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Securitization Theory Insights on the Formation of an EU Army

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Abstract
This paper analyzes the narrative securitized by Eurofederalists in support of establishing an EU army. The main objective is to identify and categorize the assertions employed by securitizing actors in their speech acts, examined through the framework of securitization theory. To assess the impact of this securitized narrative, the study evaluates its reception among the EU public before and after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. The research reveals that securitizing actors cluster their assertions around four advantages: strategic, political, societal, and economic. Furthermore, the findings indicate that by framing these advantages within their narrative, securitizing actors have successfully influenced public opinion in the EU to favor the establishment of an EU army.

Keywords
Eurofederalists; EU Army; Securitization Theory; Speech Acts; Public Opinion; Ukraine War; Strategic, Political, Societal, and Economic Advantages

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the former President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, gave an interview to the German newspaper Welt on 8 March 2015—during which he stated that the EU needs a European Union army (EU army) to deter possible attacks on Member States, respond credibly to threats against the EU, and send a message to Russia that the EU is prepared to defend its European values (Balzli, Schiltz, and Tauber 2015)—two opposing securitized discourses have emerged among the main stakeholders of the international security system. One discourse argued that establishing an EU army is an urgent necessity due to the unstable security situation along the EU's borders, which poses a threat to both the EU and its values. The opposing discourse claimed that creating an EU army is a threat in itself, as it could exacerbate existing insecurities in the international security system, undermine the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and erode the sovereignty of EU Member States. Some relevant opinions on this debate are outlined below.

It is important to note that the call for an EU army was not entirely new. The first concrete proposal for establishing a European army was made by French Prime Minister René Pleven in 1950. His Pleven Plan envisioned the creation of a European Defense Community (EDC), thereby laying the groundwork for a common EU army.

The prominent Eurofederalist Altiero Spinelli (1951) wrote the Union of European Federalists (UEF) Memorandum on the provisional report presented in July 1951 by the conference for the organization of the European Defense Community. In it, he stated that the

European Army must be under a sovereign European body, i.e., a state. This ideological framework underpins the Eurofederalists who have securitized the establishment of the EU army, headed by former President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker. If they succeed in establishing an EU army, they will have effectively created a sovereign European state. For almost half a century, the idea of an EU army remained just a concept. However, in 1993, France and Germany activated the multinational military corps Eurocorps as the first concrete attempt to establish a united European force following the collapse of the European Defense Community. However, Eurocorps is not part of the EU security architecture, despite being operational since 1995 with approximately 1,000 military personnel. While the idea of an EU army was not new, the urgent call for its establishment, as articulated by the President of the European Commission, was unprecedented. This urgency, expressed by Juncker (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018) initially in the aforementioned interview and later in his State of the Union speeches to the European Parliament, was officially reflected in the document "A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy" with the following words:

> We live in times of existential crisis, within and beyond the European Union. Our Union is under threat. Our European project, which has brought unprecedented peace, prosperity and democracy, is being questioned. To the east, the European security order has been violated, while terrorism and violence plague North Africa and the Middle East, as well as Europe itself (European External Action Service 2016, 7).

This discourse aims to convince the EU public that establishing an EU army is unquestionably necessary due to the existential threats facing the Union.

The research question that this paper seeks to answer is: What advantages did securitizing actors use in their narrative to further their securitization of the need for an EU army, and did emphasizing these advantages lead to a change in public opinion in the EU?

This paper's main objective is to identify and outline the key advantages of establishing an EU army within the securitized narrative of Eurofederalists. The success of a securitized narrative depends on clear and explicit answers to the question: Why is the EU army needed?

Organizing a securitized narrative with simple answers to the main question helps the public understand the narrative and become more accepting of the proposed solutions to the existential threat.

It is worth mentioning that the research was conducted prior to the potential second term of Donald J. Trump as President of the United States. This study highlights the significance of securitization theory in the context of establishing an EU army. Securitization theory serves as a valuable tool for researchers seeking to understand politicians' motives, as their words often provide the primary evidence for analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many scientists and numerous institutions have published diverse opinions on the reasons for establishing an EU army. They also questioned the idea from different perspectives. Each view was formed under a specific time and context of security threats. In the following section, we will summarise the most important opinions for this research paper.

Sven Biscop and Jo Coelmont (2012) examine in their book, "Europe, Strategy and Armed Forces: The Making of a Distinctive Power," how the European Union can pursue a grand strategy and become a distinct global actor in a world of emerging great powers. The authors are convinced that, at the grand strategic level, its sheer economic size makes the EU a global power. However, the EU needs to consider that many international actors continue to measure power primarily by assessing military capability. Therefore, the EU must become a global military power to preserve its status as an economic power. The next book, "The Routledge Handbook of European Security," brings a somewhat different perspective on the development of common EU military capabilities. Key experts from the academic and policy worlds, specializing in European security, examine the European Union as an international security actor. The authors recognise that the EU has gradually emerged as an autonomous actor in the security field, aiming to preserve European security by improving global security. However, from the perspective of the Member States, the development of the EU as a security factor has undoubtedly not gone unchallenged, with some seeing the rise of the EU as a threat to their national and/or transatlantic political views (Biscop and Whitman 2013).

The report "Preparing for Complexity – The European Parliament in 2025," presented in 2012 by the Secretary General of the European Parliament, Klaus Welle, identified a core set of problematic issues in EU defense policy: (a) duplication, (b) the absence of a common strategic vision, and (c) the lack of a clear long-term outlook. This document was presented to the President of the European Parliament, the Members of the Bureau, the Quaestors, and the Directors-General during the "Awaydays" meeting held in La Hulpe, Belgium, in January 2012.

However, even before this report, Ballester (2013) had highlighted the critical juncture at which Europe stood in defining its defense policy. He emphasized that this was a decisive moment for both the military structures of EU Member States and the defense industry that supports them. According to Ballester, there is a tangible cost to the so-called "non-Europe"—the consequence of operating at the national level rather than through a unified European framework (p. 7). He warned that this cost would continue to rise, particularly in three key areas: the lack of integration among the military structures of Member States, the absence of a truly integrated defense market, and the ongoing duplication of efforts.

