

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

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EU's Institutional Framework regarding Defence Matters



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ABSTRACT

This policy brief provides a short overview of recent initiatives and developments in the EU's institutional defence architecture, with a particular focus on changes proposed and implemented since 2016. Specifically, it looks at the new Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) framework, the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), the European Defence Fund (EDF), the Military Planning and Conduct Capacity (MPCC), as well as proposals to establish a European Peace Facility (EPF) and to take more Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) decisions through qualified majority voting. It examines the institutional state of play at the end of Federica Mogherini's mandate as EU High Representative and the implications of EU defence institutional innovation for existing governance structures, internal coherence and effective oversight. Finally, it identifies some of the challenges posed by the recent reforms and initiatives relating to the EU's existing defence infrastructure, and briefly introduces proposals to address these challenges.

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Table of contents

1	The EU's institutional framework for defence	4
1.1	The role of the Treaty of Lisbon in facilitating institutional developments in EU defence matters	4
1.2	New initiatives and proposals since 2016	6
2	The state of play at the end of the Mogherini mandate	7
2.1	The EDF, PESCO and the CARD	7
2.2	The MPCC and EEAS institutional reform	8
2.3	New proposals: QMV and the EPF	9
3	Missing elements	10
3.1	Link between strategy, industry and ambition	10
3.2	Parliamentary scrutiny	10
3.3	A European Security Council	11
	References	12

1 The EU's institutional framework for defence

The new initiatives and developments in the EU's institutional defence architecture in recent years have the potential to make the Union a more capable defence actor. At the same time, they challenge existing governance structures, internal coherence and effective oversight.

In 1966, Stanley Hoffmann argued that the integration of policy fields at a supranational level might work well in the realm of 'low politics' (e.g. economic integration), but would run into impermeable barriers if it tried to affect key national interests. Supranational institutions would face limitations because EU Member States still considered some 'high politics' areas to be their prerogative. Therefore, national capitals would prevent such institutions from expanding their remit to cover such issues (Hoffmann, S., 1966).

Defence was long considered the most cherished policy field, and 'the last bastion' of national sovereignty. Similarly, national defence industries were seen, 'principally, as part of a country's arsenal: a repository of goods, services, know-how and manpower from which a national military can draw in times of conflict' (Heidenkamp, H., Louth, J., and Taylor, T., 2013, p. 3). The view that national capitals ought to keep control of defence issues persisted despite practical pressures to integrate, such as coming together in order to enjoy economies of scale (Hoffmann, S., 1966).

However, between 2016 and 2019, three factors have challenged this approach and led to calls for the EU to play a greater role:

1. Europe's neighbourhood has come under threat.
2. The US commitment to guaranteeing Europe's security has been called into question.
3. The UK has voted to leave the EU.

As a result, the EU has agreed a range of new defence initiatives. Today, many of the building blocks of the EU's defence architecture have been created; the challenge lies in stable construction.

The first section of this paper briefly describes the most important institutional Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) actors, outlines some of the most important changes to the defence institutional framework brought about by the Treaty of Lisbon (2007), and analyses the institutional processes and developments since then. In the second section, the paper examines the state of play of the EU's defence architecture at the end of Federica Mogherini's mandate as EU High Representative and the implications of EU defence institutional innovation. The third section discusses the challenges to the institutional framework for defence, as well as possible remedies.

1.1 The role of the Treaty of Lisbon in facilitating institutional developments in EU defence matters

The Treaty of Lisbon catalysed a number of institutional developments in EU defence matters. Its institutional changes improved the political coherence of the EU's Common Foreign and Security (CFSP) and CSDP (Bopp, W., 2008).

At the highest level of the EU's institutional framework for defence lie the European Council meetings. Heads of state and government meet at least four times a year and retain ultimate decision-making¹ and political responsibility for all matters connected with foreign and security policy. The Foreign Affairs

¹ The unanimity rule for foreign security and defence policy, set out in the Maastricht Treaty, was strictly retained in the Lisbon Treaty, though with the possibility of abstention and constructive abstention, and with some notable exceptions relating to the European Defence Agency and permanent structured cooperation, to which majority voting applies (Howorth, J., 2014).

