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Closing or Widening the Gap? The Foreign Policy of EU Member States

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**ENVISIONING A NEW
GOVERNANCE ARCHITECTURE
FOR A GLOBAL EUROPE**



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Executive Summary

This working paper maps and analyses the foreign policy of thirteen selected European Union (EU) Member States (MS) with a focus on their present and long-term defence and security strategies. It considers high-level primary sources in order to evaluate possible incompatibilities in foreign policy amongst EU MS and to assess challenges and possibilities for the external action of the Union in the areas of security and defence.

The mapping exercise reveals that EU MS tend to hold a common assessment of their security and geopolitical environments, and largely converge around priority challenges and security threats. Firstly, The MS national strategies present a global geopolitical environment undergoing rapid transformations amidst a back drop of complicating factors such as the US-China systemic rivalry, climate change, technological disruption, resource scarcity and disinformation, which are compounded with more traditional security issues such as terrorism, extremism and the prevalence of weapons of mass destruction. Secondly, strategic thinking of EU MS aims at enhanced capacity in “broad security” areas such as hybrid warfare, disinformation, health, migration, natural disasters and climate, and cybersecurity. Finally, the MS’ strategic orientations are largely bound to their geographical position: their assessments of threats and geopolitical trends as well as their hierarchies of priorities are deeply linked to their geographical position, regional neighbourhood and adjacent areas.

We conclude that gaps exist in the strategic thinking amongst MS and between MS and EU institutions, but these divergences are not insurmountable obstacles to a deeper cooperation and a more coordinated EU external action. As long as priorities and essential interests are commonly grounded and not diametrically opposed, the challenge for joined-up external action lies at the level of policy- and decision-making and in the quest for capabilities and resources that are able to bolster actions that satisfy individual MS objectives.

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1 Introduction

A major challenge on the road towards an effective, sustainable and joined-up external action of the European Union (EU or Union) is the quest of finding synergies and unity of purpose amongst a variety of security, defence and geopolitical interests, strategic cultures and foreign policy traditions of the Union's 27 Member States (MS). On the one hand, matters of national security are deeply tied to notions and practices of sovereignty and linked to the vital interests of MS. On the other hand, decision-making and practices of the Union's external action in the areas of security, defence and intelligence cooperation are largely intergovernmental and built on consensus. Within this context, it remains crucial to assess the gaps and possible incompatibilities in foreign policy amongst EU MS in order to assess challenges and possibilities for the external action of the EU in the areas of security and defence.

This working paper is the deliverable of task 2.2 of the Horizon 2020 ENGAGE project. This task aims to identify and analyse *the foreign policy goals, priorities and actions of EU MS* with regard to geopolitics, security, defence, intelligence and other related fields of action. In doing so, it also sheds lights on how and if MS interact with and within state groupings such as the Visegrad 4 and the Weimar Triangle. In addition, and when relevant, this working paper looks at policies and action of EU MS in relation to third parties such as international organisations and non-EU countries.

Given the difficulty of completing a meaningful analysis of all 27 MS within the limited space of a working paper, this task maps and analyses the foreign policy of *13 selected MS*: Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Poland, Slovakia and Spain. This selection was made in coordination with other work packages of the ENGAGE project, in particular work package 3. This coordination ensures not only a broad representation of cases, but also joint efforts of comparison and allows future documents of the ENGAGE project to draw insights from across the network's work packages. Given the centrality of geopolitics and geoeconomics in foreign policy, the selection of Member States took primarily into account the criteria of representation of geographical position within European integration (i.e. Nordic and Baltic states, Eastern European states, Southern European states and Western European states). Following this first step, various other criteria were satisfied in the selection, including: (a) large, medium and small states; (b) states from each big enlargement wave of the EU, including pre- and post-2004; (c) states associated with 'neutral' foreign policy; (d) states associated with pro-European and Eurosceptic stances; and (e) states with stronger and weaker military capabilities.

In a first moment, the analysis of each selected EU MS includes its own assessment of its security and geopolitical environments. This includes how the state perceives its surrounding environment and the main threats to national and human security. This first step finds synergies with the Strategic Compass to be adopted by the European Council and, in particular, the stage of threat assessment. In a second moment, the analysis of each selected MS delves into the primary goals and priorities of foreign policy with a focus on security and defence. Finally, a third step looks into the main actions of foreign policy and, more importantly, what



these actions might reveal in terms of policy direction, priorities and states' self-assessment. Beyond these three main elements, and when relevant, each analysis has also included reflections on how MS interact within international organisations and how they link security and defence with other fields of action and relations with non-EU countries or groups of countries.

This mapping exercise relies on primary sources such as recent national strategies and other high-level documents. Whenever possible, these documents reveal multi-party consensus and long-term foreign policy thinking beyond the government of the day. The list of possible sources includes: (1) national strategic documents (e.g. white paper, national defence strategy, national security strategy (NSS), intelligence cooperation); (2) major speeches and official communication from authorities such as presidents, prime ministers, foreign and defence minister or equivalent and high-level positions in armed forces and intelligence agencies; (3) output of debates in national parliaments, security and defence committees or equivalent and in particular the latest agreement of government formation; (4) high-level strategic documents from armed forces and national intelligence communities. The most important primary sources for each case study are marked in italics in the analyses below.

We aim to focus only on the main goals and priorities and well as the most important actions taken in recent years. Our research prioritised a timeframe for data collection that takes into account only the latest versions of strategic documents. Given the number of cases and diversity of politics and policymaking amongst selected countries, adaptations were sometimes necessary. There may be differences amongst case studies in terms of the analysed primary sources. The primary documents mentioned above were also supplemented by the most recent secondary literature on foreign policy and strategic cultures of individual countries as well as by studies by national and international think tanks.

The first part of this working paper presents the security policies of the aforementioned 13 EU MS. The second part brings a comparative analysis of the different assessments and priorities of MS and reflects on existing gaps and convergences that are relevant for EU external action. We conclude that while there are relevant gaps amongst MS and between MS and EU institutions, these divergences are not insurmountable obstacles to enhanced cooperation and joined-up EU external action. As long as priorities and essential interests are commonly grounded and not diametrical opposed, the challenge for joined-up external action lies in policy- and decision-making and in the quest for capabilities and resources that are able to underpin actions that satisfy individual objectives.



2 The Foreign Policy of Selected Member States

This part presents the foreign policy of selected EU MS with a focus on security, defence and intelligence cooperation. By analysing the relevant primary sources indicated above,¹ each case tries to answer the following two main questions:

- How does the country assess its own security and geopolitical environment, the major threats and its long-term challenges?
- What are the country's main goals and priorities, both in terms of geographical areas and policy fields, in the areas of defence, security and intelligence cooperation?

The cases below are structured according to these questions with the use of subtitles. While the case studies attempt to answer the questions above, some also delve into additional questions as a reflection of both the importance of the topic for the country in particular and the topic's salience in the primary sources. When not mentioned under subtitles, these secondary questions are usually dealt with in other parts of the mapping exercise.

- What have been the country's most important foreign policy actions (e.g. meetings with strategic partners, participation in missions, creation of agencies or other entities, relocation or increase of troops, defence industry initiatives, etc.) in recent years?
- What has been the policy of the country within and vis-à-vis different international organisations (e.g. NATO) and more informal arrangements (e.g. Visegrad 4)?
- Does the country have sustained strategic relations with non-EU countries and what does this reveal in terms of its foreign policy goals and priorities?
- How does the country link its security and defence with particular adjacent fields (e.g. energy, technology, demographics)?

2.1 Belgium

2.1.1 Security and Geopolitical Environment

Federal policy declarations incorporate matters of foreign affairs into a broader framework of policies on European affairs and international trade, reflecting the concern of the impact of a worsening geopolitical security situation on, among other things, the economic growth of Belgium, which is largely dependent on foreign investment and trade (Ministerraad, 2017; Regeerakkoord Federale Regering België, 2020; Belgische Kamer Van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2020). The Belgian assessment of the geopolitical environment points to co-existing engines of international change: (a) climate crisis; (b) geoeconomic

¹ The references to primary and secondary sources used in the mapping and analysis of each MS are presented separately in the bibliography.



competition; (c) disruptive technologies; (d) growing influence of non-state actors; (e) demographic trends and socioeconomic inequalities; and (f) authoritarianism and challenges to democratic governance. To these challenges, the 2021 *National Security Strategy* (NSS) presents a shift of the centre of power from the (North) Atlantic to Asia with an increased US-China systemic competition and a growing assertiveness of Russia. The NSS also highlights the risk of a fragmentation of the globe in two rival blocs, forcing countries to choose sides. (Nationale Veiligheidsstrategie, 2021, pp. 12–3).

Belgium's NSS does not make a strict distinction between internal and external threats to security. The connection between security, democracy, human rights, the rule of law and sustainable development is likewise central to the international actions of Belgium on peace and security. In particular, the security implications of events as distinct as COVID-19, terrorism, inequality and climate change, many of which in turn have sparked protectionist tendencies, have strengthened the country's conviction to adopt a broad take on security.

2.1.2 Main Goals and Priorities

The NSS aims to serve as the sustainable reference framework for Belgium's security and defence policy, which should contribute to strengthening the country's integrated, global and multilateral approach (Nationale Veiligheidsstrategie, 2021). This Comprehensive Approach, mirroring the European approach (Foreign Affairs Council, 2014), is aimed at strengthening the cooperation between all relevant departments, so as to improve complementarity and mutual support. Geographically, the Comprehensive Approach identifies two fronts: the Baltic states and Central Europe in the Eastern Front, and the Mediterranean, MENA, West Africa, the Sahel and the Great Lakes regions in the Southern front. In parallel, the NSS identifies six vital interests: (1) protecting the achievements of the democratic state and its shared values; (2) the physical security of citizens and the physical integrity of Belgium; (3) the natural environment of Belgium; (4) economic prosperity; (5) the international order; (6) the effective functioning of the EU. Belgium has also focused on hybrid threats in and from the digital realm with the adoption of its first Cybersecurity Strategy in 2021.

Thematically, the federal approach of Belgium to peace and security is focused on the following security challenges (Belgische Kamer Van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2020): (a) a strong European and Atlantic security and defence policy through close engagement with and within the EU and NATO; (b) conflict prevention, conflict management and post-conflict resolution/peacebuilding that selects projects most essential for contributing to building sustainable peace situations, first and foremost those situated at the outer borders of Europe. Areas of priority include the Sahel region, Afghanistan, Israel and Palestine, Libya, Syria, Iran, the Gulf Region and the Southern Caucasus; (c) responsible and strictly verifiable disarmament, in particular of nuclear weapons, and including combating the use of chemical weapons and anti-personnel mines, and contributing to the debate on the impact of fully autonomous weapon systems; (d) the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, with a focus on the international coalition to defeat Daesh, the stabilisation of Iraq and North-Eastern Syria, Foreign Terrorist Fighters in Turkey, increased threats from online radicalism, discrimination and hate crimes, and the international obligations of Belgium in the battle



against corruption, drug trafficking, money laundering and the financing of terrorism; and (e) the fight against identity fraud, document fraud and human trafficking, as well as counterfeit medical products and comparable crimes that threaten public health and safety. The aforementioned challenges to international peace and security are explicitly connected to broader challenges to public health, migration, cybersecurity, climate change and the environment, including biodiversity.

2.1.3 Most Important Foreign Policy Actions

In line with the Comprehensive Approach, Belgium has continued to push for a political rather than military solution to the plight of Syrians by pledging 18 million EUR in humanitarian aid during the EU's fifth Syria Conference in March 2021. In the fight against the Islamic State, Belgium offered diplomatic support in addition to contributing four F16s until October 2021 to the international coalition against Daesh. Belgium has also focused on a coordinated approach to the possible repatriation of foreign terrorist fighters in South-Eastern Europe. Multiple policy actions have coincided to demonstrate the importance of the Sahel region for Belgium. Belgium is involved in various military missions in the region: at the UN level (the MINUSMA mission in Mali), at the European level (the EUTM mission in Mali), bilaterally (in Niger) and within coalitions such as Barkhane and Takuba. Further, experts from the pertinent Belgian departments are working on the reform of the internal security apparatus and justice within the framework of EUCAP Niger and EUCAP Sahel, both EU civilian missions.

In the area of disarmament, most actions by Belgium are being taken in the institutional framework of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, but other actions have been taken as well, which are aimed at fostering cooperation with specialised organisations through specific initiatives. One of these is the APOPO mine-clearance project in Angola, financed by the Peace-building Department of Belgium's FPS Foreign Affairs. Belgium also supported two projects of the international NGO Mines Advisory Group in order to maintain stability in Chad and Mauritania.

A major goal of the Belgian government is to remain a reliable partner within multilateral efforts. In turn, Belgium strives for stronger European strategic autonomy, giving space for a more proactive role and increased involvement from the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European External Action Service. Further, Belgium is focused on contributing to civilian crisis management and aims to deepen the defence cooperation between EU MS through the PESCO mechanism. Belgium also provides support to the Union's Strategic Compass and to the establishment of the European Defence Fund and the European Peace Facility for the period 2021–2027 (Belgische Kamer Van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 2020b). NATO is considered the cornerstone of collective defence for Belgium. Within NATO, Belgium strives for a more balanced distribution of the burden of defence between the US and the European allies by implementing the *Strategic Vision Defence 2030* (Ministry of Defence, 2021). Still within NATO, Belgium supports a more assertive stance against Russia and is focused on the implementation of the Minsk Protocol. Belgium attaches particular importance to restoring internal cohesion within NATO, with a focus on solidarity with Greece and the Republic of Cyprus, on the one hand, and a dialogue with Turkey, on the other.