Europe's persistent underperformance in the military field stems from a range of factors. This situation is far from satisfactory and calls for a fundamental shift in approach. In response to these challenges, the Chaillot Paper titled "Envisioning European Defence: Five Futures" (2016), authored by Jan Joel Andersson, Sven Biscop, Bastian Giegerich, Christian Mölling, and Thierry Tardy, outlines five possible scenarios for the future of European defense: Bonsai Armies, Defense Clusters, Peace Operations, European NATO, and an EU Army. These scenarios offer plausible and coherent visions of what European defense could evolve into in the near future.

Against the backdrop of accelerating global changes, and especially following significant developments in 2016, High Representative Federica Mogherini presented the "Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy" to the European Council. Just days later, the United Kingdom introduced a major internal challenge to the EU by voting to leave the Union. In this context, Sven Biscop (2016) argued that the EU should remain committed to enhancing its global strategic vision and capabilities, referring to this evolving approach as "realpolitik with European characteristics."

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Another noteworthy contribution is the book "Strategic Autonomy and the Defense of Europe: On the Road to a European Army?" by Bartels, Kellner, and Optenhögel (2017), which provides valuable insights into the political, academic, and public debates surrounding European defense and the development of a more robust Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). The book presents comprehensive data and trends on defense spending, military modernisation, and multilateral cooperation across EU Member States. It identifies the key forces shaping both national and European security and defense policies, while also highlighting the progress achieved thus far. Importantly, it offers concrete recommendations for advancing European strategic autonomy. What sets this book apart is its structure. Each chapter is authored by experts from the respective Member States, offering authentic, in-depth perspectives that reflect the unique dynamics and policy priorities of each country.

Guillermo Revilla Arjona (2020) questions the feasibility and desirability of creating a common European army, particularly in light of the deterioration of EU–US relations and the emergence of new security threats. He acknowledges that the EU has achieved an unprecedented level of integration in security and defense since the beginning of its Member States' cooperation in this area. However, he expresses concern that further militarization of the Union could undermine its traditional role as a "civilian power"—a role rooted in addressing conflicts through nonviolent means, which may, in turn, jeopardize both the stability of its neighborhood and its security.

In contrast, Vojtech Jurčák and Peter Poláček (2022), drawing on a historical analysis of the rationale for establishing a joint European army and the current security imperatives—particularly in the context of the Russia–Ukraine conflict—advocate for the creation of a unified European military force. They argue that such a development is essential for deepening EU defense integration and would position the Union as a significant global actor in promoting peace and security worldwide.

METHODS

This paper is grounded in securitization theory, as developed by scholars of the Copenhagen School, including Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde. According to this theoretical framework, securitization is defined as a "speech act" through which a securitizing actor presents a particular issue—previously considered merely politicized within the political or public sphere—as an existential threat to a referent object, thereby justifying the adoption of extraordinary measures. However, a speech act alone does not constitute securitization; it only becomes a successful act of securitization if the targeted audience accepts the proposed narrative as a legitimate security concern. To determine whether a specific narrative qualifies as an act of securitization, the theory relies on discourse analysis and public opinion analysis.

The key elements of securitization include the securitizing actor, the referent object, the public (audience), functional actors, and the context. This paper focuses on the role of context within the securitizing narrative, recognising that a speech act is never an isolated factor in the securitization process. Instead, it depends on a range of historical, political, societal, economic, geographic, and other variables that resonate with the public and shape their perception of the issue. Unlike traditional security studies (TSS) and critical security studies (CSS), securitization theory does not evaluate whether the issue presented through the speech act objectively

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constitutes a security threat. Instead, it examines how the issue is framed as a security concern—how the speech acts construct the perception of a threat. Given this, the context in which the narrative is embedded is of crucial importance. Through discourse analysis of securitizing actors, this paper identifies the dominant contextual elements used to securitize the establishment of an EU army. These elements are organized into four main thematic clusters, representing four key perceived advantages of creating a unified European military force.

An issue can only be considered a security threat if the target audience accepts it as such. To assess whether the public successfully accepted the securitizing narrative, this paper examines changes in public opinion following the articulation of the securitizing discourse.

To measure public acceptance, the study draws on general opinion polls conducted among EU citizens. The European University Institute–YouGov Survey on Solidarity in Europe was selected as the primary data source, as it was conducted both before and after the onset of the Russian war on Ukraine. Notably, the survey posed a direct and highly relevant question for this study: "Would you support or oppose the creation of an integrated EU army?"

For the analysis of speech acts, the paper relies on publicly available interviews with EU officials and official EU documents. For the analysis of public opinion, the results of the aforementioned survey are used to compare public sentiment toward the idea of a European army before and after the conflict began.

SECURITIZATION OF THE ADVANTAGES OF ESTABLISHING AN EU ARMY

Numerous academic papers and official EU documents have addressed the question of what should be done to achieve greater unity in the EU's military field (Andersson et al. 2016; Andersson 2023; Ballester 2013; Bartels et al. 2017; Biscop and Coelmont 2012; Jurčák and Poláček 2022; Revilla Arjona 2020; European Commission 2017; European External Action Service 2016). Even more studies and policy briefs have analysed the challenges inherent in this task. Nevertheless, as former Chair of the EU Military Committee, General Claudio Graziano, emphasized: "Integrating armed forces really is extremely difficult, but it's not impossible. It starts with the political will" (Graziano 2022). To further reinforce General Graziano's point, it is essential to recognize the key EU defense initiatives to which the Union has already committed.

