaptation and its limits. *Finnish Institute of International Affairs*. <https://fiia.fi/en/publication/the-eus-accidental-geopolitics>

Högenauer, A.-L. & Mišík, M. (2024). *Small States in EU Policy-Making. Strategies, Challenges, Opportunities*. Abington: Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/Small-States-in-EU-Policy-Making-Strategies-Challenges-Opportunities/Hogenauer-Misik/p/book/9781032462271>

Howorth, J. (2019). Differentiation in security and defence policy. *Comparative European Politics*, 17(5), 261-277. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41295-019-00161-w>

Hrnčiar, M. & Kompan, J. (2023). Factors Shaping the Employment of Military Force from the Perspective of the War in Ukraine. *Vojenské rozhledy*, 32(1), 69-82. <https://doi.org/10.3849/2336-2995.32.2023.01.069-082>

Ivančík, R. & Andrassy, V. (2025). Discussing EU's Security Identity: Defence Spending, Strategic Autonomy and Transition from Normative Ambition to Geopolitical Reality. *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues*, 13(1), 411-425. <http://doi.org/10.9770/c2892383535>

Ivančík, R., Nečas, P., & Iľaščíková, L. (2024). Attention as a Commodity in the World of Disinformation and Social Media. *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues*, 12(2), 176-192. <https://doi.org/10.9770/k7393698996>

Jurčák, V. & Ivančík, R. (2023). Od Spoločnej bezpečnostnej a obrannej politiky k spoločnej armáde Európskej únie? *Vojenské rozhledy*, 32(1), 18-34. <https://doi.org/10.3849/2336-2995.32.2023.01.018-034>

Jurčák, V., & Marek, J. (2020). The Russian geopolitical interests in Africa. *Politické vedy*, 23(4), 196-212. <https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2020.23.4.196-212>

Jurčák, V., & Martaus, T. (2021). Lisbon treaty and security. *Politické vedy*, 24(3), 33-50. <https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2021.24.3.33-50>

Kavan, Š., Kročová, Š., Axman, M., & Stýblová, E. (2025). Threats of contamination of drinking water sources and their protection in the case study of the Czech Republic. *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*, 32, 14632-14647. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11356-025-36542-w>

Kavan, Š., Kazanský, R., & Nečas, P. (2020). Identifying risks in selected social facilities when emergencies arise. *Journal of Security and Sustainability Issues*, 10(2), 193-202. [https://doi.org/10.9770/jssi.2020.10.2\(1\)](https://doi.org/10.9770/jssi.2020.10.2(1))

Kazanský, R., & Andrassy, V. (2019). Conflict resolution approaches towards smart sustainability of internal relations. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues*, 6(3), 1468-1484. [https://doi.org/10.9770/jesi.2019.6.3\(29\)](https://doi.org/10.9770/jesi.2019.6.3(29))

Kirpsza, A. (2023). Not so independent? The effect of Commissioners' attributes on EU member states' bargaining success. *West European Politics*, 47(4), 915-941. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2023.2183655>

