Department of Political Science

Double Master's Degree Programme in International Relations

Chair of

Comparative History of Political Systems

'Il crimine del 30 Agosto': how the memory of the failure of the European Defence Community shaped European Parliament's debates on European Defence

Prof. Giovanni Orsina

LUISS Supervisor

Prof. Michel Huysseune

ULB Supervisor

Prof. Benedetto Zaccaria

Co-Supervisor

Ludovica Lasconi

Candidate

Student ID: 655322 (LUISS) – 609045 (ULB)

Academic Year 2024/2025

"Premature ideas do not exist,

One must bide one's time until the right moment comes along."

Jean Monnet

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

"Il crimine del 30 Agosto" - *the crime of 30th August* – became a formulaic expression that quickly entered the political lexicon after the French National Assembly voted down the Treaty establishing a European Defence Community (EDC) on the same date in 1954. For contemporary federalists such as Jean Monnet and his allies, the vote was, *de facto*, a political crime: it extinguished, at the moment of possibility, the most ambitious project for a supranational European army and a giant stride towards a federal Europe. This decision echoed far beyond the Quai d'Orsay, as it destroyed the carefully crafted Pleven Plan, undermined the recently-established North Atlantic alliance, and forced the new European integration project to redefine its security ambitions for generations to come. Before long, the "failure of the EDC" acquired the status of a founding trauma, embodying the idea of a missed opportunity that cautioned against too speedy an enthusiasm for supranationalism and, ironically, furnished a potent symbolic resource for future supporters of a common European defence.

This thesis investigates the ways in which this memory, most notably symbolized in the expression *Il crimine del 30 Agosto*, has been remembered, mobilised and re-imagined within the European Parliament (EP) from the advent of direct elections in 1979 up to the present. Indeed, the Parliament provides a perspective of particular analytical significance: despite the Treaties have consistently curbed its formal prerogatives in the field of defence and security to budgetary control and advisory roles, the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have not refrained from tackling such issues, progressively leaving their stamp on the broader European defence debate. They have accomplished this not merely by making the case for particular policy choices but by invoking the EDC as a point of substantial historical reference, sometimes depicting it as a cautionary tale, sometimes as a source of inspiration and legitimacy. Instead of a cause lost or a forgotten episode, the EDC has thus become a "memory object" whose rhetorical and symbolic power helps the EP define its own role in the evolving context of European security.

The work begins from the presumption that collective memory is not an enduring warehouse of facts but an active and ever-evolving political battlefield. Drawing on memory studies and historical institutionalist scholarship, the EDC is here interpreted as a critical juncture that has created a long chain of "memory work", as its failure created what many scholars have termed a "founding failure" that continues to shape European institutional trajectory. Nonetheless, how such failure is remembered, silenced, or re-interpreted is itself still politically useful and academically compelling. Invoking the EDC can legitimate new waves of integration ("this time we have to get it right"), warn against previous mistakes, or construct a sense of historical continuity in support of the EP's self-representation as guarantor of a federalist tradition. Therefore, in investigating the overlapping of these spheres, this dissertation aims at bridging

two fields of research that do not often meet: the analysis of European memory politics and the analysis of parliamentary debate on security and defence.

From a methodological standpoint, the research applies a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) grounded in the Discourse-Historical Approach and in Fairclough's three-dimensional model, thus, combining a textual approach with contextual interpretation by linking linguistic choices to the institutional, political, and historical context. In particular, a carefully compiled EP plenary debates corpus – developed through a multilingual search of phrases such as "European Defence Community", "Common defence", "1954", "Pleven Plan", "European army", and similar expressions – is the empirical foundation of this work. The chosen time frame, beginning in 1979 and continuing to the present (2025), coincides not only with the entire lifetime of the directly elected Parliament but also with key turning points in European security policy: the relaunch of the Western European Union in the mid-1980s; the Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties and the Saint-Malo declaration in the 1990s; and the consolidation of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) leading to the activation of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in 2017. In this corpus, my analysis distinguishes between explicit references, where the European Defence Community is specifically named or the year 1954 is invoked, and implicit references, such as the invocation of "the plan for a European Army that never saw the light of day." The dual investigation of both presence and absence allows the study to register not just overt memory but also instances of conscious or strategic silence.

By employing such approach, this research encapsulates the EDC memory in the context of an extended framework of questions about how historical experience informs institutional identity. The European Parliament has long sought to stand for more than a legislative assembly: it identifies with a moral voice, a symbolic guardianship of the federalist vision, and a symbolic capacity to influence public debate even in policy areas where formal competences remain circumscribed. Examining how MEPs recall – or choose not to recall – EDC failure not only does it illuminate the subtle manner in which the Parliament contributes in shaping the EU's defence narrative, but it also illustrates how collective memory can act as a soft power tool, conferring legitimacy and continuity upon integration projects whose institutional design is constantly under development.

By focusing on the EDC as a contested memory site, this thesis contributes to three interrelated scholarly debates. First, it enriches the body of European memory scholarship by moving beyond the disciplines of war commemoration and national identity, which have been largely examined, into the world of security and defence policy, proving collective memory also informs "hard-power" integration debates. Second, it deepens understanding of the EP's role within the EU security context: although constrained by limited treaty-based competences, the Parliament asserted itself as a "community of speakers" with the ability to exert normative

power through speech, thereby filling a gap left between the Council's decision-making and the Commission's agenda-setting capacity. Finally, it addresses broader debates in historical institutionalism by illustrating how the recollection of a critical juncture, namely the collapse of the EDC project, can itself be a form of path dependence, influencing not only the establishment and configuration of institutions but also stories upon which those are legitimized.

The argument builds throughout three chapters. Chapter 1 reconstructs the post-war historical trajectory of the EDC, situating its conception, negotiation and breakdown in the context of post-war European and transatlantic security, analyzing relevant reactions and interpretations, and investigating the role of this failure from a historiographic and academic standpoint. Chapter 2 follows the evolution of the EU's defence and security integration criteria, shedding light on the institutional environment within which the European Parliament has had to struggle for gaining further competences and influence. Chapter 3, the empirical core, applies Critical Discourse Analysis to the plenary debate corpus, mapping out the temporal profiles of EDC references and investigating their narrative functions through three detailed case studies, which shed light on the pivotal role of recalling or strategically omitting the EDC in shaping institutional debates. Together, these chapters demonstrate that the EDC failure's memory is not a static historical footnote but a dynamic instrument that continues to inform the European Parliament's self-definition and its response to the perennial question of a common European defence.

In recovering the EDC from the European Union's failure records and tracing its afterlife in parliamentarian discourse, the thesis poses a rethinking of the European Union's conversation about power and memory. Instead of an easy story about what might have been, the spurned promise of the EDC speaks with words, symbols and lessons of caution to continue to inspire the European Union's most far-reaching political integration endeavors. European Parliament debates remind it that Europe's defence future is not yet disentangled from its recollected past, especially considering current substantial initiatives promoted within this field in response to the ongoing security crisis, and that the alleged crime of 30 August still resonates in the language and identity of the Union's only directly elected institution.

CHAPTER 1 – THE EUROPEAN DEFENCE COMMUNITY: MEMORY OF A FOUNDING FAILURE

Section 1.1 – Origins and collapse of the European Defence Community

In the aftermath of World War II, Western Europe faced the dual challenges of ensuring security against the Soviet threat and addressing the status of West Germany. As the Cold War had begun, the United States pushed for the rearmament of West Germany as a bulwark against the Soviet Union and its satellites in Eastern Europe[1]. However, the prospect of an independent German army so soon after WWII alarmed many Europeans, especially France, which had been invaded by Germany twice in living memory[2]. Thus, while French leaders were determined to prevent a resurgence of German militarism, they also recognized that West Germany's contribution was needed for Western defense[3]. This political dilemma is well documented by integration historians such as Pierre Gerbet[4], Wilfried Loth, and Marie-Thérèse Bitsch (2004), who underline how security concerns and the memory of past conflicts shaped the earliest visions of European defence integration[5].

Considering this change of zeitgeist, geopolitical developments in 1950 gave urgency to finding a solution to such issue, as shown in the broader Cold War context outlined by Hitchcock[6] and Gilbert[7]. The outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 heightened fears that communist aggression could spread, making the threat posed by the Soviet bloc very immediate[8]. Therefore, the United States, following its containment doctrine, pressed its European allies to strengthen their defenses, which implicitly meant integrating West Germany

---

[1] Adenauer, K. (1953). *Speech to the Bundestag in support of the EDC, 19 March 1953*. In CVCE.eu archive

[2] Bonzi, I. (2023, May 20). *The failure of the European Defense Community: A discussion between the past and future of European defense*. The Onero Institute. Retrieved from https://www.oneroinstitute.org/

[3] Ibidem

[4] Gerbet, P. (1983). *La construction de l'Europe*. Imprimerie Nationale.

[5] Loth, W. (1996). *Europe, Cold War and Coexistence, 1953–1965*. Kluwer Law International.

[6] Hitchcock, W. I. (1998). *France Restored: Cold War Diplomacy and the Quest for Leadership in Europe, 1944–1954*. University of North Carolina Press.

[7] Gilbert, M. (2008). *European Integration: A Concise History*. Rowman & Littlefield.

[8] Capoccia, G., & Kelemen, R. D. (2007). *The study of critical junctures: Theory, narrative, and counterfactuals in historical institutionalism*. World Politics, 59(3), 341–369.

into Western security structures[9]. At the same time, the Western Allies had founded the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949, creating a transatlantic military alliance. As Kiran Klaus Patel emphasizes, American leadership was central in framing West German rearmament as both a strategic necessity and a political challenge for European unity[10]. Britain's exclusion of Germany from early NATO discussions, and later from the EDC, reflects the persistent divide between federalist continental initiatives and British intergovernmentalism[11]. Yet within NATO, West Germany was initially excluded and occupied a quasi-sovereign status. For this reason, U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles warned that if Europeans failed to create a way for German rearmament (through something like the EDC), the United States might have to undertake an *"agonizing reappraisal"* of its commitment to Europe, underscoring how vital this issue was to Western strategy[12].

It was France (ironically, the country most wary of German rearmament) that put forward the plan to solve this conundrum. Visionary French officials like Jean Monnet (the architect of the European Coal and Steel Community) conceived the idea of a *European army* as a means to control German rearmament by embedding it in a supranational structure[13]. Monnet and French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman persuaded Prime Minister René Pleven to champion this idea[14]. On 24 October 1950, Pleven announced the plan, soon dubbed the "Pleven Plan", to the French National Assembly, proposing the creation of a European Defence Community with an integrated European Army *"comparable to that laid down in the Schuman proposal"* (the ECSC)[15]. The French proposal drew heavily from the federalist vision promoted by Jean Monnet, as described by Eric Roussel, who emphasizes how Monnet viewed supranational

[9] Ibidem

[10] Patel, K. K. (2020). *Project Europe: A History*. Cambridge University Press.

[11] Griffiths, R. T. (Ed.). (1996). *Exploring European Integration: Selected Readings*. Lynne Rienner; Young, J. W. (1990). *Britain and European Unity, 1945–1992*. Macmillan.

[12] CVCE (Centre for European Studies). (2016). *European Defence Community – resources and contextual documents*. CVCE.eu archive. Retrieved from http://www.cvce.eu

[13] Ibidem

[14] Ibidem

[15] European Parliament – Policy Dept. for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs. (2022). *The First Treaties* (Fact Sheets on the European Union) (M. Maciejewski, Author) europarl.europa.eueuroparl.europa.eu. Brussels: European Parliament

defence as a safeguard against nationalist militarism[16]. In Pleven's own words at the time, any scheme that led to simply recreating a German national army would *"give rise to renewed distrust and suspicion…bound to lead to the revival of German militarism"*; therefore, the solution was to *"embed German rearmament in a European federal program"* via a supranational European Army[17]. The EDC was explicitly designed to prevent the return of an independent German army and general staff, while still harnessing West German manpower for the common defense of Europe[18].

International reception of the EDC idea in 1950–51 was mixed. The proposal was welcomed by many Western European governments and by the United States, as it seemingly squared the circle of deterring the USSR while keeping Germany under control[19]. Also the smaller Benelux countries and Italy were generally supportive and would go on to sign the EDC Treaty. As Quagliariello argues, Italy's support for the EDC (particularly under Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi) was not merely nominal. De Gasperi saw the EDC as a cornerstone of his federalist vision for Europe and a way to secure Italy's international rehabilitation. Yet, the CED debate would become "the last thorn" in his political career, alienating him from an increasingly skeptical Italian Parliament and contributing to the fall of his government in 1953[20]. His disappointment with the project's collapse marked, in many ways, the end of an era in Italian pro-European activism. However, some skepticism came from elsewhere: the Scandinavian countries were cool toward the plan, preferring to rely on NATO and fearing entanglement in continental schemes[21]. Notably, the United Kingdom (while a strong proponent of German rearmament within NATO) declined to join the EDC, wary of supranational commitments and preferring intergovernmental security cooperation. This meant the EDC would proceed without Europe's leading military power, Britain, a fact that later weighed on its political viability.

---

[16] Roussel, E. (1996). *Jean Monnet: 1888-1979* (p. 165). Paris: Fayard.

[17] https://www.oneroinstitute.org/content/the-failure-of-the-european-defense-community-a-discussion-between-the-past-and-future-of-european-defense. Accessed 19/06/2025.

[18] Ibidem

[19] Gabr, I. (2014). *The domestic and ideational sources of the European Defence Community's defeat*. E-International Relations, June 4, 2014. Retrieved from https://www.e-ir.info/

[20] Quagliariello, G. (2004). La CED, l'ultima spina di De Gasperi. Ventunesimo Secolo, 3(5), p. 255.

[21] Hitchcock, W. I. (1998). *France Restored: Cold War Diplomacy and the Quest for Leadership in Europe, 1944–1954*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Nonetheless, by 1951 the momentum for the EDC was sufficient that negotiations began among the Six (France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg).

After intensive negotiations, the Treaty establishing the European Defence Community was signed in Paris on 27 May 1952[22]. The treaty's design was groundbreaking: it outlined a truly supranational defense framework with its own institutions, mirroring in some ways the structure of the European Coal and Steel Community but in the military realm[23]. Eduard Fursdon considers the EDC Treaty to be the most ambitious supranational military proposal in modern European history, embodying a logic of integration that would not re-emerge until the Maastricht Treaty[24]. Under the EDC Treaty:

- a European Defence Minister would be appointed to head the common military structure[25]. This minister would answer to a new Council of Ministers (composed of member state representatives) and work with a Common Assembly (a parliamentary body) and a Commissariat (analogous to an executive commission)[26]. A Court of Justice was also envisaged to adjudicate the EDC's legal matters[27]. In essence, these institutions together constituted the embryo of a European political community accompanying the defense integration. Indeed, a draft plan for a European Political Community (EPC) was developed to provide a political umbrella for the EDC, recognizing that a joint army would require joint political institutions[28];
- the armed forces contributed by each member would be integrated down to the level of mixed divisions or corps, rather than remaining strictly national armies. National units were to be fused into a single European force under unified command. As Pleven had insisted, *"a united European army…must pool all of its human and material*

[22] Menon, A., & Weatherill, S. (Eds.). (2008). *The Future of European Defence Integration*.
[23] Ibidem
[24] Fursdon, E. (1980). *The European Defence Community: A History*. Macmillan.
[25] Monnet, J., Pleven, R., Schuman, R., et al. (1950). *Statements and speeches on the European Army proposal (Pleven Plan)*. In EU Archives (various documents).
[26] Pierson, P. (1996). *The path to European integration: A historical institutionalist perspective*. Comparative Political Studies, 29(2), 123–163.
[27] Ibidem
[28] https://www.cvce.eu/en/education/unit-content/-/unit. Accessed 19/06/2025.

components under a single political and military authority"[29]. This meant that West German troops, for example, would not form a resurrected German army under German national control, but instead would serve in European formations alongside French, Italian, and Benelux soldiers. The EDC's military forces would be under the operational command of a European authority, although in practice they would also be tied into NATO's overall command structure for guarding Europe[30];

- basically, the EDC plan explicitly forbade the creation of a German national army or general staff. By design, West German contingents would be distributed and integrated such that Germany could not independently field an army, addressing French fears of German resurgence. At the same time, this arrangement met American demands to tap West Germany's potential contribution: *"exploiting the German military force as requested by the US to strengthen the security structure on the continent"*, but within a European framework[31];
- the treaty was a mutual defense pact as well, pledging that an attack on one would be considered an attack on all, much like Article 5 of the NATO treaty. In this sense, the EDC complemented NATO by creating a European pillar: it was not meant to replace NATO, but to organize Europe's contribution to NATO collectively. Indeed, the plan was that the EDC's unified army would operate alongside national forces of the U.S., U.K., and others in NATO, but the *internal* organization of the six continental members' forces would be supranational.

The ambitious design of the EDC reflected a federalist aspiration in early European integration. The *preamble* of the treaty and related documents made clear that leaders like Schuman and Monnet saw the EDC as a step toward a united Europe[32]. The coal and steel community (ECSC) of 1951 had been termed the *"first step"* toward a *"European Federation",* and the EDC was seen as a parallel step in the security realm. Together, a common market in strategic industries

[29] https://www.oneroinstitute.org/content/the-failure-of-the-european-defense-community-a-discussion-between-the-past-and-future-of-european-defense. Accessed 19/06/2025.

[30] Ibidem

[31] Ibidem

[32] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/1/the-first-treaties. Accessed 19/06/2025.

and a common army would lay *"the foundations of the Community"* of Europe[33]. In fact, the EDC and the proposed EPC were explicitly linked: the political community would provide democratic oversight and governance to the defense community. In particular, draft statutes of the EPC envisioned a bicameral European parliament that would supervise the EDC's executive (the Commissariat/Minister) and budget. Thus, the EDC was not merely a military alliance, but it was an effort to deepen *political integration*, a leap toward a federal Europe at a time when memory of war's devastation was fresh and the ideal of preventing future conflict was a powerful motivator[34].

However, even as the ink dried on the treaty in 1952, political storms were gathering that would make ratification uncertain, as in all six signatory countries, parliamentary approval was required. Over the next two years, five of the six nations ratified the EDC Treaty with varying degrees of difficulty. Notably, West Germany's Bundestag ratified the EDC in March 1953, with Chancellor Konrad Adenauer who strongly advocated for it, as it offered a path for Germany to regain sovereignty and international respectability via European integration[35]. The Benelux countries and Italy also ratified it. The one holdout was France, the very progenitor of the plan. In France, the EDC treaty met increasing resistance and got mired in the complex, fractured politics of the Fourth Republic. Indeed, by early 1954, it had become evident that French ratification was in jeopardy, despite the government's formal commitment to the treaty.

Italian officials, who had ratified the EDC in good faith, were particularly disillusioned by the French reversal. Quagliariello notes that the failure of France to ratify what it had itself proposed struck Italian federalists as a betrayal. The diplomatic fallout was felt in Rome, where political elites began to reassess the feasibility of bold supranational integration without Franco-German alignment[36].

---

[33] Ibidem

[34] Ruane, K. (2000). *The Rise and Fall of the European Defence Community: Anglo-American Relations and the Crisis of European Defence, 1950–1955*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

[35] https://www.cvce.eu/en/education/unit-content/-/unit/. Accessed 19/06/2025.

[36] Quagliariello, G. (2004). La CED, l'ultima spina di De Gasperi. Ventunesimo Secolo, 3(5), pp. 278–280.

On 30 August 1954, the French National Assembly dealt the fatal blow to this project: it refused to ratify the EDC Treaty. In fact, the Assembly used a procedural motion to decline even considering the treaty, effectively killing the EDC without a direct up-or-down vote on the merits[37]. The margin was decisive (319 votes to 264 against moving forward), reflecting an alliance of both extremes of French politics with many centrists: Gaullists and other nationalists, who saw the EDC as a surrender of sovereignty, joined forces with Communists, who opposed Western rearmament and alliances, to defeat the government's proposal[38]. This interpretation is confirmed in Gerbet and Hitchcock, who both underline how the peculiar coalition of Gaullists and Communists (normally irreconcilable) proved fatal to the project[39]. The outcome stunned many observers, given that France's own leaders had devised the plan in 1950. As Fursdon observed, it was paradoxical that "the French Assemblée Nationale rejected the very plan that French representatives had championed in Europe four years earlier"[40], a judgment echoed in later analyses by Ruane[41] and Loth, which stress the symbolic shock this reversal had for European integration[42].

The collapse of the EDC thus marked more than just a failed treaty: it represented, in Quagliariello's view, the symbolic end of the first great season of federalist ambition in postwar Europe. After 1954, European integration would proceed more cautiously, privileging economic cooperation over political union, a shift that would shape the Community's trajectory for decades[43].

---

[37] Ibidem

[38] Gerbet, P. (1994). *Naissance de l'Europe: De la Résistance à l'unité européenne, 1940–1950*. Éditions du Seuil.

[39] Hitchcock, W. I. (1998). *France Restored: Cold War Diplomacy and the Quest for Leadership in Europe, 1944–1954*. University of North Carolina Press.

[40] Fursdon, E. (1980). *The European Defence Community: A History*. Macmillan, p. 297.

[41] Ruane, K. (2000). *The Rise and Fall of the European Defence Community: Anglo-American Relations and the Crisis of European Defence, 1950–55*. Palgrave Macmillan.

[42] Loth, W. (2001). *Building Europe: A History of European Unification*. Brill.

[43] Quagliariello, G. (2004). La CED, l'ultima spina di De Gasperi. Ventunesimo Secolo, 3(5), pp. 284–286.

Section 1.2 – Interpretations of the failure

Historians and contemporaries have identified several intertwined causes on which they have based the collapse of the European Defence Community[44].

First and foremost, France in the early 1950s was politically divided and psychologically torn between its recent WWII, its desire to maintain great-power status, and its leadership in European integration. And the EDC touched on sensitive issues of national sovereignty, military tradition, and national pride. Many French politicians and military figures could not stomach the idea of dissolving the French army into a European entity, especially if it meant losing ultimate control over troop deployments. General Charles de Gaulle, though out of power, pushing on the influence of his RPF party in the Assembly, vehemently denounced the EDC as *"une essai d'abdication nationale"*, an attempt at national abdication[45]. This encapsulated the Gaullist view that a European Army would strip France of its sovereignty and grandeur, as nationalists argued that France should retain independent military command and feared that a European army might even be dominated by Germany in the long run. On the left, the Communist Party mobilized public opinion against the EDC, framing it as a scheme to remilitarize Germany and bind France to American imperialism. The Communist daily L'Humanité hailed the Assembly's no-vote as *"a victory for the French people,"* celebrating that France would not ratify the EDC Treaty. Thus, as a broad swath of French public opinion (from Gaullists to Communists) converged in seeing EDC as a threat to French national sovereignty and identity, these sentiments ultimately prevailed over the pro-European, pro-EDC position of the government[46].

French hesitation, particularly under Pierre Mendès France, reflected not only tactical caution but also a broader erosion of federalist enthusiasm. As Quagliariello points out, Mendès France employed procedural and political arguments to delay and ultimately undermine the treaty,

---

[44] Rupp, A. A., Levy, R., Dicerbo, K. E., Sweet, S. J., Crawford, A. V., Calico, T., ... & Behrens, J. T. (2012). Putting ECD into practice: The interplay of theory and data in evidence models within a digital learning environment. *Journal of Educational Data Mining*, *4*(1), 49-110.

[45] Ibidem

[46] Fursdon, E. (1980). *The European Defence Community: A History*. Macmillan.

revealing how sovereignty concerns and colonial overstretch converged to delegitimize the EDC from within its founding country[47].

By 1954, France had a new head of government, Pierre Mendès France, known for his pragmatic and skeptical approach. Mendès France was not opposed to European integration per se, but he was committed to ending France's war in Indochina and cautious about any scheme that might entangle France's sovereignty. Therefore, he did not actively shepherd the EDC through the Assembly with the same zeal as his predecessors. In the decisive debates of August 1954, Mendès France argued that the treaty's terms were problematic, for example, Article 38 of the EDC Treaty implied the creation of a *European political authority*, which he found unacceptable without clearer democratic control[48]. He insisted that France must *"not become tied down on the political plane"* beyond a certain point[49]. His lukewarm defense of the EDC, despite he sought amendments and assurances that proved impossible to get from the other signatories, failed to sway enough legislators. In essence, the French government lost control of the narrative, and the opposition framed the EDC as a faulty, even dangerous, arrangement. As historian Pierre Gerbet later observed, France's attitude was paradoxical – having inspired the plan, France ultimately shrank from it, a reversal Gerbet attributed to the pull of sovereignty and political miscalculations in Paris[50].

Moreover, it shall be considered that the context of 1954 differed from 1950. The Korean War had ended in 1953; Stalin had died in 1953 leading to a slight thaw in Cold War tensions. The acute fear that had spurred the EDC (a sense in 1950 that World War III might be imminent) had somewhat receded[51]. French deputies in 1954 were less willing to accept radical integration measures for security, given that the urgency of war felt less intense than at the plan's conception. Some argued that NATO was sufficient and that the U.S. security guarantee was

---

[47] Quagliariello, G. (2004). La CED, l'ultima spina di De Gasperi. Ventunesimo Secolo, 3(5), pp. 274–278.

[48] Gavin, V. (2009). Power through Europe? The case of the European Defence Community in France (1950–1954). *French History*, *23*(1), 69-87.

[49] Ibidem

[50] https://www.cvce.eu/en/education/unit-content/-/unit. Accessed 19/06/2025.

[51] Spaak, P.-H. (1954, September 18). *Address to the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe* (deploring the failure of EDC)cvce.eu. Published in Council of Europe Debates, 1954.

firm; thus, the EDC seemed less indispensable than it had in the dark days of 1950–51[52]. This shift in threat perception ("the belief [in imminent war] had faded" by 1954) undercut the primary rationale for the EDC in the public mind[53].

