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# In Every Crisis an Opportunity? European Union Integration in Defence and the War on Ukraine


## Abstract

Russia's war on Ukraine has upended the European security order. Ukraine has requested EU membership, unprecedented sanctions have been imposed on Russia, European countries have shipped weapons and munitions to Ukraine and NATO has shored up its military presence. Despite such action, is it possible to speak of a transformative moment or "Zeitenwende" for EU security and defence? This article analyses the state of EU integration in defence since the war on Ukraine. Drawing on hypotheses developed under 'new intergovernmentalism', this article analyses how EU Member State preferences in defence and intergovernmental-supranational dynamics are being shaped by the war. In particular, the article probes how supranational and intergovernmental institutions have reacted to war and how domestic preferences have fed into recent EU defence efforts. In doing so, the article provides a preliminary assessment of EU integration in defence since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



## Keywords

European Union, Defence, Ukraine, Supranationalism, Intergovernmentalism

## Word count

8,298 words, references and notes



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## Introduction

Even though it may be too early to derive lessons from Russia's war on Ukraine, or indeed to predict how the war may end, it is nevertheless true that a number of new EU defence initiatives have either been initiated or justified because of the war. Additionally, there are existing European Union (EU) policies that have been re-emphasised or bolstered because of Russia's belligerent actions. In fact, since Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine the EU has released its first-ever defence strategy (the "Strategic Compass"), accelerated deliveries of military equipment to the Ukrainian armed forces, ratcheted up sanctions on the Kremlin and key sectors of Russia's economy, taken in millions of Ukrainian refugees, offered Kyiv a path towards future membership of the EU, provided Ukraine with billions of euros in macro-financial assistance, committed to the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine's economy, opened up a medical evacuation hub for Ukrainian patients, linked Ukraine's electricity grid with Europe's transmission network, committed to investigating Russian war crimes and more.

Yet, the EU's response to Russia's war on Ukraine exists in a wider political context in which citizens, states and institutions are thinking about the future of Europe. In particular, the

Conference on the Future of Europe resulted in communications from the European Commission and European Parliament to deepen European integration through amendments to the EU Treaties and enhanced cooperation in areas such as defence, energy and health policy. Indeed, the Parliament's own May 2022 final report on the Conference underlined that EU defence policy should, in addition to being ready to undertake crisis management tasks, also provide 'adequate EU protection to any member state under attack by a third country' (European Parliament, 2022: 66). Despite the ambitions of EU institutions, however, we should recognise that security and defence policy still falls under the remit of the EU Member States working through the Council of the EU. In this sense, it is important to understand how the dynamics for EU defence integration are playing out in the context of Russia's war on Ukraine.

Scholarly attention on how EU integration functions in times of crisis has blossomed over the past few years. Some have advanced the idea that crises are indeed important for the dynamic of EU integration, and in many cases the Union is engaged in a "failing forward" process where incomplete responses to crises sow the seeds for future challenges, the response to which can potentially lead to deeper integration (Jones, Kelemen and Meunier, 2021). While others claim that the EU's response to the Covid-19 pandemic shows that the Union is able to craft credible responses to crises without failing forward (Rhodes, 2021), other scholars have advanced competing explanations for how EU integration is affected by crises. Some, such as Genschel and Jachtenfuchs (2018), have argued that the EU finds it difficult to transition from market integration to integration marked by the core powers of states. Others have called for more theoretical plurality when thinking about EU integration and crises, especially as there are a diversity of crises that may illicit different creative policy responses by the EU (Ferrara and Kriesi, 2022).

While it is still too early to comprehensively deal with EU integration in defence and the war on Ukraine, a number of scholarly texts have attempted to deal with the rise in EU defence integration over the past few years. In particular, the creation of tools such as the European Defence Fund (EDF) and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) have led to the revitalisation of neo-functionalist accounts of defence integration (Haroche, 2020; Håkansson, 2021). In particular, such explanations have stressed the importance of the growth of the European Commission's role in defence investment and capability development. Haroche contends, for example, that the Commission exhibits spillover behaviour in the way it has intervened in an area of high politics such as defence, demonstrated its ability to add value to defence matters and developed its bureaucratic capabilities for handling the EDF (Haroche, 2020).

This article engages with these theoretical discussions related to EU integration in defence by looking at how the war in Ukraine has affected the pace and nature of defence integration. To this end, it assesses neo-functionalist accounts of EU defence integration and analyses on the logic of the "new intergovernmentalism". In particular, the article focuses on the work of Bickerton, Hodson and Puetter (2015a and 2015b) to analyse whether EU initiatives in defence since Russia's invasion of Ukraine amount to more than traditional forms of intergovernmentalism and domestic preferences. Specifically, this article tests the six hypotheses advanced under "new intergovernmentalism" as a way to determine whether supranational institutions have increased their role and power since the war, how domestic preferences for defence have evolved, if there has been a blurring of lines between high and low politics and if there is evidence of disequilibrium in EU defence integration.