In 2003, the EU established the European Rapid Reaction Force (ERRF), defined as a corps-sized formation comprising up to 15 brigades or 50,000 to 60,000 soldiers. The ERRF is militarily self-sustaining, equipped with the necessary command, control, intelligence capabilities, logistics, and other essential elements tailored to combat requirements. It is designed to be capable of deployment within 60 days (European Council 1999). The ERRF are the basis of the forces deployed under the EU flag in conflict-affected areas, starting in 2003 with the EUFOR Concordia mission in North Macedonia. The same year, the EU published its first security strategy, European Security Strategy (ESS), and from 2007, the EU Battlegroups have been on standby. They consist of 1,500 soldiers who are ready for action within 10 days, but they have not yet been deployed in the conflict-problem area.

The Treaty of Lisbon (which entered into force in 2009) incorporates and institutionalises the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) into what is now the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Importantly, the institutionalized CSDP consists of: the EU's mutual assistance clause (Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union - TEU), Solidarity clause (Article

222 of Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union - TFEU), commitments to gradually shape a common EU defense policy (Article 42(2) TEU) and Permanent Structured Cooperation – PESCO Clause (Article 46 TEU). At the moment of writing this paper, 66 PESCO projects are being developed.

The European External Action Service (EEAS) was established in 2011. The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP) is at the head of EEAS, which, in addition to the central office located in Brussels, consists of a network of EU embassies called EU Delegations. The second European strategy, published in 2016, is the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS).

The EU established permanent political and military structures: The Political and Security Committee (PSC) observes the international situation and helps define policies within the CFSP, The European Union Military Committee (EUMC) composed of the Chiefs of Defense of the Member States advises the PSC on military matters, The European Union Military Staff (EUMS) shares the military expertise within the EEAS, The Politico-Military Group (PMG) does CSDP related preparatory work for the Political and Security Committee and Military planning and conduct capability (MPCC) improves the effectiveness of military missions. The EU also established EU operational centres (EU OPCEN) and a Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC). All these structures have their counterparts for civil missions.

With the development of the CSDP, the EU established European Defense Agency (EDA) with the task of supporting the development of the defense capabilities of Member States through cooperation in research, procurement and training, European Security and Defense College (ESDC) that provides strategic education about CSDP, European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) that analyses foreign policy and security and defense aspects of policy, European Union Satellite Centre (SatCen) that provides the EU with geospatial intelligence.

Intending to improve efficient defense spending, the EU established the European Defense Fund (EDF) as a support for joint research and development of defense equipment and technology, and the European Defense Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP), which regulates the development element of EU capabilities to encourage EU standardization.

In 2016, the EUISS published a special issue of the Chaillot Paper titled "Envisioning European Defence: Five Futures," presenting five scenarios for the development of the CSDP (Andersson et al. 2016).

The first scenario is the "Bonsai Army," which assumes the continuation of the CSDP policy from before 2016, meaning a further reduction of the military capabilities of the Member States' armies, and the CSDP acts only as a facilitator of cooperation.

The second scenario, "Defense Clusters," implies greater autonomy for the Union in implementing actions and translating the ambitions outlined in the documents into military obligations at both the national and supranational levels.

The third "Peace Mission" scenario presupposes the reorganization of the CSDP into a Common Security Policy (CSP), which develops as a multidimensional policy oriented towards peace missions and abandons the ambition of European defense integration and military missions.

The fourth scenario, "European NATO," assumes a European pillar within the NATO alliance, where Member States relinquish their efforts to develop an autonomous European defense.

The fifth scenario, the "European Army," assumes supranational cooperation in the field of defense. The EU army would be created in stages. First, several countries would form the European Defense Union (EDU), and then integrate their military personnel and equipment into the European Defense Force (EDF). The EDU would be financed from the common EU budget and would be supported by a common European armaments and equipment programme. According to this scenario, not all Member States should immediately commit to the EDU; however, the backbone should be France and Germany, along with existing institutions such as the EUMS and EDA, as well as structures like Eurocorps and EU Battlegroups.

The lack of political will among EU Member State decision-makers is the primary obstacle to the stalemate in the supranationalisation of the EU army. For that reason, EU officials firmly in the "federative EU" camp decided to securitize the establishment of the EU army to the EU public, hoping that the public would pressure their elected representatives. This concept is known as securitization and was defined by the theorists of the Copenhagen School of Security Studies (Wæver 1995; Wæver 1996; Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde1998; Buzan and Wæver 2009; Wæver 2011) as an extreme version of politicisation: a speech act with which a securitizing actor presents to the public until now a political or non-political issue as an existential threat to referent object which thus calls for legitimating extraordinary measures.

Professor Richard J. Kilroy Jr. (2018) defines securitization in international relations as "the process by which states determine threats to national security based on subjective rather than objective assessments of perceived danger" (p. 1). Thierry Balzacq (2005) believes that the definition of the Copenhagen School of Security Studies is too narrow as he considers that: "securitization is better understood as a strategic (pragmatic) practice that occurs within and as part of, a configuration of circumstances, including the context, the psycho-cultural disposition of the audience, and the power that both speaker and listener bring to the interaction (p. 172). This broader definition is the one this paper considers.

To advance their message and persuade the public, securitizing actors must be public figures who hold a position of respect in society. Most actors advocating for the establishment of an EU army are pro-federal EU politicians at the Member States' level, but are also prominent on the EU level. Securitizing actors in this securitization strongly believe that the EU's future is federalism. They feel that only a completely united Union can have a substantial political impact on international relations. To achieve federalism, the EU Member States must transfer the most important token of their sovereignty – the military – from the national to the supranational level. The only way for the EU to be recognized as a global power is to have a common EU army. To transfer military power from a national to a supranational level in the EU, there needs to be a political will, i.e., leaders and the majority of members of national assemblies must be Eurofederalists. The only way to achieve that is for Eurofederalists to be elected in the national elections. As a result, the target audience, namely the public, encompasses all EU citizens. Thus, the objective of securitization—the security issue—must be relevant to citizens of every Member State in some way. To ensure this universal applicability to the large public of 450 million EU citizens, security actors employ the tool of highlighting advantages.

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In the broadest sense, the existential threat refers to the perilous and unstable security situation surrounding the EU's borders. Equally significant at the global level—especially today, given advances in weaponry and the persistent nuclear threat—the global dimension increasingly impacts local security concerns.

