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Strategic autonomy of the EU in the light of CSDP and the changing world order

The development of the European Union’s activity as a security actor is closely linked to the need for global capacity for action in this domain, with a clearly “softer” role definition than NATO, which is derived from a collective security concept. The aim of this study is to identify how and under what circumstances the European Union’s self-definition in the field of security and defense policy has evolved, how it has attempted to make the EU be present in the changing world order as an independent actor asserting its strategic autonomy with a specific voice. The paper looks back not only on the development of the EU security and defense policy, but also highlights the two decades of Hungarian operational involvement in it. Our central assumption is that the strengthening of the EU’s strategic autonomy, in which CSDP is one of the core instruments, cannot be avoided amid the challenges of the modern era if the EU wants to preserve its competitiveness and adaptive responsiveness.

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Introduction

The European Union’s worldwide competitiveness is perceived as a mechanism for ensuring security, where a rapid transition towards digitalization and environmental sustainability will assume a pivotal position. The attainment of this objective through a “fair, equitable, and inclusive” approach is expected to contribute to the enhancement of the social aspect, so successfully tackling the demographic obstacles that Europe is currently confronting. This will have a particularly significant influence in the post-Covid era compared to previous periods.

Despite the prevalence of contradicting ideas about the world order like the end of history (Fukuyama 1993), the clash of civilizations (Huntington 2015), or the post-American world (Zakaria 2011), Russia’s armed aggression against Ukraine ended the post-Cold War period. However, the current state of the international order and the necessary preparations and adaptations that the European Union, including Hungary, must undertake remain rather ambiguous.

The current strategy of the presidency trio places greater emphasis on strengthening the EU as a global and autonomous actor, where the EU aspires to be a proactive and resolute entity in the realm of security and defense policy. This entails implementing a well-balanced trade policy and enhancing all aspects of security. This strategic objective extends beyond safeguarding the EU’s interests and implementing policy solutions (only) based on values.¹⁴

The incorporation of a comprehensive security approach as a prevailing strategy is not a novel aspect within a trio’s agenda. The notion of Europe aiming to augment its global capabilities has long been ingrained in the European Union’s shared position and mindset in matters pertaining to security and defense policy. The current security (self-)perception of security is influenced by decades of policy development, debate, external or internal crises. This perception has been further strengthened by the establishment of the EU’s common security and defense policy, as

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¹⁴ Program of the Council (10597/2023): <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10597-2023-INIT/hu/pdf>

well as the increasing impact of the migration crisis, the global Covid pandemic, and the war in Europe's neighborhood.

The main aim of this paper is to examine the security and defense strategy of the EU partly in relation to Hungary's two decades of membership, with a particular focus on Hungary's role within the broader framework of the Common Security and Defence strategy (CSDP). There is a longstanding necessity to enhance and strengthen the shared structure for collaboration in foreign and security policy; however, the concept of integrating a military strategy has already opened up questions related to sovereignty. This study is predicated on the premise that in order for the EU to sustain its competitiveness and adaptability within the evolving global landscape, it is imperative to enhance its strategic autonomy. The EU is a postmodern liberal political body, nonetheless, it appears imperative to enhance its ability to adhere to a pragmatic framework of power, which is the realm of realism. These skills are evidently present in the idea of creation of the CSDP and are a direct consequence of it.

Liberal World Order and the question of strategic autonomy

Under the influence of external challenges, the history of European integration has plunged cyclical questions on the agenda, such as how one of the major beneficiaries of the liberal world order, the EU, can turn from a political dwarf of an economic giant to a real global power. This is not negligible in that the EU relied on the security shield provided by the United States during every external security crisis, and without Washington, it has not been able to act effectively even in conflicts in Europe or in its neighborhood. See for instance the war in Yugoslavia which eventually led to the birth of the European security policy. The subsequent security and defense policy attitude, and understandably the immediate inclusion of the "peace dividend" (Rockoff 1998) after the end of the Cold War and the use of the money instead of defense for economic and social developments, seemed logical from an internal policy point of view in a rules-based and predictable international order, eventually driven, maintained and protected by the liberal foreign policy interest of the United States.

Today, however, the "liberal world order" faces undeniably serious questions about its existence, its basic logic, its functioning. Russia and China have gradually challenged the limits in recent years, with critical voices growing in the United States and even in the EU, but a real alternative is not on the horizon and a liberal order based on rules that contain realist elements continues to determine international relations. Countries adjust to order because it is in their immediate interest (at least in the short term) or because there is no other way to adjust, and order itself reduces uncertainty so that the world of realistic uncontrolled anarchy does not become a reality.