Council is responsible for the EU's external action². The Lisbon Treaty created the dual post of the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), who chairs the Foreign Affairs Council in its 'defence ministers configuration', and also directs the European Defence Agency (EDA). The EDA was officially included in the articles of CSDP in the Lisbon Treaty, to support the development of defence capabilities and military cooperation among its Member States (all Member States except Denmark). The Treaty further gave birth to the EU External Action Service (EEAS), to serve as the diplomatic service of the EU, under the authority of the HR/VP. Within the EEAS, two dedicated administrative structures were set up: the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC), and the EU Military Staff. In addition, the Crisis Management and Planning Directorate (CMPD) was put in charge of overall strategic issues in relation to civilian and military CSDP missions.

The Treaty formally recognised the European Parliament's right to be consulted and informed on defence matters. Parliament can scrutinise the CSDP, as well as address the HR/VP and the Council. It has oversight authority with regard to the CFSP aspects of the EU budget. It holds biannual debates on progress in implementing the CFSP and CSDP, and adopts reports on foreign and defence policy, drafted by the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and the Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE) (Turunen, T., 2019)³. The European Parliament and the Member States' national parliaments also hold two interparliamentary conferences per year to debate matters relating to the CFSP.

Finally, the Treaty also laid the groundwork for a new form of flexible cooperation for CSDP called Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO).

As Howorth notes: 'Everybody knew that Lisbon would be the start, rather than the culmination, of a process' (Howorth, J., 2014, p. 52). The CSDP did not evolve substantially in the first few years following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 (Turunen, T., 2019). But the European Council held the first thematic debate on defence in December 2013 and tasked the HR/VP and the Commission with assessing the impact of changes in the EU's global environment (General Secretariat of the European Council, 2013). Based on this assessment, in June 2015, HR/VP Federica Mogherini was tasked with drafting an EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) for 2016, which she presented to the European Council in June 2016 (EEAS, 2016). It refers to an integrated approach to conflicts, with the objective to build coherence and synergies between the EU's institutions and instruments.

Member States welcomed the strategy and agreed to move to its implementation phase. The EUGS itself did not outline new tools to make full use of the Lisbon Treaty's potential, but it did open the door to the development of such tools (Legrand, J., 2016). Since 2016, there has been a 'relaunch' of the CSDP project, with a range of new institutional developments (Howorth, J., 2019).

In November 2016, the HR/VP presented the Implementation Plan on Security and Defence (IPSD) to the Council. The plan sets out three strategic priorities: responding to external conflicts and crises when they arise, building the capacities of partners, and protecting the EU and its citizens through external actions. It outlines ambitions to deepen defence cooperation, establish PESCO, strengthen rapid response and the planning and conduct of missions, and enhance CSDP partnerships (Council of the EU, 2016). That same month, the Commission launched its European Defence Action Plan (EDAP), proposing the establishment of a European Defence Fund that would support investment in the joint research and development of

² The Political and Security Committee (PSC) acts as the principal ambassadorial adviser to the Foreign Affairs Council and prepares the EU's crisis response. The PSC itself takes advice from the EU Military Committee (EUMC) and the Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM) on military and civilian questions respectively, as well as from the political and military group, which deals with cross-cutting issues. The Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) evaluates the institutional, financial, and legal implications of CFSP agreements reached in the PSC.

³ The Parliament's right of scrutiny was further strengthened in a Declaration of Political Accountability adopted by the HR/VP in 2010.

defence equipment and technologies; boost investment in small and medium enterprises, start-ups, mid-caps and other suppliers to the defence industry; and strengthen the single market for defence (European Commission, 2016).

Historically, what stands in the way of the EU pursuing its strategic objectives through an effective (foreign and) defence policy are a lack of political will, a lack of defence capabilities, a lack of a common strategic culture⁴, and a paralysing need for consensus. While institutional innovation cannot compensate for a lack of political will, the EU's defence institutional structure must aim to help Member States work more effectively together. PESCO, the EDF and the Coordinated Annual review on Defence (CARD)⁵ are targeted at helping Member States to develop the capabilities they need and improve the operational readiness of their forces. The Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) targets the ability of Member States to deploy together in civilian and military missions. In addition, two new proposals – the European Peace Facility (EPF), and the suggestion to use more qualified majority voting in foreign policy decision-making – aimed at improving defence policy decision-making and financing have also emerged over the course of the Mogherini mandate.

1.2 New initiatives and proposals since 2016

Over the course of the last three years, the Commission, the HR/VP, the EDA and the Council have all made contributions to the new European defence architecture.