2.2 Cyprus

2.2.1 Security and Geopolitical Environment

Since the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) in 1960, the country has faced significant political problems including an ethnic conflict during the 1960s, the 1974 Turkish invasion and the occupation of the island's north ever since. Once a bi-communal state (comprised of a Greek-Cypriot majority and Turkish-Cypriot minority), the RoC has since 1964 been controlled by the Greek Cypriots due to the results of the ethnic conflict and on the basis of the doctrine of necessity (Papastylianos, 2018). Since then, the so-called “Cyprus Problem” consumes the RoC’s assessments and priorities on two main levels. First, with respect to the multiple rounds of peace talks with the Turkish Cypriot community that have been taking place until today and, second, in relation to the state’s effort to deal with or counter the Turkish power projection on the island and the broader region, given that Turkey is integral to both the creation and the prospective settlement of the conflict.

The RoC has not yet developed a national security strategy nor any other similar document, although it has been said that the government has been working on a NSS for some years (Adamides, 2019). Moreover, it does not have a National Security Council (NSC) and the Constitution only refers to the functions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs without any mention to strategy or objectives, and the Cyprus Intelligence Service (CIS) has only received legal stature in 2016 – after 46 years of largely unchecked operations on instructions from the political leadership (Cyprus Mail, 2016). In 2014, President Nicos Anastasiades formed the National Geostrategic Council. It effectively acted as a consultation body to the President, and had the role of monitoring, providing analyses and policy prescriptions on regional developments. However, the members were appointed by the President himself, often on the basis of political calculations. As the Council was not institutionalised, and its mandate was not renewed with the re-election of Anastasiades, it dissolved in 2018.

The President – followed by the Foreign Minister – is de facto the ultimate foreign policy maker. For example, according to the Constitution (article 48), and within a presidential political system, the President’s executive powers include the right to veto decisions of the Council of Ministers, and laws and decisions of the parliament concerning foreign affairs, defence, or security. It is moreover well documented that the RoC foreign policy changes whenever a new President is elected to office (Koukkides-Procopiou, 2022).

2.2.2 Main Goals and Priorities

Nonetheless, the very first foreign policy priority of the RoC is to contribute to the resolution of the Cyprus conflict, according to the principles of international law. The loose institutional framework renders governmental policy on the Cyprus conflict susceptible to frequent changes as well.

The current government has been in power since 2013 and the current Foreign Minister since 2018. During these years the RoC’s foreign policy has become more outward and proactive.



This was primarily a result of the RoC's ability to capitalise and focus its strategic thinking on the shifts that came about in the Eastern Mediterranean from 2010 onwards (Tziarras, 2019). On the one hand, these shifts were largely a product of Turkey's growing foreign policy adventurism, which led to the deterioration of relations with Israel, Syria, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Greece among others. On the other, it was a result of the discoveries of natural gas reserves off Israel, Cyprus and Egypt, and the prospect of cooperation that they created.

Under this government, for the first time since its establishment, the *RoC Foreign Ministry's website* has published a document regarding its foreign policy goals and objectives on three levels: Cyprus in its region, Cyprus in the EU and Cyprus in the world. At the first level, the aspect of trilateral partnerships is highlighted along with the various domains of regional cooperation not least of which is energy. At the second level, accession to the EU is considered a milestone for the enhancement of the RoC's international role, while Cyprus is projected as a potential facilitator of the EU's engagement in the Eastern Mediterranean. The third level focuses on the importance of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy on the world stage (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.). From this perspective, RoC foreign policy in recent years developed more complex objectives, although it has not been possible to dissociate them from the traditional priority of resolving the Cyprus conflict.

2.2.3 Most Important Foreign Policy Actions

Historically speaking, the means used to achieve the major foreign policy objectives of the RoC were the invocation of international law against Turkish violations, the formation of international partnerships and the leveraging of international organisations and great powers, such as the EU, the United Nations (UN) and the US, against Turkish policies (see, for instance: Anastasiades, 2021).

However, in the context of the abovementioned regional shifts that took place during the 2010s, the RoC adopted a rather novel foreign policy approach. It seized the opportunities produced by the geopolitical environment and developed close partnerships with Israel and Egypt, respectively. These later evolved into various schemes of trilateral partnerships, most significantly among Cyprus-Greece-Israel and Cyprus-Egypt-Greece. This foreign policy activism in conjunction with converging regional interests eventually led to the establishment of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), based in Cairo, and the decision on a Secretariat of Trilateral Partnerships in Nicosia, Cyprus (Shkurko & Jonathan, 2020). For the RoC, these developments had a twofold importance: (a) they contributed to its international image as a state promoting peace and cooperation, and potentially to its economic prosperity; and (b) they supported the effort to pressure (or incentivise) Turkey towards a viable and fair solution to the Cyprus conflict. Therefore, despite Nicosia's efforts to widen its domains of foreign policy activism, the Cyprus conflict remains at the epicentre of its concerns and strategic orientation. As former RoC Foreign Minister, Nikos Christodoulides, noted poignantly, summarising decades of the RoC's foreign policy and numerous official statements: "The Cyprus Problem continues to be the foremost priority, at the heart of our foreign policy, utilising all political and diplomatic tools at our disposal. Cyprus's accession to the EU in 2004, possibly the most pivotal moment in Cyprus's modern history and certainly one of its greatest



diplomatic successes, has meant that the solution of the Cyprus Problem is inextricably linked to the EU and by extension to EU law, values and principles” (Christodoulides, 2020).

Lastly, in the RoC there is often a sense of disappointment regarding what are perceived as lukewarm reactions to Turkey’s hostile activity against Cyprus. Most recently this was demonstrated in the discussions about the EU’s Strategic Compass where, despite the strong requests of Cyprus and Greece, Turkey has not yet been included as a threat unlike, for example, Russia. (Gold News, 2021).

2.3 Estonia

2.3.1 Security and Geopolitical Environment

In its key documents, the Estonian approach emphasises national security and defence, upholding global values and human rights, and the need for reacting rapidly to changing international environment as priorities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020; Ministry of Defence, 2017; Välisluureamet, 2022). The *National Security Concept (NSC) 2017* states that “Estonia’s security policy is based on a ‘broad security concept’”, and that the immediate threats to Estonia are linked to the security of the wider Euro-Atlantic region and Russian aggression (Ministry of Defence, 2017, pp. 3–4).

The NSC also highlights Russian aggression as the primary threat to Estonia’s immediate security. In the event that NATO’s collective deterrence is perceived as weakened or ineffectual, a military attack on Estonia becomes likely (Ministry of Defence, 2017, p. 4). Russia has been known to use threats and the use of military force. Moreover, Russia has engaged in influencing and interfering in the internal affairs of other countries in order to weaken the Euro-Atlantic community. Therefore, “the coming years will highly likely bring new crises in the region, creating both direct and indirect security threats for Estonia and more broadly for Europe” (Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service, 2021, p. 8). because of Russian activities (Laanet, 2021).

Security of both the EU and NATO are part of Estonian security. While NATO is viewed as the bedrock of Estonia’s traditional military security, the cohesion and credibility of the EU are also highlighted as it provides essential economic, financial and legal protection to Estonia. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020; Ministry of Defence, 2017; Estonian Foreign Intelligence Services, 2021). The primary threats to these organisations are both internal and external in nature. Internally, the main threats to the EU and to NATO are the erosion of and opposition to European values, such as democracy, liberal market economics, the rule of law and human rights, together with political radicalisation and increased polarisation. These threats are exacerbated by populist and discriminatory movements and ideologies within EU and NATO Member States. Differing understanding on the direction of the EU’s defence cooperation together with lacking financial contributions of European allies is seen as undermining NATO’s collective defence (Ministry of Defence, 2017, p. 9). Externally, the increasing multipolarity and rise of other states that do not share universal principles, such as China and Russia, pose challenges to the US and its allies.



Aside from the direct threat posed by Russia, emerging technologies (in particular cyberspace), disinformation, the increasing instability of domestic and global political systems and demographic trends are seen to pose potential threats to Estonia's security and defence (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020, p. 4; Ministry of Defence, 2017, p. 5; Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication, 2019).

2.3.2 Main Goals and Priorities

The aim of Estonia's security policy is ultimately to "secure the Nation's independence and sovereignty, the survival of the people and the state, territorial integrity, constitutional order and the safety of the population. In pursuing its security policy, Estonia respects fundamental rights and freedoms and protects constitutional values." (Ministry of Defence, 2017, p. 2). To this end, Estonian security policy aims to prevent and pre-empt threats, while orienting its responses with swiftness and flexibility, should threats arise (Ministry of Defence, 2017, p. 3).

Estonia sees its NATO and EU memberships as essential guarantees of its security, as they provide support for defence, security, sustainable development and trade policies. In terms of division of labour, NATO is seen as providing military capabilities, deterrence and defence, while the EU ensures political, economic and legal security. Indeed, Estonia's Foreign Minister stated in 2021 that the main aim of the 'geopolitical Commission' should be to assert the EU's position through economics and trade while developing closer trade relations with the US (Liimets, 2021; Ministry of Defence, 2017). Estonia seeks to ensure that the EU's defence cooperation is complementary with NATO, increasing the cooperation of the two organisations via contacts, improved common situational awareness, coordinated capacity-building activities, improved strategic communication capabilities and joint exercises (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020, p. 15).

In its 2020 *Foreign Policy Strategy* and other key documents, Estonia expressed support for deeper and more unified EU foreign, defence and security policies, provided that policy developments and measures do not undermine NATO (Government of the Republic of Estonia, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020; Ministry of Defence, 2017). To this end, Estonia "actively participates in [PESCO] projects that promote our security and capacity-building. Improving military mobility is a priority" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020, p. 15). Estonia participates in three PESCO projects and is coordinator of one project. Nonetheless, Estonian defence and security policy sees the EU as a 'secondary' defence and security institution, compared to NATO.

2.3.3 Most Important Foreign Policy Actions

Digital diplomacy and cybersecurity have been the main theme of Estonia's foreign and security policy since the first Cybersecurity Strategy in 2008. Estonia aims to be a leading, active and responsible international contributor in the cybersecurity arena (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020; Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication, 2019). The Estonian cybersecurity approach has three main threads. Firstly, Estonia seeks to promote the development of international law for cybersecurity in multilateral forums, such as the UN and



the OSCE, either individually or through the EU's diplomatic instruments. Secondly, Estonia works actively with "like-minded allies" to "strengthen cyberspace stability and responsible state behaviour and discourage irresponsible conduct" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020, p. 17). This entails the development of further cyber-capabilities by the EU and NATO, and closer cooperation between democratic allies. Thirdly, Estonia aims to ensure that it maintains necessary domestic capabilities and technology (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication, 2019).

Estonia continues to deepen and develop existing bilateral cooperation with France, the United Kingdom (UK) and the US. The current government made maintaining close ties between the EU and the UK government a priority (Kallas, 2021a). This cooperation is seen as being of paramount importance in foreign and security policy, as the UK is still regarded as a major European security partner, contributing to NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) in Estonia, the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force and cyber deterrence coalition including the US, the UK and Estonia (Kallas, 2021a; Governance agreement for 2021–2023, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020; Liimets, 2021). Estonia has also in recent years developed defence and security ties with France, both bilaterally and through shared institutions and initiatives. Bilaterally, Estonia has contributed to the French-led interventions operation Barkhane and taskforce Takuba in the Sahel. Multilaterally, Estonia was a founding member of the French-led European Intervention Initiative (EI2), whilst also supporting closer defence cooperation at the EU level. Nonetheless, Estonia maintains some scepticism towards the French push for "strategic autonomy" of the Union, as this is potentially competing with and undermining NATO (Laanet, 2021).

The US is seen as a strategic partner of Estonia, and when it comes to Estonian and European security "there is no alternative to NATO and close transatlantic cooperation with the United States" (Liimets, 2021). The current Estonian government aims to "strengthen transatlantic relations, devoting extra attention to our relations with the new administration of the USA" (Government of the Republic of Estonia, 2021, p. 15). Estonia is currently in the process of updating its security and defence policy following the 4-year cycle established in the 2017 National Security Concept. The forthcoming report is expected to be published in 2022.

2.3.4 International Organisations and Informal Arrangements

In terms of informal arrangements, the main one mentioned in the documentation is the Nordic-Baltic dimension. All Baltic states are members of NATO and the EU and share similar threat perceptions. Despite the broad policy agreements and close links between the three countries, there remains a degree of Baltic competition to ensure visibility in the eyes of larger EU and NATO partners. Nonetheless, Estonia aims to deepen the existing Baltic Sea and Baltic-Nordic cooperation and to continue developing a closer relationship with the countries in question (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020, p. 16; Ministry of Defence, 2017, p. 10).

