LUISS

Department of Political Science

Master's Degree in International Relations
Major in Diplomacy

Chair of Comparative Politics

PARIS LODRON UNIVERSITÄT SALZBURG | Salzburg Centre of European Union Studies

Department of European Union Studies

Master's Degree in European
Union Studies

Chair of European Integration

Security and Defence Narrative Evolution around the Concept of EU Strategic Autonomy

The case studies of France and Poland

Prof. Silvia Menegazzi
_____
LUISS SUPERVISOR

Prof. Doris Wydra
_____
PLUS SUPERVISOR

Prof. Maria Giulia Amadio Vicerè
_____
LUISS CO-SUPERVISOR

Francesca Felci
ID LUISS: 649992
ID PLUS: 12234288
_____
CANDIDATE

Academic Year 2022/2023

TABLE OF CONTENT

CHAPTER I

Theoretical framework. Creating the bridge between the EU Member States security and defense position and the application of narratives to international relations

CHAPTER II

Unveiling the research context. Between EU defence and security integration and Strategic Autonomy

CHAPTER III

The case study of France

CHAPTER IV

The case study of Poland

Introduction

The current unstable geopolitical context, its changing dynamics, and the numerous conflicts outside the European Union (EU) borders, such as the unrest in Libya and the crisis in Yemen, together with the more recent Ukrainian-Russian conflict and the Israeli-Palestinian war, are resulting in critical junctures which may considerably shape the balance of power and policy priorities within and among countries. In Europe, for instance, some of these major developments, such as Russia's aggression against Ukraine, which have deeply shaken the EU countries' economies and priorities, strongly bring the issue of security back into the public eye. Since the end of World War II, the EU's security and defence has been delegated mainly to the United States of America, serving as a guarantor power for (Western) Europe, primarily through the structures of the Atlantic Alliance, the employment of its nuclear weapons and a strong troop presence across Europe. This can generally be considered true, even if it is well known that the diverse American presidential administration had over time highlighted some changes in the ally's priorities. We observe, for example, with Trump and Obama before him, how American priorities begin to drift away from Europe and towards the Pacific. From an EU integration point of view, this has led to a fluctuating interest in security and defence matters which has varied both across decades and among members.

The topic of EU collective defence and security has been retrieved by the Lisbon Treaty after being mostly abandoned as a consequence of the failed project of the European Defence Community. It has gained increasing importance in public and political debates, especially since the EU Global Strategy of 2016, where the term 'European Strategic Autonomy' was formalized. After being considered in a previous document of 2013, the 2016 EU Global Strategy publication officially introduced it in the common vocabulary of the EU member states political elite. The apparent dichotomy between a stable NATO umbrella and the emerging EU autonomy claims in defence matters has shaped EU members' national positions across the past decades: for some countries, such as France and to some extent also Italy, Spain, and Germany, the two projects run in parallel, reinforcing each other, while for others, like Poland or the Baltic States, they have worked as different, at times alternative systems within the same policy realm. The diverse

interpretation of the term 'Strategic Autonomy', which definition is far from punctual [1], did not help solve this ambiguity. However, its formalization opens the door to a series of EU initiatives and documents aimed at strengthening defence capabilities in response to the geopolitical and external environment. Among the others, we can take into consideration, the Strategic Compass of 2022, influenced in its sharpness by the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, or the increasing number of projects introduced by the Permanent Structured Cooperation, and the European Defence Fund.

Despite the EU's common stand on the issue of defence and security, the countries' approaches and policies within the Union are led by diverse aspirations and histories and every State develops its narrative on the topic, by facing the recent geopolitical event with their own sensibility. This is evident, for instance, when considering, in addition to the wars mentioned above, other events that have affected, and still changes, the international scene. For example, Brexit and Trump's presidency have significantly marked the national strategic visions of EU countries. Countries' attitudes have fluctuated on Trump's administration and his threat to exit NATO. We can consider France, which threw itself headlong into the need to strengthen the EU's autonomous defence, while the Polish narrative on the other hand, kept emphasising the indispensable role of the American ally for its own and the EU's defence, precisely in order to prevent Trumpian threats from becoming real. Moreover, Brexit, for some nations, such as Poland, highlighted a potential and alarming imbalance of internal EU powers towards France and Germany. Nevertheless, this event did not have the same impact on other nations. In France for instance, the perceived tension was replaced by a desire to strengthen its role in the Union. These examples do not exclude the possibility of countries shaping their narratives in a similar way, as was the case with the COVID-19 pandemic, where the over-dependence of European industries on global chains was sharply delineated. However, when it comes to designing the defence and security narrative, each state's particular character can never be hidden, but rather always stands out and dictates the lines of the countries' reactions, adjusting their priorities if necessary.

---

[1] In the absence of an official definition of this concept it is possible to refer to that given by the European Parliamentary Research Service in its 2020 study "On the path to 'strategic autonomy' ". Strategic autonomy is considered "as the ability to act autonomously, to rely on one's own resources in key strategic areas and to cooperate with partners whenever needed".

Considering the above, this thesis analyses the diverse security and defence narratives created by single countries and aims at understanding the influence of specific factors on their evolution. Specifically, the research tries to comprehend to what extent the introduction of the concept of EU Strategic Autonomy, so widely debated among EU countries, did influence the evolving EU Member States' defence and security narratives. The following chapters will try to answer this question taking into consideration two case studies, France, and Poland. These two countries have shaped their priorities and policy trajectories according to their distinct needs and histories, and this will be deeply studied in this research. Especially considering their 'traditional' position, with Poland being among the most sceptical members of an 'independent' EU defence, while France is at the frontline of promoting an EU Strategic Autonomy with some degree of independence from, among others, the Atlantic Alliance. This comparative analysis exemplifies the divergent paths that countries' stances might follow in relation to the same events or concepts, adjusting over time in response to new geopolitical developments. Focusing the research on the countries' positions regarding the concept of strategic autonomy, and around the internal and external factors that have shaped those stances, it will be possible to comprehend its weight on the evolution of their security and defence narratives.

Research Question

Delving into the topic of European integration in the defence sphere, this thesis aims at assessing the changes that exist between one EU country's narrative and the others. To do so, it is necessary to first recognise that each country frames in a unique way its own vision of the events that mark the history around it. The perception of threats, opportunities, and, above all, ambitions and priorities differ depending on history, culture, political approach, geographical location, and a variety of other factors that somehow contribute to the country's identity. Considering the various countries' narratives as a reflection of these perceptions reveals their pivotal role in the evolution of European integration. This, together with their unique character, just emphasised, underlines the significance of studying and absorbing their respective differences. It does indeed bring one closer towards gaining the right key to grasp the countries' positions in the current context and potentially avoid misunderstandings. This is especially important in today's

complex environment of geopolitical changes and tensions. Indeed, when considering the wars on the European borders, such as the Ukrainian-Russian or Palestinian-Israeli wars, or the increasing migration flows towards Europe, or the tensions caused by the risk of terrorist attacks, the relevance of this research becomes even clearer.

With this in mind, and to assess the differences among narratives, this thesis seeks to explain how countries' national narratives are shaped differently around a single factor, depending on their very identity. Specifically, around EU Strategic Autonomy, which has been selected, as previously stated, because it is a highly debated topic, and is essential in the EU defence integration issue. To do so, the research will try to answer the following research question:

To what extend did the concept of European Strategic Autonomy influence the defence and security narratives evolution of EU Member States?

To cope with the aim of addressing the difference among narratives, the thesis will focus on two countries in particular: France and Poland. Specifically, the research aims to understand the role and weight of the idea of European Strategic Autonomy, so widely debated among EU countries, in the growth of these EU Member States' defence and security narratives. Focusing on the two countries' approaches concerning the notion of EU Strategic Autonomy, and the internal and external influences on those stances, the thesis is expected to underline the divergent paths that the countries' strategies might follow in relation to the same events or concepts. In specific, it should make it possible to understand the diverse influence that the European Strategic Autonomy has on Poland construction of security and defence narrative, compared to France. This will provide an additional instrument for confronting present events and understanding the positions of the two countries in the current situation, potentially predicting their future choices.

Methodology

This thesis tried to answer the research question using a qualitative approach, taking into consideration the nuanced nature of narratives, which are at the centre of the study. The inquiry posed highlights the research's investigative approach. Its purpose is to explore the processes that led each country to create its unique narrative. Process tracing emerged

as the methodological basis, offering a systematic approach to identifying the steps that define the narratives over time. This method enabled a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics driving security and defence narratives, by tracking the unfolding of events and the responses they provoke.

This method was applied to the two case studies selected. France and Poland have been chosen because of their geopolitical context, and their varying, if not opposite, perception of the notion of strategic autonomy. Poland is one of the most sceptical supporters of an autonomous EU defence and the greatest promoter of the strengthening of the EU-U.S. relationship. On the other hand, France is leading the promotion of the EU Strategic Autonomy pushing for a certain level of independence from the Atlantic Alliance, among the others. Exploring the evolution of these two countries' narratives will provide insights into the complexities of contestation over EU Strategic Autonomy and the European security landscape.

The two case studies taken into consideration were analysed in separate chapters. Each of them included a first section concerning the historical evolution of the country defence strategy, and a second deepening the official documents of the government related to defence and security areas.

A wide range of sources was used in the data acquisition process to capture the multifaceted nature of security and defence narratives in the research. For the analysis of the historical development, primary and secondary sources such as official documents, academic papers, and speeches were examined together with newspaper articles, and interviews given by political figures. This combination of materials was essential in building a solid framework to understand the evolution of the defence and security narrative. In this section, events and interventions pertinent to understand the development of the country's narrative with regard to the idea of Strategic Autonomy were identified and methodically traced to unfold the routes tying discursive shifts to broader strategic needs.

The second part of each chapter focused solely on the examination of the official government documents concerning defence and security. This provided insights into the formal articulation of the country's strategy over the years. Among them, White Books

on defence were central since they are official instruments that define the country's strategy and priorities, while also pointing out its ambitions and the steps that are needed to reach these objectives [2]. Despite their exhaustiveness, they were not the only type of document considered in this part of the study. Defence Strategic Reviews were also relevant. Considering that they established the defence structures' essential improvements needed, it would have been an enormous error to overlook them. They, indeed, outline the immediate course that the defensive strategy must take and provide a long-term plan for execution [3]. Moreover, especially in the second case study, Defence Doctrines and Quarterly National Security documents were also taken into consideration. The first one, to promote a unique vision of the country strategy goal and priority, it usually emphasises all the new characteristics that the defence and security policies introduce [4]. The second one is a set of academic papers that provide a comprehensive understanding of diverse areas of the field of security and defence, for informative purposes, and to assist in the creation of a new National Strategy or Doctrine [5]. Additionally, other types of documents published by the foreign minister and the Ministry of defence might have been considered in both sections of the chapter, as they also contribute to creating the most complete context possible for an extensive comprehension of the two countries' narrative evolution.

The analysis aimed at clarifying the driving mechanisms behind narrative construction and its influence on policy outcomes through the combination of evidence. The methodological framework outlined in this chapter provides, indeed, a robust foundation for investigating the narrative of security and defence. By applying process tracing to the two case studies of France and Poland, the study intended to contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics shaping the influence of the European autonomous strategy in their security and defence narratives.

In the following pages, the thesis will be divided in four chapters. First, the theoretical framework will be built to provide a sound foundation for the research. Beginning by

---

[2] Claudio Catalano, "Iniziative Europee di Difesa," *Osservatorio Strategico* 16, no. 4 (2014): 57-62

[3] *Australian Government. Defence.* "National Defence: Defence Strategic Review 2023." Online: <https://www.defence.gov.au/about/reviews-inquiries/defence-strategic-review>

[4] *Netherlands Ministry of Defence*, "Defence Doctrine," accessible at <https://english.defensie.nl/topics/doctrine/defence-doctrine>

[5] *Poland National Security Office*, "The Quarterly 'National Security'," (n.d.), Online: <https://www.bezpieczenstwo-narodowe.pl/>

briefly highlighting the recent importance of constructivist theory, the chapter will then link this theory to the role of narratives in international relations. In doing so it will emphasise the role of narratives in making sense of the reality experienced by countries, and in understanding the reasoning behind a given national position. This theoretical framework, therefore, clarifies the necessity of analysing the countries' narratives.

The second chapter will serve to establish the context needed to investigate the evolution of countries' defence and security narratives. The first part of the chapter will set the scene for the development of defence and security in Europe over time. Highlighting the obstacles that integration in this field has encountered over time, as well as the support received at certain times, this first section illustrates step by step the degree of interaction achieved. The second part is devoted to the notion of strategic autonomy. This part outlines its origins, and its (difficult) definition, and gives voice to the debate that has arisen around it, therefore, wisely preparing to approach the investigative phase of the two case studies.

The third and fourth chapters will respectively concern the analysis of the case studies of France and Poland. As previously stated, each of them will attempt to unfold gradually the fundamental pieces of the two countries' history, and to analyse their official documents in order to construct the most exhaustive picture possible and allow the understanding of the reasoning behind the narrative construction of the two states' defence and security strategy.

Finally, the conclusion will synthesise the findings, highlighting the key elements of France and Poland's national histories and documents that are relevant in clarifying the role of European Strategic Autonomy in shaping their respective defence and security narratives.

CHAPTER I

Theoretical framework. Creating the bridge between the EU Member States security and defence position and the application of narratives to international relations.

1.1 Introduction

The tensions at the European Union (EU) borders and the changing international dynamics are altering relations within and among countries, thus putting under the spotlight the present increasingly complex environment. Diverse critical juncture may influence the balance of power and policy priorities of States. Among others, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 had significantly jolted the EU and placed the security issue back at the forefront of the public discourse. Given the broad interstate engagement in the Ukrainian-Russian war, it is reasonable to believe that this conflict served as a catalyst for the development of changing narratives around defence and security in European countries. To ascertain the extent to which this is the case, this thesis seeks to establish and comprehend the narrative evolution of nations on the subject of security and defence. This first chapter will attempt to grasp the rationale behind the necessity to analyse narratives by emphasizing their relationship with the constructivism theory. Indeed, the central foundation of narratives in defining the key with which to understand states' position on certain matters would lose power without the interconnection with the just mentioned theory. Beginning with a brief examination of constructivism and moving to a focus on narratives, the chapter will provide an understanding of the theoretical foundation upon which the thesis will be built.

1.2 The constructivism theory

Within the International Relations (IR) area of study, the theory of constructivism has been on the back corner for a long time, marginalized by the so-called mainstream

theories that were most widespread in this field, namely realism and liberalism [6]. With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the 1980s marked the revival of constructivism. Theorists and academics were, indeed, put in the position of recognising the inability of the mainstream theories most studied at the time to explain and forecast the end of the Cold War [7]. Among scholars in the field, it became clear that a new approach was needed to deal with the changing nature of the geopolitical context [8]. This awareness led to the so called 'constructivism turn' in IR, in which the increasing number of theorists, who arose during the third great debate, played a critical role. Indeed, it was this great debate held between rationalists and reflectivists [9], that gave rise to a genuine forum for theoretical discussion. Within this forum, theorists developed their own perspective by understanding the shortcomings of rationalism while simultaneously embracing the potential of the new reflectivist approach, eventually narrowed to constructivism. The new generation of theorists that grew above this debate was aware of the importance of embracing a new approach that could explain better the large-scale changes in the global environment, without forgetting the role of subjectivity in shaping actors' social dynamics and vice versa [10]. Some studies underlined that this new approach gained even more relevance when some later events emphasized further the changes that theories should have been ready to deal with. Among the others, jihadist terrorism appeared as a new form of threat, siding the more traditional ones of the 20th century [11]. Moreover, the globalization phenomenon urged for the strengthening of the new theoretical approach by challenging the state-centrism that served as the foundation for most IR theories in

---

[6] J. Samuel Barkin. "Realist Constructivism." *International Studies Review* 5, no. 3 (2003): 325–420

[7] Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," *International Security* 23, no. 1 (1998): 171–200; Alexander Wendt, "Social theory of international politics," *Cambridge University Press*, 67 (1999): 4-6

[8] Richard Price and Christian Reus-Smit, "Dangerous Liaisons?," *European Journal of International Relations* 4, no. 3 (1998): 259–294,

[9] Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391–425; 1. Robert O. Keohane, "International Institutions: Two Approaches," *International Studies Quarterly, Oxford University Press,* 32, no. 4 (1988): 379-396

[10] Price and Reus-Smit "Dangerous Liaisons?," (1998); Hoyoon Jung, "The Evolution of Social Constructivism in Political Science: Past to Present," *SAGE* 9, no. 1 (2019)

[11] Kimbra L. Fishel, "Challenging the Hegemon: Al Qaeda's Elevation of Asymmetric Insurgent Warfare onto the Global Arena," In *Networks, Terrorism and Global Insurgency*, Ed. Robert J. Bunker *Routledge* (2006): 115–128.

the last century [12]. The collective and intersubjective comprehension of social dynamics became crucial in IR's new approaches as several theories started to place an increasing amount of emphasis on the study of intangible elements like ideas, knowledge, and culture [13]. Some authors even started to stress the idea that reality, as well as IRs, were created by social factors, whose existence was solely linked to the human agreement about it [14].

The new approach of constructivism theory emerged primarily from Alexander Wendt's publication of "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics" in 1992 [15], further developed with "Social Theory of International Politics" [16]. Wendt's constructivist approach emphasized the significance of ideas in IR since, to him, shared ideas rather than tangible elements formed national interest [17]. Although still state-centric, Wendt's constructivism, sees States as actors that in the absence of pre-existing interests, elaborate their preferences through their interaction with one another in various geopolitical settings. Through their interactions, each actor articulates his unique identity and his interests, which shape both other actors and his own expectations about his role, as well as the social structures they move within [18]. Indeed, according to other scholars that further elaborated on constructivism, the world in which States, exactly as human beings, move and interact is created by them [19]. This put their identities at the foundation for institutions, national interests, and countries relations. It is easy to further develop this

[12] Robert I. Rotberg, "Failed States in a World of Terror," In *Foreign Affairs. Council of Foreign Relations,* 81, no. 4 (2002): 127-140. 127.

[13] Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science* 4, no. 1 (2001): 391–416. 393.

[14] Emanuel Adler, "Seizing the middle ground: Constructivism in world politics," *European Journal of International Relations* 3 (1997): 319-363.

[15] Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It" (1992)

[16] Wendt, "Social theory of international politics" (1999)

[17] Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It" (1992). 141

[18] Paolo Rosa, "La svolta sociologica nelle relazioni internazionali: tre approcci e tre filoni di ricerca," *Dipartimento di Sociologia e Ricerca Sociale. Università di Trento*. Quaderno 48 (2010)

[19] Nicholas G. Onuf, "World of our making," *University of South Carolina Press*. Columbia (1989).

point by citing Watzelawick, according to whom "The belief that one's own view of reality is the only reality is the most dangerous of all delusions" [20].

To contextualize what has been said so far, we can underline that constructivism allows for the investigation of how ideas, perceptions, and the interaction of international actors through shared meanings and interpretations influence the state's role and preferences. This should be kept in mind when focusing on national narratives. Indeed, once the essential importance of ideas in shaping international relations is recognized, it is not possible to examine state security and defence narratives without addressing constructivist theory. This is even more clear as another critical component of constructivism, namely the role of social interactions in building international relations, is the key to understand how different actors' dynamics have contributed to the development of these national narratives. In this regard, it is also worth noting the significance that non-state actors gained within this theory, as they could also be regarded as part of the process of creating narratives [21].

It is impossible to have a complete understanding of constructivist theory as it has been understood for this research, without reference to the approaches presented by two major scholars: Adler and Kelly. Indeed, we can emphasize with George Kelly the concept of 'constructive alternativism', which fits into the constructivist paradigm, strongly arguing for the existence of numerous and multiple ways of interpreting reality, all of which are alternative to each other and equally valid. Therefore, according to his perspective, the idea of an objective, uniform, predetermined reality is replaced by that of a continuous creation of it by a subject whose knowledge serves as the crucial constructive element [22]. There are several elements in this theory that Adler had also brought to the attention of studies on the topic. Indeed, he focuses precisely on the subjective world experienced by each individual, thus eliminating the idea of a fixed view of reality [23]. At the basis of this subjectivity and a further element

---

[20] Paul Watzlawick and Jean Sanders. "La realtà della realtà: comunicazione disinformazione confusione," *Astrolabio* (1976)

[21] "Key Theories of International Relations," *Norwitch University* (n.d.), Online, last access 14 December 2023 <https://online.norwich.edu/key-theories-international-relations>

[22] George Kelly, "A theory of personality: The psychology of personal constructs," *WW Norton & Company* 152 (1963)

[23] Adler, "Seizing the middle ground," (1997)

that characterizes Adler's elaboration of constructivism, there is the concept of *fiction*. According to Adler, to create our own compass to guide us through the chaos of life, everyone must construct their own subjective and personal *fictions*, that reflect their opinion of themselves and the world. It is precisely this individually created *fiction* what reflects each person's view of reality thanks to the subjective formulation of thoughts, emotions, and perceptions [24]. Starting from this, Adler focuses on the world interpretation and insists that "the material world shapes and is shaped by human action and interaction" [25]. When focusing on the development of national narratives over time and in response to international events, the relevance of interpretation, *fiction*, and subjective reality is a crucial component.

The constructivist assumption on which this thesis unfolds can benefit from the connection between Adler and Kelly's just mentioned views, and Guzzini's contribution[26]. He views constructivism as based on knowledge and social reality which he considers as mutually constitutive and socially built [27]. By linking their assumptions, we can synthesize that as reality is not fixed and subjective knowledge is a crucial constructive element for it, the mutually constitutive character of reality and knowledge themselves reinforce the idea that they keep influencing one another, which stands at the root of this research. The premise of the thesis is indeed that the country's self-elaborated narrative influences and is impacted by the international reality in which it operates, including critical historical events. This becomes more evident when considering the agent-structure relationship in the constructivist theory, that is seen as a mutually constitutive relation in which neither the agent nor the structure is pre-constituted, but where they are both defined through their interaction [28]. Indeed, as the State narrative, also states' identities and interests do not come from

---

[24] Ibidem

[25] Ibidem. 322

[26] Stefano Guzzini, "A reconstruction of constructivism in international relations," *European journal of international relations* 6, no. 2 (2000): 147-182.

[27] Ibidem

[28] Hopf, "The promise of constructivism in international relations theory," (1998)

the pre-created structures in which they move, but they are shaped during the interaction itself [29].

A highly relevant strand of constructivism is also that of the culture of security, which considering the topic of this thesis is not possible to overlook. The immediate application of the theory in this area of interest can help further understand this theoretical choice. It shows that attitudes toward threats and the use of force are not rigidly driven by the international system's physical conditions, such as the balance of power. Instead, they are shaped by ideational elements like belief systems, which prompt decision-makers to adopt diverse strategies and perceive events differently [30]. This might be extended to the narrative construction of the country's defence and security area, which rather than depending solely on the material capacities of states, might be highly impacted by ideological factors, interests, social interactions, discourses, identities, conventions, and the complete set of non-material factors on which constructivism is based on [31].

Starting from the constructivism framework just unfolded, analysing the specific relevance of narratives in IR allow us to gain a deep understanding of the process that builds a shared meaning of interest, values, and aspirations of states.

1.3 Relevance of narrative in international relations

This research is based on the concert between constructivist theory and narratives, two notions that go 'hand in hand' in understanding the worldwide dynamics of our time [32]. At the heart of the analysis, the study recognizes the critical function of narratives in shaping national positions and thus defining the perceived threats and

[29] Christian Reus-Smit, "The constructivist turn: Critical theory after the Cold War," *Department of International Relations, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.* Camberra (1996); Wendt, "Social theory of international politics" (1999)

[30] Rosa, "La svolta sociologica nelle relazioni internazionali," (2010)

[31] G J Ruthu, "Theories of International Relations: Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism," *Sociology Group* (July 18, 2023), Online, accessed December 14 2023, https://www.sociologygroup.com/international-relations-theories/

[32] Sabrina Sohail, "Understanding Narratives in International Relations," The Diplomat Insight (12 October 2022), Online, last access 14 December 2023 <https://thediplomaticinsight.com/understanding-narratives-in-international-relations/>

related official responses. Their role, formerly considered marginal in social science studies, has only lately gained respect and importance in the IR field. The term 'narrative' is becoming increasingly popular (it appeared 65 times in the 'Annual Conference 2023' [33]) signalling the public and experts' growing interest in it. Choosing to investigate the evolution of France and Poland's security and defence narratives, is intended to contribute to the spread of awareness about the importance of the narratives themselves, making a modest contribution to the construction of academic literature on the subject.

The recognition of narratives as a key research tool has gradually spread throughout the human sciences, reaching also political sciences, and it can be defined as a 'narrative turn'. [34] The important growth of individualism, together with a crisis of confidence in positivist social science, along with the rediscovery of the power of agency, have pushed for this turn. [35] It has enabled a departure from earlier views that regarded the concept of narratives as merely synonymous with 'discourse' [36]. As interest in it has grown, so has the understanding of both its inherent and unique strength and potential.

Taking a structural approach toward the analysis of narratives and their potential, we can refer to the definitions of narrative that view it as the 'practice of telling stories about connected sequences of human action' [37] and the 'framework that allows human to connect apparently unconnected phenomenon around some causal transformation' [38]. Given these definitions and considering the broader framework of the structural approach to narratives, it has become essential to understand their story-like quality,

---

[33] Jack Holland and Xavier Mathieu, "Narratology and US Foreign Policy in Syria: Beyond Identity Binaries, toward Narrative Power," *International Studies Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (2023)

[34] Roberts Geoffrey, "History, theory and the narrative turn in IR," *Review of International Studies* 32, no. 4 (2006): 703-714.

[35] Robert F Berkhofer, "Beyond the great story: History as text and discourse," *Harvard University Press*, (1995).

[36] Alexander Spencer, "Romantic Narratives in International Politics: Pirates, Rebels and Mercenarie," *Manchester University Press*. Manchester (2016): 25

[37] Geoffrey, "History, theory and the narrative turn in IR," (2006). 703, 704

[38] Tzvetan Todorov, "The poetics of prose," *Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press* (1977). 45

which distinguishes them from rhetoric, frames, and discourses [39]. The originality and strength of the narrative's story-like characteristics can be concretely found in their ability to build a predictable story that begins with an initial destruction and leads to a final resolution. As a result, the audience may develop expectations about the evolution of the events, thereby projecting them into the future along with the narrator [40]. This satisfies our inherent desire for closure [41], and when carried into international relations becomes potentially central in defining geopolitical and interstate relationship changes. As summed by Ó Tuathail, 'Storylines are sense-making organizational devices tying the different elements of a policy challenge together into a reasonably coherent and convincing narrative' [42].

Indeed, through the structural lens, the relevance of narratives is that with the creation of a convincing storyline and the exclusion of competing alternatives to it, they create 'teleological sequences of events' [43], through which we try to give purpose and order to the world and the succession of occurrences in it. In this sense, narratives help people in making sense of the world they live in by creating storylines and coherent expectations that will help them find their compass. This concept has a strong connection with constructivism theory. Indeed, creating narratives satisfies the desire and need to make sense of the otherwise disordered experience of life by producing one's own subjective *fiction*, as referred to by Adler [44]. As several scholars have stressed, narratives become the means by which one makes sense of reality and the

---

[39] Ronald Krebs, ''Narrative and the Making of US National Security,'' *Cambridge University Press* (2015); Michael Barnett, "Culture, Strategy and Foreign Policy Change: Israel's Road to Oslo," *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 1 (1999): 5–36.

[40] Alister Miskimmon, Ben O'Loughlin, and Laura Roselle "Strategic Narrative: A New Means to Understand Soft Power," *Media, War & Conflict* 7, no. 1 (2014): 70–84, 76

[41] For further information see: Laura Shepherd, "Gender, Violence and Popular Culture: Telling Stories", *Routledge* (2013)

[42] Gearóid ÓTuathail, "Theorizing practical geopolitical reasoning: the case of the United States' response to the war in Bosnia," *Political Geography* 21 (5) (2002): 601-628. 617

[43] Spencer, "Romantic Narratives in International Politics," (2016); Martha S. Feldman, and Julka Almquist, "Analyzing the Implicit in Stories," In *Varieties of Narrative Analysis*, Eds. James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, *SAGE Publications* (2012): 207–228.

[44] Adler, "Seizing the middle ground," (1997)

world [45], and they are also responsible for providing the conceptual map that helps to find one's way around it.

To understand how narratives have been understood in this thesis, we must also turn to other authors who further elaborate on what has been expressed so far. Fisher, for example, emphasizes the notion that the function of narrative is to convey the meaning and purpose of lived experiences.[46] Delving deeper into this line of thought, for James Bruner narrative is not limited to merely communicating the scope of experience, but is considered a way of organizing and give meaning to them through the construction of a complex and coherent story, including in the process the selection and interpretation of events [47]. Therefore, according to him, narrative design has a far more "tangible" impact, as it may affect reality and shape opinions, demonstrating the tight link between constructivism and narratives [48]. Following Bruner's footsteps, and drawing parallels with the medical field, Arthur Frank's research focuses on narrative as a method of understanding metabolizing illnesses[49]. With the theoretical developments briefly outlined so far, it is possible to emphasize the essential role of narratives, not only as a means of transmitting a national position regarding specific issues but also and especially as a means of internalizing it for both the public and the policymakers themselves.

Based on the assumption that narratives are the tool through which states outline their interests and create a coherent storyline, their relevance also gains an external dimension to the extent that state actors use it for their international projection. Specifically, in their international relations, states use specific narratives to convey to other actors (state and non-state) their own key to reading events on the global stage. In this setting, according to studies that focus on narratives as a strategic tool, they

---

[45] Spencer, "Romantic Narratives in International Politics," (2016). 40; Krebs, "Narrative and the Making of US National Security," (2015). 2, 10

[46] Walter R. Fisher, "The narrative paradigm: An elaboration," *Communications Monographs* 52, no. 4 (1985): 347-367.

[47] Jerome S. Bruner, "The narrative construction of reality," *Critical inquiry* 18, no. 1 (1991): 1-21. 21

[48] Ibidem. 5

[49] Arthur W Frank, "What is narrative therapy and how can it help health humanities?, " *Journal of Medical Humanities* 39 (2018): 553-563

even become a way for storytellers, including political leaders, security experts, and researchers, to achieve certain political objectives [50].

The decision to examine the narratives of the countries in this thesis is greatly justified by what has been underlined in these pages, and by their relevance in shaping the international order. Every nation presents its own interpretation of the historical events that surround it in an individual way, and their narratives reflect this unique perception of the world, while also giving crucial insights to comprehending its position in the international stage. This is also true when considering their attitude on the topic of this thesis, namely the EU defence integration and Strategic Autonomy. Indeed, their study can be seen as an opportunity to acquire a more precise picture of states' approach in today's geopolitical critical context, and hopefully to help eliminate misunderstandings. For these reasons, an in-depth analysis of the states' orientations toward major junctures in the international scene cannot overlook a comprehensive examination of the narratives they use, and their evolutions.