The primary referent object of securitization is the EU and its core values. However, as will be shown in the analysis of the advantages of establishing an EU army, securitizing actors sometimes shift the focus to national or local levels when necessary, while maintaining the conviction that only a strong EU army can effectively defend these sub-level referent objects.

The sole unipolar aspect of this securitization process is the extraordinary measure required to prevent existential harm to the referent object: the establishment of the EU army.

To convince EU citizens to authorize extraordinary measures transferring European military powers from the national to the supranational level, securitizing actors use arguments highlighting the advantages. While some of these arguments are broadly shared, others are more specific to particular Member States or regions. However, all address securitization concerns relevant to citizens across every Member State. Therefore, the research identifies the following advantages of establishing an EU army:

1. Strategic Advantages of Establishing an EU Army (More Operational):

- A unified army instead of 27 national armies
- Avoiding duplication of military equipment
- Common procurement of military equipment
- Cooperation to develop necessary military capabilities

2. Political Advantages of Establishing an EU Army:

- The EU will speak with one voice in foreign policy
- Reduced reliance on the US
- Confidence in upholding Article 42.7 TEU without fear
- A much more robust and consolidated EU position within NATO

3. Societal Advantages of Establishing an EU Army:

- EU citizens will feel a strong sense of belonging to European society
- EU citizens will enjoy complete security and genuine prosperity

4. Economic Advantages of Establishing an EU Army:

- Protection of the EU's economic interests
- Development of a common European defense industry

Strategic Advantages

The foremost strategic advantage of the common EU army is its power. The united and consolidated army of 27 Member States of the EU would be more assertive and generate more significant influence than the powers of the individual troops. The most cited segment of the assumed power of the unified EU army when responding to possible military situations, as opposed to the response from 27 different national troops, is that it would be more operational, meaning that:

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> The US Army, and even the Russian army, uses only one type of main battle tank. We Europeans operate 17 different kinds. That creates enormous problems of maintenance and supply and of training together. Our navies and air forces have similar problems. We're talking about a total of 180 different platforms, while the United States has 30. This really is anachronistic and unacceptable, especially considering that we collectively spend more than 250 billion euros [about $276 billion] a year on defence, which is much more than what Russia spends. Yes, we need to spend more, but we also need to spend better by avoiding such duplication (Graziano 2022).

General Graziano could have addressed the operational shortcomings of the EU's current defense and security structures without referencing the armies of the United States and Russia. The issue is not just that the EU has 17 different types of tanks and 180 different weapon systems—it is that these inefficiencies are often highlighted by comparing the EU to the US and Russia, two of the most prominent federal systems in the world. In essence, the EU's defense capabilities would be more unified and effective if the Union were structured as a federation.

For comparison, the differences between the EU, the US, and Russia are observed in Table 1. A significant number of active military personnel, as well as a military reserve, is held by the EU. Since General Graziano's quote three years ago, defense spending by the EU has doubled; however, a problem with operational effectiveness persists due to the presence of 27 different militaries and slow progress in EU standardization.

Table 1: Comparison between the EU, the US, and Russia (Sources: IISS 2025; European Commission 2017; USAFACTS 2024)

	EUROPAN UNION	UNITED STATES	RUSSIA
Active Military Personnel	1,4 million	1,3 million	766,000
Military Reserves	1,7 million	762,000	2,5 million
Defense Spending ($)	457 billion	968 billion	145.9 billion
Main Battle Tank	17	1	1
Type of Weapon Systems	178	30	-
Type of Destroyers/Frigates	29	4	-
Type of Fighter Planes	20	6	-

Just as important is the notion that the EU spends more on defense than Russia, yet remains less effective than Russia in this regard. Russia is the country that has started a new war on European soil.

A well-rounded message finishes with the rebuttal of narratives of opponents of the establishment of the EU army, such as the 3D requirement – that the EU army would undermine NATO and thus is needless: "We have felt that it is important to do that under what we would say the three 'Ds' which is no diminution of NATO, no discrimination and no duplication because I think that we don't need any of those three 'Ds' to happen" (Albright 1998), and 2 percent narrative – that the EU Member States and NATO Member States need to spend up to and above 2 percent of their gross domestic product on national defense: "The United States fulfills our defense responsibilities and expects others to do the same. We expect our European allies

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to increase defense spending to 2 percent of gross domestic product by 2024, with 20 percent of this spending devoted to increasing military capabilities" (The White House 2017, 48).

It should be noted here that the narrative presented by US President Trump, that the EU should spend more money on military capabilities, but only at the level of Member States' military capabilities, is not recent. However, it was much more visible and audible in the first administration of President Donald J. Trump. The US administrations from 1990 onwards held the position that EU Member States should allocate more funds to military capabilities, primarily for the procurement of military equipment. However, most EU countries do not have their military industries on a large scale (IISS 2024), so if they were to try to spend 2 percent or more of gross domestic product on increasing their military capabilities, they would need to buy military equipment from the most significant military industry in NATO – the US.

The core issue for EU politicians—especially those advocating for the establishment of an EU army—is not merely the amount of money spent on military capabilities, but how that money is spent. Should each Member State individually allocate 2 percent of its GDP to defense, or should the procurement of military equipment be centralized at the supranational level? As Graziano (2022) argues in rebutting the "3D" requirement: "Yes, we need to spend more, but we also need to spend better by avoiding such duplication."

While Graziano agrees that duplication should be avoided, his meaning differs from that of US politicians when they discuss the "3Ds." For US politicians, the "3Ds" stand for no diminution of NATO, no discrimination, and no duplication within NATO. By this logic, the EU should refrain from duplicating existing military capabilities already present in NATO, even if those capabilities are primarily US assets upon which the EU depends. Graziano, however, refers specifically to avoiding duplication within the EU itself, as internal duplication undermines the EU's military operability.