This paper, as stated in the introduction, does not aim to comprehensively analyze all aspects of strategic autonomy. Instead, it specifically focuses on the military and defense dimensions of autonomy. In relation to strategic autonomy, significant quandaries emerge, including the question of how the EU can possess the capacity to autonomously make choices, particularly when its suitability for upholding a zone of peace and stability (Rada-Nyilas 2023) inside its own continent is subject to scrutiny. Subsequently, it would demonstrate the EU's credibility to make independent decisions on a global scale, which had implications for the global order.¹⁵

The history of European integration has raised recurring questions due to external constraints. These questions include how the EU, which has greatly benefited from the liberal international order, can transform from a politically insignificant economic powerhouse into a significant worldwide political player. The significance of this matter lies in the fact – as mentioned above – that the EU heavily depended on the security protection offered by the United States

¹⁵ The compulsory force of the international system is one of the central elements of Kenneth Waltz's classical neo-structural realism theory (Waltz 2010).

throughout any foreign political crises. Without the presence of Washington, the EU would be unable to adequately respond to military conflicts.

The topic of the New World Order has garnered significant attention in the realm of international literature. However, it is imperative to establish a clear definition of global order within the framework of the international liberal order. This paper does not aim to elucidate the theoretical distinction between the concepts of global order and international order. When referring to the phrase liberal international order(s) in the current context, it is important to note that the theoretical definitions of international system by John Ikenberry (2020) or Robert Kagan (2022) might serve as a point of reference. The ideals of collaboration, free commerce, the universality of human rights, and peaceful cohabitation are considered to be the „pillars” of the liberal international order in this particular scenario. In our understanding, world order may be seen as a global regulatory concept that compels participants within the international system to behave accordingly, regardless of their lack of alignment with liberal values.¹⁶ The conceptual foundation of the liberal world order, as well as all practical issues, lies in the inherent human inclination to reside within predictable limits. Immanuel Kant’s treatise on “Zum ewigen Frieden” (Kant 1998) is inherently idealistic and has implications for liberal international relations. Arthur Schopenhauer (2009), a proponent of Kantian philosophy, further developed this idea by embracing the theory of order, which is independent of human activity and assumes its all-determining logic. The obligatory framework is established by the policymakers of the liberal global order and the participants of the order are unable to disregard it. The manifestation of surrealism¹⁷ is evident here: there is a paradigmatic framework established and managed by the „West,” of which the EU clearly constitutes a component, but for the perpetuation of this framework in alignment with liberal values, it is imperative that agenda-makers, particularly the EU, enhance its efficacy by the incorporation of classical power categories that may be understood in a pragmatic manner. That is to maintain a liberal order the agenda setter needs to be realist. Envisioning the latter is a challenging task that necessitates a genuine strategic autonomy, extending beyond mere philosophical deliberations.¹⁸

The world order refers to the structural framework that maintains equilibrium by facilitating the reorganization of foreign policy goals and motives of individual players via the process of compromise. In the event that the equilibrium is disturbed or perceived by the involved parties, a process of repositioning is undertaken with the objective of mitigating any adverse consequences that may arise from the alteration in the global arrangement for the respective actor. Nevertheless, any action that alters the equilibrium might exacerbate the participants’ feeling of insecurity, so generating a rapid detrimental cycle that will challenge the core principles of the system. The legitimacy of the world order is derived from the adherence of its players to its rules, despite their diverse intentions, perceptions, and interests. This adherence is rooted in the belief that the order’s laws are less detrimental to their safety and well-being compared to the uncertain post-liberal world. This assertion posits that the dynamics of change have become more pronounced among international actors. However, it raises the question of whether the equilibrium can be altered without substantial disruptions, such as a direct confrontation between China and the United States. The equilibrium was undeniably disrupted in 2022, and the conflict in Ukraine is more indicative than a result of this. Each actor in the sequence possesses pessimistic expectations that they endeavor to modify. The restoration of order by the United States is likely to elicit adverse reactions not only in China but also throughout the global South. Simultaneously, in the event that Washington maintains a state of inactivity, it also amplifies the level of uncertainty and concurrently undermines the credibility of the order. It is

¹⁶ See a deeper argument related to this very question in: Pongrácz, Rada 2023.; or Rada, Varga 2023.

¹⁷ See for more explanation and details: Rada 2023.; Rada-Stepper 2023.

¹⁸ This is reflected in the study of the State of the Union speech by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen. The term “strategic autonomy” appears much more often than before and is interestingly associated not with defense policy but with economic and technological challenges. See: European Commission 2023.

in the EU's best interest to reinstate the equilibrium, while it would be advantageous to possess autonomous capabilities in the event that this outcome is not achieved.