In May 2017, the Council endorsed the CARD. The CARD was conceived as a tool to help Member States to harmonise their national defence plans and make sure that they are consistent with EU objectives, as well as to formalise defence cooperation (European Defence Agency, 2019 (a)). EDA acts as the CARD secretariat and is responsible for gathering all relevant information. CARD is implemented on a voluntary basis. Member States decide independently what data they want to report, and how to implement CARD recommendations. The mechanism therefore relies primarily on trust and peer pressure (Blockmans, S., 2018). In the spring of 2017, a two-year trial run began and the first full cycle of the CARD will take place in 2020 (European Defence Agency, 2019 (a)).

In December 2017, the Council of the European Union adopted a decision establishing PESCO (Council of the EU, 2017). Twenty-five EU Member States have entered the format since then. The first phase of PESCO runs from 2018 to 2020. The High Representative, the European External Action Service (including the EU Military Staff). The Council and the EDA jointly serve in a secretariat function for PESCO, while Member States remain the key actors. There are *de facto* no legal penalties if participating countries do not meet their commitments: the framework relies on peer pressure and the (unlikely) threat of suspension (Blockmans, S., 2018).

The European Commission followed up on its defence action plan with a proposal for a dedicated budget for defence under the next Multiannual Financial Framework (European Commission, 2019). Although the EDF is a largely supranational instrument (Fiott, D., 2019), it is intimately linked with PESCO and the CARD. In the words of the EDA, 'CARD gives us an overview of where we stand and identifies next steps, PESCO in turn gives us options on how to do it [defence planning] in a collaborative manner, while the EDF could provide the funds to support the implementation of cooperative defence projects in general, but with a bonus, if in PESCO' (European Defence Agency, 2019 (a)).

In December 2016, EU leaders also agreed that a new permanent operational planning and conduct capability, the MPCC, would be established within the existing EU Military Staff at the EEAS (Council of the

⁴ See for a more detailed discussion of the strategic culture challenge the Policy Brief on CSDP Missions and Operations in this series.

⁵ This brief discussed these proposals only briefly, for more information on capability development see Policy Brief in this series on military capability development.

EU, 2016). The MPCC was established in June 2017. It reports to the PSC and informs the EUMC. By establishing this body, the EU aims to achieve better coordination between EU missions and operations taking place in the same regions, and provide mission commanders in the field with better support from Brussels (Reykers, Y., 2019).

Two new proposals with the potential to change the EU's defence institutional architecture have emerged over the course of the Mogherini mandate. First, in 2018, the Commission put forward a proposal inviting the European Council to use the 'passerelle clause' to take more decisions by qualified majority voting (QMV) and extend the QMV procedure to other CFSP matters that do not have military or defence implications. The Commission proposed three initial areas where QMV could be applied: human rights promotion, EU sanctions and launching civilian missions (Schuette, L., 2019). Accordingly, in the mission statement to Josep Borrell (the candidate for High Representative), incoming Commission President Ursula von der Leyen required him to seek to allow certain decisions on the CFSP to be adopted by QMV.

Second, the EPF was proposed by HR/VP Mogherini with the support of the Commission (also in 2018). The idea is to establish a new off-budget fund worth EUR 10.5 billion over a seven-year period to coincide with the timeframe of the next Multiannual Financial Framework (Council of the EU, 2018). On a day-to-day basis, an EPF Committee, composed of Member State representatives and chaired by a representative of the High Representative, would manage the EPF, in particular budgets and accounts. Actions to be funded by the facility would be decided by the Council or, within the framework of Action Programmes approved by the Council, by the High Representative with the endorsement by the Political and Security Committee (PSC) (Ibid.). Building on and, to an extent, replacing the African Peace Facility⁶ and the Athena mechanism⁷, the proposed EPF could fund a larger proportion of the common costs of EU military operations. It could also help finance military peace support operations led by other international actors, and engage in broader actions to support partner countries' armed forces with infrastructure, equipment or military assistance, as well as in other operational actions with military or defence implications under the CFSP (EEAS, 2018). The EPF would therefore circumvent the restrictions on the provision of military aid that are set down in existing EU treaties.

2 The state of play at the end of the Mogherini mandate

As the Mogherini era draws to a close, three years after the publication of the Global Strategy, it is evident that the EU architecture for defence has evolved and improved. The flurry of activity since 2016 in particular has provided the EU with institutions that have the potential to make it more capable of taking effective security action. However, many of these initiatives are nascent or not yet launched. EU defence is entering a crucial implementation phase. To ensure the success and credibility of the EU's defence policy, internal coherence, ambition and effective governance of the new programmes will be critical.