Moreover, Estonia has been part of the 16+1 (formerly 17+1) initiative between Eastern European countries and China since its founding in 2012 in a bid to encourage Chinese investment. Following the general NATO and EU stance, Estonia has gradually become more



hard-line and concerned about the security implications of the behaviour of the Chinese government. In fact, in response to the increasingly damaging Chinese activities, Estonia has been calling for a more unified position taken by the EU (Ummelas, 2020; Estonian Foreign Intelligence Services, 2021).

2.4 Finland

2.4.1 Security and Geopolitical Environment

While the Finnish policies are described using the terms continuity, coherence and long-term approach, the geopolitical environment is seen as increasingly unstable and unpredictable. Tensions in the Baltic Sea region are of particular concern. As the President of the Republic put it, the world has become a more acrimonious and dangerous place. At the same time, there is no direct military threat to Finland (Niinistö, 2021).

The 2020 *Government Report on Finnish Foreign and Security Policy* assesses Finland's foreign and security policy environment and defines the goals and priorities for Finland's actions. It notes an intensification of great power rivalry and states that Russia has weakened the security of the neighbourhood and of Europe. Furthermore, it concludes that Russia's actions show that the threshold for using force is now lower than in previous years. The report states that Russia's goal is a security arrangement in Europe that is based on spheres of interest (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2020).

In the Report, two novelties stand out. First, the report states that Finnish foreign policy is based on human rights. Second, international cooperation plays an increasing role in security and defence, both in preventing the emergence of armed conflicts and situations endangering Finland's security and maintaining societal crisis resilience. New foreign policy priorities include health security, climate change and digitalisation.

The threats mentioned include climate change, health threats, human rights violations, migration, financial crises, increasing inequality, terrorism and international crime. The Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament views non-state actors among potential challenges and underlines the links between population increase, climate change, loss of biodiversity and migration. (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2021). The Prime Minister sees vulnerabilities in financing, information networks, competition for strategic products and raw materials, critical infrastructure, digital information and data flow management (Marin, 2021).

2.4.2 Main Goals and Priorities

According to the 2020 Government Report, the goal of Finland's foreign and security policy is to strengthen Finland's international position, to secure its independence and territorial integrity, to strengthen Finland's security and prosperity and to ensure that the society functions efficiently. This includes enhancing EU coherence and its capacity to act, a special relationship with Sweden, Nordic cooperation, NATO partnership and bilateral relations, crisis resilience, strengthening multilateral cooperation (e.g. keeping the Arctic outside of great



power tensions), sharing global responsibilities (such as human rights, climate change, global health) and peacebuilding (strengthening mediation competence, crisis management, arms control and disarmament) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, 2020).

The goals as to the EU comprise, according to the Prime Minister, developing its decision-making competence, including the capacity to create shared situational awareness, to prepare policy recommendations and to be swift in decision-making (Marin, 2021). Similarly, the President sees a need for a Europe that protects its citizens and its interests, adding that a Europe able to share threat analysis and shoulder more responsibility for its own security should only strengthen the transatlantic bond. Finland also supports efforts at a dialogue with Russia. Refusing to interact with Russia does not strengthen the EU, it only makes it look weaker and less relevant, says the President (Niinistö, 2021).

The 2021 *Defence Report* describes Finland as a militarily non-aligned state which maintains a credible national defence capability. The most significant changes from the previous report from 2017 are a more detailed description of international defence cooperation and the increasing emphasis on cyber and information security as well as space. For the first time, the defence report discusses the position of China.

Defence cooperation in Finland is closest with Sweden. There are no present limits to it; it comprises cooperation both in peacetime and in crisis or conflict and joint operational planning (Government of Finland, 2021). EU defence is viewed very much in terms of crisis management and not in terms of territorial defence. While joint procurement is a possibility; a robust domestic defence industry is necessary for security of supply. The parliamentary committees stress the importance of Articles 222 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union and the importance of safeguarding their flexible nature so that they can be invoked in, for example, grave instances of hybrid operations. Developing the EU's defence policy should not result in new dividing lines inside the Union. Finland supports the development of PESCO and takes part in projects from its national baselines. Additionally, international exercises are an important part of Finnish security and defence policy, and their goal is to develop national capabilities and readiness as well as interoperability (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2021; Defence Committee, 2021).

2.4.3 Most Important Foreign Policy Actions

The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE) was established in Helsinki in 2017, with the participation of NATO and the EU, and with now 31 Member States. In December 2021, the decision was taken to replace the current F-18 Hornet fleet with 64 F-35As. This almost 10-billion-euro deal represents the biggest defence spending ever. The decision underlines the continuity of close relations with the US but is not understood to compromise defence cooperation with Sweden nor harm European cooperation.

The Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament notes that in comparison with the policy and the international needs, the Finnish participation in crisis management operations is now on a



very low level. The aim is to increase participation in military crisis management under the UN, but a similar goal is lacking when it comes to the EU (Foreign Affairs Committee, 2021).

2.4.4 International Organisations and Informal Arrangements

The Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEF) includes situational awareness cooperation, military mobility, training and exercises. Air force cooperation between Sweden, Norway and Finland includes regular exercises and cross-border training. The intention is to update overall Nordic cooperation to preparedness for any eventuality and use the Nordic Council of Ministers for developing cooperation in the security of supply. The Prime Minister sees that Nordic bonds have a natural transatlantic dimension, too, referring perhaps to Norway and Denmark's NATO memberships (Marin, 2021). Finland is an Enhanced Opportunities Partner for NATO. It is important for Finland to be able to use the 30+2 format where Sweden and Finland can discuss with NATO on issues of common concern. Partnership with NATO is geared to military interoperability but also political dialogue on different levels.

In addition, Finland takes part in the German Framework Nation Group since 2018, the French E12 since 2018 and the British JEF since 2017. It has permanent bilateral defence cooperation arrangements with nine countries (Sweden, Norway, US, Germany, France, UK, Poland, Estonia and Japan). A trilateral arrangement with Finland, Sweden and the US was agreed in 2018, and between Finland, Sweden and Norway in 2020. Norway has recently become increasingly important as a non-EU partner.

2.5 France

2.5.1 Security and Geopolitical Environment

French foreign policy is marked by a broad and geographically wide view of security and defence, which includes a regular governmental assessment of a wide range of challenges at global, European and national levels. After his election, following in the steps of his predecessors, President Emmanuel Macron instructed the Ministry of Defence to discuss and elaborate a *Strategic Review of Defence and National Security*, published in 2017. The conclusions of the review are translated into budgetary and capabilities terms in the *Military Program Law 2019–2025*, and more recently updated by the so-called *Strategic Update* of 2021. As presented in these documents, the French assessment of the current geopolitical and security environment points to the co-existence of multiple threats, which have materialised rapidly and forcefully in the last few years, and now create a context that is much more unstable compared to the previous post-Cold War decades. Accordingly, France and Europe are seen as being “directly exposed” to various threats and issues such as terrorism, war and conflict, great power competition and authoritarian regimes, security in cyberspace and the multiple crises of the European integration project.

The French assessment links current threats to non-traditional security challenges such as climate change, health and the risk of pandemics, demographic changes and migration pressures and energy-related rivalries. In addition, the Review calls for a comprehensive



approach that integrates security and development efforts. More traditional security threats, such as terrorism, organised crime and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are also highlighted as state and non-state actors gain in capacity. The increased interdependency (i.e. the flow of people, goods and data) has the potential to create simultaneous and complex security crises in the backdrop of an increasingly unstable, unpredictable and contested international system. The Strategic Update points to the challenge of hybrid strategies that combine “military and non-military, direct and indirect, legal and illegal courses of action, [and] are careful to remain below the estimated threshold of retaliation or open conflict.” (Ministère des Armées (France), 2021c).

The simultaneous challenges are notably: (a) a direct attack against the national territory; (b) the vulnerability of the Sahel, which is viewed as being particularly impacted by climate change; (c) instability in the Middle East; and (d) tensions in Northeast Europe. In addition, the Strategic Review points to particular geographical areas that see higher risk: (a) the Mediterranean and its South bank (i.e. North Africa); (b) Sub-Saharan Africa; (c) the Balkans; and (d) Asia, with a growing geopolitical and geoeconomic importance of the Indo-Pacific region where France is the only EU MS with a permanent military presence.

Both China and Russia receive particular attention in the French geopolitical assessment as part of a “renewed military competition”. Russia is portrayed as an actor that contests and blocks international institutions while promoting regional alternatives, including with “strategic intimidation” (Ministère des Armées (France), 2021a). China is presented as a power with initially regional and later global ambitions. For France, this growing Chinese power creates important zones of strategic interaction such as East Africa and the Indian Ocean. While both powers renew and invest in their military capabilities for more assertive actions, the Strategic Review sustains that avenues for constructive dialogue must be found.

2.5.2 Main Goals and Priorities

Historically, both within Europe and globally, French foreign policy has maintained the overarching goal of strategic autonomy – a country that controls its own destiny and that has freedom of action to promote its values and interests, and to respond to major challenges. When introducing the country’s strategic review, President Macron stated that this goal translates into the objective of creating and maintaining a military capacity that is “strong and reliable, capable of facing all kinds of threats and in all places” (République Française, 2017, p. 6). France has the goal of executing autonomous action in nuclear deterrence, territorial defence, intelligence and data gathering and special operations.

There are four major goals for France’s security and foreign policy: (a) the protection of its territory; (b) the capacity to respond, alone if needed, to crises in the neighbourhood that impact French territory; (c) the ability to maintain its superiority vis-à-vis non-state actors in areas of interest; and (d) the means to maintain its capacity to engage in high-intensity confrontation with state actors, which requires modern combat capabilities. In addition, the country puts an emphasis on the goal of a robust intelligence service with an autonomous capacity of assessment and anticipation. These four objectives make it imperative to have



armed forces that are “complete and balanced” (Ministère des Armées (France), 2018; République Française, 2017, p. 53).

France also prioritises the ongoing digital revolution and cyberspace as strategic areas of interest. On the one hand, this priority is linked to technological know-how, industrial capacity and constant innovation (République Française, 2017). The development of a sound and coherent European defence industry is an important priority, which includes the stimulus for technology companies. Cyberspace is increasingly considered a place of intense strategic competition, with a growing number of non-state actors. France defends the use and adaptation of its Internal Law for cyberspace. In 2017, it created its Cyber-Defence Command (COMCYBER), which places cybersecurity forces from different army branches under the same umbrella for planning and execution (Ministère des Armées (France), 2021b).

France has renewed its commitment to military and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It prioritises a secure and reliable supply of energy that can support its economic actors and is resilient in the face of political turmoil. The security and stability of the uranium supply chain is a key priority. As the only EU MS with military nuclear capability, France also devotes large attention to nuclear deterrence in its three major components (i.e. nuclear silos, aircraft and submarines).

2.5.3 Most Important Foreign Policy Actions

In the last decade, France has deployed a significant number of armed personnel and military hardware globally. In the Sahel region of Africa, following the launching of Operation Bakhane in 2014, it has a total of 4,800 deployed military personnel. From 2020, with the “Coalition for the Sahel”, the country aims to share responsibility with local governments following a comprehensive approach (i.e. politics, security and development) to the region (Ministère des Armées (France), 2022). The French military is also deployed globally as “sovereignty forces” in French overseas departments and territories (7,500 military personnel in places like French Guinea and Reunion) and as “presence forces” in strategic positions (3,750 military personnel in countries like Senegal and the United Arab Emirates). Since 2014, Operation Chammal marks the French military involvement in the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and in Syria.

Strong and autonomous diplomatic action within international organisations such as NATO, the EU, the OSCE and the UN is seen as crucial for the creation of political and legal frameworks for the defence of national interest. French vital interests are not limited to the national level but are deeply linked to NATO and the EU, and to their treaty instruments of collective defence (i.e. Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union and Article V of the Washington Treaty). Since 2009, France is once again part of the NATO Integrated Military Command while keeping its nuclear autonomy. France also supports a flexible, predictable and dissuasive approach for NATO in its relations with Russia. It has also been engaged in the deployment of personnel in Eastern Europe within the framework of the enhanced Forward Presence. At the same time, it highlights a growing disengagement of the US from Europe.



As one of its largest MS, France seeks to facilitate strategic and sustainable convergences in the EU. (République Française, 2017, p. 53). In particular, it sees Germany as a fundamental part of the reinforcing of European security and defence, including intelligence cooperation and intensified operational cooperation (Conseil Franco-Allemand de Défense et de Sécurité: Conclusions Agréées, 2019). Partnerships with Spain and Italy are also particularly relevant in the Mediterranean context. At the beginning of its Presidency of the Council of the EU, France has convened an informal meeting of Ministers of Defence of EU MS in Brest in order to consolidate European-wide initiatives of security cooperation and exchange views and strategic thinking on new efforts (French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, 2021).

France continues to interact closely with the UK on security and defence matters, including terrorism, cybersecurity and the Indo-Pacific region (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères (France), 2021). Beyond the North Atlantic, France is also tied to partnerships around the globe and, in particular, in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. While geographical proximity is seen as a relevant factor in the prioritisation of foreign policy, key documents also highlight interests and challenges linked to cyberspace and a major crisis in Asia. France is the only EU MS with a permanent seat at the UNSC. Within the UNSC, France proposes that the right to veto should not be used to block reaction to mass atrocities.