The existing body of research consistently demonstrates¹⁹ that the Russian aggression has engendered a geopolitical landscape for the EU that is unprecedented in Europe since the Cold War, and in certain aspects, even comparable to the Second World War. Putin's endeavors to establish an empire and colonize Ukraine necessitate the EU to possess the capacity to engage in politically cohesive thinking on strategic matters. This would include expediting decision-making processes and perhaps reinforcing some federal, imperialistic traits, which critics argue are undesirable. Nevertheless, the presence of a strategically independent EU does not ensure that the EU will remain exempt from global wars, even if the imperative for enhanced security necessitates it. By increasing the degree of economic concentration and prosperity inside the EU would not be excluded from potential conflicts like as those between the United States and China. For instance, following a two-year period of conflict in Ukraine, the European Union is projected to incur expenses exceeding €200 billion. Furthermore, implementing a set of sanctions on China and addressing its worldwide economic repercussions would result in more severe outcomes (Sikorski 2023, 75).

From the EU's standpoint, there exists a scarcity of thorough studies that have been undertaken to examine the systemic changes associated with the conflict in Ukraine. In relation to the EU, the assertions pertaining to the United States concerning the alteration in the „liberal world order” and its ramifications are typically accurate. It is imperative to differentiate between the perspectives held by Europeans, namely the European liberal worldview, regarding the global landscape, the principles embodied by the EU, and the actualities that have emerged as a consequence of a conflict on the continent. The initiation of the Russian neocolonialist set of actions did not commence in the year 2022. As early as 2007, President Putin expressed his aspiration to reconstruct a more efficient and contemporary Soviet Union during his address at the Munich Security Forum²⁰, even if many did not want to understand it. This ambitious foreign policy, characterized by territorial expansion, was exemplified by the military intervention in Georgia in 2008, the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and the occupation of eastern Ukrainian territories in the same year. The EU, in conjunction with the United States, did not offer a definitive „imperial” reaction, which, according to certain interpretations, might have been seen as a vulnerability from Putin's perspective and a concession that is acceptable from the standpoint of the Western world and the global order may be the new status quo. In order to mitigate any misinterpretations, it has become imperative for the EU to establish precise delineations of its „zone of influence”. This entails expediting the expansion efforts in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe. The EU's credibility in strategic affairs is contingent upon its unity and its ability to effectively deepen alongside enlargement. In light of the growing competition between the United States and China, it is conceivable that Washington may exert greater pressure on the EU to enhance its defense capabilities. This could potentially manifest as an expectation, albeit not explicitly articulated, for the EU to address European security challenges, including those posed by Russia and the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine.

The interpretation of a world governed by power politics and self-help poses challenges within the framework of European liberal ideology, which is primarily characterized by a cooperative mindset. The act of aggression by Russia, in isolation, does not alter the existing global order. However, it does prompt inquiries on the strategic position that Russia would be deemed valuable in the context of a Sino-American struggle or conflict. Implementing a potential future embargo against China would result in a severe economic crisis inside the European Union, underscoring the need of avoiding the initiation of a new kind of Cold War. It is imperative to acknowledge inside the European Union that Russia will continue to exert influence beyond the conclusion of the conflict, and full isolation is unattainable due to several factors, such as the

¹⁹ See detailed description in: Rada 2023.

²⁰ See the full speech: URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQ58Yv6kP44>

energy challenge. The protracted conflict and subsequent post-conflict rehabilitation are expected to have a greater impact on the European Union's economy compared to the United States. Therefore, it is imperative for the EU to expeditiously bring an end to the war. European integration has progressed with the support of U.S. security assurances. However, in a revised global arrangement, it may not be practical to solely depend on U.S. guarantees. Therefore, it is not surprising that the potential for strategic autonomy is a key focus in visions regarding the future of the EU. EU leaders face a challenging situation as they must navigate the perceived shifts in the global order, the pressing European interests, the indispensability of certain values, and the vulnerability of EU citizens to extreme challenges such as economic hardships, energy insecurity, and the psychological burden of the risk of war escalation.

The EU's growing focus on enhancing autonomous defense capabilities in the last ten years may be attributed to deliberate efforts, as evidenced by the Treaty of Lisbon (Koller 2012), which established the framework for differentiated integration. However, the EU's defense development and opportunity measures have not yet resulted in tangible capacity-building. The concept of EU combat groups has been in existence for over two decades, with the first planning of the first combat group beginning in 2007. However, no combat group has been deployed since.²¹ The permanent structured cooperation, which is legally established under the Lisbon Treaty, was initiated in 2017 by the EU member states who expressed interest. Despite the adoption of the strategic compass in 2022²², which was already war-conscious, and the establishment of the European Peace Facility, the EU would face significant challenges in deterring a revisionist power due to the resurgence of Russian aggression and traditional warfare in Europe. The support of the United States is crucial in this regard. European unity must not only build institutional frameworks for defense capabilities, but also effectively implement them in order to enhance credibility, which is an essential prerequisite. Regarding crucial issues for the future global arrangement, such as post-war collaboration with Russia and China, there is a lack of a cohesive European stance. The EU Member States, as a whole, pursue their own foreign policy goals, which undermines the efficacy of the EU's foreign policy (Sikorski, 2023: 70).

