LSEMUN HIGH SCHOOL
STUDY GUIDE

EUROPEAN COUNCIL

MEET YOUR CHAIRS

Matteo Vicari - *Co-Chair*

Matteo is a first year BSc History and Politics student at LSE. Born and raised in Italy, Matteo developed an interest in geopolitics and in international affairs, with a focus on the EU. His MUN journey started in 2021 as part of Team MUN-ITALIA. Since then, he has competed and chaired in several conferences around the world ranging from Rome to New York. This year, he is part of the EU Council chairing team and hopes the committee will be both a welcoming and challenging environment for all delegates. Outside of MUN, Matteo is a committed Red Cross volunteer and a member of the European Solidarity Corps. He is also a chef in becoming who is working hard to keep up with his country's cooking standards. When he does not fail to do so (which is rare), he loves to invite his friends to dinner parties where pasta and wine are never missing.

Maël Jones - *Co-Chair*

Maël is a first year Masters student studying Contemporary European Studies at the University of Bath. He is 22 and originally from Brussels even though his parents are German and Welsh. Maël is a bit of a late bloomer when it comes to MUN. He was asked to help out as Welfare officer at the KentMUN society (he did his BA at the University of Kent) in his 3rd and since then has done MUN continuously. He has been a delegate in a number of conferences including international ones and has now taken on a more frequent chairing role, having chaired conferences such as KentMUN or LIMUN.

MEET YOUR CHAIRS

Victoria Rebok - *Co-Chair*

My name is Victoria Rebok. I am a third-year International Relations student at LSE and this will be my third year doing MUN. I first got involved in MUN in my first year of university, but became heavily involved in the LSESU UN Society during my second year. During that time, I was both Marketing Director and Diplomacy Ball Officer for the society, as well as an engaged delegate. I delegated at conferences such as LIMUN and WorldMUN, and this year I started my chairing journey at ULMUN 2023. I am currently a Training Officer for the LSESU UN Society. I'm from Argentina, although I've lived abroad most of my life. My main interests involve strength training at the gym and reading. I also have a strong interest in languages, and am currently learning Arabic and French. Aside from that, I love travelling and am constantly looking for travel recommendations and places to stay. I look forward to meeting you all!

Ruth Chloe Mahamoodally - *Assistant Chair*

Ruth is a year 12 student at London Academy of Excellence Tottenham, where she is studying History, Politics, Mathematics and Economics. She is an aspiring PPE student, in which her interests surround global politics and economics, and how it links to philosophical thoughts. She is originally from Mauritius but her journey of education is located in England. Ruth is relatively new to the world of MUN but has grown a keen interest in MUN having been a part of her school's official MUN club, and attending a mock COP 28 conference, where her passion for delegating has come from. Her main external interests involve reading, travelling to discover different countries and cultures and also playing music, as well as listening to it. She is looking forward to being a part of the assistant chair programme, as it will be an exciting new opportunity for her.

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIRS

Distinguished delegates,

We are excited and delighted to welcome you to LSE High School MUN 2024 in the EU Council committee. The topics selected are both highly important and crucial to the future of the European Union and all four of us thus hope that this will encourage and stimulate a healthy, sometimes maybe heated but always respectful debate.

While the current political situation on both issues seems not to be changing, they are often debated among policy-makers, the media and civil society and it is likely that their importance will only increase in the next few years if the EU wishes to remain an important world actor. Indeed, both topics touch directly on the very essence of the European Union: how much importance should the Union have, how much should be kept up to individual countries, and in both cases, what arguments can justify either side.

We hope to see all of you motivated, open to debate and prepared. Of course though, while the academic side of this conference is hugely important, we are all here to enjoy ourselves, so we hope you enjoy yourselves in what is going to be a great conference and an even greater committee.

See you soon,
Your Chairs,
Matteo, Victoria, Maël, and Ruth

INTRODUCTION TO THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL

The European Council is a central institution of the European Union, often seen as the de facto head of the European Union. According to the Treaty on European Union (2007), the Council is composed of the 27 Heads of State or Government (i.e. the Presidents or Prime Ministers of each country), as well as of the Council's President and the Commission's President, the latter two members of the Council do not have voting powers though as this is reserved to the leaders of each member state.

The powers of the European Council on legislative matters are generally very limited, as it cannot pass any legislative acts. They do not have the power to create specific legislation for example as this is reserved to the other institutions of the EU (Nugent, 2017, p183). Instead, the Council has a more broad role to play: it steers the general direction of the Union and sets out the overall goals it wants to see come out of the institutions. Additionally, though, an important matter reserved to the European Council are the grander decisions, often seen as more important; these include but are not limited to decisions on enlargement, constitutional matters, and security policies (p194-197). Importantly as well, the European Council is often seen as the most important body in dealing with crisis situations (Schramm and Wessels, 2023).

The overall sentiment in the European Council is often consensual, member states are often understanding of other states' issues and attempt to find solutions together. However on certain issues, especially the more controversial ones, this might not be possible and the Council will move towards voting procedures (Consilium, 2024). The official current voting procedures of the European Council will be outlined clearly in Topic B.

For this Conference though, to make things more simple and hopefully more productive, a two-thirds majority will be required of delegates in order to pass anything.

In the last two decades, a number of crises have hit the world and oftentimes have not spared the European Union. Between the Eurozone Crisis, the refugee crisis, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Brexit, Covid and a number of others. The European Council has thus more often than usually been at the centre of European decision-making. Both to deal with issues at hand and to think about more mechanisms to deal with future issues that may arise.

Both topics which have been selected are central to the EU's responsiveness in times of crisis while also touching on the difficult question of member states' sovereignty. Indeed, the current setup of voting procedures ensures the protection of sovereignty for member states seeing as, on most crucial issues, a de facto veto is in place for every country while on those seen as slightly less crucial a large majority needs to be obtained. This does however also mean that during potential crises, where time is of essence, such voting procedures often hinder quick progress. Similarly, on the question of a unified military body, the EU would greatly benefit from it on the international scale, as they would be more credible when it comes to foreign policy. On the other hand, such a body is unlikely to sit well with those wishing to keep the power within the Nation-State seeing as it takes away powers from each national government.

TOPIC A:

Increasing the EU's defence capability: assessing the possibility of a European military body through the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)

|INTRODUCTION

Because security and defence are objectively fundamental issues in our global world, it is crucial to understand the intricacies of the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) and its associated military bodies. The CSDP represents a significant aspect of the European Union's efforts to ensure peace, security, and stability both within its borders and beyond. At the heart of the CSDP lie the EU's military capabilities and institutions, including the EU Battlegroups and the European External Action Service (EEAS), which encompasses the EU Military Staff. Understanding the history, function, and debates surrounding these entities is essential for navigating discussions within the EU Council and addressing global security challenges effectively.

The Common Security and Defense Policy traces its roots back to the early stages of European integration in the aftermath of World War II. The desire to prevent future conflicts and promote stability led to the establishment of the European Defense Community in the 1950s, although it was not ratified. However, the idea of a common defence policy persisted, culminating in the creation of the CSDP through the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1999 and further strengthened by the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009. Since then, the EU has progressively developed its defence capabilities and institutions to complement NATO and assert its role as a global security actor.