2.6 Germany

2.6.1 Security and Geopolitical Environment

Germany's security and defence policy is embedded in its foreign policy principles that have guided Germany's actions in Europe and beyond over the last decades. These principles are European integration, transatlantic cooperation, peace and security, democracy, the rule of law and human rights and multilateralism. In the absence of an overall national security strategy, different strategic papers and governmental declarations provide an overview of the overarching strategic context and positioning of Germany. The country's security environment is assessed at length in the 2016 *White Paper on Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr* (The Federal Government, 2016), in which the international order is portrayed as one in transition. The German government underlines that "the international order, established after World War II, and the resulting organisations and institutions which still provide a framework for international politics, is undergoing profound changes. The drivers and effects of these changes are varied and numerous" (ibid.). The drivers of that change are observed in anti-globalisation movements, radical nationalism, violent extremism and religious fanaticism, whose forces "intensify the disintegration of state order" (The Federal Government, 2016, p. 29). Furthermore, poor governance and informal economies are perceived as factors which lead to crises, both within states and internationally. Moreover, the German government sees demographic transformations and urbanisation as further decisive factors.

Thematically, the strategic documents point to a mix of different challenges to Germany's security environment. Not only does the German government point to an increasing multi-



polarity of international power and growing fragmentation within the existing international multilateral order, not least due to the rise of China and other emerging powers, but also that the Euro-Atlantic Order of Peace and Stability is put in question. After witnessing the annexation of Crimea and warfare in Eastern Ukraine, the government concludes that “Russia is openly calling the European peace order into question with its willingness to use force to advance its own interests and to unilaterally redraw borders guaranteed under international law, as it has done in Crimea and eastern Ukraine” (The Federal Government, 2016, p. 31). In other words, the European security order, to which all Members of the OSCE have signed up to, is perceived as being called into question.

The German government also sees threats to the security of Europe due to the multiple crises that have hit Europe, and which have caused Member States to place “an increased emphasis on their own national interest” (Ibid.), rather than placing overarching European interests first. Furthermore, and as a consequence of budgetary restraints, within the EU the significant reduction of armed forces “under the pressure of the debt crisis and in view of the allegedly peaceful environment” is seen as another challenge to maintaining consistent levels of security in Europe (Ibid., p. 32). Aside from these structural challenges in international and European security, the government furthermore addresses a number of German security challenges imposed by intra- and interstate conflicts, including transnational terrorism, fragile states, poor governance and various cyber-threats (pp. 33–40). The 2021 Cybersecurity Strategy by the German Ministry of the Interior, for instance, emphasises an increasingly insecure environment with regard to cybercrime, state-issued cyberattacks and hybrid threats on various domestic targets, including cooperation of state and non-state actors in relation to disinformation (Ministry of Interior, 2021, p. 15).

In Germany’s threat assessment of 2016 various other factors are viewed as undermining the stability of order and security internationally, which imply direct security challenges for Germany, including threats by the proliferation of small and light weapons and weapons of mass destruction, threats to the maintenance of information and communication, economic supplies and global value chains, the import of raw materials, as well as the negative consequences of climate change, migration, epidemics and pandemics. In her governmental declaration in 2020, Chancellor Merkel stressed the importance of dealing with a global pandemic such as COVID-19, and underlined that security could only be provided through international cooperation and a determined and committed response to contain the virus by all states (Merkel, 2019).

Several government declarations underline the importance of Germany’s geographic position for its security. Aside from the long-term involvement of Germany in the Western Balkans, of particular concern is the sovereignty of Ukraine and the implementation of the Minsk Agreement, although ongoing challenges in the Middle East, Northern Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, Iran and Afghanistan also occupy Germany’s security concerns (Merkel, 2018; Merkel, 2019).



2.6.2 Main Goals and Priorities

Building on the ambition to find comprehensive ‘whole-of-government’ approaches to existing security threats (The Federal Government, 2016), Germany is placing particular emphasis on multilateralism, both internationally, in the context of the EU, and in its transatlantic relations, in order to provide security in crisis situations and sustain the interconnectivities of global trade (The Federal Government, 2016). In her government declaration in 2019, Chancellor Merkel underlined that Europe was founded as a multilateral project and that, as a consequence of the Second World War, Europe needs to maintain its engagement and support for international multilateralism: “No country alone can solve problems by itself; if we work against each other, then we will not win” (Merkel, 2019). Moreover, Merkel emphasised that “Europe must leave a footprint [...] when it comes to resolving conflicts in the world.” The newly elected government in 2021 shares this ambition, stressing in the 2021 *Coalition Agreement* the European dimension of Germany’s security objectives: “We want to increase Europe’s strategic sovereignty. The goal is multilateral cooperation in the world, particularly close links with those states that share our democratic values.” (Coalition Agreement, 2021, p. 143). Furthermore, the Coalition Agreement underlines: “We will help shape the work on the “strategic compass” constructively in order to shape the EU’s objectives and means in the area of security and defence in an ambitious manner as part of the integrated approach” (Coalition Agreement, 2021, p. 135). It is also the ambition of the new German government to increase the cooperation of European armies, particularly in the areas of training, capacities, missions and equipment. At the same time, civilian crisis missions are to be prioritised and missions under the European flag need to be comprehensively integrated into larger political approaches to crises. Overall, the new German government stresses that European security remains firmly embedded in transatlantic structures: “NATO remains an indispensable basis for our security. We are committed to strengthening the transatlantic alliance and fair burden-sharing” (Coalition Agreement, 2021, p. 146).

The new government’s objectives address security priorities which earlier strategic documents and government declarations have similarly emphasised, including regional and thematic priorities, such as the end to the destabilisation of Ukraine by Russia, the implementation of the Minsk Agreement, the global climate crisis, cybersecurity, transnational terrorism, weapons proliferation and control, migration, etc. What is notable, however, is that the new coalition government also emphasises—perhaps more than ever before—the increasing polarisation in world order and the need to stand up for universal values, including human rights. To this end it points to an increasing systemic rivalry with authoritarian regimes and the need to express strategic solidarity with democratic partners (Ibid., 143).

2.6.3 Most Important Foreign Policy Actions

Germany is contributing to several ongoing international EU-, NATO- and UN- led missions in the Western Balkans, Africa, Syria and Iraq. It has ended its engagement in Sudan, Libya and Afghanistan. At present, roughly 2,600 German troops are embedded in international missions. Diplomatically, the Minsk Agreement (2015), signed by Russia, Ukraine, France and Germany



has been heralded as a major diplomatic contribution for potential peace in Eastern Ukraine. It foresees the de-escalation of the Eastern Ukrainian region. The armistice between Russian separatists and Ukraine is to be monitored by an OSCE contact group and mission. The implementation of the Minsk Agreement was time and again addressed by Germany as an obligation for Russia (Coalition Agreement, 2021).

Germany has also been engaged in negotiations with Iran, along with China, France, Russia, the UK, the US and the EU to find solutions to the potential threats of the Iranian nuclear programme. The final agreement in 2015 (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) oversaw the lifting of international sanctions if Iran reduced its nuclear facilities and accepted conditions of an additional protocol. In 2018, the US withdrew from the agreement and Iran re-started efforts to invest in nuclear enrichment. In the meantime, negotiations to revive the implementation of the agreement have been re-entered. The new German government underlines that it awaits a “swift conclusion of the nuclear negotiations with Iran” and the implementation of the agreements by all the signatory states” (Coalition Agreement, 2021, p. 155).

2.7 Greece

2.7.1 Security and Geopolitical Environment

Since the beginning of the Cold War, and with its accession to NATO in 1952, Greece has maintained a rather consistent foreign policy orientation that has been pro-Western and supportive of the Western security architecture in Europe and the Mediterranean. This orientation was further consolidated when Greece became a full MS of the European Communities in 1981. Greek foreign policy has been rather isolationist and reliant on external actors for most of its history, despite the openings that it made to the Arab World during the latter half of the Cold War. Moreover, it often struggled to reconcile its Western identity with its near Eastern geographical position and experience. After the end of the Cold War, Greek foreign policy emerged as more outward and pro-active, both regionally and in its relations with actors like the EU and the US.

What defined Greece’s foreign policy choices and threat perceptions to a large extent were its troubled relations with Turkey. From the 1950s and 1960s, Greek-Turkish relations began to deteriorate, not least because of developments in Cyprus. The military coup of the Greek junta (1967–1974) and Greek Cypriot nationalists against the Cypriot government of Archbishop Makarios III, and the subsequent Turkish invasion of Cyprus, were decisive in shifting the pattern of Greek-Turkish relations towards enmity. The two states were and remain NATO allies, but they face significant bilateral problems, the most salient of which are the Cyprus Problem and the Aegean dispute. The dispute over the Aegean encompasses issues of sovereignty, territorial waters, national airspace and maritime zones (continental shelf and exclusive economic zone, EEZ).



2.7.2 Main Goals and Priorities

These two Turkey-related issues along with Athens' traditional interest in the Arab World have been the main areas of concern in Greece's strategic environment. However, the 21st century brought about new challenges: an international system that transitioned towards multipolarity, new geopolitical dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean as Turkey adopted a more assertive foreign policy and the Arab Spring revolts broke out, and new natural gas discoveries that contributed to the new regional order.

Today, Greece's main objectives remain centred around two main issues: the Greek-Turkish dispute and its regional implications, and Greece's role as a Western partner in the broader region of the Eastern Mediterranean. These priorities are evident in the foreign policy issues listed and elaborated on the *website of the Greek Foreign Ministry* (Foreign Policy Issues, n.d.) and in various statements made by Greek officials such as the Foreign Minister (Dendias, 2021).

However, a third issue is Greece's efforts to become a more independent and proactive actor with an agenda-setting role in the new security architecture and networks of cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean (Tziarras, 2021). This constitutes a break from Greece's traditional foreign policy orientation and points to a country with growing aspirations regarding its regional and international role. As Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis put it in a 2021 speech, "the historic change of our country's image – a powerful country that looks towards the future with optimism and confidence – passes [...] through the work that we have done" (Mitsotakis, 2021). What remains to be seen is whether this is a lasting or ephemeral change given that it is mostly a product of responses to geopolitical changes and challenges.

2.7.3 Most Important Foreign Policy Actions

Despite these new developments, and although it is a NATO and EU MS as well as a strong Balkan and Mediterranean country, *Greece does not yet have a national security strategy*. It has however been reported that such a document (National Security Policy, NSP) is soon to be published. The task has been undertaken by the national security adviser to the Prime Minister. The drafting of the policy has been approved by the Council for Foreign Affairs and Defence (KYSEA) (Nedos, 2021), which has been the highest decision-making body on foreign policy and defence issues in Greece since its establishment in 1986. KYSEA participants consist of the Prime Minister who heads the body, key Ministries and the Chief of the General Staff. It is expected that the new NSS will focus on the challenges posed by Turkey and the strategic environment of the Eastern Mediterranean (including important issues such as the Libya conflict), which demonstrates once again the country's foreign policy priorities (Nedos, 2021). Together with the NSS, Greece is also expected to create a National Security Council after many years of political and academic debates on the issue. Another institution that deals with foreign affairs is the National Council on Foreign Policy, which was established in 2003. It functions as an advisory body to the government and briefs the parliament on foreign policy developments. Its operation is, however, *ad hoc* and discussions within it mainly focus on



“topical issues of concern to the country’s foreign policy at any given time” (National Council on Foreign Policy, n.d.).

In the context of a new activism abroad and efforts for a new institutional framework domestically, Athens has been trying to find a solution to the bilateral disputes with Turkey based on international law and apply pressure on Ankara through various diplomatic means. At the same time, it has been pursuing an enhanced regional importance for NATO, the US (US Department of State, 2021) and the EU, especially in the context of Turkey’s deteriorating relations with these actors.

Together with Cyprus, Greece has had an active part in the diplomacy of trilateral partnerships in the Eastern Mediterranean, trying to enhance regional cooperation – not least through participation in the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) – and settle open issues such as the delimitation of its maritime zones with Italy and Egypt. Moreover, Athens made new openings to the Balkans agreeing, for example, to refer the delimitation of its EEZ with Albania to the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

Overall, this activity serves its aforementioned objectives and complements its relationship with and role for the EU. However, just like Cyprus, Greece’s policies, particularly vis-à-vis Turkey, often stumble on other EU interests as most EU MS do not share Greece’s threat perceptions of Turkey. This is reflected in the ongoing discussion about the EU’s Strategic Compass, where Turkey, despite Greece’s desire, does not yet feature as a challenge or a threat.

2.8 Hungary

The Hungarian government has updated its *National Security Strategy* (NSS) and its *Military Strategies* in 2020 and 2021 respectively, in line with the changes in the global environment. It still considers NATO as the cornerstone of its security, and it credits its membership of the EU as a helpful tool to protect its national interests. Hungary sees its geographical location, close to the Southern and Eastern neighbourhoods, as an opportune but also volatile position.

The government, in its strategic documents, provides a reasonable analysis of the global environment and current threats, but it does not name Russia or China as the emerging power challengers. On the other hand, it does include “some NGOs” among non-state actors that threaten security. In addition, there is no explicit mention of the notions of European strategic autonomy nor of NATO’s strategic concept or discussions as part of NATO 2030.