The first comprehensive German national security strategy presented in June 2023 can be seen as a significant milestone from the standpoint of European strategic autonomous thinking. Although it may not be the document itself, critics argue that it effectively combines theoretical issue-specific security challenges with practical defense policy issues. One significant interpretation of the National Security Strategy is that Germany envisions a future wherein it assumes a significant role in promoting peace, security, and prosperity within a free yet multipolar international order. This vision is envisioned by Germany, both independently and through the enhancement of its autonomous capabilities. Germany envisions a scenario wherein it operates within the existing „liberal world order” and the institutional security framework established by NATO and the European Union. Furthermore, Germany envisions a close alliance with the United States and a partnership with China.

Milestones in the development of the European security and defence policy – a road to the Lisbon Treaty and its reforms

The roots of a European defence identity that led to the formulation and institutionalization of a unified European defense vision originated from diverse efforts in the political, economic, and ideological wayfinding after WWII. A special focus on security-related issues and security policy as an important theme on the agenda has been presented even in the earliest stages of

²¹ See further information: EU Rapid Deployment Capacity. European Union External Action. URL: https://www.ceas.europa.eu/ceas/eu-rapid-deployment-capacity-0_en

²² See further information: Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). URL: <https://www.pesco.europa.eu/about/>

European integration, and so, security policy issues have been developing organically together with the processes of economic cooperation and political cohesion. These changes were often accompanied by fierce political debates, especially between Great Britain and France, peaked in the historical speech in Zurich in the year 1946 about the necessity of a “United States of Europe”; but these debates also resulted in the construction of the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) pillar with the Treaty of Maastricht and afterward, the remarkable, innovative measures of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009, the starting period of a new common security and defence policy (CSDP).

In 1952, the French proposal for the creation of the European Defense Community, widely known and referred as the Pleven Plan, was formulated following the idealism of NATO, which was established in 1949 with the Brussels Pact, as an organization that guarantees the security of the North Atlantic allied partners by traditional military means. The Pleven plan originally envisioned a supranational security policy cooperation forum and a military decision-making structure, as well as an executive council operating with unanimous decision-making procedures, which called for the coordination of the foreign and defense policies of the participating members and would have been provided opportunities to a strictly controlled rearmament of the German armed forces and its involvement in military decision-making. In parallel, Pleven also initiated the establishment of the European Political Cooperation, which was envisioned as a federative institution above its participating nations. Finally, all of these federation efforts have failed, neither the European Political Cooperation nor the European Defense Community worked in practice (Gálik, 2008). Nevertheless, forward-looking visions supported the birth of the Western European Union (WEU) in 1954 and this institutional – as a “complementary” of NATO – can be considered a practical and ideological “forerunner” of the EU CSDP frameworks we know these days.

However, WEU with its classic, intergovernmental decision-making process started to work in the shadow of NATO from its very beginning: both the concern about the duplication of defence policy tasks and skepticism due to its institutional weakness were echoed by critics. Nevertheless, the essence and spirituality represented by WEU were handed over due to the so-called Petersberg tasks which considered military tasks with the scope and nature of humanitarian actions, disarmament, and peacekeeping and peacemaking tasks. The Petersberg Declaration signed by the Council of Ministers of the Western European Union in 1992 stated that the main activities implemented by WEU shall focus primarily on humanitarian and evacuation tasks, conflict prevention and peacekeeping, crisis management operations, reconciliation, disarmament-related tasks, as well as reconstruction, military training tasks after armed conflicts, instead of traditional military means and activities. Undertaking these dedicated tasks not only narrowed the path of institutional self-definition but also fixed the attitude towards NATO. The nature and scope of the EU’s former and current civilian missions and military operations mirror these tenets of commitment.

Tasks of the WEU were incorporated into the agenda of the European Council summits held in Cologne and Helsinki in 1999 and this step forward promoted the issue and importance of a more coherent European defence community. The European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) was named as a new framework and action toolkit, and it was also aimed in the strategic document of the Helsinki Headline Goal that by 2003, a rapid reaction force based on multinational contributions shall be established to be capable of intervening as a crisis management force even in the neighborhood of Europe, in line with the Petersberg tasks and this moment called to life the concept known today as the EU Battlegroups.

