



**The European Union's Strategic Autonomy:
Foreign & Security Policy between Geopolitical Ambition and Integration Ethics**

Thesis

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Marinos Christodoulou

Supervisor: Costas M. Constantinou

MA in Political Science – European Politics

Department of Social & Political Science

University of Cyprus

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Abstract

The adoption of strategic autonomy as the ambition for foreign and security policy of the European Union, amidst intensified international rivalry, does not only shift the debate for European external relations onto power politics, but at the same time raises questions for its relevance to the integration project. By pronouncing strategic autonomy as the condition of the EU's external capacity, the debate suggests a foreign and security policy which contradicts the foundational ethics of the European project, by legitimizing hard power and intensifying the external boundaries of the Union as sites of exclusion.

Conventional theory seems inadequate to evaluate the claim for strategic autonomy, which at large produces and concurrently remains state-centric. Treating the debate of strategic autonomy as a theoretical discourse itself, the current thesis examines the semantic frameworks through which the claim emerges and juxtaposes its geo-political implications with those of integration.

Σύνοψη

Η καθιέρωση του στρατηγικής αυτονομίας ως της φιλοδοξίας για την εξωτερική πολιτική και πολιτική ασφαλείας της ΕΕ εν μέσω εντεινόμενου διεθνούς ανταγωνισμού, όχι μόνο μετατοπίζει την συζήτηση για τις εξωτερικές σχέσεις της Ένωσης προς την πολιτική ισχύος, αλλά ταυτόχρονα δημιουργεί ερωτήματα ως προς τη συνάφεια της με το πρόταγμα ολοκλήρωσης. Προτάσσοντας την στρατηγική αυτονομία ως προϋπόθεση για την εξωτερική ικανότητα της ΕΕ, η συζήτηση προτείνει μια εξωτερική πολιτική και πολιτική ασφαλείας η οποία αντιτίθεται στα θεμελιώδη ήθη του Ευρωπαϊκού προτάγματος, νομιμοποιώντας τη σκληρή ισχύ και εντείνοντας το ρόλο των εξωτερικών συνόρων ως χώρους αποκλεισμού.

Η συμβατική θεωρία διεθνών σχέσεων κρίνεται ανεπαρκής να αξιολογήσει τον ισχυρισμό, γιατί εν πολλοίς τον παράγει και ταυτόχρονα παραμένει κρατοκεντρική. Αντιμετωπίζοντας τη συζήτηση στρατηγικής αυτονομίας ως θεωρία, αναζητούνται τα σημειολογικά πλαίσια στα οποία αναδύεται ο ισχυρισμός και αντιπαρατίθενται οι γεω-πολιτικές της προεκτάσεις με αυτές της ολοκλήρωσης.

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Introduction

Amidst the polyphony of the EU's political and institutional jargon, the concept of *strategic autonomy* gained momentum as the point of reference for the geopolitical ambition of the Union. Charles Michel, the President of the European Council, even announced strategic autonomy as 'the aim of the generation' (2020). The concept, originating from defense affairs, have slowly found its place in official discourse, adopted by the European institutions, intellectuals and officials. In its simplest interpretation, it describes an ambition for the EU to be able to set its own ends and achieve them with its own means. The ends, more or less developed in the European Union's Global Strategy, have expanded to traditional security aims, and this has legitimized the acquisition and use of even military means.

Conventional wisdom would mostly describe international relations as a state-led enterprise, yet it cannot be denied that the European Union, not only provided an alternative approach for international relations in the region, but also emerged as an international actor on its own right. For more than half a century, European integration helped to mitigate conflict and enmity throughout the continent and paved a road for security and cooperation, overcoming challenges of the territorial organization of international politics. Of course, the EU has been proven more than a regional organization and its gradual consolidation, during the previous decades, raised awareness on its external capacity and increasing influence in international and global affairs. This observed role put the EU beyond questions of integration, but also under the lens of international agency.

The supranational exclusive competences in trade and the amounts of foreign aid rendered the Union a power, at least in terms of international political economy. Yet, despite the significant political leverage of its economy, 'high politics' was not considered the strong point of the EU and its preceding EC. Some saw the absence of military instruments as a 'contradiction in terms' (Bull, 1982), and a key issue to the EU's road to external agency. Anxiety to preserve and enhance the Union's external agency has generated commentary, not less from officials. Macron declared a vision for European sovereignty (2017), Borrel called Europe to 'speak the language of power' (Weiler, 2020) and von der Leyen described her collage as a 'geopolitical commission' (2019).

Such is the nomenclature that characterizes contemporary thought on the EU's external role. The case of this discourse represents an oxymoron for the EU. Not only the ideal-types of its perceived external identity are at odds with it, but it also contradicts the rationality upon which integration was justified. Since the European project was conceived upon commitments to transcend geopolitical fragmentation, military rivalry and self-centric interests, it is interesting that that the EU recedes retrospectively into similar patterns. The question raised is how the debate for strategic autonomy shifts the politics of the EU away from its foundational ethics of integration. Strategic autonomy appears to contradict integration, since both are concerned with security and international relations, yet propose two different – if not exclusive - perspectives on the issues. Furthermore, beyond offering different paradigms of international conduct, they also made different claims on what the EU is and ought to be.

The ambition of a strategically autonomous Union essentially renews these questions. In a theoretical context, these are ontological and normative questions. While not a theory in a purely academic sense, the ontological and normative claims of the debate do allow to treat it as such. These claims may seem straight-forward but are actually misleading. Framing the EU as an international actor predefines the form of possible answers and fails to grasp the ontological novelty of the supranational, even more its transformative role in global security. Thus, the question does not attempt to deny the international role of the EU, but to criticize those theoretical presuppositions of the debate that contradict the project of integration.

The focus on presuppositions draws upon a social constructionist perspective, which assumes political practice as contingent on theoretical discourse. Political narratives are understood as such theoretical frameworks, which prescribe meaning to the world prior to its description and thus enable specific political practices. Since the defining condition of international relations and external action is the boundaries of political communities, discourses of external action are necessarily geopolitical, as they produce meanings for spaces and boundaries. Thus, both integration and strategic autonomy are treated as geopolitical practices. Through a comparative lens, the two approaches are expected to produce different political geographies. As practice is contingent on theory, what is of concern as a subject of analysis are their respective narratives in the role of geopolitical theories and more specifically the spatial representations of their ontological claims.

Rearticulating the question, this thesis asks how the ontological claims of the debate of strategic autonomy changes the geopolitical representation and consequent practice of the supranational Union in relation to its integration foundations. Whereas relevant literature deals either with the conceptualization or the feasibility of the ambition, the relation of the concept to the integration project is neglected. The aim is to examine this relation by exploring the emergence of the concept of strategic autonomy, examining its geopolitical representations of the EU, and juxtaposing the two narratives in their political implications.

The first chapter reviews the subject of the EU as an international agent. First, It examines the claim for strategic autonomy through relevant literature, as well as theoretical approaches which deal with the EU as an international agent. Second, it investigates the implications of theoretical knowledge through a critical framework, which sets the methodological framework of the thesis. The second chapter introduces integration theory by examining it genealogically to understand its own normative prescriptions. Emphasis is given in the geopolitical representations of integration theories, both as a depiction of the EU and a rearticulation of international relations thought. The third chapter returns to the broader debate of strategic autonomy to understand the perceptions around which the claim is generated, by reading dominant issues of the EU's contemporary foreign relations. The last chapter attempts a critical and comparative analysis of the debate, by evaluating its semantic framework and juxtaposing it with the that of integration theory and practice.