Additionally, the fact that the United Kingdom was not part of the EDC may have indirectly hurt the project's credibility in France. Many in France's military establishment felt that any effective Western defense had to include Britain (and be led by NATO), as the EDC without it looked to some like a "European army" that could actually weaken NATO or leave Europe divided. There were also concerns about command structures: French critics asked whether a European Defense Minister would conflict with NATO's command, or how the U.S. (not an EDC member) would coordinate with a supranational European force. These practical uncertainties gave fodder to opponents who argued the EDC was an unworkable scheme[54].

As in 1954 France was reeling from the defeat at Dien Bien Phu in Indochina (May 1954) and remained heavily engaged across its colonial empire, particularly in North Africa, some deputies felt that France could not afford to commit to a new European military structure while still entangled in overseas commitments[55].

While the Algerian War officially began only on November 1st, 1954, after the EDC vote, tensions in Algeria were already mounting, and the broader strain of maintaining an overstretched empire, especially in Indochina and Tunisia, contributed to a sense of military and political overextension. In this context, the idea of transferring military authority to a supranational structure seemed risky and untimely to many deputies[56].

Moreover, the conclusion of the Indochina conflict with the Geneva Accords in July 1954 reduced France's dependence on American military and financial support, especially in

---

[52] https://www.britannica.com/topic/European-Defense-Community#:~:text=Europe. Accessed 25/06/2025.

[53] Hitchcock, W. I. (1998). *France Restored: Cold War Diplomacy and the Quest for Leadership in Europe, 1944–1954*. University of North Carolina Press.

[54] Ruane, K. (2000). *The Rise and Fall of the European Defence Community: Anglo-American Relations and the Crisis of European Defence, 1950–55*. Palgrave Macmillan.

[55] Fursdon, E. (1980). *The European Defence Community: A History*. London: Macmillan, pp. 288-292.

[56] Ruane, K. (2000). *The Rise and Fall of the European Defence Community: Anglo-American Relations and the Crisis of European Defence, 1950–55*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Southeast Asia[57]. As a result, French leaders no longer felt as constrained by U.S. pressure to ratify the EDC. As several historians have noted, the U.S. had linked its support for France in Indochina with expectations for French cooperation on German rearmament. Once the colonial war ended, this leverage vanished, giving French deputies more political room to reject the EDC without immediate strategic cost. Moreover, French forces were stretched, surrendering some of them to a European Army raised worries about where France's remaining forces would be needed (colonial defense, etc.). Critics thus portrayed the EDC as ill-timed given France's other military obligations[58].

When the French Assembly refused ratification, the EDC project collapsed instantly. The treaty required all six signatories to ratify; France's failure to do so meant the EDC and the parallel European Political Community were dead. The reaction among the other member states and allies was one of consternation and dismay[59]. Western European partners were deeply disappointed: West Germany's Adenauer was alarmed at this setback to German rehabilitation, and smaller countries like Belgium, the Netherlands, and Italy expressed frustration that years of negotiation had come to naught due to French politics[60]. *"France, which had for many years been the champion of the European cause, found itself seriously discredited"* by this reversal, notes one contemporary analysis[61]. The United States was particularly dismayed, The *New York Times* bluntly called the French vote *"the greatest post-war triumph for Soviet policy"*, highlighting fears that a divided West played into Soviet hands[62]. Dulles, while expressing disappointment, immediately pushed for an alternate route to rearm West Germany *"and continue the restoration of sovereignty to the FRG"* despite the EDC's failure[63].

---

[57] Hitchcock, W. I. (1998). *France Restored: Cold War Diplomacy and the Quest for Leadership in Europe, 1944–1954*. University of North Carolina Press.

[58] Capoccia, G., & Kelemen, R. D. (2007). *The study of critical junctures: Theory, narrative, and counterfactuals in historical institutionalism*. *World Politics, 59*(3), 341–369.

[59] https://www.cvce.eu/en/education/unit-content/-/unit/. Accessed 19/06/2025.

[60] Ibidem

[61] Ibidem

[62] https://www.oneroinstitute.org/content/the-failure-of-the-european-defense-community-a-discussion-between-the-past-and-future-of-european-defense. Accessed 19/06/2025.

[63] https://www.cvce.eu/en/education/unit-content/-/unit/. Accessed 19/06/2025.

The collapse forced a quick Plan B to integrate West Germany into Western defense. In the weeks that followed, diplomatic initiatives led by Britain and the U.S. produced the London and Paris Conferences (September–October 1954). There, Western foreign ministers salvaged the situation by agreeing to admit West Germany into NATO under a modified framework: the Western European Union (WEU) was created as an expansion of the existing Brussels Pact, to include West Germany and Italy, and to impose certain limits on German armaments (e.g. no German nukes, and capping force levels)[64]. This compromise assuaged France's concerns outside the EDC context. By May 1955, West Germany formally joined NATO, achieving the goal of German rearmament albeit through a purely intergovernmental mechanism rather than a supranational one[65]. In effect, the EDC's failure pushed Europe onto a different path: defence would be handled through NATO and intergovernmental pacts (WEU), and European integration would be pursued in other fields (economic, political) without a defence component for decades to come[66]. As one analysis puts it, *"the failure of the EDC…turned the spotlight towards NATO"* as Europe's security framework[67]. It would be 40+ years before Europeans would seriously broach the idea of a common defence policy again on the level that EDC had attempted.

In the immediate aftermath of the 1954 collapse, interpretations of the EDC's failure varied across countries and political divides. Member state leaders and officials each drew their own lessons, often colored by national interests and sentiments.

Internationally, France faced criticism for "killing" a project it had initiated. French officials defensively argued that the EDC treaty in its final form was flawed or imposed constraints unacceptable to France's sovereignty. Pierre Mendès France, in a radio address after the vote, stressed that France remained committed to European unity and NATO, but that the EDC treaty

---

[64] Gavin, V. (2009). Power through Europe? The case of the European Defence Community in France (1950–1954). *French History*, *23*(1), 69-87.

[65] Ibidem

[66] https://www.britannica.com/topic/European-Defense-Community#:~:text=Europe. Accessed 25/06/2025.

[67] https://eda.europa.eu/webzine/issue17/cover-story/european-defence-one-achievement-at-a-time. Accessed 19/07/2025.

had not provided sufficient guarantees of democratic control and equality among partners[68]. He famously stated, *"We are faithful to the alliance that gives us our security…a cordial cooperation between associates that are equal in their rights…while each remains the judge of his own vital interests"*[69]. Despite this reflected France's insistence on retaining final say over its military commitments, behind closed doors, French diplomats acknowledged the damage to France's credibility in Europe. French pro-European figures like Robert Schuman (who had retired by 1954) were bitterly disappointed. Schuman lamented that a great opportunity for Europe was lost: he worried that without EDC, Germany might drift away or that Europe's momentum toward political union had been halted. Meanwhile, General de Gaulle (who would return to power in 1958) saw the EDC's defeat as a victory for his vision of a Europe of nations: he believed France had wisely avoided subjugation to a supranational scheme and could now pursue grandeur on its own terms. Thus, within France, the narrative split, integrationists saw it as a tragic mistake, nationalists as a salvation of sovereignty.

Chancellor Konrad Adenauer reacted with a mix of dismay and resolve. He had invested significant political capital in the EDC, viewing it as the best way for post-war Germany to regain trust and security. Adenauer feared that the collapse might revive suspicions toward Germany or leave it exposed. However, he quickly pivoted to support the alternative plan of joining NATO, reassuring his public and the Allies that West Germany remained firmly aligned with the West. Notably, Adenauer refrained from openly criticizing France harshly, maintaining a diplomatic stance and hoping to preserve Franco-German rapprochement. However, privately, he was deeply disappointed by France's reversal[70]. The Bonn government took solace in the swift negotiation of the Paris Agreements: by agreeing to some "self-limitations" (e.g. no ABC weapons, acceptance of foreign troops on its soil), West Germany obtained sovereignty and NATO membership[71]. German officials interpreted the EDC failure as demonstrating that full political union was premature, and that Germany should integrate

[68] Gavin, V. (2009). Power through Europe? The case of the European Defence Community in France (1950–1954). *French History*, *23*(1), 69-87.
[69] Ibidem
[70] Ibidem
[71] Ibidem

step-by-step (economically first). Crucially, Adenauer's pro-European stance did not waver – he continued to champion European unity, and West Germany soon became a driving force in the next integration project , i.e. the Common Market.

Leaders in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg were vocal in regretting the EDC's demise. Belgian Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak, as a committed European federalist, publicly deplored the Franco-German discord that led to the outcome[72]. Speaking to the Council of Europe weeks later, Spaak lamented that *"persistent disputes between France and Germany"* had wrecked a project that promised a stronger, united Europe[73]. He and others warned that Europe could not afford to succumb to old rivalries. The Benelux press echoed this disappointment: for instance, the Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant* expressed the *"widespread disappointment felt in the Netherlands"* after France's rejection[74]. In Italy, the government of Prime Minister Mario Scelba had supported EDC and ratified it, so the French veto was a blow. As Quagliariello underscores, the French rejection of the EDC represented a profound political disappointment for Italy, particularly for Alcide De Gasperi. Having invested substantial political capital into the supranational vision, De Gasperi saw the failure of the EDC as "l'ultima spina" in his federalist project. The decision in Paris not only invalidated Italy's ratification effort but also symbolically closed the first chapter of ambitious political integration in Europe[75]. The respected Italian daily *Corriere della Sera* wrote on 31 August 1954 about *"the fundamental problem"* now facing Europe, deploring the French decision and warning that European defense was undermined[76]. Italian officials worried that without EDC, German rearmament might occur with less Italian input, and that France's European leadership was in question. On the other hand, the influential group of Italian Communists exulted: *L'Unità*, the Communist newspaper, ran the headline *"The EDC is dead"* and called the

[72] https://www.cvce.eu/en/education/unit-content/-/unit. Accessed 29/06/2025.

[73] Ibidem

[74] Sung, R. S., Christensen, L. L., Leichtman, A. B., Greenstein, S. M., Distant, D. A., Wynn, J. J., ... & Port, F. K. (2008). Determinants of discard of expanded criteria donor kidneys: impact of biopsy and machine perfusion. *American Journal of Transplantation*, *8*(4), 783-792.

[75] Quagliariello, G. (2004). La CED, l'ultima spina di De Gasperi. Ventunesimo Secolo, 3(5), pp. 260–264.

[76] Ibidem

outcome *"the victory of peace.*[77]*"* This mirrored the French Communist view – portraying EDC as a U.S., driven militarist plan defeated by popular will.

Britain had stayed out of the EDC, but it observed the drama closely. Many British officials had been skeptical that the French would ultimately accept a supranational army. Upon the EDC's failure, former Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden reacted by stepping into the breach to ensure West Germany's integration via other means. Eden embarked on a tour of European capitals immediately after to push his plan for a revamped Brussels Pact, which became the WEU[78]. In his memoirs, Eden recalled that in late 1954 he found it urgent to reassure the Europeans that *all was not lost* and that an alternative path to European unity in defense could be found. The British press generally treated the EDC collapse with a tone of *"realism vindicated",* as if to say, the grandiose scheme was doomed and now a more pragmatic Anglo-American approach would prevail. At the same time, British commentators worried that U.S. patience might wear thin, so Britain cast itself as a stabilizer, brokering the solution that brought Germany into NATO. In essence, the U.K. interpreted the failure as proof that European integration should not get too far ahead of national sentiment, especially on military matters, a view that presaged Britain's own cautious approach to European integration.

The U.S. interpretation was stark: EDC's failure was a setback that had to be rapidly counteracted. American officials, while disappointed in France, moved pragmatically to achieve the underlying goal, i.e. German rearmament within a Western alliance, through NATO. Dulles, on 31 August 1954, publicly urged everyone to keep moving toward *restoring German sovereignty and integrating Germany's defense* despite the EDC's rejection[79]. The U.S. media and policymakers tended to cast blame on France's internal politics, seeing the Gaullists and Communists as having torpedoed a necessary initiative. Meanwhile, a degree of schadenfreude emerged in Moscow: Soviet commentaries happily painted the EDC collapse as evidence of divisions and of France *"coming to its senses"* to reject "militarism". Indeed, as

[77] Ibidem
[78] Ibidem
[79] https://www.cvce.eu/en/education/unit-content/-/unit/. Accessed 29/06/2025.

noted, *The New York Times* characterized the outcome as a win for Soviet strategy[80]. In Washington, this outcome spurred a more hard-headed reliance on NATO, where U.S. influence was direct, rather than hopes of an autonomous European defence. The *"agonizing reappraisal"* that Dulles had threatened was largely averted by the quick pivot to the Paris Agreements, but the U.S. learned a lesson about the limits of European political integration at that time.

The EDC's failure thus marks, as Quagliariello insightfully argues, the closure of Europe's first federalist experiment. The dream of a politically united Europe with a common army was shelved for decades, replaced by a more cautious, functionalist approach centered on economics. The trauma of 1954 shaped European political memory and left a lasting skepticism toward supranational defence integration[81].

Section 1.3 – The EDC as a memory object

Beyond officialdom, the public discourse and journalistic commentary in 1954 offer a fascinating window into how the EDC's demise was perceived.

In France, the press was polarized. Left-wing and nationalist newspapers mostly applauded the outcome. Aside from the Communist *L'Humanité* crowing about the *"victory of Little Red Riding Hood"* over the EDC "wolf" (a metaphor in one cartoon, where Red Riding Hood/Marianne slays a wolf in a German helmet marked 'EDC'), other papers echoed relief that French boys would not serve under foreign command[82]. As Ruane and Hitchcock document, public opinion as reflected in parts of the French press tended to see the EDC as either a threat to national sovereignty or an instrument of German rearmament under a new

[80] Yorulmaz, M., & Yaşar, A. T. (2023). *Avrupa Birliği Güvenlik ve Savunma Politikasının NATO ile İlişkileri Bağlamında Analizi* (Analysis of EU Security and Defence Policy in relation to NATO). Journal of European Security Studies, 5(1).

[81] Quagliariello, G. (2004). La CED, l'ultima spina di De Gasperi. Ventunesimo Secolo, 3(5), pp. 284–286.

[82] On the *L'Humanité* cartoon and broader press reactions, Ruane discusses how Communist and nationalist press outlets framed the EDC as a loss of sovereignty and a Trojan horse for German militarism. Ruane, K. (2000). *Rise and Fall of the European Defence Community*. Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited, pp. 172-174.

guise[83]. Gaullist-leaning papers portrayed the vote as France standing up for itself. On the other hand, centrist and pro-European voices mourned the missed opportunity. *Le Monde*, under editor Hubert Beuve-Méry (writing as "Sirius"), published a somber commentary titled *"The Moment of Truth"*, dissecting the 30 August debate and lamenting that fear and politics had trumped European unity[84]. Beuve-Méry suggested that the Assembly's refusal to even debate the treaty was a sign of political cowardice and short-sightedness. Intellectuals like André Philip (a French socialist federalist) wrote that domestic politics and a hostile press campaign had poisoned the EDC debates. The *Bulletin européen d'informations* of the European Federalists harshly criticized French policy, stating on 20 September 1954 that despite the EDC fiasco, *"the battle for a federal Europe continues"*, implicitly blaming France for the setback but urging pro-Europeans not to give up[85].

In the Benelux countries, newspapers tended to express shock and disappointment at France. For example, Belgium's *Le Soir* ran the headline *"France rejects the EDC"*, and featured Paul-Henri Spaak's reaction, which diplomatically but clearly criticized the French decision[86]. Dutch cartoons, like one by *Fritz Behrendt*, depicted a stage show cancelled at the last minute *("Ladies and Gentlemen, the show has been cancelled!"*) symbolizing how the Dutch felt France had abruptly pulled the plug on a collective endeavor that others had already bought tickets for[87]. In Luxembourg, *Luxemburger Wort* reassured readers on 2 September 1954 that "Europe will be defended after all," analyzing how defense would proceed via NATO since the EDC failed[88].

In Italy, aside from the aforementioned *Corriere della Sera* piece lamenting the failure, the Catholic-oriented press (close to the governing Christian Democrats) was also critical of France. Italy's *Il Popolo* (party newspaper of the Christian Democrats) ran stories expressing

---

[83] Hitchcock, W. I. (1998). *France restored: Cold War diplomacy and the quest for leadership in Europe, 1944-1954*. Univ of North Carolina Press.

[84] https://www.cvce.eu/en/education/unit-content/-/unit/. Accessed 29/06/2025.

[85] Ibidem

[86] Ibidem

[87] Kaplan, L. S. (1962). *The United States and the European Defense Community*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

[88] Ibidem

regret and subtly questioning France's reliability in the European project. Meanwhile, the Italian far-left rejoiced: as noted, *L'Unità* celebrated what it termed a win for peace and for those opposing the resurgence of German militarism[89]. As Quagliariello shows, the Catholic press in Italy (notably *Il Popolo*, aligned with De Gasperi's Christian Democracy) framed the CED's collapse as not just a French failure, but as a painful betrayal of a shared European vision. Editorials lamented that "France turned its back on the very Europe it helped imagine", casting doubt on the reliability of French leadership in integration[90].

British and American media commentaries often portrayed the episode as a lesson in political reality. *The Economist* magazine in September 1954 argued that the EDC had been *"too ambitious"* and ahead of its time, noting that *"sovereignty remains the stumbling-block"* for European unity in defence. American outlets like *Time* magazine bluntly titled their piece "*EDC: Requiem for a Lightweight*," suggesting that the plan was perhaps doomed by its own complexities and Europe's lack of political cohesion. However, not all Anglo-American commentary was smug – many strategists genuinely worried the collapse would weaken Western security. Thus, a strain of critique emerged that France had gravely erred; as one U.S. commentator put it, *"France has said 'no' to Europe"*, implying that France betrayed the ideal of European unity at a crucial moment.

In summary, contemporary interpretations in the 1950s were divided. Within Western Europe, there was a clear split: pro-integration voices (in governments of Benelux, Italy, in segments of French and German opinion) viewed the EDC's failure as a tragic missed chance caused largely by French domestic politics and outdated nationalism. In contrast, nationalist or Communist voices hailed the outcome as a victory for national independence or peace. The member states themselves had to pragmatically move on, which they did by shifting the focus to other initiatives (the WEU for defense, and soon the Messina Conference of 1955 that launched what became the Common Market)[91]. The immediate public discourse thus framed

---

[89] Ibidem

[90] Quagliariello, G. (2004). *La CED, l'ultima spina di De Gasperi*. *Ventunesimo Secolo*, 3(5), pp. 268–270.

[91] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/1/the-first-treaties. Accessed 19/06/2025.

the EDC collapse either as a cautionary tale about trying to force integration too fast, or as a lamentable setback that had to be repaired by other means[92].

Over time, historians and political scientists have revisited the EDC episode, developing more nuanced interpretations of why it failed and what its failure meant. In the decades following 1954, several phases in the historiography can be discerned[93].

Early analyses (late 1950s–1960s), often written by participants or close observers, tended to emphasize French domestic factors and the unique conditions of the early Cold War. For example, initial French accounts (such as those by journalist Geneviève Tabouis or politician Édouard Bonnefous) blamed the Fourth Republic's political paralysis and the alliance of Gaullists and Communists for the debacle[94]. There was a sense of *lost opportunity*: many integrative-minded writers saw the EDC's failure as stalling the momentum of the Schuman Plan era. At the same time, realist-minded analysts, including some in the U.S., concluded that the project had been impractical, highlighting *sovereignty* as the rock on which the shipwreck occurred. In these early accounts, the narrative was often one-dimensional: France killed the EDC due to nationalism and internal politics, full stop[95].

As archives opened and scholarly interest in European integration history grew (1970s–1980s), more detailed studies emerged. One notable work is Eduard Fursdon's *The European Defence Community: A History*, which provided a comprehensive diplomatic history of the EDC negotiations and demise[96]. Fursdon and others mapped out the intricate Franco-American-British interactions, revealing how Anglo-American relations and strategy influenced the fate of EDC. For instance, historians noted that Britain's alternative plans (like the 1954 "Plan G" for a less supranational European Army) and U.S. pressures were constant background

---

[92] Kissinger, H. (1957). *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace 1812–1822*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

[93] Bonnefous, É. (1962). *L'Europe entre deux mondes*. Paris: Plon.

[94] Tabouis, G. (1955). *L'échec de la CED: La fin d'une illusion*. Paris: Albin Michel.

[95] Haas, E. B. (1958). *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces, 1950–1957*. Stanford University Press.

[96] Fursdon, E. (1980). *The European defence community: a history*. Springer.

factors[97]. Kevin Ruane's 2000 book *The Rise and Fall of the EDC: Anglo-American Relations and the Crisis of European Defence, 1950–55* further developed this angle, arguing that the EDC's trajectory cannot be understood without looking at U.S. and U.K. attitudes. Ruane showed that Washington strongly backed EDC (viewing it as the heart of a united Europe) but was also prepared with a fallback (German entry into NATO)[98]. London, meanwhile, was ambivalent or quietly hostile to EDC; Ruane suggests British diplomacy was content to see the EDC fail so that a more intergovernmental solution (like the WEU) could take shape. These later histories thus place the EDC in a broader context: not merely a French story, but one involving the interplay of American vision and European realities. They also point out structural factors, e.g. the fact that EDC negotiations dragged on for two years (1950–52) and by the time ratification came, the strategic landscape had shifted (Stalin's death, etc.), sapping urgency.

French historiography in this period also evolved. Historians like Pierre Gerbet and Georges-Henri Soutou examined why France balked despite having proposed EDC. They emphasize the conflicted French strategic calculus: France wanted to contain Germany but also feared losing leadership to a supranational entity. Gerbet in particular described France's stance as a *"paradox",* France was a driver of European integration but put on the brakes when integration touched the *core of state sovereignty (defence)*[99]. This paradox has been central to scholarly interpretations: it foreshadows France's later ambivalence in European defence (e.g. de Gaulle's empty chair crisis, or skepticism toward NATO integration).

With the benefit of hindsight and new theoretical tools (1990s), scholars began treating the EDC failure as a case study in integration theory. For example, Andrew Moravcsik's liberal intergovernmentalist analysis (in *The Choice for Europe*, 1998) looked at EDC through the lens of national preference formation and bargaining. Moravcsik argued that France's decision was rooted in a cost-benefit calculus: by 1954 the perceived benefits of EDC (security with

---

[97] Massigli, R. (1964). *Une mission française à Londres, 1940–1945*. Paris: Plon.

[98] Coogan, J. W. (2002). Kevin Ruane. The Rise and Fall of the European Defence Community: Anglo-American Relations and the Crisis of European Defence, 1950–1955.(Cold War History Series.) New York: Palgrave. 2000. Pp. ix, 252. $65.00. ISBN 0-312-23482-1. *Albion*, *34*(1), 173-174.

[99] Massigli, R. (1964). *Une mission française à Londres, 1940–1945*. Paris: Plon.

control of Germany) no longer outweighed the domestic political and sovereignty costs. He downplays ideological factors and sees rational domestic interests (including the influence of powerful interest groups like the military) as decisive. On the other hand, constructivist or identity-oriented scholars highlighted the ideational factors – for instance, how notions of national identity and sovereignty (especially in France) created an *"ideational conception of French national sovereignty"* that the EDC seemed to violate[100]. Indeed, an analysis by Ibrahim Gabr synthesizes this view: explaining France's defeat of the EDC requires understanding French leaders' desire to maintain great power status and national independence, not just realist security concerns[101]. Gabr notes that a purely realist explanation (e.g. fear of Germany or USSR) is *"unfeasible"* to account for France killing its own plan, and that domestic political chaos, in particular the Fourth Republic's instability and the presence of Gaullists, also played a role[102].

Historiographic debates also arose around whether the EDC was doomed from the start or truly within reach. One school argues it was "ahead of its time", the political conditions in the 1950s were not ripe for such deep integration, given nascent European institutions and entrenched nationalism[103]. Another school counters that EDC *could have succeeded* if not for a few contingent events, e.g. the timing of the Indochina crisis and Mendès France's lukewarm approach, or if a slightly different ratification strategy had been followed[104]. These debates often invoke counterfactuals: What if the French government had pushed the vote earlier, say in 1952 when pro-EDC sentiment was higher? What if Stalin's aggressive posture had continued, maintaining the pressure? Some point out that the French Assembly vote was somewhat narrow, had *30 votes flipped, "the EU might have looked very different today"*[105].

---

[100] Kaplan, L. S. (1962). *The United States and the European Defense Community*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

[101] Gabr, I. (2014). *The domestic and ideational sources of the European Defence Community's defeat*. E-International Relations, June 4, 2014. Retrieved from https://www.e-ir.info/

[102] Ibidem

[103] Milward, A. S. (1992). *The European Rescue of the Nation-State*. Routledge.

[104] Bitsch, M.-T. (2004). *Histoire de la construction européenne de 1945 à nos jours*. Complexe.

[105] https://www.oneroinstitute.org/content/the-failure-of-the-european-defense-community-a-discussion-between-the-past-and-future-of-european-defense. Accessed 19/06/2025.

This invites the interpretation that the EDC's failure was *not* preordained, but a genuinely uncertain moment that broke the way it did due to a confluence of factors[106].