This article is organised in three main parts. In the first section, the article looks at the specific defence policies and initiatives that have been developed or adapted by the EU since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. In this first section we look at the cases of the adoption of the Strategic Compass, the shift in the use of the European Peace Facility and the plans the Union has to develop greater defence-industrial cooperation through joint procurement. Each of these three policy areas are then tested in relation to the six hypotheses derived from "new intergovernmentalism". The second section looks in more detail at how the war on Ukraine has affected deliberation and delegation within the EU and how institutions have adapted to the crisis. The third section turns its focus to domestic preferences and the distinction between high and low politics, as well as probing whether a state of disequilibrium has emerged in EU defence policy. The article ends with a conclusion offering broader theoretical observations. This article draws on exchanges and interviews with government and EU officials and it hopes to contribute to a wider conversation about EU integration beyond areas such as the eurozone, migration, Brexit and the rise of illiberalism in the EU (Hooghe and Marks, 2019).

## EU defence efforts since Russia's invasion

The EU's efforts since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 can be broadly classified in three main ways: i) "strategic reorientation": the war has spurred on the adoption of the EU's first-ever dedicated security and defence strategy called the "Strategic Compass"; ii) "defensive weaponisation": the war has accelerated how the EU thinks about and delivers lethal equipment to partners through the European Peace Facility (EPF); and iii) "industrial rehabilitation": Russia's war has led the Union to think about it can better invest in the manufacturing of military equipment, especially given the need to supply Ukraine's armed forces with ammunition and munitions. Of course, while this article only focuses on defence-related matters we should nevertheless acknowledge that the EU has also imposed heavy sanctions on the Russian economy, it is welcoming millions of Ukrainian refugees and the EU has offered future membership to Ukraine in addition to financial resources for post-war reconstruction efforts. Despite these efforts, let us look at each of the EU's three major defence initiatives.

### *Strategic reorientation: the Strategic Compass*

On 24 March 2022, EU Heads of State and Government endorsed the Union's Strategic Compass. While the European Council had previously endorsed numerous conclusions on security and defence in the past, this is the first time that European leaders have endorsed a specific (47-page) strategy document in this policy area. Unlike the 2016 EU Global Strategy, which only received a timid initial welcome from the European Council, the Strategic Compass is endowed with the highest authority, which is important given that the document is supposed to guide EU security and defence policy for the remainder of this decade to 2030. Importantly, the success of the Strategic Compass depends upon the EU Member States and EU bodies delivering on over 80 specific actions designed to: 1) boost the robustness and speed of EU military action; 2) build up the Union's resilience to internal and external shocks; 3) develop the EU's military capabilities; and 4) strengthen the Union's partnerships. In the way it marries a strategic vision to concrete

action, the Compass is the most complete document on security and defence the EU has ever produced.[1]

In terms of the war on Ukraine, the Strategic Compass does not shy away from naming individual countries as threats or rivals: both Russia and China feature prominently in this regard. This is somewhat a departure for the EU, which has tended to restrict overt language to sanctions-linked Council Conclusions. Of course, with Russia's war on Ukraine the language on the Kremlin could not be anything but direct, even if earlier versions of the Compass had already singled-out Moscow as a long-term threat for the Union[2]. For example, an earlier version of the Strategic Compass that was leaked to the press in November 2021 contained only six references to Russia and one of those references stated that the EU and Russia have 'many common interests and shared culture' and that the EU should strive to engage with Moscow on certain issues (Council of the EU, 2021a: 8). The final version of the Compass released in March 2022, however, contained eighteen references to Russia and it stated bluntly that 'Russia's war of aggression constitutes a tectonic shift in European history' (Council of the EU, 2022a: 5).

The success or failure of the Strategic Compass is almost entirely premised on the idea that EU Member States will deliver in areas of defence cooperation where they have hitherto failed. For two decades, and since the inception of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), national capitals have collectively presided over the growth of military capability and investment gaps (Major and Mölling, 2020: 43). A fact doubly concerning given that many EU Member States form part of NATO too. Implementation is the hardest aspect of EU policy, and some may question how it will be possible to implement policy actions in the space of a couple of years considering that two decades of CSDP have not wielded much progress in areas such as military deployments or capability development. This is why the Compass has a "high risk - high return" philosophy at its core: succeed, and by 2030 a huge step forward for European defence would have been taken, fail, and the EU's credibility as a nascent defence actor will be seriously – possibly irretrievably – damaged.