- Kompan, J., & Hrnčiar, M. (2021). The security sector reform of the fragile state as a tool for conflict prevention. *Politické vedy*, 24(2), 87-107. <https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2021.24.2.87-107>
- Lenovský, L., Al-Absi, M., Tökölyová, T. & Gomes da Rocha, A. C. (2019). *Identity in contemporary socio-political characteristics of modern societies*. Gdańsk: Research Institute for European Policy.
- Majchút, I. (2024). Contemporary Civil-Military Relations. Challenges to national defence in contemporary geopolitical situation: Proceedings of the 4th International Scientific Conference, 124-133. <https://doi.org/10.3849/cndcgs.2024.124>
- Maurer, H., Raube, K., & Whitman, R. G. (2024). “Zeitenwende” as coming of age? EU foreign & security policy through war & peace. *European Security*, 33(3), 345-363. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2024.2376604>
- Mello, P. A. (2022). Zeitenwende: German Foreign Policy Change in the Wake of Russia's War Against Ukraine. *Politics and Governance*, 12, 7346. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.7346>
- Menshikov, V., Ruža, O., & Baltgailis, J. (2025). The digital transformation and the inclusive economy: navigating the risks. *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues*, 13(2), 299-312. <https://doi.org/10.9770/s4626758963>
- Michaels, E., & Sus, M. (2024). (Not) Coming of age? Unpacking the European Union's quest for strategic autonomy in security and defence. *European Security*, 33(3), 383-405. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2024.2376603>
- Miró, J. (2023). Responding to the global disorder: the EU's quest for open strategic autonomy. *Global Society*, 37(3), 315-335. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2022.2110042>
- Müftüler-Bac, M., Aydın-Düzgit, S., & Uzun-Teker, E. (2024). The EU's global strategic partner(ship): a tool for the maturation of European foreign policy? *European Security*, 33(3), 426-448. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2024.2376612>
- Navarra, C. & Jančová, L. (2023). Qualified majority voting in EU common foreign and security policy. *European Parliamentary Research Service*. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/740243/EPRS_STU\(2023\)740243_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/740243/EPRS_STU(2023)740243_EN.pdf)
- Nitoiu, C. (2024). The anxious and resilient European Union: experiencing FOMO in the increasingly geopolitical world order. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 33(2), 535-548. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2024.2389121>
- Okunevičiūtė Neverauskienė, L., Dirma, V., Tvaronavičienė, M., & Danilevičienė, I. (2025). Assessing the Role of Renewable Energy in the Sustainable Economic Growth of the European Union. *Energies*, 18(4), 760. <https://doi.org/10.3390/en18040760>
- Okunevičiūtė Neverauskienė, L., Kvietkauskienė, A., Tvaronavičienė, M., Danilevičienė, I., & Gedvilaitė, D. (2025). Evaluation of Renewable Energy Sources Sector Development in the European Union. *Energies*, 18(17), 4786. <https://doi.org/10.3390/en18174786>
- Palárik, M., Mikulášová, A., Hetényi, M. & Arpáš, R. (2018). *The City and Region Against the Backdrop of Totalitarianism*. Berlin: Peter Lang Group AG. <https://www.peterlang.com/document/1056490>
- Raik, K., Blockmans, S., Osypchuk, A., & Suslov, A. (2024). EU Policy towards Ukraine: Entering Geopolitical Competition over European Order. *The International Spectator*, 59(1), 39-58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2023.2296576>
- Riddervold, M., & Rieker, P. (2024). Finally coming of age? EU foreign and security policy after Ukraine. *European Security*, 33(3), 497-516. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2024.2376616>
- Rieker, P., & Giske, M. T. E. (2024). *European actorness in a shifting geopolitical order: European strategic autonomy through differentiated integration*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sabatino, E. 2024. *European Union defence ambitions: a reality cheque*. *International Institute for Strategic Studies*. <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/military-balance/2024/08/european-union-defence-ambitions-a-reality-cheque>
- Scazzieri, L. (2025). Towards an EU ‘defence union’? *Centre for European Reform*. https://www.cer.eu/sites/default/files/pb_LS_defence_union_29.1.25.pdf
- Scholz, O. (2022). *Zeitenwende: A New Era in German Security Policy*. In *The Federal Government*. <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/statement-chancellor-schulz-ukraine-2008378>

Schramm, L. (2025). Navigating widening and deepening: the European Council, geopolitical motives, and Union enlargement. *Journal of European Integration*, 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2025.2457007>

Trifunović, D., Kazanský, R., & Nečas, P. (2021). Conceptualization of Terrorism as a Modern Form of Political Violence. *Politické vedy*, 24(2), 108-124. <https://doi.org/10.24040/politickevedy.2021.24.2.108-124>

Tvaronavičienė, M. (2024). The Transition towards Renewable Energy: The Challenge of Sustainable Resource Management for a Circular Economy. *Energies*, 17(17), 4242 <https://doi.org/10.3390/en17174242>

Varma, T. (2024). European Strategic Autonomy: The Path to a Geopolitical Europe. *The Washington Quarterly*, 47(1), 65-83. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2024.2327820>

Zakharchenko, A., Peráček, T., Fedushko, S., Syerov, Y., & Trach, O. (2021). When Fact-Checking and ‘BBC Standards’ Are Helpless: ‘Fake Newsworthy Event’ Manipulation and the Reaction of the ‘High-Quality Media’ on It. *Sustainability*, 13(2), 573. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13020573>

Data Availability Statement: More information and data can be obtained from the authors on a reasonable request.

Author Contributions: The authors contributed equally, they have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Radoslav IVANČÍK, Assoc. Prof. Dipl. Eng., PhD. et PhD., MBA, MSc. is an associate professor at the Department of Philosophy and Political Science, Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2233-1014>

Jiří DUŠEK, Assoc. Prof. Dipl. Eng., Ph.D. is an associate professor at the Department of Public Administration and Management, The College of European and Regional Studies, České Budějovice, Czechia.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0687-8311>

This is peer-reviewed scientific journal <https://jssidoi.org/ird/page/peer-review-policy>

Copyright © 2026 by author(s). Publishing rights by [UAB Sustainability for Regions](https://www.uab-sustainabilityforregions.eu/)

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