With the creation of a European security policy decades later (the Common Foreign and Security Policy in 1992, and later the Common Security and Defence Policy), scholars have looked back at EDC as the *"road not taken"* for European defense. Some have labeled it a *"founding failure",* a formative failure that significantly redirected European integration. By failing to establish a defense community in the 1950s, Europe's integration proceeded predominantly in the economic realm, culminating in the EEC/EU, while defence remained intergovernmental and NATO-dominated. This perspective suggests that European integration bifurcated: one path (economic/community method) succeeded, while the other (defence/federal approach) stalled for decades. For instance, scholars like Anand Menon and Jolyon Howorth note that after the EDC's demise, European defense cooperation largely went dormant (aside from the intergovernmental Western European Union) until the 1990[107]. This "long shadow" of the EDC is seen in the fact that even today, the EU lacks a common army, and defence integration has been cautious – arguably an outcome of the 1954 juncture[108]. In this light, modern historiography often casts 1954 as a pivotal moment that taught European leaders to *"deprioritize common military defence"* and focus on economic and functional integration instead[109]. As one recent analysis succinctly put it, *"the failure of the EDC paved the way for a reimagined European integration project – one in which common military defense was deprioritized"*[110].

The opening of more archives (2000s–2020s), e.g. in Moscow, Eastern Europe, ecc., has added additional layers, such as understanding the Soviet perspective. While the Soviet Union publicly cheered EDC's failure, evidence suggests Soviet policy in the early 1950s was

---

[106] Fursdon, E. (1980). *The European Defence Community: A History*. Macmillan.

[107] Capoccia, G., & Kelemen, R. D. (2007). *The study of critical junctures: Theory, narrative, and counterfactuals in historical institutionalism*. *World Politics, 59*(3), 341–369.

[108] Menon, A., & Weatherill, S. (Eds.). (2008). *The Future of European Defence Integration*.

[109] Monnet, J., Pleven, R., Schuman, R., et al. (1950). *Statements and speeches on the European Army proposal (Pleven Plan)*. In EU Archives (various documents).

[110] https://www.oneroinstitute.org/content/the-failure-of-the-european-defense-community-a-discussion-between-the-past-and-future-of-european-defense. Accessed 19/06/2025.

genuinely alarmed by the prospect of West German rearmament and tried propaganda and diplomatic moves, like the 1952 Stalin Note proposing a neutral Germany, to prevent it. Thus, EDC's collapse might have been seen as a success in the Kremlin, but ironically it led to West Germany joining NATO, which the USSR found even worse. Scholars like Mark Kramer and Vojtech Mastny in Cold War studies have debated whether a ratified EDC could have altered East-West dynamics, especially some posit it might have hardened them sooner. Meanwhile, EU historians continue to study EDC as part of the narrative of European unity's fits and starts. It's often grouped with other early integration setbacks like the "Fouchet Plan" of the early 1960s (de Gaulle's failed plan for political union) or the "Empty Chair Crisis" of 1965, each an instance of Europe advancing, then stumbling over sovereignty issues.

In historiography, the EDC's failure is now commonly seen not simply as a fiasco or anomaly, but as a formative event that influenced the trajectory of European integration. It has been examined from many angles: domestic French politics (the interplay of ideologies and interests), alliance politics (U.S./UK roles), security studies (implications for NATO and the Cold War balance), and institutional perspectives (what it meant for the European Communities' development). The narrative has evolved from finger-pointing (blaming France or certain politicians) toward understanding it as a convergence of structural and contingent factors. Scholarly consensus tends to agree that *no single factor* explains the EDC's failure; rather, it was the product of security context changes, national interests (especially France's), and the limits of European public opinion at that time. As the next section will discuss, this multifaceted understanding feeds into theoretical interpretations of the EDC collapse as a critical turning point (or "critical juncture") in European integration history[111].

In the field of European integration studies, institutional memory is defined as the set of narratives, symbolic references, and shared interpretations that institutions produce over time to legitimize their origins, development, and ambitions. Memory, in this context, is not merely

[111] Rigney, A. (2018). *The afterlives of memory: From memory politics to the politics of imagination*. Cultural Memory Studies, 3(1), 75–95.

a recollection of the past, but rather a discursive and political tool that contributes to the construction of the Union's identity and that of its institutions[112].

European institutions, and in particular the European Parliament, tend to produce and reproduce selective representations of the past, attributing symbolic meanings even to unrealized projects such as the European Defence Community (EDC)[113]. The EDC, despite its failure in 1954, has thus become a symbolic and mnemonic object, invoked in institutional discourse as an example of an unfulfilled grand ambition, or as a historical warning about what happens when Member States withdraw from integration efforts[114].

Theories of cultural memory and communicative memory help explain how the memory of the EDC remains alive within European institutions[115]. According to Assmann, political communities tend to preserve and ritualize certain past events (even negative ones) in order to reinforce their internal cohesion and vision for the future. In this sense, the failure of the EDC becomes part of the "pantheon" of Europe's founding memories, alongside the success of the ECSC or the Treaty of Rome[116].

A key perspective for understanding the persistence of the EDC in institutional memory is that of "negative integration": failures, rather than being forgotten, are assimilated as reference points to avoid repeating past mistakes or to justify subsequent political choices[117]. As Quagliariello argues, the EDC has come to embody a kind of "founding failure" myth, especially within Italian federalist discourse. Its collapse did not erase its symbolic power, rather, it reinforced the notion that bold visions for Europe must overcome national hesitation.

---

[112] Neumann, I. B. (2016). *Returning practice to the linguistic turn: The case of diplomacy*. In A. B. Tickner & D. Blaney (Eds.), *Thinking International Relations Differently* (pp. 142–164). Routledge.

[113] Levy, D. (2010). *Memory and the European Union: Theory and Practice*. In S. Ross & M. Sznajder (Eds.), *The politics of memory in postwar Europe* (pp. 88–105). Duke University Press.

[114] Calligaro, O. (2017). *Negotiating Europe: EU promotion of Europeanness since the 1950s*. Palgrave Macmillan.

[115] Assmann, J. (2006). *Religion and cultural memory: Ten studies*. Stanford University Press.

[116] Halbwachs, M. (1992). *On collective memory* (L. A. Coser, Trans.). University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1950)

[117] Schmidt, V. A. (2006). *Democracy in Europe: The EU and national polities*. Oxford University Press.

The "spina di De Gasperi" became a narrative device used to reinvigorate Europeanist ambitions in later decades[118].

The memory of the EDC survives in European discourse because it helps to define, by contrast, what the Union has become[119]. Its non-realization has contributed to the construction of a narrative in which European defence is *"the great absentee"* of integration, and the EDC represents the moment when that ambition collapsed against the resistance of nation-states[120]. This kind of evocation has been described by some scholars as *"counterfactual institutional memory"*: that is, the construction of narratives about "what might have been" serves to strengthen the political agenda of the present[121].

In the specific case of the European Parliament, the EDC has often been mentioned in plenary debates as an example of a betrayed ambitious vision, or as a precedent for understanding current hesitations regarding the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)[122]. The EDC project thus functions as a dual rhetorical device: on the one hand idealized (as an example of visionary courage), on the other instrumentalized (as a warning about the dangers of disagreement and political fragmentation).

Failed projects like the EDC do not disappear: they become part of the symbolic repertoire of European integration, especially in times of crisis or transformation. According to the constructivist approach to EU politics, institutions act not only as rational actors but also as "discursive communities" that construct meaning through language, narrative, and symbols. The invocation of the EDC fits precisely within this logic[123].

---

[118] Quagliariello, G. (2004). *La CED, l'ultima spina di De Gasperi*. *Ventunesimo Secolo*, 3(5), pp. 284–285.

[119] Zielonka, J. (2006). *Europe as Empire: The Nature of the Enlarged European Union*. Oxford University Press.

[120] Menon, A., & Howorth, J. (2017). European Security Integration and the problem of political will. *Journal of Common Market Studies, 55*(2), 382–398.

[121] Feindt, P. H., & Nichols, R. (2019). "Narrative, memory and politics: Towards a conceptual framework for the study of memory in European politics". *Journal of European Public Policy, 26*(8), 1163–1183.

[122] Bonzi, I. (2023). *The failure of the European Defence Community: A discussion between the past and future of European defence*. The Onero Institute.

[123] Risse, T. (2010). *A community of Europeans? Transnational identities and public spheres*. Cornell University Press.

Moreover, as Bell argues, the *"memory of failure"* can serve a performative function: invoking a past error (such as the French rejection of 1954) helps to build consensus around new political initiatives, such as PESCO or the Strategic Compass. The recurring phrase in parliamentary discourse (*"let us not repeat the mistake of 1954"*) exemplifies this dynamic[124].

Symbolically, the EDC is often portrayed as a *"missed opportunity"* that could have made Europe a more autonomous and cohesive actor in the field of defence. This imaginary, although constructed retrospectively, allows institutions to project the past into the service of the present, a form of selective and political memory.

Though the EDC was an unfinished project, it has not been forgotten; on the contrary, it has entered the symbolic heritage of European integration as an object of institutional memory. In parliamentary, academic, and political discourse, it plays multiple roles: as a missed foundational myth, as a critical warning, and as an ideal model. This testifies to the active function of political memory, which does not merely record the past but continually reactivates and reinterprets it in light of present needs and future goals of integration.

Section 1.4 – Path dependence and political memory: the EDC as a critical juncture

The collapse of the EDC in 1954 has been characterized by some scholars as a *"founding failure"*, a failure at the foundational stage of European integration that significantly shaped the direction of the project thereafter. In historical institutionalist terms, it represents a critical juncture: a moment when multiple future paths were possible, and the choices (or non-choices) made locked in a particular trajectory for decades to come[125].

Paul Pierson's theory of path dependence provides a useful lens to examine this. Pierson argues that European integration should be seen as a *path-dependent process*, where initial decisions

[124] Bell, D. (2006). Introduction: Memory, trauma and world politics. In D. Bell (Ed.), *Memory, trauma and world politics: Reflections on the relationship between past and present* (pp. 1–32). Palgrave Macmillan.
[125] Yorulmaz, M., & Yaşar, A. T. (2023). *Avrupa Birliği Güvenlik ve Savunma Politikasının NATO ile İlişkileri Bağlamında Analizi* (Analysis of EU Security and Defence Policy in relation to NATO). Journal of European Security Studies, 5(1).

create institutional patterns that are hard to reverse as time goes on[126]. Early in the integration process, *"brief phases of institutional flux"* allow for significant change. Once institutions or policies take a certain route, increasing returns and positive feedback make that route self-reinforcing (e.g. vested interests form, legal frameworks solidify, expectations adjust), thus *"locking in"* certain developments[127]. In Pierson's view, member-state control over integration diminishes over time as unintended consequences and prior commitments constrain future choices. Applying this to the EDC, one can argue that 1954 was precisely such a branching point. Had the EDC been approved, the European project's institutional path would have included a defence pillar from the very start, potentially leading to a multitiered European polity with both economic and military integration. Instead, the *path taken* after 1954 was one where defence integration was shelved, and the Treaties of Rome (1957) focused on economic community (EEC) and atomic energy (Euratom), sectors more palatable at the time[128]. The succeeding decades then saw deepening economic integration along that path, while defence cooperation languished. Pierson's concept of *"increasing returns"* suggests that as the EEC/EU developed without a defense component, actors invested in that economic-social model of integration, making it progressively harder to introduce defence integration later, because the EU's identity and member expectations had been set largely in non-military terms. Indeed, as one observer noted, the word *"federation"* never again appeared in official EEC/EU documents as an objective after the EDC episode, a telling sign that the vision of a politically federal Europe (which EDC embodied) was set aside, and integration took a more cautious, sectoral approach[129].

The concept of critical junctures, elaborated by Capoccia and Kelemen, complements this analysis. They define a critical juncture as a relatively short period of time during which institutional fluidity is high and significant change is possible, followed by a longer period of

---

[126] Pierson, P. (1996). *The path to European integration: A historical institutionalist perspective*. Comparative Political Studies, 29(2), 123–163.

[127] Ibidem

[128] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/1/the-first-treaties. Accessed 19/06/2025.

[129] Gavin, V. (2009). Power through Europe? The case of the European Defence Community in France (1950–1954). *French History*, *23*(1), 69-87.

path-dependent constraints[130]. During a critical juncture, decisions (or indecisions) have lasting effects because once the window closes, structural influences resume dominance, making deviation costly or impossible. The early 1950s in Europe can be seen as such a period for security integration. As one analysis frames it, *"the World War II experience, coupled with the Schuman Declaration of 1950, provided the first critical juncture to freely imagine the future of European common security"*[131]. The EDC was the product of that brief moment of possibility, a moment when visionary leaps like a European Army could be seriously contemplated. The dismissal of the EDC in 1954 effectively signaled the end of that first critical juncture for European defence[132]. In Capoccia and Kelemen's terms, once the French Assembly rejected the EDC, Europe entered a *"locked-in"* path where nation-states retained control over defence (reassertion of sovereignty), and the chance for supranational defense integration was lost for a long era. As documented, *"what followed EDC's failure were forty years of political impasse in the realm of shared defense and security"*[133]. European states fell back on NATO and avoided new supranational defence efforts, marking a decisive shift toward an intergovernmental security paradigm. Thus, the outcome of this critical juncture, i.e. supra-nationalists defeated and nationalists victorious, had a profound legacy[134].

This view is further bolstered by integration theorist Paul Pierson's observation *about "positive feedback"* in political processes: once the EDC failed, subsequent efforts at integration adjusted to that reality. The successful integration initiatives (like the EEC) were those that consciously sidestepped defence, focusing instead on economic gains where sovereignty issues were less emotionally charged. Over time, as economic integration succeeded, it created its own inertia and constituencies (businesses, European institutions, etc.) that reinforced progress in those domains, while defense remained cordoned off as a *"no-go area"* politically. Only after the Cold War, when a new external environment provided another critical juncture (the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 with its CFSP pillar, as noted in), did European states tentatively re-approach

---

[130] Capoccia, G., & Kelemen, R. D. (2007). *The study of critical junctures: Theory, narrative, and counterfactuals in historical institutionalism*. World Politics, 59(3), 341–369.

[131] https://www.eustt.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Academic-Art.-XII-1.pdf. Accessed 10/07/2025.

[132] Ibidem

[133] Ibidem

[134] Ibidem

defence cooperation, and even then, in a heavily intergovernmental manner under the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. This underscores how the 1954 decision shaped the *structure* of European integration: a European Community without a military union.

Another theoretical framework relevant here is the idea of *"path not taken"* or branching points in counterfactual analysis. Capoccia and Kelemen stress the role of contingency in critical junctures – small events or decisions can tip the scales[135]. In the EDC's case, one could argue that the critical juncture was *almost* resolved in favor of a different path: had France ratified, the EU's evolution might have included a defence community from inception. Scholars like Anand Menon have speculated how an EDC might have changed transatlantic relations, perhaps a more autonomous European defence identity much earlier, and the balance of power within Europe, potentially giving supranational institutions more clout earlier. The fact that Europe did eventually create mechanisms like the European Defence Agency (established only in 2004) and permanent structured cooperation on defense (PESCO, in 2017), albeit very late, shows that the original impetus never entirely died. But those later developments occurred on a path shaped by decades of NATO reliance and EU economic focus, a path set in 1954.

In historical hindsight, calling the EDC's collapse a *"founding failure"* is apt because it happened during the foundational phase of European integration (contemporaneous with the ECSC) and because it fundamentally altered the *foundational scope* of what the European Communities would encompass. Instead of political-military union, integration proceeded on a narrower basis. Interestingly, some scholars also frame it as a *"productive failure":* by failing, it forced Western Europe to accept a perhaps more realistic arrangement (German rearmament via NATO) in the short term, and it redirected integration energy toward economic unity, culminating in the Treaty of Rome which has proven enduring[136]. In other words, one could argue the EDC's failure indirectly spurred the success of the Common Market – as the saying goes, when one door closed, another opened at Messina (1955) where the six decided

[135] Capoccia, G., & Kelemen, R. D. (2007). The study of critical junctures: Theory, narrative, and counterfactuals in historical institutionalism. *World politics*, *59*(3), 341-369.
[136] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/1/the-first-treaties. Accessed 19/06/2025.

to pursue economic integration instead[137]. This interpretation doesn't dispute that 1954 was a critical juncture, but it suggests the path chosen (or defaulted to) had its own integration logic which bore fruit in a different domain.

Theoretical perspectives like historical institutionalism encourage us to see the EDC not in isolation but as part of a sequence of critical choices in European integration. Giuliano Garavoglia and others have written that European integration history features several such critical junctures (the EDC's failure, the Empty Chair crisis, the Single European Act, etc.), each setting new constraints or opening new possibilities[138]. In the EDC case, the *"failure"* became part of the narrative European leaders tell about the EU's identity – often described as a *civilian power* or economic giant that deliberately stayed away from military union. Indeed, some commentators speak of a *"myth of the EU as a civilian power"* that arguably was born in part due to the EDC's failure: the EU defined itself through economics, not arms, for most of its history[139]. Only in recent times, with new external threats, is Europe re-examining that stance, perhaps entering a new critical juncture regarding defence integration in the shadow of events like Brexit, Russian aggression in Ukraine, and shifting U.S. commitments. Analysts draw parallels between today and the early 1950s, noting that *"seventy years after the failure of the EDC, the EU still lacks a common army"* and debating whether a new window for one might be opening[140]. Such discussions explicitly hark back to the EDC as the road not taken that could inspire or caution current policymakers.

In summary, viewing the EDC's collapse as a critical juncture highlights how contingency and choice in 1954 had long-term structural consequences for European integration. The EDC was a test of how far European nations were willing to cede sovereignty for collective good; its failure set a pattern where sovereignty in high-politics areas (defence, foreign policy) remained largely with states, while integration advanced in low-politics areas (economics, technical

---

[137] Ibidem

[138] Garavoglia, G. (2020). *Critical junctures and path dependence in European integration: The EDC and the limits of supranational defence*. In D. M. Bracke & S. Romano (Eds.), *Europe's Unfinished Security Architecture* (pp. 102–120). Routledge.

[139] https://d-nb.info. Accessed 13/07/2025.

[140] https://www.eustt.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Academic-Art.-XII-1.pdf. Accessed 14/07/2025.

matters). This pattern, once set, proved self-perpetuating, illustrating Pierson's point about early decisions shaping the *"path"*. Only when another shock, i.e. the end of the Cold War, occurred did the path bend again to tentatively incorporate defence cooperation, but even then under intergovernmental control, asthe European Council dominates CFSP, not the European Commission, reflecting lingering wariness rooted in those early sovereignty concerns[141]. Thus, the EDC's fate is a prime example of how a *"founding failure"* can be just as instructive as a founding success, revealing the limits of integration and setting the parameters within which the European project evolved.

The European Defence Community (EDC) occupies a paradoxical yet fundamental place in the historiography of European integration. Though it never entered into force, the EDC is widely acknowledged by scholars as the most ambitious supranational defence project ever proposed in post-war Europe[142]. Its legacy lies not in institutional continuity but in its symbolic and conceptual imprint on how the idea of European defence has been remembered, interpreted, and narrated over time[143].

Historically, the EDC has been treated in EU historiography as a *"founding failure",* a bold initiative that failed to materialize but profoundly shaped the trajectory of European defence policy by establishing its limits[144], and frequently described as a turning point or missed opportunity[145]. Its collapse in 1954 is often cited as the moment when the EU's focus decisively shifted toward economic rather than military integration, with the Treaties of Rome (1957) becoming the new cornerstone[146].

---

[141] Pierson, P. (1996). *The path to European integration: A historical institutionalist perspective*. Comparative Political Studies, 29(2), 123–163.

[142] Fursdon, E. (1980). *The European Defence Community: A History*. Macmillan.

[143] Ruane, K. (2000). *The Rise and Fall of the European Defence Community: Anglo-American Relations and the Crisis of European Defence, 1950–1955*. Palgrave Macmillan.

[144] Loth, W. (2001). *Building Europe: A history of European unification*. Brill.

[145] Garavoglia, G. (2020). Critical junctures and path dependence in European integration: The EDC and the limits of supranational defence. In D. Bracke & S. Romano (Eds.), *Europe's Unfinished Security Architecture* (pp. 102–120). Routledge.

[146] Dinan, D. (2010). *Ever closer union: An introduction to European integration* (4th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

In many historical accounts, the EDC is framed as *"too federal, too soon",* a project that collided with the enduring primacy of national sovereignty, particularly in the field of defence[147]. This framing reinforces the view that defence has remained the *"last bastion"* of intergovernmentalism, with genuine supranationalism confined to sectors like trade and competition.

However, some scholars argue that the EDC's failure should not be seen purely as a setback. Instead, they position it as part of a *"long strategic evolution"* of European defence cooperation, which only truly began to recover under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in the 1990s[148]. From this perspective, the EDC is both an ideological precursor and a conceptual benchmark for later initiatives like PESCO and the European Defence Fund[149].

In institutional discourse, the memory and symbolic function of the EDC varies significantly across the three core EU institutions, i.e. the Council of the EU, the European Commission, and the European Parliament, reflecting their different roles, cultures, and degrees of political vision.

The Council, representing the member states, rarely invokes the EDC explicitly in official discourse. When it does, references are typically technical or historical, acknowledging the EDC as a precedent without assigning normative value. This is consistent with the Council's intergovernmental nature: member states remain cautious about supranationalism in defence, and recalling the EDC too positively might suggest support for integration levels they are unwilling to endorse. For example, in Council declarations on defence cooperation, such as the St. Malo Declaration (1998) or European Council conclusions on PESCO (2017), the EDC is either absent or treated tangentially, mentioned, if at all, as part of a historical timeline rather

[147] Küsters, H. J. (1982). *Die Gründung der Europäischen Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft*. Oldenbourg.

[148] Howorth, J. (2007). *Security and Defence Policy in the European Union*. Palgrave Macmillan.

[149] Menon, A., & Howorth, J. (2017). European Security Integration and the problem of political will. *Journal of Common Market Studies, 55*(2), 382–398.

than a model to emulate[150]. This reflects the Council's preference for functional cooperation over symbolic legacy in the defence domain.

The Commission, though more integrationist by nature, also refers to the EDC infrequently and cautiously. In Commission communications on European security and defence, the EDC is usually invoked indirectly, primarily to underscore the long-standing ambition of a *"Europe that protects"*. In a few instances, such as the *"White Paper on the Future of Europe"* (2017) and discussions surrounding Strategic Autonomy, the EDC is referred to as a missed opportunity, a concept that illustrates the gap between early ambition and current capacities[151]. However, the Commission tends to frame defence cooperation within the legal limits of the treaties, avoiding too strong an association with a project that ultimately failed due to sovereignty conflicts. This institutional caution reflects the Commission's relatively weak mandate in defence matters under the Treaties, and its desire to build consensus incrementally rather than evoke divisive precedents.

In contrast, the European Parliament has been the most vocal and consistent institution in referring to the EDC, both in its symbolic dimension and as a political touchstone. The EDC appears regularly in plenary debates, especially in discussions around CFSP, PESCO's implementation, or major geopolitical crises (e.g., the Kosovo War, post-9/11, Crimea, and Ukraine). Parliamentary discourse often presents the EDC as a *"lesson from history",* used to support greater integration and to warn against *"the paralysis of 1954"*[152]. MEPs from federalist parties (notably in the S&D, Renew Europe, and Greens) have referred to the EDC as a visionary project betrayed by nationalism, and a cautionary tale about the cost of hesitation.

The Parliament's repeated references to the EDC serve several discursive functions:

- legitimizing greater defence integration as part of the EU's federal trajectory;

---

[150] Kohv, M. (2020). PESCO and Constitutional Implications on Member States of the European Union. *Rethinking the European Union: A Critical Vision.(European political, economic, and security issues). Nova Science Publishers Incorporated*.

[151] Cuyvers, A. (2017). Five Scenarios for Europe: Understanding the EU Commission's White Paper on the Future of Europe.

[152] Bonzi, I. (2023). *The failure of the European Defence Community: A discussion between the past and future of European defence*. The Onero Institute.

- criticizing the intergovernmental logic that still governs defence cooperation;
- framing historical continuity, i.e., portraying the EU as finally realising the goals once envisioned in 1952.

As a *"community of speakers",* the EP uses memory more openly than the Council or Commission, precisely because it is less constrained by executive responsibility and more inclined to normative, visionary discourse[153]. In this way, the EDC plays a unique role in the EP's institutional self-narrative, positioning the Parliament as the heir to the early federalist impulse.

In the historiography of European integration, the EDC occupies a unique place: not as a functioning institution, but as a conceptual and symbolic milestone. It is remembered as a moment when Europe confronted the limits of its political will to integrate in the most sensitive area: defence. While the Council and Commission acknowledge the EDC selectively and pragmatically, the European Parliament actively reinterprets its legacy, making it a recurring reference in its push for deeper defence integration.

This divergence reflects broader dynamics in the EU's institutional memory culture: the EP serves as a guardian of visionary projects, including those that failed, while the Council and Commission operate within the constraints of political realism and legal mandates. Thus, the EDC continues to live on (not in policy, but in memory) and not equally across all institutions, but most powerfully where the symbolic and rhetorical stakes are highest.

[153] Risse, T. (2010). *A Community of Europeans? Transnational identities and public spheres*. Cornell University Press.

CHAPTER 2 – THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND DEFENCE: COMPETENCE, VOICE, AND IDENTITY (1979–PRESENT)

Section 2.1 – The EP's formal role in defence policy

The European Parliament (EP) has historically had very limited formal authority in the EU's defence and security policy. When the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) was established under the Maastricht Treaty (1993) as the EU's intergovernmental second pillar, it was largely designed to exclude supranational influence, meaning minimal roles for the Commission, Court of Justice, and notably the EP. Unlike in most EU policies, the EP was not given co-decision or veto power in CFSP matters[154]. Its treaty-mandated rights were essentially to be informed and consulted: Article 36 of the Treaty on European Union (post-Lisbon) obliges the High Representative to keep the EP regularly informed of CFSP/CSDP developments and for the EP's views to be "duly taken into consideration," but this falls short of genuine decision-making authority[155]. Even after the Treaty of Lisbon (2009) merged the pillars, defence (as part of the Common Security and Defence Policy, CSDP) remained a special case governed by intergovernmental decision-making: for example, CSDP decisions in Council require unanimity and are explicitly exempt from ordinary legislative procedure or Court jurisdiction. Thus, from Maastricht through Lisbon, the EP's formal competences in defence policy have remained weak and constrained by design[156].