Chapter 1 – The EU as an International Agent – Claim, Theory, Metatheory

The claim for Strategic Autonomy - Ontological precondition of international agency?

Defining strategic autonomy entails challenges. It is a concept defined at best as ambiguous something that leads to diverse interpretations. Member states demonstrate different understandings and subsequent ambitions (Franke & Varma, 2019; Zandee, Deen, Kruijver, & Stoetman, 2020; Koenig, 2021). Whilst such ambiguity may be proven constructive (Drent, 2018), some warn of the possibility to become vague (Franke & Varma, 2019). Definitions vary considerably, depending each time on the understandings of acting autonomously. The latter is the common denominator by which strategic autonomy is broadly defined, which reflects the EU's capacity to act with its own means for its own interests. The efficacy of European foreign and security policy lies at the heart of the debate of strategic autonomy.

Origins of the concept of European strategic autonomy can be traced in St. Malo declaration (1998), from which the notion of autonomous action derives (Drent, 2018; Fiott, 2018). The declaration, signed by the then French president and British prime minister, echoes influence from French strategic thought (Kuokštytė, 2020; Brustlein, 2018). Indeed, the concept of strategic autonomy was initially used in national context, appeared in the Defence White Paper of 1994 (*Livre Blanc sur la Défense*, 1994), and was reproduced in following French strategic issues¹. European Council's conclusions of December 2013 (EC, 2013; Kuokštytė, 2020) contains the earliest reference in the context of European institutions. It was officially adopted in the European Union Global Strategy (EUGS, 2016), which replaced the previous *European Security Strategy (2003)*, the issue of which was an early step of articulating a role for the EU in global affairs.

Originating in the defence domain, strategic autonomy was mainly concerned with military capabilities. Strategic autonomy in defence affairs is usually divided among operational, industrial/technological, and political autonomy (Fiott, 2018; Drent, 2018; Fischer, 2017). As expressed in St. Malo declaration, initial emphasis was on the autonomy to conduct operations with one's own means, referring to the availability of forces, equipment and institutions to do so (Drent, 2018; Fiott, 2018; Zandee, Deen, Kruijver, & Stoetman, 2020; Koenig, 2021). Industrial autonomy refers to the ability to research and develop equipment in Europe, rather than simply acquiring them, as a means to reduce external dependencies (Knutsen, 2016; Fischer, 2017; Fiott, 2018). Political autonomy concerns itself with decision-making and political will to conduct operations (Zandee, Deen, Kruijver, & Stoetman, 2020).

Strategic autonomy in defence does not necessarily imply territorial defence, but mainly and initially expressed ability to respond to crises (Koenig, 2021). Various arguments stress different degree of political autonomy, such as acting when NATO has no interest or mandate to do so (Lippert, von Ondarza, & Perthes, 2019), or even assuming dependencies for defence from other actors such as the NATO and the US (Fiott, 2018; Howorth, 2018). The debate often returns to the relevance of NATO and

¹ Later texts also touch more upon issues of European strategic autonomy, for reference see the latest Strategic Update (2021). Kuokštytė (2020), Tertrais (Tertrais, 2020) and Brustlein (2018) discuss the evolution of French strategic thought, including its European dimension.

its role in European security (Zandee, Deen, Kruijver, & Stoetman, 2020). Thus, it also grasps upon political themes. As such, strategic autonomy already entails other dimensions beyond defence affairs.

Lippert, von Ondarza and Perthes (2019) adopt a definition which 'encompasses the entire spectrum of foreign policy and security, and not just the dimension of defence'. The quest for strategic autonomy explores economy, trade, energy, materials, industries. Advocated policies for trade have been termed 'open strategic autonomy' (Bjerkem, 2020; Akgüç, 2021; ERT, 2021; Gehrke, 2021), while those regarding digital technology, cyberspace and their regulation go under the theme of 'digital sovereignty' (Timmers, 2019; Aktoudianakis, 2020).

While 'domestic' might not be the appropriate term to refer to European politics, the debate concerns itself as much with what has to be done inside the Union as with what is going outside of it. The European institutions make sure to denote that 'the EU Global Strategy starts at home' (EUGS, 2016). Inescapably, the debate addresses what it perceives as shortcomings of the Union and makes claims both on the current and the desired status of it as an international agent. Strategic autonomy, as a state of having sufficient means to pursue own interests, becomes the necessary ontological condition for international agency.

Theorizing the EU's international agency

1. The EU's external agency in European Studies

Although at its core lie ontological and normative questions for the EU, the debate's relevant literature is mostly concerned with defining the concept or examining its feasibility. It rather assumes the relation between (military) capabilities and international agency, and is remotely theory-oriented. Nevertheless, theoretical work on the EU's external agency is echoed on the debate's literature.

Various concepts have been employed to explain EC/EU's external agency. On the one hand, there were attempts to measure external agency with presentations such as 'actorness' (Bretherton & Vogler, 2006, p. 1; Simão, 2022), 'presence' (Allen & Smith, 1990), 'capabilities-expectations gap' (Hill, 1993) and 'external' (Lavenex & Schimmelfennig, 2010) or 'security governance' (Kirchner & Sperling, 2007). On the other, there have been those cases which approached the EU as a different kind of international agent, proposing ideal-types such as 'Normative Power Europe' (Manners, 2002), 'Civilian Power Europe' (Duchêne, 1973; Orbie, 2006; Moravcsik, 2009) or even a postmodern actor (Ruggie, 1993; Grajauskas & Kasčiūnas, 2009).

Larsen (2017, pp. 79-83) argues that the state remains the ideal type of the EU's foreign policy analysis, especially for the 'capabilities-expectation gap' literature. Zwolski (2018, p. 88) argues alike when commenting on the attempt to define actorness. The same author, while welcomes the non-territorial orientation of governance approaches, criticizes the de-politicized outlook they adopt (2018, pp. 154-159). Descriptions of the EU as a power are questioned on the basis that civilian and power is a contradiction in terms (Bull, 1982). As for the postmodernity of EU's actorness, the concept remains rather null as such a label misses the philosophical accounts of the postmodern, namely both because it is a concept conceived through discourses of modernity and because the EU still operates in structures of modernity.

Whether the above concepts have been useful indicators of their subject is a matter of theoretical evaluation, what can be argued for is their performative role in constituting the EU as an external agent (Larsen, 2017). These theoretical trends have shaped the European external identity, evident in both the quantitative aspect – how much of an international agent the EU is – and the qualitative one – what kind of international agent the EU is. Some of these have even been adopted to self-describe the EU, not only as a different, but also as an ethically good agent (Palm, 2021).

Indeed, in contrast to other political institutions and foremostly the state, the European Union is presented as an exception or even an anomaly (Collard-Wexler, 2006), which justifies its characterization as a 'sui generis' institution. Such a label, whether a euphemism or a pejorative, only connotes an exceptional trait in the domain of political ontology but does not explain much of what differentiates it from other institutions. Even if the sui generis characterization serves to distinguish the EU from traditional actors, the long normalization of the state actor in international politics and its foreign policy instruments makes the comparison inevitable. Still, although the debate of strategic autonomy is articulated in terms of international affairs, mainstream theories of International Relations appear problematic to explain the EU.

