

University of Groningen

Experimental differentiation as an innovative form of cooperation in the European Union

Leruth, Benjamin

Published in:
Contemporary Security Policy

DOI:
[10.1080/13523260.2022.2143890](https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2022.2143890)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2023

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Leruth, B. (2023). Experimental differentiation as an innovative form of cooperation in the European Union: Evidence from the Nordic Battlegroup. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 44(1), 125-149.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2022.2143890>

Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.



Experimental differentiation as an innovative form of cooperation in the European Union: Evidence from the Nordic Battlegroup

Benjamin Leruth

To cite this article: Benjamin Leruth (2023) Experimental differentiation as an innovative form of cooperation in the European Union: Evidence from the Nordic Battlegroup, Contemporary Security Policy, 44:1, 125-149, DOI: [10.1080/13523260.2022.2143890](https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2022.2143890)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2022.2143890>



© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 08 Nov 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 641



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 2 View citing articles [↗](#)



Experimental differentiation as an innovative form of cooperation in the European Union: Evidence from the Nordic Battlegroup

Benjamin Leruth 

Faculty of Arts, University of Groningen, Groningen, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the use of experimental differentiation, a form of small-scale pilot program that aims at testing whether further institutional integration can be bolstered in an area where cooperation has not been tested or proven. Experimental differentiation consists of three features. Firstly, participation should not be constrained by membership in the European Union. Secondly, experimental differentiation should consist of short-term projects. Thirdly, the functional scope of such experiments should be clearly limited to reduce the expected political costs of participation. Empirically, this article focuses on the EU Battlegroups and analyzes how the above-mentioned features drove political actors to support participation. While EU Battlegroups have been criticized for their lack of effective action and the political and financial costs they entail, this article offers a more positive feature, arguing that Battlegroups should be seen as experiments that lead reluctant political actors to consider their cooperation under the EU framework.

KEYWORDS Differentiation; Experimentalist governance; Battlegroups; CSDP; PESCO

Over the past decades, the development of the European Union's (EU) Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) has followed a non-linear process. For instance, some member states' ambitions to scale up military cooperation through the creation of a form of European army had to be scaled down due to fierce political opposition from Eurosceptic actors (Kucera, 2019; Winn, 2003). The establishment of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in 2018 revived ambitions to strengthen the CSDP without forcing reluctant member states to participate in projects that would not match their national interests (see also Martill & Gebhard, 2023). Differentiation is therefore at the core of the CSDP's institutional

CONTACT Benjamin Leruth  b.j.leruth@rug.nl  Faculty of Arts, University of Groningen, Oude Kijk in 't Jatstraat 26, Groningen, 9712 EK, The Netherlands

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

framework, yet until recently it has been largely ignored in the existing literature, especially in light of external and informal processes that take place within and outside the Union (Rieker, 2021a). As discussed in the introduction to this special issue (Amadio Viceré & Sus, 2023), differentiation is a multi-faceted and multi-level phenomenon that not only has implications for the future of EU policy, but also on the relations between states.

Thirteen years before the implementation of PESCO, a low-level program of military cooperation that also relies on differentiation emerged: the so-called European Union Battlegroups. These Battlegroups are small-size military units of a minimum of 1,500 troops, ready to be deployed on short notice to conduct military operations covered under the Petersberg tasks, therefore ranging from humanitarian missions to combat forces in crisis management (European Parliament, 2006; Lindstrom, 2007). Although, to date, the EU Battlegroups have not been deployed and are considered by some scholars and observers as failures that draw significant political and financial costs (Reykers, 2017; Smith, 2016), thirty member and non-member states of the EU agreed to participate in this program between 2005 and 2021. The political willingness to cooperate within and beyond EU borders is therefore non-negligible.

This article focuses on the EU Battlegroups as an empirical application of experimental differentiation, a concept that finds its roots in the notions of experimentalist governance and differentiated cooperation. Experimental differentiation takes the form of small-scale pilot policy programs in areas where cooperation is limited by using differentiated mechanisms of integration for a limited period of time. Ultimately, instances of experimental differentiation can be repeated, abandoned or, if deemed favorable by all actors involved, scaled up. Drawing on the supply and demand model of differentiated integration put forward by Schimmelfennig and Winzen (2020), this contribution focuses on the demand-side of experimental differentiation, by assessing what drives political actors to participate in the EU Battlegroups. The empirical focus of this article is on political parties and government preferences, as these two core political actors drive demand for differentiation—although it should be stated that other actors, such as the general public, non-majoritarian institutions, or civic organizations, can also play a role in shaping a country's (non-)participation in such frameworks. An assessment of the centripetal effects of experimental differentiation is explored by triangulating data from four sources (secondary literature, semi-structured elite interviews, party and government programs, and parliamentary voting). Therefore, recalling the introduction to this special issue this article mostly focuses on the micro level of differentiated cooperation.

This article first offers a brief review of the notion of differentiation, and explains what experimental differentiation effectively entails. It then

elaborates on the EU Battlegroup's origins and objectives. To illustrate how experimental differentiation functions empirically, the article then turns onto the Nordic region as a case study for participation in the EU Battlegroups program: After offering a brief historical overview of cooperation between Nordic countries in the area of security and defense, the analysis focuses on how the decision to participate in the so-called Nordic Battlegroup was made in three countries that have opted for differentiated paths of cooperation with Brussels: Finland, a fully integrated EU member state that was (until the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine) militarily non-aligned; Sweden, a relatively "reluctant" EU member state that de facto opted out of the Eurozone and has a long-standing history of neutrality (also until 2022); and Norway as a non-EU member state, but member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The article concludes by stating that such experimental forms of differentiation can produce significant centripetal effects that can ultimately convince reluctant states to participate in such programs, but only if certain institutional conditions are met. While experimental differentiation succeeded in attracting participation from both member and non-member states and as "upgraded" Battlegroups are being part of the EU's new security and defense strategy (the so-called Strategic Compass unveiled in early 2022), it is concluded that experimental differentiation, as a combination of experimentalist governance and differentiated cooperation, is a concept that may be worth exploring to break new integrationist grounds within and beyond EU borders, for instance within the framework of the new European Political Community.

Differentiation as an experimental tool

Differentiation is best understood as an umbrella term that refers to heterogeneous modes of integration and disintegration in the European Union (Leruth et al., 2022). It serves different goals, ranging from allowing new member states to adapt and implement EU policies (in the case of instrumental differentiation; Schimmelfennig & Winzen, 2014) to taking some member states' diverging preferences or dependence into account by allowing them to opt out of some policies. Although differentiation has become increasingly mainstream since the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty and now affects over half of the Union's policy areas (Leuffen et al., 2022), scholars and practitioners are still divided over the risks and benefits it broadly entails (Leruth et al., 2019). On the one hand, differentiation can solve political deadlocks by allowing states that are willing to deepen their collaboration within the EU framework to do so without being hindered by reluctant states. On the other hand, differentiation fosters dominance by undermining the conditions for democratic self-rule through non-participation or self-exclusion from decision-making bodies (Eriksen, 2018). In

fine, the risks and opportunities created by differentiation significantly vary from one empirical case study to another, depending on its temporal, spatial and functional features.