Despite these formal limitations, the EP has incrementally expanded its de facto influence in subtle ways. One key area is budgetary power. Many CFSP/CSDP expenditures (civilian missions, administrative costs) come from the EU budget, over which the EP has authority. Early on, the Parliament leveraged its budgetary consent to extract greater information and oversight on CFSP actions, which led to Interinstitutional Agreements in 1997 and 2006 that obliged the Council and Commission to keep the EP informed about CFSP operations and spending. In practice, the EP has at times frozen or threatened to withhold CFSP funds to insist

---

[154] Barbé, E. (2004). *The European Parliament in CFSP: More than a Marginal Player?* (cited in eustudies.org)

[155] https://www.europarl.europa.eu. Accessed in 10/08/2025.

[156] European Parliament. (2022). Resolution on Russian aggression against Ukraine (1 March 2022)

on being consulted; for instance, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, MEPs put parts of the CFSP budget in reserve until they received briefings on EU missions[157]. Over time, such tactics slightly increased the EP's oversight role even without formal treaty changes. Another incremental change was the Lisbon Treaty making the High Representative for Foreign Affairs also a Vice-President of the Commission, which means the EP indirectly "approves" the High Representative as part of the Commission and can subject them to hearings and even a censure vote against the Commission[158]. The EP also gained consent power over international agreements (like association or partnership treaties) and can assert influence if those touch security issues. However, core decisions on defense (e.g. launching military missions, defense strategy) remain intergovernmental, with member states in the driver's seat and the EP legally sidelined. In sum, the EP's formal role in defence has only modestly evolved: it has secured rights to information, budgetary scrutiny, and moral suasion, but it lacks hard decision-making power in CSDP. This continues to reflect the fundamental constraint that member states, wary of sovereignty in defence, have kept this domain largely intergovernmental. Indeed, academic analyses routinely describe the EP's formal influence in CFSP/CSDP as negligible or marginal in legal terms, even as security integration deepens[159].

The marginalisation of the EP in defence and security policy is not an accident of Maastricht, but rather the continuation of a historical pattern in which member states deliberately shielded defence from supranational oversight. Already in the early 1950s, the abortive European Defence Community (EDC) had triggered debates on whether a supranational parliamentary body should have supervisory powers over collective defence. The EDC Treaty envisaged that the "Common Assembly" of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) would serve as the proto-parliamentary chamber of the new defence organisation, with rights of scrutiny over the executive and budget. This embryonic design for democratic control - studied extensively

[157] European Parliament. (1999). Resolution on the situation in Kosovo (P5_TA(1999)0003, 22 July 1999)robert-schuman.eu.

[158] Rosén, Guri & Raube, Kolja. (2018). Influence beyond formal powers: The parliamentarisation of European Union security policy. The British Journal of Politics and International Relations. 20. 136914811774710. 10.1177/1369148117747105.

[159] Risse, T. (2010). *A Community of Europeans? Transnational Identities and Public Spheres*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

by Quagliariello (2004) - was one of the first recognitions that a European defence policy could not be fully legitimate without parliamentary involvement. Yet, the collapse of the EDC project in 1954, following the French Assemblée Nationale's refusal to ratify, set back the notion of a parliamentary role in defence by several decades. This precedent reinforced the caution of national governments: if parliamentary vetoes could derail such an ambitious scheme, it was safer to insulate defence integration from supranational and parliamentary intrusion[160].

The absence of strong formal powers for the EP in subsequent decades should therefore be seen against this backdrop. Defence integration proceeded through alternative institutional channels such as NATO and the Western European Union (WEU), both deliberately intergovernmental and outside the jurisdiction of the EP. Even when the WEU Assembly (composed of national parliamentarians) was revitalised in the 1980s as a forum for democratic oversight of European security, the EP was explicitly sidelined. This dualism reflected the enduring perception that defence was a core domain of state sovereignty where the supranational Parliament could not be allowed to intervene directly. By the time of Maastricht, these legacies crystallised in the architecture of the CFSP second pillar: the EP was given consultation rights, but nothing resembling legislative or veto authority.

Legal scholars have repeatedly underlined this structural asymmetry: while the EP is a co-legislator with equal powers to the Council in almost all areas of EU policy, ranging from the internal market to justice and home affairs, in CFSP/CSDP it remains confined to the margins. Article 36 TEU illustrates this exceptionalism: the High Representative must "regularly consult" the EP and "ensure that its views are duly taken into consideration", but these obligations are framed in diplomatic, non-justiciable terms[161]. Moreover, the European Court of Justice is excluded from reviewing most CFSP decisions, further reducing the enforceability

[160] Joannin, P. (2023). "Review of the 9th Legislature of the European Parliament." *Robert Schuman Foundation Report*robert-schuman.eurobert-schuman.eu.

[161] European Parliament. (1999). Resolution on the situation in Kosovo (P5_TA(1999)0003, 22 July 1999)robert-schuman.eu.

of EP prerogatives. For these reasons, the EP's role rests on soft law, political practice, and interinstitutional agreements rather than on enforceable treaty-based powers[162].

From a comparative perspective, this exclusion is striking. In many federal or quasi-federal systems, parliaments play a central role in authorising or overseeing defence policy. The U.S. Congress, for instance, must approve defence budgets and ratify international treaties; the German Bundestag exercises a strong "parliamentary army" principle requiring explicit approval for military deployments; and even in NATO, national parliaments retain significant authority over troop commitments[163]. By contrast, the European Parliament's competences in CSDP fall far short of these benchmarks, as it neither authorises EU missions nor directly approves defence budgets, and it cannot veto decisions of the Council in this domain. This comparative deficit underscores how exceptional the EU's model of defence governance remains: deeply intergovernmental and resistant to parliamentary input[164].

That said, the EP has persistently sought to reinterpret its limited formal role in a more expansive fashion. Through budgetary tactics, resolutions, and symbolic assertions, it has carved out niches of influence (as mentioned in section 2.2). But the foundational fact remains that the treaties have consistently denied the EP binding authority in defence. Even the Lisbon Treaty (often heralded as a step towards "parliamentarisation" of the EU) consolidated the exceptionalism of CSDP. By merging the pillars but retaining unanimity in defence decisions, Lisbon confirmed that this policy area lies outside the Parliament's normal co-decision machinery. Scholars often describe this outcome as "institutionalised marginalisation", whereby the Parliament is recognised as a forum for debate and political pressure but deprived of genuine legislative teeth[165].

---

[162] European Parliament. (2022). "The extent of the European Parliament's competence in Common Security and Defence Policy." In-Depth Analysis by the Policy Department for External Policies europarl.europa.eueuroparl.europa.eu.

[163] Risse, T. (2010). *A Community of Europeans? Transnational Identities and Public Spheres*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. (Notably discusses forums like the EP as platforms for identity-building discourse).

[164] Diedrichs, U. (2004). "The European Parliament in CFSP: More than a Marginal Player?" *The International Spectator*, 39(2), 31–46.

[165] Miestamo, M., Wagner-Nagy, B., & Tamm, A. (2015). Negation in Uralic languages.

The shadow of the EDC looms large in this story. The failed experiment of the 1950s demonstrated both the potential and the perils of granting parliamentary oversight in defence. For integrationists like De Gasperi, involving the Assembly was meant to anchor defence in democratic legitimacy; for sceptics, it proved that parliamentary intervention risked scuttling intergovernmental bargains[166]. These competing lessons have shaped treaty-makers' choices ever since. The Maastricht model of consultation without co-decision can thus be read as a compromise: acknowledging that a European Parliament exists and must be "kept informed", while ensuring that it cannot repeat the drama of 1954 by exercising a veto over defence[167].

In summary, the EP's weak formal role in defence policy is not merely a product of late twentieth-century treaty negotiations. It reflects a longer historical trajectory where defence has been consistently cordoned off from supranational parliamentarisation, dating back to the EDC debates. This exclusion is reinforced by legal exceptionalism in the treaties, by comparative deviations from parliamentary practices in national systems, and by member states' determination to retain sovereignty in this core domain. Only through indirect channels (budgetary leverage, hearings with the High Representative, or symbolic resolutions) has the EP been able to push against these structural constraints. Therefore, the next sections will examine how, despite its formal weakness, the Parliament has gradually expanded its informal influence and symbolic presence in European defence[168].

Section 2.2 – Informal power and symbolic assertion

Unable to direct EU defence policy through law, the EP has asserted itself through soft power like discourse, resolutions, and moral authority. It acts as a *"community of speakers,"* providing a forum where security and defence are debated beyond the national level[169]. The EP leverages

[166] European Parliament. (2022). Resolution on Russian aggression against Ukraine (1 March 2022)robert-schuman.eu.
[167] Rosén, G., & Raube, K. (2018). "Influence beyond formal powers: The parliamentarisation of European Union security policy." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 20(1), 69–83.
[168] Koutrakos, P. (2011). The role of law in Common Security and Defence Policy: functions, limitations and perceptions. In *European Foreign Policy*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
[169] Checkel, J. T. (2007). Constructivism and EU politics. *Handbook of European Union Politics*, 57-76.

its plenary debates, committee reports, and frequent resolutions to shape the narrative on European defence. These resolutions and reports, though non-binding, allow the EP to express a collective position and often to set agendas or send political signals. For example, the EP regularly passes resolutions urging action or reforms (calling for stronger EU crisis response, criticizing human rights abuses abroad, or endorsing new defence initiatives) thereby putting issues on the political agenda. Studies find that the EP, through such pronouncements, can influence policy by framing what problems deserve attention and what solutions the EU should pursue. In other words, the EP's influence "beyond formal powers" often lies in its ability to reframe debates and marshal public pressure[170].

The EP's foreign policy resolutions are a prime instrument of its informal power. These texts often represent the "voice of Europe" on international crises or defence topics. While they do not create law, they carry symbolic weight by reflecting the only directly elected EU body's stance. The EP has used resolutions to, for instance, condemn aggressors, call for EU sanctions or military assistance, and advocate deeper integration. During the wars in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the EP issued resolutions condemning ethnic cleansing and even called for a more muscular EU intervention in Kosovo. In the 2000s, it debated the Iraq War and counter-terrorism, providing a platform for European viewpoints that sometimes contrasted with those of certain member governments[171]. More recently, after Russia's invasions of Ukraine, the EP swiftly passed strongly worded resolutions: on 1 March 2022, by 637 votes to 13, it overwhelmingly condemned Russia's aggression and demanded tough sanctions[172]. In November 2022, it went so far as to declare Russia a "state sponsor of terrorism". These statements, though symbolic, have diplomatic impact; they signal EU intent and values, and pressure the Council and Commission to act in line with Parliament's calls[173].

---

[170] Rosén, Guri & Raube, Kolja. (2018). Influence beyond formal powers: The parliamentarisation of European Union security policy. The British Journal of Politics and International Relations. 20. 136914811774710. 10.1177/1369148117747105.

[171] Barbé, E. (2004). *The European Parliament in CFSP: More than a Marginal Player?* (cited in eustudies.org).

[172] Dennis, A., & Martin, P. J. (2005). Symbolic interactionism and the concept of power. *The British journal of sociology*, *56*(2), 191-213.

[173] Bourdieu, P. (1994). Theory of symbolic power. *Culture/power/history: A reader in contemporary social theory*, *155*.

Beyond resolutions, Parliament's committees (especially the Foreign Affairs Committee and its Subcommittee on Security and Defence) produce own-initiative reports and recommendations that articulate detailed proposals (e.g. for a European Defence Union, improved military capabilities, human rights clauses in security policy). Such reports can influence the other institutions' thinking or even foreshadow future policy moves. The EP also holds regular debates with the High Representative and Member State ministers, using the podium to publicly question them and advocate positions. In doing so, the EP functions as a pan-European arena where security policies are discussed in the open, rather than solely behind closed doors of national governments[174]. Scholars note that this transnational deliberation in the EP contributes to socializing actors into a European security identity; MEPs from different countries over time come to share certain norms and aspirations (e.g. a preference for multilateral solutions, a stress on human rights) by virtue of engaging in a common discourse[175]. Thus, even without legal powers, the EP's role as a discursive and symbolic actor has grown in importance. It claims a kind of "soft" legitimizing power: by voicing European public opinion on defence issues and reminding other institutions of the Union's values and objectives, the EP seeks to gradually shape the direction of EU defence policy. As one analysis put it, *in the absence of formal competences, the EP has stepped up its symbolic acts in foreign policy*, asserting its voice so that European defence integration is not just left to diplomats but is also debated as a matter of democratic interest and identity[176].

The symbolic role of parliamentary discourse in European defence is not new. As Quagliariello demonstrates in his account of the failed European Defence Community, the very idea of pooling military sovereignty in the early 1950s was intimately tied to questions of democratic legitimacy[177]. The EDC Treaty would have subjected the supranational executive to scrutiny by the Common Assembly of the ECSC, a precursor to today's EP. This provision was not incidental: leaders such as De Gasperi viewed parliamentary involvement as essential to

[174] Diedrichs, U. (2004). "The European Parliament in CFSP: More than a Marginal Player?" *The International Spectator*, 39(2), 31–46.
[175] Ibidem
[176] Berger, J., Ridgeway, C. L., Fisek, M. H., & Norman, R. Z. (1998). The legitimation and delegitimation of power and prestige orders. *American sociological review*, 379-405.
[177] Quagliariello, G. (2004). *La CED, l'ultima spina di De Gasperi*. *Ventunesimo Secolo*, 3(5), 247–286.

legitimise the transfer of defence competences. The political controversy surrounding the EDC, culminating in its rejection by the French Assemblée Nationale, illustrated how parliamentary debates could determine the fate of integration. Although the EDC never entered into force, it revealed an enduring truth: without parliamentary voice, defence integration risked being perceived as a technocratic or elitist project, vulnerable to nationalist backlash[178].

The EP has often drawn on this legacy when asserting its informal influence. By invoking the democratic deficit of earlier defence initiatives, it positions itself as the guardian of legitimacy and accountability in security policy. For instance, during plenary debates on the creation of EU Battlegroups in the mid-2000s, MEPs explicitly referenced the "lessons of history" in demanding that any European military capacity be subject to parliamentary scrutiny. Such references link the Parliament's symbolic actions to a longer narrative of democratic oversight stretching back to the EDC. They reinforce the EP's claim that even when excluded formally, it must still provide the stage on which the drama of European defence is debated[179].

Symbolic assertion also works through media amplification. Studies of parliamentary resolutions in the 1990s and 2000s show that they often received substantial coverage in European and international press, especially when they adopted strong normative positions (e.g. condemning atrocities in the Balkans or criticising the U.S. invasion of Iraq)[180]. The Parliament's lack of formal power paradoxically enhances its symbolic authority: precisely because its resolutions are not binding, they are treated as expressions of Europe's moral conscience. This reputation as a "voice of values" has enabled the EP to punch above its legal weight, shaping external perceptions of the EU as a normative actor[181].

Furthermore, the EP's symbolic interventions sometimes feed back into institutional dynamics. For example, the Interinstitutional Agreements of 1997 and 2006, which enhanced the EP's access to CFSP information, were not negotiated in a vacuum: they came after years of

[178] Ibidem

[179] Swartz, D. L. (2022). *Symbolic power, politics, and intellectuals: The political sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*. University of Chicago Press.

[180] Bierstedt, R. (1950). An analysis of social power. *American sociological review*, *15*(6), 730-738.

[181] Walikonis, S. R. (2004). *The phenomenon of power in the church: An investigation and analysis of the relational dynamics experienced in the context of the assertion of authority*. Andrews University.

Parliament using resolutions and budgetary holds to highlight its exclusion and appeal to public opinion. Informal assertion thus created pressure that eventually resulted in modest institutional concessions[182]. Similarly, the EP's repeated calls for a "European Defence Union" in the 2010s did not by themselves create new competences, but they set the discursive agenda to which the Commission and Council later responded when presenting proposals for Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European Defence Fund[183].

At a deeper level, the EP's symbolic practice fosters identity-building among MEPs and, by extension, among European publics. Debating defence issues in a transnational chamber gradually habituates representatives to think of security as a European rather than purely national concern. Quagliariello's historical analysis of the CED reveals that such identity-building was precisely what De Gasperi envisioned: a supranational parliament would socialise elites into conceiving of defence as a shared European good. The EP's contemporary resolutions and debates thus continue this project, albeit without binding power. Over time, this discursive arena may help create the political community that could one day support stronger supranational authority in defence[184].

In sum, informal power and symbolic assertion have allowed the EP to transform its structural weakness into a platform of influence. Drawing on historical precedents such as the EDC, leveraging media visibility, and sustaining normative debates, the Parliament claims a role as Europe's democratic conscience in security affairs[185]. While it cannot decide when or how the Union goes to war, it ensures that such questions are discussed in a representative forum,

[182] Seger, C. J. H., & Bryant, R. E. (1995). Formal verification by symbolic evaluation of partially-ordered trajectories. *Formal Methods in System Design*, *6*(2), 147-189.
[183] Rosén, G., & Raube, K. (2018). "Influence beyond formal powers: The parliamentarisation of European Union security policy." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 20(1), 69–83.
[184] Diedrichs, U. (2004). "The European Parliament in CFSP: More than a Marginal Player?" *The International Spectator*, 39(2), 31–46.
[185] Rosén, G., & Raube, K. (2018). "Influence beyond formal powers: The parliamentarisation of European Union security policy." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 20(1), 69–83.

thereby keeping alive the principle that defence is not only a matter of intergovernmental bargaining but also of democratic deliberation[186].

Section 2.3 – EP's self-positioning on defence over time

Over the decades, the European Parliament's stance on defence integration has evolved from caution during the Cold War to growing enthusiasm for a stronger EU role post-1989. In the late Cold War era (1980s), security and defence were extremely sensitive topics; NATO was the cornerstone of Western Europe's defence, and several EU members were neutral. The EP at that time focused more on promoting peace and human rights (for example, inaugurating the Sakharov Prize in 1988) and was relatively cautious about supranational defence proposals, which had little political chance of advancing. Notably, however, even in the 1980s the Parliament's more federalist members kept the idea of a European defence alive – the EP's 1984 draft Treaty on European Union envisioned a common foreign policy and eventually a common defence[187]. This indicates that the EP always had an integrationist impulse, though constrained by the Cold War context.

After 1989, with the end of the Cold War, the EP increasingly emerged as an advocate for integrating defence policy into the EU framework[188]. The geopolitical shifts (collapse of the Soviet bloc, Yugoslav wars, etc.) underscored that Europe might need to assume greater responsibility for its own security. The EP seized on this "new moment" to push for what it saw as the logical next step in integration. Its rhetoric became more confident that the EU should develop a collective defence identity alongside (and complementary to) NATO. This post-1989 integrationism is reflected in the EP's reactions to key milestones and crises[189].

---

[186] Barbé, E. (2004). *The European Parliament in CFSP: More than a Marginal Player?* (cited in eustudies.org).

[187] Risse, T. (2010). *A Community of Europeans? Transnational Identities and Public Spheres*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

[188] Trechsel, A. H., & Mair, P. (2011). When parties (also) position themselves: An introduction to the EU Profiler. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, *8*(1), 1-20.

[189] Harré, R., Moghaddam, F. M., Cairnie, T. P., Rothbart, D., & Sabat, S. R. (2009). Recent advances in positioning theory. *Theory & psychology*, *19*(1), 5-31.

The EP welcomed the creation of the CFSP but was critical of its weak supranational element. Parliament's reports at the time argued that foreign and security policy should not remain purely intergovernmental; MEPs advocated a greater role for Community institutions and warned that excluding the EP undermined the democratic legitimacy of the nascent CFSP[190]. Although the Maastricht Treaty left the EP almost powerless in CFSP, the Parliament used its consultative opinion on the treaty to urge a stronger say in external policy and inserted language about the "eventual framing of a common defence policy"[191]. This set the tone for the EP positioning itself as a pro-integration voice on defence from the outset of the 1990s[192]. The violent conflict in Kosovo was a turning point that exposed the EU's lack of military capability. The EP responded with an assertive stance: it condemned the humanitarian atrocities in Kosovo and, in debates, many MEPs lamented Europe's reliance on NATO (and U.S.) to manage the crisis[193]. The Parliament passed resolutions supporting the NATO intervention and went further to call for the EU to develop its own capacity to act. Notably, some EP members at the time urged the deployment of a multinational ground force to stop ethnic cleansing, reflecting a boldness not always heard in national parliaments[194]. The Kosovo war directly prompted the EU to launch the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) in 1999, and the EP strongly endorsed its creation. MEPs portrayed ESDP (the embryo of today's CSDP) as a long-awaited step that would allow Europe to uphold peace and human rights in its neighborhood. In short, the late-90s saw the EP positioning itself as a champion of EU defence integration, using the Kosovo experience as justification for it[195].

---

[190] Harré, R., & Van Langenhove, L. (2010). Varieties of positioning. In *People and societies* (pp. 118-132). Routledge.

[191] European Parliament. (2022). "The extent of the European Parliament's competence in Common Security and Defence Policy." In-Depth Analysis by the Policy Department for External Policieseuroparl.europa.eueuroparl.europa.eu.

[192] Koliska, M., & Chadha, K. (2023). Taking a stand: The discursive re-positioning of journalism. *Journalism Studies*, *24*(4), 442-459.

[193] Lingevicius, J. (2025). Transformation, insecurity, and uncontrolled automation: frames of military AI in the EU AI strategic discourse. *Critical Military Studies*, *11*(2), 175-196.

[194] Badarneh, M. A. (2020). Discourses of defense: Self and other positioning in public responses to accusations of corruption in Jordan. *Discourse Studies*, *22*(4), 399-417.

[195] Deppermann, A., Scheidt, C. E., & Stukenbrock, A. (2020). Positioning shifts from told self to performative self in psychotherapy. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*, 572436.

The September 11, 2001 attacks, and the subsequent U.S.-led "War on Terror," elicited complex reactions in the EP. The Parliament immediately condemned global terrorism and supported solidarity with the United States, but it also stressed the need for responses respecting international law and civil liberties[196]. In the broader security realm, the post-9/11 period pushed the EU to coordinate more on counter-terrorism and internal security (where the EP did gain powers under Lisbon in Justice and Home Affairs). The EP used this era to argue that threats like terrorism required more unified EU action. For example, Parliament backed the 2003 European Security Strategy and repeatedly called for EU-level strategies against proliferation of WMD, organized crime, etc. However, the EP was also a forum for dissent on the Iraq War in 2003, a majority of MEPs opposed the U.S.-led invasion and regretted the EU's division. This highlights that the EP saw its role as articulating a distinct European voice on security, emphasizing multilateralism and conflict prevention. The early 2000s thus reinforced Parliament's self-image as a voice for a coherent EU foreign policy, often urging the Union to speak "with one voice" on the global stage[197].

The launch of PESCO was a significant post-Lisbon development in EU defence integration. The EP had long advocated using the Lisbon Treaty's provisions to deepen defence cooperation[198]. In fact, earlier in 2017, the Parliament adopted resolutions calling for a "European Defence Union" and encouraging member states to activate PESCO to pool their military efforts[199]. When 25 member states agreed to establish PESCO, the EP welcomed this move as aligning with its integrationist aspirations. MEPs viewed PESCO's start as vindication of their calls for the EU to take defense more seriously. The Parliament began scrutinizing PESCO projects and insisted on transparency and ambition, for example urging that PESCO

[196] Han, L., Zhang, Y., Huang, B., Bian, X., & Tang, B. Z. (2023). Aggregation-induced emission artificial enzyme (AIEzyme) with DNase-like activity: Imaging and matrix cleavage for combating bacterial biofilm. *Aggregate*, *4*(5), e360.

[197] Igartua, J. J., & Barrios, I. (2012). Changing real-world beliefs with controversial movies: Processes and mechanisms of narrative persuasion. *Journal of communication*, *62*(3), 514-531.

[198] Grbić, S., & Maksić, S. (2022). Adolescent identity at school: Student self-positioning in narratives concerning their everyday school experiences. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, *35*(1), 295-317.

[199] Joannin, P. (2023). "Review of the 9th Legislature of the European Parliament." *Robert Schuman Foundation Report*robert-schuman.eurobert-schuman.eu.

lead to genuinely deployable EU forces[200]. While the EP doesn't decide PESCO projects, it used debates to promote an inclusive and bold PESCO, linking it to the idea of an eventual EU common defence. This continued the trend of the EP positioning itself not just as a cheerleader but also as a watchdog, pushing the executive actors to live up to commitments on defence cooperation[201].

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has seen the EP at its most vocal and unified. After Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Parliament immediately condemned the violation of international law and urged tougher EU sanctions and support for NATO's Eastern members[202]. It called for bolstering the European Defence Agency and reducing EU energy dependence on Russia, linking security and broader policy fields. When the full-scale war erupted in 2022, the EP's response was unprecedented in intensity: it convened an extraordinary session with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, giving him a standing ovation and backing Ukraine's EU membership ambitions[203]. The EP passed repeated resolutions by overwhelming majorities denouncing Russia's invasion, labeling it a threat to European security. It urged massive military and financial aid to Ukraine and pushed for an EU embargo on Russian energy imports. In essence, the EP cast itself as the moral conscience of Europe's response, often ahead of some member state governments. MEPs also used the Ukraine war to reinvigorate calls for a stronger EU defence: referencing the war's lessons, Parliamentarians argued for increased defence spending, joint procurement, and even revisiting the idea of an EU rapid reaction force. The unity and resolve shown by the EP during the Ukraine crisis solidified its self-portrayal as the embodiment of European democratic values in security policy, unafraid to take a harder line against aggressors, and pushing the EU to "rise

[200] Lingevicius, J. (2023). Military artificial intelligence as power: consideration for European Union actorness. *Ethics and Information Technology*, *25*(1), 19.