2. The EU's international agency in IR theory

Realism's insistence on the primacy of the state does not allow much space for a different kind of agency. Its focus is directed on individual EU member-states and views the supranational institutions as another outcome of national interests. Structural explanations are reduced to explaining the EU as a counterbalance to other powers (Posen, 2006; Art, 2006; Hyde-Price, 2006; Kupchan, 2003). Due to the importance attributed to military power as a measure of agency, some realists understand the EU as an alliance (Jones, 2007; Posen, 2006), which is not always empirically satisfactory. Another scenario conceives the EU as a state in the making². Such a reading understands that integration should lead to a state-like polity as its logical end-product since acquiring military capabilities and political unity seems to be the necessary precondition towards international agency.

Realism should not be diminished for its state-centrism, as long as the state remains important both in intra-European politics and external affairs. Its insights are useful to understand the impenetrability of the state's ideal-type. Impenetrability should not be taken as a strict ontological description, but rather as the normative narrative upon which the state is conceived as such, disavowing other forms of political organization and agency (Ashley, 1984; Walker, 1989). The quantification of political influence in terms of military power and the depiction of centralized authority as the ideal-type for political institutions - assumptions greatly echoed in the strategic autonomy debate - drive realist interpretations of EU's efficacy as a global agent and explain their normative orientations (Rosamond, 2000).

Dominant historiographies of International Relations famously depict the discipline as a debate between realism and liberalism (Wæver, 1996). The latter is often presented as the heir of international idealism that culminated in the era before the devastating WW II, and its failure to guide international

² Such approaches are popular in comparative politics and state-building literature. For examples see Bornschieer (2000), Marks (1997), Kelemen & McNamara (2021).

relations was caricatured as its shortcoming. Today, a similar offence is used against European global politics to prove them insufficient (Hyde-Price, 2006). The antinomy of realpolitik arguments lies on the fact that European integration have long been based on strands of broader liberalism, as a social, political, and economic philosophy (Haine, 2009; Lucaraelli, 2002; Carmichael, 2013). However, mainstream liberal IR theory, such as neo-liberal institutionalism, can neither offer a better framework for an ontological interpretation of the EU as long as it remains attached to the unitary state agent (Agnew, 1994). While favoring international organizations - attributing them an active role in its international ontology and allowing the possibility of cooperation through them - it cannot grasp neither the institutional complexity nor the spatial structures of the EU through the strict definition of an international organization.

Apparently, the EU does not fit well into state-centric conceptions of politics. The representation of the unitary state as the sole effective ideal-type of political institution is monolithic, as it negates institutional alternatives, and albeit being a structuralist assumption it ignores the structural alternative offered to the anarchic model by integration (Collard-Wexler, 2006). Thus, it might seem controversial to utilize state-centric approaches to theorize the EU, but their long normalization in political thought is actually embedded on both the debate on strategic autonomy and the broader political imaginary³. Their reference, though, serves mostly as a point of departure for developing a critical framework of analysis on the theorization of international agency.

Critical Theory – Theorizing theory

As with other social sciences, research on international relations has always been characterized by diverse theoretical approaches, which has also provided ground for metatheoretical work. The historiography of the discipline records several debates (Wæver, 1996; 1997), but serious metatheoretical reflection has become mostly evident in the 1980s, during a debate which Robert Keohane termed as one between 'rationalist' versus 'reflectivist' approaches (Keohane, 1988). Whereas the 'reflectivist' label recognized the alternative contribution, Robert Cox's earlier binary of 'problem-solving' versus 'critical' theories (1981) appears more useful to provide a taxonomy of theories.

The two are distinguished in the way they look upon social and power relations, with the former taking them for granted and the latter questioning them. Critical theory provides a reflective framework of analysis, which challenge theoretical orthodoxy and its declared pragmatism. As Cox argues, critical theory contains problem-solving in itself, both because it is concerned with real world problems but also because it criticizes problem-solving theories as conservative ideologies (1981, p. 130). Following Cox's own argument, 'theory is always for someone and for some purpose', and thus cannot be removed from perspective. Accordingly, conventional theories are process which frame their subject

³ Opinion could be raised in favor of other theories, such as Constructivism which have been popular in European Studies, but to avoid an extensive reference on IR theories a brief review will be provided here. Constructivism allows looser, fluid and non-materialistic definitions of analytical categories, such as interest and security, but tends to be selective on what is or how is socially constructed, appearing at times epistemologically incoherent. E.g., Wendt's famous quote of 'anarchy is what states make of it' recognizes anarchy as socially constructed but insists on the state as predefined category.

through a priori assumptions, and this should be critical theory's own subject. A critical theory is essentially metatheoretical, with conventional theories as its object of analysis.

Both Keohane's and Cox's taxonomies are concerned with formal theories of international relations. However, considering the role other media have in shaping knowledge for the subject, theory cannot be considered an academic monopoly. Public discourses, official or popular, make extensive ontological and normative claims on international relations, and are at times more influential in shaping our perceptions of world politics rather than scholarly work (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992; Hansen, 2006, pp. 50-64). Transcending a strict definition of theory, a critical approach's scope goes beyond this demarcation and includes broader public discourses as theories of international relations. Political discourses are signifying processes and treating them as theoretical frameworks allows to critically examine their produced semantics. In a similar reasoning, the debate of strategic autonomy can be considered as a theory, exactly because of its role in framing perceptions of the EU's international agency.

Cox's own reading stems from Marxist-Gramscian thought, which considers dominant ideology as a 'cultural hegemony', a discursive means to legitimize and preserve the social/political status quo (Gramsci, 1971). Gramsci's concept of 'cultural hegemony' serves as a useful departure point to challenge prevailing narratives, including theories of international relations. However, albeit the concept recognizes the political construction of hegemonic narratives, their apprehension as a concealment of reality renders it more as a method of suspicion. Gramsci's constructionism privileges ontology over epistemology, by challenging 'how we know' but assuming 'what is'⁴. In other words it accepts the construction of knowledge but not the construction of reality. This ignores how ontological claims themselves shape the ways we think and know about a subject.

Counter to Gramsci's soft social constructionism, a critical approach would better elucidate the role of theories by putting epistemology and ontology on equal footing. A way towards such an understanding is by treating ontological claims as semantic frameworks. Following this logic, ontologies must be literally understood as frames, in the sense of imposing epistemic boundaries which delimit what and how is known. Drawing from continental philosophy and mainly poststructuralism, this kind of critical inquiry is well established in the domain of International Relations⁵. Ashley's work (1984) criticized the theoretical orthodoxy of IR mainstream by challenging its ontological presuppositions. Walker (1989; 1993) approached international relations theories as political theories in the sense of being both products and producers of modern political ontologies. David Campbell's *Writing Security* (1992) is exemplary research on how official foreign policy and security discourses of an agent shape perceptions of its identity and expected role in the world. In the field of European Studies⁶, Larsen

⁴ For Gramscian and Marxist readings, dominant representations are manifestations of class interests, thus tied to political economy and the underlying material conditions of capital distribution.

⁵ For the philosophical influences of poststructuralist IR, see Der Derian's essay *Post-theory* (2009), the introduction and first part of Hansen's *Security as Practice* (2006),

⁶ Other important contributions in critical European Studies include *The Routledge Handbook of Critical European Studies* by Bigo, Diez, Fanoulis, Rosamond, & Stivachis (2021), *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Polity & Governance* by Howarth & Torfing (2005) and *European Integration and National Identity* by Hansen & Wæver (2002).