*Defensive weaponisation: the European Peace Facility*

One policy area that has only increased in importance since the start of Russia's war on Ukraine has been how the EU delivers lethal military equipment abroad through the European Peace Facility. Indeed, the EPF was adopted by a decision by the Council of the EU in March 2021. It is an off-budget financial instrument, meaning that it is comprised of financial resources provided by the EU Member States – it is not, therefore, financed from the EU budget. The EPF today is worth some €5.6 billion that is spread over the 2021-2027 period. In essence, the EPF was designed to combine two previous financial vehicles for security and defence called the Athena Mechanism, which was designed to cover common costs as part of CSDP missions and operations, and the African Peace Facility, which was used to financially support peace support operations led by African states and regional bodies (like the African Union). By combining the two instruments in the EPF, the EU hoped to ensure that its financing of CSDP deployments and the capacity building of partners could be streamlined.

[1] Interview with an official from the European External Action Service, Brussels, 6 April 2022.
[2] Exchange with an official from the European External Action Service, Brussels, 5 July 2022.

While EU Member States are still responsible for financing CSDP missions and operations in line with the “costs lie where they fall” principle, the EPF alters this logic slightly by increasing common costs and allowing greater support for partners when they call for the strengthening of their military and defence capacities in support of peace support operations (Ruy and Morcos, 2021). What is noteworthy about the EPF is how it has had to alter its orientation since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine (Hauck, 2022). For example, when the EPF was being created those involved from Member States and EU bodies such as the Council of the EU believed that it would largely be used to finance EU training missions in Africa rather than in the Eastern Partnership countries.[3] This is supported by the fact that Council of the EU decided to launch an EU Training Mission (EUTM) to Mozambique in October 2021 in response to the crisis in the Cabo Delgado province, and that EUTM Mozambique was one of the first EU deployments to be partially financed by the EPF.

Since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, however, the EPF has been quickly adapted to the needs of the Ukrainian armed forces. The first important issue to note is that the EPF has already resulted in some €2.9 billion of total assistance measures. The largest part of this total amount has been made to Ukraine, which has received €2.5 billion or 85.1% since Russia’s February 2022 invasion. This is followed by €398 Million to Africa (or 13.7%), €16 million to the Western Balkans (0.6%), €12.75 million to Georgia (0.4%) and €7 million to Moldova (0.2%) (European External Action Service, 2022). The second noteworthy development in addition to Ukraine receiving the bulk of EPF support thus far is how the EU has decided to increase the per annum financial ceilings originally locked into the Council Decision establishing the Facility. Indeed, Annex I of Council Decision 2021/509 stated that in 2022 the financial ceiling was set at €540 million (Council of the EU, 2021b), but on five different occasions in 2022 the EU decided to increase the ceilings to the extent that €2.5 billion (or almost of half of the entire EPF for the 2021-2027 period) has already been allocated in support of Ukraine’s war effort (Council of the EU, 2022b).

*Industrial rehabilitation: common EU defence procurement*

Since Russia’s war on Ukraine, the EU has produced four major strategic documents that pertain to the need for the Union to invest in its defence capabilities and support the European defence industry. The war, having highlighted the capability gaps present in Europe’s armouries, and shown severe constraints in the ability of European arms manufacturers to produce replacement ammunition and munitions in time, led Union leaders to call for a reinvigoration of defence industry efforts. To this end, in addition to the publication of the Strategic Compass in March 2022, the EU Heads of State and Government met at Versailles on 10-11 March 2022 to discuss how the EU can deal with investments in new defence capabilities and how to replenishment stocks of Soviet-era equipment being sent to Ukraine. After the Versailles Summit, and sustained under the political guidance of the French Presidency of the Council of the EU, leaders agreed to substantially increase defence spending for the acquisition of capabilities and strategic enablers such as cyber and space capacities. Interestingly, at Versailles the European Council called for the Commission to ‘put forward an analysis of the defence investment gaps’ and ‘propose any further initiative necessary to strengthen the European defence industrial and technological base’ (European Council, 2022: 5).

[3] Exchange with an official in the Council of the EU, Brussels, 17 May 2022.