1.4 Conclusion

Given the contemporary international and particularly European context, which has been alarmed by several events, such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, defence and security became again major topics of discussion in the public discourse among EU Member States. When setting their national defence priorities and policy lines, States had to consider recent events and formulate an appropriate response to them. In this process they used their national narratives, to consistently seek to restore coherent meaning and order to the lived experience and their reaction to it. To analyse how State narratives have evolved in light of recent destabilizing occurrences, this chapter tried to build a clear theoretical framework that can serve as a basis for the study and further investigation of the topic.

After briefly outlining how constructivist theory has gained prominence in international relations only recently, and how the role of ideas in defining reality has

---

[50]Alister Miskimmon, Ben O'Loughlin, and Laura Roselle, "Forging the world: Strategic narratives and international relations," *Centre for European Politics/New Political Communications Unit*. London (2012)

become increasingly central, the chapter sought to emphasize the interconnection between constructivism and narratives. Analysing specifically the structural features of the latter, it is possible to reveal clear parallels with the constructivist theory itself. The narratives allow both the narrator and the external actors to make sense of reality, to give coherence and purpose to a states' lived experiences and to understand the reasoning behind a certain state position. In much the same way, according to constructivism, the ideas, and *fictions* that each individual creates help him define and make sense of his reality. This chapter therefore emphasized the interconnection present between these two concepts. Narratives, then, which not only reflect perceptions of a State but are also active tools in defining and communicating those perceptions, are at the heart of the thesis that will be elaborated in the following chapters.

In conclusion, this theoretical framework chapter lays the essential foundation for the in-depth analysis of international dynamics in the contemporary setting. Building on this firm groundwork, the next chapters will explore deeply the evolution of the Narratives of two EU member states, France, and Poland, thus providing access to the substantive part of this research.

CHAPTER II

Unveiling the research context. Between EU defence and security integration and Strategic Autonomy

2.1 Introduction

Analysing the evolution of the narratives of the EU Member States requires a contextual backdrop, which will be the aim of this second Chapter. The following pages will show the comprehensive context starting from which it will be possible to understand the evolution of the narratives. In creating this context there is no getting away from delving into the foundational development of the EU's own defence and security issue, as it is inherently intertwined with shifts in member states' perceptions and narratives on these matters. This will be, therefore, the topic of the first part of this chapter, as it establishes a connection between the broader European context and the individual states' perceptions, offering insights into the complexities of their evolving stances on security and defence matters. The second part of the chapter will underline another crucial component of the thesis: Strategic Autonomy. While trying to illustrate its origins and significance, the chapter will also underline the heart of the debate on which countries' positions have diverged, as well as its diverse phases. Understanding this matter is vital to better follow the unfolding of this thesis in the following chapter and to easily analyse the development of EU member countries' narratives on defence and security.

2.2 The EU security and defence development

Signs of the common defence subject in the EU can be dated back to the initial moments of cooperation at the European level when the foundations of the EU began to be laid. The first failed attempt to create a European Defence Community (EDC) in 1950 was already a hint of the complexity of the issue and the debates it was designed to bring with it. After this failure, indeed, the EU increased its integration under diverse aspects leaving behind the defence matter. This can be justified considering

that defence is a central feature of state sovereignty, and therefore EU nations were quite sceptic at the idea of devoting their powers in this area to a supranational body. Indeed, because of the lack of willingness of the EU MS to empower the Commission, a supranational institution, in this policy area, other intergovernmental bodies had a more central role in the development [51].

With the end of the Cold War and especially during the Yugoslav conflict of the 1990s that showed the glaring lack of European defence capabilities and the necessity to rely on external forces, such as those of NATO and the U.S, the EU security issue gained back a lot of public attention with rampant debates [52]. A significant milestone in the development of the European security and defence came with the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which cemented the topic's prominence. Indeed, as stated in the treaty, the EU was to be founded on three pillars, one of which was the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) [53]. The main protagonist of the EU initiatives of those years was the European Council, which brings together the heads of EU member states and where decisions related to the common foreign and security policy take place through unanimous decisions (with some exceptions), safeguarding state sovereignty [54]. It launched the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) in 1999, known as the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) since the Lisbon Treaty afterward [55]. This may gradually formulate, according to Article 42.2 of the Treaty of the European Union (TEU), the Common defence strategy of the Union. More broadly, it ought to empower the Union to take a key role in averting conflicts, ensuring global security,

---

[51]Anand Menon, "Defence policy and the logic of 'high politics'," In *Beyond the regulatory polity,* Ed. Genschel Philipp and Markus Jachtenfuchs, *Oxford University Press* (2014): 66-84.

[52] Vincenzo Aglieri, et al, "EU Global Strategy: la nuova frontiera della cooperazione per la sicurezza e difesa comune dell'Unione Europea (UE)," *Centro Militare di Studi Strategici, Istituto Alti studi per la difesa,* no. 69 (2018). 19

[53]*European Union*, *Treaty on European Union (Consolidated Version 2002)* OJ C 325 (24 December 2022) Eli: http://data.europa.eu/eli/treaty/teu_2002/oj

[54] Branislav Đorđević, Glišić Miroslav, and Dejan Stojković, "Strengthening Security and Defence. What Is the Relative Power of the European Union vis-à-vis the Member States?" *Institute of International Politics and Economics, Faculty of Security Studies at the University of Belgrade*, Belgrade (2021): 37-62; *European Union*, "European Council. Overview, " Online, last access 15 January 2024 <https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/search-all-eu-institutions-and-bodies/european-council_en>

[55] *European Union External Action*, "The shaping of a Common Security and Defence Policy" (10 August 2021), Online, last access 15 January 2024 <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/shaping-common-security-and-defence-policy_en>

and conducting peacekeeping missions [56]. In 2009, the European Council also approved the Helsinki Headline Goal, formulating a first objective to reach the availability of 60.000 soldiers for common proposes by 2003. Even if not achieved and later modified into a new goal set for 2010 that included the EU's battle groups plan, it remains an important step for the development of the security and defence area in the EU [57]. The 90s were also the years in which the European Commission attempted to play a more significant role in the field of security and defence. Indeed, between '96 and '97, it pushed for the establishment of a common defence industry among member states and a relative controlling agency ruled by the Commission itself. However, it had to face the Member States' unpreparedness in welcoming its supranational role in this area [58]. Fearing the risk of a further distancing of the MS defence industrial production from the EU, it ended up supporting the intergovernmental body preferred by them. This resulted in the foundation of the European Defence Agency (EDA) in 2004, which functions based on governments' voluntary cooperation and has the exclusive responsibility of promoting cooperative development around defence since the Lisbon Treaty entered into force [59]. Concurrently, in 2009 the Commission launched a defence package to control the related market, which was followed by the creation of a defence task force, both to enhance the Commission's coordination on defence matters and to get more actively involved in the debate over the future of EU defence [60].

In December 2013 the European Council discussion was mainly built around the issue of defence and security, focusing on the priorities to strengthening EU MS cooperation on the matter, such as the necessity to boost the CSDP's efficacy and influence, while also strengthening Europe's defence industry [61]. Urging the preparation of a strategic framework in various areas, including maritime security, energy security, and others,

---

[56] Ibidem; *Government of the Republic of Italy. Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation,* "CFSP / CSDP," Online, last access 14 January 2024 <https://www.esteri.it/en/politica-estera-e-cooperazione-allo-sviluppo/politica_europea/dimensione-esterna/sicurezza_comune/>

[57] Đorđević, Miroslav, and Stojković, "Strengthening Security and Defence," (2021)

[58] Calle Håkansson, "The European Commission's new role in EU security and defence cooperation: The case of the European Defence Fund," *European Security* 30, no.4 (2021): 589-608. 589

[59] Daniel Fiott, "The European Commission and the European Defence Agency: A Case of Rivalry?," *JCMS: Journal of common market studies* 53, no. 3 (2015): 542-557.

[60] Ibidem

[61] Đorđević, Miroslav, and Stojković, "Strengthening Security and Defence," (2021)

these discussions sought to establish the appropriate framework to prevent and manage future crises [62]. The increased relevance of the topic became even more clear in the last decade. This can be proven considering for example the commission presidency electoral campaign of Jean-Claude Juncker that focused on it [63]. Along the road that put the defence and security matter at the centre of the EU priorities, an important moment can be found in 2016 when the EU Global strategy was adopted, providing strategic directives for security and defence priorities, while catalysing a series of subsequent measures aimed at integrating defence at the European Union level [64]. Indeed, it was shortly followed by the European Defence Action Plan (EDAP) [65] and by the reflection paper of 2017 on the future of European defence [66]. Before the EU Global strategy, also the pilot project of 2015 on Common Security and Defence research was an important step in the EU integration on this matter, as it mentioned for the first time the term 'defence' in the EU budget [67]. After the EU Global Strategy of 2016, the increased focus on defence and security was sided by the creation of diverse instruments that cope with this matter. Among the others, the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) was developed, followed by the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), and the European Defence Fund (EDF) [68]. Moreover, between 2017 and 2019 the Directorate General for Defence Industry and Space was established, to

[62] Aglieri, et al, "EU Global Strategy," (2018)

[63] Jean-Claude Juncker, "A New Start for Europe. My Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change. Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission. Opening Statement in the European Parliament Plenary Session," *European Parliament* (15 July 2014).

[64] Tania Laţici, "Who does what in security and defence?," *European Parliamentary Research Service, European Parliament Liaison Office in Washington D.C* (September 2021)

[65] *European Council*, "Council Conclusions," EUCO 34/16, *European Council*, Brussels. Belgium (15 December 2016). Paragraph 11-12

[66] *European Commission*, "Reflection paper on the future of European defence," *European Commission,* Brussels, Belgium (7 June 2017)

[67]Frédéric Mauro, and Klaus Thoma, "The future of EU defence research, " *European Parliament's Sub-Committee on Security and Defence. European Parliament,* Brussels, Belgium (2016). 30

[68] Lucie Béraud-Sudreau, and Alice Pannier, "An 'improbable Paris-Berlin-Commission triangle': usages of Europe and the revival of EU defence cooperation after 2016," *Journal of European integration* 43, no. 3 (2021): 295-310; Sophia Besch, "EU's Institutional Framework regarding Defence Matters," *European Policy Department for External Relations. European Parliament Sub-Committee on Security and Defence,* Brussels, Belgium (2020)

handle the European Defence Fund (EDF) implementation [69] and to lead the European Commission activities in the sector, enhancing the commission's role as a supranational body [70]. Among these recent tools, the PESCO can be seen as a very comprehensive EU integration project in the field of defence and security. It was not only meant to strengthen the EU MS cooperation in developing their military capabilities but also to ensure that MS enhanced their efforts to share the burden of security and defence within the NATO-EU collaboration [71]. For this cooperation to work, MS, which are only those willing to participate, are led to define a set of shared standards, commitments, and plans [72]. This tool has, however, created a debate that stems from the contribution that member states joining PESCO projects must provide, as PESCO intends to be complementary to NATO, placing member states in a possible dilemma in perceiving the priorities of the two organizations involved [73]. This debate can be coupled with the one built around the concept of strategic autonomy, the subject of the next subchapter, which is regarded as a potential source of conflict in the setting of European priorities and stances. When considering the PESCO instrument, it is also relevant to underline the progress and evolution made within it. The original seventeen projects established have progressively grown to a total of sixty-eight throughout time. Furthermore, Denmark joined the group of participating nations last year, increasing the total to twenty-six [74]. This evolution exemplifies how new needs, often related to a different international scenario, influence the development of measures introduced over the years, which as active tools reflect these changes, for instance by increasing the number of projects, as in the case of PESCO, to cover the growing

---

[69] *European Commission*, "Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: European Defence Action Plan," *European Commission*, Brussels, Belgium (30 Nov 2016)

[70] Håkansson, "The European Commission's new role in EU security and defence cooperation," (2021)

[71] Mantas Bileisis and Svajune Unguryte-Ragauskiene, "EU Security Policy and Priorities," in *Europe Alone. Small State Security without the United States*, Eds. David Schultz, Aurelija Puraite, and Vidmante Giedraityte, *Rowman & Littlefield* (2022): 177-195

[72] *European Council. General Secretariat of the Council,* "European Council Meeting (22 and 23 June 2017)-Conclusions," EUCO 8/17, Brussels (23 June 2017)

[73] Ibidem

[74] *European Council, Council of the European Union*, "Timeline: EU cooperation on security and defence," Online, last access 15 January 2024 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/defence-security/defence-security-timeline/>

number of issues. Among the others, for example, the terrorist attacks of 2015 and 2017, the migration crisis, the Ukraine annexation of Crimea in 2014, and Brexit, were destabilizers and served as a further push for strengthening the integration process within the EU security realm [75].

A critical EU development in this matter is for sure related to the introduction of the Strategic Compass in 2022. The Council's approval of this instrument coincided with the outbreak of the War in Ukraine, and this is an important reason why it takes on very strong value for the Union. This instrument sets out concrete actions and an ambitious plan, with clear benchmarks to assess the EU's progress in strengthening European defence and security policies by 2030. It aims to ensure that the EU becomes a "stronger and more capable security provider" [76] both internally and in its international role as a world power. This document has a significant intergovernmental footprint since member states had a heavy leading role in its creation. One of its main features is the follow-up measures that are provided to certify its execution. These mechanisms also set it apart from the previous Global Strategy of 2016. Through the strategic compass, member states seek to establish a robust foundation for the EU to act rapidly in times of crises, even alone when necessary. In doing so, it aims to fortify EU ambitions to increase military mobility and build a strong Rapid Deployment Capacity of 5,000 troops. The protection of the Union's interests is another area of emphasis in the declaration, which is ensured by increasing intelligence analysis, building hybrid threat response teams, establishing cyber diplomacy and defence policies, building toolkits for manipulating foreign information, and developing an EU space strategy. Finally, emphasising communication, collaboration, and capacity-building, the EU aims to expand its coalitions with critical allies such as NATO, the UN, and regional partners, to be able to anticipate and deter emerging threats [77].

---

[75] Béraud-Sudreau, and Pannier, "An 'improbable Paris-Berlin-Commission triangle'," (2021); Håkansson, "The European Commission's new role in EU security and defence cooperation," (2021); Desmond Dinan, Neill Nugent, and William E. Paterson, "The European Union in Crisis," *Bloomsbury Publishing* (2017). 9

[76] *European Union External Action*, "A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence," (28 October 2021), Online, last access 10 January 2024 <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/strategic-compass-security-and-defence-1_en>

[77] Ibidem

Running alongside the evolution of the EU's defence and security sphere over the years has been the EU partnership with NATO. NATO's significance on the global stage has shifted over time, notably since the end of the Cold War, but it has always been vital to the European defence scene. Indeed, the EU and NATO have maintained a complementary bond over the years, sharing defensive strategies and threats. NATO has played a major supporting role in European defence, also economically [78]. Those European states that are also NATO's members are protected by the collective defence clause, as outlined in Article 5 of the NATO Treaty, which specifies that an assault on one member state is an attack against the alliance as a whole. A key pillar of this defence is NATO's nuclear deterrence capability, considered by many European states as essential to EU security. Its strength is entrusted to three leading nuclear powers, only one of which is a member of the EU, France, siding the U.S. and Great Britain [79]. Since the earliest steps in the 1990s when the EU desired to revise its defence responsibilities, the EU-NATO partnership has been a key element. Their close cooperation based on their mutual reinforcement, has contributed to their joint and more effective response to crises over the years [80]. The joint declarations made by the EU and NATO throughout the years have been especially important in defining and formalizing this collaboration. The first one in 2016 sought to strengthen the two bodies' cooperation around some main points, including hybrid threats and cyber security, both of which were then emphasized again in the following joint declaration. In 2018, the two institutions, building on the previous statement, signed a new one that stressed areas of collaboration helpful for cooperative action in countering the various threats that may occur. They emphasize the EU's commitment to boosting transatlantic security and reinforcing regional peace and stability. The joint statements also mention how some of the instruments introduced at the European level, such as PESCO and EDF, play a crucial role in the achievement of this solidified EU commitment. The most recent Joint declaration is from January 2023. Besides emphasizing the expansion of NATO-EU cooperation, the document condemns

---

[78] *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, "Relations with the European Union," (30 November 2023), Online, last access 12 January 2024 <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49217.htm>

[79] Suzana Anghel et al, "On the path to 'strategic autonomy'. The EU in an evolving geopolitical environment," *European Parliamentary Research Service* (September 2020): 1-48. 51

[80] *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, "Relations with the European Union," (2023)

Russian aggression against Ukraine. The areas of partnership underlined in the statement are broader than in previous ones, ranging from growing geostrategic competition to emerging harmful technologies, it also discusses space and climate change security, as well as information manipulation [81]. These statements, which formalized a long-term relationship, were essential staples in its turbulent moments. Indeed, they remarked on the important collaboration and the goals achieved when tensions appeared to threaten this bond or when the power disparity between the alliance's two key elements, the United States and the EU, seemed to be too unequal. Among the tensions it is possible to mention especially that related to burden-sharing in the alliance, which has caused several critical moments, even leading to the U.S. threat to abandon the alliance itself. This, along with Macron's subsequent declaration of the Alliance's "brain death" [82], partly as a result of this threat, is indicative of a relationship that has not always been ideal but has continued to evolve over time. Sharing twenty-two member countries, the two organizations have woven a bond that is still a cornerstone of European defence and is developing with it, adapting to new international scenarios. This can be confirmed by the bolstering of NATO forces in the EU as a result of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Therefore, for an actor like the EU, which is still formulating its full foreign policy, the NATO umbrella can be still considered as a true asset [83].

To summarize, through the analyses of the evolution of the defence and security framework of the European Union, it has been possible to identify a path of developments, initiatives, and collaborative endeavours pursued over the years. the review of the various defence and security initiatives clearly reveals a rising commitment among member nations to pursue common aims. The deepening of the ties between the EU and NATO throughout time, discussed above, has further shed light on the intricate and multifaceted environment within which the EU formulates

---

[81] European Council and Council of the European Union, "EU-NATO cooperation," Online, last access 13 January 2024 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/defence-security/eu-nato-cooperation/>

[82] Sophie Pedder, "Emmanuel macron in his own words," *The Economist* (7 November 2019), Online, Last access 10 January 2024 <https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-in-his-own-words-french>

[83] Maria Giulia Amadio Viceré, "EU Foreign Policy integration at times of war: from short-term responses to long-term solutions," *IAI* (14 February 2022), Online, last access 12 February 2024 <https://www.iai.it/it/pubblicazioni/eu-foreign-policy-integration-times-war>

its defence policies. Finally, the need to react and adapt to global threats justifies its continuous evolution.

2.3 What is Strategic Autonomy?

2.3.1 Defining Strategic Autonomy

The EU Strategic Autonomy (EU-SA) is understood by the European Parliament think thank as the "capacity of the EU to act autonomously – that is, without being dependent on other countries – in strategically important policy areas" [84]. An explicit definition of the term is missing in EU documents, nevertheless, its reiterated use over time has enabled an understanding of its meaning, though still widely debated [85]. Already in 1998, during the British-French summit in Saint-Malo, it was mentioned the expression 'European autonomy'. However, the first time an EU document specifically referred to the term 'Strategic Autonomy' was with the European Council conclusions of 2013, where the 'Strategic Autonomy' was linked to the Union's need to develop a stronger and more competitive defence technological and industrial base, as a requirement for improving it [86]. Following that, it appeared four times in the 2016 EU Global Strategy, primarily in terms of security and defence [87]. In the document, it is, for instance, considered as a necessary tool to improve "Europe's ability to promote peace and security within and beyond its borders" [88]. It is especially from the EU Global Strategy, that might be considered the official introduction of this term, that it is possible to find it more often, mainly in different Council conclusions from 2016 onward [89]. Indeed, it is exactly in one of them, the Council Conclusions of November 2016 about the implementation of the UE Global Strategy, that it is found an

---

[84] *European Parliament think tank*, "EU Strategic Autonomy 2013-2023: From concept to capacity," Briefing, *EU strategic authority Monitor* (8 July 2022): 1-12. 1

[85] Corentin Brustlein, "European Strategic Autonomy. Balancing ambition and responsibility," *Editoriaux de l'Ifri* (16 November 2018): 1-6. 2

[86] *European Council*, "Council Conclusions," EUCO 217/13, *European Council*. Brussels. Belgium (20 December 2013), paragraph 8

[87] *European Union External Action,* "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy," *Publication Office of the European Union* (June 2016)

[88] Ibidem, 9, 19

[89] *European Parliament think tank*, "EU Strategic Autonomy 2013-2023," (2022)

expression that clarifies the term, giving a sort of definition. In the document, it is stated that by enhancing the CSDP, it will be possible to boost the EU's "capacity to act autonomously when and where necessary and with partners wherever possible" [90]. This concept, as fitting with the notion of 'Strategic Autonomy', worked as an important contribution in formulating its more comprehensive and clear definition [91]. The term was also adopted in other documents, such as in the PESCO or the EDF regulations, slowly becoming integrated into the member nations' common language [92]. Among the member states, it is noticeable that France embraced this notion since the end of the Cold War, making it crucial within its debates about security and defence policies [93]. While always keeping in mind all the above, a synthesis of the various contributions to its meaning might be useful to grasp the essence of the concept. Indeed, we can consider the definition given by the European Parliamentary Research Service in its study on Strategic Autonomy of 2020 where this notion became known "as the ability to act autonomously, to rely on one's own resources in key strategic areas and to cooperate with partners whenever needed" [94]. Over time the term that started as strictly related to the defence and security industry reached a wider scope, including diverse areas of interest, such as technologies and economy. This was the case, especially with the Covid 19 pandemic, which underlined diverse weaknesses in the European readiness to react to the health crisis and to the following production chain cuts [95].

The Strategic Autonomy discourse has two political functions. First, it guarantees that the EU may use its external action to influence the direction of international relations. Second, it ensures its independence to pursue and defend its own foreign policy objectives. According to the military terminology from which the term 'Strategic Autonomy' has been formulated, it entails a long-term objective that aims to establish

[90] *European Council*, "Council conclusions on implementing the EU Global Strategy in the area of Security and Defence," 14149/16 *European Council*, Brussels, Belgium (14 November 2016)

[91] Josep Borrell, "Why European Strategic Autonomy matters," *European Union External Action* (3 December 2020), Online, last access 5 January 2024 <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/why-european-strategic-autonomy-matters_en>

[92] Ibidem

[93] Brustlein, "European Strategic Autonomy," (2018)

[94] Anghel et al, "On the path to 'strategic autonomy'," (2020). 1

[95] Borrell, "Why European strategic autonomy matters," (2020)

the circumstances necessary for defense independence from outside actors. In the context of military strategy, it includes achieving an equilibrium between concentrating on the defense of national territory and engaging in external military actions to uphold global peace and security [96]. As previously mentioned, France was the first to embrace the notion following the end of the Cold War, even before the term was adopted into EU terminology. Indeed, the French White Book on Defence of 1994 presents a valuable illustration of the concept of 'Strategic Autonomy', in determining the proper equilibrium between inward and outward-looking defence strategies, the latter also involving external military actions. Achieving a compromise enables a country to accomplish both its projection and defensive goals [97]. Following its introduction in the EU realm, especially with the EU Global Strategy, the significance it would have been expected to have at the EU level was better specified. Strategic Autonomy became, in the EU Global Strategy, an ambition for the EU and its implementation of the CFSP, which already started to broaden its meaning outside the security and defence sector, as the CFSP itself is not limited to the military aspect. Moreover, it is referred to as a prerequisite for achieving peace and security, the aims of the Union as stated in the Treaties. Finally, it is also tied to the European Defence industry development [98].

It has been specified several times that this concept is in constant evolution and that is not easy to summarize in a unique stable statement. As a result, it comes as no surprise that it has further expanded outside the sole defence and security realm. It became known as the 'open Strategic Autonomy', especially since Ursula Von der Leyen's appointment as head of the commission in 2019. This new term has become highly relevant in the EU, mostly emerging as one of the core political lines of the Geopolitical Commission led by Von der Leyen, that tries to cope with global threats and to place the EU as a more dominant player in the international scene. It emphasizes an open strategic autonomy approach, extending beyond the traditional military context to enter a variety of policies, including market-oriented ones. Indeed,

---

[96] Charlotte Beaucillon, "Strategic Autonomy: A New Identity for the EU as a Global Actor," *European Papers-A Journal on Law and Integration* 2023/2 (2023): 417-428.
[97] Ibidem
[98] Ibidem

its wider use is demonstrated by its incorporation into the Common Commercial Policy [99]. Although relevant to be underlined, for the scope of this thesis we will stick with the definition of Strategic Autonomy related to the defence and security realm, excluding the areas which diverge from it.

2.3.2. Resistance comes from within the EU

The concept of European Strategic Autonomy still raises perplexity and uncertainty among MSs. Josep Borrell, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Commission Vice-President underlined exactly this with a simple example in one article. He, indeed, stated: "Every time I mention 'European Strategic Autonomy' someone raises a finger and asks, 'And what about NATO?'." [100] Indeed, the issue is still the subject of great dispute among member countries. The European states' hesitation to completely embrace this notion throughout time highlights its sensitivity and the existence of several national interests at stake. The reference to NATO in Borrel's discourse is not accidental. In fact, the biggest struggle in asserting strategic autonomy among nations is convincing people that European autonomy does not imply less collaboration with the United Nations and NATO. This lies in a sense at the heart of the whole debate. To give more concreteness to this insight, it is possible to use an interesting example. Indeed, according to a set of various data, the enthusiasm of member states differs on the subject. When faced with this topic, countries such as the Netherlands, Finland, and Estonia are less euphoric than, for example, France [101]. This shows the real division on the subject present among countries, with its different degrees and nuances. In fact, it is possible to grasp this by taking as an example Estonia and Finland's position. They share among each other and with France the view that a proper implementation of the principle of strategic autonomy may benefit both NATO and the EU itself. However, they firmly emphasize the necessity of being sided with robust cooperations and partnerships and tend to

---

[99] Ibidem

[100] Borrell, "Why European Strategic Autonomy matters," (2020)

[101] Elina Libek, "European Strategic Autonomy: A Cacophony of Political Visions," *International Centre for Defence and Security Estonia* (19 December 2019), Online, last access 3 January 2024 <https://icds.ee/en/european-strategic-autonomy-a-cacophony-of-political-visions/>

prefer the concept of 'strategic responsibility' to that of 'autonomy' [102]. That is why we may regard them as somewhat less 'enthusiastic' and more reluctant than a France that misses no occasion to show confidence in the benefits of this autonomy [103].

Aside from the subtle differences like those just mentioned, which are nevertheless crucial for understanding the various degrees of division existing, it is also critical to highlight the more overtly contrasting positions. To do this, we might take into consideration, for instance, a statement made by the German defence minister according to which "illusions of European Strategic Autonomy must come to an end" because "Europeans will not be able to replace America's crucial role as a security provider" [104]. The most reticent states on the issue of EU Strategic Autonomy are those who fear that a superior EU capability in the defence sphere would compete with NATO's role and cause friction with U.S. leadership [105]. The prospect that growing autonomy might jeopardize U.S. commitments in Europe is alarming especially for the Balkan countries, also causing concerns among those in Central Europe [106]. Poland *in primis*, but also Germany, the Netherlands, and Denmark are highly concerned with both the real danger that increased EU autonomy will be synonymous with a more isolated EU, as well as the risk that increased European strategic autonomy may inspire thoughts of the disintegration of the EU- U.S. alliance [107].

The much-feared American disengagement has been denied several times, even by the Americans themselves, nonetheless, the internal EU division in countries' confidence in a more pronounced strategic autonomy persists. Once again, The EU High

---

[102] Ibidem

[103] Anghel et al, "On the path to 'strategic autonomy'," (2020). 53

[104] Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, "Europe still needs America," *Politico Europe* (2 November 2020), Online, last access 15 January 2024 Nov. 2020), <https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-still-needs-america/>

[105] *European Parliament think tank,* "EU Strategic Autonomy 2013-2023," (2022). 8

[106] Niklas Helwig and Ville Sinkkonen, "Strategic Autonomy and the EU as a global actor: The evolution, debate and theory of a contested term," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 27. Special Issue (2022).

[107] Lena Strauß and Nicolas Lux, "European Defence – Debates in and About Poland and France," *SWP Journal Review* (27 February 2019), Online, last access 12 January 2024 <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2019JR01/>; Matthew Karnitschnig, "America's European burden: How the Continent still leans on the US for security," *Politico* (14 June 2023), Online, last access 15 January 2024 <https://www.politico.eu/article/america-europe-burden-continent-leans-security-defense-military-industry/>; Helwig and Sinkkonen, "Strategic Autonomy and the EU as a global actor," (2022)

Representative and Vice-President, Borrel, provided an example of how resistance is more internal than external to the EU. Speaking of the importance of strategic autonomy, he stressed that it is not the U.S. that is holding back the development of this autonomy, but this opposition is to be sought within the EU itself, among its member states [108]. In fact, according to what Borrel and U.S. Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, concluded in the 2021 joint statement, the U.S. is pushing for a stronger European defence that "contributes to global and transatlantic security" [109]. Despite this U.S. reassurance, the debate remains, especially since U.S. support toward greater European autonomy in the defence sphere may be related more to an economic issue than to other factors. This doubt is enough to spark again the now familiar debate over a more autonomous EU, which for some is at odds with NATO's role, and for others, on the contrary, strengthens the alliance [110].

Beneath this internal tension, member nations have more than valid historical and practical reasons to continue with caution toward greater autonomy. Indeed, since the end of the Cold War, the EU has relied on its protection and defence against external threats to the United States, through NATO. This has long conferred a sense of security and privileged status to European countries. This situation, maintained over the years, even if not without debates especially about burden-sharing [111], in the last decade has suffered from numerous shocks. A fierce debate about Europe's next steps has resulted from the insecurity brought on, in particular, by President Trump's handling of the U.S.-EU partnership. This has shaken European countries by reviving

[108] Josep Borrell, "Europe in the interregnum: our geopolitical awakening after Ukraine," *Groupe d'etudes politiques* (24 March 2022), Online, last access 16 January 2024 < https://geopolitique.eu/en/2022/03/24/europe-in-the-interregnum-our-geopolitical-awakening-after-ukraine/>

[109] *U.S. Department of State*, "Joint Statement by the Secretary of State of the United States of America and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the European Commission," (3 December 2021), Online, last access 29 January 2024 <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-us-joint-statement-secretary-state-united-states-america-and-eu-high-representative-foreign_en>

[110] European Parliament think tank, "EU Strategic Autonomy 2013-2023," (2022). 9; Maria Giulia Amadio Viceré, "Which role should the EU play in International relations? Understanding the post-Lisbon foreign Policy at times of change*," IAI 15/07, Luiss School of Government* (May 2015)

[111] "70 anni di NATO: sfide e prospettive dell'Alleanza," *ISPI* (4 April 2019), Online, last access 14 January 2024 <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/70-anni-di-nato-sfide-e-prospettive-dellalleanza-atlantica-22739>

concerns about the possibility of American disinterest in Europe and a potential divergence between American and European priorities [112]. First, the American withdrawal from the United Nations HR Council in 2018 [113], followed by the exit from the Open Skies Treaty in 2020 [114], which provided transparency and thus more confidence through monitoring and surveillance of territories and military operations, began to undermine the EU's security. Furthermore, the same year saw the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change [115]. Even though it was not the first U.S. exit from a climate crisis deal, occurred at an already strained period of European trust in the Atlantic ally. Although the U.S. rejoined both the United Nations Human Rights Council and the Paris Agreement in 2021 under Biden's administration [116], Trump's choices have put member countries more clearly on alert, causing them to doubt their certainty.