2.1 The EDF, PESCO and the CARD

Since their launch, the EDF, PESCO and the CARD have developed quickly. The EDF in particular is set to strengthen the European Commission's role in defence industrial policy; most importantly through the creation of a new Directorate-General for the Defence Industry and Space. Combining responsibility in this way could lead to more efficient management of the EU's new financial envelopes. It should also provide the Member States and intergovernmental EU players with a single interlocutor (Koenig, N., 2019).

An initial list of 17 projects to be developed under PESCO was adopted by the Council on 6 March 2018, a second batch of 17 projects was adopted on 19 November 2018, and a third batch of 13 projects was

⁶ The Africa Peace Facility is financed from the extra-budgetary EDF.

⁷ The Athena mechanism is an off-budget financing arrangement established by the Council for the financing of the common costs of military CSDP operations.

adopted on 12 November 2019. The Council further adopted a decision establishing a common set of governance rules for PESCO projects in June 2018 (European Defence Agency, 2019 (b)). A review to assess PESCO's progress is planned for 2020, after which the Council could choose to enhance PESCO commitments before the second phase (2020–2025). This could be an opportunity: PESCO members pledged to improve their militaries' ability to deploy together and to reform the way joint military operations are funded, but the operational side of PESCO has not received much attention since the framework's launch.⁸

The CARD trial run report was completed in autumn 2018. It showed that firstly, Member States still largely carry out defence planning and acquisition from a national perspective; and secondly, an accurate and comprehensive EU overview on defence cooperation between Member States is still lacking (European Defence Agency, 2019 (a)). Some EDA members failed to participate in the trial and the data provided by participants was not always easily comparable (Mills, C., 2019).

Therefore, it is potentially problematic that the EDA remains chronically underfunded. In May 2017, defence ministers underscored and strengthened the EDA's role as the main instrument for intergovernmental capability planning and prioritisation in Europe, but only minor adjustments were made to its budget to compensate for its increased responsibility for, and involvement in, PESCO, the CARD and the EDF. The 2018 edition of the European Parliament's annual report on the implementation of the CSDP rightly notes that possible additional budgetary appropriations may be necessary to cover the administrative expenditure of the EEAS and the EDA, in order to allow them to fulfil their functions as the PESCO secretariat, and for the EDA to run the next CARD phase successfully (European Parliament, 2018).

On the one hand, the EU's decision to invest in defence research is a 'game changer', because it represents a revolutionary readjustment of its approach to defence research funding (Fiott, D., 2018). The Commission's involvement in defence research and development impacts not only European security, but European integration as a whole, with implications for 'the very nature and orientation of the European project' (Karampekios, N., Oikonomou, I., and Carayannis, E., 2018, p. 377).

But, as Keith Hartley argues, as long as governments remain the main driver of the economics and politics of European armament collaboration, politics will always interfere with the economic benefits of integration. He writes that: 'European defence solutions require a single European state able to provide a single agreed view of threats to Europe and their solutions. Without a single European state the inefficiencies of national state solutions will continue to be reflected in the costly duplicating of military capabilities and defence solutions' (Hartley, K., 2018, p. 82).

Because the new instruments incorporate elements of supranational and intergovernmental governance structures, their coherence and coordination is at risk. As Fiott notes: 'Designing an overarching governance structure that can allow for maximum effectiveness and symbiosis between PESCO and the EDF is crucial' (Fiott, D., 2019).

2.2 The MPCC and EEAS institutional reform

Responding to the institutional developments of the last three years, the EEAS has reformed its crisis management structures. As Steven Blockmans and Loes Debuysere explain, in 2019 the former EEAS CMPD has been absorbed into the EEAS Directorate Integrated Approach for Security and Peace. The directorate is responsible for crisis response and planning, and operates in parallel with a 'policy pillar', which brings

⁸ Instead, the European Intervention Initiative, set up outside of EU structures by France, pursues similar objectives among its 14 members. Through the bottom-up framework involves sharing threat assessments, exchanging expertise and intelligence, training together, and jointly developing capabilities, its ultimately aimed at fostering a shared strategic culture. More work is required to ensure it develops in line with the EU's institutional defence architecture (European Political Strategy Centre, 2019).

together all policies relating to security and defence (e.g. PESCO, the CARD, cyber security) on the one side, and a 'conduct pillar', which combines responsibility for the CPCC and the new MPCC. The authors note that the new directorate has the potential to foster stronger operational coordination within the EEAS and between other services, to clarify and strengthen the chain of command and to better embed the EU's integrated approach in the institutional structure of the EEAS. The crisis meetings hosted by the new directorate are particularly interesting in this context, as they bring together all relevant EEAS divisions and Commission DGs involved in crisis management (Debuysere, L., and Blockmans, S., 2019).