Building on the Versailles Declaration and the Strategic Compass, the European Commission and High Representative/Vice-President (HR/VP) jointly published their assessment of defence capability gaps on 18 May 2022. The assessment underlined that, due to Russia's war, EU Member States needed to create economies of scale in the European defence market through collaborative projects and investments. The Joint Communication also specified how the Union should urgently invest in gaps such as stockpiles of ammunition and air and missile defence systems, while also calling on EU Member States to 'phase out existing Soviet era legacy systems still in use within EU Armed Forces with European solutions', especially in areas such as main battle tanks, armoured fighting vehicles and heavy artillery (European Commission and HR/VP, 2022: 7). Interestingly, the Joint Communication also outlined that the EU needed to set up a task force to manage joint procurement needs and that the Commission would provide a VAT exemption for European defence projects as well as pursue an overall increase in the budgets of the EDF and military mobility.

The last of the four major documents to be released by the Commission on defence-industrial matters was the proposed Regulation for the European Defence Industry Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act (EDIRPA), which was published on 19 July 2022. The proposed Regulation sets out a new ambition for the European Commission to invest €500 million over the 2022-2024 period in joint defence projects that address the defence capability gaps identified in the 18 May Joint Communication and build on the EDF, which is already investing €8 billion in defence research and capability development until 2027 (European Commission, 2022). However, the proposed Regulation goes further in announcing that the EDIRPA should only be a short-term measure that will lead to the creation of a fully-fledged European Defence Investment Programme (EDIP). While the level of investment in the proposed EDIP is unknown today, it is seen as a way for the EU to move into the area of common defence procurement. In this sense, the EDIP would build on the existing EDF and allow the Union to not only invest in defence research and defence prototyping, but engage in common procurement and eventually the development and commercialisation of weapons systems.

To sum up, therefore, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led to a range of new strategies and policies in defence within the EU. Russia's actions have also forced the EU to adapt existing policies like the EPF to new circumstances, and it has also given rise to initiatives on common EU defence procurement. Despite this policy evolution, however, there is a need to understand the significance of these developments for EU defence integration. In particular, by analysing the Strategic Compass, EPF and EU defence industrial policy in more detail it will be possible to provide a preliminary assessment of how intergovernmentalism and supranationalism are changing (*or not*) as a result of Russia's war. Before heading into the next sections, it is worth stating that this paper understands intergovernmentalism to mean a situation whereby EU Member States can cooperate on matters of common interest 'in situations and conditions they can control' (Nugent, 2002: 475). Supranationalism is hereby seen as a relationship between Member States that results in 'some loss of national sovereignty' (*ibid*.).

## Deliberation, delegation and institutions

The first hypothesis advanced under "new intergovernmentalism" is that deliberation and consensus has become the guiding norm of day-to-day decision making at all levels of the EU

(Bickerton, Hodson and Puetter, 2015a: 711). In this sense, "new intergovernmentalism" hypothesises that intergovernmental consensus and deliberation has effectively side-lined supranational centralisation. In all of the three cases explored in this article, there is evidence to support this claim. Certainly, the Strategic Compass and the EPF are two initiatives that thrive without supranational control. In fact, the EPF is run by a committee of Member States and presided over by an official from the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU. The Peace Facility is wholly financed by the Member States and decisions are, by default, taken in a consensual and deliberative manner. It is true, of course, that the EPF takes guidance on military-technical matters from the EU Military Staff, but even this body – located in the EEAS – is composed of seconded national experts. Furthermore, it was a caucus of Member States that effectively ensured that the EPF would not only focus more on Ukraine rather than Africa[4], but indeed that its *per annum* financial ceilings could be raised. In this respect, this analysis departs from the notion that the EPF signifies a step towards further integration (Bergmann and Müller, 2021).

The Strategic Compass is also an interesting case study in how policy goals and strategic orientation was guided largely by the EU Member States. In fact, while the drafting of the Compass was put in the hands of an EEAS official working on behalf of the HR/VP, the drafting process was uniquely deliberative and consensual. Indeed, over a period spanning from February to October 2021 the EU Member States co-organised approximately 50 workshops and produced over 25 non-papers on various aspects of EU defence policy including security of supply, crisis management operations, capability development planning and outer space (Fiott and Lindstrom, 2022: 6). It is true that the Compass did include a range of policy initiatives that fell under the purview of the Commission – especially in relation to defence industrial policy, space and cybersecurity –, and officials from the Commission were intimately involved in the drafting process through coordination via the cabinet of the HR/VP and other Commissioner cabinets and Directorates General (DGs).[5] However, the vast majority of the 80 or so action points in the Compass do not contribute to enhancing supranationalism in EU defence policy.