2.3.3 Four phases of the EU Strategic Autonomy debate

Despite the fact that, as pointed out at the beginning of this second chapter, the European countries have pursued their own integration from a defence and security perspective, and unlike what might be expected given the steps taken over the years toward the realization of a common European defence policy, this has not been sufficient to allow a smooth consensus for the inclusion in the EU policy framework of the specific reference to European strategic autonomy [117]. This insecurity lies behind and supports the debate that has developed around the EU Strategic Autonomy.

---

[112] Brustlein, "European Strategic Autonomy," (2018)

[113] Richard Roth and Maegan Vazquez, "US officially rejoins controversial UN Human Rights Council," *CNN* (14 October 2021), Online, last access 15 January 2024 <https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/14/politics/us-united-nations-human-rights-council/index.html>

[114] Kingston Reif, and Shannon Bugos, "U.S. Completes Open Skies Treaty Withdrawal," *Arms Control Association* (December 2020), Online, last access 14 January 2024 <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2020-12/news/us-completes-open-skies-treaty-withdrawal>

[115] Lynn Wagner and Jennifer Allan, "The U.S. Has Exited the Paris Agreement. Does it Matter?," *IISD* (4 November 2020), Online, last access 20 December 2023 <https://www.iisd.org/articles/insight/us-has-exited-paris-agreement-does-it-matter>

[116] Antony J. Blinken, "The United States Officially Rejoins the Paris Agreement," *U.S. Department of State* (19 February 2021), Online, last access 10 January 2024 <https://www.state.gov/the-united-states-officially-rejoins-the-paris-agreement/> ; Roth and Vazquez, "US officially rejoins controversial UN Human Rights Council," (2021)

[117] Anghel et al, "On the path to 'strategic autonomy'," (2020). 51

Four significant moments can be identified in history to clarify the European nations' positions when they tried to determine how much benefit or damage a greater European autonomy could bring them.

The dispute began long before the idea of strategic autonomy, as it is now known, was formalized in the EU framework. Indeed, the first moment when European countries began to discuss the need to improve European military defence given a possible American disengage from the 'old continent' occurred in the 1990s, that is, with the end of the Cold War. In particular, the destructive events in the Balkans, underscored the obvious lack of strength and independence of European military forces, clearly emphasizing in the view of member countries their inadequacy to handle such a crisis without the American partner. This drives the first phase of the discussion, driving the launch, under pressure from some states in particular, of a collective defence project in Europe [118]. Among the positions formed during that period, the so-called Atlanticists, in which we find among others Britain and Portugal, clashed with the so-called 'Europeanists' led by Mitterrand's France. The former, who refused to entertain any European security initiative, were overcome by the Franco-German position, which aimed to complete the EU integration in the field of defence and security and acted as the driving force behind this initiative. It was at that time that they suggested the creation of the Eurocorps, which was not fully accepted by Atlanticists primarily due to concerns over the emergence of a so-called Franco-German axis. Despite the debates, a bud of the new European security was created with the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, which inaugurated the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) [119]. This step represents Europe's earliest recognition of its inability to deal with international crises on its own, as well as the heavy reliance on the U.S. and NATO that it had created over time and that it needed to modify [120].

---

[118] Helwig and Sinkkonen, "Strategic Autonomy and the EU as a global actor," (2022)

[119] Trattato sull'Unione europea (TUE) / Trattato di Maastricht. europarl.europa.eu (1992). online <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/?uri=CELEX:11992M/TXT>

[120] Centro Studi d'Europa, "La NATO e l'Unione Europea: le fasi dell'evoluzione della difesa europea," *Osservatorio Istituzionale Comunitario* (February 2023), Online, last access 10 January 2024 <https://europacentrostudi.org/2023/02/01/la-nato-e-lunione-europea-le-fasi-dellevoluzione-della-difesa-europea/>

The second major, important moment during this development comes after the Treaty of Lisbon. After fifteen years during which both the developments of this European defence and the debates about it were kept silent, from 2009 onward a series of international events brought the issue back to the attention of European countries. The wars in Syria and Libya and the annexation of Crimea to Russia in 2014, along with the onset of the migration crisis of 2013 and the violent terrorist attacks of those years, tones up how exposed Europe is to the tensions in its neighbourhood. The need for its defensive autonomy is made clear with the 2016 EU Global Strategy, which makes explicit the need for the EU to achieve an appropriate level of ambition and 'strategic autonomy' [121].

The third phase that is possible to identify is definitely related to the Trump presidency. Drawing on the second moment, which culminates with the inclusion of the term strategic autonomy in the EU Global Strategy, member nations discuss the term strategic autonomy with renewed vigour as the U.S. administration of those years begins to undermine some crucial European countries' certainties. This brings back into the debate the possibility of the U.S. moving away from its commitment to Europe but broadens the arguments to include economic aspects. In fact, the geostrategic force exerted by economic instrumentalities, such as sanctions or tariffs, becomes a key point in support of concerns about the non-reliability of U.S. power as well as a limitation of individual European actions in the economic and trade fields as well. In particular, this is evident with the extraterritorial sanctions on Iran with which the U.S. deeply affects the EU. Another evidence of this weaponized interdependence is China's Belt and Road Initiative, which through an investment system creates a binding to achieve geostrategic goals [122]. This is the reason why, at this stage, the discussion over Strategic Autonomy is not only coming back and thus becoming more significant within the EU, but it is also starting to cover topics diverse from the purely military one, though remaining linked to it.

[121] *European Union External Action,* "Shared Vision, Common Action," (June 2016). 9, 19
[122] Henry Farrell and Abraham L. Newman, "Weaponized Interdependence: How Global Economic Networks Shape State Coercion," *International Security* 44, no. 1 (1 July 2019): 42–79

The fourth phase, on the other hand, is brought to light by the disruption of the COVID 19 pandemic. A direct result of this crisis is the emergence of a clear link between greater European autonomy with welfare and health, expanding again the concept of 'Strategic Autonomy' to areas distant from the EU's military defence and security [123]. By adding the word 'open', the commission stresses the proactivity it wants to pursue, emphasizing "the EU's ability to make its own choices and shape the world around it through leadership and engagement, reflecting its strategic interests and values" [124]. This, however, does not yet lead to a precise definition of what strategic autonomy entails, rather it once again serves as a basis for debates about the EU's future in the international geopolitical framework [125].

It is not yet clear whether or not it can be referred to as a fifth phase of the debate, but it is certainly clear that the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2022 revives the urgent debate on the European strategic question [126]. Several member nations have asked for Article 42.7 TEU, which governs EU state involvement in the case of a military attack against one of them, to be made more operative. Among them, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain are leading the way in this thinking, in light of recent international events [127]. Moreover, with the outbreak of this war, NATO's role receives a new impetus. European sanctions against Russia confirm the broadening of the Strategic Autonomy discourse also to factors not strictly related to military defence, emphasizing the potential for economic weaponization and thus the use of interdependence between countries at their own expense. These points, central during the latter stages of the strategic autonomy debate, are also sided by the rivalry between China and the US, which exposes the EU to many challenges, including endangering the functioning of key international bodies such as the WTO. This

---

[123] Helwig and Sinkkonen, "Strategic Autonomy and the EU as a global actor," (2022)

[124] *European Commission*, "Trade Policy Review – An Open, Sustainable and Assertive Trade Policy," *European Commission*. Brussel (18 Feb. 2021)

[125] Helwig and Sinkkonen, "Strategic Autonomy and the EU as a global actor," (2022)

[126] Ibidem

[127] Elie Perot, "Why the EU now plays an increasing role in Europe's collective defence," *LSE* (25 August 2023), Online, last access 14 January 2024 <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2023/08/25/why-the-eu-now-plays-an-increasing-role-in-europes-collective-defence/>

underscores the United States' renewed focus on the Indo-Pacific region and reignites the debate about the redirection of U.S. priorities away from Europe [128].

Finally, to fully paint the picture of today's debate on European Strategic Autonomy, the current geopolitical situation cannot be forgotten. In addition to dealing with the war in Ukraine for over two years, Europe is now confronted close to its border with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It has worsened unprecedentedly in recent months, compelling the EU to refocus its efforts on the defensive and military spheres, as well as its position as a global power [129]. Giving also space to the side of the discussions about strategic autonomy according to which reaching a stronger and more resilient neighbourhood is a fundamental step [130]. The absence of a 'clear strategic vision' that recently caused some criticisms to the EU in light of EU members' wavering on stances to take at the start of this conflict [131], once again sheds light on the necessity for and relevance of a strategic European position that is autonomous and independent. This might re-energize the debate on this issue, perhaps changing member states' perspectives and guiding them toward a definitive acceptance of this concept.

---

[128] Helwig and Sinkkonen, "Strategic Autonomy and the EU as a global actor," (2022)

[129] "Qual è la posizione dell'Unione Europea nel conflitto tra Israele e Palestina?," *Orizzonti politici* (26 October 2023), Online, last access 15 January 2024 <https://www.orizzontipolitici.it/qual-e-la-posizione-dellunione-europea-nel-conflitto-tra-israele-e-palestina/>

[130] Maria Giulia Amadio Viceré and Matteo Bonomi, "The EU's search for 'effective' Strategic Autonomy in the Neighbourhood," *IAI* (29 January 2021), Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://www.iai.it/it/pubblicazioni/eus-search-effective-strategic-autonomy-neighbourhood>

[131] Pier Virgilio Dastoli, "L'Unione Europea unita sull'Ucrina si divide sulla Palestina," *Linkiesta* (4 November 2023), Online, last access 15 January 2024 <https://www.linkiesta.it/2023/11/ucraina-palestina-unione-europea-politica-estera/>

CHAPTER III

The case study of France

3.1 Strategic Autonomy's Steps in French History

Taking the lead from the latter chapter and the context and insights it underlined, the following pages will try to analyse the France defence and security narrative. To do so, examining the key historical events, the political situation, and the social changes that influenced France's perception of defence and security is crucial.

3.1.1 French Autonomy in the early years

The overview of NATO and EU development from the French point of view is necessary to reconstruct the historical chain of events that over time participate in constructing the French security and defence narrative. Within the creation of these multilateral organisms, France had, indeed, a key role. When NATO developed in the '50s as an organization, France was one of its essential members thanks to its geographical position, which is also the reason why most of the military settings of the U.S. and Canada are in France, as well as the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) and the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR). In those years, much French energy and resources were invested in the issue of decolonization, which was a central element for its security and defence realm. More specifically, a great part of France's army was removed from Europe to fight in Algeria. Indeed, in those years, France asked that the same solidarity promised by the Allies in the Atlantic could be projected also outside, where their interests were strongly present. For this reason, the U.S. anti-colonialist sentiment had a role in the French fluctuation of trust in the Atlantic Alliance in the late 50s. This, together with US pressure on the European Defence Community (EDC) and the Suez crisis, created an environment of hesitance within French leaders of those years, that evolved toward a so called 'anti-Americanism'. Both the Gaullists, who were starting to make a significant impact on the political scene, and the communists' party perceived NATO as "an American bankers' war machine aimed at the Soviet Union strikes a chord

with the population"[132]. Being part of NATO meant for France to welcome American troops on its territory, a thing that especially for De Gaulle was of primary concern. Indeed, the politician was not completely convinced about the integrated military system and saw the maintenance of French control on its own defence and independence as vital [133]. For what concerns Washington's pressure on EDC, they insisted on the European need to put more effort into their defence, in particular by strengthening their conventional forces. From the American sight, this stood at the premise of Germany's rearmament, which was strongly feared and opposed by France. As a consequence, France proposed a plan, that even if by partially limiting its national autonomy, could reconfirm its control over Germany [134]. Indeed, it is possible to state that the EDC proposed through this project, called Piano Pleven, from the first French minister's name, was a consequence of the U.S. push for West Germany's rearmament [135]. Truman regarded the plan inadequate for achieving a true European defence since it limited Germany's rearmament and raised the possibility of duplicating the newly formed NATO, which might compromise its effectiveness. However, the situation changed with the election in France and the Gaullists rising to power. The project of European common defence was hampered by the new presidency, as against the more nationalistic and conservative Gaullists projects. As a consequence, the possibility of a complete abandonment of the common effort in defence capabilities by the EU, made Truman change his mind and welcome the Pleven plan. In 1952 the institutional agreement of the CED was signed, with the consciousness that Great Britain and the U.S. would help the allies in case of necessity as delineated by Art 5 of the Treaty of Washington (NATO mutual defence). However, after it was signed, the French *in primis*, followed by Italy, decided to not ratify it. The reasons behind this choice were several. Firstly, after Stalin's death, Paris, as well as other Western countries, perceived URSS as less dangerous. Moreover, the Gaullists, in part sustained by the communists, made nationalistic instinct growth, superseding the Europeanist feeling and the push for building a common defence. Also, the military and

---

[132] Maurice Vaïsse and Clémence Sebag, "France and NATO: An History," in *Politique étrangère*, *Institut français des relations internationales* (May 2009): 139-150. 140

[133] Ibidem

[134] Ringailė Kuokštytė, "Revisiting France's Commitment to Defence Integration," In *European Strategic Autonomy and Small States' Security,* Eds. Giedrius Česnakas and Justinas Juozaitis, *Routledge* (December 2022): 34-50

[135] Ibidem

diplomatic figures had their say, as they feared a possible loss of France sovereignty, therefore, holding back Europeanization and thus ratification [136]. Finally, the French Parliament decided to halt the CED progress because of a "directorial role" issue [137]. Indeed, the Plan Pleven did not grant the French control in the defence. The fear of not guiding the EDC command or being overcome by the German troops in case of rearmament and therefore losing their primacy within the CED led to the parliamentary action [138].

The major disagreements between France and the U.S. in the following years touched on three matters. Firstly, nuclear weapons were a central element of conflict. France saw it as a vital resource in the event of a URSS attack and was eager to own a nuclear arsenal. On the other side, the U.S. worried about nuclear proliferation and sought to keep it as a last chance option, forcing European rearmament with traditional weapons. Moreover, they also feared that French investment in their nuclear power would have keep them from investing in NATO's efforts. The French, who refused to be placed in U.S. hands for their defence, were firm enough to avoid their participation in the Anglo-American Nassau talks that in 1962 established an agreement for a multilateral nuclear force. Secondly, and connected with this last point, the integrated military system was something De Gaulle did not approve. Mostly because he feared the possibility of a France obligation to fight the American battles when also getting a subordinate position. This system, from his point of view, could endanger the sense of self-defence among French citizens by weakening the autonomous force of the country. Finally, the French perspective of an independent Europe, which would maintain the shared values with the U.S. but not be dependent on it, differed from the American idea that wanted a leading role as partner and protector of Europe [139].

---

[136] Dino Šabović, "Difesa Europea: perché non ora?," *Geopolitica* (15 March 2021), Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://www.eurobull.it/difesa-europea-perche-non-ora?lang=fr#nb5>

[137] Jocelyn Mawdsley, "France, the UK and the EDA," In *The European defence agency*, Eds. N. Karampekios and I. Oikonomou, *Routledge* (2015): 139-154.143

[138] Victor Gavin, "Power though Europe? The case of the European Defence Community in France," *French History*, 23, no.1 (20 January 2009): 69-87; Pierre Haroche, "Interdependence, asymmetric crises, and European defence cooperation," *European Security,* 26, no. 2 (2017): 226-252. 237, 238

[139] Vaïsse, and Sebag, "France and NATO: An History," (May 2009)

Already from this initial historical framework, it is possible to identify a clear French inclination toward the idea of autonomy. This was exemplified in those years both with the 1959 withdrawal of the Mediterranean French fleet from NATO's integrated command and with that in 1962 from the North Atlantic's naval forces. It also highlights that France was not keen to renounce to its 'World Power' role and make this French-American disagreement the root of the decision taken by France a few years later [140].

3.1.2. Abandoning NATO integrated military command

In 1966, France took a firm stance in leaving NATO's integrated military command structure completely. This decision came with the withdrawal of French forces from Germany, which caused the simultaneous evacuation of two NATO-integrated commands of which they were part. As a result, both the senior command of the allied forces in Europe and the Central European command were obliged to transfer their head offices outside France [141]. All this was done with a solid awareness on the side of the French government that they intended to stay in the alliance, retain a seat in the North Atlantic Council (NAC), and have an independent voice in decision-making [142]. This reflects the ambivalence of France in wanting to keep its independence in defence and foreign affairs matters, while also remaining a great power, and so included in the biggest decisional body. This also explains the late 1960s cooperation with alliance regional commands through two agreements, namely the Ailleret-Lemnitzer and Valentin-Feber [143]. In spite of the independentist rhetoric, the French military realm was still linked to its allies. Indeed, there were joint manoeuvres, and discussions of military issues such as nuclear deterrence. France also considered the possibility of France troops being placed under NATO in a European war scenario [144].

As already underlined, the decision to distance itself from the military integration reflects France's reluctance about getting involved in a mechanism that could end up hurting

---

[140] Ibidem

[141] Ibidem

[142] Ibidem

[143] Anand Menon, "From independence to cooperation: France, NATO and European Security." *International affairs*, 71 (January 1995): 19-34

[144] Michel Fortmann, David Haglund, and Stéfanie Von Hlatky, "Introduction: France's 'return' to NATO: implications for transatlantic relations." *European Security* 19, no. 1 (2010): 1-10.

France's independence and power. The perfect explanation of France's consideration of the alliance was given by the Gaullists, according to which France and the U.S. could be "friends, allies, but not aligned" [145]. Moreover, De Gaulle clearly expressed his vision of France as an international, yet autonomous actor in the world, clarifying that it was necessary for France to be free from U.S. dependence, while not sacrificing its role in the Atlantic Alliance [146]. This position will be unchanged for over four decades, guiding and explaining French decision in those years [147].

The need to feel independent from superpowers (especially the U.S. and the Soviet Union) can be even dated back to the end of the Second World War [148]. The French need to maintain its independence is clear and objective as we can exemplify by considering the country determination in keeping its own weapon system and industry [149]. This was already clear when considering the effort put by France to become a nuclear power, a goal that would be achieved in 1969 when it was fully endowed with a nuclear arsenal [150]. Furthermore, it can be also seen in its refusal to access the Eurogroup in 1968, a project that wanted to enhance the EU member's defence businesses' competitiveness [151].

3.1.3 Navigating transatlantic dynamics and the rapprochement with NATO

Since 1966, until France's decision to rejoin the integrated military structure, its relationship with NATO has fluctuated between reconciliation and friction. The first moment of rapprochement occurred soon after De Gaulle, when members of the Atlantic Alliance signed a declaration under Pompidou's presidency, reiterating the U.S. commitment to defend Europe. Most significantly, this 1974 declaration, based on a

---

[145] Fortmann, Haglund, and Von Hlatky. "Introduction: France's 'return' to NATO" (2010)

[146] Annahita Ahmadi, "The French security and defence issue," *University of Gothemburg*, *Department of Political Science* (2021)

[147] Frederic Bozo, "France and NATO under Sarkozy: end of the French exception?," *Fondation pour l'Innovation Politique*, Paris, FIP Working Paper (2008); Fortmann, Haglund, and Von Hlatky. "Introduction: France's 'return' to NATO" (2010)

[148] Ahmadi, "The French security and defence issue," (2021)

[149] Lucie Beraud-Sudreau, "French arms exports: the business of sovereignty." *Routledge* (2020): 25; Claude Serfati, "The adaptability of the French armaments industry in an era of globalisation," *Industry and Innovation* 8, no. 2 (2001): 221-239, 221, 225

[150] Vaïsse, and Sebag, "France and NATO: An History," (May 2009)

[151] Mawdsley, "France, the UK and the EDA," (2015). 143,144

French proposal, acknowledges France and England as essential parts of NATO's nuclear deterrent [152]. During the Euro-missile crisis, their relationship undergoes another significant turning point. Indeed, the role of d'Estaing, French president in those years, in chairing the Guadalupe summit in 1979 was central to NATO's implementation of the 'Double-Track Decision' [153]. This decision shows the double strategy chosen by NATO, attempting to negotiate with the USSR to urge them to remove Soviet missiles, while at the same time threatening to deploy its weapons in Europe if negotiations were not successful.

Even with Mitterrand, there will be a resurgence of French solidarity with the Atlantic alliance. Indeed, Mitterrand disapproved of De Gaulle's decision to resign from the NATO integrated military structure, calling it a 'voluntary isolation', and voting a motion against it. This feeling, in a sense, justified French active engagement in Western summits, as well as Paris' hosting of the Atlantic Council conference in 1983 [154]. Despite this, French concern about being entangled in other countries' conflicts meant that it maintained its focus on its own nuclear development and kept as a key priority its independence. In particular, this is evident with the French drowning of the American proposal for a 'global NATO' that would include Japan [155]. Thus, France and the U.S. divergence of ideas about the European and NATO's future, persists. That is also why, the vision of a stronger, unified Europe gained more centrality in French ideas during this period.

With the collapse of the Soviet bloc, tensions rose between the Americans and the French, nonetheless, the question of the French fully rejoining NATO was officially revived. The 1990s saw the Americans and French attempting to solve the incompatibility between the Atlantic alliance and the fortification of a European identity. With the end of the Cold War, NATO was perceived as superfluous making the idea of a European strategic identity beyond the alliance more concrete [156]. This appeared to be the ideal circumstance

---

[152] Vaïsse, and Sebag, "France and NATO: An History," (May 2009)

[153] Ibidem

[154] Ibidem

[155] Ibidem

[156] James Baker, *"A New Europe, A New Atlanticism: Architecture for a New Era,"* EU Speech, Address by Secretary Baker to the Berlin Press Club at the Steigenberger Hotel, *United States Department of State. Bureau of Public Affair.* Washington D.C (12 December 1989)

for Paris to negotiate with the United States and other allies at its convenience. At that time, the proposals for France envisioned its full reintegration into NATO structures, but with the need for an organization's adjustment to be more consistent with building a European identity [157]. Although the 1991 Rome Atlantic Council affirmed the important European role in defence and security through the European Security and Defence Policy, this was far from the progress envisioned in the French proposals, which were not achieved by either Mitterand or his successor Chirac [158]. Indeed, the Americans, who did not want to give up their leadership role in Europe, attempted to restore a role for NATO by directing it toward a 'new Atlanticism' [159]. France believed that this growth and this new direction did not align with the interests of Europe. Indeed, Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl started an initiative to accomplish a "genuine common foreign and security policy" [160].

Followed in 1992 by the Franco-German summit at La Rochelle that sought to plan the Eurocorps, the initiative was held back by the Americans, who fearing a Franco-German axis, effectively 'nullified' the autonomy efforts made up to that point, though not completely destroying the project. Because of the background American pressure, the Germans wanted to specify that the European corps would help strengthen NATO. [161] Despite these unsuccessful attempts, France tried to initiate a process of 'gradual re-integration' [162]. Indeed, Mitterand agreed to NATO's strategic review by agreeing in 1992 to take part in the alliance's peacekeeping activities. In addition, France became an 'observer' in the military committee in 1993 in order to control NATO involvement in the Balkan civil wars that had started to create unrest. The Atlantic Council approved the French-Italian proposal for Eurocorps, a multinational military unit, an initiative abandoned since the EDC in 1954 [163]. Strategic relations improved after Clinton took office as president that year, owing primarily to a significant reduction in U.S. troop

---

[157] Fortmann, Haglund, and Von Hlatky. "Introduction: France's 'return' to NATO" (2010)

[158] Fortmann, Michel, David Haglund, and Stéfanie Von Hlatky. "Introduction: France's 'return' to NATO: implications for transatlantic relations." *European Security* 19 (1) (2010): 1-10; Baker, *"A New Europe, A New Atlanticism: Architecture for a New Era,"* (1989)

[159] Baker, *"A New Europe, A New Atlanticism: Architecture for a New Era,"* (1989)

[160] Vaïsse, and Sebag, "France and NATO: An History," (May 2009)

[161] Ibidem

[162] Jeremy Ghez and F. Stephen Larrabee, "France and NATO," *Survival* 51, no. 2 (2009): 77-90. 78

[163] Fortmann, Haglund, and Von Hlatky. "Introduction: France's 'return' to NATO" (2010)

presence in Europe. As proof of this progress, it was decided in those years that the Eurocorps would be placed under NATO command in the case of a crisis [164]. Moreover, in those very years, again showing this softening, France supported several NATO initiatives, including the Partnership for Peace and, following the Brussels summit in January 1994, the expansion of the alliance [165]. In addition, France since the 1990s has been actively engaged by using its armed forces in several NATO conflict scenes, including Bosnia (participating in Implementation and Stabilization forces -IFOR and SFOR-), Kosovo (with the Kosovo mission -KFOR-), and Afghanistan (in the International Security Assistance Force -ISAF) [166].

Those years were marked, among other things, by the Maastricht Treaty, which established the ESDP, as well as by the Franco-British summit in Saint-Malo in December 1998 and the appointment of Javier Solana, already general secretary of NATO from 1995, as head of the ESDP. The situation heightened American concerns that European defence initiatives risk duplicating NATO or causing strategic divides in the Euro-Atlantic region [167]. For this reason, indeed, despite the withdrawal of U.S. troops from many European territories and the semblance of recognition from European independence, the U.S. maintains an important role in Europe and insists on its authoritative position within the alliance, restraining and hindering the formation of a full-fledged European defence. For example, with the agreement that provided the European Security and Defence policy to use NATO assets for peacekeeping operations, it did not leave complete autonomy to Europe, keeping it always under American gaze and control. Moreover, the French proposal that the NATO command could take turns between Italy, France, and Spain was rejected by the Americans. This explains the late 1990s French decision to remain outside the integrated military structure of NATO [168].

---

[164] Vaïsse, and Sebag, "France and NATO: An History," (May 2009)

[165] Pascal Boniface, "NATO's enlargement, France's dilemma," In *Will NATO Go East,* Ed. D.G. Haglund, *Queen's University Centre for International Relations* (1996): 181-196

[166] Ibidem

[167] *NATO archive,* "Prague Summit Declaration," *Press Release 127,* Issued by the head of States and Governments participating to the meeting of the Nac in Prague, (21 November 2002), Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://archives.nato.int/prague-summit-declaration-issued-by-heads-of-states-and-governments-participating-to-meeting-of-nac-in-prague-on-21-november-2oo2>; Vaïsse, and Sebag, "France and NATO: An History," (May 2009)

[168] Ibidem

In those years, joint declarations from the 2000s onward between NATO and EU [169] will help dispel the feared overlap of the two organizations, and their better coordination will be ensured with the Berlin Plus agreements. This is also happening because European states, independently from French thinking, realize the necessity of cooperation with NATO, and that they cannot rely solely on their autonomous capabilities. [170] As Sarkozy came to power in 2007, the French rapprochement policy toward NATO became even more defined [171]. During the 2008 NATO meeting, France opted to send additional forces to Afghanistan, reaching a total of 3,000 [172]. This was a clear final clue for what would be the definitive French reintegration into the integrated military structure in 2009.

On April 4, 2009, at the Strasbourg-Kehl NATO Summit, France led by President Sarkozy announced its full re-entry into NATO's military integrated command [173]. In doing so France is bringing with its return, $63.9 billion [174] (2.1 percent of GDP [175]) of military spending. The other member nations applauded this decision, which resulted in the appointment of French General Stéphane Abrial to lead one of the two NATO strategic commands, the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT) [176]. The ACT leads the transformation of NATO's structures, capabilities, and military doctrines, providing for the education and training of NATO forces to improve military adequacy

[169] *North Atlantic Treaty Organization. NATO Press Release*, "EU-NATO Declaration on ESPD," *European Parliament* (16 December 2002), Online, last access 16 January 2024 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/committees/afet/20040217NATO/142en.PDF>

[170] Šabović, "Difesa Europea: perché non ora?," (15 March 2021)

[171] Salvatore Rizzi, "Le conseguenze del 'rientro francese nella NATO'," *Geopolitica* (17 April 2013), Online, last access 19 January 2024 <https://www.geopolitica.info/le-conseguenze-del-rientro-francese-nella-nato/>

[172] Vaïsse, and Sebag, "France and NATO: An History," (May 2009)

[173] *Parlamento Italiano*, "I Vertici dell'Alleanza atlantica. 2009-2012," (n.d.), Olnine, last access 20 January 2024 <https://leg16.camera.it/561?appro=792>

[174] "La spesa in armamenti nel mondo (2009)," *Centro diritti umani UNIPD* (18 October 2010), Online, last access 18 January 2024 <https://unipd-centrodirittiumani.it/it/schede/La-spesa-in-armamenti-nel-mondo-2009/157>

[175] "Military expenditure (% of GDP) – France" *The World Bank,* Online: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?locations=FR>

[176] *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, "The Role of NATO and its Strategic Commands," *NATO Allied Command Transformation* (n.d.), Online, last access 21 January 2024 < https://www.act.nato.int/about/the-command/>

and to maintain the alliance member countries' security and territorial integrity [177]. With this achievement, France gained that long-desired leading position.

3.1.4 France's strategic evolution toward European leadership

The US' shift in focus towards the Pacific, and its tendency to not burden itself with issues concerning properly European interest, has fostered France's role as a preferred partner for the US, along with Britain and Germany, while also leaving the Mediterranean under the control of some European countries [178]. In 2011, the operation in Libya sought by France and Britain, involved NATO only at a later stage, under pressure from other member states, including Italy, to provide a stronger multilateral framework to deal with a manifest European military weakness. On that occasion, France led the Libyan mission with U.S. support acquiring a privileged position as a mediator on Libyan land [179].

With the 2013 intervention in Mali (Operation 'Several') [180] to remove the Islamic terrorist groups' threat on Algeria's border and protection of its own energy interests, France demonstrated its military decision-making independence, in line with its historical inclination towards autonomy. Following this operation, France took the lead in training the Malian army through the European Union training mission in Mali (EUTM), once again reinforcing the recognition of its European leadership [181]. These French interventions were also accompanied by France's drive for Western intervention in the war in Syria. Enjoying American and British support it succeeded in dismantling the Syrian chemical arsenal [182]. France, thanks to the relevant military role thus assumed, could play a leading role within Eurocentric security. It is crucial to note, however, that France, due to its nevertheless limited strength, focuses its military activity mostly on

---

[177] Ibidem

[178] Rizzi, "Le conseguenze del 'rientro francese nella NATO'," (2013)

[179] Valerio Briani, "Il futuro della NATO e l'Italia," *Osservatorio di Politica Internazionale. IAI* no.90 (March 2014)

[180] Marco di Liddo, "L'escalation della crisi maliana e l'intervento militare francese: i possibili sviluppi ed il ruolo della Comunità Internazionale" *Centro Studi Internazionali* (January 2013)

[181] Rizzi, "Le conseguenze del 'rientro francese nella NATO'," (2013)

[182] "The Holland Administration," *Britannica* (n.d.), Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://www.britannica.com/place/France/The-Hollande-administration>

Africa, where it has greater manoeuvring capacity. Therefore, its presence, while remaining a reference within Europe, does not overcome the need for NATO's assistance.