2.8.1 Security and Geopolitical Environment

The new global challenges, according to Hungary’s NSS, titled “A Secure Hungary in a Volatile World”, are based on the emerging multipolar world order and the changing face of security challenges connected to the acceleration of climate change and demographic change. For Hungary, these affect and are closely related to “illegal and mass migration, the depletion of natural resources and the society-shaping effects of the technological revolution” (The



Government of Hungary, 2020, p. 1). In addition, Hungary sees the Western Balkan region as fragmented and volatile, directly posing a security challenge for the country.

Studying the language of governmental documents, there is a notable focus placed on Hungarian values, and the country's unique language and culture—the Hungarian nation. Its national sovereignty is unquestionable and any attempts to “impose the compulsory resettlement of stateless persons or foreign nationals” (The Government of Hungary, 2020, p. 2) is considered unacceptable. To this end, Hungary places attention on resolving the mass migration flows by addressing the global challenges that trigger the flows (e.g. lack of drinking water, global warming, increase of unstable states/failed states, etc.) (The Government of Hungary, 2020, p. 6).

There is a direct link between Hungary's foreign and security priorities and the field of energy. Similar to other EU MS, Hungary is also highly dependent on imported natural gas supplies (80%) (The Government of Hungary, 2020, p. 5). Notably, Hungary pursues and will continue to pursue diversification through nuclear energy.

In Hungary's strategic documents the negative demographic trends in the country are included among the security challenges. These are proposed to be dealt with through a combination of national policies to promote “responsible parenthood” and by improving general health, as well as the use of mechanisation, automation and artificial intelligence in different processes (The Government of Hungary, 2020, p. 22). Finally, Hungary also links security policy to technology. Especially pertinent is the connection to developing domestic R&D structures in defence and cyber capabilities (The Government of Hungary, 2020, p. 18).

2.8.2 Main Goals and Priorities

The strategic Hungarian documents state the country's main priorities as: (1) security and stability of Hungary, Central Europe, neighbouring countries (especially Western Balkans and Ukraine) and the Euro-Atlantic and European area; (2) the protection of the fundamental rights of Hungarians living beyond the borders understood as an integral part of Hungary's national security; (3) the protection and security of Christian communities; (4) the interest in the security and stability of the Middle East and North Africa, the Sahel and Central Asia to mitigate migration challenges; (5) the goal of making CFSP and CSDP more effective and autonomous while staying complementary to NATO's activities; (6) the accession of the Western Balkans into the EU as a tool to secure the region; (7) the development of a multinational response capability against hybrid warfare at national level, and in particular, in the EU and NATO. Hungary is open in principle to increased defence budgets and a future European defence force, but only if EU MS find a solid and unanimous agreement.

Hungary has set the goal to be one of the five safest countries in Europe and one of the ten safest in the world by 2030 (The Government of Hungary, 2020, p. 2). To accomplish such a goal, an emphasis is placed on building a regionally dominant military force based on “an exportable domestic defence industry” (The Government of Hungary, 2020, p. 5). An analysis of Hungary's capabilities reveals that it can respond to security challenges primarily through



international cooperation. However, from 2024, Hungary will commit 2% of its GDP for military spending, in accordance with the NATO pledge (The Government of Hungary, 2020, p. 4, The Government of Hungary, 2021, p. 5084). At present, Hungary spends 1.6% of GDP on military (The World Bank, 2020).

Hungary considers its defence forces as one of the most important instruments for the implementation of its foreign policy. While there is a resolve in building a domestic defence industry, the Hungarian government does not see much space for growth given the current European defence industry market. Instead, the government is concentrating on strategic research and development. Currently, Hungary spends 20% of its defence budget on modernisation (The Government of Hungary, 2021, p. 5084).

2.8.3 International Organisations and Informal Arrangements

NATO continues to be regarded as the cornerstone of Hungary's security. While the EU is supported so long as it respects the sovereignty of its MS and enjoys their unanimous support, it can improve the continent's global competitiveness. Special emphasis is placed on the veto right of each MS in most decisions relating to European foreign and security policy. Nevertheless, regarding security threats, the strategic documents present NATO and the EU as primary actors. In addition, Hungary sees the OSCE as a contributor to its security. In 2020 Hungary participated in an observer's mission to Ukraine (Transcarphatia), where a large Hungarian minority lives (Szijjártó, 2020a; Szijjártó, 2020b). As the government perceives migration as a significant long-term security threat there is an openness for Hungary to be involved in operations and missions in the regions identified as the source of the problem.

Hungary places great importance on participating in or even leading regional multinational formats and capability development initiatives (National Security Strategy, 2020, p. 8, National Military Strategy 2021, pp. 5083, 5087). It sees the Visegrad Four cooperation as the "strongest and most effective alliance of the European Union" (Szijjártó, 2020b, p. 12). Hungary, therefore, pursues even closer cooperation and integration in the Central European region. One way is through the establishment of a Regional Special Operations Command and a Central European Division Command with regional partners.

On a bilateral basis, relations with Germany hold a prominent place in Hungary's foreign and security policy. Significant importance is also placed on relations with Poland, which Hungary views as its primary Central European partner with whom it can coordinate European policy actions (The Government of Hungary, 2020, p. 14). Moreover, Hungary refers to the importance of the US-EU relationship, rather than bilateral relations between Hungary and the US. However, the strategic documents also discuss the potential for more intense relations with Turkey, described as a "dynamic regional player and NATO ally" (The Government of Hungary, 2020, pp. 14–15).

In regard to Russia, Hungary struggles to clarify and formalise its stance. While it re-affirms its commitment to NATO and to the EU, the government calls for pragmatic bilateral relations with Russia, including economic cooperation. Similarly, there is an attempt to separate military and



defence developments in China, seen as troublesome, from its investment potential for Hungary. China is characterised in strategic documents as “a centre of civilisation” (The Government of Hungary, 2020, p. 16) and “a crucial strategic partner” (Orban, 2021). Hungary pursues an open trade and investment policy with China, resisting calls from EU institutions and other MS for a more restrictive policy.

2.9 Italy

2.9.1 Security and Geopolitical Environment

Italy’s strategic documents indicate an overall geopolitical context characterised by significant and complex changes (Ministerio della Difesa, 2021a). At the same time, the country is seen as deeply embedded in an interdependent and highly complex web of international relations. Italy’s geographical position and dependence on foreign countries for the supply of resources are key elements of its assessment (Ministerio della Difesa, 2015). Italy’s most recent comprehensive strategic document, its *White Paper for International Security and Defence*, dates back to 2015. It highlights two concomitant geopolitical phenomena: globalisation and interconnections, and fragmentation and destabilisation. In this scenario of global power rivalry, conflicts and crises are seen to arise from different factors: demographic changes, lack of human resources, widespread access to technologies, scarcity of natural resources and climate change, globalisation of financial resources and flows, amongst others (Ministerio della Difesa, 2015, pp. 22–25).

While the fight against terrorism is still a major component of Italy’s strategic view, more recent documents also highlight the increasingly assertive posturing of countries like China and Russia, which “openly question assumptions of shared security” (Ministerio della Difesa, 2021a, p. 3). The current geopolitical environment also implies renewed military competition between states in traditional as well as new fields such as cybernetics and space. The complexity and multiplicity of threats also includes hybrid and proxy warfare, information and media.

2.9.2 Main Goals and Priorities

Italy’s geopolitical assessment focuses on two priority regions: The Euro-Atlantic and the Euro-Mediterranean. The former is considered a “pillar of global equilibrium” (Ministerio della Difesa, 2015, p. 26) and a focus of national interest that is anchored on common values and democratic beliefs. The Euro-Atlantic is also a key geoeconomic area for the country, which sees a high share of Italian international trade as well as industrial and technological interdependency. For Italy, a peaceful multilateral system is anchored in the EU, NATO and the UN (Ministerio della Difesa, 2021b). While Italy supports European strategic autonomy, it maintains that the enhancement of the EU’s role in defence must happen in strict complementarity with NATO. The country supports close EU-NATO cooperation in areas such as military mobility, hybrid threats, cybersecurity and policies towards the European neighbourhoods, in particular the Mediterranean (Pioppi, 2021). In the Euro-Atlantic region, “[...]”



improving the EU's defence capabilities will contribute to strengthening the transatlantic relationship" (Guerini, 2021).

The second focus region is the Euro-Mediterranean, comprised of five areas (i.e. EU MS, the Balkans, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean area of the Middle East and the Maghreb), interlinked by the Mediterranean Basin. Particularly in this area, the rise of transnational actors linked to terrorism and criminal activities poses a threat that redefines the traditional conceptualisation of security and defence, merging internal and external dynamics. While the White Paper argues that a stable and effective regional security system in the Euro-Mediterranean is unachievable in the short term, it also sustains that Italy should "assume more responsibility" to resolve the region's multiple crises. The region is also an "open system" influenced by adjacent areas: the Mashreq to the East; the Sahel to the South; the Horn of Africa as an area of traditional Italian presence; and the Persian Gulf as a supplier of resources and key geographical location. Reflecting this open system assessment, the *Multiannual Defence Programme* of 2021 (Ministerio della Difesa, 2021a) elaborates on the concept of "Wider Mediterranean" as a key area of national interest. Stability and development in these areas are of fundamental importance to Italian security.

The stability of the Sahel, understood to be plagued by international terrorism and jihadism (Ministerio della Difesa, 2021a), has become a central priority for Italy. The (in)stability of the Sahel impacts the security situation in the Mediterranean to the extent that the Italian defence minister has recently portrayed the region as "the true southern border of Europe" (Ministerio della Difesa, 2022). In the broader MENA region, the *Multiannual Defence Programme* paints a complex web of bilateral and multilateral Italian relationships, including military and assistance missions countries such as Tunisia, Libya and Djibouti. (Ministerio della Difesa, 2021a) With a rediscovered Mediterranean vocation (Berti, 2021), Italy's Foreign Affairs Ministry has hosted, since 2015, high-level level Mediterranean Dialogues, promoting a positive agenda for the region.

Beyond the actors of the immediate neighbourhood, relations with Russia also have gained importance in light of recent events. In its policy towards Libya and the wider Mediterranean, Italy notes a growing Russian presence via proxy warfare and enhanced maritime capabilities (Battagli, 2022). Moreover, Italy has developed a more active diplomatic strategy towards the crisis in Ukraine and the Russian military build-up. Within the context of NATO, Italy contributes to the Alliance's Enhanced Forward Presence in Latvia.

Underpinned by this assessment, the country's military forces have four main missions, all of which relate to the country's overall priorities: (a) territorial defence and defence of the vital interests of the nation, including lines of critical infrastructure, lines of communication and the safety of Italian citizens living abroad; (b) security of the Euro-Atlantic area; (c) contribution to the management of international crisis in the framework of international organisations; and (d) safeguarding of free institutions and specific tasks in cases of catastrophes. All of those missions are themselves linked to the current needs originating from asymmetrical and hybrid warfare, such as terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. Key documents also point to the extension of traditional concepts of defence and security in order to include priorities in the



fields of economics, development, finance and social affairs – connecting internal and external security.

2.9.3 Most Important Foreign Policy Actions

In 2021, Italy redesigned its cybersecurity architecture with the establishment of the National Cybersecurity Agency (CAN). A few weeks later, CAN and the Department for Digital Transformation published a Cloud Strategy Italia with the goal of ensuring reliable and efficient cloud infrastructure. (National Cybersecurity Agency & Department for Digital Transformation, 2021). In the field of technology and 5G in particular, Italy attempts to strike a balance between security demands and its economic ties with China (Ghiretti, n.d., p. 54).

Following the exit of the UK from the EU and the more proactive direction of the Italian government in international affairs (Darnis, 2021), Italy finds a renewed leading role in the process of the EU's strategic thinking alongside large players such as Germany and France. Italy seeks to strengthen relations with both countries (Ministerio della Difesa, 2022) for cooperation in areas such as the European defence industry and a joint policy towards the Eastern Mediterranean and Sahel (Ministerio della Difesa, 2021b). In November 2021, Italy signed the Treaty of Quirinale with France, which foresees a deepening of defence relations with a Franco-Italian Security and Defence Council (2+2 format with foreign and defence ministers) and synergies in operational capabilities such as aeronaval groups (Alcaro, 2021; France & Italy, 2021).

2.10 Ireland

The *Defence White Paper of 2019* (Department of Defence, 2019) and National Cybersecurity Strategy (Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, 2019), together with the *2020 Irish Defence Forces Annual Reviews* (Department of Defence, 2021) and *2020 Government Agreement* (Department of Taoiseach, 2020) provide a thorough analysis of the broad security threats and challenges facing Ireland. As a militarily non-aligned country, Ireland emphasises the role of the EU and the UN, while acknowledging the increasing need to broaden relationships in and outside the EU context following Brexit (Department of Defence, 2019; Department of Taoiseach, 2020).

Instead of focusing on specific states as direct threats to Ireland, the Irish foreign and security focus is on the maintenance of the Good Friday Agreement as well as of the rules-based multilateral order, and on addressing “broad security challenges”. (Department of Defence, 2019, p. 12; Department of Taoiseach, 2020, pp. 110–114). To this end, the lack of clear military strategy and severely limited defence force capabilities continue to underpin the Irish preference for participating in UN- and EU-led crisis management operations. The decision-makers agree that the Irish Defence Forces significantly lack the capabilities and resources for national defence. Ireland relies on its strategic location and diplomacy to ensure external, mostly UN assistance, in the case of a direct military threat (Department of Defence, 2019; Department of Foreign Affairs, 2021).