The strengthening and better visibility of the European defense identity were also enhanced by the fact that Javier Solana, formerly Secretary General of NATO, became the „face” of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the ESDP in a dual-hatted role. On one hand, his appointment as High Representative for the CFSP tasks in 1999 strengthened the Common Foreign and Security Policy as an independent pillar of the EU. At the same time, in that year, he was also entrusted with the position of Secretary General of the WEU by the member states

intending to gradually transfer WEU tasks into the framework of the ESDP. While the WEU technically functioned until 2011, its significance diminished rapidly due to the changes mentioned earlier.

The experience of the Balkan wars, the Kosovo crisis in 1999, and the following years of peacebuilding and restoration, also served as crucial incentives for the operational capabilities of the Hungarian Defence Forces, accompanied by the incorporation of WEU tasks into the working portfolio of Solana, referred to as the nickname of “Mr. CFSP”. Member states declared EU’s priorities for civilian crisis management in Santa Maria da Feira in 2000, summarized in the document of the Civilian Headline Goal. By the year 2003, EU’s first security strategy, the European Security Strategy was also published. Furthermore, the first crisis management operations were launched in the same year in Macedonia (Concordia, Proxima) and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Artemis). (Lindstrom, 2013)

Thus, the characteristic profile of the EU security and defence policy began to take shape by the mid-2000s, and in parallel, the participation of the Hungarian Defence Forces in military operations abroad started, primarily within NATO and later, after the accession to it, within the EU.

The Treaty of Lisbon (2009) is handled as the most significant and legally noteworthy development in the history of European defence identity. With this treaty, the European Union acquired an independent legal personality, consolidating the previous three pillars. The term European Security and Defence Policy was replaced by the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), reflecting a greater solidarity among member states. Among several significant institutional changes, the position of High Representative/Vice President of the European Commission (HR/VP) was established as the permanent president of the Foreign Affairs Council. The first politician appointed to this position was H.E. Catherine Ashton from the U.K. Furthermore, a professional staff was created within the European External Action Service (EEAS), the EU’s diplomatic body, responsible for the policy planning and central monitoring of CSDP and CSDP-actions.

The Treaty of Lisbon significantly enhances member states’ commitment toward mutual assistance and defence. The so-called solidarity clause enables *“The Union and its Member States shall act jointly in a spirit of solidarity if a Member State is the object of a terrorist attack or the victim of a natural or man-made disaster. The Union shall mobilise all the instruments at its disposal, including the military resources made available by the Member States to [...] assist a Member State in its territory, at the request of its political authorities, in the event of a natural or man-made disaster.”* (Article 222 of the TFEU). On the other hand, the mutual defence clause (Article 42(7) TEU) imposes obligations to assist a potentially attacked member state. This clause provides that if a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States must aid and assist it by all the means in their power, starting with diplomatic support to technical assistance and military and civilian crisis management tools. However, the clause stipulates that NATO remains the primary guarantor of collective defence. Last, but not least, the Treaty of Lisbon also provides a framework for enhancing the defence capabilities of member states, coordinating their procurements and their military operational and civilian mission participation, by establishing the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). Due to PESCO, member states can voluntarily initiate joint projects, research, and acquisitions and set joint capability development goals. National goals and strategies follow and reflect those common and coordinated directives articulated by all member states. PESCO is based on member states’ commitment to fulfilling their obligations.

After the Treaty of Lisbon and Hungarian contribution to common defense

The development and practical implementation of the EU CSDP have always been permeated by and continue to be defined by the demand for a comprehensive (integrated) approach, which has

a central impact on the EU's consideration of crisis management: practically, it reflects that member states share their best practices both for prevention of a conflict and for a lessons-learned base. For example, member states share their situational awareness reports and security analyses with each other (preventional intention), and they also adopt common political, strategic framework documents to apply coordinated efforts and follow integrated directives during the mission planning and implementation of tasks, or the allocation of different responsibilities in the field of a mission is also based on national commitments and capabilities; member states carry out operational tasks on their specific capabilities, equipment, and willingness. Essentially, we can summarize that this lofty, nice expression and message behind comprehensiveness encompasses a coordinated, strategic method of planning and implementation, derived from a common EU toolkit and the coordinated use of national crisis management resources and capabilities along EU strategic objectives.

Since the beginning of the first operations in 2003, a total of 40 CSDP military operations and civilian missions have been carried out, across three continents. These days, there are 9 ongoing military operations and 13 civilian missions under the auspices of the EU, with 4000 personnel serving in them. Military operations can be represented by training missions (-TM), advisory missions (-AM), and capacity-building missions (-CAP) aiming to develop and strengthen the autonomous defence capabilities, mechanisms and institutional background of the host nation. Ongoing military missions are the following: EUFOR Althea in Bosnia-Herzegovina; EUMPM Niger; EUNAVFOR MED Irini - maritime operation; EUNAVFOR Somalia; EUTM Mali; EUTM Mozambique; EUTM Somalia; EUTM RCA - Central African Republic; EUMAM Ukraine).