The French foreign policy stance was accompanied in those years by a political shift toward the Socialist Party. The 2012 elections are won by Hollande beating the right-wing Sarkozy [183]. In Europe, and therefore also in France, in the years addressed above, at the turn of the Sarkozy and Holland presidencies, the management of the Eurozone crisis that had been bending European countries since 2010 was the focus of national attention. The escalation of the crisis, resulting in rising unemployment and the failure to improve the country's economy as promised by Hollande, ensued in widespread discontent among the population [184]. This gradually erodes trust in Hollande and fuels anti-European sentiment among voters, which is promptly welcomed and promoted by the right-wing National Front party [185]. Despite this, French interest in European institutional strengthening remains solid. The Franco-German axis is reinforced precisely with the Eurozone crisis, which calls for a concerted search for stabilization and the proposal of a single resolution body [186]. Moreover, the national pressure toward a common response to the migration bursting crisis in the Union, and the focus on USA-UE agreements for free investment, while tightening the two powers relations, put the question of a common military European defence in the background [187].

Among the challenges that France faced over those years was a brutal jihadi terrorist assault in Paris in 2015, followed by another in Nice in 2016. This resulted in the declaration of a state of emergency in France. Suspected individuals in the country reach

---

[183] Mario Nocera, "La storia della Francia dal 1789 all'elezione di Emmanuel Macron," *Ius in Itinere* (31 May 2018), Online, last access 16 January 2024 <https://www.iusinitinere.it/la-storia-di-francia-dal-1789-allelezione-di-emmauel-macron-10672>

[184] Jean-François Jamet, "La Francia e la crisi dell'Euro" *Osservatorio di Politica Internazionale* 41 (October 2012)

[185]"Atlante Geopolitico-Francia 2014," *Treccani* (n.d.), Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/francia_res-938c0bf5-17f6-11e4-a818-00271042e8d9_(Atlante-Geopolitico)/>

[186] Hanno Degner, and Dirk Leuffen. "Franco-German cooperation and the rescuing of the Eurozone." *European Union Politics* 20, no. 1 (2019): 89-108.

[187] Šabović, "Difesa Europea: perché non ora?," (2021)

up to 1,000, and it is estimated that many combatants, so-called 'foreign fighters' [188], who took part in terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq were European, most of them precisely French. The country's struggle to monitor all suspects, raises concerns about homeland security and the management of terrorism-related threats in the French context [189]. This circumstance prompts France to launch a series of air strikes on jihadist sites in northern Syria. Furthermore, France seeks to coordinate its actions not only with those of the United States, bolstering the two nations' already robust collaborative efforts in Iraq, but also with those of Russia. The call for support obviously touches the EU as well. All of this leads to the G20 declaration of support for the operations, the Russian Air Force's increase of the raids against Isis jihadists in Syria, and the EU defence ministers' unanimous approval of France's request to use the mutual assistance clause, Article 42.7 of Treaty of the Union, which stipulate that the EU members have a duty in assisting with all means possible, another EU state if victim of aggression [190].

During these years, the concept of Strategic Autonomy first appears in official European documents. This happened in the European Council's discussions on EU common security and defence policy in December 2013, where it was tied to the issue of technology and defence industries. In 2016, the EU adopted the Global Strategy, in which the term is reiterated. The 2016 also marks the start of Donald Trump's presidency and the UK's decision to leave the EU. With decisive consequences, the two events highlighted again the need to equip the EU with its own armed force. Indeed, with Brexit in particular, the Union suffers both the withdrawal of British contingents from the continent and the loss of significant diplomatic assistance [191]. The following year Emmanuel Macron won the election, beating the National Front opposition, in an election that marked French political history as it saw neither the historic party of Socialists nor

---

[188] Defined in the European Parliament Briefing (2016) 'Foreign fighters – members states response and EU action' as: "individuals who join insurgencies abroad and whose primary motivation is ideological or religious rather than financial"

[189] Leandro Di Natala, "La minaccia Isis in Europa attraverso la lente delle Relazioni annuali," *Sicurezzanazionale.gov* (2 May 2016), Online, last access 20 January 2024 < https://www.sicurezzanazionale.gov.it/sisr.nsf/approfondimenti/la-minaccia-isis-in-europa-attraverso-la-lente-delle-relazioni-annuali.html>

[190] A.M.B, "Lotta allo Stato islamico. Russia e Francia 'in guerra' contro l'Is," *Avvenire* (17 November 2015), Online, last access 20 January 2024 < https://www.avvenire.it/mondo/pagine/parigi-siria-raid-g20-finanziamenti>

[191] Šabović, "Difesa Europea: perché non ora?," (2021)

Republicans on the ballot [192]. Macron found himself dealing with the delicate geopolitical situation that had developed in previous years from the beginning of his term in office.

Both Trump's isolationism and the obstacles that Britain was experiencing in the aftermath of Brexit, prompted Macron to grab the opportunity to take a central role worldwide, especially as a leader in multilateralism. France therefore seeks to energetically position itself as a mediator that can limit Trump's isolationist tendencies, notably through personal invitations to strengthen direct ties with its American counterpart. However, its power in this regard falters, as its efforts do not prevent American exit from either the Paris Agreement or the Iranian nuclear deal [193]. Moreover, the presence of world powers that beat France in particular in terms of resources, as shown by China's rising influence, leads France to look more realistically within Europe for its leadership goals. Indeed, French intentions are to "bring together the countries of the Continent under its aegis to make the European Union a new superpower, capable of facing the great challenges of the future"[194] The French government's belief that it can take the lead in Europe at that specific historical juncture further encourages this course, especially in light of the challenges that Brexit poses for Britain [195].

With *de facto* this goal in mind, France goes to great lengths to achieve the objective of European autonomy and sovereignty in the military arena. Also, in light of the geopolitical changes just pointed out, 2017 is the year in which PESCO was established among 23 member states. In addition to these initiative and related projects, as a sign of the reappearance to national attention of an EU defence project, in 2019 the Franco-German Acquisgrana Agreement sought to accelerate the process of European integration by enhancing bilateral cooperation in both the political and military spheres [196]. This is in

---

[192] Nocera, "La storia della Francia dal 1789 all'elezione di Emmauel Macron"

[193] Romain Brunet, "Five years of Macron on the international stage: Spirited, disruptive, impotent?." *France24* (3 March 2022), Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20220303-spirited-disruptive-impotent-five-years-of-macron-on-the-international-stage>

[194] Michele Gioculano, Simone Mezzabotta and Gabriele Junior Pedrazzol, "Charting the Course: Navigating Macron's Vision for French Foreign Policy," *Mondo Internazionale* (29 June 2023), Online, last access 19 January 2024 < https://mondointernazionale.org/focus-allegati/charting-the-course-navigating-macrons-vision-for-french-foreign-policy>

[195] Ibidem

[196] Šabović, "Difesa Europea: perché non ora?," (2021)

line with the fact that France has always invested heavily in bilateral relations with European countries to maintain close relations with them, especially with Germany as evident during the Eurozone crisis. These efforts contribute to the preconditions for a French leadership position [197].

The *Gilets Jaunes* protests in 2019 tested French strength, prompting the country to temporarily limit its international presence. Later that same year, the G7 conference pushed France to reclaim its space in the global arena. This is evident, both in the autonomous dialogue it opens with Putin without involving the other EU members, and in Macron's sharply critical definition of NATO as "brain death" [198].

3.1.5 Sculpting global tensions in pursuing European Strategic Autonomy

Moreover, during Emmanuel Macron's presidency, France faced a crucial challenge posed by the Covid-19-related health crisis. Also responding to this emergency, Macron advocated and pushed for an EU-wide approach to vaccine supply, working with Germany to create the EU's Covid Recovery Plan, based on a vast joint loan scheme managed by the Commission [199]. The pandemic upheld the importance of the idea of international cooperation that Macron had advocated by talking about "effective multilateralism" and contributed to the European integration project so much supported by France [200].

However, at the end of Trump's presidency, the European autonomy initiative suffered a major setback. Internal disagreements among EU members, combined with Biden's decision to halt the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Europe, undermined European enthusiasm for defensive integration [201]. On the French side, relations with the U.S. have

---

[197] Michele Gioculano, Simone Mezzabotta and Gabriele Junior Pedrazzol, "Charting the Course," (2023)

[198] Michel Duclos, "Tracing French Diplomacy: A Brief History of Macron's Foreign Policy," *Institut Montaigne* (12 January 2021), Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/expressions/tracing-french-diplomacy-brief-history-macrons-foreign-policy>

[199] Gesine Weber, "French foreign and security policy under Macron: all in for European sovereignty," *Uk in a changing Europe* (4 April 2022), Online, last access 20 January 2024 < https://ukandeu.ac.uk/french-foreign-and-security-policy-under-macron-all-in-for-european-sovereignty/>

[200] Duclos, "Tracing French Diplomacy," (2021)

[201] Šabović, "Difesa Europea: perché non ora?," (2021)

suffered greatly under the new administration headed by Biden, as a result of certain secretly negotiated submarine contracts between the US, Britain, and Australia. This event, together with the American unannounced exit from Afghanistan in the same period, disappointed any hopes for a new era of transatlantic cooperation. The situation also highlighted the complexity of Euro-American, and particularly Franco-American, relations, pushing for a reinvigorated strength from France's side to further enhance the EU-SA [202]. In addition, Macron's re-election in 2022 at a national level coincides with its presidency of the EU Council in the first semester of that year. This role will allow him to promote the EU Strategic Compass [203], a key document in the Union's evolution toward a stronger autonomous role in security and defence.

The geopolitical context is further complicated by the Russian-Ukrainian war outbreak in the first months of 2022, which has provided an opportunity for Paris to emerge as a genuine defender of the Continent from Russian influence. Even in this context, France put all its effort in pursuing a guiding role, 'standing out' among the others. The French Foreign Ministry has distinguished itself through diplomatic efforts and autonomous initiatives, such as the meeting with Putin to prevent the outbreak of the war. Macron, who has never fully sided with the US, has positioned himself as European leader independent of American partners, seeking to advance a separate political agenda [204]. This led him to reiterate the case for a European strategic autonomy with an important French role as a crisis manager [205]. The ineffectiveness of French autonomous initiatives to dissuade Putin from invading Ukraine noted France's inadequacy in the face of Russian actions and called into question France's major role in international affairs. This is comparable to what happened with Trump years earlier. Furthermore, around the same period, France decided to hastily withdraw its forces from Mali after nine years of military operations, which is further interpreted as proof that France was not in its best shape [206]. Although not all of its autonomous initiatives have been successful, they underline that France is aware of having to maintain its own personal strategy and vision. This is evident, for instance, in the fact that while France agrees with the rest of the EU and NATO

---

[202] Brunet, "Five years of Macron on the international stage," (2022)
[203] Weber, "French foreign and security policy under Macron" (2022)
[204] Michele Gioculano, Simone Mezzabotta and Gabriele Junior Pedrazzol, "Charting the Course," (2023)
[205] Weber, "French foreign and security policy under Macron" (2022)
[206] Brunet, "Five years of Macron on the international stage," (2022)

members on sanctions against Russia, it always returns to seeking dialogue with Putin exactly because it sees it as its 'ticket' to a role of influence in the EU [207].

The War in Ukraine also had unexpected consequences. The Atlantic Alliance's immediate and firm response enhanced U.S. dominance over Europe, and EU members' confidence in NATO, proving wrong the idea that NATO was 'brain dead', as Macron stated. This contributed to further reducing European enthusiasm and urgency for its own strategic autonomy [208]. However, the perspectives of governments in Europe are not completely homogeneous, indeed many have advocated for a continental solution in line with France. Therefore, the creation of a common European defence apparatus and a related shared foreign policy will remain at the centre of the debate [209].

3.2 EU's Strategic Autonomy in French White Papers and Strategic Reviews

The analysis of the French security and defence narrative should inevitably include the White Book on Defence as well, as they are the official tools by which the country defines its strategy and illustrates its strategic priorities, and ambitions, and also the needs and useful steps to achieve them [210]. These documents should be part of this analysis since they provide insight into France's position on 'strategic autonomy'.

The concept of 'strategic autonomy' has its origins in France's own 'strategic autonomy culture,' [211] which can be easily verified, for example, in the 1994 White Book, in which the notion of national 'strategic autonomy' replaces that of strategic independence present in France since De Gaulle [212]. Both notions shared a desire for an independent France in terms of defence decisions and priorities. De Gaulle's vision insisted mainly on a France that was on an equal foot with the great powers and thus influential in the newly formed

---

[207] Giorgio Leali, "Macron, Putin resume phone contact but remain far apart on Ukraine war," *Politico* (3 May 2022), Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://www.politico.eu/article/macron-putin-resume-phone-contact-but-remain-far-apart-on-ukraine-war/>
[208] Michele Gioculano, Simone Mezzabotta and Gabriele Junior Pedrazzol, "Charting the Course," (2023)
[209] Ibidem
[210] Catalano, "Iniziative Europee di Difesa," (2014)
[211] Patrice Buffotot, "Défense européenne. Quel avenir?," in *Études*, 395 (10) (2010): 297-307.
[212] Ulrike Franke, Tara Varma, "Independence play: Europe's pursuit of strategic autonomy," *European Council on Foreign relations* (July 2019)

Atlantic Alliance. This is precisely why De Gaulle believes the acquisition of a nuclear arsenal to be essential in limiting U.S. hegemony in NATO [213]. We find a continuity between these concepts since nuclear deterrent power remains a priority even for the French strategic autonomy as expressed in the White Book of 1994. This can be noted in the introduction speech by the then French Prime Minister, Balladur, stating that "The primary objective is to ensure the country's independence and the defence of its vital interests. The choice made by France, […] to have a nuclear deterrent force that is credible and constantly adapted to changing threats, guarantees the latter" [214].

The extension of the concept of strategic autonomy to a European project is equally rooted in French strategic thinking and intertwined with French autonomy itself. Ever since De Gaulle, indeed, France's geopolitical vision has included an expansion of European goals [215]. This then becomes evident with the 1994 White Book, which the Prime Minister addresses in his speech launching the paper, highlighting the need for "autonomous capabilities that enable us to join forces with our allies at any time, and to actively prepare a future European capability. […] Our defence policy must contribute to the gradual building of a common European defence" [216]. Even the text itself reiterates how among the defined priorities is that of a national French strategic autonomy "within the framework of the progressive affirmation of the European defence project" [217].

Finally, the defence minister's opening remarks to the document clarifies things further. Indeed, he insists on the French role as a country that may be used as an example throughout Europe, as "the European project will only succeed if France actively contributes to it, by assuming a leading role and making the sacrifices that this implies" [218]. In doing so, it also underlines another cornerstone of the French defence narrative and strategy, namely, the French willingness to take on leadership roles in multilateral contexts.

---

[213] Mazziotti Di Celso and Elena Tosti Di Stefano, "Oltre il Trattato del Quirinale. Le relazioni italo-francesi alla prova dei mutamenti politico-strategici in Europa," *Osservatorio di Politica Internazionale. Edizioni Nuova Cultura* (June 2022)

[214] Government of the French Republic. Ministère des armes, *Livre Blanc sur la Défense*, Paris: Ètat-major des armées, (1994)

[215] Di Celso and Di Stefano, "Oltre il Trattato del Quirinale," (2022)

[216] Government of the French Republic, *Livre Blanc sur la Défense*, (1994)

[217] Ibidem. 150

[218] Ibidem.

With the 2003 European Security Strategy, France is only increasing its commitment to European defence [219]. And, through the 2008 White Book, the concept of 'EU Strategic Autonomy' is reconfirmed, with the goal that the EU develops "a permanent and autonomous strategic planning capability", and expands its effort in the "operational planning and the conduct of operations", which is nowadays still entrusted to national commands or NATO assets [220]. The document devotes much effort in also detailing the concrete steps needed to establish this European strategic autonomy:

> "The identification of intelligence themes of common interest, sharing open documentation derived from the member countries' space observation facilities, and exchanges of instructors and trainees. These resources will play a key role in ensuring the strategic autonomy of the Union." [221]

Beyond that, however, it is interesting to observe the focus on the very operational side: "France considers that it needs, in company with its European partners, effectively and progressively to build an intervention capacity of 60,000 men" [222], and that "the countries of the Union must be able to plan their operational needs and assemble the necessary forces for operations decided on at the appropriate time" [223].

This White Book is also the fruit of a period of solid EU rapprochement with NATO and the United States. In the French vision, the two organizations in that historical moment were both needed "to come to grips with the threats and crises" [224]. The link between them is clear, indeed it is stated that "the enlargement of the Atlantic Alliance has bolstered that of the European Union" [225]. Additionally, NATO's multilateral military potential is "based on a close relationship and co-ordination between American and European means" [226]. However, the White Book never loses sight of the goal of strengthening Europe, and as such, in the eyes of the French government "The European ambition stands as a priority" [227]. This can also be seen as it is specified how the French

---

[219] Di Celso and Di Stefano, "Oltre il Trattato del Quirinale," (2022)
[220] Government of the French Republic. Ministère des armes, *Livre Blanc sur la Défense*, Paris: Ètat-major des armées, (2008). 84
[221] Ibidem
[222] Government of the French Republic, *Livre Blanc sur la Défense*, (2008). 82
[223] Ibidem. 84, 85
[224] Ibidem. 304
[225] Ibidem. 23
[226] Ibidem. 304
[227] Ibidem

re-entry into NATO military structures "will go hand in hand with the reinforcement of the European Union in the area of crisis management and the search for a new balance between Americans and Europeans within NATO" [228]. Additionally, this priority remains solid also if we consider that by insisting on the complementary dimension between the two organizations, which it devotes an entire subchapter to [229], the White Book clarifies in firm terms that "There is no competition between NATO and the European Union" [230], and therefore re-entering fully the organization does not threaten EU reinforcement.

This emphasis on strengthening Europe's autonomous capacities, including the need for a proper EU White Book, also reflects the explicit request made by Sarkozy himself. In his 2007 charge letter for the creation of the White Book, he asked "to focus specifically on the reinforcement of the European dimension of our defence and security policy" [231]. Therefore, considering all the above, we can think that for France, notwithstanding its recent rapprochement with NATO, the goal of European autonomy remains a fixed point, directly tied to its own national strategic autonomy. About this last point, the document states: "France intends to remain a standard-bearer in Europe's drive to acquire a true strategic dimension, as a global security actor able to shoulder its international responsibilities in times of crisis, either on its own or in partnership with the United States" [232]. This highlights that French autonomy remains a priority in the White Paper and enables us to find a line of continuity with some of De Gaulle's positions, most notably the French nuclear deterrence and its "permanent freedom of decision" [233].

By the time the new White Book was published under Hollande in 2013, the concept of the 'EU's strategic autonomy' as France's "first and foremost" [234] partner is well established in France, but surprisingly, the white paper never mentions it. Nevertheless, the Paper has a broadly multilateral approach to problem-solving. As is clear from

---

[228] Ibidem

[229] Ibidem. 93

[230] Ibidem. 304

[231] Nicolas Sarkozy. The President of the French Republic. *Lettre de mission*, Addressed to M. Jean-Claude Mallet, Conseiller d'Etat, Elysée (31 July 2007)

[232] Government of the French Republic, *Livre Blanc sur la Défense*, (2008). 299

[233] Ibidem. 304

[234] Government of the French Republic. Ministère des armes, *Livre Blanc sur la Défense*, Paris: Ètat-major des armées, (2013).11

President Hollande's foreword, the document highlights the cross-cutting and shared reach of the global threats in the organizations to which France is a member:

> "Once we have taken on board all the implications of the fact that our security issues are not circumscribed within our borders, we can construct joint responses with our partners and allies. Since they face the same risks and threats as we do, we must build on our solidarity and seek shared capabilities that reflect our mutual interdependence." [235]

The multilateral approach is also inherent in the White Book itself, as for the first time the committee that dealt with it also included two Europeans (specifically a German and a British) [236]. Moreover, the document deals in detail with the historical context and the range of threats that define it. It specifically arises in light of the war in Libya, the French intervention in Mali, and most importantly, the economic crisis that the Eurozone is currently experiencing and the related state budget constraints. The Paper sees a response to these issues in the common European effort. Along with these, it also considers the shift in U.S. priorities away from Europe, which according to it "puts more pressure on the Europeans to shoulder responsibility for the security issues that concern them most directly" [237]. Both may present chances for further integration at the European level, according to France's point of view. There is much hope that the progress in finance and budget integration caused by the Eurozone crisis situation will extend to security and defence, and that greater responsibilities on the defence side will encourage member countries to unify their forces "to address the capabilities that they can no longer develop or maintain on a purely national basis, and consequently to organise mutually agreed capability interdependencies" [238]. It is in this situation that France "envisions its future and the exercise of its sovereignty", [239] once again claiming a main thread of its security strategy, namely that "it will be able to contribute more effectively to a collective response if it is able to retain its capacity for initiative and leadership" [240].

Yet again, the White Paper seeks to promote "a new ambition relying on organised – rather than de facto – Interdependencies", and underlines the French effort in supporting

---

[235] Government of the French Republic, *Livre Blanc sur la Défense*, (2013)
[236] Ibidem
[237] Government of the French Republic, *Livre Blanc sur la Défense*, (2013). 9
[238] Ibidem. 21
[239] Ibidem. 17
[240] Ibidem. 20

"European initiatives aimed at sharing and pooling military capabilities" [241]. Nevertheless, an interesting element is that despite ongoing support for joint European efforts from a defence and strategic perspective, which we can identify as a strand of the French defence and security narrative, France comes to a kind of disillusion with the integrated European defence as "it cannot ignore the stumbling blocks to development of the European framework" [242].

In the White Paper, without major surprise, all this progresses in parallel with the constant demand for French strategic autonomy. The foreword states that France "acts in close concert with its European partners and its allies, but retains its capacity for independent initiative", and that "France considers that the greater its autonomous capacity for initiative and action, the greater will be its contribution to a collective response" [243]. To secure a leadership role in multilateral operations with European allies, as well as influence in operations involving the United States, according to the White Book's position, France must possess the capabilities that allow its armed forces to take the initiative in straightforward operations or to weigh in the coalition. Further strengthening its autonomy on the international level, the document also highlights its global reach, as it states that "France maintains a global presence on the international stage, where it has the second largest diplomatic network in the world, after the United States" [244].

The documents analysed so far give us insight into the fact that the issue of greater integration and autonomy in decision-making and European capabilities in the area of defence and security are common threads in the French narrative. This concept develops in a kind of mutually reinforcing relationship with the need for French national strategic autonomy, a constituent part of French ambitions to assume a major role in the international context.

Given that the term 'EU Strategic Autonomy' was officially published in the EU global strategy in 2016, it will since then, become a concept with an ever-greater value in the community, as well as a broader meaning. It will eventually move away from the concept of French national 'strategic autonomy', which is focused primarily on nuclear deterrence

---

[241] Ibidem. 126
[242] Ibidem. 59
[243] Ibidem. 127
[244] Ibidem. 14

and hence purely tied to the classical defence and security dimensions, as was already happening in French White Books (under Sarkozy, for example, when the necessity to enlarge its meaning start to be evident). In light of this transformation, it is also necessary to examine the defence and national security strategy reviews that have been created thus far.

Although the 2013 White Book has a long-term vision and forms a strategy that should cover a fifteen-year period, the changing global scene and the election of the new president, Macron, justify the decision to produce the first Strategic Review in 2017, updating that strategy. In this Strategic Review, in the introduction addressed by Macron, it is underlined, among the others, the spread of Islamic terrorism that hit the country in 2015, together with the other threats that France has to deal with in the global arena. Specifically, his words stated that "Assertive powers and authoritarian regimes are emerging or re-emerging, while multilateralism appears to be giving way to the rule of force" [245].

Even in this document, as was the case in the 2013 White Paper, in the French vision, difficulties should act as a driving force for greater integration at the European level: "Europe's progress on defence must be further consolidated. We have laid the foundations for its strategic autonomy" [246]. Thus, we see, perhaps also strong from its official inclusion in the EU Global Strategy, the great comeback of the term European strategic autonomy, which was absent from the previous White Paper. Also returning with renewed vigour is a newfound confidence in defence integration in Europe, that even if always remaining a desired goal for France, it seemed rather impossible to be achieved in the 2013 White Paper. The new document states: "The time is […] right to revive European defence by drawing our strategic cultures closer, by cultivating pragmatic partnerships with European states […], by committing the necessary resources at the European level and by strengthening our defence industries." [247]

---

[245] President of the Republic. Ministère des Armées. *Revue stratégique de la défense et de la sécurité nationale.* Paris: Secrétariat général de la défense et de la sécurité nationale (12 October 2017)
[246] Ibidem
[247] Ibidem

In the Strategic Review, however, the concept of national strategic autonomy, of which nuclear deterrence is the ultimate guarantee [248], is never abandoned, as France's government always considers "strengthening its strategic autonomy as a matter of priority" [249]. Indeed, it is evident that the path taken by French strategy, and consequently its narrative, moves toward a concept of European Strategic Autonomy that runs parallel to the national one [250]: "More than in the past, we must strengthen the links between national strategic autonomy and European ambition, as well as between national and shared interests." [251]

The direction toward a much-needed European strengthening is over time becoming clearer in the eyes of EU member states. Concerns are growing in a Europe that finds itself "more alone than in the past" [252]. In specific this is happening as a result of the rise of populism and divergent state priorities within the EU, which the Strategic Review dedicates a full subchapter to [253], as well as mistrust of the Atlantic ally brought on by Trump's election, and the concurrent shift in American priorities and the growing China. EU priorities toward the Mediterranean and Africa in particular, lack of American support that has shifted its attention toward China and Taiwan [254]. Even in its approach toward China, the EU faces divergences with the US. On the grounds of a strategic dialogue with China, as explained in this strategic review, the EU will sign the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment with Beijing in 2021, promoted by France. This will enable the EU to distinguish itself from Washington's aggressive stance towards China pursued from 2017 onward, to which a peaceful interaction is always preferred for the EU [255]. In this context, the consciousness of European countries "of shared security interests is growing, as is the desire to possess more autonomous means of action" [256]. In this regard, explicit reference is made in the document to the important contribution of

---

[248] Ibidem

[249] Ibidem. 86

[250] Jean-Pierre Darnis, "L'Unione europea tra autonomia strategica e sovranità tecnologica: problemi e opportunità," *IAI* (May 2021)

[251] President of the Republic. *Revue stratégique de la défense et de la sécurité nationale.* (12 October 2017). 50

[252] Ibidem. 56

[253] Ibidem. 19

[254] Di Celso and Di Stefano, "Oltre il Trattato del Quirinale," (2022)

[255] Ibidem

[256] President of the Republic. *Revue stratégique de la défense et de la sécurité nationale.* (12 October 2017). 86

the 2016 EU Global Strategy, in the emergence of a stronger commitment of European countries "to ensuring their own security, and to work towards the goal of shared strategic autonomy" in a situation where "threats are converging from the European point of view" [257]. All of this emphasises the need for and, at the same time, the existence of a European strategy distinct from the American one, which will serve as a leitmotif of Macron's presidency and of the French defensive narrative more broadly.

France, as the Strategic Review stresses, is ready to ride the wave of these challenges and uncertainty toward a European reinforcement in the defensive sphere, in which a leadership position of its own remains important. The document itself reiterates that maintaining its national strategic autonomy and freedom of action is fundamental for this aim, as it allows it to gain legitimacy and "assuming the role of framework nation" [258]. Indeed, "at a time when Europe is demonstrating its determination to lay the foundations of its own autonomy, as it faces shared threats and challenges, France's ability to continue to take action and exert influence is a valuable asset in supporting and rallying its neighbours" [259].

As the review points out, Brexit also stands in favour of French leadership within the union. Indeed, Great Britain's withdrawal from the EU makes France the perfect candidate, as it thus becomes the only member holding a nuclear arsenal, in times where more than before it is stressed how much the Union needs its own autonomous defensive capability. Following Brexit, France also becomes the only European country member of the UN Security Council. The realisation that these elements, combined with its global share, are insufficient to compete with the great world powers, which was a French ambition during the De Gaulle era and the Cold War, leads to its position as a leader in Europe, a more realistic arena for its power.

Always keeping clear, hence, its ambitions to "preserve is strategic autonomy and to build a stronger Europe" [260], France pursues a variety of autonomous initiatives and bilateral agreements aimed precisely at this end. This intention is fundable in the document itself where it states both that "notwithstanding Brexit, the challenge for France is to solidify a

---

[257] Ibidem. 56
[258] Ibidem. 75
[259] Ibidem. 54
[260] Ibidem. 14

defining bilateral defence cooperation with the United Kingdom," [261] and that there are other bilateral agreements with Germany, such as initiatives involving MALE drones or cooperative development of combat vehicles. France's attention to other European partners is equally critical because fostering direct contacts with everyone facilitates its leadership role. Always for this purpose, and to emphasize the concrete French-driven steps taken at the European level, in collaboration with Germany, Italy, and Spain, the strategic review shows the proposal of the European Defence Fund, as "a major event for Europe [...] to encourage cooperation between member states and support the European defence industry" [262].

Also of utmost significance is the acquired French awareness that its ability to engage in dialogue with Putin could be a great opportunity to assert its position as a leader in the European Union. The text expressly states the need of establishing a dialogue with Russia as the basis for a "constructive relationship between Europe and Russia" [263], which is carried forward by French autonomous moves, such as the meeting with Putin in 2017 and then the following one in 2022, that reaffirm its willingness to 'stand out' among European countries and be recognized as an example to follow. France thus views multilateral or bilateral partnerships as opportunities to assert its individual status as a power. While constantly preserving EU-SA as its high priority, as France "strives to increase Europe's strategic autonomy," [264] it is possible to find the French 'protagonism' as a characterizing factor of its defence and security narrative, albeit always tied to a community reinforcement.

One final element in the 2017 Strategy Review helps in clarifying France's approach toward EU-SA. Indeed, it is interesting to note that the document emphasizes European efforts in NATO to spend 2 percent of their GDP on defence "to be understood less as a response to American demands of fairer burden sharing, than as Europeans taking increasing responsibility for their own security" [265]. This says a lot about the strained relationship with NATO at that moment in history. This is outlined by Macron's famous

---

[261] Ibidem. 59
[262] Ibidem. 57
[263] Ibidem. 42
[264] Ibidem. 60
[265] Ibidem. 58

2019 speech, in which he declares NATO "brain-dead" and warns Europe to be on "the edge of a precipice" [266], enhancing the importance to reach EU-SA.