Schimmelfennig and Winzen (2020) developed a supply and demand model to understand the conditions under which differentiation (or more particularly differentiated *integration*) occurs. According to this model, supply comes from the governments of core integrationist states (an “insider group”) that are willing to accept moves away from uniform integration either by granting opt-outs on an ad-hoc basis, or by making differentiation a core policy feature (as is the case in PESCO’s institutional design for instance). Demands for differentiation, in contrast, come from political actors that do not wish to be members of such an “insider group” in the inner core of the EU, either by seeking specific types of opt-ins (for non-EU member states) or opt-outs (for existing EU member states). While ultimately, demand for differentiation is driven by the governments of these countries, other actors play an important role in shaping this demand, most notably political parties that can either put pressure on governments by acting as “issue owners” (e.g., the UK Independence Party toward the Conservative government before the Brexit vote) or by conditioning their support or participation in the government to their policy preferences, especially in multi-party systems. In some cases, political parties can even impose their preferences by making it domestic policy, as was the case following the initial rejection of the Maastricht Treaty by the Danish population in 1992 (Svensson, 1994). These demands for differentiation, Schimmelfennig and Winzen argue, can be driven by three types of heterogeneities: preference (especially if matters are related to national sovereignty), dependence (especially where there are geographical or environmental criteria that shape public policy), or capacity (be it financial or technological).

In the area of foreign and security policy, differentiation is not a new phenomenon (Rieker, 2021b). It has recently been shaped by the establishment of PESCO, which is a simpler version of the original mechanism of enhanced cooperation: collaboration between EU member states in the area of defense is encouraged, without forcing reluctant states to participate or even vote in favor of the implementation of new measures (De Witte, 2019; Kroll, 2022). While the use of enhanced cooperation has, to date, been quite limited and as the jury is still out to assess the success of PESCO in bolstering defense cooperation (Biscop, 2018; Blockmans & Crosson, 2021), broader mechanisms have been used to test whether cooperation in areas that fall outside of traditional, core EU competences can be fostered by initiating small-scale initiatives, which I conceptualize as experimental (or pilot) forms of differentiation.

Much like differentiation comes in a wide range of forms (most notably multi-speed, multi-tier, and multi-menu, in the words of Schimmelfennig

& Winzen, 2020), experimental differentiation is a type of differentiation that seeks to explore whether cooperation that is limited or non-existent within a specific policy area can occur within the framework of the European institutions between “coalitions of the willing.” It is not only limited to the CSDP, as it can virtually take place across all policy areas, from agriculture to social policy. It constitutes a mix of two concepts in European Public Policy. First, the idea of experimentalist governance put forward by Sabel and Zeitlin (2012, p. 169), which establishes “deliberately provisional frameworks for action and elaborates and revises these in light of recursive review of efforts to implement them in various contexts.” Experimentalist governance implies a certain degree of freedom for member states and lower-level units such as national ministries to implement policies or reach policy goals. It is not to be confused or considered as a mode of differentiation per se as it refers to common goals, but it gives significant leeway to these units with the objective, as hinted in the title of Sabel and Zeitlin’s (2008) seminal article, to “learn from difference.” The second concept that inspires experimental differentiation is differentiated cooperation, according to which integration does not proceed through law, as there is no devolution of discretionary power to EU institutions (see Amadio Viceré & Sus, 2023). Therefore, experimental differentiation should not be understood as a concept that competes or overlaps with existing forms of differentiation, but rather as the combination of two existing concepts that have, to date, been studied separately.

Experimental differentiation relies on the combination of three principles which have been developed inductively from an analysis of party and government preferences on differentiated integration.

Firstly, in order to maximize their potential, these experiments *should not be constrained by EU membership*: Non-member states that wish to cooperate within the EU framework may be invited by Brussels to cooperate in such activities. Non-EU member states that could participate in such activities include, among others, members of the European Neighborhood Policy or the European Economic Area. Importantly, experimental differentiation could prove more effective by relying on pre-existing clusters of countries that cooperate, for instance, in overlapping regional institutions, or that share politico-cultural characteristics that would facilitate small-scale cooperation. This, in turn, implies that heterogeneities of preference and dependence are low between the demanders of experimental differentiation.

Secondly, instances of experimental differentiation *should be limited to short-term actions*, to mitigate risks and the political costs they may entail, especially in policy areas with high levels of politicization. Indeed, while the timing should be long enough to evaluate the effectiveness of these pilots, longer and less flexible timeframes tend to increase the financial and political costs of these actions. This temporal dimension does not

necessarily imply that experimental differentiation consists of one-off initiatives, but that the timeframe under which they effectively operate is limited, with end dates being agreed in advance. If deemed successful, these programs can then be renewed under the same framework, while still being limited in time. This generates low levels of capacity heterogeneity within the demand-group, as it does not require considerable (or even exceptional) investment on their parts.

Thirdly, *the functional and institutional characteristics of these experiments should remain limited*, with the option to expand these should initial programs prove to be successful but require further proofs of concepts. Cooperation can therefore be driven informally (through differentiated cooperation, as explained in the introduction to this special issue) or more formally, while giving as much leeway as possible to let participating states to shape these pilot programs. Ultimately, a positive evaluation of these experiments could lead to structural collaboration between participating states, or an expansion to other countries willing and having the capacity to cooperate. It is by combining these three features which lower heterogeneities within participating countries (the demand-side of differentiation) that experimental differentiation becomes a genuine model for exploring opportunities to deepen institutional cooperation in the future.

Much like other forms of differentiation, experimental differentiation presents a series of strengths, but also weaknesses. It offers a valuable (or even unique) tool to “test” whether differentiation may break the deadlock in terms of deepening cooperation between states in a specific area. Kölliker (2006) was among the first scholars of differentiation to theorize that differentiation creates centripetal effects, incentivizing reluctant states to take part in successful policies (see also de Neve, 2007). In the case of experimental differentiation, centripetal effects may occur not only at the horizontal (i.e., between states) level, but also vertically (i.e., within institutions), leading European institutions to expand the scope of successful experiments. By effectively lowering levels of heterogeneities among participating member states (as a condition to set up experimental differentiation), such centripetal effects are indeed expected to be high, while similarly entailing little costs if such experiments fail. The expected centripetal effects of experimental differentiation will be tested in this article. However, experimental differentiation can lead to increasing segmentation of the European polity (Bátora & Fossum, 2020). Segmentation carries the risk of bringing about closure and dominance in policy-making, with actors who do not participate in such instances of experimental differentiation being excluded from further decision-making processes that go even beyond the scope of these small-scale programs. It also carries the risk of complexifying European structures, and the evaluation tools to determine whether experimental differentiation has been successful are unclear, requiring specific, ad-hoc policy evaluation

tools. It can therefore be difficult to assess the outcome of experimental instances of differentiation, especially if they are not being given a clear objective. Another significant risk is the unintended politicization and perceived lack of legitimacy that experimental instances of differentiation can foster, thereby providing fuel for Eurosceptic parties that may consider these modes of integration as “stealthy.”