(2017) has examined how the concepts utilized to describe European foreign policy are constitutive of its external identity.

If the semantics of a theory construct a particular representation of reality, one would be suspicious of its explanatory power. Suspicion over explanation arises because explanation requires the acceptance of a proposed ontology, but ontology is the object in question. The theory itself imposes the criteria of its explanatory evaluation. Then, why to be concerned with theory?

Approaching political discourses as theories calls to explore the relation between ontological and normative claims. These two kinds of arguments cannot be separated since ontologies as representations of a particular reality prescribe a framework through which the political phenomena are interpreted and political practice is enabled. Arguing that ontological claims construct reality does not deny its existence. Rather, defining theory as a semantic framework implies that its ontological claims define what is normal and what is not, what is appropriate to do and what is done wrong. By assuming particular ontologies, favoring specific political forms, and adopting them as analytical ideal-types, theories become normative narratives with a performative effect on the institutional outcome. This is the logic through which theories are understood as not merely descriptive but also constitutive of their subject.

Theory is important not because it frames knowledge, but because it defines practice through this knowledge. The ways we perceive a domain of action defines the ways we act. Considering that ontologies do not describe but construct their subject, they are also constitutive of a particular political conduct, including the ways political issues are dealt with. Thus, ontological and normative arguments are indistinguishable since the 'ought' is already established. Bringing the above into consideration, what is of concern in theories as objects of analysis is their normative, not their explanatory power.

Geopolitics of International Ontologies

Critical approaches on international relations are critical, not solely for their role on bringing the above considerations in the fore, but also because they stress the geopolitical underpinnings of international relations theory. These works cross disciplinary boundaries towards the field of critical geopolitics, writers of which have alike questioned the knowledge of conventional geopolitical theories and have examined the ways political discourses construct and securitize spaces. Critical geopolitics is defined as 'the study of the spatialization of international politics by core powers and hegemonic states' (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992, p. 192). Accordingly, it scrutinizes the territorial imaginary and its ties to international agency as the sole possible representation of international political geography (Agnew, 1994).

As the defining condition of external action/foreign policy are the boundaries of political communities, ontologies of international relations are essentially geopolitical. The characterization does not seek to ascribe a sense of geographical determinism to international conduct, but rather to describe the way international ontologies produce spatial imaginaries. They fragment, organize and hierarchize global geography along binary taxonomies of inside/outside. They produce spatial representations of the Self and its Others, define the semantics of political spaces and enable specific political geographies by dictating the appropriate policies along and across boundaries. Whereas spaces

and boundaries are inseparable from international politics, they do not ascribe to a fundamental signification but are contingent on the geopolitical discourse which ascribe meaning to them.

Methodological considerations

Instead of evaluating the ontological claim for strategic autonomy through conventional theoretical approaches (which at large shape it), strategic autonomy is scrutinized through the discourses which normalize it. Considering the role of political discourses in framing perceptions and prescribing practice, the debate of strategic autonomy becomes the object of analysis. Treated as (geo)political theory, it is examined on its normative capacity, namely how it normalizes perceptions of international agency, security and boundaries. To understand the divergence of strategic autonomy from integration, one must treat them as geopolitical discourses, with an interest on how their narratives transform the semantics of boundaries, referring both to the symbolic meanings and functional role which boundaries are expected to conform.

The (geo)political perceptions of the debate are scrutinized comparatively to the foundations of integration, using integration theories as a frame of reference. The criticism is based on the rejection of conventional understandings of international agency and the assumption of territoriality as the absolute geopolitical end. The incompatibility of state-centric approaches for the theorization of the EU leads to theories of integration as the discourse upon which a supranational ontology was conceived. While a question of 'what integration is' differs from a question of 'what the EU is', integration theories are a valuable source since the Union is their political product. Again, the interest on integration theories lies not on their explanatory but on their normative power.

Chapter 2 - Theorizing the EU and International Relations through Integration theories

Genealogy of integration theories

An ontological examination of the EU cannot be teleological since the subject in question cannot be predefined. Fixed ontologies pre-assume end types of polities, which is problematic for an institution in the making. A genealogy of theories which narrate European integration can better grasp the development of the project, functioning as a means to unveil their formative effect on the ontological outcome. By genealogy I refer to the historical examination of the emergence, continuity and change of the phenomenon (of integration) and its (geo)political meanings through some of its normative discourses. A genealogical examination is also dialectical. It reveals the intellectual debate upon which theories are dropped and replaced by others and how their empirical knowledge generates institutional outcomes. Addressing and juxtaposing the historical appearance, expectations, and shortcomings of theoretical discourses that allowed the emergence and development of the EU can provide the normative prescriptions of European integration.

1. Ideas of Europe

Ideas of a pan-European polity stretch historically back to the earliest conception of a European particularism. For a genealogy of European integration, we could account for a number of diverse past manifestations of European unity and following adaptations, bounded by (selective) criteria of political inclusion and ranging from the legacy of the Roman world, Christendom, or even the Concert of Europe⁷. To be contextually relevant, the current narration favors those 'Europe' discourses which were told during the last century. The basic rationality lies foremostly on their immediate relation with the contemporary European project. However, what must be seen as the basic contradiction, between perennial narratives of European exceptionalism and post-WWII integration practices or theories, is the inclusive ethos of the latter. Actually, modern European integration was conceived in an era of horrific exceptionalism and was a counter-narrative for the geopolitical practices and assumptions deriving from the institution of the national state and its principle of territorial sovereignty. Theories of European integration fall in this line of thought, as they are engaging with changing forms of sovereignty and political authority.

An historical examination of integration theories requires us to revisit the current status of the relevant discipline. European Studies has proliferated through multidisciplinary approaches which study phenomena relevant to the integration project, but not necessarily theory oriented. Some of the later theoretical developments include multi-level governance, new institutionalism strands (Pollack, 2009; Jupille & Caporaso, 1999) and post-functionalist theory (Hooghe & Marks, 2008). These are associated by a change in intellectual interest from what was 'integration as process' to what became 'integration as outcome' (Chrysochou, 2009; Rosamond, 2000). The newer attitude has move past the examination of the emergence and development of integrated Europe towards questions of how the established EU operates as a polity on its own and how the novel institutions function. In regard to foreign and security policy, newer approaches tend to view them as external policies of the Union, neglecting how they lie

⁷ For historical genealogies of the idea of Europe, see Weller's *The Idea of Europe: A Critical History* (2021) and Spiering & Wintle's *European Identity and the Second World War* (2011).

at the core of the integration project. While the intellectual trajectory in scholarship is logical and justified, with its own useful insights, it is one that contributes to EU/European exceptionalism in general and the debate of strategic autonomy in particular, marked by the normalization of the institutionalized outcome and a dis-interest in the normativity of integration.

What is of concern in the current thesis are those preceding phases of 'integration as process', Emphasis is given on the bigger fragments of integration theory, by reviewing those particular authors and works which shaped the intellectual debate of integration.