Following a period in which member countries' urgency to achieve European Strategic Autonomy waned, owing in part to the relaxation between America and Europe after Trump's presidency, France has seized on two events in particular as exemplary evidence of the need to strengthen the efforts towards EU-SA: the emergence of Covid 19 and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The direct relationship between the outbreak of hostilities or the post-Covid scenario and the claim of strategic autonomy is made evident in the first paragraphs of the new strategic review of 2022: "The circumstances require us […] to accelerate our efforts to promote the emergence of a common and shared view of European defence and strategic autonomy." [267]

France-U.S. relationship has seen better times, since, as already noted in previous subchapter 3.1, the election of Biden does not mark a complete positive turning point for them. Despite this, the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war leads France to reconsider its position toward NATO and the American allies, as it is confronted with evidence of American material contribution in response to the war, and the rapid and united reaction of its members, that restores its credibility. In this sense, the two strategic assessments are consistent, as we see affirmations of the two organisations' complementarity here as well. The document's development, however, consistently demonstrates France's emphasis on European Strategic Autonomy: "Closer cooperation between the EU and NATO will be essential to further strengthen European strategic autonomy and the transatlantic relationship." [268]

Given the context described thus far, the document's emphasis on the compatibility of the two organisations may be intended to 'calm down' those countries that believe that strengthening the EU-SA will undermine the stability of the Atlantic relationship, and thus to encourage a renewed effort to that end. It is clear that the years preceding this document have, however, deeply affected French trust in the Atlantic allies, in fact, the

---

[266] "Emmanuel Macron warns Europe: NATO is becoming brain-dead" *The Economist* (7 November 2019), Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warns-europe-nato-is-becoming-brain-dead>

[267] President of the Republic. Ministére des Armées. *Revue stratégique de la défense et de la sécurité nationale.* Paris: Secrétariat général de la défense et de la sécurité nationale (9 November 2022). 7

[268] Ibidem. 14

suspicious gaze returns even in it, as it underlines the importance of always "guarding against the side effects of the sometimes shifting strategic or geographical priorities of these allies" [269]. It is precisely because of this suspicion and lack of trustworthiness, despite the newfound harmony between France and NATO, that France is now openly and even more strongly supporting the need for European integration in the defence sphere and its strategic autonomy, with the prospect of increasing its influence in the Atlantic Alliance itself [270].

Not missing from this document is the significance of France's role as a leading power in the framework of the European autonomous strategy. Indeed, the document opens by outlining the presidential ambitions:

> "I want France to have consolidated its role as a balancing, united, globally influential power, a driving force for European autonomy, and a power that assumes its responsibilities by contributing, as a reliable and supportive partner, to the preservation of multilateral mechanisms based on international law." [271]

Moreover, on several occasions the text stresses France's intention to play a leading role in the Euro-Atlantic area, the country's current "driving force for European strategic autonomy" and its framework nation position in the multilateral bodies of which it is part [272].

Even in this document, we find the communion of French and European strategic autonomy. By refusing to be confined to geopolitical positions, in fact, France once again reaffirms its undisputed national strategic autonomy. In this regard, as the latter strategic review already did, this document brings attention to its uniqueness as an EU, NATO, and UNSC member and nuclear power, the thing that with the war in Ukraine becomes even more relevant [273]. The importance of bilateral partnerships outside of Europe continues to be regarded as a vital component in maintaining this framework country's status. The value of its national strategic autonomy, together with the enhancement of European sovereignty, contributes to the security interests of France [274]. The strategic

---

[269] Ibidem. 7
[270] Ibidem. 41
[271] Ibidem
[272] Ibidem. 8, 15, 27
[273] Ibidem. 15, 33
[274] Ibidem. 16

review also emphasises the critical role of the most recent European tools, such as the strategic compass in March 2022 and the European Intervention project launched in 2018, in strengthening this Strategic Autonomy [275]. The viewpoint according to which rising awareness of a collective strategy in the EU is equivalent to partners' alignment with the French aims and vision of a "collective responsibility for defence" [276], captures the essence of the French protagonism that steers its narrative.

Finally, one more interesting point to note is that Macron has begun to favour the notion of 'European sovereignty' since his presidency of the European Council began in 2022, instead of the original 'autonomy'. This choice might be considered as a signal to those countries still concerned that autonomy would mean autonomy from NATO and the U.S., therefore threatening the relation between the EU and the Alliance [277]. Indeed, this underlining again the perseverance of France in make it possible to more integration and autonomy to be reached in Europe.

3. 3 Conclusion

By analysing this case study, it was possible to track the evolution of the French security and defence narrative around the topic of European strategic autonomy. Ever since France's initial focus on the issue of strengthening a common European defence distinct from the Allies, the study of the country's historical evolution has revealed key elements determining the reasons behind its unconditional support for European strategic autonomy in recent decades. Specifically, the need to maintain its own autonomy in the sphere of defence, in order to influence the geopolitical level on a par with the great powers. The historical evolutions and the rise of new superpowers on the global scene have led France to rediscover its strategic thread in achieving a leading position in the European context. To this end, European Strategic Autonomy is an unmissable opportunity for France, especially since the term entered the EU's official documents, as it can promote it and take the lead in its development.

---

[275] Ibidem. 13, 43, 44
[276] Ibidem. 14
[277] Weber, "French foreign and security policy under Macron" (2022)

The first section of the analysis also allows for an understanding of the discontinuity in the Franco-American relationship, which also affects the relationship with NATO. This has further added to the French narrative's emphasis on the necessity of European strategic autonomy. Indeed, France has always found a way to promote the strengthening of the EU-SA, whether it was by riding the wave of uncertainties caused by Trump and by the shift in American priorities away from European ones, or by supporting the mutual reinforcement between the two organisations (EU and NATO) that made it indispensable even at times of greater cohesion between them. We might consider European strategic autonomy as a tool through which France seeks to achieve its goal of influencing the international arena. Indeed, a Europe with a more autonomous defence role and strategy *vis-à-vis* its allies, led by France itself, could meet its desire to emerge.

The analysis of official documents emphasises the coherence of French efforts, both individually and in conjunction with other states, to foster a European Strategic Autonomy in which its visions and positions on the world stage can be reflected. It is precisely this prominence that acts as the *fil rouge* in the French defence and security narrative, in which both national strategic autonomy and leadership are constants. Indeed, France takes every moment of global tension as an opportunity to consolidate its guiding role.

In simple terms, the EU's strategic autonomy plays a decisive role in the French defence and security narrative, serving as a means to extend its influence. The EU-SA is thus perceived as an opportunity, which France itself has helped in creating, to reinforce its vision of a Europe that is not subordinate to external interests, and where France becomes the needle of the scales. To conclude, we could therefore argue that France, through the concept of European strategic autonomy, seeks to shape its own destiny and make its own independent decisions in the global scene.

CHAPTER IV

The case study of Poland

4.1 Historical development of the Polish strategy

This chapter will focus on the second case study selected: the Polish narrative. For this purpose, in the following pages, a historical perspective will be employed to explore the development of key situations and partnerships, or social and political changes that had an impact on the Polish approach to its defence and security, therefore contributing to shaping its narrative in the matter.

4.1.1 The turbulent path of Poland's independence

Understanding the Polish security and defence narrative implies a thorough knowledge of the struggles that it had to deal with in its history. Indeed, its priorities and interactions today, are strongly connected with past traumas. Talking about traumas is not wrong when referring to this country as its geographical position has posed Poland under several threats. Being between Russia and Germany, influenced deeply its history. With their histories as imperialist nations, both of its neighbours had long claimed Polish territory. The consequence of this was that Poland, until the collapse of the Soviet Union, experienced only one brief period of independence between the two world wars, while it did not have other opportunities to express its own independent foreign policy and build alliances [278].

By the end of World War I, its land, which was considerably larger than it is now, had become the independent buffer between Germany and the Soviet Union, and the country had established alliances with France and Great Britain to defend itself from any German or Russian aggressions. The two key themes of Polish strategy in those years were in fact the struggle for the independence and sovereignty of its territory, and the prevention of

---

[278] Tomas Smura, "Relations between the United States and Poland: from Enemy to the Main Security Guarantor," In *The Relations of Central European Countries with the United States,* Ed. Anna Péczeli, *Dialóg Campus*, Budapest (2019): 101-114

Russian-German cooperation. Of the two countries, Poland was most concerned about Russia, therefore cooperating with the Germans was far more convenient, especially from an economic point of view, as it allowed Poland to grow and at the same time providing better security against Russia [279]. As a result, in 1934, Poland signed a non-aggression pact with Hitler's Germany, in addition to the agreements with France and Britain. In 1939, it became clear that Polish independence was incompatible with Hitler's ambitions. That year, Germany and Russia signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, defining in a secret protocol the Polish territories over which they would extend their influence respectively, effectively splitting Poland between them. The subsequent invasion represented Poland's first betrayal. Poland, however, relied heavily on the support of its French and British allies. When Germany and Russia invaded the country from all four sides, this support, although initially declared, did not come. This was a second profound moment of betrayal that contributed to building the trauma that Poland still suffers from, manifested in a latent scepticism towards Europe, which led it to rely significantly on American support for its defence [280].

Despite its resilience as the first country to oppose Hitler's invasion, Poland was unable to defy imperialist pressure [281]. Throughout the Second World War, Germany was responsible for the deaths of millions of Poles. This disrupted the path of relations between the two countries and opened a deep wound that has not yet been entirely healed and is still a source of contention between the two countries. So much so that on 1 September 2022, the 83rd anniversary of Germany's invasion of Poland, the then-Polish Foreign Vice-Minster Morawiecki requested war reparations from Germany. The request was rejected by Chancellor Scholz, as according to Germany the issue was already addressed in several international treaties [282].

---

[279] Michal Wojtylo, "La diffidenza di Varsavia per Berlino passa da Mosca," In *Limes: La Polonia Imperiale,* 2/23 (9 march 2023): 35-40. 35, 36

[280] Marcin Zaborowski, "Between power and weakness. A New Actor in the Transatlantic Security," Contribution to the conference *New Europe, Old Europe and the New Transatlantic Agenda,* Centre for International Relations (6 September 2003)

[281] Ibidem

[282] Agnese Rossi, "Perché la Polonia chiede riparazioni di guerra alla Germania," In *Limes: La Polonia Imperiale,* 2/23 (9 March 2023). 41, 42

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Great Britain once again played a central role in the betrayal of Poland. During the Theran Conference first and Yalta later, the 'big three', the US, GB, and USSR, delineated the Polish borders, among other things. The UK took part in the decisions, agreeing to shift the Soviet borders to the west, thus enclosing Poland [283]. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the USSR, Poland, subjugated until then to communist power, freed itself from Moscow's 'protectorate' and gained back its complete sovereignty, declaring the Third Polish Republic [284]. Owning to this unsettled past of innate insecurity and exposure to foreign assault, it is possible for us to understand the central role that territorial defence has always had in Poland's security policies, and still has today. Moreover, layer upon layer, these events work together to build the framework that pushes Poland increasingly closer to the United States [285].

The significant role that Poland played in the fall of the Berlin Wall is also worth noting for an in-depth understanding of its political development and status in the EU. Poland was the driving force for the democratic transformations of the other states under Russian rule. This chain of events was triggered by the anti-communist opposition that exploded in 1980 in Gdansk with a strike, supported by the trade unionist Lech Wales [286], who would later be elected President of the Polish Republic in 1990. This protest was followed by the founding of the Solidarity movement, which was the first non-Communist and Catholic-inspired trade union (dissolved in December 1981, upon the declaration of the state of emergency) [287]. Both of these events influenced and pushed the demonstrations in East Germany (the GDR) that led to the fall of the Berlin Wall [288].

In the 1980s, although Poland was still forced into a communist regime, it seemed to communicate more optimism than in previous years. The support of Pope Wojtyla, the

---

[283] Tomasz, "Relations between the United States and Poland" (2019)

[284] Marceli Sommer, "La politica polacca non è quel che sembra," In *Limes: La Polonia Imperiale,* 2/23 (9 march 2023): 185-190. 185

[285] Zaborowski, "Between power and weakness" (6 September 2003)

[286] "Solidarnosc, il primo colpo al Muro," *Avvenire* (26 February 2009), Online, last access10 February 2024 <https://www.avvenire.it/agora/pagine/solidarnosc-il-primo-colpo-al-muro_200902260930593070000>

[287] Alfredo Canavero, "1989-2019. Il crollo del muro di Berlino e i muri che restano," *Pearson* (n.d.), Online, last access 24 January 2024 <https://it.pearson.com/aree-disciplinari/storia/cultura-storica/novecento-mondo-attuale/1989-2019-crollo-muro-berlino.html >

[288] Anna T. Kowalewska, "30 anni dal crollo del Muro di Berlino," *Agensir* (*9* November 2019)

first Polish pope, was a key element in the gear that led to the country's independence. At a time when, with Gorbachev taking office in the Kremlin, Soviet repression seemed highly unlikely and the Communist Party was stable but comparable to a 'bankrupt bureaucracy' [289], the growing dissident movements, that were considerably more open and active than in other states of the Soviet Union, were highlighted [290]. The crisis that persisted in Poland under the communist regime led the country to turn to the Solidarity movement and the Catholic Church, which was reinforced by the election of the new pope. These dialogues led to the first free elections in the country in 1989, which sealed the collapse of communist power after nearly forty years (the last semi-free elections had been those of 1947) in which elections had been held without any degree of freedom [291].

Until that time, Poland's subordination to the Soviet Union had prevented it from developing its own foreign policy, which will therefore be defined from scratch [292]. Its construction had to deal with many changes. Since the fall of the Wall and with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a new geopolitical context was determined for Poland's foreign policy, for its relations with the neighbouring states (from 1989 to 1993 all the neighbouring states changed), and for its role in Europe [293]. As evidence of this, Berlin-Warsaw relations were re-established from that moment on, and Germany firmly supported Poland's entry into NATO (1999) and the European Union (2004) [294]. For the first time, in 1989, Poland faced two crucial issues for its future: security, with the need to strengthen the country's autonomy, and socio-economic transformation, whose achievement would be inspired by the Western model of a free market and democratic system [295]. The direction, explicitly defined by the first non-Communist government with Mazowiecki in 1989, was therefore toward integration with the West, which, in terms of

---

[289] Jane Leftwich Curry, "The Polish crisis of 1980 and The Politics of Survival," *The Rand Corporation* (November 1980)

[290] Ibidem

[291] "Solidarnosc, il primo colpo al Muro," (26 February 2009); Canavero, "1989-2019. Il crollo del muro di Berlino e i muri che restano," (n.d.)

[292] Rafal Sadowski, "La Polonia è un paese dell'Europa centrale e non è una questione geografica," In *Limes: Polonia l'Europa senza euro* 1/14 (21 January 2014)

[293] Ibidem

[294] *European Union*, "Polonia" Online, last access 27 January 2024 <https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/country-profiles/poland_it>

[295] Sadowski, "La Polonia è un paese dell'Europa centrale e non è una questione geografica," (21 January 2014)

foreign policy, pursued three important goals. The entry into the EU and integration within the European institutions, the cooperation with the United States, especially in security matters with the NATO membership, and the maintenance of relations with the European countries of the former Soviet Union [296].

This foreign policy direction, defined by Mazowiecki himself as 'the return to Europe' [297], began already the year before the elections, with the first diplomatic relations established between Poland and the European Economic Community (EEC), which led to the signing of an economic trade agreement central to the Polish transformation. Followed by the 1991 association agreement with the European Community, the deal formed the basis for future relations, and in perspective also for Poland's eventual entry into the EU [298].

4.1.2 Addressing the relevance of Polish transatlantic bond

As far as the relationship with the U.S. is concerned, we can see how it has stayed constant from the early 1990s onwards, namely from both the political and intelligence support Poland gave the U.S. during the Kuwait operations, and for the subsequent evacuation of U.S. citizens. To prove this relationship, it is worth mentioning Bush's visits to Poland, the first in 1989 and the second in 1992 [299]. Poland declared its intention to join NATO already in 1992, and only two years later it was included in the Partnership for Peace programme. Although compared to the Bush administration, under Clinton the relationship seemed to slightly slow down, in practice the bond between the two countries continued to tighten. Poland's entry into the Partnership for Peace Programme stemmed precisely from the American need to listen to the pressure from the Visegrad Group (a group of former USSR countries) regarding NATO enlargement. To Poland, the credit

---

[296] Katarzyna Kolodziejczyk, "Poland in the European Union. Ten years of membership," *University of Warsaw* (2019); Sadowski, "La Polonia è un paese dell'Europa centrale e non è una questione geografica," (21 January 2014)

[297] Tadeusz Mazowiecki, "Powrót do Europy. Przemówienie na forum Rady Europy w Strasburgu," (A Return to Europe. A Speech Held in the Council of Europe in Strasburg), *Znak*, no. 416, Kraków (January 1990): 3-9.

[298] Kolodziejczyk, "Poland in the European Union. Ten years of membership," (2019)

[299] *Office of the Historian*, Department of State, United Sates of America https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/president/poland

for this inclusion was American and thus reinforced the Polish idea that saw the U.S. as a loyal partner that listened to its needs and accommodated its demands [300]. In fact, although Poland did not settle only with its inclusion in the programme, and instead aimed to join NATO, this first move towards its goal was fully exploited, with full active participation, precisely to prove its usefulness to the alliance. Once NATO standards were met, it was Clinton himself who negotiated with Russia for the approval of NATO enlargement and thus included Poland as a member of the alliance in 1999 [301]. Poland's enthusiasm and willingness to be relevant in NATO operations was clear from the outset. An example of this is the contribution of Polish military contingents to the KFOR forces on missions in Kosovo in those years. Poland was clearly confident of the primary role of the U.S. in the Atlantic alliance, without which, in their view, NATO would not have been sufficiently efficient. The US's central role in the Polish vision of security and defence, notably as a guarantor of the effectiveness of the NATO instrument, can help explain Poland's scepticism toward European defence and security initiatives, including the European Autonomous Strategy. It may be understood that for Poland, a potential American disengagement from Europe due to these projects is excessively dangerous. The stakes for Poland, namely its autonomy and independence, also and above all its territorial one achieved a few years ago, are too high to take this chance.

4.1.3 Poland's engagement in Eastern Europe

The third element of Poland's strategic direction is its interest in the countries of the former Soviet Union, particularly those in Eastern Europe, with which it will seek to forge social and economic cooperation. This active policy towards its eastern neighbours has been a cornerstone of its foreign strategy since the 1990s launched with the 'dual-track policy' in an effort to establish parallel relations with Moscow and the previous Soviet republics [302]. It is historically known that Poland has never claimed the lands lost in the East (unlike other countries), and furthermore, the conception of Mieroszewsk, head of

---

[300] Roman Kuźniar, "Geopolitics and Poland's Security Policy," *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs* 17.1 (2008): 55-70.

[301] Ibidem

[302] Sadowski, "La Polonia è un paese dell'Europa centrale e non è una questione geografica," (21 January 2014)

government in 1989, implied precisely the need to conduct an Eastern European-oriented policy based on close cooperation with the countries of the region [303]. The Polish focus in this regard is explained by both geographical proximity (the border with Ukraine and Belarus is 953 km) and cultural-historical ties (many territories that today belong to Belarus and Ukraine belonged to the Polish-Lithuanian confederation from the 14th to the 17th century) [304]. This attention was reflected especially in the support and involvement in achieving the autonomy of the eastern neighbours (also to counter the resurgence of Russian imperialism) and the promotion of a process of integration with the West, all fundamental factors in distancing the risk of Russia gaining power over those territories again [305]. As a clear example, Poland was the first country to recognise Ukrainian independence in 1991, the same year that other Eastern European countries, including Belarus, Moldova, and the Southern Caucasus countries (Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan), regained their independence. At that point in history, a new chapter began for Eastern European countries. Also gaining independence in 1991 were the Baltic states (Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia) in Central and Eastern Europe, towards which Polish interest would be channelled a few years later with the establishment of the Trimarium [306]. These movements in Europe, combined with the pro-democracy protests in the following years, added to Poland's interest in Eastern Europe. Among the revolutions of those years were those in Georgia in 2003, in Moldova in 2009, but especially the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004. A revolution was born out of protest against electoral fraud in the election of pro-Russian Prime Minister Viktor Janukovyč, which led to the Supreme Court requesting a repeat of the ballot. Known by the name of the square where it took place: Maidan [307]. In those years, Poland tried to establish strong political and economic ties with Belarus in addition to Kyiv. Unfortunately, this policy

---

[303] Ibidem

[304] Ibidem

[305] Ibidem

[306] Giovanni Chiacchio, "Dalla Terra tra i Mari ai Tre Mari, la 'Nuova Europa' nasce a a Varsavia," *Geopolitica* (17 November 2023), Online, last access 27 January 2024 <https://www.geopolitica.info/dalla-terra-tra-i-mari-ai-tre-mari-la-nuova-europa-nasce-a-varsavia/>; Paolo Pizzolo, "Dall'Intermarium al Trimarium. L'Europa centro-orientale tra nuove iniziative e vecchi schemi," *Geopolitica* (21 June 2022), Online, last access 7 February 2024 <https://www.geopolitica.info/europa-centro-orientale-nuove-iniziative-vecchi-schemi/>

[307] Massimo Introvigne, "Pretesti per un'invasione. Il mito dei 'colpi di stato americani' in Ucraina. La rivoluzione arancione del 2004," *Bitterwinter* (15 April 2022), Online, last access 14 February 2024 <https://bitterwinter.org/mito-colpi-di-stato-americani-in-ucraina-1-la-rivoluzione-arancione-del-2004/>

towards Belarus was slowed down by Lukashenko's authoritarian regime, which since 1994 has been strongly criticised by Poland, making all forms of cooperation difficult [308]. Again, to underline Polish involvement in the East and the continuation of this choice of political direction, we could mention the Polish intervention in the Russian-Georgian war a few years later. This 2008 conflict was an opportunity for Poland to further demonstrate its support and promotion of the independence of former USSR countries [309].

Since 1991, the connection between Poland and the Central European countries also grew with the founding of the Visegrad Group between Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. The group was a political and cultural alliance of three countries, which became four when Czechoslovakia split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 1993 [310]. The group was part of the above mentioned pressures on the U.S. to include the three states in the Atlantic Alliance initiatives. Moreover, the three (later four) countries had the common goal of actively contributing to a unified Europe while maintaining their national character and implementing the universal system of human values:

> "Full restitution of state independence, democracy and freedom, elimination of all existing social, economic and spiritual aspects of the totalitarian system, construction of a parliamentary democracy, a modern State of Law, respect for human rights and freedoms, creation of a modern free market economy, full involvement in the European political and economic system, as well as the system of security and legislation." [311]

The success of this collaboration was evident not only from their inclusion in the NATO structures in the late 1990s, but also from their entry into the EU in 2004, and above all from the fact that even after entry into the Union, the group maintained a direct interface with Brussels, without disbanding.

---

[308] Sadowski, "La Polonia è un paese dell'Europa centrale e non è una questione geografica," (21 January 2014)

[309] Ibidem

[310] *Visegrad Group,* "Visegrad Declaration 1991," available at:
https://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/visegrad-declarations/visegrad-declaration-110412-2

[311] Ibidem

4.1.4 Poland's 'Americanisation'?

As the first decades passed since Polish independence, the state grew stronger, as did its relationship with the US, which, as previously stated, remains a central element of its strategy. Particularly since the 11 September attacks, we can see total Polish flanking and support for the US, even outside NATO. Indeed, Poland got on the War on Terror bandwagon without any hesitation, embracing this direction of intervention. The clearest example of this was undoubtedly the Polish intervention in Iraq alongside the US, despite the lack of a UN resolution authorising military intervention [312]. The fact that Poland did not desist despite this and in spite of the EU's criticism of the intervention, which it considered to be outside the international rule of law, demonstrates the 'Americanisation' of Polish security and defence. The goal that was always evident in Poland's ideas, and easily recognisable from the situation, was to consolidate its position of significance and support in its relationship with the United States. In fact, American appreciation was clear, among other things, from the US's frequent visits to the country, as well as several speeches geared at consolidating and applauding the similarities in strategic vision between Poland and the U.S. [313]. For example, the American Ambassador to Poland intervened, arguing that "the Poles and Americans have similar attitudes towards security and foreign policy in general" [314]. This event demonstrates how Polish-American relations are mostly based on strategic considerations. The U.S. views Poland as a friendly nation along the crucial border between Eastern and Western Europe, and Poland regards the U.S. as a source of stability against its neighbours. This event and the position taken by Poland also served as a sort of distance between Poland and the EU [315].

As an evident example of Polish determination to build this strong relationship with the US, it is interesting to consider another event from those years that should have resulted in a detachment between the two countries but did not: the 2003 Iraq War. The Polish interventions in Iraq were highly costly for the country, which, however, counted on being able to cover the costs with the Iraq reconstruction contracts. However, it was the

---

[312] Zaborowski, "Between power and weakness" (6 September 2003)

[313] Smura "Relations between the United States and Poland," (2019); Zaborowski, "Between power and weakness" (6 September 2003)

[314] Interview with Christopher Hill in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, (22 December 2002)

[315] Smura "Relations between the United States and Poland," (2019)

Americans who took most of those contracts, leaving only crumbs for other countries. This fact was also paired with the maintaining of the entry visa for Poles in America, upon whose cancellation Poland was counting, specifically to make the relationship between them openly known, and in some ways as a symbol of acknowledgment for the ever-present Polish support. Despite the wave of resentment directed towards the ally in the wake of these incidents, Poland's perception of the U.S. remained unchanged despite being provided with proof of a lack of U.S. interest and thus had no substantial consequences towards its security policy directions [316]. Indeed, in addition to allowing the placement of U.S. missiles on its soil (whose sole purpose was to defend U.S. territory), it also increased its contingent presence in Afghanistan under U.S. command [317].

Instead, it was Obama's election that changed the Poles' perception of the US, which began to be more realistic. Indeed, from 2008, with the new presidency, which coincided with the pro-European Polish government of Donald Tusk (from 2007 to 2014), American-Polish relations loosened. The references made by Obama towards Poland and to the challenges of central Europe were minimal, and this was a clear consequence of the shift that American policy was making in those years, with changes in priorities and a general distancing from European needs [318]. Moreover, the intensity of presidential visits diminished, leaving the Polish nation waiting for two years, when Obama finally sent Vice President Biden to Poland to placate worried minds. The gesture worked only relatively, as can be seen from the words of Polish politician Zbigniew Brzeziński: "I see one fundamental difference between the U.S. approach to Poland under the Bush and Obama administration. For Obama, Europe is Europe. There are the Germans, the Brits and the French who play the first fiddle. Poland is of course partner […] but there is not any special, separate U.S. strategy towards Poland" [319]. This speech emphasises the Polish realisation that the U.S. had abandoned a special strategy with it. Additionally, in a second

---

[316] Ibidem

[317] Roman Kuźniar, "Geopolitics and Poland's Security Policy," (2008)

[318] Jonathan Panikoff, "Shifting Priorities: The US and the Middle East In a Multipolar World," *ISPI* (8 July 2022), Online, last access 8 February 2024 <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/shifting-priorities-us-and-middle-east-multipolar-world-35692>

[319] Zbigniew Brzeziński, "Krach pewnych złudzeń," *Rzeczpospolita* (18 February 2009), Online, last access 6 February 2024 <https://www.rp.pl/wydarzenia/art15406931-krach-pewnych-zludzen>

part of the speech, the politician stresses the fact that the U.S. was leveraging on the anti-Russian Polish sentiment to ensure a positive Polish response to the missile defence system, but with the sole purpose of serving the military campaign in Iraq, rather than a potential Russian threat [320]. The disillusionment of the Polish people, as a result of the negative experiences of those years, was also fuelled by the studies and research carried out by 'experts' that focused on the asymmetry of Polish- U.S. relations. All this played a part in weakening the so-called fascination for the US, which was also based on the conviction that the U.S. could consider them as a decisive actor in the alliance [321].

4.1.5 Navigating the European relation

This increasing realism about the relationship with the Americans, which became obvious in Poland during those years, coincided with the deepening of Polish involvement in Europe, which was also facilitated by the earlier mentioned pro-European Tusk government. Poland's active participation in the Eastern Partnership plan desired by the EU in 2009 is not only a clear indication of this rapprochement with the EU, but it also reconfirms Poland's continuous focus on Eastern European countries [322]. Poland's entry into the EU increased its ability to pursue active policy in Eastern Europe, thanks to the tools at its disposal. However, Warsaw had already attempted to draw Brussels' attention to Eastern Europe prior to 2004, when Foreign Minister Bronisław Geremek proposed an 'eastern dimension' of EU policy in 1998. The EU policy efforts carried out from that point onwards are 'crowned' in a sense by the launch of this Eastern Partnership [323]. The Eastern Partnership was indeed initially aimed at the political association and economic integration of six Eastern European countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine), later to become five with the Belarusian suspension of participation [324]. The Partnership will be among the commitments made during the

---

[320] Smura "Relations between the United States and Poland," (2019)

[321]Longin Pastusiak, "Prezydent dobrych intencji: polityka zagraniczna Baracka Obamy," *Akademia Vistula.* Warsaw (2015): 243

[322] *European Council. Council of the European Union.* "Eastern Partenship", https://www.consilium.europa.eu/it/policies/eastern-partnership/

[323] Sadowski, "La Polonia è un paese dell'Europa centrale e non è una questione geografica," (21 January 2014)

[324] *European Council. Council of the European Union.* "Eastern Partnership," https://www.consilium.europa.eu/it/policies/eastern-partnership/

Polish turn of the EU Council Presidency in 2011. The Polish-Swedish initiative received substantial support, although it somewhat resembled the European Neighbourhood Policy concept established by the EU since 2004. The main difference introduced by the Eastern Partnership was the possibility of multilateral and bilateral cooperation, while the areas of interest remained the same (political and security) [325]. Another important achievement of this presidency was the conclusion of the association agreement with Ukraine. It enabled to claim that the presidency not only served Poland to consolidate its role in the EU but also allowed it to give a voice to the areas and issues most relevant to it, leading in a certain sense to a shift in the Union's attentions towards the East [326]. Moreover, another symptom of this Polish involvement in the life of the Union can be found in the nomination of Donald Tusk for the presidency of the European Council from 2014 to 2019, crucial years in terms of Polish influence in the European Union.

The 2014, was also the year that saw Russia's first aggression against Ukraine in the new century and the annexation of Crimea, which occurred in response to the deposition of the corrupt Janukovyč, in a repetition of the events of ten years earlier, reported above [327]. Although Poland has been a very active stakeholder during the conflict, and more generally in Europe since the first years of independence, from 2015 onwards Poland has also been the object of many debates in Europe, particularly centred on the rules of law that it has been accused of not complying with [328]. Despite the persistence of the debate over the years, Poland simultaneously maintained a central role in the initiatives concerning Eastern Europe. Indeed, it was head of the Trimarium, which officially became the Three Seas Initiative (TSI) in 2016 at its first summit in Dubrovnik, where Poland and Croatia were the most active promoters. The TSI (Baltic, Adriatic, Black Sea) brought together twelve member countries, whose goal was to cooperate closely in various fields, including energy and the economy [329]. The TSI was supported by the United States, denoting a strengthening of Washington and NATO's attention towards it.