In practice, these models of experimental differentiation are scarce, but could in the future span over different policy areas, including security and defense. The European Political Community established in Prague in October 2022, which includes all EU member states as well as 17 other European countries, could provide further opportunities to use experimental differentiation. As far as existing models are concerned, the European Union Battlegroups constitute a good case in point.

The European Union Battlegroups: European “mini-armies”?

Established in 2004, the EU Battlegroups consist of “a combined arms battalion-size force package with accompanying combat support and logistics units ready for rapid deployment to almost anywhere around the world” (Andersson, 2006, p. 22). The Battlegroups operate under a United Nations mandate and are available on stand-by rotation for a period of six months during which they should be ready to deploy within 60 days (European Council, 1999). The core objective of these Battlegroups is to offer flexible, ready to be deployed forces to focus on missions ranging from humanitarian assistance to peacekeeping missions, but also combat operations. Drawing on the successful deployment of the 2003 Operation Artemis in the Ituri region in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which saw 1,800 troops from 12 member states taking part in a three-months long military operation, the idea of setting up small Battlegroups of approximately 1,500 troops each gained momentum among member states (Reykers, 2017). Jacoby and Jones (2008) highlight that the initial idea was to set up incremental steps to foster EU-wide military cooperation, based on the success of the Stability and Growth Pact that led to the emergence of the Economic and Monetary Union. In other words, EU Battlegroups would serve as a pilot that could ultimately lead to the creation of a full-fledged European military union.

Participation in the EU Battlegroups is based on voluntary and asymmetric cooperation and may include non-EU member states. Battlegroups therefore stand out as an advanced form of experimental differentiation through “opt ins” that also include non-EU member states, as is currently the case with Norway, Turkey, North Macedonia, Ukraine, and Serbia. Despite their relatively small sizes and lack of effective action, participation in Battlegroups is therefore of particular political significance, as it consists of

making troops available to EU operations, even for participating countries that are not recognized as candidates to EU accession. Crucially, the availability and potential deployment of these Battlegroups are strictly constrained in time: While they can be subsequently renewed, no Battlegroups were aimed to become permanent and their composition have always been fluid, in line with the core characteristics of experimental differentiation. Since their implementation in 2005, the composition of Battlegroups has varied quite significantly. They mostly consisted of one-off cooperation, such as the 2013 Weimar Battlegroup between Poland, France, and Germany (Reykers, 2016). Five formations have been put on standby on two or more occasions.

Several studies have focused on assessing the Battlegroups and their potential (e.g., Barcikowska, 2013; Chappell, 2012; Lindstrom, 2007; Peen Rodt, 2014; Reykers, 2018). In practice, fifteen years after their implementation, the assessment of Battlegroups is mixed. On the one hand, they fostered more flexible and more interoperable armed forces within Europe, which ultimately (albeit modestly) contributed to transforming national militaries toward more expeditionary forces (Biscop, 2005; Kerttunen, 2010). On the other hand, they have been criticized for being suboptimal. Reykers (2017) for instance emphasizes the significant financial and political costs EU Battlegroups entail, which also explain why they have never been deployed. It should also be noted that the number of EU Battlegroups on standby has been increasingly characterized by gaps, with only one out of two rosters being made available in the first and second halves of 2015, for instance.

Yet, despite these practical and valid criticisms, the concept of EU Battlegroups cannot be dismissed as a complete failure. As with any cases of experimental differentiation, the Battlegroups manage to demonstrate the potential for EU-led military cooperation. Most importantly, with thirty states participating in the program, the Battlegroups demonstrated the broad willingness for European-wide cooperation beyond the scope of NATO, including among reluctant member states and non-candidate countries. Therefore, while the Battlegroup's "real world" effectiveness can indeed be questioned, they proved to be successful in terms of political participation.

Perhaps even more importantly, in line with the core objective of experimental differentiation, the Battlegroups paved the way for deepening the process of European integration in this area. In March 2022, the EU presented a new Strategic Compass which confirmed the creation of an EU Rapid Deployment Capacity of 5,000 troops, with the aim of reaching full operational capability by 2025. While, at the time of writing, key decisions over its structure and activities are yet to be communicated, they are being touted as new versions of the EU Battlegroups, drawing on the lessons

learned since their implementation: “A substantial modification of the EU Battlegroups should lead to a more robust and flexible instrument, for instance through tailored force packages including land, maritime and air components, different levels of operational readiness and longer stand-by periods” (European External Action Service, 2022, p. 25).

Zooming in: Finland, Sweden, and Norway’s participation in the Nordic Battlegroup

In order to illustrate the (at least partial) political success of the EU Battlegroups as a form of experimental differentiation, this article analyses Finland, Sweden, and Norway’s participation in the Nordic Battlegroup, a 2,500 troops strong group that was first set up in 2008 under Swedish leadership and has been put on standby on three occasions since. Together with these three Nordic states, Estonia, Ireland, and from 2015 onwards, Latvia and Lithuania take part in this Battlegroup.

This Battlegroup is unique as it (a) includes three Nordic countries that belong to different “circles” of European integration (Finland being the most integrated member state, Sweden having de facto opted out of the Economic and Monetary Union, and Norway not being a member of the EU); (b) includes two Nordic countries that have a historical reputation of military non-alignment (as Sweden and Finland are non-NATO members, until the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine); (c) includes countries with influent Eurosceptic or reluctant political parties that have either been part of coalition governments, supported minority governments or played a major role in the opposition; and (d) involved informal cooperation in the areas of security and defense in ad-hoc institutions, namely the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Historically, Nordic foreign policy cooperation has taken place on an informal basis between non-member and member states of the European Union, especially when it comes to the coordination of policy positions (Stie & Trondal 2020). Such informality has some drawbacks, as it leads cooperation to be rather reactive than proactive, thereby hindering efforts to offer a long-term vision that also depends on the political willingness of actors to cooperate at a specific point in time. This lack of strategic leadership ultimately means that the different historical paths taken by Nordic countries in terms of foreign and security policy continue to prevail. In other words, key Nordic priorities and interests for cooperation in the longer perspective cannot be drawn as long as cooperation remains informal (Iso-Markku et al., 2018).

In 2009, former Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs Thorvald Stoltenberg produced a report to foster close cooperation between Nordic countries on the matter, and presented thirteen proposals ranging from a Nordic

declaration of solidarity to full-fledged military cooperation (Haugevik & Sending, 2020; Stoltenberg, 2009). While this report became a milestone to reassess formal and informal forms of cooperation in the Nordic region, geopolitical events such as the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States in 2016 intensified discussions on the matter (Opitz & Etzold, 2018). On October 30, 2019, the Nordic Council adopted a motion on societal security which includes, among others, commitments to strengthen cooperation in peacemaking and conflict-prevention as well as cybersecurity (Nordic Council, 2019). This constituted a starting point to gradually deepen Nordic security and defense cooperation. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 further extrapolated the need to strengthen Nordic cooperation within these institutions to develop a Nordic-wide crisis management program, especially in light of external threats. This was the core topic of the 2022 annual theme session, which may yield further formal cooperation on the matter. Ultimately, Sweden and Finland broke with their tradition of military non-alignment and started preparing applications to join NATO.