The second hypothesis that we analyse here from "new intergovernmentalism" is the idea that supranational institutions are not hard-wired to seek ever-closer union. Bickerton, Hodson and Puetter argue that '[t]he post-Maastricht period has been notable for the absence of a big push by the Commission for the centralization of decision-making in new areas of EU activity' (2015a: 712). To support this argument, they argue that supranational institutions are more cautious about deepening EU integration when in hostile political climates, and in certain cases a quest for more power ranks as a more important objective than integration. In advancing this hypothesis, "new intergovernmentalism" not only pushes back against institutionalist or functionalist accounts of EU integration, but it dislocates the automaticity with which we equate deeper EU integration with increased supranational power. In advancing this particular hypothesis, questions have been raised by Schimmelfennig (2015) as to whether the hypothesis is testable at all. As he states, the 'hypothesis is unlikely to fail because a single instance of a supranational institution preferring the status quo over more integration is enough' (Schimmelfennig, 2015: 727). He goes on to argue that "new intergovernmentalism" fails to show under which specific 'conditions supranational institutions prefer more or less integration' (Schimmelfennig, 2015: 727). In a rebuttal to this

[4] Exchange with an official from the EEAS, Brussels, 16 May 2022.
[5] Exchange with officials from the EEAS and European Commission, Brussels, 17 and 19 May 2022.

critique, Bickerton, Hodson and Puetter (2015b) argue that the hypothesis is indeed testable and they call for sustained attention to develop empirical evidence.

Since Russia's war on Ukraine, we have seen how the European Commission has sought to advance EU action in the area of common defence procurement through EDIRPA and the planned EDIP. Even though common defence procurement does in theory hint at the notion of a loss of national sovereignty, it is necessary to understand whether it represents an instance of the Commission seeking to deepen EU integration in defence or not. One way of uncovering the rationale behind the move is to look at the proposed Regulation for the EDIRPA and the Commission's work to identify defence investment gaps. Indeed, in its analysis of investment gaps the Commission underlines the rationale already set down by the European Council in its tasking at the Versailles Summit. Here, the Commission recognises the need for greater joint defence procurement to reinforce European defence against Russian aggression and to replenish military equipment and ammunition stocks given the deliveries being made to Ukraine. To this end, the Commission calls for more coordinated spending from the Member States in the areas of drones, main battle tanks, cyber defence, space capabilities, military mobility and more.

However, a closer read of the Joint Communication reveals that there is little to suggest that the European Commission wants to pursue deeper supranational integration at the EU level. First, the Commission calls for Member States to make use of EU-level capability planning and development frameworks such as PESCO and CARD, but in doing so they are making reference to overtly intergovernmental tools and frameworks. Second, the Communication also only refers to the term "European" when underlining how the European defence industry needs supporting and, even with references to VAT exemptions, it does not announce any bold steps (e.g. joint or EU ownership of defence capabilities) that would imperil intergovernmentalism or national sovereignty. Third, while it is true that the Communication calls for the establishment of a Joint Defence Task Force to study further common procurement needs, the Commission is clear that this Task Force should be largely compromised of the Member States and intergovernmental bodies like the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Defence Agency (EDA).

Where there is perhaps a shift in tone is when the Communication talks about how the Commission could support joint procurement. Accordingly, the Commission uses the governance logic already embedded in the EDF, whereby financial inducements are used to encourage a minimum number of EU Member States to invest in military capabilities together. It does go further, however, in stating that its plan for European common defence procurement should lead to a re-configuration of defence planning at the Union level. Thus far, and to the extent that genuine defence planning occurs at the EU level, it does so in an intergovernmental setting through the EDA, EU Military Staff and EU Military Committee. Despite this, the Communication calls for 'a joint EU defence programming and procurement function' that could 'act as a central purchasing body for EU joint procurement and support Member States in their joint procurements, including downstream from the EDF-funded projects' (European Commission and HR/VP, 2022: 11). Interpreting this initiative for a 'central purchasing body' in relation to "new intergovernmentalism's" third hypothesis – namely, that when delegation occurs governments and supranational actors support the creation of *de novo* bodies – raises serious questions (Bickerton, Hodson and Puetter, 2015a: 713).

One could, for example, argue that even the creation of a defence planning and procurement function at the EU level would not necessarily enhance supranationalism in defence, as Member States would still own and use defence capabilities and, at least for the period of 2022-2024, the EU plans to invest only €500 million into joint defence procurement projects under EDIRPA. Nevertheless, by the time the Commission tabled it's proposal for a Regulation for the EDIRPA on 19 July, it continued to advance the idea that a special procurement agent to lead the work under EDIRPA would be required. Interestingly, however, it does not put itself forward for the role, even though DG DEFIS – the dedicated DG for defence and space in the Commission – already manages the EDF. In fact, Recital 22 of the proposed Regulation calls on Member States to 'appoint a procurement agent to conduct' common procurement 'on their behalf', and, even though it states that Union bodies can be used for this purpose, it also lists non-EU bodies such as the Organisation Conjointe de Coopération en matière d'Armement (OCCAR) as a potential agent too. Accordingly, at present it seems unclear whether *de novo* bodies will be established to manage EDITPA or the future EDIP. All we can be certain of today is that the Commission will be the responsible body that awards a share of EDIRPA to three or more Member States, yet even here the Commission – just like it does under the EDF – will be supported in its work by a committee comprised of the Member States.