A lack of military operability in the EU was a common complaint for many years, opening the door to greater efficiency and reduced spending. However, this discourse is not random, as we can read from the European Commission's factsheet published in 2017:

> There are 178 different weapon systems in the EU, compared to 30 in the US. There are more helicopter producers in Europe than there are governments able to buy them. And despite the EU spending half as much as the United States on defence, we are not even half as efficient. This all points to big duplications in European defence spending (p. 1).

It should be emphasized here that the discourse promoting the strategic advantages of the EU army is organized and regulated. Further evidence can be found by following the discourse that highlights the difficulties experienced during deployment due to inoperability between Member States caused by the procurement of military equipment:

> Regarding high-end military capabilities, Member States need all major equipment to respond to external crises and keep Europe safe. This means having full-spectrum land, air, space and maritime capabilities, including strategic enablers. To acquire and maintain many of these capabilities, Member States will need to move towards defence cooperation as the norm. Member States remain sovereign in their defence decisions; nevertheless, nationally-oriented defence

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> programmes are insufficient to address capability shortfalls (European External Action Service 2016, 45).

In the above citation, it is directly stated that the EU's defense suffers because it lacks all the necessary military capabilities and strategic enablers to respond to external crises independently. It also implies that it lacks these capabilities because it heavily relies on the US, which possesses them, and because Member States alone cannot afford to develop them. If defense programs from the Member States' level are to be elevated to the supranational EU level in the form of cooperation, it would be feasible to develop the necessary military capabilities.

Less than 3% of European troops (40,000) are deployed due to a lack of interoperability and shortages in equipment. This compares to 200,000 deployed US troops overseas (European Commission 2017). The lack of interoperability, manifested in the standardisation of equipment as well as differing capabilities among the Member States, is directly compared in this citation with the capabilities of the US. It is not only a matter of financial resources. A mindset focused on joint training and cooperation is required. When deployed together, credibility is established (Graziano 2022).

Even if every Member State achieved 2 percent of GDP spending on military capabilities, as the US urges, the Member States would still not be able to advance their military capabilities sufficiently and therefore project credible power. Nevertheless, if the Member States worked together on the supranational level, they could spend the same amount of money, achieve greater military capabilities and avoid unnecessary duplication under the EU umbrella. Based on standardisation, the Member States' troops could work and train together and, as such, be deployed together and project credible power.

Political Advantages

If the EU wants a more effective EU foreign and security policy, it must speak with one voice. The primary political advantage of establishing an EU army is that the EU would finally speak with a unified voice in foreign policy, as no country would have an independent army that could act independently.

By establishing a common EU army, the EU will be able to position itself as a strong power and will be able to impose its foreign policy by example more easily (Hill 2003, 244-245) with which it will promote its values and principles, which it is currently unable to do through the NATO alliance work because the members have diametrically different thoughts on security and NATO's role in the world (Kashmeri 2011). The primary example is the War in Iraq in 2003 and the EU's inability to have a joint stand. A more compelling example is the war in Afghanistan, where, in 2021, the withdrawal of national contingents from European countries largely depended on the United States Army's ability to provide them with logistical support and security protection. Many local workers who have worked for years for the Western allies in the field are left at the mercy of the Taliban.

When employing this advantage in the discourse, securitizing actors emphasize that with a common EU army, individual Member State governments would no longer be able to diverge from the EU's foreign policy, as they sometimes do today. A unified military would enable the EU

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to present a common stance in foreign affairs, embodying the characteristics of a sovereign European state (Spinelli 1951). Although securitizing actors tend not to elaborate on the more profound implications behind phrases like "speaking with one voice" and "credibility in foreign affairs," these slogans imply that if the EU achieves sovereignty, Member States would necessarily cede some of their sovereignty. Securitizing actors want to emphasize that by transferring sovereignty from the national to the supranational level, countries would feel more protected and empowered:

> To engage responsibly with the world, credibility is vital. The EU's credibility hinges on our unity, on our many achievements, our enduring power of attraction, the effectiveness and consistency of our policies, and adherence to our values. A stronger Union also requires investing in all dimensions of foreign policy. In particular, investment in security and defence is a matter of urgency. Full spectrum defence capabilities are necessary to respond to external crises, build our partners' capacities, and to guarantee Europe's safety. Member States remain sovereign in their defence decisions: nevertheless, to acquire and maintain many of these capabilities, defence cooperation must become the norm. The EU will systematically encourage defence cooperation and strive to create a solid European defence industry, which is critical for Europe's autonomy of decision and action (European External Action Service 2016, 11-12).

The primary goal of EU federalists is a common EU army, but to achieve this, the EU must first take smaller steps that will ultimately lead to the end goal. One of the small steps is building credibility behind the words in foreign policy. Credibility, as noted in the above citation, comes from the defense capabilities of all Member States. The easiest and most straightforward way to build the credibility of the EU is to promote stronger cooperation between Member States, which would lead to greater unity. If all Member States relied on the European defense industry and EU cooperation, there would be fewer opportunities for a rogue Member State to hinder EU foreign policy goals or for a foreign power to interfere.

A key political benefit of establishing an EU army would be reducing dependence on the US, which would, in turn, impact the political positions of the individual Member States. Europeans must assume greater responsibility for their security. They need to be prepared and capable of deterring, responding to, and defending themselves against external threats. While NATO's role is to protect its members—most of whom are European—from external attacks, Europeans must enhance their equipment, training, and organization to support these collective defense efforts effectively and to act independently when necessary (European External Action Service 2016, 19).

The issue of reducing reliance on the US can be viewed from two angles. First, the EU must develop the capability to deter any external threats independently.

Second, the EU's trust in the US as a dependable NATO ally has diminished. In 2016, Donald J. Trump, then a Republican presidential candidate, openly declared that he would not automatically guarantee the defense of NATO's European members (McCurry 2016) and described NATO as obsolete (Parker 2016). After becoming US president in 2017, although he did not withdraw from NATO, his rhetoric and actions caused significant concern among EU leaders, undermining the perception of the US as a reliable partner. The same situation is

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unfolding again in 2024, as Trump wins the US presidency; however, this time he not only disparages NATO and EU allies but also entertains the notion of taking over Greenland, a territory of the EU (Contorno 2024).