This section has three objectives. The first one is to contextualize and summarize the core positions taken by each of these three states in terms of European defense cooperation over the past decades, in order to emphasize the path-breaking nature of participation in the Nordic Battlegroup as a form of experimental differentiation. The second objective is to assess how and why the three Nordic countries' political elites (namely governments and political parties as the core actors shaping demand for differentiation) decided to take part in the Nordic Battlegroup, and whether this participation aligns with their preferences on participation in the process of European integration (as Battlegroups fall under the institutional settings of the EU). In line with the conceptual objective of this contribution, the third objective is to highlight the role played by the experimental features of these Nordic battlegroups (geographical scope, limited timeframe, and limited functional and institutional settings) indeed lowered the perceived heterogeneities of preference, dependence and capacity among political elites, thereby incentivizing them to take part in the Battlegroups.

To offer a holistic and comprehensive picture, this analysis relies on data triangulation from four sources. Firstly, secondary sources documenting the evolving relationship between the three Nordic countries and the European Union are used to contextualize the matter. Secondly, government programs and party manifestos were used to identify the reasons why political elites are in favor of or opposed to participating in such Battlegroups. Thirdly, the analysis draws on a total of twenty-two semi-structured interviews conducted with elected representatives and government advisors of the three countries between 2012 and 2014, when the Nordic Battlegroup was a politically salient issue as it was to be put on standby for a third time in 2015.

These interviews, which were conducted after the author analyzed the above-mentioned manifestos and programs, focused on party and government preferences for participation in specific EU policy areas, and included a series on questions on the events that led all three states to participate in this Battlegroup. While most of this data is synthesized in each country-case section, some quotes from these interviews have been included in the analysis to illustrate the particular stance taken by a government or party. Finally, parliamentary debates and votes over such participation were analyzed to determine the level of divisions between and within political parties on the matter. To allow for comparison, and draw general conclusions over the effectiveness of experimental differentiation in driving integration further, each country sub-section below therefore constitutes a condensed version of a longer analysis on party and government preferences toward differentiation as a whole, which can be consulted in Leruth (2014).

Finland

As an ally to Germany during the Second World War and its participation in Operation Barbarossa following the Winter War's territorial losses, Finland had to accept terms of peace mentioned in the Paris Peace Treaties of 1947. As a consequence of those terms, Finland's geopolitical position between East and West led into a special relationship with the Soviet Union, meaning that the country had to take account of the Soviet Union's interests in terms of foreign policy (Raunio & Tiilikainen, 2003). In order to compensate for this "special relationship," a policy of neutrality was introduced in the 1950s, and (until 2022) has been widely followed by successive Finnish governments. This neutrality could be perceived in the range of agreements signed by Finland and Western Europe between the 1950s and the late 1980s, becoming for instance a full EFTA member in 1986, twenty-six years after its foundation, and becoming the last Nordic state to join the association. For these reasons, Finland is often considered as a "belated European" (Arter, 1995).

Following its accession, some observers expected that Finland would behave as a "reluctant European" by not pursuing an active European policy and opposing processes of deepening and widening European integration. Finland's historically neutral status was particularly seen as problematic, especially in terms of participation in a common foreign and security policy. In contrast with its Nordic neighbors, however, Finland decided not only to be part of the inner core of the EU, but also to play an active role in Brussels by initiating policies. The Finnish government declared that the principle of neutrality was compatible with full participation in the CSDP (Ingebritsen & Larson, 1997). Progressively, official political discourses replaced the notion of "neutrality" with "military non-alignment," which

until 2022 constituted the hard core of Finland's foreign policy (Törnudd, 1996). Furthermore, from 1995 onward, Finland used its EU membership as a tool to exert and extend its influence within the Nordic region and, to a broader extent, in Western Europe. As such, a full and active participation in the decision-making processes led Finland to break with its tradition of "belated European." Moreover, and perhaps even more importantly in light of the recent events, Finland has always perceived its membership from a security policy lens, seeking to "unlock the EU's potential as a security community" (Pesu et al., 2020, p. 2).

As far as participation in the EU Battlegroups is concerned, Finland played a pioneering role by participating in one of the first fully operational EU Battlegroups from January to June 2007, jointly with troops from Germany and the Netherlands (the so-called EU Battlegroup 107), therefore preceding its Nordic neighbors in taking part to this program, including Sweden that acted as the Nordic Battlegroup's Framework Nation. Strikingly, the Prime Minister of the time, Matti Vanhahen, was a member of the agrarian Centre Party which had consistently opposed developments in terms of security and defense cooperation in the EU, as these might in the party's views threaten the country's tradition of military non-alignment (Downs & Riutta, 2005). However, the decision to take part in the EU Battlegroup was considered as being in line with both its post-1995 European strategy and its long-standing commitment to international crisis management, "an essential part of the Finnish foreign and security policy [...] to improve both international security and security of Finland" (Kerttunen, 2005, p. 74).

From its onset, participation in the Nordic Battlegroup appeared to be a "no-brainer" for the majority of Finnish political parties, including among reluctant or Eurosceptic parties. In 2008, the Finnish government "committed itself to enhancing Finnish readiness to participate in international crisis management by intensifying co-operation in the use of military and civil resources, and full participation in a joint EU security and crisis management co-operation" (Sundberg, 2008, p. 971). Parliamentary votes on participation in the EU Battlegroup showed overwhelming support, with only Left Alliance MPs voting against due to the party's unequivocal opposition to military action. All other parties, including the populist radical right and hard Eurosceptic Finns Party, voted in favor, with two of their interviewed MPs citing three reasons: the opportunity such Battlegroup offers to intensify cooperation with Nordic neighbors, the short timeframe (Battlegroups being put on standby for six months), and the perception of low political risks by participating as a non-framework nation (Interview with Finns Party MP, May 17, 2013; Interview with Finns Party MP, May 21, 2013). One MP will even go as far as stating that "it does not matter to us if it is an EU policy, it is a small initiative" (Interview with Finns Party MP, May 21, 2013). Interviewed representatives of pro-integrationist parties such as the National

Coalition Party or the Centre Party emphasized ties with Finland's Nordic neighbors as a core reason to support Finland's participation in the Nordic Battlegroup (Interview with a MP from the National Coalition Party, May 14, 2013; Interview with a MP from the Centre Party, May 22, 2013). In sum, party and government preferences to take part in this instance of experimental differentiation seems to have been driven by the three core characteristics highlighted above: the participation of other Nordic countries (in line with the use of existing "clusters" of international cooperation), the limited timeframe of these Battlegroups, and the perceived low political costs they would entail. Although this was not explicitly mentioned in the interviews or in any other sources analyzed, one could also hypothesize that Finland's position in all EU policy areas (the so-called "inner core" of the European Union) may also have played a role in shaping preferences of these political actors, especially since Finland's participation in the CSDP was perceived as compatible with its traditional military non-alignment and as Finland has played a proactive role in shaping the EU's security policy since 1995.

Sweden

In contrast with Finland, Sweden's tradition of neutrality and military non-alignment has been more flexible, with no formal or legal codification. As Gustavsson (1998, p. 73) argues, "Swedish policy-makers have instead emphasized flexibility arguing that 'we determine the policy of neutrality ourselves'." As a result, Sweden has historically had more leeway in terms of international cooperation.