What does the empirical investigation so far reveal in relation to some of the hypotheses advanced under "new intergovernmentalism"? What is perhaps relatively clear at present is that the Commission has seized on the opportunity of advancing EU policy in the area of common defence procurement – a policy area hitherto not seriously addressed at the EU level. Yet it has only done so with the express consent and direct tasking of the European Council. Clearly, Member State leaders believed that the Commission was the best placed EU institution to deal with a collective challenge such as common defence procurement, and that no single EU Member State could solve this challenge it on its own. In this sense, Russia's war on Ukraine has not only exposed the costs of fragmentation in Europe's defence market, but it has provided a political impetus to organise defence procurement at the Union level so as to avoid undue competition from external industrial players and to leverage the EU budget for common defence needs. In relation to the EPF, which has become an important expression of the Union's support Ukraine, the role for supranational bodies is severely constrained. Likewise, the Strategic Compass only embeds the logic of intergovernmentalism and it does not seek any transfers of power to supranational institutions in the area of defence policy.

**Preferences, politics and disequilibrium**

Another of the core hypotheses advanced by "new intergovernmentalism" is that 'problems in domestic preference formation have become standalone inputs into the European integration process' (Bickerton, Hodson and Puetter, 2015a: 714). Here, it is argued that liberal intergovernmentalism offers a narrow interpretation of domestic preferences and that it gives precedence to economic interests that are bargained for by governments at the EU level. "New intergovernmentalism" urges a broader understanding of preferences to include popular political movements and room for distrust in governments. Yet, in many respects Liberal Intergovernmentalism has never argued that economic preferences are the only set of important interests (Schimmelfennig, 2015: 727). Indeed, there have already been scholarly attempts to

reposition the notion of domestic preferences under Liberal Intergovernmentalism in relation to the defence sector. Fiott (2019 and 2017), for example, shows how when governments bargain at the EU level in defence policy they do so by representing a multitude of preferences. This diversity of preferences includes industrial and commercial interests, considerations about military strategy or whether the development of EU-level policy could lead to the further empowerment of the European Commission in the area of defence (Fiott, 2019; Calcara, 2019). Accordingly, such research has expanded what we consider to be domestic preferences in the context of the EU defence policy and it has also shown how even commercial actors do not have to rely on national governments to advance EU-level policy, especially if this includes transnational defence firms that are only partially owned by states (Fiott, 2019).

The fifth hypothesis forwarded under "new intergovernmentalism" is that the 'differences between high and low politics have become blurred' (Bickerton, Hodson and Puetter, 2015a: 715). Of course, the original idea behind such a distinction was to highlight those policy areas where Member States would be more vigilant about their sovereignty. By arguing that domestic preference formation is contested and not as simple as assumed by a Liberal Intergovernmental reading of preferences, "new intergovernmentalism" posits the notion that high and low politics have become blurred 'because of the difficulties in forging any single and coherent narrative about the national interest' (Bickerton, Hodson and Puetter, 2015a: 716). In relation to EU defence policy, however, it is questionable whether the distinction between high and low politics has truly become blurred. Indeed, the EU Treaties are particularly clear that matters pertaining to security and defence are a matter for Member States. While the drafting of the Strategic Compass is not, in itself, a matter of high politics, the Member States have made clear that any decisions pertaining to the transfer of weapons to Ukraine under the EPF is a matter for sovereign states to manage in common and without supranational institutions.

In terms of EU defence industrial policy, one could make the argument that even the audacity of proposing common EU defence procurement is tantamount to a blurring of lines between high and low politics. After all, it was the European Council that first asked the European Commission to explore the idea. Naturally, decisions about how to spend defence budgets and which military capabilities to acquire is one of the quintessential hallmarks of national sovereignty. It is for this reason that the proposal for EDIRPA is carefully crafted to maintain national sovereign control over capabilities, even when jointly developed. In fact, the proposed Regulation does not stray from the logic that Member States ultimately have to develop, own and use military capabilities – regardless of whether they have been financed at the EU level or agreed to through a Commission-led committee. Thus, this evidence would lead one to disagree with "new intergovernmentalism" because there are still areas in defence policy that Member States seek to safeguard.