Civilian missions focus on advisory activities, capacity-building, and supporting those efforts which relate to the security sector reform (SSR) or rule of law (-LEX), including border assistance missions (-BAM). Recent civilian missions are the EUAM Iraq; EUAM RCA; EUAM Ukraine; EUBAM Libya; EUBAM Rafah; EUCAP Sahel Mali; EUCAP Somalia; EULEX Kosovo; EUM Armenia; EUMM Georgia; EUPOL COPPS - Palestine, rule of law and police mission; EU RACC Sahel; EUPM Moldova).

EU's integrated approach is particularly presented in the complex capacity-building goals in the Sahel region: the EUTM Somalia launched in 2013, the EUCAP Sahel Mali initiated in 2014, and the EU involvement in the Central African Republic started in 2016 are characterized by coordinated efforts of military, police, and civilian forces, as well as multidimensional capacity-building and advisory activities (supporting the host nation's background institutions at various levels in the military, civilian defense, education, and public administration sectors). The EEAS strives to implement these tasks in a way that the partial results and successes of each mission may complement and amplify the effects of the other mission.

According to the abovementioned details and approach, it is evident that EU's crisis management „credo” – the spectrum of the different crisis management tasks as well as the implementation – is characterized by a unique, „Security-Development Nexus”, which strongly relies on a coordinated work with national authorities and other international organizations acting in the mission field. This is particularly visible in correlation with the EU engagement and cooperation with the UN and the African Union, both in terms of high-level political engagement and practical joint work on the spot. The legal basis of CSDP missions' mandate, so the legitimacy of them is usually enabled by the decision of UN Security Council, and mutual operational support with individual regional organizations (e.g. collaboration of EUTM Mali and UN MINUSMA) can also be realized in specific tasks (Boguslawska, 2013). The EU's supportive action, including operational, financial, and development assistance - for example, the support provided to AMISOM under Operation Atalanta or the African Peace Facility financial instrument established to support the AU - complements traditional forms of military/civilian crisis management and regular political dialogues.

A well-known example of operational cooperation with NATO is represented by the joint participation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, via the EUFOR Althea mission. EUFOR Althea, in

which the largest contingent of Hungarian troops with 400 soldiers serves and is commanded by a Hungarian chief, is operating according to the so-called Berlin Plus agreement. Concluded and signed in 2002, this agreement allows the EU to utilize and take advantage of NATO's planning capabilities and intelligence assets for CSDP operations and missions, while it also provides a specific role for the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR) of NATO. The first practical example of launching a Berlin Plus operation was the Concordia in 2003, and in the year of 2004, after nine years of the NATO IFOR/SFOR commitment, NATO transferred all of its operational responsibilities to the newly launched EUFOR Althea. Upon the launch of EUFOR Althea, new parallel elements were introduced within NATO command structures: DSACEUR oversees the military execution of Althea, while the EU Operational Headquarters (OHQ) supports this work (Ujházy, 2014). The appointment of the Hungarian Major General Dr. László Sticz as operational commander includes high-level and continuous coordination between EU and NATO military cells.

As mentioned earlier, the initial and also current operational activities of the Hungarian Defence Forces are closely attached to the military involvement in the Western Balkan region. Furthermore, the current rotation of the Hungarian contingent within EUFOR is enriched with new responsibilities and tasks: air search and rescue capability, as well as air evacuation capabilities, have been involved as added responsibility areas. Additionally, there is a staff increase in the field of explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), military medical support, and logistics.

The Arab Spring and the migration crisis of 2015 also had impacts on the directions of the Hungarian Defence Forces' deployment within the EU framework and on the tenets of political decision-making. With the operational ambition of the HDF - to offer 1000 soldiers serving abroad simultaneously - currently, close to 800 of our soldiers serve in 14 countries on 3 continents, across 9 different missions. As of the summer of 2023, 22% of the total foreign operational force served within the EU framework. Since the launch of the EUTM Somalia mission until their withdrawal in February 2019, Hungarian soldiers have been serving (on average, 4 personnel), and following their withdrawal, the Hungarian contingent gradually increased in size in EUTM Mali, from 7 to 21 personnel (Szász, 2019). (In addition, Hungary joined the Takuba combat force in Mali in 2022, which is a French-led operation.) Hungarian soldiers are also present in smaller numbers in the EUMM Georgia mission and the EUNAVFOR Irini operation. (The would-be military participation in Chad, which has received considerable media attention and harsh criticism, shall be initiated upon individual request of the host nation, and not launched within the EU framework; the first contingent would have been expected to be deployed in the spring of 2024.)