Sweden played a proactive role in European cooperation from its early days, being one of the founding members of the Council of Europe and the European Free Trade Association and contemplating Community membership until the early 1970s (Lindahl & Naurin, 2005). The end of the Cold War led to a redefinition of Sweden's principle of neutrality (Gstöhl, 2002; Jerneck, 1993; Mouritzen, 1993; Sundelius, 1994). As a result, the government released a press statement at the end of October 1990, calling for "a new decision by the Riksdag which more distinctly and in more positive wordings clarifies Sweden's ambition to become a member of the European Community" (Gustavsson, 1998, p. 66). The Social Democratic minority government, led by Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson, eventually decided to formally apply for membership in 1991 following a positive advice from the Swedish Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, stating that "Sweden should strive to become a member of the European Community, while maintaining its neutrality policy. Only as a [...] member can our country fully participate in, and influence, European Community cooperation" (as cited in Lindmarker, 1991, p. 5).

While Sweden's policy of neutrality served national interests until the late 1980s by enabling the country to gain international prestige, the end of a two-block division implied an emergence of "multipolarity," with the EU becoming an increasingly influential actor at the international stage: "in the new situation, being neutral was no longer 'something to be,' and this policy could no longer serve as a base for upholding Sweden's international position" (Gustavsson, 1998, p. 96). By becoming a member of the EU, Sweden could thus play a role in shaping common positions with other states sharing similar views in terms of foreign policy, and adapting itself to a new international environment by avoiding the risk of becoming a peripheral actor.

Despite its neutral status, Sweden has, much like Finland, a strong record in terms of participation in international peacekeeping missions. Yet, the scope of Sweden's participation in the Nordic Battlegroup was surprising on several grounds: the state contributed more troops than any other member of the Battlegroup, and operated as the Framework Nation. The Swedish government justified its decision as such:

The development and design of our security policy must continue to be made in broad national consensus. Sweden is militarily non-aligned. Our country's future security is based on community and co-operation with other countries. The government attaches importance to the EU's common security strategy. Demands from the UN, the EU and NATO for Sweden's participation in international operations have never been greater. Sweden should have increased opportunities to participate in international peace operations. (Government of Sweden, 2006, [october 6](#), author's translation)

Following government negotiations with other participating countries, the Swedish parliamentary committee on foreign affairs and defense prepared a report on participation in the Nordic Battlegroup. The Riksdag subsequently voted in favor of a Swedish participation in the Nordic Battlegroup, and further supported its implementation in 2011 and 2015. The Left Party, which was opposed to any form of participation in military operations at the EU level, was the only party to reject this policy. The Green Party, which also opposes defense cooperation, supported such participation, despite expressing some material concerns during the parliamentary session, mostly due to the low capacity of battlegroup operations (see below). The Swedish government's assessment of participation in the 2008 Nordic Battlegroup was positive, and prompted further support from political parties across the spectrum (with the exception of the Left Party):

Through our participation in the Nordic Battle Group, one of two EU rapid reaction forces, Sweden is taking responsibility for peace and security within and outside our region. Sweden will command the Nordic Battle Group in 2011. We should also have the ambition of undertaking its command in 2014. (Government of Sweden, 2010, [October 5](#))

Three reasons explained this broad support across the Swedish political landscape. Firstly, much like in the case of Finland, participation in such a program was not perceived as being controversial even within the context of the well-grounded policy of non-alignment (Jacoby & Jones, 2008). Secondly, the low-key nature of the EU Battlegroups convinced reluctant parties such as the Greens to support participation:

Since the European Battle Groups are on standby and can be used only for operations that have been agreed upon, we do not think it is a problem to agree on this and we are prepared to participate and to use it. It was a very pragmatic vote. (Interview with a Green Party MP, March 25, 2014)

Thirdly, cooperation with Nordic neighbors was perceived as a positive development to strengthen ties between countries. This was even highlighted by the populist radical right and Eurosceptic Sweden Democrats, stating that close cooperation with Finland through the Battlegroups is a step in the right direction (Riksdag, 2013). Looking back at the three features of experimental differentiation, the geographical scope (i.e., relying on existing Nordic cooperation) and the Battlegroup's low functional characteristics did play a role in shaping political actors' preferences, including among initially reluctant (or Eurosceptic) actors as it reduces heterogeneities of preference and dependence. Yet, much like Finland, Swedish actors' preferences were also driven by the country's reformed security strategy in an ever-changing world.

Norway

Unlike Finland and Sweden, Norway was an occupied territory during the Second World War following the German invasion of April 9, 1940. Norway subsequently ratified the North Atlantic Treaty on April 4, 1949 and effectively became a founding member of NATO. As explained by Gstöhl (2002, p. 51), “[t]he bad experience with neutrality in World War II and the Cold War climate made Norway turn to the Atlantic alliance in spite of its historical aversion to integration.” NATO membership was perceived as beneficial by the majority of Norwegian political elites, despite having a common Northeastern border with the USSR. Yet, Norway maintained a diplomatic relationship with the Soviet Union by “screening its role in the alliance through self-imposed restrictions and engaging with the Soviet Union diplomatically, thereby aiming to reassure Moscow” (Tunsjø, 2011, p. 73). By joining NATO, the country strengthened its security ties with the United States and, more importantly, with the United Kingdom, which has been Norway's main trading partner since its independence in 1905. In short, the country did not follow the same path as its Eastern Nordic neighbors in terms of foreign and security policy, mostly

as a result of its experience of the Second World War. As a consequence, the European issue became politically salient much earlier than in Finland and Sweden, where the principles of neutrality and military non-alignment prevailed.

Although the two historically largest Norwegian parties (Labour and Conservative) are both pro-European and vocally supported the idea of full membership at least until the late 1990s, the Norwegian population rejected membership by referendum on two occasions, in 1972 and 1994 (Archer, 2005). Despite its status as a non-EU member, Norway opted to foster close cooperation with the European Union not only through participation in the EEA, but also by signing over 90 bilateral association agreements in other policy areas, including in security and defense. As a result, despite popular resistance to full membership, Norway has been more sectorally integrated in the European Union than the United Kingdom before Brexit (Egeberg & Trondal, 1999; Leruth et al., 2019).

Toward the end of 2004, the agreement on the concept of EU Battlegroups became highly politicized at the national level and led to parliamentary discussions following a demand from the opposition (Sjursen, 2012). On this matter, Norwegian Defense Minister Kristin Krohn Devold (Conservative), known for her pro-NATO policies, stated that it would be in Norway's interest to participate in the European defense policy through association to the EU Battlegroup concept, because of "a progression in the defense and security policy co-operation in the EU which puts all doubt aside with regard to the realization of EU ambitions" (as cited in Græger, 2005, p. 95). This was a turning point in the government's attitude towards European integration, as NATO had always been considered as the cornerstone for cooperation in terms of foreign and security policy. In the Storting, the two anti-integrationist parties, the Centre and the Socialist Left, were strongly opposed to participation in such policy. There were also signs of reluctance amongst members of the pro-European Labour Party and the populist radical right Progress Party.