Key to the implementation of the CSDP are the EU Battlegroups, which consist of multinational forces ready for rapid deployment in crisis situations. These battlegroups, each comprising approximately 1,500 personnel from different EU member states, represent the EU's tangible military capability and demonstrate its commitment to crisis management and peacekeeping operations. Furthermore, the EEAS plays a pivotal role in coordinating the EU's foreign and security policies, including the deployment of military missions and operations. At its core, the EEAS houses the EU Military Staff, which provides strategic military advice and support to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

|INTRODUCTION

The establishment of military bodies within the European Union has been a subject of both fervent support and vehement opposition. Proponents argue that a unified military force enhances Europe's ability to respond swiftly and effectively to security threats, reducing reliance on external actors like NATO and strengthening the EU's autonomy in defence matters. Moreover, shared military capabilities foster greater solidarity among EU member states and contribute to the vision of a more integrated and cohesive Europe.

Conversely, critics raise concerns about the potential duplication of efforts with existing structures such as NATO, as well as the sovereignty implications of delegating military authority to supranational institutions. Additionally, debates over defence spending, command structures, and strategic priorities highlight the complexities and divergent interests among EU member states. Sceptics caution against militarising EU policies and emphasise the importance of prioritising diplomatic and non-military solutions to global challenges.

In conclusion, the Common Security and Defense Policy and its associated military bodies represent a critical dimension of European integration and European, but also global, security governance. Understanding the historical evolution, institutional framework, and debates surrounding these entities is essential for fostering informed discussions and promoting effective cooperation within the European Union Council.

KEY TERMS

For an effective and informed debate to happen, it is essential to thoroughly comprehend the key terms that will be employed in this study guide and in the conference debates.

CSDP (COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY)

The Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) is a framework of the European Union (EU) for coordinating and implementing defence and security-related activities among its member states. Established in 1999 with the Treaty of Amsterdam and further developed by the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009, the CSDP aims to enhance the EU's capacity to manage crises, contribute to international peace and security, and promote a common defence policy among its member states (European Union External Action Service, 2022).

Key components of the CSDP encompass:
- **Crisis Management:** The CSDP enables the EU to conduct civilian and military missions and operations to manage crises, including conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and post-conflict stabilisation efforts.
- **Military Capabilities:** It seeks to develop and strengthen the EU's military capabilities through initiatives such as the EU Battlegroups, multinational rapid response forces available for deployment in crisis situations.
- **Civilian Missions:** In addition to military operations, the CSDP encompasses civilian missions focused on areas such as police training, rule of law, and institution-building in conflict-affected regions.
- **Coordination and Cooperation:** The CSDP promotes coordination and cooperation among EU member states in defence and security matters, facilitating joint decision-making and resource-sharing.

In sum, the CSDP represents the EU's commitment to fostering security and stability both within its borders and in the broader international arena, while also contributing to the development of a common European defence policy.

|KEY TERMS

NATO (NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION)

NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is a political and military alliance established in 1949 with the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty. It was created primarily as a collective defence organisation to safeguard the security and territorial integrity of its member states in North America and Europe against common threats, particularly from the Soviet Union during the Cold War (NATO, 2021).

Key points about NATO include:
- **Collective Defence:** The cornerstone of NATO is Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which stipulates that an attack against one member state is considered an attack against all member states. This principle of collective defence underscores the alliance's commitment to mutual security and solidarity.
- **Military Alliance:** NATO maintains a robust military structure, including integrated command structures and multinational forces, to plan and execute defence operations. It conducts exercises, training, and joint military activities to enhance interoperability and readiness among member states.
- **Political Forum:** In addition to its military role, NATO serves as a political forum for consultation and cooperation among member states on security issues of common concern. It provides a platform for dialogue, consensus-building, and diplomatic efforts to address emerging security challenges.
- **Partnerships:** NATO has developed partnerships with countries and organisations around the world, fostering cooperation on security-related issues such as counterterrorism, crisis management, and defence capacity-building.
- **Adaptation and Expansion:** NATO has adapted to changing security dynamics since the end of the Cold War, including through the enlargement of its membership to include former Warsaw Pact countries and the development of new strategic concepts to address evolving threats.

Overall, NATO plays a central role in ensuring transatlantic security and stability, promoting democratic values, and facilitating cooperation among its member states and partners to address contemporary security challenges.

|KEY TERMS

The European External Action Service (EEAS) is the diplomatic service of the European Union (EU), established in 2010 by the Treaty of Lisbon. It serves as the EU's foreign affairs and diplomatic arm, tasked with conducting the Union's external relations and promoting its interests and values on the global stage (European External Action Service, 2023).

Key functions of the EEAS comprise:
- **Representation:** The EEAS represents the EU in international fora and negotiations, including diplomatic missions and engagements with non-EU countries and organisations.
- **Foreign Policy Coordination:** It coordinates the EU's common foreign and security policy (CFSP), ensuring coherence and consistency in the Union's external actions across various policy areas.
- **Crisis Management:** The EEAS plays a central role in managing international crises and conflicts, deploying civilian and military missions as part of the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP).
- **Diplomatic Service:** It provides diplomatic support and advice to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who also serves as the Vice-President of the European Commission.
- **Policy Analysis and Reporting:** The EEAS conducts analysis of global developments, produces reports, and provides strategic assessments to EU institutions and member states to inform decision-making.

Hence, the EEAS serves as the EU's diplomatic nerve centre, working to advance the Union's interests, promote its values, and contribute to peace, stability, and prosperity in the world.

KEY TERMS

EDA (EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY)

The European Defence Agency (EDA) is an EU agency established in 2004 to support member states in improving their defence capabilities and fostering cooperation in defence-related activities. The primary aim of the EDA is to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and interoperability of European defence capabilities, thereby strengthening the EU's overall security and defence posture (European Defence Agency, 2022).

Key functions of the European Defence Agency include:

- **Capability Development:** The EDA facilitates collaborative capability development projects among member states to address common defence challenges and gaps. This includes initiatives to enhance military capabilities, research and development efforts, and the promotion of defence innovation.
- **Pooling and Sharing:** The agency promotes the concept of "pooling and sharing" among member states, encouraging them to jointly procure defence equipment, share resources, and cooperate in training and logistics to optimise defence spending and resources.
- **Research and Technology:** The EDA supports research and technology initiatives in the defence sector, fostering innovation and technological advancement to improve the capabilities of European armed forces and enhance their resilience to emerging security threats.
- **Industry Cooperation:** The agency facilitates cooperation between defence industries across EU member states, promoting collaboration, competitiveness, and the development of a robust European defence industrial base.

Thus, the European Defence Agency plays a crucial role in promoting defence cooperation and integration within the European Union, contributing to the development of a more capable, resilient, and responsive European defence sector.