The framework of this study does not allow for a detailed presentation of the EU's civilian crisis management capabilities and Hungary's role in CSDP civilian missions, even though the formulation of the Civilian Headline Goal document closely followed the publication of the Helsinki Headline Goal, and EU civilian crisis management became institutionalized rapidly after the Kosovo crisis in 1999, with the launch of the EUPM mission in 2003. Currently, the review of the Civilian Headline Goal is ongoing, and the publication of the new framework strategy is expected this year. It is also worth emphasizing that the accession of Central European states to the EU in 2004 had a significant impact on the nature of EU civilian crisis management, as these countries became directly adjacent to regions deeply affected by organized crime, instability, and corruption (such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, Turkey, Belarus, and Russia). Naturally, this had an impact on the requirements and tasks of EU civilian crisis management, as evidenced by events such as the Euromaidan protests in 2014 and the mass migration events in 2015. According to Csaba Németh's assessment, the significance of Central and Eastern European member states in EU civilian crisis management is considerable; however, these countries have not yet fully utilized their potential. Therefore, it could be crucial for the future of civilian crisis management to what extent the member states that joined the EU after May 1, 2004, will participate in EU civilian crisis management activities. (Németh, 2017.)

Current global challenges and the Hungarian Presidency

Hungary takes over the Presidency as of 1st of July 2024, and it is expected to be accompanied by tense political debates. However, this situation shall provide an opportunity for Hungary to improve its policy reputation within the EU with a pragmatic approach to certain EU policies („honest broker”). However, the working groups coordinated by the newly established Ministry for European Union Affairs generally face a challenging task, as Hungary takes over the presidency from its Belgian partners amidst preparations for the negotiations on the next seven-year, long-term budget, and right after the European Parliamentary elections in June. The Hungarian presidency will also be a little bit shorter and more concentrated (with the substantive part lasting 4.5 months), which may result in additional challenges. The intention for the Western Balkans enlargement will be a prominent topic again, but given the shadow of the Russian-Ukrainian war, improvement in the deadlock concerning the accession of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ukraine, and Moldova is hardly expected.

The chapter „Promoting Europe’s Interests and Values in the World” (V.) enlists the necessity of comprehensive assistance to Ukraine, consistent promotion of EU enlargement, and the European Political Community as a global actor, particularly in terms of energy security and flexible resilience and responsiveness to any crisis, along with the Global Gateway strategy and its nine strategic orientations. The role of EU global partners is also discussed in this context. As a special focus on security and defence policy, the Trio defined the priorities of the EU-UN strategic partnership – in line with the overview of the experience of the Security-Development Nexus), and on the other hand, it is committed to the consistent implementation of the third joint declaration signed between the EU and NATO in January 2023. The preparation for the next strategic period, covering the years 2024-2029, and the formulation of substantive proposals for the development of the CSDP are also (tentative) goals, especially in the context of the post-Covid period and events in Ukraine. The trio shall cope with no less important policy tasks than the strategic review of PESCO and the midterm review of the European Defence Fund - which are expected to spark intense debates among member states. The presidency period may also involve a review of the Council decision on the establishment of the European Peace Facility (EPF). Regarding the development of EU defence capabilities, there is a focus on identifying and addressing capability shortfalls, strengthening the EU’s defense technological and industrial base. Defining the rules for joint defense procurement is aimed at enhancing the EU’s military capabilities, which actively includes cyber diplomacy and the application of hybrid warfare tools.

The EEAS currently foresees the strengthening of the CSDP until the period ends in 2030, and so, the Strategic Compass focuses on four main areas to be developed within this timeframe (*act, invest, partner, secure*). As HR/VP Joseph Borrell expressed after the adoption of the strategic vision in 2022, the European Union must learn how to speak the language of power and effective advocacy, and there is a „quantum leap” both in the physical dimensions and practical implementation of capability development. Therefore, it shall be presumed that the general aim of the Hungarian presidency will be in correlation with an active assistance to the implementation of the strategy and the work of the EEAS with all possible means which might strengthen the (more) unified European defence cooperation as a central endeavor.

The renascent idea of establishing an EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (RDC) (*act*) refers to providing a 5000-strong rapid response force by 2025, as well as to developing the capability for the EU to get ready to launch a fully equipped CSDP mission with 200 personnel within 30 days. The improvement of the EPF financial framework to becoming as flexible as possible also aims to ensure a more coordinated, faster, and mutually reinforced, efficient planning, deployment, and implementation of operational tasks, especially in the Sahel region, in the Strait of Hormuz, and the Horn of Africa. It is hard not to notice that the active commitment of the Hungarian foreign- and defence policy in the Sahel region is prominently emphasized and it reflects the emphasis on addressing and solving problems at the local level – and this reflects the

strategic directions of the EEAS. Therefore, the Hungarian presidency is expected to coordinate member states' discussions on the readiness of the RDC and prioritize engagements in the Sahel region (and in the Western Balkans). Assigning financial support to these tasks will also remain an unavoidable topics.