---

[325] Kolodziejczyk, "Poland in the European Union. Ten years of membership," (2019)

[326] Ibidem

[327] Ernest Wyciszkiewicz, "Come i polacchi leggono la Russia," In *Limes: La Polonia Imperiale* 2/23 (9 March 2023): 79-86. 83

[328] Irenenusz Pawel Karolewski and Maciej Wilga, "Poland and the European Union locked," *Oxford university Press* (26 February 2018)

[329] Chiacchio, "Dalla Terra tra i Mari ai Tre Mari, la 'Nuova Europa' nasce a a Varsavia," (2024)

This is also in light of a renewed strengthening of US-Poland relations. Indeed, since 2013, American attention towards Poland has been growing, as evident from Obama's first visit to Poland in 2013, when an Agreement on the deployment of the U.S. Air Force in Poland was announced. With the Russian annexation of Crimea, we assisted at the failure of the so-called 'reset policy' that had characterised the Obama presidency and that was based on improving the relationship with Russia, and that perhaps in a sense had contributed to diminishing American attention to Poland. A second visit by Obama in 2014 to Poland, precisely in the wake of the Russian attack on Ukraine, reaffirmed the closeness of the relationship, and reassured Polish leaders of the American 'guarantee' [330]. In his speech, Obama will make a direct reference to the betrayals endured by Poland in its history:

> "I know that throughout history, the Polish people were abandoned by friends when you needed them most. So, I've come to Warsaw today – on behalf of the United States, on behalf of the NATO Alliance – to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to Poland's security. Article 5 is clear – an attack on one is an attack on all." [331]

Furthermore, the Americans' decision to place a military heavy unit in central and eastern Europe as part of the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) [332], and to send a large combat brigade to the Polish city of Orzysz were comprehensive moves [333].

4.1.6 Poland's grip on NATO and the US

Poland, like the rest of Europe, was destabilised by Trump's presidency, starting in 2016. The US's threats to leave NATO after proclaiming it 'obsolete', as well as its withdrawal from other agreements over the years, have strained EU- U.S. relations. In addition, the decision to condition the continuation of its promises to the Baltic countries contingent

---

[330] Smura "Relations between the United States and Poland," (2019)

[331] Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at Clinton Global Initiative," *The White House, Office of the Press secretary* (23 September 2014), Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/23/remarks-president-clinton-global-initiative>

[332] Mark F. Cancian, "The European Reassurance Initiative," *CSIS* (9 February 2016), Online, last access 11 February 2024 <https://www.csis.org/analysis/european-reassurance-initiative>

[333] Smura "Relations between the United States and Poland," (2019)

on their defence spending increased Polish concerns [334]. Despite this, less than a year after his appointment, Trump made his first visit to Poland for the Trilateral Summit in Warsaw, which was deemed as a 'victory' for Poland by the head of the Polish Foreign Intelligence Agency. The fact that this happened at the outset of Trump's presidency highlights the strength of Polish diplomacy and its significance in American foreign policy [335]. In his speech at the time, Trump emphasised the importance of increased EU cooperation in defence operations, praising Poland for, among other things, spending 2 percent of GDP on defence. Trump's statements underscore his recognition of Poland as an American strategic asset, which, although the years of weakened ties with Obama, was never truly questioned by Poland: "A strong Poland is a blessing to the nations of Europe, and they know that. A strong Europe is a blessing to the West and to the world." [336]

The transatlantic bond is therefore strengthening, even though those years coincided with a robust drive for European integration throughout the rest of Europe, precisely because of the concerns raised by Trump's remarks. Poland also felt reassured by American actions that followed the speeches in 2017 [337]. In particular, in addition to reaffirming the United States' commitment to NATO Article 5, the summit just mentioned ended with the common affirmation that the TSI was a vital tool for cooperating with the United States within the NATO framework [338]. On that occasion, the United States, led by Donald Trump, gave 850 million dollars to the TSI fund, following throughout the footsteps of Joe Biden, who recognised the Trimarium as the cornerstone of American geopolitics in Europe. The USA considered the TSI as a corridor to develop ties with the Atlantic Eurozone and North Africa, in the hands of the Chinese and Russian giants, and as an element to control Russian dominance in Eastern Europe, which on this occasion acquired

---

[334] David E Sanger, and Maggie Haberman, "Donald Trump Sets Conditions for Defending NATO Allies Against Attack," *The New York Times* (21 July 2016), Online, last access 5 February 2024 <www.nytimes.com/2016/07/21/us/politics/donald-trump-issues.html>

[335] Smura "Relations between the United States and Poland," (2019)

[336] *Presidency of the Republic of Poland,* "Remarks by President Trump to the People of Poland," *President.PL* (6 July 2017), Online, last access 3 February 2024 <https://www.president.pl/news/remarks-by-president-trump-to-the-people-of-poland,36457>

[337] Tomasz Smura, "America (still) first? Assessment of the first year of Donald Trump's presidency," *Komentarz Międzynarodowy Pułaskiego.* Pulaski Policy Paper, no. 2 (9 January 2018)

[338] Chiacchio, "Dalla Terra tra i Mari ai Tre Mari, la 'Nuova Europa' nasce a a Varsavia," (2024)

a first idea of economic autonomy [339]. Poland thus placed itself as critical to the geopolitical balance, not just on the side of Eastern Europe and the Western bloc, but also on that of the United States and NATO. Indeed, Poland presents itself as a vital and loyal ally, situated in a critical region for European security, particularly after Russia started to pursue a more assertive foreign policy with Ukraine. Nonetheless, it is evident from the Polish perspective, despite all forms of collaboration and speeches, that Poland is one of many U.S. allies in the region and around the world, while the meaning of this partnership still remains almost existential for Poland [340]. For this reason, Poland approached with caution the question of European strategic autonomy, which became part of the public debate in those years. For Poland, the risk that EU Strategic Autonomy degenerates into isolation from the U.S. and NATO was not acceptable [341]. This is supported by the remarks of the then-minister of foreign affairs: "the so-called strategic autonomy of the European Union cannot, in our opinion, take its place at the expense of NATO and the weakening of transatlantic ties." [342] In this regard, Brexit increases Polish concern, as it removes a crucial state of 'balancing' from the European picture. Therefore, the Polish worried that the post-Brexit EU and strategic autonomy would not serve the interests of all member states, becoming a domain of the Franco-German axis, whose relationship has strengthened since 2016, to the detriment of medium-small countries [343]. The fear also arises owing to the persistent worry of being betrayed, which has a significant weight in

[339] Giulia Gigante, "Il Trimarium serve a Varsavia per contare a Washington," In *Limes: La Polonia Imperiale* 2/23 (9 march 2023). 269

[340] Smura "Relations between the United States and Poland," (2019)

[341] *Government of the Republic of Poland. Minister of European Union Affairs. "*Informację dla Sejmu i Senatu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej o udziale Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w pracach Unii Europejskiej w okresie lipiec-grudzień 2020 r." (Information for the Sejm and Senate of the Republic of Poland on the participation of the Republic of Poland in the work of the European Union in the period July- December 2020) Warsaw, no. 910 (2021)

[342] *Government of the Republic of Poland. Minister of Foreign Affairs.* "Informacja Ministra Spraw Zagranicznych o zadaniach polskiej polityki zagranicznej w 2019 roku." (Information of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the tasks of Polish foreign policy in 2019) (14 March 2019), Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://www.gov.pl/web/dyplomacja/informacja-ministra-spraw-zagranicznych-o-zadaniach-polskiej-polityki-zagranicznej-w-2019-roku>

[343] Justyna Gotkowska, "Poland and the Baltic States: A Preference for a Renewed West," *Heinrich Boll Stiftung* (8 January 2021), Online, last access 30 January 2023 <https://www.boell.de/en/2021/01/08/poland-and-baltic-states-preference-renewed-west>

the Polish narrative and leads it to see the West as a "crucial provider of physical and ontological security, [… and] at the same time as unreliable and even 'traitorous'"[344]. Precisely to reiterate this, the Polish government, led by Mateusz Jakub Morawiecki of the conservative PIS (Law and Justice) party, did not work to reconcile pro-European sentiment. With this government, which lasted from 2015 to 2023, there was a constant shift towards increasingly illiberal and authoritarian positions, exacerbating the disputes with the EU. From the beginning of this government, Poland insisted that inclusion in the European Union would be a way to improve its socioeconomic situation inside Western Europe, but without ceding part of its sovereignty in favour of a pro-European project led predominantly by Franco-German. From Morawiecki's speech at the Sorbonne on the 23 of March 2023, clearly emerged its vision of the national identity as the only way to preserve a country's freedom, culture, and its social, economic, political, and military security, rather than through a decision-making, bureaucratic Europe governed by an elite [345].

Poland's authoritarian and non-democratic positions, in particular linked to its Judiciary body, have resulted in a direct clash with Brussels, as well as widespread alarm inside the EU. Brussels urged Poland to amend the laws that undermined democracy's foundations, in particular the one concerning the justice reform, defined as the "muzzle law". The Court of the EU has issued 20 sentences to demand for the reform of the rules that led to the election of 1,700 judges appointed illegally and against the principles of the European treaties [346]. This led in 2017 to the triggering of Article 7 (EUT) by the European Commission, which could lead to the suspension of Polish voting rights, as well as preventing Poland from accessing as much as 30 billion euros from the EU [347]. These

---

[344] Molly Krasnodębska, "Politics of stigmatization: Poland as a 'latecomer' in the European Union," *Palgrave Macmillan* (2021)

[345] Valentin Behr, "La dottrina Morawiecki: il piano della destra radicale polacca per riorganizzare l'Europa," *Le Grand Continent* (27 March 2023), Online, last access 24 January 2024 <https://legrandcontinent.eu/it/2023/03/27/la-dottrina-morawiecki-il-piano-della-destra-radicale-polacca-per-riorganizzare-leuropa/>

[346] Tommaso Di Caprio, "La Polonia alle urne tra il sostegno all'Ucraina e il futuro delle relazioni diplomatiche con Berlino," *Geopolitica* (14 October 2023), Online, last access 6 February 2024 <https://www.geopolitica.info/la-polonia-alle-urne-tra-il-sostegno-allucraina-e-il-futuro-delle-relazioni-diplomatiche-con-berlino/>

[347] Sebastien Maillard, "Poland's elections alter the balance of power in the EU," *Chatam House* (17 October 2023), Online, last access 4 February 2024 <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/10/polands-elections-alter-balance-power-eu>

divergent views, which covered not only justice, but also other matters, such as the distribution of European funding, migratory flows, and the preservation of human rights, were, however, never followed by a clear manifestation of Poland's intention to leave the EU [348]. This is mostly for economic reasons, and Poland stands to benefit greatly. Following Covid, the PNRR money paid to Poland, albeit with German reluctance, totalled 57 billion euros [349]. In addition, for its security, Poland is increasingly aware of the importance of exploiting all the tools at its disposal, and in this case, the possibility of harmonising the EU strategic compass and NATO's strategic concept is not doubted, particularly in the context of defensive industrial production [350]. This is supported by Poland, despite its reservation and concern towards greater European autonomy on the topic. In particular, Poland's reluctance, as President Duda underlined in one of his speeches, was to give the U.S. the mistaken impression that their engagement in the EU was not needed [351]. During those years, it emerged that Poland could only accept European strategic autonomy if in complete coordination and without interfering with NATO's functions. Minister Spraw's statement confirms exactly this: "the strategic autonomy of the EU should be understood as a long-term ambition under which the EU […] will play a valuable, complementary role to NATO or will act where NATO chooses not to act" [352].

Since 2016 and then even more so with Covid, strategic autonomy has become a topic widely addressed by European political elites, and Polish politicians have also expressed their opinions several times in this regard. What emerges in those years, based on the historical trajectory described thus far, is that Poland fears the lack of support for its defence if the United States withdraws from Europe. It does not consider the EU ready to

---

[348] Di Caprio, "La Polonia alle urne tra il sostegno all'Ucraina e il futuro delle relazioni diplomatiche con Berlino,"(2023)

[349] Ibidem

[350] Gotkowska, "Poland and the Baltic States," (8 January 2021)

[351] "Prezydent Duda: Unia Europejska nie może konkurować z NATO," (President Duda: EU Defence Initiative should not compete with NATO) *Radio Maryja* (11 October 2019), Online, last access 7 February 2024 <https://www.radiomaryja.pl/informacje/prezydent-a-duda-inicjatywy-obronne-ue-nie-powinny-konkurowac-z-nato/>

[352] *Government of the Republic of Poland. Minister of Foreign Affairs,* "Informację dla Sejmu i Senatu RP o udziale Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w pracach Unii Europejskiej w okresie lipiec- grudzień 2019" (Information for the Sejm and Senate of the Republic of Poland on the participation of the Republic of Poland in the work of the European Union in the period July- December 2019) Warsaw, no. 186 (2020)

face this scenario alone and therefore approaches the concept of strategic autonomy with reticence. For Poland, indeed, the failure of EU member states, that are also NATO members, to meet their commitments, casts severe doubt on their ability to create a parallel defensive system and therefore to be ready to support Poland in case of need in the absence of the U.S. [353]. Indeed, Poland's belief that the EU cannot cope with a global crisis without the U.S. remains unchanged, ignoring the debate about U.S. future goals that started after their withdrawal from Afghanistan. All of this does not intend to limit European military strengthening, but rather connects it inextricably with the need to collaborate with NATO. Furthermore, in the post-Covid period, Poland adopted a more open approach towards European strategic autonomy, supporting this goal in the areas of supply chains and industry, which were critical during the pandemic period. However, its vision of the defensive and security sphere remains unchanged. This is confirmed among others by a publication of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which states that the European Strategic Autonomy should complement "the single market without barriers" and be "firmly anchored with the broader transatlantic community and its values" [354].

When the Russo-Ukrainian conflict broke out in 2022, Poland immediately sided with Ukraine, as did the EU. Already in 2014 when there was the initial aggression against Ukraine and the invasion of Crimea, Poland recognized those assaults as a direct threat to its security. Those facts proved that Russia had not abandoned the imperialist agenda. Russia, then, also targeted Poland with false historical information, in its media propaganda. These repeated hostile measures have removed the chance of developing any relationship with Moscow. This was adequately demonstrated with military support for Ukraine, the adoption of sanctions against Russia, and humanitarian help to the Ukrainian population which reflects the Polish belief that the security and peace of Europe rely on the defeat of Russia [355]. In this context, once again the American visit to Poland strengthens the partnership between the two states, Joe Biden's words clarify this

[353] *Presidency of the Republic of Poland*, "Waszczykowski: Agentura Kremla w UE jest aktywna." (Waszczykowski: The Kremlin's agency in the EU is active) *Wpolityce.pl* (2021), Online, last access 6 February 2024 <https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wydarzenia/prezydent-nato-i-ue-zjednoczone-i-przygotowane,48971>

[354] *Government of the Republic of Poland. Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, "States stronger EU in a turbulent world. Contribution to the discussion on the concept of EU Strategic Autonomy," *Chancellery of the Prime Minister*. Warsaw (16 September 2021)

[355] Wyciszkiewicz, "Come i polacchi leggono la Russia," (9 March 2023): 86

relationship "The United States needs Poland, just as Poland needs the United States" [356]. For this reason, the promotion of cooperation between the EU and NATO always remains central in the Polish strategic narrative.

In less than a year, this position has weakened, as evidenced by repeated declarations by Polish Prime Minister Morawiecki of his desire to halt the reception of Ukrainians, limit the sending of weapons, and strengthen his own military defence in order to build a strong Polish army motivated by the possibility of an extension of Russia's war against Poland. However, in October 2023, with the new elections, Donald Franciszek Tusk, of the pro-European liberal party KO (Civic Coalition), was elected as Poland's prime minister. The liberal KO (Civic Platform) party's triumph and Tusk's inauguration were warmly welcomed by the European institutions, as seen by the statement made on X by Ursula Von der Leyen: "Congratulations Donald Tusk on becoming Poland's Prime Minister. Your experience and strong commitment to our European values will be precious in forging a strong Europe, for the benefit of the Polish people." [357] Tusk confirms his pro-Europeanism by declaring that a powerful European Union will help make Poland 'stronger', and that "We are all the stronger, all the more sovereign, not only when Poland is stronger, but also when the European Union is stronger" [358]. As can be seen from these statements, the premises of this mandate aimed at reconfirming support for Ukraine, the resumption of human rights, including the abortion law, and priorities democratic values. Moreover, he insisted on turning Poland again to its central role on the international scene, within the framework of the European Union, while not ignoring the problems associated with Polish farmers, which gave rise to the dispute over wheat and resulted in the previous government's blocking of the shipment of weapons to Ukraine. Furthermore, in his

---

[356] Fabio Turco, "Potenza in cortocircuito. Alla Polonia manca un ultimo passo sullo stato di diritto per entrare tra le grandi d'Europa," *Linkiesta* (24 February 2023), Online, last access 3 February 2024 <https://www.linkiesta.it/2023/02/polonia-protagonista-europa-ucraina-stato-di-diritto/>
[357] "Polonia, Donald Tusk riporta a Varsavia un governo filo-UE," *ItaliaOggi* (12 December 2023), Online, last access 6 February 2024 <https://www.italiaoggi.it/news/polonia-donald-tusk-riporta-a-varsavia-un-governo-filo-ue-202312121629103465>
[358] Ibidem

programme there is the intention to obtain EU funds (around 110 billion euros) blocked over the years due to the policies promoted by the PIS [359].

This government also emphasises that by actively participating in the Strategic Compass project, Poland can help ensure that EU defence measures complement those of NATO and evolve in accordance with Polish interests [360]. Despite this, a pro-EU Poland led by Tusk will still create some challenges. Indeed, the new coalition, which has an Atlanticist bending, is hesitant about the EU's strategic autonomy and has specific views on the EU enlargement. Indeed, it seeks to give priority and to support Ukraine's entrance over Western Balkan states, who are seen as too weak and, in the case of Serbia, too pro-Russian [361]. What seems to become increasingly clear, also given the evolution of the war in Ukraine and Russian pressure, is that thinking of creating a European defence or an autonomous strategic system without Poland is not feasible [362]. Polish attention toward Eastern European countries as well as its warning that collective defence cannot disregard NATO, and its unwavering scepticism of the autonomous European strategy, cannot be ignored in the current discussion on European defence. This is evident not only to European countries, but also to Poland, strong from its relevant position in the war.

4.2 Poland's Strategic Documents

The analysis of Poland's official security strategy documents is necessary to understand the country's priorities and fears, and properly place its approach toward the EU Strategic Autonomy within its defence and security narrative. Other than the White Book, published in 2013, the government of Poland has used diverse types of official documents to make the country's strategy cope with the changes in the international arena. As a consequence, diverse sources will be analysed in this chapter to understand the

---

[359] Andrea Girardoni, "Dalle urne esce una Polonia filo-Ue," *Il BO Live*. University of Padova (17 October 2023), Online, last access 6 February 2024 <https://ilbolive.unipd.it/index.php/it/news/dalle-urne-esce-polonia-filoue>

[360] Karolina Muti, "Tracciare un percorso nuovo: come la Polonia può contribuire alla difesa Europea," *European Council on Foreign Relations* (13 May 2021), Online, last access 20 January 2024 https://ecfr.eu/rome/article/tracciare-un-percorso-nuovo-come-la-polonia-puo-contribuire-alla-difesa-europea/>

[361] Maillard, "Poland's elections alter the balance of power in the EU," (2024)

[362] Monika Sus, "Poland's (Lack of) Vision for Europe," *Carnegie Europe* (28 March 2023), Online, last access 10 February 2024 <https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/89386>

development of Poland's strategy. Among the others, the defence Doctrines are quite fundamental in this research, as they have the purpose of creating unity of opinion about the defence objective and priorities of the country, and generally serve as the root of the military operation's tactics [363]. Moreover, they underline the novelty introduced by the Polish defence policy in light of the changes in the international context. In addition, National Strategies, quarterly "National Security" [364], and Strategic reviews will be taken into consideration as well.

In the development of Poland's defence strategy, the first years of independence were complemented at every stage by an appropriate strategic framework. More specifically, in that initial period were published the Defence Doctrine of the Republic of Poland in 1990 and, two years later, the Security and Defence Strategy Policy of the Republic of Poland and the Assumptions in the Polish security Policy. The 1990 Defence Doctrine was the first attempt to define and declare the basic elements of national defence strategy. However, this document is considered to be already out of date at the moment it was published, as it gave a lot of space to Poland's participation in the Warsaw pact, which would have been declared ended the following year, coinciding with the fall of the Soviet Union. In fact, it is made clear in the treaty from the outset that Poland did not view itself as being under an obligation to uphold the duties resulting from the agreement. This clarification emphasised the strength of Poland's restored national independence, after years of oppression by the Soviet Union, placing a high value on its decision-making autonomy and refusing to sacrifice its forces for other states. However, despite what has just been underlined, the document is in fact outdated, as the resolution with which the doctrine was established states that "Poland's bilateral and multilateral alliances and its membership in the Warsaw Pact are still an important element of this security". The reference to the pact importance remains evident. Yet, the fact that developments on the horizon could already be glimpsed in this document can be forecast from a section in the

---

[363] *Netherlands Ministry of Defence*, "Defence Doctrine," (n.d.), Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://english.defensie.nl/topics/doctrine/defence-doctrine>

[364] Defined by the *Poland National Security Office* as an open access journal with the aim to deepen knowledge in the field of security and defence.

text in which, alluding to the Polish alliances, it is stated that "their role may change as a new, pan-European security system is built" [365].

The document emphasises Poland's and other central European nations' importance in any potential crashes that could endanger the new global environment. As a major threat to international relations, it names the Warsaw Pact and NATO's coalition conflicts as the most significant of the potential conflicts. The two primary points of this document are the need to defend the territorial integrity and build a climate of trust and collaboration within the neighbourhood. The newly acquired Polish independence lies behind the significance of these elements, making them extremely relevant. For what concerns the first point, the resolution with whom the document was adopted underlines that "The foundation of the Polish defence doctrine is securing the country's territorial integrity" and the inviolable and immutable characteristic of its borders. Moreover, the text goes further and links its stability to that of the EU arguing that "Questioning the durability and stability of Poland's western border is undermining an important component of the European order". We can also find proof of the second key aim, as the document states that "The Republic of Poland does not make any territorial claims and does not consider any country as its enemy", expressing the clear desire to maintain a peaceful situation at its borders and stabilizing the territorial situation in central/eastern Europe. This is further highlighted by the overt Polish intention to "actively participating in negotiations leading to increased mutual trust, defence and cooperation in Europe". Finally, it is important to consider that the 90s were a period of political changes in Poland that will guide the following strategic documents of the country. This can be noted, as the document does not clearly point to NATO as the aggressor, only talking about the lack of trust between the two ex-blocs as a possible source of conflicts. We can therefore see this document as the externalization of the last breaths of a strategic vision linked to the old international dynamics, already in the way of radical changes.

It is exactly because of the enormous novelties of that period, especially the Soviet Union collapse and the subsequent dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, that Poland considered necessary to define a new path for Poland's strategy. This was done in 1992 with the

---

[365] Government of the Republic of Poland. Ministry of National Defence. *Resolution on the Defence Doctrine of the Republic of Poland*. Warsaw: country defence committee (1990)

Defence Strategy Policy, which as the previous one also emphasized that Poland did not see a threat in the existing countries and did not see them as enemies, underlining once more its need to create an atmosphere of trust and cooperation in its neighbourhood. Moreover, the relevance of defending and strengthening the national sovereignty is gained central in the document. For this purpose, it also includes the necessity of improving the national economy. With this in mind, the document highlights its new strategic location between Western Europe and the disintegrated post-Soviet area, as an opportunity to increase security through the reinforcement of its eastern borders, but also taking into consideration new possible sources of threats that could derive from it. The text also defined its long-term strategic goal of being included in NATO and in the Western European Union, which at the time was NATO's European column and a key component of the European system of collective security. Connected to this, it is relevant to note that, given its popularity in the 1990s, the pan-European system of collective security is a recurring theme throughout the entire paper. This is helpful to understand how relevant was for Poland to be included in the Western dynamics and arena, and consequently detach in a definitive way from the ex-Sovietic suppressor, excluding any threat to its sovereignty. Moreover, the desire to join NATO demonstrates how Poland quickly began to have strong ideas about the strategy of its alliances. The security guarantees of NATO and the membership in the European forms of cooperation will be part of the strategy line that all governments will follow. Finally, compared to the previous strategy, it shows a key change in the assessment of the nature of threats. It lacks reference to international or nuclear wars, while non-military threats gained instead more space, together with regional possible conflicts. This vision was an obvious consequence of the collapse of the two-block structure, and it will change again in the documents following the Russian annexation of Crimea or aggression toward Georgia.

Once Poland embraced full membership in NATO in 1999, it became necessary to develop a new vision and definition of security policy in the Alliance context- With this aim, the 2000 Security Strategy of Poland was published, as a simple guidance, because it lacked the presidential signature. It embraced the new context but still reflected a continuity of the previous aspiration of Poland in defence. Indeed, the geographical position of Poland is considered again of "special strategic importance on the European

East-West line" [366]. For this reason and because it is at the "interface between NATO and its two most important partners - Russia and Ukraine" it should maintain good partnerships with them to ensure the security of Europe. Poland's tendency to give itself so much credit stems from a renewed self-confidence in a historical period when its relations with the United States and European countries were thriving. This may even be seen as a form of self-affirmation, which makes perfect sense considering Poland's historical experiences. It will also serve as a common thread in Poland's strategic narrative, along with the previously mentioned necessity of preserving its territorial integrity. Indeed, the document stresses the "independence and inviolability of its territory" as one key national interest, among the others [367]. In this regard, the text already clearly states the need to participate "in the common defence of the territories of NATO member states" [368] as a critical point in the defence against external threats and to strengthen its "position as a reliable ally" [369]. The development of "military cooperation with other countries, especially neighbouring ones" [370] is another important element to be accomplished to shape a safe context for Poland's sovereignty survival. This aspect of collaboration is explored extensively throughout several points in the text, by referring also to the Partnership for Peace [371]. The consistency between this document and the NATO Strategic Concept of 1999 is explicitly underlined in the text, together with the recognition of the mandatory nature of the alliance's functions and tasks. This enhances Poland's belief that it requires NATO for protection, the thing that will dictate a clear direction for the development of its strategic narrative. Furthermore, in view of Poland's accession into the EU, the document started to emphasise its participation in the European Security and Defence Policy as well as EU crisis response activities.

It was the upcoming accession to the EU, together with the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan in which Poland took part, and the increase of terrorist threats after the tragic events of the Twin Towers in 2001, that bent the basis for the amendments to the Polish

---

[366] Government of the Republic of Poland. Ministry of National Defence. *Defence Strategy of the Republic of Poland*. Warsaw (2000)

[367] Ibidem

[368] Ibidem

[369] Ibidem

[370] Ibidem

[371] Ibidem

National Security Strategy in 2003 and then again in 2007. All these events and changes provided new ways of looking at international security and at national involvement in the global order. Poland's reactions to these events through its enhanced engagement in NATO and EU actions, required a new strategy that could deal better with future challenges. The newly produced document aligns with the 2003 European concept, as a clear result of the shared viewpoints that brought Poland extremely close to the European system in that period. However, this does not in any way reduce the significance of Poland's relationship with the United States, as Poland does not miss any occasion to underline. Indeed, the weight of NATO and Poland- U.S. relations is impossible to go unnoticed throughout the pages of this National Strategy. Poland, indeed, underlines on several occasions that its "bilateral relations with the USA also represent an essential link of the transatlantic relationship" and that "NATO is for Poland the key platform for multilateral and bilateral collaboration within the scope of security and defence" explaining the conviction of the need of strengthening transatlantic ties, the leitmotiv of its narrative. Moreover, also when referring to the EU security concept, with which it wishes to align in view of its membership), it underlines the recognition of NATO as an important guarantor of European security. Furthermore, it insists on the necessity for "cooperation so as to ensure full complementarity of the EU and NATO operation." [372] Although this is not intended to lessen the importance of European defence and security, it nevertheless underlines the country's reliance on the transatlantic alliance. This is also considering NATO's readiness in the event of threats, which Europe still lacks, and on whose territories the American presence remains vital for the European sense of security. The strengthening of the EU therefore always remains in a certain way contingent on the United States and leads the EU to be "an increasingly important partner of the USA." [373]

Even though Polish support for American visions and operations is evident, as it is the priority given to the relation with the US, the document is published at the gates of Polish access to the Union and, therefore, still tries to explain the rationale behind the enthusiasm of entering the EU. It provides a direct reference to the need to have "a Healthy economy

---

[372]Government of the Republic of Poland. Ministry of National Defence. *The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland*. Warsaw (2003): 6

[373] Ibidem

[… as] the basic guarantees of national security" [374], linking the EU membership to the chance of economic development, more than to security and defence. It explicitly states: "Positive effects for our security will accrue from our participation in the EU Single Market and common trade policy, and from our use of the Union support measures for less developed regions." [375] Other than for economic purposes, it is also seen as an "opportunity to amplify our voice in international policy" and most importantly to "strive for the development of the EU Eastern Dimension" [376].

In this document, Poland recognises that the risk of threats near its borders is greatly reduced, and collaboration with Russia appears almost a viable option. This is also consistent with United States expectations, that will be shown by President Obama's 'reset strategy' implemented. Despite this, Poland's history has always led to greater attention toward the guarantee of territorial and non-territorial independence. As in the previous documents, this one also underlines that the main goal is to "defend Poland's territory against any armed aggression, to secure inviolability of the borders". Furthermore, new types of threats enter the Polish picture, less classic (armed conflict) and more unconventional, due to the negative effects of globalisation, such as migration flows and terrorism. Poland recognises that while typical threats might be uncommon, they cannot be completely eliminated, especially when considering long-term strategies. As a result, one of its principal aims remains to uphold "friendly relations with partners, including neighbouring states, support for transformational processes in Eastern and Southern Europe" [377] in order to keep promoting a secure international context for Poland and its development. It also insists on the fact that "Poland shall develop bilateral cooperation with its neighbours and also other countries in the region for the benefit of all-around stabilisation of the security situation in this part of Europe" [378].

Following this publication, the new Strategy was adopted and approved by the President of the Republic in 2007, and it was necessary to update the strategy in light of the changes occurring in that period. The biggest innovation is that it classified national interests

---

[374] Ibidem. 4
[375] Ibidem. 6
[376] Ibidem
[377] Ibidem. 1
[378] Ibidem. 8

according to the grade of importance, even if without departing significantly from the elements that emerged in the previous documents. Therefore, the survival of the state, through the sovereignty preservation, territorial integrity and inviolability of borders, together with the strengthening of democracy, is considered as the vital interests of Poland. Then the category of important interest concerns the country's economic and national identity development. Finally, the last category in order of relevance includes the maintenance of a strong international position and the possibility of effective promotion of Polish interests in the international arena [379].

Given the papers reviewed thus far, it is possible to identify several common threads in the narrative of Polish security and defence. The most notable is the safeguarding of its own territorial and border security, which is justified by its history. This is connected to 'devotion' toward the relationships with the United States, both individually and within alliances (such as NATO). The relationship with the EU is viewed from a different perspective. Although it is an integral aspect of preserving its security, it is regarded more as an economic opportunity and a way to draw attention to the need to keep the countries on the eastern front stable. President Komorowski approved the replacement of the 2007 strategy in 2014, with a new one. Prior to the strategy publication, the White Book on National Security was released in 2013. This White book indicates that in Poland's vision, as already underlined in the previous documents, the classic wars are always less frequent (even if not to be excluded), compared to the new challenges (also at an economic level, as the Eurozone crisis shown in those years) [380]. This justifies the need for a new strategy, which will once again demonstrate the strategic importance of Poland's geographical position in international dynamics. This factor, as proven by the *excursus* on Poland's strategic growth, to which an entire subchapter is dedicated, allows us to reaffirm territorial defence and sovereignty as a throughline in the Polish story [381].