2. Early thought on European Integration

Earliest theories are characterized by an explicit normative style, because of being mostly ideas propagating the desire for integration. For them, integration was a policy for mitigating conflict and establishing those institutions that would prevent future warfare in the continent. Their main subject of analysis was the nation-state, and integration was their answer for overcoming its shortcomings. As such they are not theories in the strict sense, as they do not explain but suggest integration. Federalism and functionalism are the two main schools of this formative phase. While their advocacy for integration might not had strong empirical evidence, their critique on the nation-state was and remain pragmatic.

The movement of European federalism has its roots in the Ventotene Manifesto, which was authored by Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi during the Second World War. We can read:

The nation is no longer considered the historical product of coexistence among men ... [its] sole concern is its own existence and development, without a second thought for the harm it may cause others. (1941, pp. 8-9)

Federalists impute the causes of perpetual conflict to the nation-state and its self-preservative character, arguing how nationalism has lost its earlier emancipating character in favor of a chauvinistic reactionism. Their geopolitical understanding conceives the principle of national sovereignty as divisive and thus harmful. The manifesto sketches the securitization patterns upon which foreign policies become aggressive, as the principle of sovereignty dictates self-sufficiency. It also suggests that under the terms of unconditional sovereignty, social and political institutions - such as education, industry and scientific research - become militarized, which is an outcome of the continuous reproduction of the necessity of (military) power.

Federalist ethics lie upon a commitment to engage with the European Other. It understands and respects cultural differences, wishing to preserve the diversity. One of the novel geopolitical significations that federalism offers is that national or ethnic self-identification must not necessarily translate into distinct, exclusive and homogenous political institutions. A by-product of this argument, and the main geopolitical proposal of federalists, is the imagination of a political community that does not concede the nation. Federalism, then, views international anarchy as the structural outcome of the principle of national sovereignty. It interprets anarchy as conflict, and proposes federalization as a structural alternative for international security and governance: 'a federal regime, bringing the current anarchy to an end' (Spinelli & Rossi, 1941, p. 22).

Federalists even trace the inefficiency of international organizations, once again, in their respect of the 'absolute sovereignty of member states' (Spinelli & Rossi, 1941, p. 21). It is, then, important to note that federalists advocated the creation of a juridified international institution (Burgess, 1996). As such, their vision was not simply a project of supra-state building, but their proposed answer on the question of international anarchy, offering another radical geopolitical signification, which negates traditional geopolitics: 'Due to the global economic interdependence, the living space is now the entire world' (Spinelli & Rossi, 1941, p. 13).

It is obvious that security lies at the core of federalist thought. Of course, the concept does not adhere to a *realpolitik* definition of state preservation. Security is interpreted as the creation of those conditions which will allow the emergence of a perpetually peaceful international order. Federal – or differently, supranational – institutions were essential for their conception of international security as the means to abolish the state's monopoly over politics. In the days of early integration, federalists advocated the grant of legislative and executive powers to the Council of Europe and were frustrated by the intergovernmental institutionalization of it (Vayssière, 2022). They were also vocal on the adoption of the High Authority as a supranational executive during the establishment of European Coal and Steel Community. European Defence Community was given importance by proponents of federalism (Burgess, 2009) which again reminds that security was a central feature of the project. The difference in the interpretation of security between early federalists and strategic autonomists is more than obvious, as the former talked for an inclusive security among members while the latter seek an exclusionary security from non-members.

While for federalists, 'federalism' stands opposite to sovereignty, they failed to see that their preference for supranational institutions creates a contradiction with their inclusive ethics. By desiring a federal Europe, they were replicating a centralized, state-like polity in a bigger scale (Mitrany, 1943; Mitrany, 1930; Hoffmann, 1966; Zwolski, 2017), especially when they advocated for European Political and Defence Communities. Boundaries would become blurred among European nations and national sovereignty would be limited, but a new closed polity would be born. It might be actually inevitable to escape representations of identity and difference, but a supranational/federal Europe would only exaggerate them and still reproduce exclusionary politics. Federalists would again fall in the territorial trap (Agnew, 1994).

In one of the earliest debates on European integration, David Mitrany raised concerns over attempts of supranational institution building. He warned that the problems of states will not be solved with the creation of a bigger one (Mitrany, 1965). While Mitrany shared the federalist assumption of sovereignty's role to conflict, he located the reproduction of antagonism to the territorial aspect of the principle and attacked federalist or closed regional projects as reproducing old types of divisions in new forms:

We must have the vision to break away from traditional political ideas, which in modern times have always linked authority to a given territory. (Mitrany, 1943, p. 96)

It is important to remember that Mitrany's scope was not continental but global (Mitrany, 1930), and integration was not the end but the means of a peaceful international order. This remark

signifies European integration as part of a broader pacifist geopolitical practice, contrary to conceptions for the creation of a 'European power'. What differentiates European federalists from Mitrany's functionalism and brings them closer to state-centric approaches is their spatial imaginaries.

Mitrany proposed functional solutions to regional and global integration. He offers a definition of authority that is not determined by legal norms but by practical requirements. It seems viable to him that 'power and duties being handed over to regional and other authorities for better performance' (Mitrany, 1943, p. 99). His method was indeed reflected in the gradual path adopted by Schuman and Monnet and the subsequent creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, despite the latter declaring the foundation of a federal Europe (Burgess, 2009; Burgess, 1996; Zwolski, 2017). In my opinion, Mitrany's attempt to de-politicize functional needs and its conception of the political lacks since it decorrelates economic and cultural relations from authority. He does not elaborate enough on how functional agencies are going to be established without political commitment or what political power would functional agencies acquire. Furthermore, Mitrany's favor of technocratic solutions is in essence a political position itself. Thus, it would be more accurate to describe his concepts not as depoliticized but as alternatively politicized.

In the geopolitical plane, Mitranian thought translates into a representation of post-territorial politics. Priority is ascribed in needs and not in forms. It is a reminder that the teleological product of integration should not be a pre-determined form of polity, but European and global cooperation per se. Functionalism opened the discussion for political organization outside the strict principle of territorial sovereignty (Mitrany, 1948), and that is the reason of Mitrany returning with critiques on attitudes of a 'closer Union' (1965). For our political imaginaries and the ontological query of the European Union, functionalism sketches geographies that overlap pre-defined political boundaries and bring life to a de-territorialized conduct of international relations (Zwolski, 2017). A re-reading of integration as a cooperative *modus operandi* of international relations, as a functional re-structuring of a conflictual international system is the basic maxim of the approach and contrasts those hegemonic interpretations of the European Union as a closed self-sufficient agent – witnessed in the strategic autonomy debate.

3. Explaining European Integration post-inception

Federalism and functionalism were influential and prominent during the early postwar era, but they lost prominence after integration moved from declarations to practice (Zwolski, 2017). Ernst Haas's neofunctionalism came to dominate integration research, with an empirical advantage and an explanatory stance. To understand it, we should elaborate on what differentiates it from Mitranian functionalism⁸.

One of the most significant divergences is the re-establishment of the political aspect in integration theories. This is achieved through two, at least, ways. First, Haas values the role of political institutions in propagating and expanding integration (Haas, 2004; Lucian, 2009). He understands the sectoral division of labor attributed to international organs as political. Second, he approaches the

⁸ The label of functionalism was not applied to Mitranian thought by himself, which was suspicious of -isms, but by Haas (Zwolski, 2018, pp. 103-108). Mitrany offered a functional theory of international relations but was a pragmatist, stating that he was seeking solutions and not theories on international peace.

various sectors that become integrated as subjects of political interests. Neofunctionalism is structurally concerned as long as it debates the rearrangement of international relations through the transfer of national sovereignty, but at the same time focuses on different levels and centers of political agency, such as the supranational institutions or the political elites.