In the field of EU crisis management, from an institutional perspective, the establishment of the new MPCC was significant. As Thierry Tardy argues, with the MPCC, 'a little taboo has been broken' (Tardy, T., 2017, p. 3). Given the sensitivities that any debate on an EU permanent planning and conduct structure have revealed in the past, the establishment of the MPCC carries notable political meaning (Ibid) – with its establishment, member-states agreed to delegate powers in the realm of strategic and operation command and control and the MPCC is seen by some as a step towards a permanent EU military headquarters (Reykers, Y., 2019). Member States carried out a review of the MPCC in November 2018, where they agreed to expand its remit and responsibilities. Having initially limited the MPCC to operational planning and conduct at strategic level for only the EU's non-executive military missions, EU leaders decided that the MPCC should be ready to also manage one executive military CSDP operation limited to EU battle group size by the end of 2020 (Mills, C., 2019). To ensure optimal integration of the MPCC in the existing EEAS structures, and strengthen coordination between civilian and military work strands, it will also be necessary to enhance cooperation between the MPCC and the CPCC, also through the Joint Support Coordination Cell (JSCC).

But, as Rieker and Blockmans note, despite the flow of new initiatives for improving coordination between EU institutions in the field of crisis management, there is still no rapid decision-making capacity (and therefore no well-developed capacity for crisis response). This shortcoming is partly the result of the unanimity requirement for launching a common security and defence initiative (Rieker, P. and Blockmans, S., 2018), partly an expression of the persistent differences in national interests and threat perception among Member States, and partly due to funding restrictions on the EU's defence activities.

2.3 New proposals: QMV and the EPF

The latest changes proposed to the EU's defence architecture attempt to address the challenges of decision-making and sustainable finance. QMV could help overcome divisions between Member States and make the EU's foreign policy more effective. But Leonard Schuette has shown that this effect will only be achieved when:

1. differences between national interests are small;
2. only an individual Member State or a small group of them are seeking to block decisions, perhaps encouraged by third countries.

Schuette warns that the EU should not set a precedent of majority voting in security policy 'unless the very nature of the Union were fundamentally changed' (Schuette, L., 2019). It would indeed not be wise (and illegal under the EU's treaties) to use QMV for matters that cut to the heart of national sovereignty, such as the decision to deploy troops. But the European Commission proposal for QMV remains below that threshold, envisaging its application instead for decisions on sanctions, the launch of civilian missions and positions on human rights (European Commission, 2018). In these matters of foreign policy decision-making, QMV, applied with diplomatic care, could help to make EU decision-making faster and more ambitious, as well as less vulnerable to efforts by third parties to pressure single member-states into blocking an EU-level decision.

The EPF could help to harmonise a fragmented EU financing architecture for peace and security, where several actors share responsibility. However, it might also contribute to the further institutional entrenchment of military activities versus civilian means of security, crisis management, conflict prevention and development (Deneckere, M., 2019). Commentators have also warned that, even with mitigation strategies in place, some EU weapons provided to fragile countries might end up in the wrong hands and be used to commit atrocities, which in turn could lead to attempts to deny the evidence or otherwise evade accountability (Ryam, K., 2019).

The EPF would require functioning links to the EU's supporting crisis management infrastructure, for example on situational awareness and context analysis. Depending on which institutions and bodies would be involved in the management of the facility – the current proposal foresees that implementation will be ensured by the HR/VP, with the support of the EEAS, assisted by the Commission for the purposes of financial administration – an increase in financial and administrative capacity might also be required (Ibid.).

3 Missing elements

Three challenges to a robust EU defence institutional infrastructure currently stand out.

3.1 Link between strategy, industry and ambition

Moving forward, to ensure coherence and coordination between the EU's new initiatives it will be important to create and maintain direct links between the Union's strategic objectives, its level of ambition and any planned industrial projects. First, more work is required to flesh out the military implications of the strategic goals set in the EUGS and the IPSD. In this context, the European Parliament has called for an EU Security and Defence White Book to define an overarching strategic approach to European defence (European Parliament, 2018). Alternatively, Member States might devise a 'strategic compass'. What matters most is that any resulting document reflects a common understanding of the Union's defence objectives and means.