The importance of the relationship with the United States, as well as the alliances to which Poland has now become a member (EU and NATO), is emphasised from the opening

---

[379] Government of the Republic of Poland. Ministry of National Defence. *National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland.* Warsaw (2007)

[380] Government of the Republic of Poland. National Security Bureau. *White Book on the National Security of the Republic of Poland.* Warsaw (2013). 13

[381] Ibidem. 9

pages. The inevitable mention of NATO's fundamental significance in Polish strategic assessment is no longer surprising. The alliance is considered "the most powerful and effective political and military alliance on the globe" [382] which grants success in the defence [383]. Its relevance is also stressed by the fact that "it is capable of using 'hard' force to guarantee the protection of its members". And also, as an element which "strengthens the geopolitical ties between the USA and Europe and warrants American presence on the European continent" [384]. As is currently stated in all defence documents, the direct relationship with the United States, as well as its presence in Europe, is critical. Highlighted by the explicit consideration of the U.S. as "of great significance […] for Poland and other Central European states" [385], as well as by the transcription of a piece of the 2008 Declaration on strategic Cooperation between Poland and the US. In the White Paper, Poland also shows to be ready to realistically face the demise of American hegemony, but despite this, it still believes that the U.S. will remain "the most powerful country in the world" [386]. This, in some ways, justifies their vision of transatlantic tie consolidation in the face of changing circumstances.

In this white paper, unlike previous documents, Poland begins to express increased concern about a possible American retreat from Europe and its reduced military presence and commitment [387]. Even if it seems unlikely, it reflects the shift in American priorities towards the Pacific. In this regard, the goal is to "advocate a decreased scale of withdrawal of the U.S. military potential and help define the new foundations of American presence by linking it closely with the readiness to respond to threats to Euro-Atlantic security" [388]. The concreteness of this issue may also be drawn from the fact that Poland realises at the same time the importance of the "real increase in European military capabilities within the CSDP."[389] In any case, he sees the American presence in Europe as an essential factor of insurance against any European fracture. It is actually considered that "Without

---

[382] Ibidem. 12
[383] Ibidem. 10, 123
[384] Ibidem. 123
[385] Ibidem. 125
[386] Ibidem. 12
[387] Ibidem. 125
[388] Ibidem. 162
[389] Ibidem

the USA, the divided Europe could not function" [390].   In reality, Europe, and more specifically the greater European integration at the level of common security and defence policy, are considered opportunities in which it must actively participate, but whose usefulness for Polish defence depends heavily on "the intensification of cooperation with NATO, as well as EU coherent policy toward Russia" [391]. Indeed, the economic crisis, the internal divisions in approaching various issues (such as the relationship with Russia), and its lack of autonomy from the point of view of raw material, are clearly seen as factors that weaken its safety [392].

Furthermore, what Poland considers crucial in terms of European integration is particularly the "deepening relations with the Eastern Partnership states in the area of security policy" [393]. Indeed, even in the view of a larger integration scenario at the EU level, the only way through which it is seen as positive is if it is linked with the collaboration with NATO and the "continuation of political and military presence of the USA on European soil" [394]. Moreover, as was the case in the previous document, a great amount of the part that talks about EU integration is dedicated to stability and economic growth [395]. Integration at the EU level is therefore fundamental for Poland in this document, but it is always accompanied by stronger cooperation with NATO [396].

A final point that is quite relevant in the Polish vision is the documents' attention dedicated to Russia. Seen as a potential partner, or possible threat. Although somewhat Downgraded due to its inability to restore its pre-Soviet status quo, Poland nonetheless views it as a major priority [397]. What emerges is both the awareness and the fear that the old "conflicts get 'defrosted' and enter a vehement phase, as in the case of the 2008 Georgian-Russian war" [398] reaffirming the fact that Russia remains an intrusive neighbour, to which much attention is paid in outlining Polish strategies.

---

[390] Ibidem. 125, 126
[391] Ibidem. 124
[392] Ibidem. 124
[393] Ibidem. 125
[394] Ibidem. 145
[395] Ibidem. 146
[396] Ibidem. 162, 163, 168
[397] Ibidem. 103, 126
[398] Ibidem. 127

The National Security Strategy published the following year does not present unexpected elements, rather following the footsteps of the previous document. In fact, references are made to Polish membership in the EU and NATO, which is also considered on those pages as "the most important form of political and military cooperation" [399]. The role of economic support that the EU plays, as well as the importance for Poland of the American partnership, are both well specified [400]. Additionally, the significance of cooperation between the EU and NATO is also specified, together with the Polish inclination to encourage cooperation and partnerships with Eastern Europe and their rapprochement with both the EU and NATO, to create a 'safe' neighbourhood [401]. Among the threats, here too there is a fear of the reorientation of American priorities towards the Pacific, which emphasises the importance of preserving American involvement in Europe, both through NATO and with bilateral agreements [402]. It is underlined that "the credibility of disarmament agreements [...] has been undermined" [403] and with this, it seems as the seriousness of the resurgence of an 'old' threat - armed conflict - that carried less weight in earlier agreements was emphasised.

Generally speaking, the most novel aspect of this paper in comparison to its predecessors is its examination of Russia. indeed, in addition to the attack on Georgia a few years earlier, Russia invaded and annexed Crimea to its territories in 2014, before the publication of the document. That which, thus, appeared to be an isolated incident lost this characteristic and took on the appearance of a larger breach to the Polish eyes. So much so that the document actually states that: "The European security policy is beginning to be challenged by processes taking place in EU eastern neighbourhood countries, connected with a strong political, military and economic pressure of Russia." [404] Consequently, we can consider the fear of a "Russian" return as a leitmotif in his security and defence narrative, which between ups and downs develops in tandem with

---

[399] Government of the Republic of Poland. Ministry of National Defence. *National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland*. Warsaw (2014). 9, 20
[400] Ibidem. 9
[401] Ibidem. 10, 20
[402] Ibidem. 21
[403] Ibidem. 18
[404] Ibidem. 22

the assertion of the Polish relationship with the United States first and foremost, and then the EU. Indeed, it established its urgency and outlined Poland's priorities clearly.

This circumstance, along with the uncertainty that surrounds the Trump administration, is what makes a strategic review of Poland necessary. The Polish Defence Concept was released in 2017 presenting "a vision of Polish defence in the future" [405]. The document, which contains the conclusions reached by the strategic review conducted in 2016 and never made public, is not adopted by the Council of Ministers, therefore, remaining a political declaration rather than a real tool to shape defence policy. It is, in any case, relevant for the development of the narrative, especially for its concrete features.

The focus on eastern relations stressed in it should "allow Poland to enhance our role in NATO and to serve as the unifying force of all Allied activities on the eastern flank" [406]. Moreover, it stressed the need to enhance "military cooperation in [… Poland's] region" [407], and it also gives concrete suggestions on how to accomplish the cooperation within the eastern flank, namely through "intensification of exercise, the creation of join commands and units, and […] in the joint acquisition of military equipment" [408]. From this, it is evident that Russia poses a direct threat to the states bordering Poland, and therefore its actions are carefully examined in the text: "The Russian Federation aims at enhancing its position in the global balance of power by using various means. They include breaches of international law, the regular use of force and coercion in relations with other states, and various attempts to destabilize Western integrated structures." [409]

The disparity between Russia's troops and those of NATO's eastern members, as well as the fact that Russia views NATO as its biggest danger, are both mentioned in the section dedicated to the analysis of this threat [410]. Both factors do nothing but underline the critical and real threat situation. All this happens in light of the events in Georgia and

---

[405] Marek Strzoda and Dariusz Szkoluda. "Contemporary conditions of organization and functioning of the Command and Control System of the Polish Armed Forces," *Scientific Journal of the Military University of Land Forces* 51 (2019): 1-19. 5

[406] Government of the Republic of Poland. Ministry of National Defence. *The Defence Concept of the Republic of Poland.* Warsaw (2017)

[407] Ibidem. 45

[408] Ibidem

[409] Ibidem. 23

[410] Ibidem. 23, 24

Crimea, which are also highlighted here as alarms of the situation. The delicacy of the situation and the importance of stability and strength of the Polish neighbourhood is proved by the hope that Ukraine will regain its stability and through the expression of concern for the Caucasus region, which Poland views as vulnerable because it "is perceived by Russia to be in its alleged sphere of influence" [411]. Furthermore, for Poland, the slowdown in transatlantic cooperation is directly linked to the Russian growing power. This is why even in this document the importance of NATO for Polish defence remains solid, with Poland confirming its commitment to ensuring that NATO "remains the guarantor of peace and prosperity in Europe"[412]. It also underlines again the fundamental cooperation between NATO and the EU, as well as with the USA [413]. Any European action in the defence sector must, indeed, be intended to "complement and enrich NATO operations in a non-competitive manner" [414]. Moreover, the U.S. military engagement in the EU is a key element highlighted in several parts of the document [415]. In light of Brexit, the significance of Poland's bilateral relationship with the United Kingdom is added to all of this for the first time "look forward to increasing" [416]. Additionally, the specific objective of 2,5 percent of GDP investment on defence by 2030 is stated in this 2017 Concept exactly with the aim of guaranteeing safety.

Finally, a noteworthy aspect that appears in this declaration, somewhat for the first time, is that Poland gives total priority to its own defence, maintaining its commitment to support abroad, but without depriving itself of essential resources: "We are committed to reinforcing a stable international order. Our contribution will be constructive, but it cannot significantly deplete our national defence potential." [417] By doing this, Poland not only conveys its concern about Russian military aggression, for which it needs to be prepared, but it also underlines the main direction of its strategy, namely that of being able to defend itself. Poland is afraid of anything that would take it further away from this goal or risk jeopardise its main defence point of reference, the U.S. support. This helped

---

[411] Ibidem. 24
[412] Ibidem. 44
[413] Ibidem. 30,32
[414] Ibidem. 32
[415] Ibidem. 37, 44
[416] Ibidem. 45
[417] Ibidem. 41

understand the reticence of the Polish documents to speak openly about the strategic autonomy of the EU, a topic of significant discussion during that time. Indeed, there is too much worry that increased defence cooperation with the EU will drive the United States away.

With the subsequent approval of the National Security Strategy in 2020, the previous one of 2014 was officially considered "null and void" [418]. The new strategy points out that a "wide range of armed conflicts" are drawing the international dynamics [419]. Among the others, for Poland, the greatest threat is the neo-imperial policy of the authorities of the Russian Federation, which is increasingly using its military force, as the Georgia, Crimea, and hostilities in eastern Ukraine underline. The violation of international law and the failure to meet international obligations undermines the European security system. The document assumes that Russia will keep its aggressive methods "to rebuild its power and sphere of influence", that consists of the main threat to Poland, which for long feared [420]. Connected to this, the document stresses the risk that enhancing energy dependency between Russia and the UE could be highly exploited by Russia to put pressure on Western countries, therefore Poland in the text criticised the new project of Nord Stream 2 [421]. Moreover, persistent internal and regional disputes in the Southern European Neighbourhood are considered another risk factor, as well as the increasing pressure from migration. Additionally, Poland sees a potential impact on the international order from the developing competition between the United States, China, and Russia [422].

The text refers to the fact that the coherence of European and American stances and activities is diverging. The document specifies the likelihood of this happening, stating that in the EU there are "divergent approaches concerning [… the US-EU bond] further development is emerging. There is also a noticeable risk of undermining the coherence of the positions and actions of the member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union" [423]. It is now evident that Poland does not overtly

---

[418] Government of the Republic of Poland. National Security Bureau. *National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland*. Warsaw (2020)
[419] Ibidem. 7
[420] Ibidem. 9
[421] Ibidem. 8
[422] Ibidem. 7
[423] Ibidem. 6, 7

address the question of European strategic autonomy, but this passage does so implicitly. What emerges is a deep Polish concern that the EU and NATO lack synergy in their actions and that as a result, relations between the two may break down, affecting the security of the EU, and especially Poland, which is the bordering country. For this reason, the document does not exempt itself from underlining the importance of Polish-American cooperation in the field of security as fundamental for Poland's security, while also stressing the relevance of other multilateral agreements in which it is involved [424]. Therefore, it is not surprising that the document delves into the need to strengthen cooperation and synergy between NATO and the EU "to ensure the security of Poland and the entire Euro-Atlantic area" [425] even dedicating to it an entire chapter.

Considering all of this, it is not really shocking that Poland needs to engage in European integration to "ensure its complementarity with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization" [426] and to push for the improvement of security in the Eastern Neighbourhood [427]. In light of this, Poland also stresses the necessity of "accelerate the development of operational capabilities of the Polish Armed Forces by increasing the growth rate of defence spending, reaching 2.5% of GDP in 2024" [428]. Moreover, it is important for Poland the "consolidation of the military presence of NATO on its eastern flank" [429], and it is urgent the necessity to take part in "strengthening the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova" [430], through the tools at its disposal, such as the Eastern Partnership. All of this is contingent on its own safety, which it perceives to be compromised by the Russian mobilisation. This is also why the document states that Poland "maintain a dual-track policy towards the Russian Federation within the framework of NATO, consisting in enhanced deterrence and defence combined with readiness to engage in a conditions-based dialogue" [431]. Specifically, to keep

---

[424] Ibidem. 10, 25
[425] Ibidem. 23
[426] Ibidem. 24
[427] Ibidem. 13
[428] Ibidem. 18
[429] Ibidem. 23
[430] Ibidem. 25
[431] Ibidem. 23

peaceful options open, but with the awareness that they must be enhanced and prepared for any scenario.

Given all of this, along with the ongoing conflict that began in Ukraine in 2022, several documents from 2023 consistently emphasise Poland's need to fortify itself against armed aggression, especially from the Russian Federation, since it is perceived to be Poland's main source of risk. Among these documents, we have President Duda's 2023 Draft Act and the 2023 National Security Quarterly. In the letter document's introduction, the secretary of state underlines the situation of uncertainty and war of recent years, as well as Poland's intention of being a centre of gravity for European security, as it is a country "aware of its responsibility for the security of its own and allied borders" [432]. In conclusion, the security and defence narrative of Poland is still undergoing significant changes, however, always maintains the *fil rouge* underlined throughout these documents, namely its own territorial integrity, and sovereignty.

4.3 Conclusion

The analysis of the Polish case study in this chapter brought us closer to comprehending the Polish security and defence narrative by delving into its historical evolution and official strategic documents.

Today's Poland bears the burden of a complicated past. The recent restoration of freedom and territorial sovereignty is coupled with the betrayals caused in the years of the world wars by some European countries, as the historical section of the analysis underlines. This shapes its strategic vision, influencing the Polish position towards the concept of European strategic autonomy. Poland's scepticism toward this concept is unsurprising, and the reasons for this are extensively explained in Polish history and reaffirmed several times in its official documents. Indeed, what clearly marks the direction of its security and defence narrative is certainly the need to protect its territories and maintain strong ties with the United States, which it regards as its greatest protector. The possibility that European strategic autonomy could lead to

---

[432] Government of the Republic of Poland. National Security Bureau, *Quarterly "National Security", n*o. 42/3023 (2023) Online <https://www.bbn.gov.pl/pl/informacje-o-bbn/publikacje/9760,Kwartalnik-quotBezpieczenstwo-Narodowequot-422023.html>

misperceptions with the Atlantic allies and create challenges to EU-NATO relations would contribute to the worst-case scenario for Poland, namely the reduction of American support in European defence, unable to cope on its own with the defensive challenges it might face. This relates to the need to never underestimate Russia, whose eagerness to regain a position of sovereignty is to date Poland's greatest concern. Precisely, to protect itself from this threat, Poland relies heavily on U.S. and NATO activity in Europe. As a result, to avoid upsetting this balance, official Polish documents do not speak directly about the European Strategic Autonomy, instead referring to it implicitly. When this happens, it is always clear that Poland will only support a strengthening of this direction of European integration only if it happens to complement NATO, without overlapping with it. The need for cooperation between the two organisations is particularly evident in its documents.

We therefore understand that Poland perceives the European Strategic Autonomy more as a concern than as an opportunity, and therefore remains sceptical about its strengthening. This also happens due to the lack of a clear definition of the term itself, which leads to its potential misinterpretation. However, his vision has evolved. Indeed, Poland has demonstrated, particularly in the wake of COVID, that it welcomes the idea of strategic autonomy more favourably, as long as it reflects an 'open' idea, therefore emphasising industrial and economic autonomy over the defensive one. The area of security and defence always remains, in fact, delicate for Poland. Consequently, the country is committed to and participates in European integration by trying to influence this development to ensure strong NATO coordination and to guarantee that Eastern Europe receives adequate attention. Indeed, this is a further key component of the Polish security and defence narrative that shapes its approach to strategic autonomy. Poland fears that this will become a Franco-German-led instrument whose priorities take precedence over those of the others, especially after Brexit. We thus make sense of Poland's determination in its documents to preserve the stability in Central and Eastern Europe, which indirectly supports Polish own security.

In conclusion, given the several issues raised in the chapter, analysis shows a strong Polish scepticism towards the concept of strategic autonomy. This leads the Polish defence narrative to emphasise the importance of the relationship with the US. Poland

can therefore use its involvement in integration within the framework of strategic autonomy as a means for ensuring that European objectives do not threaten NATO's presence on European soil. According to the Polish perspective, showing to the United States that Europe is ready to handle its defence autonomously, is not only unrealistic but also very dangerous, as it could lead to the real distancing of the United States. Finally, despite these pillars of the Polish narrative, the pro-European Tusk administration could lead to a more positive approach toward strategic autonomy. Despite this, it is hard to imagine that Poland will completely depart from the positions held by the previous government.

Conclusion

This thesis sought to deepen the theme of European integration in the field of defence and security and to understand its development over time. It focused in particular on European Strategic Autonomy, as a key factor in the progress of this integration, and drew attention to the approach with which each country regards the issue of European strategic autonomy. It does so in particular by analysing two case studies. To this end, it was necessary to look at the geopolitical developments of recent years and to begin by considering that each country shapes its own unique perception of the events that affect the history around it. The research, therefore, sought to analyse the narratives pursued by states for their own defence and security, as it is there that each country shapes its strategic vision and provides reasoning behind it. The research therefore wanted to explore the influence of Strategic Autonomy in the evolution of the defence and security narratives of the EU member states.

The thesis begins by providing a comprehensive theoretical framework that tries to underline the relevance of taking into account the narratives of the countries. In the first chapter, indeed, the study of the narratives has been linked to the constructivist theory. Since this theory has gained more relevance recently, this connection highlights also the increasing importance of the narratives themselves. Drawing a parallel between the two, the chapter emphasises the role of narratives in making sense of reality, as well as their contribution to moulding it.

Beyond this part, the document focuses on the context that has been considered for the thesis, and from which has raised the need to explore even further the issue. Indeed, the purpose of the study was to illustrate the steps of European integration in defence and security throughout time, not only stressing not the obstacles it has faced but also the opportunities the EU's countries have taken to strengthen and deepen this integration. This stage of the study was essential as it established a link between the greater European framework and the individual states' viewpoints, revealing details about the complex nature of their developing position on security and defence issues. The chapter underlined the role of the EU institution in deepening this integration over time, and the longstanding relation between NATO and the EU which also affected this development emphasising the multifaced environment within which the EU

97

formulates its policies. The research also focuses on the need of the EU to adapt to the constant changing of the balance of power, as well as the rising of new threats and new challenges. While doing so, it assesses the progress, efforts, and joint initiatives pursued over time, showing a growing commitment among countries to achieve shared goals. This is critical for understanding the context in which individual country narratives fit when discussing European integration and, more especially, the EU's strategic autonomy.

Despite the efforts and steps taken by European member states to achieve European integration and the realisation of a European Common Defence, the issue is far from being welcomed by all member states. Most importantly, all these efforts have not led to a smooth consensus for the inclusion of the specific reference to European strategic autonomy into the EU policy framework. For this reason, and to provide the right tools for investigating the countries' narratives, the research sought to spend adequate space to analyse the notion of strategic autonomy in Europe. Precisely because of the lack of a clear and unambiguous definition of this term, it was necessary to trace its origins, but more importantly to shed light on the debate of which it is at the centre, tracing its various steps. Furthermore, given that the term has widened over time and has been subject to numerous interpretations, this section of the thesis served to clarify the choice to focus on the concept of European strategic autonomy from a defence and security standpoint.

The heart of the thesis therefore drew from these necessary considerations and backgrounds to investigate how member states approach the issue of strategic autonomy in their security and defence narratives. The decision to select two case studies for this research was necessary to narrow its scope. The choice turned to France and Poland, two different countries with disparate histories and geographical locations. Both are under the EU and NATO umbrella, each participating in the multifaceted context where the two states must construct their defence and security strategies and shed light on their position. Since the thesis sought to capture the weight of the European autonomous strategy in the construction of these narratives, the two countries were also chosen by considering their stance toward this autonomy. Indeed, in order to provide a comprehensive analysis that could reflect the degree of diversity actually present within the EU, the two chosen cases take an almost opposing approach

to the topic. The EU Strategic autonomy is greeted with great scepticism by Poland, one of the countries that support the strengthening of the EU-US relationship more. Whereas France covers a fundamental role in the achievement and support of this autonomy, striving for a certain level of independence of the UE among the others from NATO. Delving into the constituent steps of their narratives in this regard, an effort was thus made to observe the topic from two divergent points of view. This has to some extent helped frame the diverse perspectives with which one of the key issues of European integration is approached.

Thanks to the first case study, examined both through a more historical excursus and an analysis of the official documents of French strategy, it was possible to enter the guts of the country's narrative that addressed strategic autonomy well before it entered the European vocabulary. France, being the origin point of the concept itself, which it first discussed in relation to its own national strategic autonomy, is the ideal candidate to promote this notion at the European level. It is precisely due to the first part of the analysis that we can trace in French history the series of events that defined its support for the European integration project. Through this study, we have drawn several leitmotivs, which also occur in the official French documents considered. Among these, we found a country with clear aspirations for autonomy in the defensive sphere and a strong desire to have an influential voice in geopolitical decisions, equal to the great powers. Over time and with the emergence of various superpowers, first and foremost China, France regained its space in Europe, where it placed its aspirations for influence on the international stage. We thus see French protagonism emerging in the dynamics with which the country relates to the EU and in particular in its approach to strategic autonomy. Promoting it is indeed an opportunity for France to take a leading role in its development and to exert weight on the international stage. Achieving this autonomy with a leading France would both allow European priorities to avoid being overshadowed by other powers, while also satisfying France's ambition to emerge.

As can be seen from the historical evolution of the country, also the disjuncture in the relationship between France and the United States, and consequently with NATO, is shaped in the narrative to give space and strength to the need for European strategic autonomy. France has been able to make the pursuit of EU-SA a goal in line with the ups and downs of this relationship. Whether while experiencing a tense moment with NATO,

as during the Trump presidency, or conversely while supporting its involvement in Europe, France has never failed to turn the moment into an incentive to achieve this autonomy. Indeed, autonomy becomes either the perfect landing ground for uncertainties and insecurities regarding allied support in Europe, or the necessary step to aid and assist NATO operations in Europe.

Therefore, at the conclusion of the study of the first case, it is possible to emphasise the French effort (also together with the other states) in promoting European strategic autonomy, which enters its narrative as a tool and opportunity to promote a Europe with a say, where France becomes the swinging point. Indeed, both national strategic autonomy and French leadership are constant in their narrative, and they are in a sense enhanced by the EU Strategic Autonomy, which acts as a means to extend French influence.

The second case study, on the other hand, with Poland as the protagonist, provides insight into how the country's troubled past, long struggling for its territorial sovereignty, also affects its approach to European strategic autonomy. Indeed, the Polish narrative identifies the constant need to emphasise its non-subjugated position in the world and to steadily protect the integrity of its territories. European strategic autonomy therefore fits into this framework as a possible threat to the stability that Poland seeks. The significant Polish effort to create an environment that ensures its security, such as supporting the independence of neighbouring countries, or bilateral agreements and direct relations with its allies, especially the US, explains why thinking of a Europe with a greater degree of defence autonomy is destabilising for Poland. Indeed, the Polish vision is worried that the outcome of this strategic goal and the misconceptions that may arise from its pursuit will lead to NATO's withdrawal from Europe, which it considers unacceptable. Reducing Atlantic engagement in the EU would clash with Europe's unreadiness to face global challenges on its own, one of the most feared by Poland being Russian sovereignty aspirations.

The Polish narrative, had to shape itself around this notion of strategic autonomy, although with much hesitation. This can be seen from the absence of the term in many official defence documents. By maintaining a clear direction of its strategic priorities, Poland considers the EU-SA something to be handled carefully, ready to explode at

any moment. As a result of the term's permanence in the European arena, Poland has to include the topic in its narrative, that somehow come to accept a 'soft' version of this autonomy, where cooperation with NATO is clearly delineated and the absence of any overlapping intentions is made clear. Indeed, the absence of a precise definition for the term itself only serves to reinforce Poland's concerns. In the post-COVID period, the Polish narrative has even evolved to the point where it acknowledges an open idea of strategic autonomy that prioritises industrial and economic concerns over defence. Poland in this sense never lets its guard down. It plays safe by clearly identifying how geopolitical shifts may affect its priorities and tries to prevent this from happening. This is the case with Brexit, that fuels its concern about Franco-German leadership of European strategic autonomy and adds to Poland's reluctance to support the European Strategic Autonomy. Taking part in the integration within the framework of strategic autonomy becomes a way to ensure that European objectives do not threaten NATO's presence on its territories or forget Eastern Europe. This remains a cornerstone of the Polish narrative. Indeed, although recent political changes in Poland may influence the country to adopt a more open narrative towards this autonomy, it is unlikely that the priorities that have so far figured prominently in the Polish defence and security narrative will radically change and be abandoned. At most, they might undergo variations that future studies would be able to identify.

To summarise, this case analysis has enabled us to delineate how European Strategic autonomy essentially drives the Polish defence narrative toward the need to keep emphasising the importance of the transatlantic relationship. Perceived more as a concern than an opportunity, this notion, makes Poland vigilant as it approaches it with extreme scepticism and caution.

Analysing the cases allowed us to observe how each country used this notion within its narrative, and how it was forced to evolve its positions because of this. It has thus been possible to clarify how a single concept, European strategic autonomy, once introduced on the European scene, has led states to take very different stances. It has therefore been a tool in the hands of the two countries, which, depending on their needs, positions, fears or ambitions, have embraced it as an unmissable opportunity, in the French case, or an additional concern to face, in the Polish one.

Finally, this thesis seeks to emphasise the ongoing evolution of states' positions and strategies, while also noting that countries' narratives themselves are constantly changing and can never be defined as immutable. In doing so, the thesis tried not only to contribute to the field of study of European integration and strategic autonomy but also to encourage future research to further explore the topic.

Bibliography

Academic Articles

Adler, Emanuel. "Seizing the middle ground: Constructivism in world politics." *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no. 3 (1997): 319-363.

Aglieri, Vincenzo, et al. "EU Global Strategy: la nuova frontiera della cooperazione per la sicurezza e difesa comune dell'Unione Europea (UE)". *Centro Militare di Studi Strategici. Istituto Alti studi per la difesa* no. 69 (2018)

Ahmadi, Annahita. "The French security and defence issue." *University of Gothemburg, Department of Political Science* (2021)

Amadio Viceré, Maria Giulia. "Which role should the EU play in International Relations? Understanding the post-Lisbon Foreign Policy at times of change." *IAI 15/07, Luiss School of Government* (May 2015)

Anghel, Suzana, et al. "On the path to 'strategic autonomy'. The EU in an evolving geopolitical environment." *European Parliamentary Research Service* (September 2020): 1-48

Barkin, J. Samuel. "Realist Constructivism." *International Studies Review* 5, no. 3 (2003): 325–420

Barnett, Michael. "Culture, Strategy and Foreign Policy Change: Israel's Road to Oslo." *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 1 (1999): 5–36.

Beaucillon, Charlotte. "Strategic Autonomy: A New Identity for the EU as a Global Actor." *European Papers-A Journal on Law and Integration* 2023/2 (2023): 417-428.

Béraud-Sudreau, Lucie and Alice Pannier, "An 'improbable Paris-Berlin-Commission triangle': usages of Europe and the revival of EU defense cooperation after 2016." *Journal of European integration* 43, no. 3 (2021): 295-310

Beraus-Sudreau, Lucie. "French arms exports: the business of sovereignty." *Routlege* (2020).

Berkhofer, Robert F. "Beyond the great story: History as text and discourse." *Harvard University Press* (1995).

Bileisis, Mantas and Svajune Unguryte-Ragauskiene. "EU Security Policy and Priorities." In *Europe Alone. Small State Security without the United States.* Eds. David Schultz, Aurelija Puraite, and Vidmante Giedraityte. *Rowman & Littlefield* (2022): 177-195.

Boniface, Pascal. "NATO's enlargement, France's dilemma." In *Will NATO Go East*, Ed. D.G. Haglund. *Queen's University Centre for International Relations* (1996): 181-196

Bozo, Fredereic. "France and NATO under Sarkozy: end of the French exception?." *Fondation pour l'Innovation Politique*. Paris. FIP Working Paper (2008).

Briani, Valerio. "Il futuro della NATO e l'Italia." *Osservatorio di Politica Internazionale. IAI* no. 90 (March 2014).

Bruner, Jerome S. "The narrative construction of reality." *Critical inquiry* 18, no. 1 (1991): 1-21.

Brustlein, Corentin. "European Strategic Autonomy. Balancing ambition and responsibility." *Editoriaux de l'Ifri* (16 November 2018).

Buffotot, Patrice. "Défense européenne. Quel avenir?." in *Études*, 395 (10) (2010): 297-307.

Catalano, Claudio. "Iniziative Europee di Difesa." *Osservatorio Strategico* 16, no. 4, (2014): 57-62.

Curry, Jane Leftwich. "The Polish crisis of 1980 and The Politics of Survival." *The Rand Corporation* (November 1980).

Darnis, Jean-Pierre. "L'Unione europea tra autonomia strategica e sovranità tecnologica: problemi e opportunità." *IAI* (May 2021).

Degner, Hanno, and Dirk Leuffen. "Franco-German cooperation and the rescuing of the Eurozone." *European Union Politics* 20, no. 1 (2019): 89-108.

Di Celso, Mazziotti, and Elena Tosti Di Stefano. "Oltre il Trattato del Quirinale. Le relazioni italo-francesi alla prova dei mutamenti politico-strategici in Europa." *Osservatorio di Politica Internazionale. Edizioni Nuova Cultura* (June 2022).

Di Liddo, Marco. "L'escalation della crisi maliana e l'intervento militare francese: i possibili sviluppi ed il ruolo della Comunità Internazionale." *Centro Studi Internazionali* (January 2013).