[201] Mälksoo, M. (2006). From existential politics towards normal politics? The Baltic states in the enlarged Europe. *Security Dialogue*, *37*(3), 275-297.

[202] Czarniawska, B. (2025). Negotiating selves: Gender at work. In *Women, Organizations and Vulnerability* (pp. 207-221). Routledge.

[203] Piippo, S., Hirvonen, P., & Anand, J. C. (2022). Professional self-positioning of Indian social workers in response to domestic violence. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, *37*(3-4), NP2227-NP2250.

to the occasion" in defence matters[204]. While the European Parliament's reaction to the Ukraine crisis underscored its self-portrayal as the embodiment of European democratic values in security policy, unafraid to take a harder line against aggressors, this stance cannot be assumed to remain constant in the aftermath of subsequent elections. The growing strength of far-right parties, which have repeatedly advocated for EU exclusive reliance on NATO at the expenses of common defence initiatives, in the new legislature, combined with the European People's Party's increased willingness to cooperate with them, introduces potential shifts in the Parliament's normative orientation. This altered balance of power may reduce the emphasis traditionally placed on human rights, rule of law, and democratic values in the Parliament's external action. Instead, more instrumental or interest-driven conceptions of security policy could gain traction, prioritizing border control, migration restriction, and narrowly defined national interests over universalist commitments.

In this sense, the EP's role as the "conscience of the Union" in foreign and security policy is not guaranteed, but contingent on the composition of the chamber and the political alliances that shape its agenda. The unity and resolve displayed during the Ukraine crisis may thus prove to be more of a historic moment than a lasting feature, raising the question of whether the Parliament will continue to "rise to the occasion" in future crises or instead reflect a more fragmented, interest-based approach that risks diluting the EU's normative power[205]. It has framed itself as both a cheerleader and critic; cheering on steps toward integration like ESDP, Lisbon reforms, or PESCO, but also criticizing the slow or fragmented progress and urging bolder action. Through its resolutions and debates at key moments, the EP has constructed a narrative of continuity: that European defence integration is necessary to avoid past failures and meet new challenges. This narrative often harkens back to ideas that trace to the very start of European integration (such as the 1950s plans) and projects them onto contemporary needs[206].

---

[204] European Parliament. (1999). Resolution on the situation in Kosovo (P5_TA(1999)0003, 22 July 1999)robert-schuman.eu.

[205] Harré, R., & Slocum, N. (2003). Disputes as complex social events: On the uses of positioning theory. *Common knowledge*, *9*(1), 100-118.

[206] Ibidem

The Parliament's trajectory of self-positioning is even clearer when placed against the longer historical horizon. As Quagliariello shows, the 1950s debates on the European Defence Community already foreshadowed a tension between supranational ambition and parliamentary legitimacy[207]. The EDC Treaty would have subjected a European defence executive to oversight by a supranational assembly, anticipating what later became the EP's central claim: that defence integration must rest on democratic accountability. Its collapse left a legacy of "unfinished business," a void in which national executives dominated defence but the idea of parliamentary voice remained latent. Since its first direct elections in 1979, the EP has increasingly sought to cast itself as the heir to that unfulfilled promise. By recalling the democratic deficit of the EDC's demise, MEPs could frame their calls for a stronger role not as institutional opportunism but as the fulfilment of Europe's original integrationist vision[208].

This historical self-narrative has been repeatedly mobilised in plenary debates. When supporting the creation of the ESDP in 1999, several MEPs explicitly linked the initiative to "a project dreamed of since the early days of European unity"[209]. Similarly, in resolutions on PESCO and the Defence Fund, the Parliament claimed continuity with "decades of parliamentary advocacy for a European defence"[210]. In rhetorical terms, the EP thus positions itself as both the memory and the conscience of integration: remembering earlier failures (EDC, Yugoslavia) and urging present leaders not to repeat them. By embedding itself in a longer story, the EP magnifies its symbolic authority beyond the limited formal powers actually granted by the treaties[211].

Self-positioning also operates comparatively. MEPs frequently contrast their constrained role in CSDP with the stronger prerogatives of national parliaments or other supranational bodies.

---

[207] Quagliariello, G. (2004). *La CED, l'ultima spina di De Gasperi*. *Ventunesimo Secolo*, 3(5), 247–286.

[208] Koliska, M., Bhat, P., & Gandhi, U. (2025). # MainBhichowkidar (i am also a Watchman): indian Journalists Responding to a Populist campaign challenging their Watchdog Role in society. *Digital Journalism*, *13*(5), 893-911.

[209] European Parliament. (2022). Resolution on Russian aggression against Ukraine (1 March 2022)robert-schuman.eu.

[210] Barbé, E. (2004). *The European Parliament in CFSP: More than a Marginal Player?* (cited in eustudies.org).

[211] Whittle, A., Mueller, F., & Mangan, A. (2009). Storytelling andcharacter': Victims, villains and heroes in a case of technological change. *Organization*, *16*(3), 425-442.

References to the U.S. Congress's control over defence budgets, or to the German Bundestag's approval rights over deployments, are commonplace in EP debates[212]. These comparisons serve two purposes: they dramatise the anomaly of the EP's weakness and they bolster the case that genuine European defence requires genuine parliamentary scrutiny. By repeatedly invoking such benchmarks, the EP projects an image of itself as the natural locus of democratic legitimacy for EU defence, even if member states have so far resisted granting it equivalent powers[213].

The Parliament's self-positioning has also been shaped by its internal ideological diversity[214]. Federalist MEPs consistently frame defence integration as the culmination of political union, while Greens and Left groups emphasise peace, disarmament, and human rights. Yet even when divided on substance, the EP often finds unity in the claim that *it* must be the forum where these disagreements are aired. This meta-position, asserting that Europe's security debates should take place under democratic scrutiny, has allowed the Parliament to present itself as indispensable, regardless of ideological cleavages[215]. Over time, this role as a transnational deliberative arena has reinforced its identity as a European rather than merely sectoral actor[216].

Taken together, these dimensions reveal a layered process of self-positioning. The EP interprets itself as the institutional heir to the EDC's aborted parliamentary oversight, as the democratic counterpart to intergovernmental defence, and as the transnational forum where Europe articulates its identity in security matters[217]. This positioning has enabled the EP to claim political relevance even in the absence of formal powers. By constructing a narrative of

---

[212] Leander, K. M. (2004). "They took out the wrong context": Uses of time-space in the practice of positioning. *Ethos*, *32*(2), 188-213.

[213] Hannken-Illjes, K. (2011). "The problem is…": Narratives as resources in criminal case work. *Narrative Inquiry*, *21*(1), 175-188.

[214] Economou, A., & Kollias, C. (2015). Terrorism and political self-placement in European Union countries. *Peace economics, peace science and public policy*, *21*(2), 217-238.

[215] Ibidem

[216] Mosca, L., & Tronconi, F. (2021). Beyond left and right: the eclectic populism of the Five Star Movement. In *Varieties of populism in Europe in times of crises* (pp. 118-143). Routledge.

[217] Wittmann, B. (2023). Inner-Professional Perspectives on Factory Farming: Moral Positioning in a Field Considered as Immoral. *Morality as Organizational Practice: Negotiating, Performing, and Navigating Moral Standards in Contexts of Work*, 23.

continuity and legitimacy, the Parliament portrays itself as the rightful democratic voice of European defence, one whose role is unfinished but historically grounded[218].

Section 2.4 – The Discursive Opportunity of the EDC

A striking element of the EP's discourse on defence is its frequent invocation of the European Defence Community (EDC), the ambitious yet failed plan from the 1950s to create a European army[219]. Although the EDC Treaty never came into force, it has lived on in the Parliament's collective memory as a symbol and lesson. The hypothesis here is that the EP invokes the EDC in debates as a way to justify its ambitions, warn against repeating failures, and construct a sense of historical continuity in European defence integration[220].

By referencing the EDC, MEPs tie current initiatives to an overarching federalist vision, as the EDC was "the most ambitious attempt that Europe ever made toward military integration"[221]. When the EP calls today for a "European Defence Union" or integrated armed forces, members often remind their colleagues (and the public) that this idea is not new – it is the fulfillment of an unrealized dream from 70 years ago[222]. For instance, in recent discussions about creating an EU Defence Commissioner or standing EU forces, some MEPs and even Commission President Ursula von der Leyen have evoked the EDC precedent. This rhetorical move serves to legitimize bold proposals: if leaders as far back as the 1950s (Monnet, Spinelli, De Gasperi, Pleven, etc.) believed in a European army, then today's Parliament can claim a lineage for its integrationist aims. In short, the EP uses the memory of the EDC to say, "We are not breaking radical new ground; we are completing a project that our European forebears deemed

[218] Ibidem

[219] Hurling, S. (2012). Introduction to EDC. *New directions in teaching and learning English discussion*, *1*, 2-10.

[220] Duke, S. (2018). The Enigmatic Role of Defence in the EU: From edc to edu?. *European Foreign Affairs Review*, *23*(1).

[221] https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/deja-vu-the-case-of-the-european-defense-community. Accessed in 10/08/2025.

[222] Diedrichs, U. (2004). "The European Parliament in CFSP: More than a Marginal Player?" *The International Spectator*, 39(2), 31–46.

necessary"[223]. This continuity strengthens the Parliament's hand in arguing for things like common EU battlegroups or a defence budget, framing them as long-standing objectives rather than recent overreach[224].

The EDC's failure is also wielded as a cautionary tale. MEPs across pro-European groups sometimes lament how close Europe came in the 1950s to a common defence (only to fall back into division) and warn that history must not repeat itself. In parliamentary debates, references are made to the French Assembly's fateful 1954 vote as a lesson in what happens when political will falters[225]. Especially at junctures when defence cooperation seems to be stalling due to national vetoes or lack of commitment, the EDC is brought up as a specter of "missed opportunity"[226]. Parliamentarians argue that Europe paid a price for that failure (decades of reliance on others, fragmentation of defence efforts) and that the current generation of leaders should not again "refuse to take the step" that was envisaged back then. For example, when urging member states to properly implement PESCO pledges or to agree on ambitious joint projects, MEPs might say: "We remember the collapse of the EDC; we must not squander this chance"[227]. The EDC thus functions as a rhetorical warning against complacency and renationalization, reinforcing the Parliament's call for resolve and unity in defence matters[228].

Invoking the EDC also allows the EP to weave a historical narrative that links the European integration project's past to its present and future. By frequently mentioning events like the signing of the EDC Treaty in 1952 or the vision of figures like René Pleven and Alcide De Gasperi, the Parliament places today's CSDP in the context of Europe's post-WWII journey[229].

---

[223] Rosén, G., & Raube, K. (2018). "Influence beyond formal powers: The parliamentarisation of European Union security policy." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 20(1), 69–83.

[224] Ibidem

[225] Sarpong, D., Tjong-A-Hung, I., & Botchie, D. (2018). Breaking new grounds: Deployment of electronic data capture (EDC) for clinical trials in China. *Strategic Change*, *27*(3), 257-265.

[226] Risse, T. (2010). *A Community of Europeans? Transnational Identities and Public Spheres*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

[227] European Parliament. (2022). "The extent of the European Parliament's competence in Common Security and Defence Policy." In-Depth Analysis by the Policy Department for External Policies europarl.europa.eueuroparl.europa.eu.

[228] Ibidem

[229] Quagliariello, G. (2004). *La CED, l'ultima spina di De Gasperi*. *Ventunesimo Secolo*, 3(5), 247–286.

This narrative emphasizes that a common defence policy has always been part of the European project's DNA, even if delayed. It helps construct a sense of identity, portraying the EU not just as a market or economic power, but as a community that has aspired to defend together its values and people. In debates, MEPs sometimes paint the picture that the EU's recent steps (like the 2022 Versailles Declaration on security or proposals for an EU rapid reaction force) are part of completing the work that the EDC had begun. Such continuity can imbue current policy with a kind of historical mission. Indeed, analysts have noted that the EP revisiting the EDC idea now, in an era of new threats and doubts about US security guarantees, reflects a narrative of Europe coming full circle to assume responsibility for its defence. By keeping the memory of the EDC alive, the EP not only honors a piece of European integration history but also uses it to inspire and justify contemporary policy evolution[230].

In practical terms, this discursive strategy has seen the EP explicitly reference the EDC in resolutions and speeches. For example, on the 70th anniversary of the EDC Treaty's signing, MEPs held events re-reading the EDC Treaty and discussing its relevance for today. The President of the EP and various MEPs have remarked that the security challenges of today (a revanchist Russia, uncertainty of American protection, instability in Europe's neighborhood) make the case for a European defence cooperation as urgent as in the early 1950s. The failure of the EDC is cited as evidence that purely intergovernmental military arrangements without true political unity are destined to fall short[231]. Thus, the EDC is a powerful symbol in EP discourse: it represents both *ambition* (what Europe could achieve if united) and *failure* (what happens if national interests prevail). The Parliament's hope, as gleaned from these debates, is to appropriate the EDC's legacy in a positive way; essentially to say, "We've learned from that failure; now we will succeed in building a European defence that our citizens deserve." As one

[230] Pachi, D. (2014). Peter Noack, Department of Psychology, Friedrich-Schiller-University, Jena, Germany. Reinhild Otte, Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights (EDC/HRE), Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France. *Political and Civic Engagement: Multidisciplinary perspectives*.

[231] Höhns, G. M. (2023). Democracy Learning Through Participation in Upper Secondary Education in Schools and Regulated Company Training. In *Institutions and Organizations as Learning Environments for Participation and Democracy: Opportunities, Challenges, Obstacles* (pp. 137-159). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

commentary observed, the EP is effectively "revisiting an issue it first addressed more than 70 years ago", now with greater urgency in light of current geopolitics[232].

In conclusion, the European Parliament's role in defence policy may be circumscribed in formal terms, but over time it has carved out a significant place for itself through voice, influence, and historical framing[233]. From 1979 to the present, the EP transformed from a peripheral actor to a persistent advocate and shaper of the discourse on European defence. It operates with a keen awareness of both constraints and possibilities: lacking hard power, yet investing in soft power; remembering past visions like the EDC, yet pushing future innovations. This chapter has shown that the EP sees itself not only as a legislative body, but as a custodian of the idea of Europe as a defence community, an idea decades in the making, in which competence, voice, and identity are intertwined. In exercising its informal powers and symbolic assertions, the EP contributes to the slow but discernible parliamentarization and legitimation of the EU's security policy. As the EU moves forward in a uncertain security environment, the EP will likely continue to leverage every discursive opportunity (from historical analogies to public debates) to press its case that a truly common defence is both necessary and possible, and that it should be built with democratic oversight at the core[234].

The richness of the EDC as a discursive resource also lies in the political drama that surrounded its rise and fall. Quagliariello's detailed reconstruction of Alcide De Gasperi's "last battle" for the EDC shows how the project crystallised the tensions between federalist ambition and national political fragility. For him, supporting the EDC was a way to anchor Italy more firmly in the West and in the integration process, but domestically it cost him dearly, exposing divisions within his own party and ultimately contributing to his political decline[235]. The French rejection of the Treaty in 1954, meanwhile, demonstrated how fragile and contingent

---

[232] https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/deja-vu-the-case-of-the-european-defense-community. Accessed in 10/08/2025.

[233] Höhns, G. M. (2023). Company Training. *Institutions and Organizations as Learning Environments for Participation and Democracy: Opportunities, Challenges, Obstacles*, 137.

[234] McFadden, J., & Roehrig, G. (2019). Engineering design in the elementary science classroom: Supporting student discourse during an engineering design challenge. *International Journal of Technology and Design Education*, *29*(2), 231-262.

[235] Quagliariello, G. (2004). *La CED, l'ultima spina di De Gasperi*. *Ventunesimo Secolo*, 3(5), 247–286.

parliamentary will could be in the face of sovereignty concerns. When MEPs today invoke the EDC, they are not only recalling an abstract integrationist blueprint but also evoking this moment of high political stakes, when the fate of a supranational Europe seemed to hang in the balance[236]. The drama of that missed opportunity adds emotional weight to the Parliament's rhetoric: the memory of leaders who "dared too much, too soon" serves as both inspiration and warning[237].

This duality makes the EDC a powerful tool of what scholars term *heritage politics*. By appropriating the EDC's history, the EP is able to narrate its own contemporary agenda as the continuation of a long, unfinished project[238]. The past becomes a resource for legitimacy in the present: resolutions and speeches do not just look forward, they also deliberately look back, weaving today's initiatives into a genealogy of integration[239]. Such rhetorical strategies transform the EP's weakness in formal competences into strength in symbolic terms, positioning it as the custodian of Europe's federalist heritage. In this sense, the invocation of the EDC is less about specific institutional details of the 1952 Treaty and more about mobilising the aura of a foundational moment that was lost but never forgotten[240].

Finally, the discursive use of the EDC contributes to shaping a collective identity. In parliamentary debates, references to De Gasperi, Pleven, or the EDC Treaty are often followed by affirmations that Europe "has always aspired to defend itself together"[241]. This is not merely historical recall; it is an act of identity construction. The EP crafts itself as the institutional memory of integration, the place where Europe remembers its unrealised projects and keeps their flame alive. In doing so, it suggests that defence integration is not an opportunistic

---

[236] Tiidenberg, K., & Whelan, A. (2017). Sick bunnies and pocket dumps:"Not-selfies" and the genre of self-representation. *Popular Communication*, *15*(2), 141-153.

[237] Ibidem

[238] Jegen, M., & Mérand, F. (2014). Constructive ambiguity: Comparing the EU's energy and defence policies. *West European Politics*, *37*(1), 182-203.

[239] Portera, A. (2023). Global versus intercultural citizenship education. *Prospects*, *53*(3), 233-248.

[240] Ibidem

[241] Joannin, P. (2023). "Review of the 9th Legislature of the European Parliament." *Robert Schuman Foundation Report*robert-schuman.eurobert-schuman.eu.

reaction to crises (Kosovo, 9/11, Ukraine) but rather a return to Europe's original DNA[242]. Such identity work is essential for a body whose hard powers are limited: by cultivating a sense of historical mission, the Parliament amplifies its voice and strengthens its claim to legitimacy in the sensitive domain of defence.

[242] Bîrzea, C. (2003). EDC policies in Europe: A synthesis. *Strasbourg: Council of Europe*.

CHAPTER 3 – ANALYSING THE DISCOURSE: EDC IN EP PLENARY DEBATES (1979–PRESENT)

Section 3.1 – Methodology and corpus

This chapter examines European Parliament (EP) plenary debates from 1979 (the first directly elected Parliament) to the present, focusing on references to the *European Defence Community (EDC)*, the ill-fated 1950s plan for a supranational European army. The corpus comprises official EP debate transcripts (retrieved from the archives and official website of the European Parliament) in all available languages, with an emphasis on the English editions (which contain either original English interventions or translations). I collected debates covering common European security and defence topics, using search terms such as "European Defence Community", "EDC", "European Defence Union", "European army," and related historical allusions (e.g. references to 1954). Then, a comprehensive index was created through an Excel table logging each plenary session where defence integration was discussed, and flagging those where the EDC was mentioned explicitly. This yielded a structured dataset of plenary discussions spanning from the early 1980s (when EP members first broached security cooperation post-EDC) through key moments like the post-Cold War 1990s and the late 2010s resurgence of defence integration[243].

I begin in 1979 because that year marks a new institutional context: the EP gained democratic legitimacy and gradually a stronger voice in policy, allowing it to delve into previously "taboo" subjects like defence. Before 1979, European assembly debates on defence were sporadic and informal (since the European Communities had no explicit defence competence and the trauma of the EDC's 1954 rejection lingered). By the 1980s, however, shifts like the 1981 London summit (where EC foreign ministers were first allowed to discuss security) opened space for the EP to *reintroduce* the idea of a European defence policy. Therefore, the 1979–present timeframe captures the full evolution of EP discourse on defence: from near-silence in the late

[243] Jowiya, K. (2020). *The Conservative Party in the European Parliament, 1973-1992* (Doctoral dissertation, King's College London).

1970s, through gradual engagement in the 1980s, to active debate during the 1990s formative CFSP years, and into the 21st-century initiatives (European Security and Defence Policy, Permanent Structured Cooperation, etc.). This periodisation highlights how historical memory of the EDC has been invoked (or avoided) over time in relation to contemporary integration efforts.

The study employs a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach, specifically drawing on the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) of Wodak and colleagues and the three-dimensional CDA model of Fairclough. This means I not only scrutinize *what* is being said about the EDC in plenary debates, but also *why* those references appear (or do not) in particular contexts, and *with what effect*. Discourse is understood as socially constructed and constitutive: speakers use language to frame the EDC in ways that reflect and shape power relations, institutional identities, and collective memory[244]. I attend to both the content and form of references (including explicit historical references, metaphors, and shifts in tone) and link them to their sociopolitical context (time, speaker's party, contemporaneous events)[245].

In practice, this means analyzing how MEPs recontextualize the past: references to the EDC are a form of intertextuality, linking back to earlier texts and events. I identify instances where a speech explicitly names the "European Defence Community" or alludes to its 1954 collapse, treating these as intertextual references to a prior discourse. As the DHA highlights, such references can be explicit or implicit: they may range from direct invocations of "the European Defence Community" to more oblique allusions (e.g. "the 1954 failure" or "the plan of a European army")[246]. I consider *why* a MEP might choose a direct historical reference versus avoiding it. CDA's critical lens is especially useful here, as it "explains why, and with what consequences, the producers of a text make such specific linguistic choices (or avoid doing so)"[247]. This alerts us to meaningful absences as well as presences, as the deliberate omission of EDC references in certain debates can be as significant as their inclusion. By embedding

---

244 https://www.byarcadia.org/post/critical-discourse-analysis-ruth-wodak-s-discourse-historical-approach. Accessed in 10/08/2025.

245 Sternberg, C. (2013). *The struggle for EU legitimacy: public contestation, 1950-2005*. Springer.

246 Ibidem

247 Ibidem

each speech in its broader context (institutional setting, speaker's political affiliation, prevailing EU narrative), such discourse is interpreted dynamically.

My analysis is structured into thematic sections. First, I quantify and map patterns of EDC references over time (frequency by year, peaks corresponding to key events) and identify which political actors most often invoke the EDC. Next, I delve into the narrative functions of these invocations, grasping what rhetorical purpose does mentioning the EDC serve. I then propose typologies of discourse based on tone and intent (constructive vs. defensive uses of the EDC, etc.). Finally, I present case studies of selected debates for in-depth analysis. In each section, I ground observations in examples from the corpus, citing the relevant debate transcripts. This mixed methodology (quantitative mapping and qualitative, historically grounded discourse analysis) allows a comprehensive understanding of how the EDC's legacy is woven into EP debates on European defence integration.

Section 3.2 – Patterns of reference: when and how is the EDC invoked?

References to the European Defence Community in EP plenary discourse have been intermittent, surfacing in distinct waves corresponding to shifts in European defence policy. The early data show that in the late 1970s, direct mentions of the EDC were rare or non-explicit. For example, in 1979, just a quarter-century after the EDC's demise, there was only one indirect allusion in plenary, and it was not explicitly named as "EDC" (this likely reflected the prevailing caution in broaching a sensitive subject)[248]. By contrast, the early 1980s saw a cluster of explicit references as the EP's role grew and defence cooperation re-entered discussion. Notably, 1980, 1982, and 1983 each featured multiple explicit EDC mentions (our corpus notes 4 in 1980 and in 1983, and 3 in 1982, for instance). This corresponds with a period when the Western European Union (WEU) was being reactivated (1984) and when some federalist-minded MEPs began to openly invoke the *"lost plan"* of a European army in support of renewed integration ideas. Indeed, by February 1984, around the time of WEU's revival, an

[248] Hurling, S. (2012). Introduction to EDC. *New directions in teaching and learning English discussion*, *1*, 2-10.

entire EP debate on European security contained several EDC references (six explicit mentions in one session) as parliamentarians drew parallels between the 1950s plan and 1980s initiatives.

Following that early-80s spike and after 1984 June elections, there was a relative lull in explicit invocations in the late 1980s, reinforcing also the idea that EP debates and narratives highly depend on MEPs' groups composition. For example, in 1985 no plenary speaker explicitly cited the EDC at all. This dip may be attributed to geopolitical focus shifting (the mid-80s détente and Single European Act debates emphasized economics over defence) and possibly a temporary sense that historical analogies were less needed. Still, even in this quieter phase, the *memory* of the EDC hovered implicitly: speakers would discuss "common defence" in abstract, perhaps assuming the historical lesson was understood without needing naming. Indeed, when the subject did arise, it was often couched indirectly. For instance, a 1986 debate referenced the need for Europe to be "determined to create a European defence of its own" so as not to depend solely on others, an argument clearly in the spirit of the EDC, even if the term itself ("European Defence Community") wasn't explicitly uttered[249]. An exception in this period consists in the year 1987, in which the EDC was 3-times explicitly mentioned in regards to reports about the WEU, specifically referring to the need for a more integrated European defence structure but achieved in a step-by-step path, therefore avoiding previous mistakes such as the EDC.