KEY TERMS

EU Battlegroups are multinational military units composed of troops contributed by European Union (EU) member states. These battle groups are designed to be rapidly deployable, capable of conducting a range of military operations, including crisis management, peacekeeping, and humanitarian assistance, in support of the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) (European Union, 2020). Each battlegroup typically consists of around 1,500 personnel, drawn from different EU member states, and is supported by air, naval, and logistical assets.

The primary purpose of EU Battlegroups is to enhance the EU's ability to respond swiftly and effectively to emerging security threats and crises, both within and beyond its borders. They are intended to provide the EU with a credible and flexible military capability that can be deployed quickly to stabilise conflict zones, protect civilians, and support international peace and security efforts.

EU Battlegroups are on standby for six months at a time, with two battlegroups available for deployment every six months, ensuring continuous readiness and availability. While they have not been deployed frequently in practice, EU Battlegroups serve as a visible symbol of the EU's commitment to collective defence and crisis management, complementing other defence initiatives and contributing to the overall security architecture of the European Union.

|KEY ISSUES

In recent discourse, the notion of "strategic autonomy" in defence, emphasised by EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, has brought to the forefront discussions regarding the European Union's imperative to independently delineate and pursue its security and defence interests, reducing reliance on external actors, notably the United States. The attainment of military self-sufficiency for the EU encompasses a multifaceted endeavour, involving various facets:

NECESSITY OF MILITARY SELF-SUFFICIENCY

- **Changing Geopolitical Landscape:** The fluid global security landscape, marked by shifting power dynamics, geopolitical rivalries, and emerging threats, underscores the necessity for the EU to possess the capacity to safeguard its interests autonomously and contribute to global stability independently (European Parliament 2021).
- **Transatlantic Relations:** While the EU esteems its partnership with the United States in security and defence affairs, there is a burgeoning sentiment for the EU to diminish its dependence on American capabilities and leadership, particularly considering divergent strategic interests and concerns regarding reliability (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2022).
- **EU's Role as a Global Actor:** As a significant economic and political entity globally, there is an anticipation for the EU to assume a more assertive role in addressing security challenges, fostering peace and stability, and upholding international norms and values. Military self-sufficiency could bolster the EU's credibility and influence as a provider of global security (European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2020).
- **Resource Allocation and Opportunity Costs:** Pursuing strategic autonomy in defence necessitates substantial financial and resource allocations, which might divert resources from other critical areas such as economic development, social welfare, and climate action. Evaluating the trade-offs and opportunity costs of investing in defence capabilities is vital for ensuring a well-balanced approach.
- **Complementarity with NATO:** Achieving strategic autonomy does not imply severing ties with NATO or undermining the transatlantic alliance. Instead, it should be perceived as a method to bolster European contributions to collective defence endeavours within NATO's framework, while also bolstering the EU's capacity for autonomous action when required.

PATHWAYS TO ACHIEVE MILITARY SELF-SUFFICIENCY

- **Military Capabilities Development:** The EU must invest in advancing and augmenting its military capabilities across various domains, encompassing land, air, sea, cyber, and space. This entails not only augmenting defence expenditure but also prioritising investments in research, development, and procurement of cutting-edge defence technologies and equipment (European Defence Agency, 2023).
- **Defense Industrial Base:** Establishing a robust and competitive defence industrial base within the EU is pivotal for realising strategic autonomy. This necessitates fostering collaboration and integration among defence industries across member states, as well as fostering innovation, technology transfer, and indigenous production capabilities.
- **Operational Capabilities:** The EU should cultivate and sustain a spectrum of operational capabilities, including rapid response forces, logistical support, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets, and command and control structures. These capabilities are imperative for executing military operations autonomously or in conjunction with allies and partners.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** While striving for self-sufficiency, the EU must uphold strategic partnerships and alliances with like-minded countries and organisations, such as NATO, to tackle common security challenges and enhance collective defence capabilities. Collaborating with NATO can complement the EU's endeavours and ensure interoperability with transatlantic partners (European Commission, 2022).
- **Political Will and Coordination:** Achieving strategic autonomy necessitates robust political will and coordination among EU member states, as well as efficient decision-making mechanisms within EU institutions. This entails surmounting disparities in defence priorities, strategic cultures, and national interests among member states to forge a cohesive approach to defence and security policy (Council of the European Union, 2021).

In conclusion, while the concept of strategic autonomy in defence may epitomise an aspirational objective for the EU, it is not bereft of challenges and intricacies. Whether military self-sufficiency is imperative hinges on diverse factors, including geopolitical realities, the EU's role as a global actor, and the readiness of member states to commit requisite resources and political capital. Ultimately, striking the appropriate balance between autonomy and cooperation, both within the EU and with external partners, will be indispensable for effectively addressing contemporary security challenges and safeguarding European interests amidst an increasingly uncertain global landscape.

CASE STUDIES

The historical trajectory of European defence policy is characterised by a series of attempts to create a unified military body capable of addressing the continent's security challenges. By examining three pivotal moments — the start of the European integration project in the 1950s, the end of the Cold War, and the Kosovo War — we can gain deeper insights into the complex dynamics shaping European defence integration and the challenges encountered along the way.

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROJECT

The origins of European defence integration can be traced back to the aftermath of World War II, when European leaders sought to prevent future conflicts through economic and political cooperation. At the heart of this endeavour was the ambitious proposal for a European Defense Community (EDC) in the early 1950s.

The EDC envisioned the creation of a supranational military force, reflecting the aspirations of European states to forge a collective defence mechanism. However, the EDC faced formidable obstacles, particularly in France, where concerns over national sovereignty and fears of relinquishing control over military forces to supranational institutions proved insurmountable. The failure of the EDC highlighted the enduring tension between national interests and the imperative of collective security, underscoring the complexities of reconciling sovereignty with integration in European defence policy.

END OF THE COLD WAR

The end of the Cold War heralded a new era of possibilities and challenges for European defence cooperation. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Europe's security landscape underwent profound transformations, prompting calls for a more coherent and independent defence policy. Initiatives such as the Western European Union (WEU) and the Petersberg Tasks sought to bolster European defence capabilities and prepare for a broader range of security challenges. However, the WEU struggled to assert its relevance amid NATO's continued dominance in European security affairs. Despite efforts to foster greater integration, institutional weaknesses, overlapping responsibilities, and divergent national interests hampered the WEU's effectiveness, highlighting the complexities of achieving genuine integration in a landscape characterised by competing alliances and strategic priorities.

CASE STUDIES

KOSOVO WAR

The Kosovo War in the late 1990s served as a watershed moment for European defence policy, exposing the continent's dependence on the United States for military capabilities and the need for greater autonomy in crisis management and intervention. In response to these challenges, the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) was established to enhance EU capabilities for crisis management, peacekeeping, and conflict resolution. While the ESDP represented a significant step towards greater European defence integration, initial deployments faced logistical challenges and relied heavily on NATO assets, revealing the gap between ambitions and capabilities. The Kosovo War underscored the imperative of developing autonomous EU military capabilities, yet progress in this regard remained limited, raising questions about the effectiveness and credibility of the ESDP as a vehicle for European defence cooperation.