Despite this merit, neofunctionalism comes with its own shortcomings. The explanatory shortcomings of Haas's theory will not be examined, because it is of no interest in this intellectual genealogy. However, its prescriptive arguments themselves contain the production of geopolitical significations that concern the current thesis.

A drawback from Mitranian functionalism is the re-territorialization of integration theory. Neofunctionalism proposes a specific object of analysis, regional integration. It does not seek alternatives for international anarchy, since it has one at hand, the formation of European Communities. By removing the global scope of integration and specifying a Western European locus⁹ it brings territory back to functional reasoning. Furthermore, as its focus turns to mechanisms of integration, neofunctionalism also dissociates the project from the security concerns it was conceived (Zwolski, 2017).

Additionally, while it celebrates the sectoral and gradual pace of integration, it diverges from functionalism on the institutional telos, proposing centralized institutions instead of functional agencies. Thus, while the means appears to be similar, the end appears more 'federal' rather than 'functional'. Neofunctionalism had been criticized deterministically optimistic for the institutional outcome of integration. Not only neofunctionalism regionalizes integration theory, but it also represents it as a centralization project, which even lacks the considerations for popular legitimacy that federalists argued for.¹⁰

Neofunctionalism as proposed by Haas was, in his own words, meant 'to show that are other ways to peace, than either power or law' (Haas, 2004, p. xiv). Albeit being overly optimistic for the community method and determinist for the end-product, Haas's approach remains critical to nation-state system (Haas, 1964). His theory is to be remembered as a narrative which offers significations of beyond-the-state politics and contributes to the theorization of fluid ontologies. In his own words again: 'the study of integration is a step toward a theory of international change' (Haas, 2004, p. xv).

While neofunctionalism proved to be empirically true during periods of extensive integration, regular stall of the process challenged its prescriptive optimism. Member states would often decelerate or negate any substantial change in various sectors, especially when regarding their most securitized or culturally sensitive affairs. It was obvious that states were retaining their agency and had an active role in the pace or depth of integration. As such several policies through the European Communities were conducted under an intergovernmental style. This led to the actual creation of intergovernmental bodies through the institutional nexus of the EC/EU.

⁹ This is not necessarily a misconduct by Haas because, in regard to the historical context, the Inner Six was the empirical departure.

¹⁰ For the constitutionalist orientation of federalists, see Burgess, Introduction: Federalism and Building the European Union (1996).

Motivated by the empirical negation of neofunctionalist expectancies, Stanley Hoffmann elaborated on the persistence of the national state (1966). Characterizing it as 'obstinate', not 'obsolete', his contribution produced the intellectual camp of intergovernmentalism and a debate with neofunctionalism.¹¹ Hoffmann's main idea was that integration did not necessarily weaken the nation-state but actually strengthened it. Intergovernmentalism, essentially, brings the state back into integration. Of course, Hoffmann's idea of the state was not of the realist ideal type of a unitary agent (Rosamond, 2000). He offers a sophisticated definition of the 'national situation' which considers material, cultural and subjective factors, thus differentiating it qualitatively with assumptions of objective 'national interest'. His distinction of 'high' and 'low' politics introduces an intellectual schema which considers member-states' securitized concerns in a historically relevant reading (Chrysochou, 2009).

The intellectual significance of intergovernmentalism lies on reminding that integration is still international relations. Whatever the institutional outcome, integration is still about relations among constitutive units of an international (sub-)system. In Hoffmann's words: 'There are many ways of going 'beyond the state' and some modify the substance without altering the form.' (1966, p. 911). Intergovernmentalism is not a dis-integration theory. It does not negate integration as a process, as an outcome or as a pursuit, but reminds of state/government agency regardless of pooled sovereignty. It does not raise borders but draws national centers back onto the integration map, thus decentralizing the process. By reminding of the nation-state's persistence, Hoffmann's intergovernmentalism is an implicit early step of elevating identity as an analytical category of European and International studies, generating questions of national identities, emerging European identities, and hierarchies of those: 'Europe cannot be what some nations have been: a people that create its state; nor...a people created by the state.' (1966, p. 910)

By positioning subjective 'national situations' in integration theory, it signifies a geopolitical reasoning which does not reduce security politics into a juridical territorial logic but raises awareness for human geographies, promoting a vision of integration than negotiates the universal/common and the particular/national. Empirically, the leading role of the intergovernmental European Council, the shared legislative power of the Council of the EU and the gradual development of a common foreign and security policy with emerging institutions – including supranational which represent the Community i.e., the High Representative and the EAAS – show that integration is still possible without centralizing authority. The establishment of a European community is 'beyond the state' but not without it.

Integration theory as Critical IR/Geopolitics?

Resisting the temptation to portray the EU as an international actor, which would minimize its depiction in conventional categories and would prescribe an evaluation of its 'actorship' in relation to ideal-types of international agents, the above genealogy locates ontological representations of the supranational in its intellectual roots. The 'integration as process' label is an oversimplification which

¹¹Intergovernmentalism is mostly presented as at odds with neofunctionalism, which shall not be the case as long as Hoffmann praises Haas's work and does not condemn supranational institutions.

does not do justice neither to the diversity nor the individual richness of these theories. On the other, it also misses both their shortcomings and their place as hegemonic narratives on European integration. However, since theories shape practice, their claims can better provide the normative foundations upon which the supranational was conceived.

It is not claimed here that integration theories can provide a 'truer' ontology of the EU and its capacity as an international agent. The theories were not chosen for their explanatory power. In the contrary, the choice was made in attempt to locate that narration of European integration which provided the foundations towards an alternative conduct of international politics. Beyond its insights on integration, the above literature remains a methodologically convenient tool as conceptual departure from conventional international thought.

A basic aim of this intellectual history is to relocate integration theories into the sphere of international relations theories. Indeed, integration remains both a practice and a theory concerned with politics among nations, in the literal sense of the concept. As theories of international relations, integration theories are as well concerned with basic questions of the discipline, such as security, conflict, and cooperation. They are actually born out of these considerations. However, they reject core assumptions on the assumed nature of international politics.

Theorists of integration reject both anarchy as the single structural possibility and conflict as endogenous to international politics. Instead, they attribute their reproduction to the principle of territorial sovereignty which is understood as their causal condition. Territoriality, as the state's monopoly over political spaces, is condemned as insufficient to provide neither for security nor other needs of societies. This leads to an immediate contradiction with the conventional assumption of the state as the sole form of political organization that can cope with international issues. The state represents the archetypal image of the unitary international agent, which concentrates the resources and the means. Integration theorists reject the unitary agent both as an ontological precondition and as a legitimate institution.

This attitude detaches security from a self-centric view. For integration theorists, security is neither an individual inquiry nor a relative one. It is rather a common condition, what would Karl Deutsch term as a 'security community' (Deutsch, et al., 1957)¹² or in Wæver's reinterpretation for the case of the EU, a non-war community (1998). This rearticulation of security delegitimizes the roles of boundaries as sites of security and hard power as the means towards it. Proposing the transcendence of an exclusionary ontology, integration allows security to be imagined beyond the 'safe haven' of the national state – the myth that prevails in an inside/outside logic, and which is reproduced in the image of a 'closed union'. This carries structural connotations describing a non-anarchical international system, introducing and promoting patterns of international governance.