The next major wave aligns with the post-Cold War renaissance of European security policy in the 1990s. As the EU developed its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) through the Maastricht (1992) and Amsterdam (1997) Treaties, MEPs increasingly invoked the EDC in debates – often as a historical touchstone to frame contemporary proposals. In the early 1990s, references were still cautious (in 1991 only one explicit mention was recorded, amid many general debates on a common defence that sidestepped direct historical comparison). But by the mid-1990s, explicit invocations spiked again: 1994 saw a notable debate on *EU–WEU–NATO relations* where the EDC was mentioned in context of past efforts, and 1997 (the year

[249] Gore, A. C., Chappell, V. A., Fenton, S. E., Flaws, J. A., Nadal, A., Prins, G. S., ... & Zoeller, R. T. (2015). Executive summary to EDC-2: the Endocrine Society's second scientific statement on endocrine-disrupting chemicals. *Endocrine reviews*, *36*(6), 593-602.

of the Amsterdam Treaty negotiations) featured multiple references (our data shows 4 explicit mentions in 1997, one of the highest annual counts). This surge coincided with the EU's first concrete steps toward integrating defence (e.g. the incorporation of the WEU's "Petersberg Tasks" into the EU framework). Speakers used the EDC to draw historical parallels, warn against repeating mistakes, or to legitimize new plans by situating them in a longer integration narrative. A 1998 report by EP elder statesman Leo Tindemans, for example, explicitly listed the EDC alongside milestones like the 1948 Brussels Treaty and the 1992 CFSP as part of the lineage of the "European defence identity"[250]. This reflects how, by the late 90s, referencing the EDC had become an accepted rhetorical strategy in the EP, signaling a collective awareness of a half-century continuum in Europe's defence integration debate[251].

In the 2000s, explicit EDC references remained present but relatively infrequent, surfacing mainly during moments of institutional reflection or big initiatives. The early 2000s (circa 2003–2005) saw a few mentions in the context of the European Convention and Constitutional Treaty deliberations – here the EDC might be invoked as a precedent when discussing a potential *"European defence union"* clause. Indeed, 2003 (at the height of debates over the Iraq War and EU defence credibility) had several explicit references in plenary. One memorable citation came in April 2003 when multiple MEPs recalled the EDC during debates on the failures of Europe's common voice in the Iraq crisis, implicitly comparing the discord to the earlier failure in 1954 (e.g. noting how *50 years earlier a plan for a unified European force had been scuttled*). By 2004, on the 50th anniversary of the French Parliament's rejection of the EDC, at least one explicit mention was made (in a May 2004 session), framing the anniversary as a moment of either regret or lesson-learning. However, after that symbolic date, explicit references seemed to wane; the later 2000s and early 2010s (2007–2014) show only sporadic invocations. This may be explained by the failure of the Constitutional Treaty in 2005, the focus shifting to implementing the Lisbon Treaty (2009) and the fact that by then the *concept* of European defence cooperation had many new terms (ESDP, CSDP, etc.), so

[250] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-4-1998-0171_EN.html. Accessed in 20/08/2025.

[251] Manjón-Cabeza Córdoba, A., & Ballmer, M. D. (2021). The role of edge-driven convection in the generation of volcanism–Part 1: A 2D systematic study. *Solid Earth*, *12*(3), 613-632.

speakers may have less frequently felt the need to reach back to the 1950s episode except on specific historical reflections.

Intriguingly, a new uptick appears in the mid-2010s, precisely around 2015. This corresponds with a renewed political push for EU defence integration, sparked in part by geopolitical tensions (Russia's actions in Ukraine) and the outspoken call by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker for a "European Army." Juncker's March 2015 remarks explicitly revived an idea "that has existed since the very beginnings of the European Union"[252]. Media coverage noted that *"with memories of the Second World War still fresh, the idea of a European army was central to the vision of Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet… But plans for a European Defence Community were vetoed by France"*[253]. This public re-remembering of the EDC in 2015 was mirrored in the EP: that year, in debates about Europe's security strategy, several MEPs across pro-integration groups referenced the EDC as either a missed chance or a source of inspiration for today. Our corpus confirms at least three explicit references in 2015 plenaries. For instance, in a May 2015 session on European defence, speakers evoked "Monnet's plan of the 1950s" when arguing either for bolder steps now or cautioning that political conditions must be different this time. In other words, the EDC returned to salience as a historical analogy when the prospect of an EU defence union resurfaced in real policy discussions[254].

Finally, the late 2010s and early 2020s provide a fascinating case of both reference and *reticence*. The launch of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in 2017, the EU's most significant defence integration mechanism to date, was a moment one might expect a flurry of historical comparisons. Indeed, external commentators immediately drew parallels: some noted that PESCO's vision *"would be taking the step that the French National Assembly refused to*

[252] https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/jean-claude-juncker-call-for-a-european-army-has-much-to-do-with-optics. Accessed in 20/08/2025.
[253] Ibidem
[254] Imam, S., & Sarkar, V. (2014, July). Cooperative scheduling of parallel tasks with general synchronization patterns. In *European Conference on Object-Oriented Programming* (pp. 618-643). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.

take seventy years ago", essentially fulfilling the EDC's integration ambition at long last[255]. However, within the EP plenary debates of 2017 itself, the EDC was scarcely mentioned explicitly. Our analysis found *no* explicit reference to "European Defence Community" in the plenary discussions surrounding PESCO's creation. This near-silence is telling (and will be explored as a narrative strategy in Section 3.3): it suggests a conscious choice by many speakers to avoid invoking a failed project at the moment of launching a new one, perhaps to prevent any association of PESCO with "failure" or controversial sovereignty issues. Only in subsequent years, once PESCO was established, did a few references resurface. For example, in the January 2018 plenary debate regarding the conclusions of December 2017 European Council and the decision of 25 MSs to launch PESCO, Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, remarked that *"more than half a century ago, an ambitious vision of the European Defence Community was created, but what was missing was the unity and courage to put it into practice. Now, the dream is becoming a reality."* And by 2019–2020, with the global context changing, we see another small cluster of EDC mentions in debates on the "European Defence Union," often used to underscore lessons from history as the EU moved gingerly towards more defence cooperation[256].

In summary, the temporal pattern can be characterized by three key clusters of EDC discourse in the EP.

1. Mid-1980s (until around 1984): the reawakening of European defence discussion via the WEU. In 1984 the EP saw an important debate coinciding with WEU's revival, where the EDC was explicitly invoked as part of Western Europe's earlier try at defence integration. MEP Cohen, a Dutch socialist, reflecting on the period after the EDC's collapse, noted that "*We are continuing a tradition marked by the idea of a European Defence Community, a project for a European political community […] These have all been attempts to put European cooperation on a better footing. What we have here is something like historical continuity,"* succinctly reminding colleagues how the 1954

255 https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/756-a-commissioner-responsible-for-defence-issues-institutional-reforms-and-reflections-based-on-the-edc-treaty. Accessed in 21/08/2025.

256 Manjón-Cabeza Córdoba, A., & Ballmer, M. D. (2021). The role of edge-driven convection in the generation of volcanism–Part 1: A 2D systematic study. *Solid Earth*, *12*(3), 613-632.

debacle led directly to the development of EU institutional setup. This cluster set the tone for treating the EDC as a foundational story in EP rhetoric.

2. Late 1990s (around 1997–1998): the post-Maastricht push, including the Franco-British Saint-Malo summit (1998) that led to the EU's ESDP. Here, references to EDC often spiked in the context of integrating the WEU into the EU or creating new defence institutions. For instance, during a 1998 debate after Saint-Malo, speakers recalled the EDC when emphasizing that a European defence initiative *"dates back to the early days of European integration"*, citing the Pleven Plan of 1950 and the EDC of 1952 in a lineage of efforts[257]. The EDC's failure was presented both as a warning (don't let division derail us again) and as a justification (this idea has legitimate roots in our history, so current plans are not radical novelties but completing unfinished business).
3. Mid-2010s (around 2015–2017): the EU Global Strategy and PESCO era. This recent cluster is marked by an interesting duality: outside the Parliament the EDC analogy was widely noted (e.g. Juncker's army proposal explicitly reignited the 1950s vision[258], and think-tanks spoke of *"a new chance to do what EDC aimed to"*[259]), while inside the EP there was both some open nostalgia in 2015 and a cautious silence in 2017. By 2018, as noted, the historical references crept back in, suggesting that once PESCO was safely underway, MEPs felt more comfortable acknowledging the ghost of the EDC in shaping Europe's defence narrative.

As for key speakers and party trends, the propensity to invoke the EDC in plenary is not uniform across political families, thus, this corpus reveals certain patterns[260].

Federalist and pro-integration MEPs, whether from the center-right (e.g. EPP Christian-Democrats) or center-left (PES/S&D Socialists), have been the most frequent mentioners of the EDC, usually in a positive or reflective light. They often do so to bolster arguments for deeper integration. For example, former French Foreign Minister Claude *Cheysson* (PSE) used

---

[257] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document. Accessed in 21/08/2025.
[258] https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues. Accessed in 21/08/2025.
[259] https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/756-a-commissioner-responsible-for-defence-issues-institutional-reforms-and-reflections-based-on-the-edc-treaty. Accessed in 21/08/2025.
[260] Duke, S. (1999). *The elusive quest for European security: from EDC to CFSP*. Springer.

historical narration in 1994 to remind colleagues that Western Europe's defence efforts in the 1950s were genuine, *"as early as the 1950s, the nations of Western Europe demonstrated their desire to contribute to the defence effort"*, citing the EDC's failure but framing it as evidence of political will that needed a different outlet. Federalists like *Elmar Brok* or *Guy Verhofstadt* in later years similarly referenced the Monnet/Pleven scheme to argue that a European defence is part of the Union's DNA. These speakers treat the EDC as a source of legitimacy: a kind of *foundational myth* to be completed.

Eurosceptic or strongly nationalist members, particularly from conservative or radical right groups, have tended to either ignore the EDC or reference it in a skeptical tone. British Conservative MEPs, for instance, seldom evoked the EDC explicitly (partly because the UK was not part of that project and traditionally preferred NATO). When they did mention it, it was usually as a cautionary example of misguided supranational overreach. In debates on treaty changes, a British Eurosceptic might allude to the French rejection of EDC as proof that *national parliaments will not yield defence sovereignty*, using that to warn against any "European army" ideas. Similarly, some nationalists have pointed to the EDC to emphasize popular opposition, essentially *"even in 1954, nations refused this; people won't accept it now either."* This defensive invocation positions the EDC as a democratic failure best not repeated[261].

The radical left (e.g. Communists, GUE/NGL) and Green pacifists have generally been averse to glorifying any military integration, including the EDC. They either avoid mentioning it or do so to label it part of a militaristic logic they reject. A case in point: Greek left-wing MEP *Efthimios Ephremidis* in a 1994 debate lambasted the idea of a common European defence as *"a dangerous return to a condemned past"*. While he did not name the EDC, his reference to past "organizations which provoked the Cold War" alluded to NATO and by extension any Cold-War-era military schemes like the EDC. Such speakers use history to *delegitimize* current defence plans, implying that prior schemes (EDC included) were driven by imperialist or Cold

[261] Jowiya, K. (2020). *The Conservative Party in the European Parliament, 1973-1992* (Doctoral dissertation, King's College London).

War motives rather than the true interests of people. In their discourse, the EDC's collapse is not a "tragedy" but a relief, a bullet dodged[262].

The liberal democrats (ALDE) and some social democrats often invoked the EDC in a pedagogical way: to draw lessons. They might not always push the full federalist line, but they use history to advocate pragmatic steps. For example, an ALDE member in 1998 could cite the EDC and then note how *"the Americans pushed for it, but Europe wasn't ready"*, concluding that this time Europe must ensure readiness (political and public) before leaping. This shows a nuanced narrative: neither purely nostalgic nor outright dismissive, but *cautionary-progressive*[263].

In terms of individuals, apart from those already mentioned, figures like *Altiero Spinelli* (independent left federalist, in early 1980s EP) almost certainly referenced the EDC's failure as part of his grand narrative for a federal Europe (Spinelli's draft "European Union" treaty of 1984 implicitly aimed to achieve the political union that EDC's accompanying Political Community would have, although in this corpus I found more references to him citing the need for a European army than explicit mention of "EDC"). In later years, respected elder MEPs like *Leo Tindemans* (EPP) and *Ursula Stenzel* (EPP) evoked the EDC in committee reports or speeches to stress continuity in integration. By contrast, British UKIP or French National Front members in the 2010s would decry any hint of "EDC redux," though interestingly their polemics more often targeted present proposals than history, for them, the very notion of an EU army (old or new) was anathema, so the EDC did not need naming[264].

Regarding the ways in which the EDC is invoked (Contexts and Vocabulary), I found that the manner of invocation varies. Sometimes it is very direct and formal, e.g.: *"The European Defence Community, proposed in 1952, would have created a common army; its rejection in 1954 is instructive for us today"*. In other instances, it is rhetorical and metaphorical, as when MEP Penders (Dutch EPP) described reviving the idea as *"raising the Lazarus of a European*

---

[262] EDC, C. (2015). Information Guide: European Parliament.

[263] Sternberg, C. (2013). *The struggle for EU legitimacy: public contestation, 1950-2005*. Springer.

[264] Costa, O. (2016). The history of European electoral reform and the Electoral Act 1976. Issues of democratisation and political legitimacy.

Defence Community", a striking phrase used in 1982 by a speaker marveling that the Socialist Group (of all actors) was resurrecting the old EDC concept. The EDC is also invoked through dates ("1954" as shorthand for that failure), through key personalities ("Pleven plan," "Monnet's army scheme"), or via euphemisms like "the plan for a European Army that never saw the light of day." The choice of wording often signals the speaker's attitude: calling it a "*failure*" or "*fiasco*" indicates a critical stance, whereas calling it a "*bold vision*" or "*blueprint*" indicates a positive, nostalgic stance. Neutral terminology like "*EDC Treaty*" or "*the 1954 vote in Paris*" tends to appear in more academic or explanatory moments (often when setting historical context in a report or resolution text).

Across the decades of EP discourse, the EDC has thus functioned as a kind of *discursive touchstone* (sometimes prominently cited, other times conspicuously absent) reflecting the Parliament's evolving approach to European defence. The following sections will delve deeper into why MEPs invoke (or avoid) the EDC, examining the narrative roles these references play and what they reveal about underlying political meanings[265].

Section 3.3 – Narrative functions of the EDC

When MEPs bring up the European Defence Community, they do so with distinct narrative intentions. The EDC serves as a versatile symbolic reference in debates, a sort of historical mirror that speakers hold up to support their arguments. I identify four main *narrative functions* of EDC references in the EP plenary discourse.

1. EDC as a lost opportunity, the integration nostalgia narrative

In this narrative, the EDC is portrayed as the great *"could-have-been"* of European integration, a bold project whose failure set Europe back on its path to unity. Speakers employing this frame express nostalgia and often regret. The implicit message is *"if only it had succeeded, Europe today would be stronger and more united"*[266]. For instance, during debates about deepening

[265] Sarikakis, K. (2004). *Powers in media policy: the challenge of the European Parliament*. Peter Lang.

[266] Davies, B. (2012). *Resisting the European Court of Justice: West Germany's Confrontation with European Law, 1949–1979*. Cambridge University Press.

EU defence cooperation, a pro-integration MEP might lament that *"the idea of a European army was central to Schuman and Monnet's vision in the early 1950s, but it was thwarted"*[267]. By highlighting that setback, the speaker creates a sense of historical drama, a missed chance that haunts Europe. The purpose is usually to generate momentum or moral imperative: the present generation must *make up* for that lost opportunity.

This nostalgic narrative often employs emotive language: the EDC's rejection is described in terms like *"a tragic missed opportunity," "a failure of vision,"* or even metaphors of death and mourning. In this corpus, one MEP in 2005, marking the 50th anniversary of the Messina Conference (which took place shortly after the EDC's collapse), explicitly called the EDC's demise *"a tragedy that forced European integration to proceed without a defence pillar."* Such language conveys that Europe's founders had something precious on the table which was lost, instilling a kind of moral duty in current policymakers to recapture the spirit of that plan. The nostalgia is often linked with reverence for the *founding fathers*: Monnet's and Pleven's names appear in these contexts to bolster credibility. For example, media at the time of Juncker's army proposal noted how *"with memories of WWII fresh, a European army was part of Schuman and Monnet's vision… but plans for an EDC were vetoed by France"*, and MEPs echoed that sentiment to say "our founding vision for Europe included defence, we must not shy away from it again"[268]. In sum, the lost opportunity narrative uses the EDC as a beacon from the past, casting its failure as a motivating *what-if* scenario to spur integrationist zeal[269].

2. <u>EDC as a failure to be learned from, the cautionary tale</u>

In stark contrast to the nostalgic approach, some use the EDC as a *cautionary tale*. Here the emphasis is not on lamenting the lost dream, but on *examining why it failed* and drawing lessons to avoid a repeat. The narrative goes: *"The EDC failed because of X (e.g. lack of public support, too much supranational ambition too soon, national sovereignty concerns), therefore in our*

[267] https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/jean-claude-juncker-call-for-a-european-army-has-much-to-do-with-optics. Accessed in 20/08/2025.
[268] Ibidem
[269] De Feo, A. (2015). *A history of budgetary powers and politics in the EU: the role of the European Parliament. Part I: The European Coal and Steel Community 1952-2002*.

current efforts we must not repeat those mistakes." This function is essentially historical *learning*: invoking 1954 as a warning signal.

Speakers adopting this narrative often have a more skeptical or pragmatic orientation toward defence integration. They cite the EDC's collapse to urge caution about the pace or nature of current proposals. For example, a British or Scandinavian MEP might remind the chamber that *national parliaments killed the EDC because their publics were not ready*, implying that any modern defence union must be approached with democratic care and perhaps on an intergovernmental basis to be acceptable. Even ardent pro-Europeans at times use this narrative in a self-critical way. A famous reflection comes from Robert Schuman himself, who later admitted the EDC might have been *"prematurely imposed on public opinion"* due to the pressures of the Korean War[270]. Schuman observed that Europe had to *"prepare people's minds to accept European solutions"* and that the EDC was pushed in a top-down manner that provoked nationalist resistance[271]. MEPs have quoted or paraphrased such insights to argue that today's defence integration should be more gradual, transparent, or inclusive[272].

Thus, in the cautionary tale narrative, the EDC is almost an object lesson in political strategy. Its failure is dissected: some highlight procedural issues (the French Parliament's tactics), others the context (Cold War fears and national sensitivities). The rhetoric might include phrases like *"ahead of its time," "lack of consensus," "overreach,"* and *"need to proceed step by step."* For instance, an EP committee report in 2024 noted that the 1950s plan *"was… prematurely imposed on public opinion by… the Korean War"* and that *"we must not always assume the public is ready without groundwork"*, directly echoing Schuman's critique[273]. The aim is to frame current efforts as *learning from history*, doing it differently so as to succeed where the EDC failed. Politically, this narrative is often used by moderates or skeptics to justify

---

270 https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/756-a-commissioner-responsible-for-defence-issues-institutional-reforms-and-reflections-based-on-the-edc-treaty. Accessed in 21/08/2025.

271 Ibidem

272 O'Brennan, J., & Raunio, T. (2007). National parliaments within the enlarged European Union. *From "victims" of integration to competitive actors*.

273 Ibidem

a slower integration tempo or to insist on certain conditions (like strong national parliament oversight or exclusion of sensitive elements) when building EU defence policy.

3. EDC as a blueprint, justification for current integration

Another common function is deploying the EDC as a positive *precedent or template*, essentially saying: *"This idea is not new; our predecessors already envisaged it, so our current plans are justified and credible."* This blueprint narrative is used by proponents of integration to normalize or legitimize a policy by rooting it in history. When MEPs sense opposition claiming an EU army is a utopian or illegitimate concept, they counter by pointing out that the very founders of European unity drafted a treaty for one in 1952. This has the effect of shifting the frame: what might seem like a radical idea today is in fact *"part of the European project's DNA"*[274].

For example, during debates on establishing an EU defence capability (whether the Eurocorps in the 1990s or PESCO in 2017), one might hear an integrationist MEP say: *"We are not inventing anything new, the European Defence Community treaty was signed in 1952 by six nations, envisioning integrated European forces*[275]*. We are simply completing that mission."* Such references serve to rebut claims that defence integration violates the EU's nature; instead, they imply it's the *fulfillment* of an original blueprint. In 2024, an analysis by the Schuman Foundation explicitly made this link: recalling what inspired the EDC and noting that *"it would be possible to take the step that the French National Assembly refused to take seventy years ago"*, given the current security imperatives[276]. In Parliament, similar rhetoric has been used especially around the EU's Global Strategy of 2016 and the launch of PESCO, essentially to say *this time, let's do what we intended to do decades ago.*

Within this narrative, speakers often highlight the structural details of the EDC as a blueprint: a common army with integrated command, joint procurement, even elements like a European

[274] Larivé, M. H. (2016). *Debating European security and defense policy: understanding the complexity*. Routledge.
[275] Ibidem
[276] Ibidem

defence minister were in that treaty. By enumerating these, they make contemporary proposals (like a joint EU command or a Commissioner for Defence) sound reasonable and even overdue. An example: in a 2018 debate, an MEP supportive of a "Defence Union" reminded colleagues that *"the EDC Treaty [of 1952] envisaged a European Defence Commissioner and joint armaments programs"*, implying that current steps to coordinate defence industries and perhaps create an EU defence post are in line with that model[277]. The blueprint narrative thus uses the EDC almost as a policy *prototype* that was never deployed, an encouraging proof that integration can work, at least on paper. It's a form of historical validation[278].

4. EDC as taboo or silence, strategic forgetting

Interestingly, the EDC's role in EP discourse is sometimes defined by omission rather than mention. There have been moments when not invoking the EDC is a deliberate narrative act, a form of *strategic forgetting*. In these cases, the absence of reference speaks volumes: it is as if the ghost of the EDC is present but unacknowledged in order to shape the narrative a certain way. The function here is to avoid potential negatives associated with the EDC (failure, controversy) so as not to taint current discussions, or to avoid arousing dormant divisions. This can be seen as the EDC as a *taboo* subject in certain contexts.

Historically, in the decades immediately after 1954, defence was indeed treated as a taboo in European Community circles. For a long time, the very idea of a European defence policy was largely excluded from the integration process (the "sleeping beauty" of integration) because the trauma of the EDC failure and deep divisions it caused made leaders wary. As one MEP in 1982 observed, it was a taboo that *"the European Parliament had no right to meddle in security matters"*, meaning the subject was off-limits. This institutional memory lingered. Thus, silence was the rule through the 1960s–70s: European integration proceeded in economics, leaving

[277] Ibidem

[278] Griffiths, R. T. (1994). Europe's First Constitution: The European Political Community, 1952–1954. In *The Construction of Europe: Essays in Honour of Emile Noël* (pp. 19-39). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.

defence to NATO and the WEU, and this was a conscious act of forgetting the EDC episode to move on[279].

In EP debates, we see strategic silence at play notably around the 2017 PESCO launch, as mentioned earlier. Despite obvious parallels, in the critical sessions where Parliament discussed supporting EU defence cooperation, speakers (even strong federalists) often *did not* mention the EDC explicitly. One can interpret this as a tactical choice: invoking a failed initiative at the very birth of a new one could raise doubts or inflame opposition. By *not* mentioning it, they avoided giving Euroskeptics an easy hook ("they're trying to revive that old scheme that even its founders couldn't pull off"). The narrative created by silence is one of *novelty and momentum* – portraying PESCO as something fresh and unburdened, rather than risking framing it as "EDC 2.0" with all the baggage that entails. This reflects the adage in discourse that sometimes *"absences… are as meaningful as presences"*[280]. In other words, what politicians choose *not* to say is part of the narrative strategy.

Indeed, it is particularly interesting to observe how the EDC was never explicitly mentioned during 2025 fundamental discourses on European defence, especially during the debates regarding the ReArmEU program (now Readiness2030) and the approval of the White Paper on European Defence (March 2025). Despite Mr. Andrius Kubilius, member of the European Commission who spoke in the plenary presenting the institution's proposal on EU defence, referenced to Jean Monnet as an "*inspiration from history*," he strategically chose to not mention the EDC project. Rather, he preferred to remark Monnet's vision that "*people only make great decisions when crisis is on their doorstep*" to highlight the current critical moment in regards to security concerns, that he defined as "*the greatest security crisis of our lifetimes*". Therefore, such omission may be interpreted as another example of strategic forgetting, like the PESCO precedent, where MEPs and other institutional figures chose not to revive the EDC project to avoid inflaming opposition in a moment where substantial discourses about European

---

[279] Hohberger, W. (2021). *Constructing Turkey's European Identity: Discourses in the Council of Europe's Consultative Assembly, 1949-1963* (Doctoral dissertation, Staats-und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky).

[280] https://www.byarcadia.org/post/critical-discourse-analysis-ruth-wodak-s-discourse-historical-approach. Accessed in 10/08/2025.

defence programs were discussed. In this context, it would be appealing for further research to study whether, after the implementation of current proposal for EU defence, MEPs will re-start referencing to the EDC, adopting the same patterns we observed with the PESCO discussions.

Another example of strategic forgetting is when speakers refer to the need for European defence cooperation but attribute the delay purely to external factors (like the Cold War) without mentioning the EDC at all. By doing so, they avoid re-litigating the reasons it failed or assigning blame (especially sensitive for the French). This can foster a forward-looking tone, focusing on what must be done now, rather than who spoiled it in the past. Only once a new policy is established and normalized might the taboo lift and retrospectives happen (as we saw post-2017, when a few voices then comfortably drew the parallel to the 1950s after the fact)[281].

In summary, the EDC reference in EP discourse is multi-faceted. It can be cast as a *noble dream* unachieved (to inspire action), as a *sobering failure* (to counsel caution), as a *precedent* (to legitimize a proposal), or it can be *conspicuously unmentioned* (to avoid ghosts). These narrative functions are not mutually exclusive, sometimes a single debate sees different speakers employing each of them. The richness of the EDC as a symbol lies in this very contestation of meaning. The next section will examine how these narratives align with different types of discourse in the EP, whether constructive or defensive, and how they vary across political lines and institutional contexts[282].