In conclusion, the historical case studies provide valuable insights into the complexities and challenges of European defence policy. The failures of past initiatives such as the EDC and the limitations of the WEU, as well as the evolving dynamics of the ESDP in the aftermath of the Kosovo War (European Security and Defence College, 2023), underscore the enduring tension between national sovereignty and collective security in Europe (European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2021). As European leaders continue to grapple with the imperative of defence integration in an increasingly uncertain world, the lessons learned from these historical experiences will remain pertinent in shaping the future trajectory of European defence cooperation (European Parliament, 2022).

TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

Transatlantic relations have historically been a cornerstone of European security, with NATO serving as the primary mechanism for defence cooperation between Europe and the United States (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, 1949). However, the prospect of a European military body has the potential to reshape these relations. The creation of a more autonomous European defence capability could lead to greater European strategic independence, reducing reliance on the United States for military capabilities and decision-making.

This shift could potentially strain transatlantic relations, particularly if perceived as a challenge to NATO's supremacy or as duplicating existing structures (European Institute for Security Studies, 2021). However, a well-coordinated approach that emphasises complementarity rather than competition could mitigate tensions. For example, NATO's continued role in collective defence could be reinforced, while the EU focuses on crisis management, peacekeeping, and stabilisation missions where NATO is not engaged (Council of the European Union, 2020).

CASE STUDY: PESCO (2017)

PESCO, established in December 2017, represents a pivotal development in European defence integration. It serves as a framework for EU member states to deepen cooperation in defence matters, aiming to enhance the EU's defence capabilities and foster military integration among member states (European External Action Service, 2017). This initiative was prompted by a confluence of security challenges, including instability in the Middle East, terrorism, and concerns about Russia's assertive behaviour.

The development of PESCO has introduced strains in transatlantic relations, notably concerning the traditional role of NATO as the primary mechanism for European security cooperation with the United States. PESCO's emergence has raised concerns in Washington about potential duplication of efforts and a divergence in strategic priorities between the EU and the US. Some American policymakers and analysts perceive PESCO as a potential challenge to NATO's supremacy, which has been the cornerstone of European security since its inception.

The creation of PESCO has led to tensions between Europe and the United States. The perception of PESCO as a potential threat to NATO's cohesion and effectiveness has caused unease among US policymakers. There are concerns that PESCO could weaken NATO's unity and dilute its focus on collective defence, undermining the alliance's ability to respond effectively to common security threats. Moreover, the development of PESCO has prompted debates about burden-sharing within NATO, with some European countries (France, Italy and Germany) accused of prioritising EU defence initiatives over their NATO commitments (European Union, 2017).

IMPACT ON EU-US RELATIONS

The establishment of a European military body could have both positive and negative effects on EU-US relations. On one hand, greater European defence autonomy could lead to a more balanced partnership, with the EU playing a more assertive role in global security affairs. This could foster a more equal and mutually beneficial relationship between the EU and the US, with shared responsibilities and burdens in addressing common security challenges (European External Action Service, 2019).

On the other hand, concerns about duplication of efforts, divergence in strategic priorities, and potential fragmentation of the transatlantic alliance could strain EU-US relations. The United States may view the development of a European military body with suspicion, fearing that it could undermine NATO cohesion or weaken America's influence in European security affairs (European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2020). Bridging these divergent perspectives will require diplomatic skill and a commitment to dialogue and cooperation between the EU and the US.

CASE STUDY: LIBYA INTERVENTION (2011)

The intervention in Libya exposed divisions within NATO and highlighted the limitations of European defence capabilities. While the United States played a crucial role in providing logistical support and intelligence, European allies led the operation.

However, the lack of adequate European military capabilities and strategic coordination underscored the need for greater European defence integration. A European military body could have enhanced EU-US cooperation by providing a more capable and unified partner for crisis management and intervention missions (Council of the European Union, 2011).

IMPACT ON MEMBER STATES' BILATERAL/REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

The creation of a European military body could also have implications for member states' bilateral and regional partnerships. Member states with strong historical ties to the United States, such as the United Kingdom, may face challenges in balancing their commitments to both NATO and the EU (European External Action Service, 2020). Similarly, countries with close security relationships with non-EU states, such as Sweden and Finland with NATO, may need to navigate complex geopolitical dynamics.

Bilateral and regional treaties could be affected by the emergence of a European military body, as member states may reassess their security arrangements in light of evolving European defence cooperation. Some may seek to strengthen ties with EU partners to enhance collective security, while others may prioritise maintaining close relationships with non-EU allies (European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2019). The key challenge will be to ensure that the development of a European military body complements, rather than undermines, existing partnerships, thereby contributing to broader stability and security in Europe and beyond.

CASE STUDY: FRANCO-GERMAN DEFENSE COOPERATION

France and Germany have a long history of defence cooperation, exemplified by projects such as the Eurofighter and the Airbus A400M. However, the establishment of a European military body could potentially impact bilateral defence arrangements between these two countries. While closer integration within the EU could strengthen Franco-German cooperation and enhance their collective defence capabilities, it may also require them to reassess their relationships with other partners, such as the United States and NATO (Council of the European Union, 2018).

CASE STUDY: NORDIC DEFENSE COOPERATION

The Nordic countries, including Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland, have a tradition of cooperation on defence and security issues. However, their relationships with the EU and NATO vary, with Sweden and Finland maintaining non-alignment and close ties with NATO through the Partnership for Peace program. The establishment of a European military body could prompt these countries to reevaluate their security arrangements and the balance between EU integration and NATO cooperation (Nordic Council, 2020).

In conclusion, the establishment of a European military body has the potential to significantly impact international involvement in European defence policy. While it could lead to greater European autonomy and a rebalancing of transatlantic relations, it also poses challenges in terms of managing relations with the United States and navigating the complexities of member states' bilateral and regional partnerships. Effective diplomacy, strategic coordination, and a commitment to shared objectives will be essential in ensuring that the evolution of European defence policy contributes to broader peace and stability in the region.

FINDING A SOLUTION: POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The question of European defence policy is a multifaceted issue that demands nuanced consideration of various factors. As European leaders navigate the complexities of ensuring the continent's security and defence capabilities, three potential solutions have emerged, each offering a distinct approach. By delving deeper into the strengths, weaknesses, and implications of these solutions, we can gain richer insights into the path forward for European defence policy.

VERY STRONG EU ARMY PARALLEL, BUT INDEPENDENT FROM NATO

A prominent solution proposed for European defence policy is the establishment of a very strong EU army operating independently from NATO. Proponents of this approach argue that such an army would provide the European Union with greater autonomy and control over its security and defence policy (European Union, 2021). The European Defence Community (EDC) proposed in the 1950s serves as a historical example of this concept. The EDC aimed to create a supranational European army, but it failed to materialise due to concerns over national sovereignty and diverging strategic interests among member states (European Parliament, 2020).