Dinan, Desmond, Neill Nugent, and William E. Paterson. "The European Union in Crisis." *Bloomsbury Publishing* (2017).

Đorđević, Branislav, Glišić Miroslav, and Dejan Stojković. "Strengthening Security and Defence–What Is the Relative Power of the European Union vis-à-vis the Member States?." *Institute of International Politics and Economics. Faculty of Security Studies at the University of Belgrade*. Belgrade (2021): 37-62.

Farrell, Henry and Abraham L. Newman. "Weaponized Interdependence: How Global Economic Networks Shape State Coercion." *International Security* 44, no. 1 (1 July 2019): 42–79.

Feldman, Martha S., and Julka Almquist. "Analyzing the Implicit in Stories." In *Varieties of Narrative Analysis*. Eds. James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, *SAGE Publications* (2012) 207–228.

Finnemore, Martha, and Kathryn Sikkink. "Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 4, no. 1 (2001): 391–416.

Fiott, Daniel. "The European Commission and the European Defence Agency: A Case of Rivalry?." *JCMS: Journal of common market studies* 53, no. 3 (2015): 542-557.

Fishel, Kimbra L. "Challenging the Hegemon: Al Qaeda's Elevation of Asymmetric Insurgent Warfare onto the Global Arena." In *Networks, Terrorism and Global Insurgency*. Ed. Robert J. Bunker. *Routledge* (2006): 115–128.

Fisher, Walter R. "The narrative paradigm: An elaboration." *Communications Monographs* 52, no. 4 (1985): 347-367.

Fortmann, Michel, David Haglund, and Stéfanie Von Hlatky. "Introduction: France's 'return' to NATO: implications for transatlantic relations." *European Security* 19, no. 1 (2010): 1-10.

Frank, Arthur W. "What is narrative therapy and how can it help health humanities?." *Journal of Medical Humanities* 39 (2018): 553-563.

Franke, Ulrike and Tara Varma. "Independence play: Europe's pursuit of strategic autonomy." *European Council on Foreign relations* (July 2019).

Gavin, Victor. "Power though Europe? The case of the European Defence Community in Fance." *French History* 23, no. 1 (20 January 2009): 69-87.

Geoffrey, Roberts. "History, theory and the narrative turn in IR." *Review of International Studies* 32, no. 4 (2006): 703-714.

Ghez, Jeremy, and F. Stephen Larrabee. "France and NATO." *Survival* 51, no. 2 (2009): 77-90.

Gigante, Giulia. "Il Trimarium serve a Varsavia per contare a Washington." In *Limes: La Polonia Imperiale* 2/23 (9 march 2023).

Guzzini, Stefano. "A reconstruction of constructivism in international relations." *European journal of international relations* 6, no. 2 (2000): 147-182.

Håkansson, Calle. "The European Commission's new role in EU security and defence cooperation: The case of the European Defence Fund." *European Security* 30, no. 4 (2021): 589-608.

Haroche, Pierre. "Interdependence, asymmetric crises, and European defence cooperation." *European Security* 26, no. 2 (2017): 226-252.

Holland, Jack, and Xavier Mathieu. "Narratology and US Foreign Policy in Syria: Beyond Identity Binaries, toward Narrative Power." *International Studies Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (2023).

Hopf, Ted. "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory." *International Security* 23, no. 1 (1998): 171–200.

Helwig, Niklas and Ville Sinkkonen. "Strategic Autonomy and the EU as a global actor: The evolution, debate and theory of a contested term." *European Foreign Affairs Review* 27. Special Issue (2022).

Jamet, Jean-François. "La Francia e la crisi dell'Euro." *Osservatorio di Politica Internazionale* 41 (October 2012)

Jung, Hoyoon. "The Evolution of Social Constructivism in Political Science: Past to Present." *SAGE* 9, no. 1 (2019).

Karolewski, Irenenusz Pawel and Maciej Wilga. "Poland and the European Union locked." *Oxford university Press* (26 February 2018) .

Kelly, George. "A theory of personality: The psychology of personal constructs." *WW Norton & Company* 152 (1963).

Keohane, Robert O. "International Institutions: Two Approaches." *International Studies Quarterly. Oxford University Press* 32, no. 4 (1988): 379-396.

Kolodziejczyk, Katarzyna. "Poland in the European Union. Ten years of membership." *University of Warsaw* (2019).

Kowalewska, Anna T. "30 anni dal crollo del Muro di Berlino." *Agensir* (9 November 2019).

Krasnodębska, Molly. "Politics of stigmatization: Poland as a 'latecomer' in the European Union." *Palgrave Macmillan* (2021).

Krebs, Ronald. "Narrative and the Making of US National Security." *Cambridge University Press* (2015).

Kuokštytė, Ringailė. "Revisiting France's Commitment to Defence Integration." In *European Strategic Autonomy and Small States' Security*. Eds. Giedrius Česnakas and Justinas Juozaitis. *Routledge* (December 2022): 34-50.

Mawdsley, Jocelyn. "France, the UK and the EDA." In *The European defence agency*. Eds. N. Karampekios and I. Oikonomou, *Routledge* (2015): 139-154.

Mazowiecki, Tadeusz. "Powrót do Europy. Przemówienie na forum Rady Europy w Strasburgu." (A Return to Europe. A Speech Held in the Council of Europe in Strasburg). *Znak*, no. 416. Kraków (January 1990).

Menon, Anand. "Defence policy and the logic of 'high politics'." In *Beyond the regulatory polity.* Eds. Genschel Philipp and Markus Jachtenfuchs. *Oxford University Press* (2014): 66-84.

Menon, Anand. "From independence to cooperation: France, NATO and European Security." *International Affairs* 71 (1995): 19-34.

Miskimmon, Alister, Ben O'Loughlin, and Laura Roselle. "Forging the world: Strategic narratives and international relations." *Centre for European Politics/New Political Communications Unit*. London (2012).

Miskimmon, Alister, Ben O'Loughlin, and Laura Roselle. "Strategic Narrative: A New Means to Understand Soft Power." *Media, War & Conflict* 7, no. 1 (2014): 70–84.

Ó Tuathail, Gearóid. "Theorizing practical geopolitical reasoning: the case of the United States' response to the war in Bosnia." *Political Geography* 21 (5) (2002): 601-628.

Pastusiak, Longin. "Prezydent dobrych intencji: polityka zagraniczna Baracka Obamy," *Akademia Vistula*. Warsaw (2015).

Price, Richard, and Christian Reus-Smit. "Dangerous Liaisons?." *European Journal of International Relations* 4, no. 3 (1998): 259–294.

Reus-Smit, Christian. "The constructivist turn: Critical theory after the Cold War." *Department of International Relations. Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies. Australian National University*. Camberra (1996).

Rosa, Paolo. "La svolta sociologica nelle relazioni internazionali: tre approcci e tre filoni di ricerca." *Dipartimento di Sociologia e Ricerca Sociale. Università di Trento*. Quaderno 48 (2010).

Rossi, Agnese. "Perché la Polonia chiede riparazioni di guerra alla Germania." In *Limes: La Polonia Imperiale,* 2/23 (9 March 2023).

Rotberg, Robert I. "Failed States in a World of Terror." In *Foreign Affairs. Council of Foreign Relations,* 81, no. 4 (2002): 127-140.

Sadowski, Rafal. "La Polonia è un paese dell'Europa centrale e non è una questione geografica." In *Limes: Polonia l'Europa senza euro* 1/14 (21 January 2014).

Serfati, Claude. "The adaptability of the French armaments industry in an era of globalisation." *Industry and Innovation* 8, no. 2 (2001): 221-239.

Shepherd, Laura. "Gender, Violence and Popular Culture: Telling Stories." *Routledge* (2013).

Smura, Tomasz. "Relations between the United States and Poland: from Enemy to the Main Security Guarantor." In *The Relations of Central European Countries with the United States*. Ed. Anna Péczeli. *Dialóg Campus*. Budapest (2019): 101-114.

Sommer, Marceli. "La politica polacca non è quel che sembra." In *Limes: La Polonia Imperiale* 2/23 (9 march 2023): 185-190.

Spencer, Alexander. "Romantic Narratives in International Politics: Pirates, Rebels and Mercenarie." *Manchester University Press*. Manchester (2016).

Strzoda, Marek, and Dariusz Szkoluda. "Contemporary conditions of organization and functioning of the Command and Control System of the Polish Armed Forces." *Scientific Journal of the Military University of Land Forces* 51 (2019).

Todorov, Tzvetan. "The poetics of prose." *Ithaca. Cornell University Press* (1977).

Vaïsse, Maurice and Clémence Sebag. "France and NATO: An History." in *Politique étrangère*, *Institut français des relations internationales* (May 2009): 139-150.

Watzlawick, Paul and Jean Sanders. "La realtà della realtà: comunicazione disinformazione confusione." *Astrolabio* (1976).

Wendt, Alexander. "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics." *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391–425.

Wendt, Alexander. "Social theory of international politics." *Cambridge University Press* 67 (1999).

Wojtylo, Michal. "La diffidenza di Varsavia per Berlino passa da Mosca." In *Limes: La Polonia Imperiale,* 2/23 (9 march 2023): 35-40.

Wyciszkiewicz, Ernest. "Come i polacchi leggono la Russia." In *Limes: La Polonia Imperiale* 2/23 (9 March 2023): 79-86.

Zaborowski, Marcin. "Between power and weakness. A New Actor in the Transatlantic Security." Contribution to the conference *New Europe, Old Europe and the New Transatlantic Agenda,* Centre for International Relations (6 September 2003).

Official Documents and Reports

Baker, James. "A New Europe, A New Atlanticism: Architecture for a New Era." EU Speech. Address by Secretary Baker to the Berlin Press Club at the Steigenberger Hotel. *United States Department of State. Bureau of Public Affair.* Washington D.C. (12 December 1989)

Besch, Sophia. "EU's Institutional Framework regarding Defence Matters." *European Policy Department for External Relations. Parliament Sub-Committee on Security and Defence*. Brussels. Belgium (2020).

European Commission. "Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: European Defence Action Plan." *European Commission*. Brussels. Belgium (30 Nov 2016)

European Commission. "Reflection paper on the future of European defence." *European Commission*. Brussels. Belgium (7 June 2017).

European Commission. "Trade Policy Review – An Open, Sustainable and Assertive Trade Policy." *European Commission*. Brussels. Belgium (18 Feb. 2021)

European Council. "Council Conclusions." EUCO 34/16. *European Council*. Brussels, Belgium (15 December 2016).

European Council. "Council conclusions on implementing the EU Global Strategy in the area of Security and Defence." 14149/16. *European Council.* Brussels. Belgium (14 November 2016)

European Council. "Council Conclusions." EUCO 217/13. *European Council*. Brussels, Belgium (20 December 2013)

European Council. General Secretariat of the Council. "European Council Meeting (22 and 23 June 2017)-Conclusions." EUCO 8/17. Brussels (23 June 2017)

European Parliament think tank. "EU Strategic Autonomy 2013-2023: From concept to capacity." Briefing. *EU strategic authority Monitor* (8 July 2022): 1-12.

European Union External Action. "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy." *Publication Office of the European Union* (June 2016)

European Union. *Treaty on European Union (Consolidated Version 2002)* OJ C 325 (24 December 2022) Eli: http://data.europa.eu/eli/treaty/teu_2002/oj

Government of the French Republic. Ministère des Armes. *Livre Blanc sur la Défense*, Paris: Ètat-major des armées (1994)

Government of the French Republic. Ministère des Armes. *Livre Blanc sur la Défense*, Paris: Ètat-major des armées (2008)

Government of the French Republic. Ministère des Armes. *Livre Blanc sur la Défense*, Paris: Ètat-major des armées (2013)

Government of the Republic of Poland. Minister of European Union Affairs. "Informację dla Sejmu i Senatu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej o udziale Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w pracach Unii Europejskiej w okresie lipiec-grudzień 2020 r." (Information for the Sejm and Senate of the Republic of Poland on the participation of the Republic of Poland in the work of the European Union in the period July- December 2020) Warsaw, no. 910 (2021).

Government of the Republic of Poland. Minister of Foreign Affairs. "Informację dla Sejmu i Senatu RP o udziale Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w pracach Unii Europejskiej w okresie lipiec- grudzień 2019" (Information for the Sejm and Senate of the Republic of Poland on the participation of the Republic of Poland in the work of the European Union in the period July- December 2019) Warsaw, no. 186 (2020).

Government of the Republic of Poland. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "States stronger EU in a turbulent world. Contribution to the discussion on the concept of EU Strategic Autonomy." *Chancellery of the Prime Minister.* Warsaw (16 September 2021).

Government of the Republic of Poland. Ministry of National Defence. *Resolution on the Defence Doctrine of the Republic of Poland*. Warsaw: country defence committee (1990).

Government of the Republic of Poland. Ministry of National Defence. *The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland*. Warsaw (2003).

Government of the Republic of Poland. Ministry of National Defence. *Defence Strategy of the Republic of Poland*. Warsaw (2000).

Government of the Republic of Poland. Ministry of National Defence. *National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland.* Warsaw (2007).

Government of the Republic of Poland. Ministry of National Defence. *National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland*. Warsaw (2014).

Government of the Republic of Poland. Ministry of National Defence. *The Defence Concept of the Republic of Poland.* Warsaw (2017).

Government of the Republic of Poland. National Security Bureau. *National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland*. Warsaw (2020).

Government of the Republic of Poland. National Security Bureau. *White Book on the National Security of the Republic of Poland.* Warsaw (2013).

Juncker, Jean-Claude. "A New Start for Europe. My Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change. Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission. Opening Statement in the European Parliament Plenary Session." *European Parliament* (15 July 2014).

Latici, Tania. "Who does what in security and defence?." *European Parliamentary Research Service. European Parliament Liaison Office in Washington D.C*. (September 2021)

Mauro, Frédéric, and Klaus Thoma. "The future of EU defence research." *European Parliament's Sub-Committee on Security and Defence. European Parliament.* Brussels. Belgium (2016)

President of the Republic. Ministére des Armées. *Revue stratégique de la défense et de la sécurité nationale.* Paris: Secrétariat général de la défense et de la sécurité nationale (12 October 2017)

President of the Republic. Ministére des Armées. *Revue stratégique de la défense et de la sécurité nationale.* Paris: Secrétariat général de la défense et de la sécurité nationale (9 November 2022)

Sarkozy, Nicolas. The President of the French Republic. *Lettre de mission*. Addressed to M. Jean-Claude Mallet, Conseiller d'Etat, Elysée (31 July 2007)

Smura, Tomasz. "America (still) first? Assessment of the first year of Donald Trump's presidency." *Komentarz Międzynarodowy Pułaskiego.* Pulaski Policy Paper, no. 2 (9 January 2018)

Sitography

"70 anni di NATO: sfide e prospettive dell'Alleanza." *ISPI* (4 April 2019). Online, last access 14 January 2024 <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/70-anni-di-nato-sfide-e-prospettive-dellalleanza-atlantica-22739>

"Atlante Geopolitico-Francia 2014." *Treccani* (n.d.). Online, last access 20 January 2024 https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/francia_res-938c0bf5-17f6-11e4-a818-00271042e8d9_(Atlante-Geopolitico)/

"Emmanuel Macron warns Europe: NATO is becoming brain-dead" Interview to Emmanuel Macron. *The Economist* (7 November 2019). Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warns-europe-nato-is-becoming-brain-dead>

"Key Theories of International Relations." *Norwitch University* (n.d.). Online, last access 14 December 2023 <https://online.norwich.edu/key-theories-international-relations>

"La spesa in armamenti nel mondo (2009)." *Centro diritti umani UNIPD* (18 October 2010). Online, last access 18 January 2024 <https://unipd-centrodirittiumani.it/it/schede/La-spesa-in-armamenti-nel-mondo-2009/157>

"Military expenditure (% of GDP) – France." *The World Bank*. Online <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?locations=FR>

"Polonia, Donald Tusk riporta a Varsavia un governo filo-UE." *ItaliaOggi* (12 December 2023). Online, last access 6 February 2024 <https://www.italiaoggi.it/news/polonia-donald-tusk-riporta-a-varsavia-un-governo-filo-ue-202312121629103465>

"Prezydent Duda: Unia Europejska nie może konkurować z NATO." (President Duda: EU Defence Initiative should not compete with NATO) *Radio Maryja* (11 October 2019). Online, last access 7 February 2024 <https://www.radiomaryja.pl/informacje/prezydent-a-duda-inicjatywy-obronne-ue-nie-powinny-konkurowac-z-nato/>

"Qual è la posizione dell'Unione Europea nel conflitto tra Israele e Palestina?." *Orizzonti politici* (26 October 2023). Online, last access 15 January 2024 <https://www.orizzontipolitici.it/qual-e-la-posizione-dellunione-europea-nel-conflitto-tra-israele-e-palestina/>

"Solidarnosc, il primo colpo al Muro." *Avvenire* (26 February 2009). Online, last access 10 February 2024 <https://www.avvenire.it/agora/pagine/solidarnosc-il-primo-colpo-al-muro_200902260930593070000>

"The Holland Administration." *Britannica* (n.d.). Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://www.britannica.com/place/France/The-Hollande-administration>

A.M.B. "Lotta allo Stato islamico. Russia e Francia 'in guerra' contro l'Is." *Avvenire* (17 November 2015). Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://www.avvenire.it/mondo/pagine/parigi-siria-raid-g20-finanziamenti>

Amadio Viceré, Maria Giulia and Matteo Bonomi. "The EU's search for 'effective' Strategic Autonomy in the Neighbourhood." *IAI* (29 January 2021). Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://www.iai.it/it/pubblicazioni/eus-search-effective-strategic-autonomy-neighbourhood>

Amadio Viceré, Maria Giulia. "EU Foreign Policy integration at times of war: from short-term responses to long-term solutions." *IAI* (14 February 2022). Online, last access 12 February 2024 <https://www.iai.it/it/pubblicazioni/eu-foreign-policy-integration-times-war>

Australian Government. Defence. "National Defence: Defence Strategic Review 2023." Online <https://www.defence.gov.au/about/reviews-inquiries/defence-strategic-review>

Behr, Valentin. "La dottrina Morawiecki: il piano della destra radicale polacca per riorganizzare l'Europa." *Le Grand Continent* (27 March 2023). Online last access 24

January 2024 <https://legrandcontinent.eu/it/2023/03/27/la-dottrina-morawiecki-il-piano-della-destra-radicale-polacca-per-riorganizzare-leuropa/>

Blinken, Antony J. "The United States Officially Rejoins the Paris Agreement." *U.S. Department of State* (19 February 2021). Online, last access 10 January 2024 <https://www.state.gov/the-united-states-officially-rejoins-the-paris-agreement/>

Borrell, Josep. "Europe in the interregnum: our geopolitical awakening after Ukraine." *Groupe d'etudes politiques* (24 March 2022). Online, last access 16 January 2024 <https://geopolitique.eu/en/2022/03/24/europe-in-the-interregnum-our-geopolitical-awakening-after-ukraine/>

Borrell, Josep. "Why European Strategic Autonomy matters." *European Union External Action* (3 December 2020). Online, last access 5 January 2024 <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/why-european-strategic-autonomy-matters_en>

Brunet, Romain. "Five years of Macron on the international stage: Spirited, disruptive, impotent?." *France24* (3 March 2022). Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20220303-spirited-disruptive-impotent-five-years-of-macron-on-the-international-stage>

Brzeziński, Zbigniew. "Krach pewnych złudzeń." *Rzeczpospolita* (18 February 2009). Online, last access 6 February 2024 <https://www.rp.pl/wydarzenia/art15406931-krach-pewnych-zludzen>

Canavero, Alfredo. "1989-2019. Il crollo del muro di Berlino e i muri che restano." *Pearson* (n.d.). Online, last access 24 January 2024 <https://it.pearson.com/aree-disciplinari/storia/cultura-storica/novecento-mondo-attuale/1989-2019-crollo-muro-berlino.html>

Cancian, Mark F. "The European Reassurance Initiative." *CSIS* (9 February 2016). Online, last access 11 February 2024 <https://www.csis.org/analysis/european-reassurance-initiative>

Di Natala, Leandro. "La minaccia Isis in Europa attraverso la lente delle Relazioni annuali." *Sicurezzanazionale.gov* (2 May 2016). Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://www.sicurezzanazionale.gov.it/sisr.nsf/approfondimenti/la-minaccia-isis-in-europa-attraverso-la-lente-delle-relazioni-annuali.html>

Duclos, Michel. "Tracing French Diplomacy: A Brief History of Macron's Foreign Policy." *Institut Montaigne* (12 January 2021). Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/expressions/tracing-french-diplomacy-brief-history-macrons-foreign-policy>

European Council and Council of the European Union. "Timeline: EU cooperation on security and defence." Online, last access 15 January 2024 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/defence-security/defence-security-timeline/>

European Council. Council of the European Union. "Eastern Partenship." Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/it/policies/eastern-partnership/>

European Union External Action. "A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence." (28 October 2021). Online. Last access 10 January 2024 <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/strategic-compass-security-and-defence-1_en>

European Union External Action. "The shaping of a Common Security and Defence Policy." (10 August 2021) Online, last access 15 January 2024 <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/shaping-common-security-and-defence-policy_en>

European Union. "European Council. Overview." Online, last access 15 January 2024 <https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/search-all-eu-institutions-and-bodies/european-council_en>

Gioculano, Michele, Simone Mezzabotta and Gabriele Junior Pedrazzol. "Charting the Course: Navigating Macron's Vision for French Foreign Policy." *Mondo Internazionale* (29 June 2023). Online, last access 19 January 2024

<https://mondointernazionale.org/focus-allegati/charting-the-course-navigating-macrons-vision-for-french-foreign-policy>

Girardoni, Andrea. "Dalle urne esce una Polonia filo-Ue." *Il BO Live*. University of Padova (17 October 2023). Online, last access 6 February 2024 <https://ilbolive.unipd.it/index.php/it/news/dalle-urne-esce-polonia-filoue>

Gotkowska, Justyna. "Poland and the Baltic States: A Preference for a Renewed West." *Heinrich Boll Stiftung* (8 January 2021). Online, last access 30 January 2023 <https://www.boell.de/en/2021/01/08/poland-and-baltic-states-preference-renewed-west>

Government of the Republic of Italy. Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. "CFSP / CSDP." Online, last access 14 January 2024 <https://www.esteri.it/en/politica-estera-e-cooperazione-allo-sviluppo/politica_europea/dimensione-esterna/sicurezza_comune/>

Government of the Republic of Poland. Minister of Foreign Affairs. "Informacja Ministra Spraw Zagranicznych o zadaniach polskiej polityki zagranicznej w 2019 roku." (Information of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the tasks of Polish foreign policy in 2019) (14 March 2019). Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://www.gov.pl/web/dyplomacja/informacja-ministra-spraw-zagranicznych-o-zadaniach-polskiej-polityki-zagranicznej-w-2019-roku>

Government of the Republic of Poland. National Security Bureau. *Quarterly "National Security"*. no. 42/3023 (2023). Online <https://www.bbn.gov.pl/pl/informacje-o-bbn/publikacje/9760,Kwartalnik-quotBezpieczenstwo-Narodowequot-422023.html>

Introvigne, Massimo. "Pretesti per un'invasione. Il mito dei 'colpi di stato americani' in Ucraina. La rivoluzione arancione del 2004." *Bitterwinter* (15 April 2022). Online, last access 14 February 2024 <https://bitterwinter.org/mito-colpi-di-stato-americani-in-ucraina-1-la-rivoluzione-arancione-del-2004/>

Karnitschnig, Matthew. "America's European burden: How the Continent still leans on the US for security." *Politico* (14 June 2023). Online, last access 15 January 2024

<https://www.politico.eu/article/america-europe-burden-continent-leans-security-defense-military-industry/>

Kramp-Karrenbauer, Annegret. "Europe still needs America." *Politico Europe* (2 November 2020). Online, last access 15 January 2024 <https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-still-needs-america/>

Leali, Giorgio. "Macron, Putin resume phone contact but remain far apart on Ukraine war." *Politico* (3 May 2022). Online, last access 20 January 2024 < https://www.politico.eu/article/macron-putin-resume-phone-contact-but-remain-far-apart-on-ukraine-war/>

Libek, Elina. "European Strategic Autonomy: A Cacophony of Political Visions." *International Centre for Defence and Security Estonia* (19 December 2019). Online, last access 3 January 2024 <https://icds.ee/en/european-strategic-autonomy-a-cacophony-of-political-visions/>

Maillard, Sebastien. "Poland's elections alter the balance of power in the EU." *Chatam House* (17 October 2023). Online, last access 4 February 2024 <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/10/polands-elections-alter-balance-power-eu>

Muti, Karolina. "Tracciare un percorso nuovo: come la Polonia può contribuire alla difesa Europea." *European Council on Foreign Relations* (13 May 2021). Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://ecfr.eu/rome/article/tracciare-un-percorso-nuovo-come-la-polonia-puo-contribuire-alla-difesa-europea/>

NATO archive. "Prague Summit Declaration." *Press Release 127*. Issued by the head of States and Governments participating to the meeting of the Nac in Prague (21 November 2002). Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://archives.nato.int/prague-summit-declaration-issued-by-heads-of-states-and-governments-participating-to-meeting-of-nac-in-prague-on-21-november-2oo2>

Netherlands Ministry of Defence. "Defence Doctrine." (n.d.). Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://english.defensie.nl/topics/doctrine/defence-doctrine>

Nocera, Mario. "La storia della Francia dal 1789 all'elezione di Emmanuel Macron." *Ius in Itinere* (31 May 2018). Online, last access 16 January 2024 <https://www.iusinitinere.it/la-storia-di-francia-dal-1789-allelezione-di-emmauel-macron-10672>

North Atlantic Treaty Organization. "Relations with the European Union." (30 November 2023). Online, last access 12 January 2024 <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49217.htm>

North Atlantic Treaty Organization. "The Role of NATO and its Strategic Commands." *NATO Allied Command Transformation* (n.d.). Online, last access 21 January 2024 <https://www.act.nato.int/about/the-command/>

North Atlantic Treaty Organization. NATO Press Release. "EU-NATO Declaration on ESPD." *European Parliament* (16 December 2002). Online, last access 16 January 2024 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/committees/afet/20040217NATO/142en.PDF>

Obama, Barack. "Remarks by the President at Clinton Global Initiative." *The White House. Office of the Press secretary* (23 September 2014). Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/23/remarks-president-clinton-global-initiative>

Panikoff, Jonathan. "Shifting Priorities: The US and the Middle East in a Multipolar World." *ISPI* (8 July 2022). Online, last access 8 February 2024 <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/shifting-priorities-us-and-middle-east-multipolar-world-35692>

Parlamento Italiano. "I Vertici dell'Alleanza atlantica. 2009-2012." (n.d.). Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://leg16.camera.it/561?appro=792>

Pedder, Sophie. "Emmanuel Macron in his own words." *The Economist* (7 November 2019). Online. Last access 10 January 2024 <https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-in-his-own-words-french>

Perot, Elie. "Why the EU now plays an increasing role in Europe's collective defence." *LSE* (25 August 2023). Online, last access 14 January 2024 <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2023/08/25/why-the-eu-now-plays-an-increasing-role-in-europes-collective-defence/>

Pizzolo, Paolo. "Dall'Intermarium al Trimarium. L'Europa centro-orientale tra nuove iniziative e vecchi schemi." *Geopolitica* (21 June 2022). Online, last access 7 February 2024 <https://www.geopolitica.info/europa-centro-orientale-nuove-iniziative-vecchi-schemi/>

Poland National Security Office. "The Quarterly 'National Security'." (n.d.). Online: <https://www.bezpieczenstwo-narodowe.pl/>

Presidency of the Republic of Poland. "Remarks by President Trump to the People of Poland." *President.PL* (6 July 2017). Online, last access 3 February 2024 <https://www.president.pl/news/remarks-by-president-trump-to-the-people-of-poland,36457>

Presidency of the Republic of Poland. "Waszczykowski: Agentura Kremla w UE jest aktywna." (Waszczykowski: The Kremlin's agency in the EU is active) *Wpolityce.pl* (2021) Online, last access 6 February 2024 <https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wydarzenia/prezydent-nato-i-ue-zjednoczone-i-przygotowane,48971>

Reif, Kingston and Shannon Bugos. "U.S. Completes Open Skies Treaty Withdrawal." *Arms Control Association* (December 2020). Online, last access 14 January 2024 <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2020-12/news/us-completes-open-skies-treaty-withdrawal>

Rizzi, Salvatore. "Le conseguenze del 'rientro francese nella NATO'." *Geopolitica* (17 April 2013). Online, last access 19 January 2024 <https://www.geopolitica.info/le-conseguenze-del-rientro-francese-nella-nato/>

Roth, Richard and Maegan Vazquez. "US officially rejoins controversial UN Human Rights Council." *CNN* (14 October 2021). Online, last access 15 January 2024

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/14/politics/us-united-nations-human-rights-council/index.html>

Ruthu, G J. "Theories of International Relations: Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism." *Sociology Group* (18 July 2023). Online, Accessed 14 December 2023. <https://www.sociologygroup.com/international-relations-theories/>

Šabović, Dino. "Difesa Europea: perché non ora?." *Geopolitica* (15 March 2021). Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://www.eurobull.it/difesa-europea-perche-non-ora?lang=fr#nb5>

Sanger, David E. and Maggie Haberman. "Donald Trump Sets Conditions for Defending NATO Allies Against Attack." *The New York Times* (21 July 2016). Online, last access 5 February 2024 <www.nytimes.com/2016/07/21/us/politics/donald-trump-issues.html>

Sohail, Sabrina. "Understanding Narratives in International Relations." *The Diplomat Insight* (12 October 2022). Online, last access 14 December 2023. <https://thediplomaticinsight.com/understanding-narratives-in-international-relations/>

Strauß, Lena and Nicolas Lux. "European Defence – Debates in and About Poland and France." SWP Journal Review (27 February 2019). Online, last access 12 January 2024 <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2019JR01/>

Sus, Monika. "Poland's (Lack of) Vision for Europe." *Carnegie Europe* (28 March 2023). Online, last access 10 February 2024 <https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/89386>

Turco, Fabio. "Potenza in cortocircuito. Alla Polonia manca un ultimo passo sullo stato di diritto per entrare tra le grandi d'Europa." *Linkiesta* (24 February 2023), Online, last access 3 February 2024 <https://www.linkiesta.it/2023/02/polonia-protagonista-europa-ucraina-stato-di-diritto/>

U.S. Department of State. "Joint Statement by the Secretary of State of the United States of America and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the European Commission." (3 December 2021). Online, last access 29

January 2024 < https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-us-joint-statement-secretary-state-united-states-america-and-eu-high-representative-foreign_en>

Wagner, Lynn and Jennifer Allan. "The U.S. Has Exited the Paris Agreement. Does it Matter?." *IISD* (4 November 2020). Online, last access 20 December 2023 <https://www.iisd.org/articles/insight/us-has-exited-paris-agreement-does-it-matter>

Weber, Gesine. "French foreign and security policy under Macron: all in for European sovereignty." *Uk in a changing Europe* (4 April 2022). Online, last access 20 January 2024 <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/french-foreign-and-security-policy-under-macron-all-in-for-european-sovereignty/>