The third political advantage would be the absence of the fear of respecting Article 42.7 Treaty on European Union, i.e., the mutual defense clause that states that the Member States are obliged to "aid and assistance by all the means in their power" (Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union 2008) attacked Member State. However, that obligation will "not prejudice the specific character of the security and defense policy of certain Member States" (Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union 2008).

If there were a common EU army and no individual national armies, then Article 42.7 would be unnecessary. If armed aggression occurs on the territory of one Member State, the EU's armed forces will automatically be put into action. The specific character of particular Member States' security and defense policies and commitments under NATO is not applicable in this case.

The fourth political advantage would be that inside NATO, the EU's position will be much more robust and consolidated:

> In this context, the EU needs to be strengthened as a security community: European security and defence efforts should enable the EU to act autonomously while also contributing to and undertaking actions in cooperation with NATO. A more credible European defence is essential also for the sake of a healthy transatlantic partnership with the United States (European External Action Service 2016, 20).

Elaborated political advantages are more prominently featured in official EU documents than in speeches delivered by federalists. Consequently, these documents adopt a cautious and measured tone. The wording consistently acknowledges NATO and emphasizes the positive nature of the partnership with the United States. Nevertheless, they do not shy away from clearly identifying the actions the EU must undertake to fully activate these political advantages.

Societal Advantages

The primary goal of establishing the EU was to eradicate the possibility of wars in Europe following the devastation of World War I and World War II. This objective recalls the historic significance of ending the division of the European continent and the necessity of creating a solid foundation for building the future of Europe (Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union 2012).

Alongside economic unification, military unification was among the first proposals. In 1950, the Pleven Plan (1950) proposed the establishment of the European Defense Community (EDC). The idea behind the EDC was not a foremost federalist idea. Still, it was born out of fear of a military re-strengthening of Germany and was backed by the United States in fear of the USSR. The Pleven plan outlines that the successful integration of European coal and steel industries would lay the foundation for the concept of a unified European defense. The French Government seeks a resolution regarding Germany's role in forming a European force that acknowledges the harsh experiences of history while aiming toward a future envisioned by

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Europeans across all nations. It suggests establishing a European army, connected to the political structures of a united Europe, for collective defense (Pleven 1950).

Although the founding agreement was signed by all members of the European Coal and Steel Community, it was not ratified by the French Parliament. French representatives refused ratification due to concerns that the European Defense Community (EDC) could threaten France's sovereignty and fears that the EDC's establishment would lead to the remilitarization of Germany. The unification of the armies, thereby elevating military forces to a supranational level, was seen as a way to strengthen the sense of belonging to a unified European society. European federalists believe that: "Only the combined weight of a true union has the potential to deliver security, prosperity and democracy to its citizens and make a positive difference in the world" (European External Action Service 2016, 16).

Modern security threats encompass not only military actions against one's territory, but also include cyberattacks and other non-military threats. Modern threats include hybrid threats, terrorism, climate change, economic volatility, energy insecurity, and the politics of fear (European External Action Service 2016, 18-19). For EU security, a threat is even if one of these threats challenges just one Member State, as the EU is an economic and political union. All Member States must act in unison in all fields to effectively combat these threats. Climate change, economic and energy insecurity, terrorism and fear know no borders.

The most prominent aspect of this discourse is the impression it leaves with the public that a true union is only a complete federal union. This discourse also places a significant portion of the burden for the future on the public. If the public chooses federalism and an EU army, only then will citizens be fully secure and live in true prosperity.

Economic Advantages

The single market is the EU's primary economic lever, enabling the free movement of people, goods, services, and capital throughout the EU. Ultimately, the EU is first and foremost an economic union. Nevertheless, in the globalist world, the economy knows no borders. Thus, the EU's economy relies on an open and fair international economic system, as well as sustainable access to the global commons (European External Action Service 2016, 8). To achieve these goals, the EU needs to help build resilient democracies, promote its values and rules-based global order around the world: "We have an interest in fair and open markets, in shaping global economic and environmental rules, and in sustainable access to the global commons through open sea, land, air and space routes" (European External Action Service 2016, 15-16).

The EU needs a strong and unified military force to protect its interests. Not all Member States will directly benefit from economic partnerships with certain non-EU countries or open access to particular commons. Still, the unified EU is much stronger in the global market. This would also be confirmed by the joint EU army, serving as the protector and enforcer of a rules-based international order, as stated: "Our security at home entails a parallel interest in peace in our neighbouring and surrounding regions" (European External Action Service, 2016, p. 15).

The status of great power is not achieved by excellence in just one area but as a combination in several areas that are integral parts of power: 1) the size of the territory and population, 2) resource wealth, 3) economic and 4) military strength, 5) political stability, and 6)

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capabilities (Waltz 1993, 50). The Union has all the predispositions and possibilities to become a great power, except for its military strength.

As observed in the paragraph on strategic advantages, the current defense procurement among EU Member States is fragmented and non-operational, hindering the combined strength of their militaries. The establishment of a common European defense industry—one that is sustainable, competitive, and innovative—is essential for Europe's strategic autonomy. Additionally, it would stimulate economic growth and create jobs (European External Action Service 2016, 46). However, the persistent lack of cooperation between Member States in the fields of defense and security:

> is estimated to cost annually between € 25 billion and € 100 billion. This is because of inefficiencies, lack of competition and lack of economies of scale for industry and production (…) Since 2010, less than € 200 million has been spent each year on collaborative European research & technology in the field of defence. From 2021, we will more than triple this figure to over € 600 million (…) Around 80% of defence procurement is run on a purely national basis, leading to a costly duplication of military capabilities (…) More Europe in defence will have a positive spill-over effect on the European economy. The European defence industry generates a total turnover of € 100 billion per year and 1.4 million highly skilled people directly or indirectly employed in Europe. Each euro invested in defence generates a return of 1,6, in particular in skilled employment, research and technology and exports (European Commission 2017, 2).