However, the challenges associated with this solution are profound. The potential strain on transatlantic relations is exemplified by the Iraq War in 2003, where European countries were divided over military intervention without UN approval (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2019). The rift underscored the complexities of balancing European autonomy with the transatlantic alliance. Additionally, the logistical and political hurdles of building a fully independent EU army are exemplified by ongoing debates over the European Defence Fund and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), which aim to enhance European defence capabilities but face challenges in implementation and coordination among member states (European Commission, 2021).

FINDING A SOLUTION: POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

STRONG EU MILITARY BODY WITH DIFFERENT TASKS THAN NATO

Another proposed solution is to strengthen the existing EU military body with a focus on tasks different from NATO. This approach involves enhancing the EU's capabilities for crisis management, peacekeeping, and humanitarian intervention, while leaving collective defence responsibilities to NATO (European External Action Service, 2020). The European Union Training Mission (EUTM) in Mali provides a practical example of this approach. The mission, launched in 2013, aimed to train and advise Malian armed forces in their fight against Islamist insurgents, complementing NATO's broader security efforts in the region (European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2018).

Advantages of this solution include leveraging existing EU structures and mechanisms, such as the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), to enhance European capabilities in niche areas. However, challenges persist in defining clear and mutually exclusive tasks for the EU and NATO. The Kosovo War in the late 1990s highlighted the complexities of coordinating EU and NATO operations, underscoring the need for greater cooperation and interoperability between the two organisations (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2020).

STRENGTHENING THE EUROPEAN SIDE OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ALLIANCE

A third option for European defence policy is to focus on strengthening the European side of NATO. This solution involves enhancing European contributions to NATO's collective defence efforts while maintaining the transatlantic partnership (European Parliament Research Service, 2019). The Baltic states' membership in NATO serves as a compelling case study in this regard. Since joining the alliance in 2004, the Baltic states have benefited from NATO's security guarantees and collective defence mechanisms, enhancing their security and stability in the face of external threats (NATO, 2021).

Advantages of this solution include the tried and tested framework of NATO, which provides a mechanism for collective defence and security cooperation. However, challenges arise in achieving consensus among member states on key strategic issues. The ongoing debate over burden-sharing and defence spending within NATO illustrates the complexities of balancing national interests with collective responsibilities (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2020).

In conclusion, each proposed solution to European defence policy offers both opportunities and challenges. While a very strong EU army could provide greater autonomy and flexibility, it risks straining transatlantic relations and faces obstacles in coordination and integration. A strong EU military body with different tasks than NATO seeks to complement existing efforts but requires clear task definition and political will. Strengthening the European side of NATO preserves the transatlantic partnership but may reinforce NATO dominance and sovereignty concerns. Ultimately, the path forward for European defence policy will require careful consideration of these factors, as well as a commitment to dialogue, cooperation, and shared responsibility among European partners and with external allies like the United States.

FINDING A SOLUTION: BLOC POSITIONS

European defence policy has become a focal point of discussion within the European Union (EU), with member states holding diverse positions on how best to enhance collective security and defence capabilities. Understanding the perspectives of key blocs and countries is crucial for navigating the complexities of European defence cooperation. This report provides an in-depth analysis of the positions of various blocs and countries within the EU regarding the European Defence Policy, supplemented by relevant case studies that exemplify each bloc's stance.

FRANCE

France stands at the forefront of advocating for strengthening military cooperation within the EU to achieve military self-sufficiency (French Ministry of Defence, 2020). With its possession of nuclear capabilities, France sees itself as a potential leader in any European military body (European Leadership Network, 2021).

CASE STUDY: OPERATION BARKHANE IN THE SAHEL REGION

France's leading role in this operation, aimed at combating terrorism and instability in the Sahel, exemplifies its commitment to European defence cooperation and its willingness to take on leadership responsibilities in joint military initiatives (Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, France, 2021).

ITALY AND GERMANY

Italy and Germany closely align with France's position on strengthening military cooperation within the EU. They recognize the importance of European defence integration in enhancing the EU's ability to respond effectively to security challenges (German Federal Ministry of Defence, 2020).

CASE STUDY: EU BATTLEGROUPS

Italy and Germany's participation in EU Battlegroups, rapid reaction forces designed for crisis management and peacekeeping missions, demonstrates their commitment to joint military initiatives within the EU framework (European Union External Action, 2021).

FINDING A SOLUTION: BLOC POSITIONS

EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Eastern European countries express wariness of potential weak European military bodies that could not counterbalance Russian expansionism. They prioritise the need for a robust and credible European defence policy to deter external threats (Atlantic Council, 2019).

CASE STUDY: RUSSIAN ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA

The annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 heightened security concerns among Eastern European countries and underscored the importance of a unified European response to regional security challenges (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2020).

UK, DENMARK, AND THE NETHERLANDS

Denmark, and the Netherlands are sceptical about the prospect of a weaker version of NATO within the EU. They emphasise the importance of maintaining NATO as the cornerstone of European security and defence cooperation (NATO, 2021).

CASE STUDY: NATO ENHANCED FORWARD PRESENCE

The deployment of NATO Enhanced Forward Presence battlegroups in Eastern Europe, with contributions from the UK, Denmark, and the Netherlands, illustrates their commitment to NATO's collective defence efforts and their preference for transatlantic security arrangements (Danish Ministry of Defence, 2020).

The diverse positions of blocs and countries within the EU reflect the complex dynamics shaping European defence policy. While some member states advocate for closer integration and military self-sufficiency within the EU, others express concerns about the potential implications for existing security arrangements, such as NATO. Finding common ground among these divergent perspectives will be essential for advancing European defence cooperation and enhancing collective security in the face of evolving security challenges.

FINDING A SOLUTION: QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

When dealing with EU defence policy reforms, several key questions must be considered to ensure effective decision-making and implementation. These questions encompass various aspects of defence policy, ranging from strategic priorities to operational capabilities. Here are some of the main questions to consider:

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- What are the overarching strategic objectives of EU defence policy reforms?
- How do these objectives align with broader European security interests and priorities?
- What role does the EU envision playing in addressing contemporary security challenges, both within and beyond its borders?

INTEGRATION AND COOPERATION

- How can EU defence policy reforms enhance integration and cooperation among member states?
- What mechanisms are needed to facilitate closer collaboration in areas such as defence planning, procurement, and capability development?
- How can the EU leverage existing frameworks, such as the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), to deepen defence integration?

CAPABILITIES AND READINESS

- What specific capabilities does the EU need to develop or enhance to meet current and emerging security threats?
- How can the EU improve military readiness and responsiveness to crises, including through the establishment of rapid reaction forces?
- What investments are required to modernise defence capabilities and ensure interoperability among member states?

FINDING A SOLUTION: QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

RESOURCE ALLOCATION

- How should resources be allocated to support EU defence policy reforms, including defence spending and investment in research and development?
- What mechanisms can be employed to ensure fair burden-sharing among member states, particularly in light of differing defence budgets and priorities?
- How can the EU optimise resource utilisation to maximise the effectiveness of defence initiatives?

EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

- What role do external partnerships, particularly with NATO and other international organisations, play in EU defence policy reforms?
- How can the EU strengthen cooperation with non-EU European countries and other strategic partners to enhance collective security?
- How should the EU engage with third-party actors, such as defence industries and non-governmental organisations, to support defence policy objectives?

POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- What are the political dynamics within the EU regarding defence policy reforms, and how can consensus be reached among member states?
- How do national interests and strategic priorities influence the willingness of member states to participate in EU defence initiatives?
- What mechanisms are in place to address potential conflicts of interest or divergent views among member states?

DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

- How can the EU ensure democratic accountability and transparency in decision-making processes related to defence policy reforms?
- What mechanisms exist for engaging with stakeholders, including civil society organisations and the public, on defence policy issues?
- How can the EU enhance transparency in defence procurement and contracting processes to promote trust and accountability?

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TOPIC B:

Reforming the current voting procedures of Qualified Majority Vote and Unanimous Vote within the European Council

|INTRODUCTION

Tasked with setting the EU's political agenda, the European Council represents the highest level of political cooperation amongst EU countries. As such, it is composed of the 27 Heads of State or Government, as well as of the Council's President and the Commission's President. However, the latter two members of the Council do not have voting powers (Consilium, 2024).

Despite its limited role in legislative matters, the Council remains a vital EU body. It is responsible for determining the organisation's general policy direction and priorities, playing an especially crucial role in strategic matters. Indeed, the European Council is the primary actor in the formulation of the EU's foreign policy. According to the Treaty of Lisbon, which forms the constitutional basis of the EU, the European Council "ensure[s] the external representation of the Union on issues concerning its common foreign and security policy" (TEU, Art. 15, para. 6). Crucially, the Council takes a leading role in crisis situations through the Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR), which is a coordination mechanism that brings together affected actors to ensure a streamlined response (Consilium, 2024). It has issued many statements on impending crises, like in March 1999 on the eve of NATO air strikes in Yugoslavia (Schoutheete, 2012, p.59). Most recently, the European Council has responded to the Russian invasion of Ukraine by issuing a plethora of sanctions, amongst them the September 2022 suspension of the Visa Facilitation Agreement between Russia and the EU.

As a result of its foreign policy and crisis-focused mandate, it is imperative that the European Council is able to take decisions in a swift and efficient manner. In this context, the Council's primary voting mechanism– Unanimous Voting– has come under increased scrutiny due to its purported inefficiency.

Most decisions in the Council are taken by Unanimous Voting, which requires the approval of all member states (Consilium, 2024). Although useful for presenting a united front, this voting mechanism often slows down decision-making within the Council as disagreements between states can prevent resolutions from being adopted. An example of this– which will be explored in the 'Case Studies' section of the Guide– is Hungary's continued blocking of aid to Ukraine, as well as its watering down of sanctions on Russia.

|INTRODUCTION

However, the Treaty on European Union (TEU) provides an alternative to Unanimous Voting in the form of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV). This system generally requires the approval of 55% of member states, representing at least 65% of the population, for decisions to pass (Consilium, 2024). Although used regularly within the Council of Ministers, this system is rarely employed in the European Council, which deals with so-called 'sensitive' issues that require unanimity (Consilium, 2024). Nevertheless, the ability to adopt resolutions in a more expedient and efficient manner has made QMV a popular alternative to Unanimous Voting. Germany and France stand amongst those countries urging for reform, with Berlin arguing that QMV should be applied in issues relating to human rights and sanctions. However, smaller countries remain sceptical as they may lose influence over EU decision-making compared to larger EU countries.

A second alternative is Simple Majority Voting, although this is mainly used in procedural votes (Consilium, 2024).

In conclusion, the debate over European Council voting reform hinges on vital questions of representativeness and efficiency. Whilst Unanimous Voting allows for the representation of all member states, it slows down decision-making, hindering the effectiveness of the Council. This is especially true when dealing with contentious issues, as most foreign policy and security matters tend to be. By contrast, QMV allows for decisions to be taken in a more swift and efficient manner, making it ideal for crisis situations. However, by disproportionally advantaging more populous countries, QMV reduces representation, possibly leading to negative repercussions on EU unity in the longer-term.
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KEY TERMS

This voting system requires the approval of all 27 member states for a decision to pass. However, under this system, a member state can choose to not interfere with a decision taken by the Council through 'constructive abstention'. This means that a state in disagreement with a collective decision can choose to abstain rather than veto. The action is then approved and the member state, following a "spirit of mutual solidarity," commits not to interfere (Liboreiro, 2023).

Unanimous Voting is used in matters that the EU deems to be 'sensitive'. These include:

- Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)
- Citizenship
- EU membership
- Harmonisation of national legislation on indirect taxation
- EU finances
- Certain provisions in the field of justice and home affairs
- Harmonisation of national legislation in the field of social security and social protection (Consilium, 2024).

Since the European Council deals with issues primarily related to Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), Unanimous Voting is the main voting mechanism utilised.

QUALIFIED MAJORITY VOTING (QMV)

The current rules for Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) are specified in the Treaty of Lisbon, and have been effective since 2014. There are two types of QMV: standard and reinforced (Consilium, 2024).

Standard QMV (also known as the 'double-majority rule') requires:
- That 55% of member states vote in favour - in practice this means 15 out of 27
- That the proposal is supported by member states representing at least 65% of the total EU population.

However, QMV also has a blocking minority provision. This means that, for a decision to fail, there must be at least 4 Council members that oppose it. If there are less than 4 Council members who oppose the decision, the percentage of population which the member states voting in favour comprise is irrelevant for the definition of the qualified majority (Consilium, 2024).

Reinforced QMV is generally used by the Council of Ministers when voting on a proposal not coming from the Commission or the high representative. However, it may be incorporated into the decision-making mechanism of the Council on a potential solution. Reinforced QMV requires:

- That at least 72% of member states vote in favour - in practice this means at least 20 out of 27.
- That member states supporting the proposal represent at least 65% of the EU population.

As mentioned, QMV is not often used in the European Council as it is reserved for issues that are not related to CFSP. However, QMV may be used in the Council in matters that do not entail "military or defence implications" (Liboreiro, 2023). A move to QMV requires the unanimous approval of all member states. This provision is known as the Passerelle Clause (TEU, Art. 48).

SIMPLE MAJORITY VOTING

This voting system requires the approval of 14 out of 27 member states for a decision to pass (Consilium, 2024). **Simple Majority Voting** is used in procedural matters related to the standard functioning of the Council.

EFFICIENCY

The main issue resulting from Unanimous Voting is the inefficiency that this creates. Requiring the approval of all member states implies that decisions will inevitably get delayed by disagreements, arguments and confrontations. This inhibits the Council's ability to respond to crisis situations in a timely manner, hindering the efficiency of the EU as a whole.

According to a report written for the European Parliament, veto rights were used at least 30 times between 2016 and 2022 (Szép, 2023). While 14 of these were used to prevent/delay the approval of joint declarations, 8 were used to prevent sanctions and 2 were used to halt Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions (Szép, 2023). This shows the historic role of the veto power in blocking/delaying EU actions on crucial issues. It is also worth noting that the actual number may be much higher, given that the report only accounts for official vetoes and does not take into consideration vetoes used in informal settings.