2.10.1 Main Goals and Priorities

The Defence White Paper, the *Irish Department of Foreign Affairs 2021–2023 Strategy*, and the 2020 Government Agreement make it clear that maintenance of global peace and security and the continued development of and participation in the EU's CSDP are key objectives of the Irish foreign and security policy (Department of Defence, 2019; Department of Foreign Affairs, 2021c; Department of Taoiseach, 2020).

To this end the Irish military forces are to continue their active participation in UN- and EU-led crisis management operations. The main priority for the Irish defence forces is the continued development of expeditionary capabilities for both military and civilian crisis management units for UN and EU-led operations.

The presence of major global digital companies such as Meta (formerly Facebook), Google and Apple in Dublin and emerging cyber threats, both domestically and globally, have raised the salience of cybersecurity issues in Ireland. As it is estimated that 30% of all EU data travels through Ireland, cybersecurity has become a focus for both Irish domestic and foreign policies (Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, 2019). Even while the spring 2021 cyberattacks on national health services were attributed to Russian government-linked actors, the responses have mostly been framed as a domestic security and law enforcement issue, instead of as a defence or foreign policy one.

As potential responses, Ireland emphasises the need for continued support to multilateral negotiations and institutions, together with developing domestic civilian defensive cyber-capabilities, with the support of military forces, to protect the Irish interests, state and society (Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, 2019; Department of Defence, 2019). Overall, both the focus on climate change and on the cyber domain demonstrate the Irish prioritisation of domestic security, where the military adopts a supporting role, working with domestic agencies, such as law enforcement and communications.

Active Irish participation in the EU remains a significant part of the Irish security policy (Department of Defence, 2019) as the current Taoiseach remarked in 2021 that “I very much support the idea of the EU developing greater strategic autonomy” (Micheál, 2021a). However, the current government has also re-iterated that any Irish participation in EU CSDP programmes or missions is contingent on the maintenance of Irish ‘military non-alignment’ (Department of Taoiseach, 2020) and subsequent debates in the Lower House of Parliament. (Department of Taoiseach, 2020; Murphy & Coveney, 2018). This, together with continued criticism by the political opposition, a lack of political leadership and very limited resources means that Irish engagement and participation in the EU CSDP are very limited.

Another challenge for Irish foreign and security policy is that its defence and security is the EU's smallest defence budget of €1.0bn (0,3% of the GDP) (Fiott & Zeiss, 2021). There is also very limited appetite for any discussion on the defence and security policies amongst decision-makers and in public. The small budget places significant limits on Irish defence capabilities and resources, especially when coupled with aging resources and vehicle fleets across all



branches. The military also faces significant problems in staffing, personnel retention and morale stemming from poor human resources management, a total lack of engagement on defence and security issues and the lack of any clear strategic vision (Tonra, 2021; Department of Defence, 2021).

Overall, the main goals of Irish defence and security policy seem to be to support domestic actors (i.e. 'Aid to civilian power'), continue prioritising crisis management and "global maintenance of peace and security", either through UN- or EU-led missions (Tonra, 2021; Department of Defence, 2019).

2.10.2 International Organisations and Informal Arrangements

"Membership of the UN is a cornerstone of Irish foreign policy." (Department of Taoiseach, 2020, p. 113). Ireland maintains a long-standing tradition of active participation in UN peacekeeping missions. In addition to being a significant part of its self-identity, "Ireland's contributions to international crisis management operations, help shape policy and security outcomes with the goal of advancing our values and interests [...]." (Department of Defence, 2019, p. 74). The Irish seat in the UNSC for 2021–2022 is seen as a major diplomatic achievement, but detached from the security and defence policy all-together, apart from the realm of crisis management.

As Ireland is not a NATO Member, its engagement with the organisation is notably limited. Even though Ireland has in the past participated in NATO-led operations, such as KFOR in Kosovo, this only happened when operations were mandated by the UNSC. Irish engagement with NATO beyond the Partnership for Peace is practically non-existent and is domestically controversial. Ireland is a Member of the OSCE, with a stated aim of increasing its engagement with the organisation, as the non-military nature of the OSCE makes the organisation more appealing from the Irish perspective (Department of Taoiseach, 2020, p. 111).

Following Brexit, Ireland has informally sought to strengthen its partnerships on bilateral and multilateral levels. Bilaterally, Ireland has made it clear that it seeks closer cooperation at the European and international levels with France, but for the most part the envisioned engagement with France is dedicated to research, culture, education and cross-cultural interactions. While defence is discussed in the document, there is limited enthusiasm on the Irish side for any meaningful commitment on defence and security issues. Ireland does not take part in any French-led defence initiatives or projects such as the EI2 (Micheál, 2021d; Department of Foreign Affairs, 2021b).

Multilaterally, Ireland's post-Brexit adjustment in the EU is reflected in emerging informal partnerships. In April 2018, during the initial stage of negotiations on the new EU budget for 2021–2029, Foreign Minister Simon Coveney noted the importance of a new partnership between the Netherlands, Ireland, the Baltic and Nordic EU MS (so-called "New Hanseatic League") that could also yield joint examination of foreign policy (Coveney, 2018; Department of Foreign Affairs, 2021a).



2.10.3 Relations with Non-EU Countries

Ireland acknowledged in 2019 the need for transatlantic partnerships whilst “*taking account of new geopolitical realities*”, (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2019) but it does not include defence or security cooperation. Instead, the foreign policy priority has since Brexit been to maintain good relations and to ensure that the Good Friday Agreement holds. This is indicative of generally non-existing security and defence relations with the US, despite allowing un-armed US planes, including military ones, to utilise the Shannon airport for logistical purposes (Micheál, 2021f).

The Irish relationship with the UK following Brexit in security and defence matters has deteriorated, along with all other policy areas (Tonra, 2021). The two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2015 on defence and security cooperation, but its future is still unclear as many of its provisions assume that both parties are EU MS. Domestic institutions and policymakers broadly agree that outside the direct partnerships with the UK, the issues of the Northern Ireland border and the fate of the Good Friday Agreement constitute the most pressing potential domestic security threats to Ireland (Department of Defence, 2019; Department of Foreign Affairs, 2021c). Potential instability in Northern Ireland and an erosion of the Good Friday Agreement can lead to an increase in organised crime and domestic terrorism activity also in Ireland (Department of Defence, 2019).

2.11 Poland

Despite recent polarisation in Poland, the perception of national security still enjoys some degree of cross-political consensus. Poland continues to focus on the threat from Russia. Warsaw is one of the most consistent defence spenders in NATO and it prioritises the traditional defence role of the Alliance. Warsaw works towards boosting the Alliance’s presence at its Eastern flank and retains a strong security relationship with the US. On all these matters there are no meaningful divisions between the main political forces in Poland.

2.11.1 Security and Geopolitical Environment

The *National Security Strategy* (NSS), published in 2020, makes it clear that Poland’s security environment has deteriorated in recent years (National Security Bureau, 2020). The key culprit responsible for the growing instability and the weakening of the regional order is, according to this document, Russia. Russia is characterised as an aggressive ‘neo-imperial power’ (as described in the NSS) waging wars on Georgia and Ukraine and meddling in domestic affairs in Moldova. The boosting by Russia of the A2AD capabilities and the stationing nuclear forces in Poland’s direct vicinity in the Baltic region and the Kaliningrad enclave is also viewed as a major threat to national security. Finally, Russia’s hybrid warfare activities, including cyberattacks, information warfare and espionage are named in Poland’s strategic documents as constituting a major threat that could become a seed for armed conflict.

All major relevant documents identify the transatlantic bond as the cornerstone of national security (National Security Bureau, 2020). The perceived weakening of the bond is therefore



described as one of the central threats to the country. The NSS, which is the product of the President's office, blames this development on the EU while notably refraining to mention the role of the Trump Administration. Conversely, the opposition tends to characterise the Trump Administration as the impetus to the weakening of bonds but is similarly critical of the EU's drive for strategic autonomy.

Strategic documents highlight the role of energy security as Poland's proverbial Achilles' heel. The challenge here is two-fold. First, Poland's continuing dependence on Russian gas, which, according to documents, is only likely to grow with the completion of the Russo-German NordStream2 project. Second, Poland's dependence on coal for energy generation, which will become increasingly unaffordable as the EU moves forward with the implementation of its climate neutrality goals. Therefore, the transition to alternative sources of energy in Poland will be extremely expensive since, at present, 70% of its power generation comes from coal.

Other challenges named in the strategic documents include the weakening of the international norms system and the growing risks of proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. The impact of epidemics, militarised new technology and climate change are also named in strategic documents as sources of instability. The non-traditional security aspect that has gained more prominence is demography. Poland's population is rapidly ageing whilst the pension and health care systems are not keeping up at pace.

2.11.2 Main Goals and Priorities

The NSS (National Security Bureau, 2020) names four key priorities: (1) safeguarding national independence and sovereignty; (2) shaping the international order so it is conducive with national security; (3) strengthening national identity and heritage; and (4) creating an environment favourable to sustainable development.

Naming the priorities in this order needs to be viewed against the background of Poland's current political context, in which the party of government drives the sovereignty narrative. It is, for example, unlikely that a different government would have identified the 'strengthening of national identity and heritage' amongst its top security goals and interests. The measures that this and other documents identify as ways of protecting national independence include boosting defence spending, modernising the armed forces, strengthening NATO's Eastern flank and working closely with the US and regional partners.

2.11.3 Most Important Foreign Policy Actions

Poland's top foreign policy partner has consistently been the US. In 2017, President Donald Trump chose to deliver his first major foreign policy speech in Warsaw (Trump, 2017). Following the 2016 NATO summit in Warsaw, Poland has been hosting a US-led NATO battle Group, the size of a battalion, in Orzysz. In 2019 Poland and the US completed an Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement. Currently, Poland hosts 4,500 US troops on its territory. The US is also building part of its missile defence installation in Poland. Since the election of Joseph Biden, the relationship with the US lost some of its familiarity and confidence but



functional cooperation in the realm of security remains. The privileged nature of the relationship with the US is emphasised in all strategic documents of the current and former governments.

The current government is largely isolated in the EU context, mainly due to its violations of the rule of law. Although Poland enjoys very close economic relations with Germany – in recent years taking over the UK and Italy to become Germany's 5th most important trade partner – in the sphere of politics the current government de-prioritises relations with Berlin, which is hardly mentioned in strategic documents. At the same time, the government refocused the attention to the region by setting up the Three Seas Initiative (TSI) and Bucharest 9 (Duda, 2018; Presidency, 2019). Both formats are the signature foreign policy initiatives of the Law and Justice government and are named as such in strategic documents. Most recently, Poland also strengthened relations with Turkey, where it made a major purchase of drones for its armed forces.

Poland continues to serve as home to the EU Frontex Agency. However, as of now, Poland failed to request Frontex's cooperation in addressing the migration crisis at its border with Belarus. In the past, Poland was one of the main European contributors to the US mission in Iraq and NATO's ISAF mission in Afghanistan. Currently, Poland maintains a smaller scale presence in eight overseas missions around the world (NATO, EU and UN), with its overall contribution being at the level of 1400 troops.

2.11.4 International Organisations and Informal Arrangements

Poland is a committed Atlanticist and is a strong supporter of NATO. Poland has been spending 2% of its GDP on defence from 2018 onward and prior to that it was spending no less than 1,9% annually (SIPRI, 2021). According to the NSS Poland will be spending 2.5% on defence by 2024 (National Security Bureau, 2020, p. 18). In addition to smaller scale missions, Warsaw is the main contributor to NATO's Baltic air policing missions.

While Poland's population is among the most pro-European, the current Polish government is rather Eurosceptic. Official documents are critical of European federalism and advocate an approach, labelled as euro-realism, which refers to the Gaullist notion of 'Europe of nations' and the sacrosanct principle of state sovereignty. At the heart of this approach is the conflict with the EU's institutions over the rule of law and the government's denial that the EU has the legal authority to interfere with and criticise the standards that exist in Poland.

Following the change of government in autumn 2015 Poland de-prioritised relations with Germany and France, which resulted in the near death of the Weimar Triangle (although the format is still mentioned in documents). Instead, the government attempted to strengthen Poland's role in the region. This was largely unsuccessful in the context of the Visegrad Four cooperation (Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia), not least because of the internal differences within this grouping. However, as indicated above, Warsaw successfully set up the Three Seas Initiative and the Bucharest 9.



2.12 Slovakia

2.12.1 Security and Geopolitical Environment

The Slovak government has updated its Security Strategy, Defence Strategy and Foreign and European Policy Document in the course of 2021. All three documents provide for an in-depth analysis of the current global and national threats and outline the national goals and priorities.

The 2021 Slovak *Security Strategy* recognises the deterioration of the global security architecture and the complexity and interconnectedness of the threats and challenges the country is facing. Geographically, the ongoing concerns for Slovakia are primarily the military instability in Ukraine and heightening tensions in Western Balkans.

The change of the government in early 2020 has not shifted Slovakia's commitment towards the EU and NATO (Coalition Agreement, 2020). The cornerstone of Slovakia's basic pillar of security policy remains its Euro-Atlantic orientation, which also represents its civilisation, values and geopolitical anchorage (GLOBSEC, 2021).