Rejecting the territorial principle, integration theories look upon possible means to penetrate the unitary agent. Others tie political economy to geopolitics by suggesting common resources as a leverage, where others suggest functional agencies to slowly establish common institutions. Whatever

¹² 'A security-community, therefore, is one in which there is real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way.' p.5

the vehicle, the supranational establishes itself in a post-territorial logic, creating the conditions to transcend the fragmented geography of territorial units. Early integration legitimated the supranational community as a means to peace and prosperity in Europe. Schuman declared:

‘By pooling basic production and by instituting a new High Authority, whose decisions will bind France, Germany and other member countries, this proposal will lead to the realization of the first concrete foundation of a European federation indispensable to the preservation of peace’. (The 9th May Declaration 1950)

From the creation of this first High Authority up to the current Commission, the supranational institutions symbolize the possibility of a polity beyond national boundaries. Either as functional agencies or as federal bodies, the legitimacy of the supranational was based on an idea of regulating relations through common institutions as a prerequisite of perpetual cooperation.

It might be an exaggeration to claim that contemporary politics can move beyond the territorial principle, especially when territorial integrity is deemed the norm and the European project is still bounded by borders. However, the supranational is not established as a bigger state but as an institution which regulates international relations without replacing the parts. Post-territoriality is practiced by the emergence of parallel and overlapping spaces of political authority. It is implied by the mitigation of both the functional and symbolic roles of boundaries. The former refers to the relaxation of boundaries in the role of frontiers which control mobility, whereas the latter refers to the gradual engagement and reconstruction of the (European in the case) Other. As a geopolitical phenomenon, integration mitigates boundaries through the establishment an international political geography more pragmatic and beyond the rigid fragmentation of the territorial system. The strict territorial lines that divide nations vanish, replaced by blurred sites of contact and mobility.

An ontological deduction stemming not from the theories themselves but from their genealogy, is the social construction of political institutions, implied by the plurality of ontological interpretations. This points to the possibility of diverse ways to imagine and institute the supranational, with ontological fluidity becoming a precise description of the indeterminacy of social/political institutions. Following logically the above is the creative potential for political institutions. Instead of comparing it contra ideal-types of political entities (like a unitary state, a confederacy or an international organization), the supranational should be treated as an ontological novelty. While it is indeed difficult to move beyond established concepts of political theory and practice, comparatively measuring the EU simply prescribes the project to replicate old ideas and practices.

Applying the problem-solving/critical binary on integration theories, they would hardly find a place in the latter category. However, the intellectual history of integration theories does not only help to understand the European Union but also offers a critical rearticulation of international ontologies. Reading integration as international relations counters assumptions of geopolitical realities and international agency. It does so by rejecting the perception of the territorial, self-sufficient, military capable ideal type for efficient international agency.

Chapter 3 – Perceptions of the International in the debate of strategic autonomy

Returning to contemporary European politics, one would ask how a project shaped through the post-war ethics of integration moved into 'high politics'. Emergence of the debate must be seen through the context in which such concern was raised. Indeed, contemporary trends in global politics have at large shaped the motivation towards strategic autonomy. Instituting and practicing European foreign and security policy have not always been self-evident. Actually, developments have mostly been slow, in contrast to other policy areas in which Europe is integrated. Beyond asking why strategic autonomy, it is useful to ask why strategic autonomy now.

To provide the current context, a prehistory of the concept must be traced. Any reading of the current debate should acknowledge some pre-Maastricht data. Briefly, the perception of EU's limited external agency rests upon earlier failures on integrating defence and foreign policy in Europe. Albeit they took place in a different politico-historical context, they are fragments upon which a pessimistic view of the possibility of common foreign policy was built. Complementary and more importantly, US and NATO's role in assuming defence of Europe by 1950s shaped and still dominates perceptions surrounding security in the continent.

Post-Maastricht integration momentum may have provided an early pulse, such as the introduction of the Common Foreign and Security Policy as a pillar of the Union, however it remained by the time a minor ambition (Maastricht Treaty, 1991). As was mentioned, the notion of autonomous action was conceived in St. Malo declaration (1998). The latter was an early alarm of an infertile institutionalization of external action in the Union, born as a response to insufficient response in the Yugoslav wars. While the declaration paved a road for the early steps of a common external action¹³, there was not broader interest in doing so. Some of the impetus remained of course and is reflected in the subsequent treaties and produced institutions, nevertheless¹⁴. Additionally, there had already been some work in progress for the deployment of military and civilian missions abroad, first of them initiated by 2003 (EUPM/BiH, 2015). However, during the 'end of history'¹⁵, foreign policy of the Union was preoccupied mostly by the prospect of integrating Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries in the Union, a project with a broader consensus within, and not by a major security issue.

The above provide us with two antithetical images of Europe, one of a weak geopolitical agent versus one of a significant regional project. Due to convulsive and reluctant action during the Yugoslav wars EU was fabricated as a minor power (Toje, 2011). In contrast, enlargement euphoria in the following years stands in contrast with the previous assumption. Indeed, enlargement came with some important effects. Firstly, it glorified the European project, proving it more than a regional organization. Secondly, the Union got significantly larger in space and population, thus established itself as a major

¹³ Manifested in the introduction on the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), later Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

¹⁴ The last reform treaty, Treaty of Lisbon (2007), provided two major institutions, those of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/CFSP) and the European External Action Service (EEAS). An attempt to improve cooperation in defense matters have been made through later institutions and policies such as PESCO, CARD and EDF.

¹⁵ Referring to thesis proposed by Francis Fukuyama that the end of Cold War marked an era of ideological singularity (Fukuyama, 1992).

geopolitical variable. Thirdly, the enlargement did not only increase the number of people and states inside the Union, but also the number of views and perceptions regarding security priorities. European Union has evolved to include twenty-eight members¹⁶. The fact that the states are not mere nation-states anymore but have been transformed into member-states is a significant achievement of integration. However, for the sole reason that the state remains a point of reference for inter-European relations indicates that national preferences still control the pace (which is not inherently positive or negative). The main concern of Eastern member-states to mitigate Russian influence is exemplary of the above case.

In the context of pre-enlargement historical experience and post-enlargement diversification, EU is still regarded a minor security agent. After all, this assumption is the motivation behind a strategically autonomous Union. However, it should not be deduced that the debate is simply a result of this perceived shortcoming of integration. Actually, integrated Europe provides the most concrete foundation and the earliest stimulus on which a common foreign and security policy is conceived. The debate became possible through the institutional life of the Union, but the current questioning of EU's capabilities is shaped and amplified by the experience of contemporary geopolitics. The argument is that any ambitions for a common foreign and security policy were not irrelevant previously, but their present climax as in the vision for strategic autonomy grew out of current practices in international relations.

Turmoil in neighbourhood

First in consideration of international practices, which intensified advocacy for enhanced external agency, include a series of Russian actions understood in Europe as aggressive. The relation between Russia and the West was already deteriorating and reached its nadir following the military intervention in Ukraine (Krastev, 2015; Avere, 2016). Annexation of Crimea and declaration of autonomous republics in Eastern Ukraine, backed by Russian forces, were not only condemned as illegal by the EU and its member-states (CEU, 2014). They were also perceived as a direct offense against the Union since Ukraine was in the course of an Association Agreement (Litra, Medynskyi, & Zarembo, 2017). War in Ukraine marked the end of an era between Russia and the West, which it might not have been of a close association, but nevertheless characterized by a minimum of understanding under international order (Krastev, 2015; Chivvis, 2015; Kostanyan, 2017; Avere, 2016).