The Strategic Compass offers insights into the relationship between high and low politics in EU defence policy, too. As we has seen, the Compass is but a document but it is also the first-ever EU security and defence strategy. In this respect, it imparts important political signals about how EU defence policy should be directed. As a document called for, agreed and endorsed by Member States it should be no surprise to learn that the Compass reinforces an intergovernmental logic and it underlines how the HR/VP 'will provide an annual report on the progress made as a basis for a European Council meeting to provide political guidance for our efforts' (Council of the EU, 2022a: 47). It should be stated that, in underlining the European Council's central role, the Compass goes

beyond the traditional focus on the Council of the EU as the main arbiter of the direction of EU security and defence policy. Yet the Strategic Compass goes further in bringing together policies under both the CSDP and wider defence initiatives that fall under the Commission's purview. While the EU Treaty provisions on maintaining defence as an area of high politics are maintained in the Compass, the first-ever EU defence strategy interestingly brings together communitarian and intergovernmental policy initiatives in one document, and places them under the political guidance of the European Council. For example, one can find provisions on space and cyber policy alongside military operations planning and the EPF. This increased role for the European Council in defence policy is in keeping with the idea that the body is vital 'for governing within policy areas that are at the heart of national sovereignty and domestic politics' (Puetter, 2014: p. 69).

The final hypothesis offered by Bickerton, Hodson and Puetter (2015a) is that the post-Maastricht order is marked by a greater degree of political disequilibrium. By disequilibrium they mean that there is a question about the durability of intergovernmentalism and how it relates to the legitimacy of EU policy. Indirect democratic authority through the Council of the EU, they argue, covers the fact that citizens can be at odds with the governments that represent them and the EU policy that they make. Schimmelfennig even tends to agree with the notion that mass politics, as opposed to domestic preferences, may mark an innovative departure from Liberal Intergovernmentalism (2015: 727). How the voice of the people is articulated in relation to EU defence integration and Russia's war on Ukraine – as opposed to just governments and domestic preferences – is a salient point. However, even a cursory look at polling data on the Union's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and how the EU should develop its defence policy shows evidence that citizens may be more interested in defence integration than their governments. This would not necessarily contradict the idea that there is a gap between governments and popular sentiment, but it does question the notion that somehow governments are more in favour of defence integration than citizens.

Indeed, in April 2022 Eurobarometer conducted a flash survey on what EU citizens thought about the Union's response to the war on Ukraine – approximately 76% of people interviewed not only agreed that the EU had put up a united front in response to the war on Ukraine, but that the war also served as a reason for greater military cooperation within the EU (Eurobarometer, 2022: 21). What is even more startling with these results is that while 69% of those polled believed that the EU27 had reacted satisfactorily to the war on Ukraine, 75% of those same people surveyed stated that more military cooperation within the EU is necessary (Eurobarometer, 2022: 19 and 23). Such polling results can, perhaps, be explained away as a form of permissive consensus but there is evidence to suggest that the slow progress in EU defence integration is due to the reluctance of EU Member States and not citizens, which have historically been polled to express a consistent positive attitude towards greater EU defence integration (Schilde, Anderson and Garner, 2019).

Interestingly, in the way new intergovernmentalism flags how Eurosceptic parties are moving closer to the mainstream, and thus raising 'popular concerns about the merits of EU membership' (Bickerton, Hodson and Puetter, 2015a: 717), it is suggested that such parties may readily rebel against EU defence integration efforts – especially if they contradict political or electrical programmes to enhance national sovereignty. The assumption at play here is that past elites that were pushing for EU defence integration did so without the consent of people, even if this is contested given sustained polling to show otherwise. Such an assumption can be questioned.

Indeed, even if the specific political context in the UK led to media and popular calls against an "EU army" during the Brexit campaign, continental Eurosceptic parties have been less virulent about EU defence integration. For example, even recently the right-wing Brothers of Italy have been very careful to underline their commitment to the transatlantic partnership and they even promised in their electoral manifesto to pursue the strengthening of common EU defence and to bolster the European pillar in NATO (Sondel-Cedarmas, 2022; Castaldi, 2022; Varvelli, 2022). A bigger challenge for new intergovernmentalism is not so much how Eurosceptic parties turn away from EU integration, but how indeed certain elements of EU policy – such as defence – are seen as an important element of their political programmes.