Improved prospects for advancing the military industry are likely to stimulate increased activity not only within the defense sector but also across related industries throughout the Member States. Additionally, this growth will have a positive impact on non-military sectors that act as subcontractors to the defense industry.

The following section will analyze how the positive securitization of the EU army influences public opinion within the EU, with particular attention to the role of the emphasized advantages presented in the securitized narrative.

LITMUS TEST: THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE

Former President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, initiated a positive securitization of the establishment of the EU army in 2015, asserting that the EU urgently needs a joint army due to existential threats on its borders, among others, including Russia. Russia fulfilled Junker's prophetic stance in 2022 by invading Ukraine and becoming an aggressor on Europe's soil and the borders of the EU.

Among the reasons Russia attacked Ukraine was Ukraine's attempt to sign an association agreement with the EU in 2014, as well as the fear of Ukraine joining NATO and the presence of multinational forces in Eastern European Member States. Behind those well-known and stated reasons, there is also a clash of identities, as European and Russian identities have different values and priorities in international and domestic politics. Since Russia perceives its internal security as equivalent to the regime's security, any attempt to cooperate with the EU is considered a threat to the government due to the ideas that may be spread through

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cooperation. Ukraine's decision to cooperate with the EU in 2014 was seen as a line that should not be crossed and a danger to the regime.

However, every action provokes a reaction. The military threat on the EU's borders compelled the EU public to consider the advantages that a joint EU army would bring, as well as its implications for the EU's interests and identities. As shown in Figure 1, according to the 2022 European University Institute YouGov survey on solidarity in Europe,[1] support for creating an integrated European army increased after Russia invaded Ukraine.

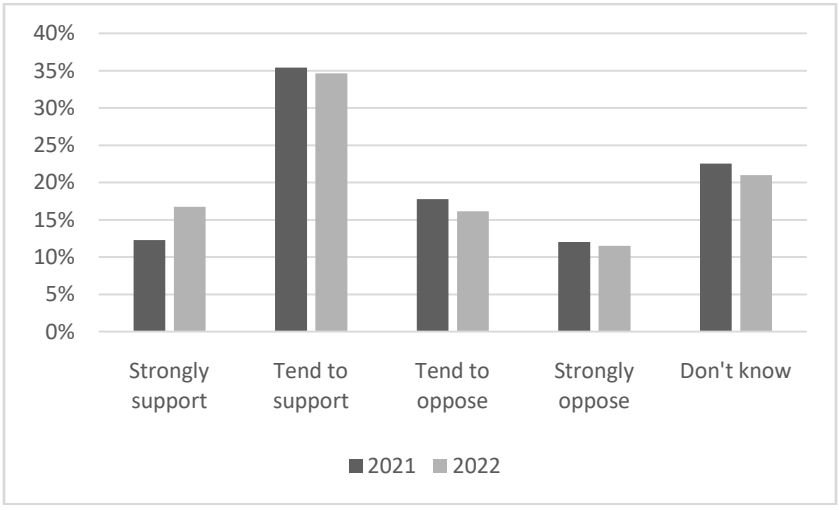


Figure 1: Would You Support or Oppose the Creation of an Integrated European Army? (Source: Hemerijck, Genschel, Stolle, Cicchi, Russo and Nasr 2022)

Public opinion is critical in healthy democracies. Although political elites make decisions, they remain attentive to the general public and are highly motivated to avoid political backlash (Genschel, Leek, and Weyns 2023, 4).

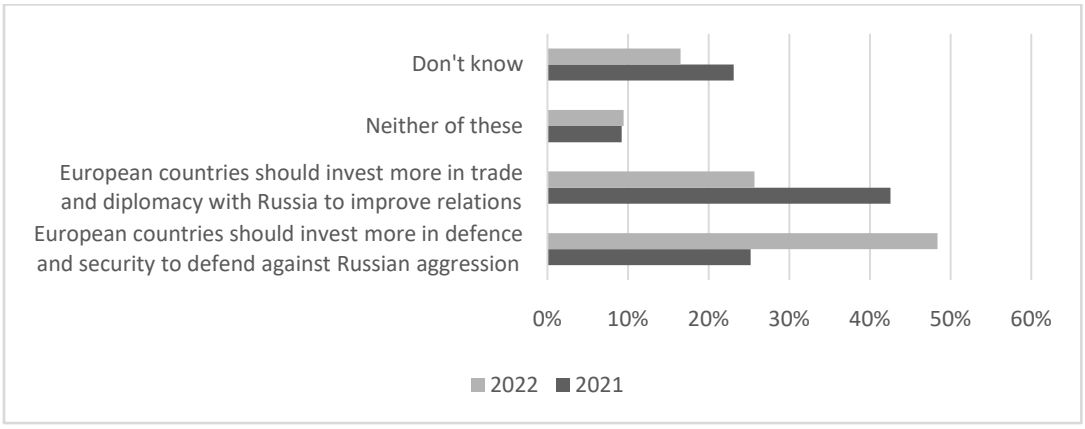


Figure 2: Thinking About the EU's Relationship with Russia: Which Approach Would You Prefer European Countries to Take? (Source: Hemerijck et al. 2022)

[1] For further information, please visit: https://datacatalogue.cessda.eu/?keywords%5B%5D=european%20security

In Figure 2, a shift in public opinion within the EU can be observed regarding the *status quo* versus increased investment in EU defense before and after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In 2021, support for greater investment in trade and diplomacy with Russia to improve relations was 18 percentage points higher than support for increased investment in defense and security against Russia. However, following the 2022 invasion, this trend reversed across all EU Member States and voter groups (Genschel, Leek, and Weyns 2023).