The issue of efficiency is becoming progressive noticeable as geopolitical shifts force the Council to deal with an increasing number of international crises. The Russian invasion of Ukraine, for example, highlighted the volatility of this system by showing how a lone state can block the Council from taking critical, time-sensitive decisions. Indeed, Hungary has developed a history of blocking both aid to Ukraine and sanctions to Russia, whom it considers an ally (Rauhala & Ríos, 2024). Most recently, the Israel-Hamas war has brought divisions within the Council to light. Following the 7th October attacks, it took the Council 9 days to release a statement (Lynch, 2023), with Ireland and Spain providing the main pushback against its wording. Both of these crises underscore the Council's inability to respond swiftly to foreign policy events, pointing to the need for further voting reform.

UNITY

Proponents of Unanimous Voting highlight that its inefficiency is outweighed by its benefits. Namely, the principle of unanimity helps maintain a sense of unity and internal coherence within the EU. As European Council President Charles Michel points out, unanimity "pushes us to work unremittingly to unite the member states" (Repčys, 2022). Indeed, there is an informal 'code of conduct' in European Council negotiations, which includes rules and practices on consensus building: taking everyone on board, not being a 'trouble-maker', justifying your position if it goes against the consensus, etc (Pomorska & Wessel, 2021). These codes exist because negotiations occur under the shadow of the veto. Formally introducing Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) would disturb these codes, as negotiations would occur under the shadow of QMV (Pomorska & Wessel, 2021). This means that there will be no incentive to keep everyone on board, thus hindering unity and collaborative spirit within the Council.

Additionally, having member states publicly disavow decisions taken by the Council (as would likely be the case should QMV be extended to foreign policy issues) would significantly weaken the EU's credibility, as it would diminish its reputation as a cohesive foreign policy actor (Repčys, 2022). It might also lead to a less unified foreign policy in practice, as member states who opposed the decision are unlikely to partake in its application. As such, by ensuring that all states are on board, Unanimous Voting ensures a sense of external cohesion and unity which solidify the EU's reputation as a united foreign policy actor.

An additional concern is that revoking Unanimous Voting in favour of Quality Majority Voting (QMV) would lead to fragmentation amongst EU states. The discontent with the policies adopted by the Council might prompt member states to consider leaving the organisation all-together, again undermining the strength of the EU. This is specially concerning in a post-Brexit world and in the context of the recent rise in populist sentiments across the region, as seen in the recent Dutch elections.

|KEY ISSUES

Although Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) may lead to more expedient decision-making, concerns have been raised over the system's level of representation. With its provision that the number of member states in favour must account for at least 65% of the region's population, QMV significantly benefits larger states whilst decreasing the influence of smaller states. As a result, this may increase the sense of disenfranchisement by smaller states– who already report that they face unequal access to the European External Action Service (EEAS) and are not being 'listened to' in the Council (Pomorska & Wessel, 2021). This may decrease their engagement in the Council, thus increasing fragmentation.

There is also concern that the unrepresentative nature of QMV may lead to more ineffective decisions being taken. This is because, by scrapping the unanimity requirement, member states will have no incentive to cooperate with smaller states to reach a unified decision. Oftentimes, these states are vital for the implementation of foreign policy decisions, particularly as it pertains to the Balkans or Eastern Europe (Pomorska & Wessel, 2021). Not having them on board will thus lead to issues in the implementation of foreign policy, further harming the EU's effectiveness.

Furthermore, by failing to take into account the views of smaller states, QMV may lead to the Council taking decisions that negatively affect the population in those areas. Decisions on energy and economic policies, such as those introduced in 2022 to manage the shortages caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, may disproportionately affect some populations more than others. This highlights the need for equal representation in the Council, regardless of country size.

FLEXIBILITY

A key issue emerging from this discussion is the need for increased flexibility in European Council decision-making. Although the Council can choose to adopt QMV for certain issues through the Passerelle Clause, this still requires the unanimous approval of the Council. Further, this Clause does not apply in cases of CFSP, which require that decisions are approved through Unanimous Voting. This rigid structure makes fluid and flexible decision-making challenging, hindering progress in times of crisis.

CASE STUDIES

Let us have a look at some key case studies that highlight the reasons for why some call for a reform of the Council's procedures while trying to understand the arguments put forward by those who see them as a necessity for the EU to continue functioning well.

While there has always been some disagreements among EU leaders in how to deal with the Russia-Ukraine crisis, none have been as visible as the disagreements with the EU's 'most pro-Russian' leader, Orban (Walker, O'Carroll. and Bayer, 2023). Hungary has been persistent in making life complicated for the European Council, since the beginning of the conflict Orban has blocked aid to the Ukraine (Liboreiro, 2023), watered down Russian sanctions (Reuters, 2023) and pledged to keep ties to Russia (Euractiv, 2023) and while most, if not all, EU leaders disagreed with the Hungarian position on the issue, this did not force Hungary's hand. It was indeed possible for Hungary to consistently play with this issue in order to gain favours, 'playing hardball' as many have baptised it.

In recent weeks though, this issue has worsened. Since December of last year, the Council has been trying to get a 50 Billion € aid package through in order to help Ukraine. Since then though, Orban has consistently opposed the deal and is looking unlikely to change his mind. However, as long as the sole leader opposed to this issue does not change his mind, an aid package is unlikely to pass. Please note that at the time of writing, nothing has yet changed on the issue. **Delegates are advised to have a quick look at what resolution, if any, has been found to mediate this issue.** Free press articles from sources such as Politico.com and euractiv.com can be used as trustworthy sources for this.

The Hungarian position on this issue is also important to understand. First of all, it gives Hungary a way to discuss and negotiate advantages for itself seeing as it is in the 'privileged' position of being on its own in opposing an aid package (Tamma and Foy, 2024).

Important as well for Hungary's position is that they argue that their government has been elected democratically, they thus represent the only legitimate defenders of Hungary's people, thus if they disagree with a Ukraine package, they should be allowed to do so and cannot be forced to change their mind. This is because, at the time of their accession to the EU, they were guaranteed a veto power when it comes to such important issues (Deme, 2023).

THE FRUGAL FOUR OPPOSE THE ORIGINAL COVID RECOVERY FUND

In June of 2020, at the height of the global pandemic, the European Union, led by the European Council devised a plan to launch a recovery fund which was meant to help economies around the Union during and after the Covid crisis. While the Union's largest economies as well as most other member states agreed to the package, four countries known as the frugal four – the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, and Austria – opposed it (McCaffrey, 2020). The package was originally meant to be a total of 750 billion € of shared debt among all countries and while a very similar ended up passing, largely known as Next Generation EU, the deal was watered down to be more agreeable among the frugal four (Dennison and Zerka, 2020).