2.12.2 Main Goals and Priorities

Both the *Security Strategy* (Ministry of Defence, 2021b) and the *Foreign and European Policy Document* (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, 2021) of 2021 identify good neighbourly relations as one of the key priorities, with a special emphasis placed on relations with Ukraine. Bratislava perceives a threat not only in the territorial destabilisation of Ukraine but also in hybrid warfare. In 2021, Slovak President Zuzana Čaputová expressed "deep concerns over ceasefire violations and casualties in Donbas highlighting that further destabilisation would mean a threat to Slovakia's security" (Caputova, 2021a).

The key priority identified in the Security Strategy is Slovakia's relationship with the US (Ministry of Defence, 2021b). Ruling politicians in Slovakia have expressed aspirations for strong bilateral cooperation following the formation of the Biden Administration. Slovakia shares common values with and is bound by a strong historical alliance and commitment to collective defence with the US. The Slovak presidential office expressed positive attitudes towards the new political developments and identified security, democracy, as well as the environment as key priorities of the new transatlantic partnership. Additionally, the Security Strategy outlines Slovakia's strong security interest in maintaining the military presence of the US in Europe.

The next country mentioned in the Security Strategy is Russia, with Moscow being described as the primary security challenge(r) in the transatlantic domain. It is worth mentioning that since its independence, Slovakia's policy towards Russia has been nuanced and significantly influenced by the attitudes of individual governments. Even though relations are currently viewed through the prism of EU membership and especially NATO, Slovakia uses ambiguous language laying out its position towards Russia. For example, the Foreign and European Policy Document highlights that Slovakia's foreign policy will remain based on the search for



intersections of common interests and open dialogue with Russia, while at the same time Bratislava consequently supports the EU's sanctions towards Russia and NATO policy towards Moscow.

With regard to China, Slovakia bases its foreign policy on the position of the EU. Thus, it sees China both as a partner but also as a competitor and strategic rival. The Security Strategy marks a reference to China as promoting its own model of governance and a different understanding of human rights and freedoms, which the Slovak Republic will take into account in its mutual relations.

When it comes to specific policy areas, Slovakia recognises hybrid threats as the forefront of its security perceptions. Both the Security and Defence Strategies contain specific mentions of hybrid threats as an emerging security challenge posed by state and non-state actors (Ministry of Defence, 2021b, 2021a). To address these challenges, several resilience-building measures are in place. These include the strengthening of capacity with regard to public administration and awareness with respect to these threats, improved coordination and detection mechanisms and the use of strategic communication.

One of the key shortcomings identified by the Slovak Minister of Defence is defence spending, which has never reached the intended 2% GDP level. Coupled with the non-implementation of development plans it led to considerable shortcomings in the Armed Forces' capacities and capabilities as well as the deterioration of its Defence Support System. In this light, the Defence Strategy highlights Slovakia's alignment of financial resources with NATO, with the ambition of achieving the 2% GDP level in 2024 coupled with a minimum of 20% of defence spending on major Armed Forces equipment and related research and development.

When it comes to imports, in 2021 the main import partners for machinery and transport equipment included Germany (15%), the Czech Republic (10.8%), China (8.4%) and Russia (5.4%). In this light, the Ministry of Defence sealed a deal procuring UH-60 helicopters from the US, which will reduce Slovakia's dependence on Russian military equipment, create better conditions for meeting the tasks of the Armed Forces and save funds.

2.12.3 International Organisations and Informal Agreements

The Slovak Defence Strategy (Ministry of Defence, 2021a) identifies NATO as the primary framework for defence and sees no better alternative. It also considers the EU's CSDP as an opportunity for enhancing Slovakia's defence. While Slovakia is a strong supporter and contributes to the development of CSDP, it highlights the importance of avoiding duplicities with NATO.

Slovakia's contributions to the Alliance have represented training missions in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as participation in NATO's multinational battlegroup in Latvia. Slovakia currently participates in 18 international missions—9 EU; 3 NATO; 2 UN; and 4 OSCE missions, and altogether deploys 492 soldiers and policemen.



It is worth mentioning the decision of the committee of the National Council on defence and security to expand Slovakia's involvement in the EU maritime mission EUNAVFOR MED IRINI in July 2021 (Office of the Government, 2021). The Defence Strategy of Slovakia emphasises the support of PESCO and meeting the country's obligations, including the generation of military capabilities and the employment of Armed Forces. The Strategy additionally pledges to support strengthening the effectiveness of CFSP and CSDP with the aim of making the EU a more influential actor on the international stage.

Slovakia is a member of the Visegrad Group, within which the countries cooperate on sectoral policies such as economy, infrastructure, energy, digitalisation and innovation. The Foreign and European Policy Document affirms that Slovakia will work on improving the reputation of the format within the EU and on safeguarding common European solutions. In this light, despite being an active member of the format, Bratislava is gradually distancing itself from its Visegrad partners and investing more in the Slavkov/Austerlitz format with Austria and the Czech Republic. The Slovak Minister of Foreign Affairs indicated that the Slavkov format constitutes a very good venue for regional cooperation with the ultimate goal for European solutions and strengthening the European project (Extraplus, 2020).

2.13 Spain

2.13.1 Security and Geopolitical Environment

For over a decade, Spain has consistently produced and updated strategies for external engagement at different levels of government. In the security and defence fields, policy continuity is ensured by the National Security System (Arteaga, 2022). In late 2021, Spain published its new *National Security Strategy* (NSS), the fourth document of this kind in 10 years. It points to a period of transition in the global order that is marked by intense geopolitical competition amongst state actors and by challenges, such as terrorism and cyberattacks, originating from non-state actors. As presented in the 2020 *National Defence Directive*, changes in the global security architecture result in the "erosion of the international order and the unusual prominence of the use of force" (Ministerio de Defensa, 2020). In the 2021 *Strategy for External Action*, change is seen to emanate from "deep fractures": economics and inequality, environmental concerns and climate change, technology and regulation and governance and the pervasive lack of trust (Gobierno de España, 2021a).

In their threat assessment, the key Spanish documents highlight that challenges to national security originate from the interaction of various risks, which should not be analysed independently. Security challenges can originate from climate change and pandemics, which are not directly connected to deliberate action. Digital transformations and climate change are presented as key drivers of change in international affairs, which has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Gobierno de España, 2021b). Hybrid threats as well as technological changes are transversal factors, which are increasingly instrumentalised by state and non-state actors. Hence, the recent strategic documents take into account broad security issues



with a particular focus on disinformation and psychological tactics that spread confusion in public opinion and work against democratic institutions.

Both China and Russia take a prominent place in the Spanish assessment. The Chinese economic expansion, including in the fields of technology, has led to escalating trade tensions while the country seeks to increase its weight in global governance. Russia's assertive position is also seen as a key challenge, which includes the re-establishment of zones of influence, a greater presence in conflicts such as Syria and Libya, and uncertainty vis-à-vis mechanisms like arms control (Gobierno de España, 2021b). Finally, the socio-economic crises and geoeconomic factors such as the US-China turbulent relationship are also seen as contributing to change in international dynamics, from negotiation to competition.

2.13.2 Main Goals and Priorities

Spanish security is determined by the country's European, Mediterranean and Atlantic features. Hence, it supports both stronger European strategic autonomy through CSDP and a strategic revision of NATO strategy that includes collaboration with the EU. The EU should also take on greater responsibilities in crisis management, health, fights against terrorism, cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns. Strengthening the European defence, technological and industrial base is also seen as a priority, which is itself presented in complementarity with NATO and a stronger European component in the Alliance. In multilateral institutions, the objective is to promote effective multilateralism anchored in the EU-UN-NATO triad.

While the geopolitical environment of various regions is assessed in the NSS (i.e. Europe, Maghreb and Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia Pacific), the focus lies primarily on the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Sahel. The NSS puts emphasis on these regions as key areas of strategic competition that see a growing presence of and rivalry among extra-regional powers. A key goal of Spanish defence policy is, therefore, to "contribute to stability and progress in the Mediterranean, North Africa, and the Sahel, combining participation in international initiatives with bilateral agreements, [...] fights against terrorism and the training" (Ministerio de Defensa, 2020, p. 19552).

To the south, priority is given to the relationship with and between Morocco and Algeria, key countries in the supply of energy. The NSS calls for the elaboration of a Security Plan for the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in North Africa. For Sub-Saharan Africa, the strategic documents highlight the security-development nexus and the importance of preventive efforts. Three areas are prioritised: (a) the Sahel and the issues of governance and extremism; (b) the Horn of Africa and its importance for maritime routes; and (c) the Gulf of Guinea with strategic importance for "Spanish interests". In the latter, the priority is given to maritime safety, protection of energy supply and protection of fisheries and of Spanish investment in the region (Amirah Fernández et al., 2021; Gobierno de España, 2021b, p. 167807). Finally, it is worth mentioning that Latin America is also presented as a geographical priority. However, the region figures more prominently in foreign policy strategies, through bilateral partnerships and the established channel of the Ibero-American Conferences, than in security-related documents.



2.13.3 Most Important Foreign Policy Actions

The 2021 NSS presents key priorities for Spain: (1) establish a crisis management model; (2) strengthen the security dimension of the technology sector; and (3) enhance the capacity to detect, prevent and respond to hybrid threats. These priorities also call for the increased resilience of Spanish society. Reflecting their priorities, the strategic documents call for the following actions: (a) a national strategy to fight disinformation campaigns; (b) a dedicated national security component in a Spanish Space Agency as well as a comprehensive economic programme for the aerospace sector; (c) the modernisation of epidemiological surveillance and early warning systems (Iglesias Fraga, 2021); and (d) the overall incorporation of sustainable development goals (Fernandez del Vado, 2022).

Spanish forces are currently involved in various civilian and military operations in the framework of the EU, NATO and the UN. The largest contingents are in EU missions in Bosnia (3,000 military) and Mali (300), the UN mission in Lebanon (600) and the NATO Enhance Forward Presence in Latvia (350). In the enlarged foreign policy field, Spain aims at a significant role in international relations, anchored on the EU, enhanced multilateralism, strategic bilateral relations and a solidarity commitment to sustainable development (Badillo Matos et al., 2021; Gobierno de España, 2021a, pp. 34–36).



3 A Common European Language? Analysing the Member States' Geopolitical and Strategic Thinking

This second part brings forward notable elements of comparison between the case studies and, towards the conclusion, delves into the different conceptualisations of 'gaps' in the study of EU external action and how they can shed light on the analysis of MS' national security strategies. It is worth noting that some countries have yet to develop an NSS or equivalent document (e.g. Cyprus, Greece) to guide and underpin their foreign policy actions while others (e.g. Estonia, Ireland, Spain) have produced a variety of key documents laying down their concepts, strategies and plans of action.

First of all, a look at the EU MS' most recent strategic documents reveals a general convergence in their assessment of issues and challenges of security and defence which have grown in importance. The majority of analysed countries assess their security as indissociable from "broad security" (e.g. Belgium, Spain, Ireland), and sometimes human security (e.g. Finland), the functioning of their societies and the preservation of social practices. Even when countries do not make direct references to broad security, their strategies inevitably engage with the concept by including challenges and perceived threats such as migration and adverse demographic trends (e.g. Hungary, Italy). In parallel, in the same assessments, there is convergence on the high relevance of particular issues such as cybersecurity (e.g. Ireland, Italy, Estonia), demographic trends and migration (e.g. Hungary) and energy (e.g. Poland). These security issues are correlated to the main drivers of international relations and global governance as identified in ENGAGE's deliverable 2.1: technological revolution(s), demographics and climate change and energy.

At the same time, the mapping of the MS' strategic thinking identifies *particular concerns* that are linked to the countries' geographical position, long-term and recent history, and current political context. These issues vary significantly, from the doctrine of necessity in the Cypriot frozen conflict (e.g. Cyprus) to the issue of return of foreign fighters from Syria (e.g. Belgium), passing by the threat of "some NGOs" (e.g. Hungary), the importance of the Good Friday Agreement and non-alignment (e.g. Ireland), the stability in the Western Balkans (e.g. Slovakia, Poland, Hungary), cybersecurity (e.g. Estonia) and nuclear deterrence (e.g. France).

The mapping of MS foreign policy in the areas of security and defence also identifies differences in the *prioritisation of issues and challenges*. The chart below presents a visualisation of these priorities.



Table 1: Priorities of Member States in the Areas of Security and Defence According to the Most Recent Strategic Documents²

Country	Cyber-security	Climate Change	Energy	Migration	Hybrid Warfare	Space	Health	Terrorism	WMDs	Development Nexus	Defence Industry	Crisis Management	Focus issues
Belgium													
Cyprus													Cyprus conflict
Estonia													Russia
Finland													
France													
Germany													
Greece													Turkey
Hungary													
Italy													
Ireland													Non-alignment
Poland													Russia
Slovakia													
Spain													

Source: own elaboration

² Member States often include all of the above areas in their strategic documents. A chart based only on mentions of challenges and issue areas in strategic documents would be counterproductive – most of the boxes would be checked and there would not be useful discrimination amongst countries in the analysis of priorities. Therefore, this chart is based on a qualitative analysis that combines the expertise of this working paper’s contributors with the way that issues are presented in the strategic texts (i.e. number of mentions, order of appearance, importance of the document, etc.).