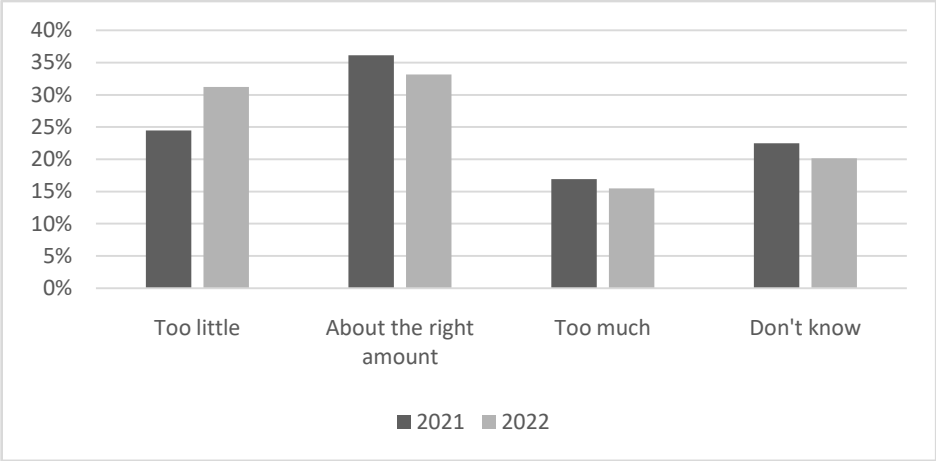


Figure 3: Do You Think That Your Country Currently Spends Too Little on Defense, Too Much on Defense, or About the Right Amount? (Source: Hemerijck et al. 2022)

Similar to Figure 2, Figure 3 illustrates a significant shift in the EU public's opinion on defense spending following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Germany has announced a dramatic increase in its defense budget—an unprecedented development. The 2024 budget plans to raise defense spending by €1.7 billion to approximately €51.8 billion, aiming to meet the target of allocating 2% of GDP to defense (The Associated Press 2023).

However, Germany is not alone. All EU Member States intend to increase their defense expenditures by 2025 to around €70 billion. Concurrently, numerous contracts for arms and military equipment were signed by the European defense industry in 2022 (Andersson 2023).

Ultimately, political elites have swiftly mobilized to strengthen EU defense. As General Graziano noted, the war in Ukraine "gives an incredible push to building a more concrete and credible European defense union. And a defence union is really the only possible answer to this crisis" (Graziano 2022).

CONCLUSION

A call for the establishment of an EU army, based on securitization theory, i.e., identifying the relevant public (EU citizens), an existential threat (Russia), and the proposed solution (establishment of an EU army), was successful, as evident in Figure 1. We can also detect the change in public opinion through Figures 2 and 3. These figures identified the advantages of establishing the EU army, promoted by securitizing actors in the securitization process. The EU public recognized that a Member State cannot contend alone in the international security

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system but can as an EU. Moreover, to be more relevant globally, it needs to be more operational, just as the securitizing actors pointed out from 2016 onwards.

Over the years, but mainly during the crisis in Ukraine, the EU public also noted that the EU needs to speak with one voice in foreign policy. The most straightforward way to manage this is not to have Member States with independent armies, but to have a single EU army, work out its differences, and come to united decisions. Establishing the EU army would automatically render Article 42.7 of the Treaty on European Union redundant. The EU army would also help the EU cut its reliance on the US, and the EU's position inside NATO would be much more robust and consolidated. One of the main ideas behind the joint EU army is eradicating the possibility of wars in Europe. Still, it would also be a bonding act, fostering a sense of belonging within European society. In conclusion, the EU public recognized that the EU was initially intended as an economic union; therefore, establishing the EU army would be instrumental in protecting the EU's global and local economic interests and supplementing solid economic output through a common European defense industry.

The securitizing actors rightfully decided that to push public opinion in their favour, they needed to employ more substance behind the idea of establishing the EU army. The bare idea of the EU army was not enough for the majority of the public, as the counterargument— that the establishment of the EU army would end one country's sovereignty —played a significant part in the general public's reluctance to support the establishment of the EU army. By utilizing arguments that the general public felt strongly about that this paper categorized into four clusters: strategic, political, societal, and economic, and showed them as advantages of establishing the EU army and disadvantages of the divided nation armies, the securitizing actors employed the same tactics of fear used by the counter securitizing actors who cautioned against the establishment of the EU army.

The general public is continually concerned about the use of money and its proper allocation. The securitizing actors, therefore, warned through their speeches that the national armies of the Member States are not sufficiently operational and thus the Member States and the EU as a whole dissipate money that could be used more efficiently if there is a common EU army. A common EU army would also protect the interests of the EU market, as the goods and services needed for the development of the military industries would be sourced within the EU market.

Using the threat of belligerent Russia and the US wavering foreign politics, the securitizing actors warned about the EU's precarious position between the two military powers. An efficient and strong army is not just needed for waging wars, but as a deterrent.

Research for this paper finished before the November 2024 elections in the US and President Trump's second term in office. However, with a change of current global security situation primarly because of president Trump's erratic statements about annexing Canada and Grenland, hinting that he would not object for the US to leave NATO, expressing kinship with Russian President Vladimir Putin, accusing Ukraine of starting the war with Russia, and last but not least his continuous assertions that the EU is somehow exploiting the US, the Eurofederalist dreamabout establishing the EU Army cannot be closer.

In the current global security situation, Russia is waging a war of conquest in Ukraine and threatening the Baltic states and Poland. On the other side, the US is engaging in economic competition and is even threatening Denmark with the annexation of Greenland. Even the most

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staunch defenders of national sovereignty should recognize the need for closer and more standardized collaboration between Member States' militaries. Eurofederalists have good reason to believe or expect that the establishment of an EU army is just around the corner.

Words are powerful; when used deliberately, they can move mountains or persuade people to see the narrator's point of view. By carefully dissecting sentences and placing them in their proper context, one can uncover the narrator's underlying motivations. The securitization theory is critical in today's world for understanding the intentions behind speeches before any actions are taken.

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Iva Žutić: conceptualization, methodology, investigation, writing-original draft. **Robert Mikac:** conceptualization, resources, review and editing.

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