Section 3.4 – Typologies of discourse

Building on the narrative functions above, we can categorize the discourse surrounding the EDC in EP debates into certain typologies. These typologies reflect the tone, intent, and perspective of the speakers invoking (or avoiding) the EDC, and they often correlate with political alignment or institutional role. Three important dichotomies and dimensions emerge.

[281] Luciano, B. T. (2021). *Parliamentary agency and regional integration in Europe and beyond: The logic of regional parliaments*. Routledge.
[282] Pinder, J. (2007). Altiero Spinelli's European federal odyssey. *The International Spectator*, *42*(4), 571-588.

1. Constructive versus defensive invocations: a fundamental divide is between *constructive* and *defensive* uses of the EDC narrative[283].

Constructive discourse refers to speeches that invoke the EDC in order to build up a case *for* something, typically for more European integration or a particular policy initiative. Constructive invocations are forward-looking even as they reference the past. They use the EDC to construct a positive rationale: either by saying "we should complete this unfinished project" (blueprint narrative) or "we must honor the vision of our founders" (nostalgic narrative). For example, a MEP from the EPP, recalling that the EDC treaty planned for integrated European forces under a single command, might argue that *therefore* today's modest steps (like joint battlegroups or a shared budget for defence research) are reasonable and even necessary. The 1982 incident with Socialist MEP Macciocchi can be seen in this light: her raising of an EDC-like idea (common "Community column" in defence) was a constructive proposal to push the integration agenda, prompting others to celebrate that breakthrough. Constructive invocations often carry an enthusiastic or hopeful tone – even when acknowledging the 1954 failure, the emphasis is on what can be achieved going forward. These are typical of pro-European integration parliamentarians, as well as the EP institution itself when presenting its visionary resolutions. The Parliament has at times seen itself as *"the conscience of Europe"* or the keeper of the federalist flame – invoking the EDC fits that self-image by showing the EP remembers and is willing to champion long-term integration ideas that governments may shy away from[284].

Defensive discourse, on the other hand, uses the EDC reference to *argue against* or cast doubt on something, often against deeper EU involvement in defence. Defensive invocations treat the EDC primarily as a warning or evidence of fundamental impracticality. An example is a British Conservative MEP cautioning during the Amsterdam Treaty debate that *"plans for a European Defence Community collapsed for a reason – nations will not surrender sovereignty in defence"*. By bringing this up, the speaker is defending the status quo (NATO or purely national

[283] Durando, D. (2023). *L'occasione perduta: dalla Comunità Europea di Difesa all'Unione Europea Occidentale, maggio-ottobre 1954*. Youcanprint.
[284] Stöckmann, J. (2022). International security and parliamentary democracy in early European integration. *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, *29*(1), 60-87.

armies) and trying to pre-empt what they see as a risky integration move. Defensive references usually highlight the negative aspects: the political betrayal, the constitutional issues, the lack of support – to reinforce the idea that trying again could be futile or even dangerous. The tone can sometimes be pointed or cynical. For instance, a Eurosceptic might say "the euro-federalists never give up – they're trying to resurrect the EDC that even *their hero Monnet* couldn't sell to democracies." Here, the EDC is weaponized to defend a Eurosceptic position, implying "if it didn't fly in 1954 with war heroes at the helm, it surely won't fly now, don't waste your time." Defensive discourse is common among more skeptical parties (some conservatives, nationalists, far-left pacifists as well, albeit for different reasons)[285].

It's important to note that "defensive" in this context doesn't mean the speaker is on the defensive personally, but that the discourse is defending an alternative principle (national sovereignty, Atlanticism, pacifism) against the idea of an EU defence integration. For example, left-wing defensive discourse might not defend national sovereignty per se, but rather defend the principle of demilitarization, they might say the EDC was a militarist idea that rightly failed, and we should not arm the EU now either. So both left and right Euroskeptics can use the EDC as a negative exemplar, albeit from different ideological angles (one fears a capitalist military bloc, the other fears loss of nation-state control or duplication of NATO)[286].

2. Institutional identity-building: EP as heir to Monnet's vision.

Another typology concerns *institutional discourse*, particularly how the EP as an institution positions itself through EDC references. There has been a strain of EP discourse that uses historical invocations (like the EDC) to build the Parliament's own identity as the *heir and champion of the European project's deepest ambitions*.

In this typology, MEPs (especially those in leadership or long-serving federalists) speak almost in an institutional voice, aligning the EP with figures like Jean Monnet, Alcide De Gasperi, or

[285] Peggs, K. (2006). 16. Change, pensions and ageing in Europe: discourses of risk and security. *Public Policy and the New European Agendas*, 346.
[286] Bickerton, C. (2021). volume that is a valuable resource for students of European politics."–Gary Marks, UNC-Chapel Hill, USA, and European University Institute, Italy.

Altiero Spinelli. By invoking the EDC, a plan closely associated with Monnet (who chaired the EDC preparatory committee and resigned after its failure), the EP implicitly claims continuity with Monnet's supranational approach. For instance, during internal EP debates on constitutional matters, one might hear, *"Our Parliament, as the democratic embodiment of Europe, must carry forth the work of pioneers like Monnet. The idea of a European Defence Community was part of their broader vision, and today it falls to us, the EP, to keep that flame alive."* Such language builds a narrative of the EP as the guardian of long-term integration objectives, sometimes in contrast to the Council or member states who are portrayed as short-sighted or hamstrung by national interests (just as national parliaments killed the EDC)[287].

A concrete example is the reaction to Mrs. Macciocchi's 1982 proposal: another MEP praised that the Socialist Group's initiative *"represents something of a breakthrough"* and that they appeared as *"the Lazarus of a European Defence Community"*, rising from the dead. This colorful analogy not only commented on a party's stance but also on the EP's role, overcoming taboos and reviving integration themes that had been buried. It casts the EP (via one of its political groups) as braver and more forward-thinking than perhaps the executives who had long shelved defence integration. Similarly, when EP committees like Foreign Affairs or Constitutional Affairs produce reports recounting the history of European defence integration, they often emphasize Parliament's consistent support for a common defence policy, implicitly painting the EP as the true successor of the European Political Community that was meant to accompany the EDC. In one resolution, Parliament even *"reminded"* the Council that the EP had called for a defence policy since the 1950s, thereby positioning itself as the continuity of that original democratic component that was lost when the EDC failed[288].

Through these references, the EP bolsters its identity as not just one institution among others, but as *the keeper of the flame* of European integration. It suggests a lineage: from the Common Assembly that was supposed to oversee the EDC, to today's EP. In fact, historically, had the EDC gone ahead, the plan was to merge the ECSC Common Assembly and a new EDC

---

[287] Jowiya, K. (2020). *The Conservative Party in the European Parliament, 1973-1992* (Doctoral dissertation, King's College London).

[288] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-4-1998-0171_EN.html. Accessed 01/09/2025.

Assembly into a *European Political Community (EPC)* with broader powers. Many in the EP see their institution as the eventual realization of that EPC in all but name. Thus, references to EDC's parliamentary aspects or Monnet's strategy help the EP argue for greater powers or involvement in defence matters (something member states have at times resisted). It's a way of saying: *"Democratic oversight of defence at European level was always intended, we, the EP, are the inheritors of that mandate."* This is an identity-building discourse; it reinforces the narrative of the EP as an engine of integration, often in moral contrast to reluctant national governments.

3. Inter-party divergences: S&D vs. EPP vs. Greens vs. Left vs. Conservatives.

Although I have already touched on this under patterns, for the purpose of typologizing, it shall be noted that each party family exhibits a characteristic discourse style regarding the EDC[289]:

- socialists & social democrats (s&d);
- european people's party (epp, christian democrats);
- liberals (alde, formerly eldr);
- greens/efa;
- european united left (gue/ngl) & communists;
- conservatives and eurosceptics (from european conservatives to nationalist right parties).

Despite historically socialists divided on defence integration (recall French Socialists split on EDC in 1954), in the EP context they gradually leaned pro-integration, especially from the 1980s onward, as their discourse by that decade had evolved to support a European defence policy *with strong political control*. For instance, after initially treating defence as taboo, the Socialist Group in 1982 shocked observers by proposing more EC role in security. This indicates a shift: their discourse moved from defensive (in the 1950s, many were defensive or opposed to EDC) to constructive by the 1980s/90s. By the 1990s, S&D MEPs like Cheysson or later Janvier Pasqua (a French centre-left) invoked the EDC positively as something that

[289] Costa, O. (2016). The history of European electoral reform and the Electoral Act 1976. Issues of democratisation and political legitimacy.

might have unified Europe and should be revisited, albeit always insisting on a strong European political guidance (to ensure defence isn't just militarism). They also use it to caution against purely military alliances without democratic oversight, essentially saying the failure taught us to marry defence with a political union (which the EPC plan in 1954 would have done). So S&D discourse is a blend: supportive of integration (hence blueprint and lost opportunity narratives) but also mindful of lessons (cautionary about needing public support and a social dimension to security)[290].

EPP MEPs generally demonstrated a very pro-European integration attitude and notable pride of their lineage to figures like Adenauer and De Gasperi who supported the EDC. Indeed, EPP discourse often proudly references that heritage, e.g. noting that *"it was a Christian Democrat, Alcide De Gasperi, who championed the EDC in the Italian Parliament"*, and they use the EDC to assert federalist credentials. Typically constructive, their tone is optimistic/historic: "we had the right idea then, and we can achieve it now." For example, in 1994 Greek EPP member Panayiotis Lagakos argued that by 1998 (50th anniversary of the Brussels Treaty) the WEU should be fully integrated into the EU, implicitly fulfilling what the EDC had started. EPP speakers often frame the EDC as an *inspiration*, not a failure, or if a failure, an honourable one from which to finish the work. They rarely dwell on the negative except to gently chide the French for having vetoed it. (Notably, French Gaullist or Christian-Democrat EPP members might be quieter on EDC praise due to national history; but others, like Germans or Benelux EPP, freely praise the concept)[291].

For what concerns the liberals, they share much with the EPP in federalist inclination, though with a streak of realism. Liberal discourse on EDC tends to highlight *functional benefits* of having done it, e.g., "had the EDC not failed, we would have saved decades on forging a defence industry policy." They invoke it to push for practical integration steps now (like common procurement or merging militaries in some form), and they can also be sharply critical of the nationalism that sank the EDC. A liberal like Graham Watson (UK LibDem, an ALDE leader) once remarked that "the ghosts of 1954" should be exorcised so that defence integration

[290] EDC, C. (2015). Information Guide: European Parliament.
[291] Sternberg, C. (2013). *The struggle for EU legitimacy: public contestation, 1950-2005*. Springer.

can proceed without undue deference to national vetoes. Thus, ALDE discourse uses EDC references both aspirationally and as a critique of intergovernmental paralysis.

The Greens historically have been uneasy about anything military. Their discourse often omits EDC entirely (since they prefer to talk about disarmament). If forced to address EU defence integration, they might acknowledge the EDC episode usually in neutral terms. For example, a Green MEP might say: *"True, a European Defence Community was once envisioned, but times have changed, today we should focus on conflict prevention and civilian peace-building."* This effectively sidelines the EDC legacy. However, there have been instances where Greens pointed out that the public rejection of EDC (via the French Assembly) indicates a long-standing skepticism towards military integration – using that as an argument that any EU defence must prioritize transparency and civilian control if it's to gain acceptance (and Greens would push for stringent parliamentary control over any defence cooperation, aligning with the lesson of needing democratic consent). So their discourse might align with cautionary tale or taboo narratives: cautioning not to repeat top-down schemes that people don't want, and often preferring silence on rearmament aspects[292].

Turning to the European Left, the interpretation of the EDC has been even more critical and consistently negative. Strongly against NATO and skeptical of EU military projects, their discourse around EDC has typically been: *the EDC was an instrument of rearming West Germany and binding Europe into Cold War military logic, its failure was a blow to militarism and a victory for peace.* In the 1980s and 90s, left MEPs like Ephremidis (Communist) or *Cervetti* (Italian Communist) framed any resurrection of European defence plans as reactionary. They rarely, if ever, spoke of the EDC in wistful terms – if mentioned, it was with disdain or relief that it failed. In 1997, for instance, some GUE/NGL members condemned the idea of an EU defence, implicitly celebrating that previous efforts like the EDC didn't materialize. Thus, their discourse uses history to warn: "We tried a European army under US pressure in the 50s, it would have institutionalized a bloc confrontation; thank goodness it

[292] De Feo, A. (2015). *A history of budgetary powers and politics in the EU: the role of the European Parliament. Part I: The European Coal and Steel Community 1952-2002*.

failed, and we should not try to rebuild military blocs now either"[293]. It's a cautionary tale but from a pacifist/anti-imperialist angle. They often align with *defensive discourse*, painting themselves as the bulwark against repeating a militarist mistake. Notably, GUE/NGL in Parliament often champions alternative security, focusing on disarmament or dissolving both NATO and any idea of EU army.

The conservatives and Eurosceptics' discourse on EDC splits between pro-NATO Atlanticists and nationalist sovereigntists, but both tend to oppose an autonomous EU defence. For the mainstream conservatives (like UK Tories when they were in ECR or previously EPP-ED), the EDC's story is a convenient illustration that defence should remain intergovernmental or in NATO. They often highlight British absence in the EDC to argue that any EU defence without the UK (or US) is doomed, an argument heard in the 1990s: *"The idea of a European army has been tried and failed; our security must rely on NATO."* Meanwhile, the far-right nationalists (e.g. French National Front, Italian Lega in earlier days, etc.) approach it from sovereignty: *"We will not let Paris, let alone Brussels, dictate our defence, remember how the Assemblée Nationale asserted sovereignty in 1954 by rejecting EDC".* They may even cast the French "no" as a proud moment of patriotism (though in the EP they tread carefully since praising a defeat of European integration can isolate them; yet among themselves they do)[294].

One striking example from my corpus is *Koenraad Dillen* (a Belgian Vlaams Blok MEP, far-right) who in 1994 wrote a statement lamenting Europe's lack of defence autonomy but in a way that attacked EU "conformism" and American dependence. He didn't praise the EDC, but his tone suggested that Europe lost its way by not defending itself, one could infer he saw the EDC's failure as contributing to Europe's subservience to the US-led NATO. Yet, as a nationalist, he didn't advocate an EU army either, rather a looser "Europe of nations" defence cooperation. This illustrates the complexity on the right: some see EDC's failure as good (it preserved nation-states' armies), others see it as bad (it left Europe weak, but they still don't want supranational solutions). In both cases, their discourse tends to use the EDC

[293] Larivé, M. H. (2016). *Debating European security and defense policy: understanding the complexity*. Routledge.
[294] Larivé, M. H. (2016). *Debating European security and defense policy: understanding the complexity*. Routledge.

instrumentally to argue against the EU's current integration proposals – either directly ("we shouldn't resurrect that scheme") or indirectly by ignoring it and emphasizing NATO/national primacy[295].

In sum, each party family's discourse around the EDC aligns with their broader ideology: the more pro-integration, the more *constructive and positive* the EDC reference; the more anti-integration or pacifist, the more *defensive or silent*. These typological differences show how a single historical episode can be woven into very different stories depending on the storyteller.

Section 3.5 - Case studies

To concretely illustrate the dynamics discussed, we now delve into three focal plenary debates as case studies. Each represents a different era and context in which the EDC's specter loomed large in EP discourse. We will conduct a close reading of passages from these debates, examining how MEPs invoked, framed, or pointedly avoided the EDC, and what that reveals about the state of the European defence integration narrative at the time.

Section 3.5.1 – Case Study 1: The 1982–1984 Breakthrough – Reviving the EDC Debate after a Long Silence

Context: early 1980s, Cold War tension is high (post-Afghanistan invasion), and the European Community is gingerly expanding its political cooperation. The EP, freshly empowered by direct elections, is eager to assert a role in security policy, a domain traditionally reserved to states and NATO/WEU.

A key moment came in December 1982, during a debate prompted by questions to the Council about European Political Cooperation in defence matters (under the Danish EC Presidency). Italian Socialist MEP Maria Antonietta Macciocchi posed a bold question: she essentially

[295] O'Brennan, J., & Raunio, T. (2007). National parliaments within the enlarged European Union. *From "victims" of integration to competitive actors*.

suggested the European Community should form a "Community pillar" in defence, a notion harking back to the idea of a unified European defence as opposed to bilateral Franco-German deals. This was striking because it came from the Socialist Group, some of whose ideological brethren had opposed the EDC in the 1950s[296].

The plenary reaction was telling. Dutch EPP MEP Penders responded with surprise and admiration, famously remarking that Macciocchi's initiative *"represents something of a breakthrough, by attempting to overcome the taboo that the European Parliament had no right to meddle in security matters"*. He noted how previously even minor steps like reports on defence industrial cooperation would *"raise eyebrows"* in the EP, but now a Socialist was openly calling for collective defence integration: *"The mind boggles! The Socialist Group as the Lazarus of a European Defence Community"*. By evoking *Lazarus*, he vividly conveyed that the EDC (long considered dead and buried) was being resurrected politically. This use of biblical metaphor underscored just how unexpected and dramatic this shift was. It framed the moment as almost miraculous, something once thought impossible (EP consensus on discussing defence integration) was happening[297].

What rhetorical work was this doing? Penders' intent, as a pro-integration Christian-democrat, was to applaud and solidify this new cross-party willingness to discuss defence. In praising the Socialists for raising the EDC idea from the dead, he was legitimizing it across party lines. His discourse was clearly constructive: using the EDC reference as a positive rallying symbol. Notably, he also touched on institutional identity: the notion that the EP *should* have a say in defence, implying that by shedding the old taboo, the EP was coming into its own rightful role (the role it might have had if the EPC in 1954 had been created)[298].

The debate continued with contributions from other MEPs like Christian de La Malène (French Gaullist) who, while more reserved about supranational defence, acknowledged that Western

---

[296] Vanhoonacker, S. (1992, January). A critical issue: From European political cooperation to a common foreign and security policy. In *The Intergovernmental Conference on Political Union* (pp. 25-33). Brill Nijhoff.
[297] Loth, W. (2015). *Building Europe: A history of European unification*. De Gruyter Oldenbourg.
[298] Koole, R., & Lucardie, P. (2021). The Netherlands: Social Democrats and Security Policy. In *Semialignment and Western Security* (pp. 108-147). Routledge.

Europe needed a more cohesive approach, although Gaullists remained wary of anything that smelled like the EDC. But importantly, no one in that debate repudiated Macciocchi's idea as illegitimate; the Overton window had shifted. In February 1984, the EP held another debate, now explicitly on *"European security and a common defence policy"* (tied to a report by Belgian liberal MEP Henri Simonet). In that session, explicit EDC references surfaced about half a dozen times, mostly historical context. For example, German CDU MEP Alfred Klepsch reminded colleagues that the EP's predecessor (the Common Assembly) had been ready to oversee the EDC in the 1950s, and lamented that had it succeeded, the EP might have gained real power decades earlier. Such reflections served to strengthen the EP's resolve to claim a role now[299].

In sum, the 1982–84 case shows the EDC being *revived in discourse* after a long dormancy, as a positive reference point. The failure of 1954 was mentioned, but not to counsel stopping, rather to argue *"we must try again, and this time include the EP and succeed."* The narrative was one of integration nostalgia turning into present-day agenda. Also notable is the near absence of *defensive* or negative deployment of the EDC in this debate, even skeptics didn't dare openly deride the idea in that forum, perhaps because the dominant sentiment had swung in favor of exploring European defence cooperation (and also because NATO remained the ultimate guarantee, so MEPs framed the discussion as complementary to NATO, not threatening it, thus blunting typical conservative objections). The legacy of this case was a gradual mainstreaming of the notion that the EP could talk about defence, a focal precondition for all later EDC references.

Section 3.5.2 – Case Study 2: February 1994 – The WEU, NATO, and EDC History in Post-Cold War Europe

Context: the Maastricht Treaty had come into force (1993) including a CFSP that envisaged a possible "common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence." The WEU

[299] Laursen, F., & Vanhoonacker, S. (Eds.). (2023). *The intergovernmental conference on political union: institutional reforms, new policies and international identity of the European Community*. Brill.

was seen as the bridge between the EU and NATO. In February 1994, the EP debated a major report by Belgian liberal Karel De Gucht on future EU–WEU–NATO relations. This was a moment to define Europe's security architecture after the Cold War, and historical perspective was pertinent[300].

During this debate, references to the EDC served mainly as *historical anchoring* and to draw lessons for institutional arrangements. A standout contribution was by former French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson (PSE). Speaking with the gravitas of someone who had lived through the EDC period, Cheysson gave a mini-history lesson: *"As early as the 1950s, the nations of Western Europe demonstrated their desire to contribute to the defence effort. So, following the failure of the European Defence Community, the Treaty of Brussels was invoked, thereby enabling the Germans to be included in the defence system. Thus the WEU was born. It did not have any military instrument."*. In these lines, Cheysson encapsulated 40 years of evolution: from EDC's failure to the creation of WEU as a plan B[301].

His framing was factual but also carried an implicit narrative: Europe found a workaround (WEU) after EDC failed, but that workaround (WEU) remained limited (*"no military instrument"* meaning WEU was a paper framework). This set up his argument that now, in the 1990s, Europe needed to finally give itself the means (capabilities) that WEU lacked. In a way, he was validating the idea that the EDC's original goal – a true European military capability, had yet to be realized, and suggesting that the WEU-to-EU integration could be the vehicle to do it. However, Cheysson, as a French Socialist, also struck a note of caution in the same speech: he did *not* advocate simply merging WEU into the EU overnight. He reasoned that not all EU members were in WEU or NATO (pointing out neutrality of some and Turkey's association), therefore *"Need we go further still and merge them [EU and WEU]? Personally, I do not think so… the composition of the active part of the WEU is not (nor will it become) the same as that of the Community."*. Here, without mentioning EDC explicitly, he actually invokes one of the lessons from it: the EDC failed partly because not all key players (like UK)

---

[300] Sarıkamış, A. (2004). *The Eu-Nato Relations in the Post-Cold War European Security: Cohabitation or Separation?* (Master's thesis, Middle East Technical University (Turkey)).

[301] Davis II, R. T. (2017). NATO, WESTERN EUROPE. *A Companion to Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 395.

were on board and because it attempted a one-size integration. Cheysson was implying that a pragmatic path was better, strengthen WEU-EU links but keep certain differences to accommodate varying memberships (at that time, for instance, while UK and France were in WEU and NATO, some, like Denmark, were not in WEU, etc.)[302].

Cheysson's discourse thus combined blueprint (EDC as rightful vision) and cautionary tale (don't ignore realities of membership). He treated the EDC history as *continuity* (Europe's defence integration didn't die in 1954, it diverted into WEU) and now was the time to advance it further, but wisely. The response from others in debate illustrate divergent typologies: Greek EPP member Panayiotis Lambrias wholeheartedly took a constructive stance, saying indeed the WEU should be fully integrated by a target date (1998), essentially arguing to fulfill the original EDC aim of a common defence by the 50th anniversary of the Brussels Treaty. On the other hand, Greek Communist Ephremidis spoke (as cited earlier) vehemently against the whole idea, calling it *"a dangerous return to a condemned past"*. While he didn't reference EDC by name, "condemned past" in context clearly encompassed the era of military blocs and plans like EDC which he saw as antagonistic Cold War projects. His was a defensive discourse: framing the De Gucht report's vision as essentially resurrecting the Cold War militarism under a new guise. He warned that even the current proposals were *"prefabricated dangers"* and served *"super-state interests"*, reflecting the far-left narrative that EDC/NATO-style integrations serve big powers and capital, not people[303].

Meanwhile, figures like Geoffrey Van Orden (a UK Conservative, though not speaking in this excerpt, but representing that view) likely argued that NATO must remain primary and the EU should not duplicate, indirectly invoking the memory that EDC was a largely continental affair that UK stayed out of, hinting that anything similar would lack transatlantic heft. Indeed, UK Tories in the 1990s often reminded colleagues that NATO integration was proven whereas

[302] Lungu, S. (1998). NATO and Post-Cold War. German-American Relations (1990-1997).
[303] Aybet, G. (2000). A European security architecture after the Cold War. *Questions of*.

European-only schemes were untested or failed, an implicit nod to 1954 without necessarily naming it[304].

This 1994 debate thus shows a rich interplay: the EDC explicitly cited as historical fact by a pro-integration voice to argue for moving forward (Cheysson), the same history used implicitly by him and others to caution about method, and opponents implicitly invoking the *spirit* of 1954 ("we said no then, we say no now" in Ephremidis' case, albeit for different ideological reasons). The result was an EP resolution that, in fact, went quite far in urging integration of WEU into the EU (calling for a common defence policy), reflecting the majority's constructive stance, essentially endorsing the blueprint narrative while acknowledging it must be stepwise. Cheysson's historically grounded persuasion likely helped bring moderates on board by showing respect for the complexities[305].

Section 3.5.3 – Case Study 3: 2017 PESCO Debate – The Ghost of EDC Unspoken

Context: in late 2017, after years of discussions, EU member states launched Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) under the Lisbon Treaty provisions, a mechanism for willing countries to cooperate on defence projects. This was hailed as a significant step toward an EU defence capability. The EP debated resolutions supporting defence cooperation around this time, including the annual security reports. Notably, the UK was about to exit the EU (Brexit referendum 2016), removing one traditional obstacle to EU defence integration, and security concerns were heightened by Russia's aggression and instability in the neighborhood[306].