The Strategic Compass emphasizes that the establishment of a Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity is essential in order to strengthen a strategic culture in the sectors of cyberspace and outer space (*secure*) - through the EU Hybrid Toolbox to coordinate member states' military and civilian cyber defense capabilities and the adoption of the new Cyber Resilience Act. The EU Satellite Centre is assigned to play a prominent role in this process, but the establishment of the European Infrastructure of Security Operations Centres is also formulated as a future goal, which would significantly contribute to enhancing the cyber capabilities of CSDP missions.

The work carried out by the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) is also a key focus to cover and bridge strategic capability gaps and prioritize the reduction of technological and industrial dependencies. Promoting synergy in defense capabilities and supporting defense-industrial cooperation (*invest*) could also be topics for the Hungarian EU presidency. This is already assumed in connection with the PESCO review, and moreover, the prominent emergence of Hungarian defense industry investments alone implies that the issue could serve as a reference point in the presidency's action plan.

In terms of partnerships (*partner*), in addition to the importance of regional partners, cooperation with bilateral partners must also be considered, especially with like-minded countries such as the USA, Canada, Norway, the United Kingdom, or Japan. Within the framework of CSDP operations and missions, the EU seeks to encourage the targeted involvement of Western Balkan, African, Asian, and Latin American partners (tailored partnership) in crisis management tasks aimed at enhancing security in their regions. Regarding China, the strategic documents go beyond defining it as an economic competitor and recognize that the EU can only find solutions to many global challenges with China's involvement, especially in the areas of climate change and sustainable development.

Climate change and the „green”, sustainability-related factors of CSDP actions are much more prominently featured in EU communication compared to the previous decade. Promoting energy efficiency in CSDP operations and missions, minimizing the ecological footprint of EU operational forces, and prioritizing green technologies and sustainable digitalization solutions will increasingly come to the fore in crisis management. Therefore, further analysis of this thematic issue may worth, even in terms of the Hungarian Defense Forces' mission preparation for the era by 2030.

Generally, the EU continues to focus on complex crises and crisis management, and so, the improvement of comprehensive response capabilities. What we can see now is a significant shift in emphasis from the traditional physical domains (land, air, maritime) to a broader and more sophisticated space, incorporating hybrid methods that require special expertise and tools to manage/tame, if not control. Thus, the consistency of EU CSDP efforts must be ensured through the coordinated efforts of the HR/VP, the various CSDP actors, and member states' defence ministers.

Conclusions

Given the challenges highlighted in the paper and the proposed methodologies, the issue remains unresolved: can a more robust, expansive, and effective EU be achieved simultaneously? What are the implications of this for Hungary and its defense policy?

The ongoing conflict in our neighbourhood is a significant obstacle but it has the potential to influence the allocation of resources, the timing of defense-industrial cooperation, and the level engagement from member states. The EU is intrinsically impractical, making it very challenging to respond to a crisis characterized by power dynamics and stringent security factors that necessitate a comprehensive and pragmatic political study. While there is general agreement

among EU member states regarding the significance of the war in Ukraine and that Russia is the aggressor, and sanctions have been approved by all countries, it is important to note that realistic and pragmatic perspectives are not commonly heard. Instead, Brussels often expresses strong criticism within the framework of liberal and typical ideological perspectives. However, it is important to recognize that, based on our current perspective and liberal ideologies, we have effectively eliminated the potential for significant, conventional conflicts, such as hybrid and civil wars, to occur in Europe during the post-Soviet Union era.

The Scholzean shift in Russian relations on the EU level has occurred amid a changing international order that has changed the international equilibrium but is undergoing changes. The majority of the European public now perceives Russia as either an adversary or a menace. The EU-Russia ties may undergo a process of normalization, but they will not persist at the same level as they were before to 2022 or earlier.

From a European perspective, the optimal global arrangement entails the expansion of political and diplomatic spheres, ensuring that the United States maintains the distinctive and intimate alliance. In a context characterized by economic openness and mutual interdependence, which aligns with the liberal foundations of the EU, a significant concern arises regarding the preservation of the American alliance's credibility. This is particularly relevant if the EU does not possess the right to unconditionally endorse the geopolitical aspirations of the United States, even if such aspirations are partially directed towards maintaining a „liberal world order”²³ that is agreeable to the EU. Resolving the political conundrum of determining the duration and level of intimate relations with China becomes challenging when China poses a threat to the global order and the United States. Furthermore, it is important to note that the EU faces a predicament wherein it is unable to relinquish its relationship with Russia.

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²³ Former Indian Foreign Minister Shivshankar Menon expressed an interesting idea, saying that maintaining order is not even in the absolute interest of the United States (see Menon 2022). The EU is the only status quo power in the world.

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