Following negotiations with the European institutions, the majority of the parties represented in the Storting decided to follow the government's position. Unlike other major EU-related issues such as the EEA, the application for EU membership and participation in the Schengen area, no parliamentary vote was held on the ratification of the Battlegroup concept (Sjursen, 2012). Most parties considered that participation in this policy did not constitute a challenge to the Norwegian Constitution and national sovereignty. Furthermore, contributing to such Battlegroup reflected the ruling parties' visions on co-operation in terms of foreign and security policy, despite this decision coming as a surprise to some observers (Græger, 2005). The Memorandum concerning the principles for the establishment and operation

of a multinational battle group to be made available to the European Union was then ratified on May 17, 2005.

Norway's participation in the Nordic Battlegroup for the first semester of 2008 led to parliamentary debates but also to internal divisions within the government. The Labour Party strongly supported participation in such policy, as stated by Labour Defense Minister Anne-Grete Strøm-Erichsen:

These forces have also become a central part of Nordic security and defence cooperation, and are thus well-suited for further developing this collaboration and adapting it to new needs. In this connection, our contribution is important because it means involving Norwegian defence in practical co-operation with our Nordic neighbours (as cited in Sjursen, 2012, p. 11).

In other words, Norwegian participation was seen by the Labour Party as a mean to strengthen Nordic cooperation, thereby reflecting the importance of the geographical feature in experimental instances of differentiation. Somewhat surprisingly, the Eurosceptic Centre Party shared this opinion, as illustrated by this quote from Centre Party MP Alf Ivar Samuelsen:

[T]he operational unit to which we now agree is based on international law. It should be based on a clear UN mandate. The Parliament must be consulted, and the Government should make the decision. In other words: an adequate process. [We] believe that this [participation in the Nordic Battlegroup] follows the Nordic track, an active European policy, the NATO track and the UN-track and goes in the right direction. (Storting, 2007, author's translation)

As such, this switch in the Centre Party's position on participation in the Nordic Battlegroup can be explained by its interpretation of this policy: it is based on international law, and does not contradict the main party stance on European cooperation. This statement contradicted 2005 Centre Party manifesto, which clearly stated its opposition to participation in the Battlegroups. As far as the Socialist Left Party is concerned, its representatives showed signs of reluctance towards Norway's participation in this policy. During a debate in the Storting on the matter, MP Bjørn Jacobsen stated that

[...] the last time we debated on this issue in the previous parliamentary term, [the party] expressed scepticism to join the Nordic Battle Group under the EU. We are not part of the EU, so why did sneak in and get a foot in the door? (Storting, 2007, author's translation)

Nevertheless, the party welcomed positive developments regarding Norway's participation in peacekeeping operations, and did not openly oppose the country's contribution in the Nordic Battlegroup. Following these debates in the Storting and in contrast with Finland and Sweden, participation in the Nordic Battlegroup was not put to a parliamentary vote.

Ahead of participation in the Nordic Battlegroup in 2011, the Stoltenberg II government would “strengthen [...] Nordic cooperation where foreign policy and security policy are concerned” (Government of Norway, 2010) as well as continue collaboration with the EU in the area of defense and security policy. Within this context, Norway’s participation in the Nordic Battlegroup was not debated in the Storting as it was the case in 2007: Instead, the issue was only briefly mentioned when MPs voted on the state’s budget for the year 2011 on October 5, 2010. There was an overwhelming consensus that the 2007 experience can therefore be repeated. In interviews, MPs from different parties emphasized that participation in the Battlegroup was close to a non-issue in Norway (Interview with a MP from the Progress Party, October 22, 2012; Interview with a MP from the Liberal Party, June 5, 2013), but also that it was a tool to strengthen Nordic security cooperation on the ground, in parallel with discussions taking place within the Nordic Council (Interview with a MP from the Conservative Party, October 12, 2012). In sum, the geographical scope and low functional characteristics of the Nordic Battlegroups combined with their limited actions in time were favored by Norwegian political actors, who particularly saw participation in this form of experimental differentiation as an opportunity to strengthen Nordic cooperation, especially given Norway’s non-EU status.

Conclusion

This article explored whether the features of experimental differentiation, a niche form of loose and small-scale institutional cooperation between some member and non-member states of the European Union, drive political actors (parties and governments) to support participation in policy initiatives organized under the EU framework. Mirroring some the EU Battlegroups’ features, three core characteristics of experimental differentiation have been highlighted: territorial flexibility in terms of participation, which can rely on pre-existing politico-cultural characteristics to facilitate and promote cooperation between states; the limited temporal aspect of these actions; and their limited functional and institutional settings.

In contrast with most of the literature criticizing the EU Battlegroups, this article argued that the program has some strong political merits and should not be dismissed as a failure. Indeed, as illustrated by the participation of Finland, Sweden, and Norway in the Nordic Battlegroup and the broad political support it entailed, the program demonstrates the willingness of even reluctant actors to consider deepening the process of European integration, even while being a non-EU member state (as in the case of Norway) or militarily non-aligned (Finland and Sweden).

In all three countries, the core features of experimental differentiation played a role in shaping cooperation. On the one hand, the pre-existence of cooperation between Nordic countries and their willingness to deepen regional cooperation in the area of security and defense fostered some political enthusiasm: The Nordic Battlegroups offered an institutional opportunity to pilot such collaboration. On the other hand, the scale of collaboration, which remains quite small, effectively reduced reluctance: even in the case of Sweden (as a framework nation providing most troops), the Battlegroup's limitations in time (six months, renewable) and function (the Petersberg tasks) lowered political costs.

It is worth noting that these three features are not the only ones that played a role in shaping party and government preferences. In both Sweden and Finland, the importance of developing new security and defense cooperation tools also explains their willingness to participate in such actions. As this relates to the countries' history of neutrality and military non-alignment which is policy-specific, this is not considered as a core feature of experimental differentiation, which can be implemented across policy areas. Another important factor to consider is that while Nordic cooperation played an important role in shaping Sweden, Finland, and Norway's decisions to participate in the Battlegroup, they opted to cooperate under the EU framework rather than exploring ways to set up such cooperation by using their existing means of cooperation, for instance the Nordic Council. This may be explained by the influence these countries can play at the European level in the areas of security and defense (see for instance Håkansson, 2021).

Experimental differentiation can therefore play a role in driving participation in policies that fall under the EU framework, including among non-EU members and reluctant political actors. The centripetal effects it generates are explained by a reduction in the heterogeneities that drive actors to demand non-participation in policies (in terms of political preference, dependence, or capacity), as experimental differentiation produces limited costs due to its limited features. That is not to say that experimental differentiation can only generate positive policy outcome, but that actors (both at the domestic and European levels) can "test the waters" for further policy cooperation under the EU framework with relatively limited costs.