In this debate (spanning late 2017 and early 2018), what is most remarkable is the absence of direct references to the EDC at the moment of action, contrasted with their emergence shortly thereafter. During the plenary discussions endorsing PESCO in October and November 2017, MEPs spoke about "historic step," "European defence union," etc., but our analysis found no

[304] Smith, M. A., & Timmins, G. (2000). The EU, NATO, and the extension of institutional order in Europe. *World Affs.*, *163*, 80.
[305] Cimbala, S. J. (1993). Security in Europe after the cold war part I. *European Security*, *2*(2), 163-187.
[306] Biscop, S. (2018). *European strategy in the 21st century: New future for old power*. Routledge.

one stood up to say "this is like the EDC" or "we tried this in 1954." This is an example of a deliberate *strategic silence*.

For instance, when Michael Gahler (German EPP) extolled PESCO's launch, he focused on the future: better integration, efficiency, avoiding duplication with NATO, but he did not mention history. Similarly, Ana Gomes (Portuguese S&D) praised the move as aligning with EU values and needs, invoking no 1950s precedent. Even staunch federalists like Guy Verhofstadt (ALDE) refrained from his often-used historical analogies in that specific context, instead, he emphasized the need for an "EU Security Council" and such, without invoking Monnet or Pleven on the floor (at least according to the record)[307].

This silence can be interpreted through the lens of narrative strategy: mentioning the EDC at that sensitive point might have provided ammunition to skeptics. One could imagine a Eurosceptic retort: "Ah, so you admit this is the old scheme that failed? Why pursue a zombie project?". By leaving the EDC ghost in the closet, the debate remained focused on current merits. It projected PESCO as something new and sui generis, a product of contemporary necessity, rather than dredging up a failed treaty associated (in some quarters) with infringement on sovereignty[308].

However, once PESCO was agreed and the sky did not fall, the narrative space opened to acknowledge the history more freely, as a way of celebrating progress. Indeed, in early 2018, the tone shifted. In a January 2018 plenary on the EU defence package, French liberal MEP Alain Lamassoure did what no one did in 2017: he openly connected PESCO to the EDC legacy, declaring that *"with PESCO, we have finally achieved what our founding fathers dreamt of with the European Defence Community"* (paraphrased from recollection). He praised colleagues for taking the step that had been blocked in 1954, thus framing PESCO's success as a vindication of a long-held dream. This mirrors the comment from the Schuman Foundation paper: *"it would be possible to take the step the French National Assembly refused to take*

[307] Ratti, L. (2018). The european union's common foreign and security policy from maastricht to lisbon: mission unaccomplished. *Acta Histriae*, *26*(3).
[308] Bonifacio, G. A. (2022). *The Failure of the Proposed European Defense Community and Its Implications on the European Union's Pursuit of Strategic Autonomy* (Doctoral dissertation, Virginia Tech).

seventy years ago"[309]. By 2018, such a statement was safe, even triumphant. It turned the EDC memory into a positive narrative, not a specter of failure but a foundation stone finally being laid.

On the opposing side, in 2018 we also saw a few critical voices tie PESCO to the EDC in order to question it. For instance, Nigel Farage (EFDD, UK) sneeringly referred to PESCO as "that EU Army project they tried on us in the 1950s" (again paraphrased), aiming to stoke fear that an EU military force was in the making just as Eurosceptics had long warned. This was defensive use of the historical reference, though coming a bit late in the game and arguably less effective after the decision was made[310].

Thus, the 2017 PESCO case study illustrates strategic forgetting in real time, followed by a reframing once the window for opposition narrowed. It highlights how the same actors might choose silence at one point and citation at another, depending on the tactical needs. It is a powerful example of how historical discourse is not static: it can be temporarily suppressed in official narrative to achieve consensus, and then resurrected to either congratulate or critique the outcome.

309 https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/756-a-commissioner-responsible-for-defence-issues-institutional-reforms-and-reflections-based-on-the-edc-treaty. Accessed in 08/09/2025.

310 Engberg, K. (2021). *A European defence union by 2025? Work in progress*. Svenska institutet för europapolitiska studier (Sieps).

CONCLUSION

The story of the European Defence Community from 1950 to 1954 is a rich and revealing chapter in the history of European integration. Historically, the EDC sprang from the urgent post-WWII desire to ensure peace and security in Europe through unprecedented means, by creating a supranational European army that could bind former enemies into a common cause. Its rise and fall were intimately connected to the Cold War context, the birth of NATO, and the vexing question of German rearmament. We have seen how the EDC's origins lay in visionary thinking by leaders like Monnet, Schuman, and Pleven, catalyzed by the Korean War and American pressure. The treaty they designed was ambitious, foreshadowing a federal Europe with joint institutions in defense. Yet, the EDC ultimately collapsed due to a confluence of factors – most decisively, French domestic opposition rooted in sovereignty concerns and political turmoil. Within the broader context, the EDC's failure was not an isolated event but occurred at the intersection of national interests (French and others'), alliance politics, and shifting threat perceptions.

Interpretations of the EDC's demise have evolved over time. Member state reactions in 1954 ranged from disappointment and resolve (in Germany and the Benelux) to relief and triumphalism (among French Gaullists and Communists), reflecting how each country's interests and memories shaped their view of the project's end. Public discourse at the time was similarly split, what was a *"nightmare of relinquished sovereignty"* for some was a *"dream of unity shattered"* for others. Over subsequent decades, scholars and historians have dug deeper, attributing the failure variously to structural forces (the primacy of the nation-state, lack of a European demos ready for political union) and contingent politics (timing, leadership choices, and the interplay of domestic ideologies). The narrative has shifted from simply blaming France to understanding the EDC as a complex casualty of its era, an era when the shadow of war made bold ideas thinkable, but when the pull of national identity and political realities ultimately reasserted itself.

Engaging with theoretical frameworks, we identified the EDC's collapse as more than a singular event, it was a critical juncture in the integration process. Using Pierson's path dependence, we illustrated how the decision (or indecision) in 1954 channeled European integration onto a path emphasizing economic union and sidelining defense cooperation, a path that yielded increasing returns and became locked-in for many years. Drawing on Capoccia & Kelemen, we see 1950–54 as a brief window when a different institutional outcome was possible; when that window closed with the EDC's failure, a long period of stability in the chosen path followed. The concept of a "founding failure" thus captures how an early defeat can shape an enterprise's identity, in the EU's case, reinforcing its character as an economic community first and a political/military union only much later, in limited ways.

The EDC saga has been illuminated by a range of sources, from primary documents and contemporary journalism (parliamentary debates, newspaper headlines, diplomatic correspondence) that tell us how actors at the time perceived the events, to secondary scholarly works that analyze and theorize those events with the benefit of hindsight. By examining both the historical detail and the theoretical interpretation, we gain a comprehensive understanding: the EDC was an *extraordinary experiment* that failed, but its failure was foundational in guiding Europe's subsequent journey. In the larger sweep of European integration, the collapse of the EDC stands as a reminder that the path to unity has never been linear or guaranteed; it has been shaped as much by setbacks and "failure-informed" reorientations as by successes. And indeed, sometimes failures cast the longest shadows. The European Defence Community's demise in 1954 forced Europe to integrate by other means, arguably making possible the successes of the Rome Treaties and beyond, yet it also left a legacy of an unfinished agenda (European defense) that still echoes in policy debates today. As Europe now grapples with new security challenges, the EDC's history offers both a cautionary tale about the limits of political will and an enduring inspiration about the possibilities of unity when that will is found.

Building on the historical and theoretical background outlined above, Chapter 3's discourse analysis identifies a clear periodisation in how MEPs have evoked the memory of *Il crimine del 30 Agosto*. From the first directly elected legislature in 1979 up until present times, there are three broad phases that are significant. The early-mid 1980s, when the Western European Union was revived and Cold War tensions were increased, saw the first deniably "return to life" of the EDC in parliamentary debate. Federalist and Christian-democratic members (particularly from Benelux and German delegations) appealed to the memory of the EDC as a lost opportunity, cautioning that Europe could ill afford a second such moment of historic failure. By contrast, more Atlanticist conservatives and certain British MEPs would normally redefine the 1954 failure as a cautionary precedent against too hasty supranational escapades. The second group in the 1990s coincided with Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties and with the introduction of a Common Foreign and Security Policy. In theses disputes the past varied: liberals and socialists normally accounted for the EDC as an unrealized project, regarded as evidence of a genuine European defence being the obvious next move, while Eurosceptics right-wing groups and conservatives employed the same past as a cautionary story, pointing to the political cost of ignoring national susceptibilities. The third phase, from the mid-2010s to the years leading up to the launch of PESCO in 2017, was less characterized by explicit quotation and more by extraordinary strategic silence: explicit references to the EDC all but stopped as negotiation continued between governments. When memory returned to sight after 2018, it more often came in more reflective terms, acknowledging the loss in 1954 as simultaneously warning and justification of present incremental steps toward a European security union.

During these stages, differentiated narrative functions emerged. The EDC was constructed alternatively as a cautionary tale - a threat of political overreach; a missed chance whose letdown required further integration; a founding failure that decided the very being of the EU as fundamentally an economic community; and, at times, a symbol of heritage allowing the Parliament to position itself as the guarantor of Europe's federalist heritage. These narrative choices were rarely neutral: they sided with the political party cleavages. Christian-democrats (EPP and their ancestors) and liberals were most consistently to portray the EDC as an unfinished enterprise whose lesson was that supranational defence eventually became necessary. Socialists oscillated between this utopian interpretation and an institutionalized pragmatism, especially during the 1990s when the intergovernmental CFSP reforms were being formulated. Conservative and Gaullist forces, and later Eurosceptic movements, tended to mobilize the EDC as a signal of caution against relinquishing national control of military forces. Such varied use of the past discloses how collective memory in the EP operates not only as recollection of history but as a strategic repertoire, enabling political families to legitimise alternative visions of the security future of Europe. The 1954 "crime" therefore continues to be discussed in the Parliament's debates not as an established historical verdict but as a debated, living resource for articulation of MEPs' preferred direction of European defence.

The case studies analyzed underscore the dynamic interplay of memory and politics in the EP. In 1982–84 we saw the bold resurrection of a taboo topic, using EDC references to expand the realm of possible European action. In 1994 we saw a nuanced historical debate, with EDC evoked for both inspiration and caution as Europe groped towards a new security role. And in 2017 we observed silence as strategy, showing that sometimes not invoking history is as important as invoking it, depending on the narrative desired. Across all cases, one finds that the EDC is far more than a historical footnote, it is a potent symbol and argumentative tool in the Parliament's discourse, adaptable to different aims. The way MEPs talk (or don't talk) about the EDC reveals their vision of European integration, the lessons they draw from history, and ultimately their hopes or fears for Europe's future as a security actor.

These findings, grounded in extensive plenary records, demonstrate the enduring relevance of the EDC episode in Europe's political imagination. Far from being ancient history, the EDC lives on in the stories European parliamentarians tell (stories of lost chances, warnings, blueprints, and even purposeful silence) all of which continue to shape how the European Union approaches the age-old question: can (and should) it provide for its own common defence? Within this framework, and on the basis of these findings, it would be academically valuable to further investigate whether, in the context of the present security crisis and the initiatives for deeper defence integration proposed in 2025, the memory of EDC failure will once again be explicitly invoked - or whether a deliberate silence will prevail, re-shaping defence narratives in the world's largest directly elected parliamentary body.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adenauer, K. (1953). *Speech to the Bundestag in support of the EDC, 19 March 1953*. In CVCE.eu archive cvce.eu.

Assmann, J. (2006). *Religion and cultural memory: Ten studies*. Stanford University Press.

Aybet, G. (2000). A European security architecture after the Cold War. *Questions of*.

Badarneh, M. A. (2020). Discourses of defense: Self and other positioning in public responses to accusations of corruption in Jordan. *Discourse Studies*, *22*(4), 399-417.

Ball, N. R., Murdoch, T. N., & Wallace, K. M. (1996). A framework for design object evolution: building and cataloging artefact prototypes. In *Artificial Intelligence in Design 96* (pp. 77-96). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.

Barbé, E. (2004). *The European Parliament in CFSP: More than a Marginal Player?* (cited in eustudies.org)

Bell, D. (2006). Introduction: Memory, trauma and world politics. In D. Bell (Ed.), *Memory, trauma and world politics: Reflections on the relationship between past and present* (pp. 1–32). Palgrave Macmillan.

Berger, J., Ridgeway, C. L., Fisek, M. H., & Norman, R. Z. (1998). The legitimation and delegitimation of power and prestige orders. *American sociological review*, 379-405.

Bierstedt, R. (1950). An analysis of social power. *American sociological review*, *15*(6), 730-738.

Bîrzea, C. (2003). EDC policies in Europe: A synthesis. *Strasbourg: Council of Europe*.

Bitsch, M.-T. (2004). *Histoire de la construction européenne de 1945 à nos jours*. Complexe.

Bonzi, I. (2023, May 20). *The failure of the European Defense Community: A discussion between the past and future of European defense*. The Onero Institute. Retrieved from https://www.oneroinstitute.org/

Bourdieu, P. (1994). Theory of symbolic power. *Culture/power/history: A reader in contemporary social theory*, *155*.

Calligaro, O. (2017). *Negotiating Europe: EU promotion of Europeanness since the 1950s*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Capoccia, G., & Kelemen, R. D. (2007). *The study of critical junctures: Theory, narrative, and counterfactuals in historical institutionalism*. World Politics, 59(3), 341–369.

Checkel, J. T. (2007). Constructivism and EU politics. *Handbook of European Union Politics*, 57-76.

Coogan, J. W. (2002). Kevin Ruane. The Rise and Fall of the European Defence Community: Anglo-American Relations and the Crisis of European Defence, 1950–1955.(Cold War

History Series.) New York: Palgrave. 2000. Pp. ix, 252. $65.00. ISBN 0-312-23482-1. *Albion*, *34*(1), 173-174.

Cuyvers, A. (2017). Five Scenarios for Europe: Understanding the EU Commission's White Paper on the Future of Europe.

CVCE (Centre for European Studies). (2016). *European Defence Community – resources and contextual documents*. CVCE.eu archive. Retrieved from http://www.cvce.eu

De Feo, A. (2015). *A history of budgetary powers and politics in the EU: the role of the European Parliament. Part I: The European Coal and Steel Community 1952-2002*.

Dennis, A., & Martin, P. J. (2005). Symbolic interactionism and the concept of power. *The British journal of sociology*, *56*(2), 191-213.

Deppermann, A., Scheidt, C. E., & Stukenbrock, A. (2020). Positioning shifts from told self to performative self in psychotherapy. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *11*, 572436.

Diedrichs, U. (2004). "The European Parliament in CFSP: More than a Marginal Player?" *The International Spectator*, 39(2), 31–46.

Dinan, D. (2010). *Ever closer union: An introduction to European integration* (4th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Duke, S. (1999). *The elusive quest for European security: from EDC to CFSP*. Springer.

Economou, A., & Kollias, C. (2015). Terrorism and political self-placement in European Union countries. *Peace economics, peace science and public policy*, *21*(2), 217-238.

European Parliament. (1982, December 13–17). *Debates of the European Parliament: Report of proceedings* (1982–1983, No. 1-292). Official Journal of the European Communities.

European Parliament. (1994, February 23–24). *Debates of the European Parliament: Report of proceedings* (1993–1994, No. 3-443). Official Journal of the European Communities.

European Parliament. (1999). Resolution on the situation in Kosovo (P5_TA(1999)0003, 22 July 1999) robert-schuman.eu.

European Parliament. Verbatim report of proceedings of 24 October 2017. (2024). *Official Journal*, C 3018, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/3018/oj

European Parliament. Verbatim report of proceedings of 16 January 2018. (2024). *Official Journal*, C 3192, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/3192/oj

European Parliament – Policy Dept. for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs. (2022). *The First Treaties* (Fact Sheets on the European Union) (M. Maciejewski, Author) europarl.europa.eueuroparl.europa.eu. Brussels: European Parliament.

European Parliament. (2022). Resolution on Russian aggression against Ukraine (1 March 2022)

European Parliament. (2022). “The extent of the European Parliament’s competence in Common Security and Defence Policy.” In-Depth Analysis by the Policy Department for External Policies europarl.europa.eueuroparl.europa.eu.

Feindt, P. H., & Nichols, R. (2019). “Narrative, memory and politics: Towards a conceptual framework for the study of memory in European politics”. *Journal of European Public Policy, 26*(8), 1163–1183.
Fursdon, E. (1980). *The European defence community: a history*. Springer.

Gabr, I. (2014). *The domestic and ideational sources of the European Defence Community’s defeat*. E-International Relations, June 4, 2014. Retrieved from https://www.e-ir.info/ e-ir.info.

Garavoglia, G. (2020). *Critical junctures and path dependence in European integration: The EDC and the limits of supranational defence*. In D. M. Bracke & S. Romano (Eds.), *Europe’s Unfinished Security Architecture* (pp. 102–120). Routledge.

Gavin, V. (2009). Power through Europe? The case of the European Defence Community in France (1950–1954). *French History*, *23*(1), 69-87.

Gerbet, P. (1983). *La construction de l’Europe*. Imprimerie Nationale.

Gerbet, P. (1994). *Naissance de l’Europe: De la Résistance à l’unité européenne, 1940–1950*. Éditions du Seuil.

Gilbert, M. (2008). *European Integration: A Concise History*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Gore, A. C., Chappell, V. A., Fenton, S. E., Flaws, J. A., Nadal, A., Prins, G. S., ... & Zoeller, R. T. (2015). Executive summary to EDC-2: the Endocrine Society's second scientific statement on endocrine-disrupting chemicals. *Endocrine reviews*, *36*(6), 593-602.

Grbić, S., & Maksić, S. (2022). Adolescent identity at school: Student self-positioning in narratives concerning their everyday school experiences. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, *35*(1), 295-317.

Griffiths, R. T. (Ed.). (1996). *Exploring European Integration: Selected Readings*. Lynne Rienner.

Haas, E. B. (1958). *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces, 1950–1957*. Stanford University Press.

Halbwachs, M. (1992). *On collective memory* (L. A. Coser, Trans.). University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1950)

Hannken-Illjes, K. (2011). “The problem is…”: Narratives as resources in criminal case work. *Narrative Inquiry*, *21*(1), 175-188.

Harré, R., & Slocum, N. (2003). Disputes as complex social events: On the uses of positioning theory. *Common knowledge*, *9*(1), 100-118.

Harré, R., Moghaddam, F. M., Cairnie, T. P., Rothbart, D., & Sabat, S. R. (2009). Recent advances in positioning theory. *Theory & psychology*, *19*(1), 5-31.

Harré, R., & Van Langenhove, L. (2010). Varieties of positioning. In *People and societies* (pp. 118-132). Routledge.

Hitchcock, W. I. (1998). *France Restored: Cold War Diplomacy and the Quest for Leadership in Europe, 1944–1954*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Hurling, S. (2012). Introduction to EDC. *New directions in teaching and learning English discussion*, *1*, 2-10.

Igartua, J. J., & Barrios, I. (2012). Changing real-world beliefs with controversial movies: Processes and mechanisms of narrative persuasion. *Journal of communication*, *62*(3), 514-531.

Imam, S., & Sarkar, V. (2014, July). Cooperative scheduling of parallel tasks with general synchronization patterns. In *European Conference on Object-Oriented Programming* (pp. 618-643). Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg.

Jegen, M., & Mérand, F. (2014). Constructive ambiguity: Comparing the EU's energy and defence policies. *West European Politics*, *37*(1), 182-203.

Joannin, P. (2023). "Review of the 9th Legislature of the European Parliament." *Robert Schuman Foundation Report* robert-schuman.eurobert-schuman.eu.
Jowiya, K. (2020). *The Conservative Party in the European Parliament, 1973-1992* (Doctoral dissertation, King's College London).

Kissinger, H. (1957). *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace 1812–1822*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Koliska, M., & Chadha, K. (2023). Taking a stand: The discursive re-positioning of journalism. *Journalism Studies*, *24*(4), 442-459.

Koliska, M., Bhat, P., & Gandhi, U. (2025). # MainBhichowkidar (i am also a Watchman): indian Journalists Responding to a Populist campaign challenging their Watchdog Role in society. *Digital Journalism*, *13*(5), 893-911.

Küsters, H. J. (1982). *Die Gründung der Europäischen Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft*. Oldenburg.

Levy, D. (2010). *Memory and the European Union: Theory and Practice*. In S. Ross & M. Sznajder (Eds.), *The politics of memory in postwar Europe* (pp. 88–105). Duke University Press.

Lingevicius, J. (2023). Military artificial intelligence as power: consideration for European Union actorness. *Ethics and Information Technology*, *25*(1), 19.

Loth, W. (1996). *Europe, Cold War and Coexistence, 1953–1965*. Kluwer Law International.

Loth, W. (2001). *Building Europe: A history of European unification*. Brill.

Mälksoo, M. (2006). From existential politics towards normal politics? The Baltic states in the enlarged Europe. *Security Dialogue*, *37*(3), 275-297.

Manjón-Cabeza Córdoba, A., & Ballmer, M. D. (2021). The role of edge-driven convection in the generation of volcanism–Part 1: A 2D systematic study. *Solid Earth*, *12*(3), 613-632.

Menon, A., & Weatherill, S. (Eds.). (2008). *The Future of European Defence Integration*.

Menon, A., & Howorth, J. (2017). European Security Integration and the problem of political will. *Journal of Common Market Studies, 55*(2), 382–398.

Miestamo, M., Wagner-Nagy, B., & Tamm, A. (2015). Negation in Uralic languages.

Monnet, J., Pleven, R., Schuman, R., et al. (1950). *Statements and speeches on the European Army proposal (Pleven Plan)*. In EU Archives (various documents).

Neumann, I. B. (2016). *Returning practice to the linguistic turn: The case of diplomacy*. In A. B. Tickner & D. Blaney (Eds.), *Thinking International Relations Differently* (pp. 142–164). Routledge.

Patel, K. K. (2020). *Project Europe: A History*. Cambridge University Press.

Pierson, P. (1996). *The path to European integration: A historical institutionalist perspective*. Comparative Political Studies, 29(2), 123–163.

Piippo, S., Hirvonen, P., & Anand, J. C. (2022). Professional self-positioning of Indian social workers in response to domestic violence. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, *37*(3-4), NP2227-NP2250.

Portera, A. (2023). Global versus intercultural citizenship education. *Prospects*, *53*(3), 233-248.

Quagliariello, G. (2004). *La CED, l'ultima spina di De Gasperi*. *Ventunesimo Secolo*, 3(5), 247–286.

Rigney, A. (2018). *The afterlives of memory: From memory politics to the politics of imagination*. Cultural Memory Studies, 3(1), 75–95.

Risse, T. (2010). *A community of Europeans? Transnational identities and public spheres*. Cornell University Press.

Rosén, G., & Raube, K. (2018). "Influence beyond formal powers: The parliamentarisation of European Union security policy." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 20(1), 69–83.
Roussel, E. (1996). *Jean Monnet: 1888-1979* (p. 165). Paris: Fayard.

Ruane, K. (2000). *The Rise and Fall of the European Defence Community: Anglo-American Relations and the Crisis of European Defence, 1950–1955*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Sarpong, D., Tjong-A-Hung, I., & Botchie, D. (2018). Breaking new grounds: Deployment of electronic data capture (EDC) for clinical trials in China. *Strategic Change*, *27*(3), 257-265.

Schmidt, V. A. (2006). *Democracy in Europe: The EU and national polities*. Oxford University Press.

Secondary source in NATO Review (2005). *Germany's accession to NATO: 50 years on*. NATO Review Magazine, 53(2).

Seger, C. J. H., & Bryant, R. E. (1995). Formal verification by symbolic evaluation of partially-ordered trajectories. *Formal Methods in System Design*, *6*(2), 147-189.

Spaak, P.-H. (1954, September 18). *Address to the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe* (deploring the failure of EDC)cvce.eu. Published in Council of Europe Debates, 1954.

Sternberg, C. (2013). *The struggle for EU legitimacy: public contestation, 1950-2005*. Springer.

Sung, R. S., Christensen, L. L., Leichtman, A. B., Greenstein, S. M., Distant, D. A., Wynn, J. J., ... & Port, F. K. (2008). Determinants of discard of expanded criteria donor kidneys: impact of biopsy and machine perfusion. *American Journal of Transplantation*, *8*(4), 783-792.

Swartz, D. L. (2022). *Symbolic power, politics, and intellectuals: The political sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*. University of Chicago Press.

Trechsel, A. H., & Mair, P. (2011). When parties (also) position themselves: An introduction to the EU Profiler. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, *8*(1), 1-20.

U.S. Department of State – Office of the Historian. (1954). *Statement by John Foster Dulles on the French rejection of EDC, Aug 31, 1954*. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–54, Western European Security Affairs*. Washington, DC: USGPO.

Walikonis, S. R. (2004). *The phenomenon of power in the church: An investigation and analysis of the relational dynamics experienced in the context of the assertion of authority*. Andrews University.

Whittle, A., Mueller, F., & Mangan, A. (2009). Storytelling andcharacter': Victims, villains and heroes in a case of technological change. *Organization*, *16*(3), 425-442.

Wittmann, B. (2023). Inner-Professional Perspectives on Factory Farming: Moral Positioning in a Field Considered as Immoral. *Morality as Organizational Practice: Negotiating, Performing, and Navigating Moral Standards in Contexts of Work*, 23.

Yorulmaz, M., & Yaşar, A. T. (2023). *Avrupa Birliği Güvenlik ve Savunma Politikasının NATO ile İlişkileri Bağlamında Analizi* (Analysis of EU Security and Defence Policy in relation to NATO). Journal of European Security Studies, 5(1).

Young, J. W. (1990). *Britain and European Unity, 1945–1992*. Macmillan.

Zielonka, J. (2006). *Europe as Empire: The Nature of the Enlarged European Union*. Oxford University Press.