For certain countries, the state of their *old and new relations with non-EU countries* is seen as crucial to their own security. Russian assertiveness is a key element in the assessment of countries such as Poland and Estonia. Turkey, on the other hand, figures prominently in the strategies of Cyprus and Greece, but also Italy and Spain, as Mediterranean countries. At the same time, it is reasonable to expect that other MS do not attach the same importance to the relationship with these third countries. There can be divergence in the choices of partners and perceptions of threats. While countries like Cyprus and Greece place Turkey as a central challenge in their assessment of the security environment, countries like Poland strengthened their relationships with Ankara, including through weapons deals. Some countries clearly identify Russia as a threat (e.g. Poland, Estonia) while others remain more ambivalent, keeping channels of communication and cooperation open (e.g. Slovakia, Hungary).

Brexit is seen as having a big impact in the EU’s security and geopolitical environments, forcing EU MS to strategically reflect on its consequences. For Ireland, the new relationship with the UK has significantly altered its security landscape, including internal security. While Spain aims at a good relationship with the UK, it makes sure to mention the “anachronistic” situation of Gibraltar. At the same time, Italy sees Brexit also as an opportunity to occupy a more prominent role in European decision making alongside Germany and France.

In terms of the *geographical scope* and reach of their assessment and priorities, it is interesting to note that most EU MS remain focused on their immediate neighbourhoods and adjacent areas. When it comes to security and defence, it is the MS’ own regions or adjacent regions (e.g. East Mediterranean, Nordic Sea, Western Balkans, Sahel, North Africa, etc.) that occupy most of the foreign policy thinking and prioritisation. Geographical proximity is an overwhelming factor for security and defence strategies (Buzan & Waeber, 2003). Even long-term cultural and political ties do not necessarily lead to the prioritisation of regions which are not geographically close. While Spain, for instance, is one of the only analysed MS that offers a few paragraphs on its relationship with Latin America, it does so in a broad assessment of foreign policy, and not in a security and defence framework.

Table 2: Geographical Focus in the Fields of Security and Defence

Country	Focus
Belgium	Southern front: MENA, Sahel, Great Lakes (Africa), West Africa Eastern front: Baltic states, Central Europe
Cyprus	Eastern Mediterranean
Estonia	Eastern Europe and Euro-Atlantic
Finland	Baltic Sea Region
France	Sahel; MENA; North and Eastern Europe; Western Balkans; Asia
Germany	Euro-Atlantic; Western Balkans; Eastern Europe
Greece	Europe and Eastern Mediterranean
Hungary	Central and Eastern Europe; Western Balkans; MENA, Sahel and Central Asia (migration)

Italy	Euro-Atlantic and Euro-Mediterranean - Wider Mediterranean with Sahel, Mashreq, Horn of Africa and Persian Gulf
Ireland	Euro-Atlantic, MENA
Poland	Euro-Atlantic; Eastern Europe
Slovakia	Euro-Atlantic; Eastern Europe; Western Balkans
Spain	Euro-Atlantic; Mediterranean; North Africa; Sahel; West Africa; Horn of Africa

Source: own elaboration

This geographical focus is also valid for fields related to broad security such as migration and, to a certain extent, cybersecurity – even though cyberthreats and disinformation campaigns are less geographically bound. While the strategic documents of the majority of the analysed MS point to China as an emerging systemic rival in a contested world order, most attention is given to their neighbourhood.

The general focus of EU MS on their European geographical neighbourhood and the adjacent regions potentially contrasts with the ongoing strategising process at the European level through the EU's institutions and the accompanying scholarly debate. Reflection at the European level has concentrated prominently on the elaboration of a European Strategy towards the *Indo-Pacific* to where, as most MS would agree, global power is shifting. Germany, France and The Netherlands (Government of The Netherlands, 2020; Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs (France), 2021; The Federal Government (Germany), 2020) have elaborated national strategies towards the region and pushed the EU in the same direction (European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2021).

Transatlantic and European relations are more often than not a key priority for MS in their respective NSS documents. As countries attach importance to the role of transatlantic relations in their own security, they point to NATO (e.g. Belgium, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Italy) as the main vehicle of the partnership in the field of defence. On the one hand, MS point to the effective functioning of the EU as key to their own security (e.g. Belgium, Finland, Spain) and support a larger role for CSDP and the quest for strategic autonomy. On the other hand, the traditional NATO-EU division of labour (i.e. crisis management versus territorial defence) is rarely, if at all, called into question. For EU MS, NATO offers the ultimate defence assurances and deterrence and the benefits of military interoperability and training. It also offers political dialogue through a partnership with non-NATO countries (e.g. Finland). At the same time, NATO is not directly associated with the growing US-China rivalry, and countries tend to emphasise NATO's role in territorial defence in Europe, crisis management in the neighbourhood and interoperability and training.

The mapping of the actions of the MS in the fields of foreign and security policies also shows that there are *growing networks of defence and security* mechanisms. These are formal and informal agreements that go beyond the initiatives by the EU and amongst its MS. These include not only hardcore security arrangements but also networks linked to broad security

concerns and geoeconomics. These initiatives can happen bilaterally, in the smaller regions of which the MS are part, or through existing organisations such as the OSCE, the Nordic Defence Cooperation (e.g. Finland), the Three Seas Initiative and Bucharest 9 (e.g. Poland). The recent signatures of the Treaty of Quirinale (France and Italy) and the updated Elysée Treaty (France and Germany) also point to growing bilateral relations amongst the EU's largest players and renewed commitments in the areas of security, interoperability and defence industry. In their strategies, MS can also place themselves as key actors to facilitate the EU's engagement in particular areas, such as Cyprus and Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean, Italy in the Mediterranean and France in the Sahel. Such a growing network needs to be taken seriously into account. As noted in Finland's strategic documents, the variety of cooperation initiatives generates some uncertainty as to their meaning in practice and may lead to situations where a choice between them should be made. There is also uncertainty with regards to decision-making and the modes of activation of various arrangements.

Convergences and divergences in the foreign policies of the EU MS might create gaps amongst the MS themselves as well as between the MS and the EU. In the literature on EU security and defence, the debate on "gaps" usually refers to the *capability-expectation gap* (Bendiek et al., n.d.; Hill, 1993). On the one hand, there is a usually high expectation regarding what the EU should do and the responsibilities it should have in international affairs. These expectations derive from the Union's own discourse and ambitions set by its documents, but also by the general expert discourse. On the other hand, the capabilities of the EU, both material (e.g. military hardware, equipment, troops, infrastructure, etc.) and political (e.g. decision-making, competences, institutional functioning, know-how, information, etc.), and its power to act and react to issues on challenges of international security were considered to be below the general expectations. Traditionally, more attention was given to bridging the gap by addressing the capabilities side. Recently, initiatives such as the European Defence Fund (EDF), the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and PESCO, are aimed mostly at increasing the EU's capabilities via additional funding and cooperation efforts. More recently still, initiatives such as the Strategic Compass might also be said to focus on the expectation side of the cleavage, with a more clear and common assessment of threats and attempts to find common ground for a feasible EU role in international affairs and security. Such a process of strategising can potentially bring the expectations and goals closer to the actual and potential capabilities.

In order to assess the possibilities of bridging the capability-expectation gap in the EU's external action, it is essential to shed light on potential gaps amongst EU MS and identify divergences or locate "dissent" (Toje, 2008). However, a first look at the mapping of EU MS' foreign policies reveals a *broad agreement* in the way these countries:

- *assess their geopolitical environment* with growing strategic competition between the US and China, a transition in the global order accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the rise of China and renewed Russian aggressiveness, the growing importance of non-state actors, etc.;

- *identify threats* such as the return of conventional use of force, weapons of mass destruction, hybrid threats and internal-external security challenges, terrorism and extremism;
- *prioritise areas and/or engines of change* such as cyberspace, space policy, migration and demographics, climate change, energy policy and strategic resources, humanitarian crisis, (dis)information campaigns, global health, etc.;
- *prioritise geographical spaces* that are close to home, most notably the neighbourhoods to the East and the South and their adjacent areas.

There are, of course, differences in terms of assessment of the strategic environment and threats, of goals and priorities and of how states plan to address challenges. In general, however, the assessment and the prioritisation seen in MS strategic documents match considerably with the most recent statements and strategies of the Union and its representatives (see, for example: Borrell, 2022; European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2021; European Union, 2016). In the Strategic Compass threats analysis, for example, efforts currently focus on issues that are recurrent in MS documents: the slowdown of globalisation, the growing economic rivalry between global powers, climate change and resources, migratory pressures and the ongoing challenges to the multilateral system. The Strategic Compass also discusses threats originating from non-state actors, disruptive technologies, disinformation, hybrid threats and terrorism (European External Action Service, n.d.; Fiott & Lindstrom, 2021; Koenig, 2021; Lazarou, 2021; Sus, 2021; European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2021). The focus of the ongoing discussions is, therefore, in line with what is already expressed in national documents. Hence, the case studies reveal that the gaps amongst MS, and between MS and the EU strategies, are mostly subtle gaps on the nature, size and impact of threats and challenges, on how to address them and, on what issues to prioritise.

Nevertheless, even subtle *gaps might turn into obstacles for cooperation* and effective joint action for at least two reasons. First, there are limited resources, both political and material, available for joint action in areas of European foreign policy. EU MS and institutions are obliged to choose where exactly they place these resources and what the priorities are, potentially leaving the goals and priorities of MS unsatisfied. Should, for example, more attention and resources be devoted to equipping the EU and the MS with tools to deter cyberattacks, or should more resources be invested in cooperation for research and development of conventional weapons for territorial defence? Or is there a need to invest in aircraft carriers in order to maintain credible military capacity in the Asia-Pacific? In a context of limited resources, not all choices are possible and, by consequence, the divergence of interests becomes particularly relevant.

It is worth mentioning, however, that countries tend to portray many issues as “important” or as “priorities” as a rhetorical device in their strategic documents. Hence, an exclusively literal reading of such primary sources would lead to very extensive lists of priorities for each country both in terms of challenges to tackle and regions on which to focus. This reading would lead

to the question: if all potential threats are portrayed as a priority, does it make sense to analyse priorities at all? If every region is important, to where must the efforts be directed? Of course, countries do have hierarchies of issues and areas that they place above others. These originate from the country's geopolitical context, strategic culture, historical trends and relations as well as current government positioning. Therefore, a careful reading is necessary in order to unpack this prioritisation. Oftentimes the key issue or geographical area is presented first in the strategic document or it receives the most extensive analysis. In other documents, the key priorities can be grasped in the executive summaries, document introduction, or forewords by authorities.

Secondly, foreign policy assessments and goals might actually be in opposition to each other. This means that two hypothetical goals cannot be satisfied without negatively affecting each other, even in a scenario of the availability of resources. This can happen, for instance, when a non-EU country is assessed as a significant or existential threat by an EU MS while still being considered as a potential partner or at least a necessary relationship by another EU MS. The potential gaps created by the way in which different EU MS assess and relate to Russia is an example of this particular obstacle. While some consider Russia's assertiveness to be a great challenge or threat, other EU MS remain ambivalent or keep relationships open for energy relations or other reasons. Issues related to broad security, such as diverging views on migration and how to deal with refugees and waves of economic migrants, are also examples of gaps that cannot be easily bridged.

However, national strategic documents rarely, if ever, present explicit red lines for actions and cooperation at the European, bilateral, or international level. Oftentimes, faced with particular security and strategic dilemmas, countries limit themselves to presenting the available choices and aiming at a win-win scenario. Such is the case in the relationship between the EU and its MS, on the one hand, and Russia or China, on the other. In these cases, it is often mentioned that a balance must be struck between the strategic needs (e.g. energy supply in the case of Russia, economic interdependency in the case of China) and the actions meant to address potential threats. The relationship and potential overlaps between the EU and NATO in the areas of security and defence is another topic where countries prefer to aim at a win-win scenario. EU MS often articulate that the enhancement of the EU's security and defence will reinforce NATO's own capabilities in its European component and vice versa.

4 Concluding Remarks

The analysis of EU MS' foreign policy in the area of security and defence reveals a broad convergence in the way that MS assess their geopolitical environment, identify potential threats, and point to important challenges and geographical spaces. In this regard, this working paper shows that there is already a common European language (Agence Europe, 2021) on security and defence and a base on which to build a strategic culture (Zandee & Kurijver, 2019). But the exercise of mapping and analysing the foreign policy of MS also reveals gaps in and between countries and the strategising processes of the EU. These gaps do not necessarily constitute insurmountable obstacles, nor do they prevent joint European action. Therefore, substantive gaps are less important than foreign policymaking and the attitudes of MS towards further integration in security and defence. Gaps can be bridged through concrete actions and patient conversation (Vimont, 2021) so that they do not become areas friction. In parallel, it is crucial to also map and analyse potentially "unbridgeable gaps", particular red lines that indicate how far different MS are willing to go in foreign policy cooperation and what points in their strategic assessment and objectives are non-negotiable. Since red lines are very rarely explicit in NSS and other documents, these obstacles for cooperation and joint action, and specific gaps between the EU strategies and those of the MS, can only be fully grasped through in-depth case studies of (attempted) cooperation. These cases can be specific CSDP missions, CFSP decisions, particular EU strategies and communications towards third parties and regions, etc. The next deliverables of the ENGAGE project will be able to uncover how these subtle gaps reflect in the practice of EU external action.

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