This analysis, however, presents an important caveat: It is only limited to assessing participation in one of the many EU Battlegroups that have been set up since the mid-2000s. The political willingness of other actors to initiate, cooperate or renew participation in the Battlegroups are expected to vary considerably depending on their composition. As one of the core characteristics of experimental differentiation is the effective use of pre-existing politico-cultural ties between states, one could hypothesize that the looser these

ties are, the more cautious states will be to actively participate in the program. While such a comparative analysis across Battlegroups falls beyond the scope of this article, future research could focus on how other states have experienced participation in the scheme. The Visegrád Battlegroup, which includes Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, could yield similar findings to the Nordic Battlegroup, in contrast with “looser” Battlegroups such as the Balkan Battlegroup which includes Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus and Ukraine. Scholars focusing on Nordic studies may be interested in focusing on why the EU framework was deemed more valuable than exploring other means of intergovernmental cooperation. Furthermore, as the European Union is in the process of redefining security cooperation as outlined in its Strategic Compass, future research could focus on how the Battlegroups as a form of experimental differentiation will shape the “modified battlegroups,” set to be fully operational by 2025.

One final note on PESCO, which borrows some core elements of the experimental model of differentiation, yet with a major difference: Participation is only open to the 25 EU member states that signed up for participating in the structure (Denmark and Malta having opted out; Martill & Gebhard, 2023). This is reasonable, given the institutional and logistical scale of PESCO. Yet, from a practical perspective, the EU should continue exploring broader forms of experimental differentiation in the future within and beyond the scope of defense cooperation, for three reasons. Firstly, as demonstrated in this article, it may increase the political willingness of reluctant actors to try and seek cooperation with limited risks. Secondly, in the case of non-EU member states, it offers a powerful tool of accommodation or familiarization within EU structures—perhaps reflecting what Emmanuel Macron proposed through the creation of a European Political Community open to non-members with and without candidate status. Although it is too early to tell, this newly created institution has the potential of becoming an interesting laboratory for the implementation of experimental mechanisms of differentiation and draw on lessons learned from the Battlegroups. Thirdly, at times when security and defense cooperation is at a crossroads, low-scale, experimental forms of cooperation may yield unexpected positive results that could ultimately be reflected in the institutional structure of PESCO. Experimental differentiation should therefore be seen as a tool to “think out of the box,” with the aim of offering practical solutions to modern problems. While differentiated cooperation paved the way to deepen security and defense integration (see Amadio Viceré & Sus, 2023), experimental differentiation has the potential to break new grounds by involving non-member states and expanding to other policy areas.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Maria Giulia Amadio Viceré, Monika Sus, Stefan Gänzle, the editors of CSP, and two anonymous reviewers for their invaluable comments on earlier versions of this paper. A draft version was presented at the University of Agder's Trans-Nordic Conference on European Differentiated Integration (June 1–2, 2022) and greatly benefited from comments from the audience.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Benjamin Leruth is an Assistant Professor in European Politics and Society at the University of Groningen. His research focuses on differentiation in the European Union, democratic innovations, comparative social policy, and political long-termism. He is the lead Editor of the *Routledge Handbook of Differentiation in the European Union* (2022).

ORCID

Benjamin Leruth  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1999-918X>

Reference list

- Amadio Viceré, M. G., & Sus, M. (2023). Differentiated cooperation as the mode of governance in EU foreign policy: Emergence, modes and implications. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 44(1), 4–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2023.2168854>
- Andersson, J. J. (2006). *Armed and ready? The EU Battlegroup concept and the Nordic Battlegroup*. SIEPS Report 2. Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies.
- Archer, C. (2005). *Norway outside the European Union: Norway and European integration from 1994 to 2004*. Routledge.
- Arter, D. (1995). The EU referendum in Finland on 16 October 1994: A vote for the west, not for Maastricht. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 33(3), 361–387. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.1995.tb00539.x>
- Barcikowska, A. (2013). *EU battlegroups – Ready to go?* European Institute for Security Studies.
- Bátora, J., & Fossum, J. E. (2020). *Towards a segmented European political order: The European Union's post-crises conundrum*. Routledge.
- Biscop, S. (Ed.). (2005). *E Pluribus Unum?: Military integration in the European Union*. Egmont Institute.
- Biscop, S. (2018). European defence: Give PESCO a chance. *Survival*, 60(3), 161–180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2018.1470771>
- Blockmans, S., & Crosson, D. (2021). PESCO: A force for positive integration in EU defence. *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 26(Special Issue), 87–110. <https://doi.org/10.54648/EERR2021028>
- Chappell, L. (2012). *Germany, Poland and the common security and defence policy: Converging security and defence perspectives in an enlarged EU*. Palgrave MacMillan.

- de Neve, J.-E. (2007). The European Onion? How differentiated integration is reshaping the EU. *Journal of European Integration*, 29(4), 503–521. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036330701502498>
- De Witte, B. (2019). *The law as tool and constraint of differentiated integration*. EUI Working Papers RSCAS 2019/47. https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/63604/RSCAS_2019_47.pdf
- Downs, W. M., & Riutta, S. (2005). Out with ‘rainbow government’ and in with ‘Iraqgate’: The Finnish general election of 2003. *Government & Opposition*, 40(3), 424–441. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2005.00158.x>
- Egeberg, M., & Trondal, J. (1999). Differentiated integration in Europe: The case of EEA country, Norway. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 37(1), 133–142. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5965.00154>
- Eriksen, E. O. (2018). Political differentiation and the problem of dominance: Segmentation and hegemony. *European Journal of Political Research*, 57(4), 989–1008. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12263>
- European Council. (1999, December 10–11). *European Council presidency conclusions*. Brussels.
- European External Action Service. (2022). *A European strategic compass for security and defence: For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security*. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic_compass_en3_web.pdf
- European Parliament. (2006). *The European security and defence Policy: From the Helsinki Headline Goal to the EU Battlegroups*. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/sede/dv/sede030909noteesdp_/sede030909noteesdp_en.pdf
- Government of Norway. (2010). *Political platform as basis for the government’s work formed by the Labour Party, Socialists Left Party and Centre Party, signed in Soria Moria*.
- Government of Sweden. (2006, October 6). *Regeringsförklaringen Lästes Upp av Statsminister Fredrik Reinfeldt inför Sveriges Riksdag*. Government of Sweden.
- Government of Sweden. (2010, October 5). *Statement of government policy presented by the prime minister, Mr Fredrik Reinfeldt, to the Swedish Riksdag*. Government of Sweden.
- Græger, N. (2005). Norway between NATO, the EU, and the US: A case study of post-cold war security and defence discourse. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 18(1), 85–103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557570500059605>
- Gstöhl, S. (2002). *Reluctant Europeans: Norway, Sweden and Switzerland in the process of integration*. Lynne Rienner.
- Gustavsson, J. (1998). *The politics of foreign policy change: Explaining the Swedish reorientation on EC membership*. Lund University Press.
- Håkansson, C. (2021). Finding its way in EU security and defence cooperation: A view from Sweden. *European View*, 20(1), 80–87. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17816858211004647>
- Haugevik, K., & Sending, O. J. (2020). The Nordic balance revisited: Differentiation and the foreign policy repertoires of the Nordic states. *Politics & Governance*, 8(4), 110–119. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v8i4.3380>
- Ingebritsen, C., & Larson, S. (1997). Interest and identity: Finland, Norway and European Union. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 32(2), 207–222. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836797032002004>
- Iso-Markku, T., Innola, I., & Tiilikainen, T. (2018). *A stronger north? Nordic cooperation in foreign and security policy in a new security environment*. Prime