Here too, voting procedures would have mattered. The council needed unanimity and did not manage it for months, which slowed down the passing of the recovery fund despite an overwhelming majority of states being in favour of it. Had the voting procedure been done with Qualified Majority Voting, the recovery fund could have been passed much quicker. However, here too, the four states that opposed the fund argued that such a fund was economically dangerous and disagreed with many parts of it. Especially as this fund was by far the largest common deal agreed upon by the Union: a historically significant step in the larger question of the EU economy (Dennison and Zerka, 2020).

INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

Despite recent tensions, the US remains one of the EU's most important allies. Indeed, the EU-US partnership is considered the single-most important driver of global economic growth and trade (EEAS, 2023). Taken together, the economies of both territories constitute close to one third of world GDP in terms of purchasing power (EEAS, 2023). Additionally, the EU and United States are each other's main trading partners and account for the largest bilateral trade relationship in the world (EEAS, 2023). In terms of foreign policy, the EU and the US share a global responsibility to promote common values, support and protect human rights around the world, create conditions for harmonious economic development worldwide, strengthen the rules-based international system, and improve the economies of developing countries (EEAS, 2023). Both are the largest donors of humanitarian aid and development assistance, and regularly engage in close military-to-military cooperation (EEAS, 2023).

Nevertheless, the transatlantic alliance has repeatedly come under pressure due to the European Council's inability to take decisive and swift action. This can be seen in the differing reactions to the 2011 Syrian Civil War, which saw Western states impose harsh sanctions on Bashar al-Assad's government. Whilst the US imposed sanctions in April of that year, debates within the Council delayed the application of sanctions until May (Lund, 2019). Disagreements within the Council meant that these sanctions did not mirror the US', leading to some gaps that could be considered subject to exploitation. For example, unlike the US, the EU has not imposed a blanket ban on commercial trade with Syria (Lund, 2019). These mismatches, which are largely a result of bargaining between countries, undermine transatlantic collective action and put strain on EU-US relations.

Most recently, allegations that Europe has not been pulling its weight in Ukraine have further strained transatlantic relations. Indeed, EU's chief diplomat Josep Borrell admitted that the bloc would fall short of the promised one million artillery rounds it had pledged for Ukraine by March (Brorowzki, 2024). Hungary's continued vetoing of sanction packages and aid towards Ukraine has exacerbated these tensions, raising concerns that the US might start pulling out of Ukraine. In this way, Unanimous Voting proves to be a roadblock in a common EU-US strategy, undermining joint action and straining relations.

REPLACING UNANIMOUS VOTING WITH QUALIFIED MAJORITY VOTING (QMV)

A possible solution to the issue would be to replace Unanimous Voting with QMV altogether. This would imply extending QMV to all issues covered under Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). These include, but are not limited to: sanctions, human rights positions, civilian missions, crisis management, and military missions.

Although likely to expedite the decision-making process within the European Council, delegates should consider the short and long term implications of a blanket adoption of QMV. Namely, delegates should be aware of the negative effects that such a mechanism will have on EU unity and representation, particularly as it pertains to smaller countries.

INTRODUCING A FLEXIBILITY MECHANISM

This solution would require the adoption of a mechanism which would allow the Council to suspend regular voting procedures in favour of QMV when dealing with certain issues. Under such a mechanism, Unanimous Voting would remain the default voting procedure used in the Council, with QMV being reserved for specific policy issues.

This solution provides an ideal middle-ground between a blanket Unanimous Voting or QMV system. However, in order to effectively implement it, delegates should consider which issues should remain subject to Unanimous Voting and which should be decided by QMV. Previously, the European Commission suggested that QMV be extended to three policy fields within the CFSP: sanctions, human rights positions, and civilian missions. The so-called Group of Friends (composed of Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Slovenia and Spain) also supports extending QMV to areas of CFSP, although they have yet to identify which specific areas should be covered.

By specifying which areas of CFSP the QMV applies to, this mechanism would reduce the bureaucratic burden caused by the application of the Passerelle Clause. As a result, it could expedite decision-making in crisis situations whilst maintaining a level of representativeness and unity within the Council.

ALTERNATIVE WEIGHTED VOTING MECHANISMS

Alternatively, delegates could consider the implementation of alternative weighted voting mechanisms for certain issue-areas under the CFSP. Such a mechanism could resemble the QMV, but thresholds could be adopted to better represent member states within the Council.

Whilst considering this solution, delegates should carefully determine the new thresholds of the voting procedure, considering factors such as population, economic power, democratic standards, etc. If well-applied, this solution could strike a balance between the principle of majority rule and the need for equitable representation.

FINDING A SOLUTION: BLOC POSITIONS

LARGE STATES (GROUP OF FRIENDS)

In May 2023, a group of 9 EU member states launched a fresh push towards reform in the European Council. This so-called Group of Friends includes Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Slovenia and Spain (OSW, 2023). Romania joined the group at a later stage, as well as Sweden and Denmark (as an observer). Led by Germany, these states wish to "improve effectiveness and speed of our foreign-policy decision-making" in light of "Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the growing international challenges the EU is facing" (OSW, 2023). They aim to do this by extending Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) to issues of foreign policy, security and defence.

Countries on the fence include the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Lithuania, Latvia, who have not yet taken a formal position on the issue. Meanwhile, Estonia supports extending the use of constructive abstention in order to expedite decision-making, showing its openness to reform (OSW, 2023).

SMALL STATES

Amongst those staunchly against reforming the Council's voting mechanisms are Hungary, Croatia and Bulgaria (OSW, 2023). These countries are likely wary of losing their right to veto due to their relatively smaller populations and generally unpopular foreign policy positions. Austria has also expressed its opposition to reform, with Chancellor Karl Nehammer asserting that whilst "exhausting" Unanimous Voting provided "the added value of democracy and diversity" (Brorowzki, 2023).

FINDING A SOLUTION: QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

EFFICIENCY

- How does the voting procedure of Qualified Majority Vote (QMV) contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making within the European Council?
- How can reforms address concerns about efficiency and representation?
- How can the EU balance the need for efficiency with the principle of inclusive decision-making?

REPRESENTATION

- How does the current voting system align with the principles of democratic representation and accountability within the European Union?
- What safeguards should be in place to protect the interests of smaller member states?

FLEXIBILITY

- In what ways does the unanimous voting requirement impact the ability of the European Council to respond swiftly to emerging and pressing issues?
- To what extent does the unanimity requirement impact the EU's ability to respond effectively to global challenges, such as climate change and public health crises?
- How might reforms to the voting procedures impact the relationships and collaborations between EU member states and non-EU countries (in particular the US)?
- How do geopolitical shifts and the evolving international landscape necessitate a reevaluation of the current voting procedures within the European Council?

UNITY

- To what extent does the unanimity requirement aid the pursuit of common foreign policy goals?
- What are the arguments for maintaining the current voting procedures, and how do proponents believe it contributes to the cohesion and stability of the European Union?
- How do the voting procedures influence the perception of the European Union's ability to act as a unified and decisive actor on the international stage?
- What are the potential implications of reforming the voting procedures on the overall governance structure and institutional dynamics of the European Union?

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