The next challenge will be to prevent compartmentalisation and a growing gap between defence policy and market, strategy and industry (Molina, I., and Simon, L., 2019). The role of the new DG Defence Industry and Space is limited in scale and scope. It has been tasked with focusing on implementation and it is focused on the defence market rather than on defence policy *per se*. As a result, the Commission is compelled to approach defence industrial policy through an economic policy lens, with the objective of strengthening Europe's defence technological and industrial base. At the same time, the EDF is explicitly geopolitical. A constructive working relationship between the commissioner responsible for the technological-industrial aspects of European defence and the HR/VP in charge of the political-strategic aspects will be crucial (Ibid).

The third challenge will be to translate the EU's agreed level of ambition into military requirements and tools, for which the Union will need to fix its defence planning process. The European Court of Auditors recently pointed out that there now exist as many as four different planning instruments – the EU Military Staff's capability development mechanism, the EDA's capability development plan, the CARD and PESCO – which often overlap or contradict each other, and should be coordinated internally, as well as aligned with NATO defence planning timelines (European Court of Auditors, 2019). The objective should be that every new piece of equipment, weapons system or training facility that Member States build together has a clear link to the EU's strategic priorities and capability shortfalls.

3.2 Parliamentary scrutiny

A more 'Europeanised' CSDP requires democratic control over policy direction and resource allocation. Security and defence policies remain challenging areas for parliamentary scrutiny. For the European

Parliament, defence policy has remained the most elusive of all domains (Herranz-Surrallés, A., 2019). This is becoming more problematic. As the 2018 edition of the European Parliament annual report on the implementation of the CSDP notes: 'the parliamentary structures at EU level, which were established at a time when the EU's level of ambition and level of activity regarding security and defence matters were rather limited, are no longer adequate to provide the necessary parliamentary oversight of a rapidly evolving policy area demanding the capacity for swift responses' (European Parliament, 2018).

As Fiott has noted, there is scope for parliaments to play a role in the evaluation of EDF projects. The annual PESCO report that the HR/VP must present to the Council could provide basic elements for a debate between the European Parliament and the HR/VP during their biannual meetings. But scrutiny and oversight over the defence fund and PESCO are limited. The EPF faces a similar issue. It is to be established as an intergovernmental CFSP instrument, which would likely give the European Parliament no formal oversight role (Fiott, D., 2019).

As Fiott outlines, one way to increase parliamentary scrutiny could be through strengthened cooperation between the European Parliament and national parliaments (Ibid). The European Parliament has repeatedly called for its SEDE to be upgraded to a full committee and to provide it with the competences necessary to contribute to comprehensive parliamentary oversight of CSDP, including PESCO, the EDA and any other CSDP actions as envisioned by the Treaties (European Parliament, 2018). The necessary political will to pursue this institutional change has so far been lacking (Herranz-Surrallés, A., 2019). But as the Commission management competencies for defence have increased, the subject of parliamentary scrutiny should be re-examined.⁹

3.3 A European Security Council

Both the French and German governments have made proposals for a European Security Council (ESC), with the goal to increase the effectiveness of European foreign policy. Such a Council could, for example, take decisions on the launching of civilian and military operations, as well as providing permanent political guidance (Coelmont, J., 2019). However, the notion still needs to be further developed. At the time of writing, it remains unclear how a ESC should work in terms of membership and voting rights, whether it would be set up within or outside of EU structures, and which states would be involved beyond Germany, France and the UK.

Luigi Scazzieri sketches out four different institutional formats the ESC might take (Scazzieri, L., 2019). It could be:

1. a wholly new body within the EU's institutional architecture;
2. a dedicated meeting of the European Council, with all Member States plus the UK as a non-voting member, with the aim of fostering a more regular strategic debate between national leaders on European foreign policy;
3. an intergovernmental forum outside EU structures, involving only a select few Member States and the UK;
4. an expanded 'EU three format' (the informal arrangement through which France, Germany, and the UK currently discuss policy towards Iran).

Any concrete proposal for a ESC will have to be measured against its potential to increase the EU's effectiveness as a defence actor, the risk it carries in relation to undermining unity, the legitimacy of its decisions and how well it is integrated with, and able to benefit from, the EU's existing defence structures.

⁹ See Policy Brief on CSDP Missions and Operations for a discussion of parliamentary scrutiny of CSDP operations.

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