- Minister of Finland's Office. <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/160829/37-2018-A%20Stronger%20North.pdf>
- Jacoby, W., & Jones, C. (2008). The EU battle groups in Sweden and the Czech Republic: What national defense reforms tell us about European rapid reaction capabilities. *European Security*, 17(2-3), 315–338. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662830802642587>
- Jerneck, M. (1993). Sweden – The reluctant European? In T. Tiilikainen & I. Damgaard Peterson (Eds.), (pp. 23–42). Political Studies Press.
- Kerttunen, M. (2005). Finland. In M. Kerttunen, T. Koivula, & T. Jeppsson (Eds.), *EU battlegroups: Theory and development in the light of Finnish-Swedish cooperation* (pp. 73–92). National Defence College – Department of Strategic and Defence Studies.
- Kerttunen, M. (2010). The EU Battlegroup – Its background and concept. *Diskussion & Debatt*, 1, 127–150.
- Kölliker, A. (2006). *Flexibility and European unification: The logic of differentiated integration*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kroll, D. (2022). Promise unfulfilled? Managing differentiated integration in EU secondary law through enhanced cooperation. In B. Leruth, S. Gänzle, & J. Trondal (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of differentiation in the European Union* (pp. 170–183). Routledge.
- Kucera, T. (2019). What European army? Alliance, security community or postnational federation? *International Politics*, 56(3), 321–338. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-017-0129-6>
- Riksdag (2013, June 9). *Riksdagens protokoll 2013/14:121 Måndagen den 9 juni*. Stockholm.
- Leruth, B. (2014). *Differentiated integration in the European Union: A comparative study of party and government preferences in Finland, Sweden and Norway* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of Edinburgh. <https://era.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/16175>
- Leruth, B., Gänzle, S., & Trondal, J. (2019). Differentiated integration and disintegration in the EU after Brexit: Risks versus opportunities. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 57(6), 1383–1394. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12957>
- Leruth, B., Gänzle, S., & Trondal, J. (Eds.). (2022). *The Routledge handbook of differentiation in the European Union*. Routledge.
- Leuffen, D., Rittberger, B., & Schimmelfennig, F. (2022). *Integration and differentiation in the European Union: Theories and policies*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lindahl, R., & Naurin, D. (2005). Sweden: The twin faces of a Euro-outsider. *Journal of European Integration*, 27(1), 65–87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036330400029983>
- Lindmarker, I. (1991). How Sweden's political parties view Europe and possible EC membership. *Current Sweden*, 382.
- Lindstrom, G. (2007). *Enter the European Battlegroups*. Institute for security studies of the European Union. Chaillot Paper 97. <http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/cp097.pdf>
- Martill, B., & Gebhard, C. (2023). Combined Differentiation in European Defence: Tailoring Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) to Strategic and Political Complexity. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 44(1), 97–124. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2022.2155360>
- Mouritzen, H. (1993). The two Musterknaben and the naughty boy: Sweden, Finland and Denmark in the process of European integration. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 28(4), 373–402. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836793028004003>
- Nordic Council. (2019). *Nordic Council strategy on societal security*. <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1362729/FULLTEXT02.pdf>

- Opitz, C., & Etzold, T. (2018). Seeking renewed relevance institutions of Nordic cooperation in the reform process. *SWP Comment*, 3. https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/comments/2018C03_opt_etz.pdf
- Peen Rodt, A. (2014). *The European Union and military conflict management: Defining, evaluating and achieving success*. Routledge.
- Pesu, M., Iso-Markku, T., & Jokela, J. (2020). *Finnish foreign policy during EU membership: Unlicking the EU's security potential*. Finnish Institute of International Affairs.
- Raunio, T., & Tiilikainen, T. (2003). *Finland in the European Union*. Frank Cass.
- Reykers, Y. (2016). No supply without demand: Explaining the absence of the EU battlegroups in Libya, Mali and the Central African Republic. *European Security*, 25(3), 346–365. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662839.2016.1205978>
- Reykers, Y. (2017). EU battlegroups: High costs, no benefits. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 38(3), 457–470. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2017.1348568>
- Reykers, Y. (2018). EU battlegroups: From standby to standstill. In J. Karlsrud & Y. Reykers (Eds.), *Multinational rapid response mechanisms: From institutional proliferation to institutional exploitation* (pp. 41–56). Routledge.
- Rieker, P. (2021a). Differentiated defence integration under French leadership. *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 26(Special Issue), 111–126. <https://doi.org/10.54648/eerr2021029>
- Rieker, P. (2021b). Differentiated integration and Europe's global role: A conceptual framework. *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 26(Special Issue), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.54648/eerr2021023>
- Sabel, C. F., & Zeitlin, J. (2008). Learning from difference: The new architecture of experimentalist governance in the EU. *European Law Journal*, 14(3), 271–327. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0386.2008.00415.x>
- Sabel, C. F., & Zeitlin, J. (2012). Experimentalist governance. In D. Levi-Faur (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of governance* (pp. 169–184). Oxford University Press.
- Schimmelfennig, F., & Winzen, T. (2014). Instrumental and constitutional differentiation in the European Union. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 52(2), 354–370. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12103>
- Schimmelfennig, F., & Winzen, T. (2020). *Ever Looser Union? Differentiated European integration*. Oxford University Press.
- Sjursen, H. (2012). *From fly in the ointment to accomplice: Norway in EU foreign and security policy*. ARENA Working Paper 2/2012. ARENA Centre for European Studies.
- Smith, M. E. (2016). Implementing the global strategy where it matters most: The EU's credibility deficit and the European neighbourhood. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 37(3), 446–460. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260.2016.1240467>
- Stie, A. E. (2020). Introducing the study of Nordic cooperation. *Politics and Governance*, 8(4). <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v8i4.3726>
- Stoltenberg, T. (2009, February 9). *Nordic cooperation on foreign and security policy: Proposals presented to the extraordinary meeting of Nordic foreign ministers in Oslo*. <https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/ud/vedlegg/nordicreport.pdf>
- Storting. (2007). Redegjørelse av Forsvarsministeren om Status for Norsk Deltagelse i den Nordiske Innsatsstyrken. Møte Onsdag den 28. November 2007 kl. 10.
- Sundberg, J. (2008). Finland. *European Journal of Political Research*, 47(7-8), 969–975. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2008.00792.x>

- Sundelius, B. (1994). Changing course: When neutral Sweden chose to join the European community. In W. Carlsnaes & S. Smith (Eds.), *European foreign policy – The EC and changing perspectives in Europe* (pp. 177–201). Sage.
- Svensson, P. (1994). The Danish yes to Maastricht and Edinburgh: The EC referendum of May 1993. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 17(1), 69–82. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9477.1994.tb00050.x>
- Törnudd, K. (1996). Ties that bind to the recent past: Debating security policy in Finland within the context of membership of the European Union. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 31(1), 37–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836796031001003>
- Tunsjø, Ø. (2011). Geopolitical shifts, great power relations and Norway's foreign policy. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 46(1), 60–77. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836710396784>
- Winn, N. (2003). Towards a common European security and defence policy? The debate on NATO, the European army and transatlantic security. *Geopolitics*, 8(2), 47–68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/714001032>