**Conclusion**

This paper began by seeking to assess to what extent EU defence integration has been affected by Russia's war on Ukraine. The article drew on three EU defence policy developments that have emerged since the February 2022 invasion by Russia. First, we detailed the importance of the Union's first official strategy for security and defence, the Strategic Compass. Second, the paper analysed how the pre-existing EPF had been amended to be able to focus more centrally on providing military support to Ukraine and to increase its per annum levels of financial support. Third, we also focused on developments in EU defence industrial policy such as plans for common defence procurement. Combined with all of the EU's other – non-defence – support for Ukraine, the Union has displayed a recognition of existing defence capability shortfalls and taken steps to reposition itself as a defence actor. Despite these measures, however, this paper has argued that there is scant evidence to suggest that there has been a substantial drive towards more supranational forms of EU integration in defence.

This article has also provided a counter argument to the notion that supranationalism has increased in EU defence in the intervening years. In fact, even though bodies such as the European Commission have seized on the opportunity to push common defence procurement to the EU level, this can best be described as a form of policy entrepreneurship rather than a substantial shift to supranationalism or deeper EU defence integration. Indeed, the article confirms the "new intergovernmental" hypothesis that increased Commission powers does not automatically equate to integration. This is the argument advanced by neo-functionalism and its emphasis on cultivated spillover (Håkansson, 2021; Haroche, 2019). The divergence between these theoretical positions essentially rests on how one defines supranationalism. For intergovernmental approaches factors such as policy entrepreneurship, cross-sectoral framing and self-empowerment (see Håkansson, 2021; Niemann, 2006; Bergmann, 2019), do not necessarily result in any substantial transfer of national sovereignty to supranational institutions. If anything, this paper has provided evidence of how certain Member States may have cooperated with the Commission to advance their mutual interests in the area of defence-industrial policy (Béraud-Sudreau and Pannier, 2021).

Despite the ongoing divergence between neo-functionalist and intergovernmentalist accounts, however, this study can inform and indeed grow from interaction with the growing focus on the "failing forward" literature. On the one hand, our analysis has certainly supported the argument that responses to crises at the EU level can be incomplete, and that this may sow the seeds for future crises (Jones, Keleman and Meunier, 2021). Indeed, it is unclear today whether the incomplete approach taken under the EDIRPA with regard to which institution or agent should

serve as the 'Union's defence procurement agency' will cause defence planning concerns in the future or whether it will actually remedy the fragmentation of the European defence market. Additionally, it is also unclear over the longer-term whether a separation between the development of EU military capabilities (under EDIRPA and EDIP) and the supply of this equipment to partners (via the EPF) is sustainable. In this regard, future complications regarding the Union's arms exports policies may well lead to questions about how and to what extent the EU can respond to international crises.

On the other hand, this study clearly pushes back against certain hypotheses advanced under the theory of "failing forward". For example, while it should be acknowledged that supranational bodies have sought to innovate with new tools, legislation and policy frameworks they may not amount to an irreversible or head-long rush into supranationalism. As has been argued, most of the evidence in this article would appear to contradict the neo-functionalist assumption that, even with crises and the rise of Euroscepticism, the EU is becoming ever more integrated. In this sense, we return to the genesis of Liberal Intergovernmentalism in countering neo-functionalism's inherent positive bias towards more EU integration. Additionally, part of the problem in measuring more or less supranationalism is that the very term is contested: this article, for example, has consciously painted the EEAS and HR/VP as servants of intergovernmentalism, whereas other studies see them as supranational agents in their own right (Bergmann and Müller, 2021: 1682). In this respect, there is certainly continued room for *all* theoretical approaches to EU integration to clarify what is meant by the basic terms: intergovernmental and supranational.

However, one of the promising forms of theoretical interaction that can be advanced between intergovernmental and the "failing forward" framework relates to policy learning and feedback (Bergmann and Müller, 2021: 1682). For example, when "new intergovernmentalism" speaks about the importance of deliberation there is scope to connect it with the learning processes of both intergovernmental (Council of the EU) and supranational (European Commission) bodies. In fact, we have seen in this article how documents such as the Strategic Compass have been used to impart new meaning about EU defence policy and to work towards outcomes that are designed to remedy current issues (i.e. ammunition replenishment or military capability gaps). Likewise, the Commission's attempts to develop common defence procurement is a reflection of the lessons it has already learned under the EDF. In this sense, one of the research areas that deserves far more attention is how various actors at the EU level interact when developing policy and initiatives. Far from intergovernmental bargaining occurring as some form of one-shot game, defence policy at the EU level – as an area of continued high politics – reflects a far more organic learning process. As this article has shown, Russia's war on Ukraine may not have led to any tangible level of EU defence integration but it has helped to uncover how the Union functions in defence under intense external and internal political pressure.

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