In the light of the Ukrainian crisis, perceptions of a peaceful international order were challenged (Krastev, 2015; Wiggel & Vihma, 2016; Simão, 2011). Literature notes not only the departure from the previous security reasoning, but despite that, the enduring reluctance and even absence of EU institutions after the military escalation in Ukraine (Howorth, 2014; De Ruyt, 2014; Tocci, 2014; Kostanyan, 2017; Blockmans, 2014; Litra, Medynskyi, & Zarembo, 2017). Considerations over the ability of EU to act and protect – and subsequently over its legitimacy – rose. The use of force in a European country near its borders provoked arguments for the necessity of EU to improve its capability to act autonomously, to act quickly and to have an increased role in security affairs (Chivvis, 2015; Gromyko,

¹⁶ Twenty-seven members after Brexit. Euro-British relations hold their own relevance in regard to the current debate. Interestingly enough EUGS has been adopted some days before the official declaration of the British withdrawal from the Union.

2015; Szeptycki, 2015; Popescu, 2014; Litra, Medynskyi, & Zarembo, 2017). Voices raised concerns over the lack of strategic framework and the minimal use (and the relevant usefulness) of available instruments such as the CSDP (Howorth, 2014; Avere, 2016; Litra, Medynskyi, & Zarembo, 2017).

The only common characteristic of Euro-Russian relations since the dawn of Ukrainian crisis is mutual distrust. A recent crisis with Belarus, a state with strong ties to Russia, is fueling discordance. European relations with other states are greatly affected by Russian politics, not only in the near neighborhood, but extrapolated - at least - in Middle East and North Africa. Politicization of energy due to the European dependence on Russian supplies (Noël, 2019) and rival trading practices despite the vast trade between the two are another two major problems (Wiggel & Vihma, 2016). Additionally, European Union has to face what it perceives as hybrid warfare from Russian practices (Litra, Medynskyi, & Zarembo, 2017), including cyberattacks (Popescu, 2018), political influence accompanied by financial support to Eurosceptic parties and the spread of fake news. Europe is also worried for the level of human rights and political freedom in Russia, and there has been tension between them regarding the suppression of political opposition, often with violent and lethal means including prison and poisoning.

Second in the list of geopolitical events was conflict and turmoil in EU's 'southern neighbourhood'. The case of the southern neighbourhood follows closely the previous consideration of conflict in Ukraine. First, for both cases foreign relations were conducted under the auspices of European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), of which limited results challenged the normative power of the Union and the relevance of the policy. Second, in both cases conflict and turmoil disrupted the assumptions of a peaceful rule-based order. Differences lie on the purposive role of EU in Middle East and North Africa¹⁷, the minimal intervention, and the exclusion of EU from the settlement.

From the list of local cases regarding the 'southern neighbourhood', two seem of great importance for strategic thought in Europe, those of Libya and Syria, where civil war still devastates both countries. In case of Libya, intervention was carried via NATO, and this provoked for some the question why the EU could not have led the operations instead (Howorth, 2014). Post-intervention witnessed operations under the mandate of CSDP, mainly maritime patrols to implement arms embargo, however the effectiveness and purpose of them was questioned as well. In regard to Syria, the migration crisis produced by the vast number of refugees, the increasing intervention of other agents in the conflict and the rise of Daesh raised questions of what role EU should have there.

The direct consequences of the conflicts in Europe (rather than the conflicts themselves), namely the migration crisis in 2015 and increased terrorism (related to Daesh) in EU countries, were the actual triggers for thoughts surrounding EU's capabilities. Thus, it can be concluded that turmoil in MENA shaped considerations on two matters. First, regarding the capability of the EU to conduct operations at home and abroad. Operations at home include protecting the borders from illegal migration and preventing terrorists entering the Union's territory. Relevant are operations to manage

¹⁷ Counter to the Eastern partnership, the southern neighbourhood was not ever seen through the prism of enlargement.

refugee shipwrecks and capturing smuggler boats. The last and most controversial point is to intervene militarily in conflicts outside its territory.

The second issue refers to agents that actively intervened in the area, affecting the conflicts and usually in contrast with European interests. Civil wars in MENA, from Libya to Yemen, have been evolved into proxy wars. Regarding the immediate interest of the EU and in the context of the mentioned above conflicts, two agents of importance are namely Russia and Turkey. The above leads to another input shaping EU's quest for strategic autonomy, relative to the European neighbourhood. While tensions with Russia are explained above, Turkey remains a difficult part in the puzzle.

Having been an ally of the West for the previous decades, Turkey has become a difficult neighbour in the last years, raising aspirations for regional leadership in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean. While it remains a major trade partner and a main investment destination for member-states, issues such as democratic deficit, unilateral aggressive policies in the region, accession negotiations stalk and even difficulties in reforming and applying the Customs Union led to a deterioration of relations (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019; Alessandri, Lesser, & Tastan, 2018). The refugee crisis, which affects both Turkey and European states, has worsened the bilateral cooperation, involving issues of humanitarian ethics, financial support, and politicization of migration (Dalay, Lesser, Talbot, & Tastan, 2020; Dursun-Özkanca, 2019). Furthermore, Turkey has long-time disputes with two member states – Greece and Cyprus – including maritime boundaries issues which often escalate militarily (Filis, 2020; Axt, 2021; Stanicek, 2020; Dalay, Lesser, Talbot, & Tastan, 2020). European Union is generally divided upon the future of the relations with Turkey (Adar & Toygür, 2020).

West falling apart

Turkey's divergence from its Western track has been accompanied by improved relations with Russia on particular issues. This is an event that has strained relations with Western countries, especially regarding military infrastructure and security policies of Turkey (Dursun-Özkanca, 2019). This has created a rift in the NATO security alliance, worrying European member states of both EU and NATO in various issues including equipment interoperability, information security but also regarding strategic choices of Turkey that could contradict Western interests (Alessandri, Lesser, & Tastan, 2018). While Turkey and Russia do not cooperate or agree on all affairs, the establishment of close ties between the two countries in parallel with their undemocratic governance and the simultaneous military engagement in regional conflicts creates ambiguity on the reliance of Turkey as a security partner.

A comparison of European relations with Russia and of those with Turkey can provide some interesting insights. Historically, they both fell into the identity abyss at the margins of the West and East, oscillating between the perceptions of being (and being accepted as) Europeans or Orientals (Neumann, 1998). The historical experience establishes a background of relations instituted on difference and suspicion, at times culminated into enmity. However, twentieth century witnessed a clearer and conscious demarcation of the politico-cultural traits of both countries, with Russia becoming the significant Other of a liberal and democratic West, while Turkey came to be a part of it (Neumann, 1998; Alessandri, Lesser, & Tastan, 2018; Çalı, 2017; Simão, 2011). Thus, while the fall of the Iron Curtain allowed a brief welcome into the western order, the re-emergence of an aggressive Russia simply confirmed a difficult relation. Contrary, the case with Turkey is phenomenally of different

kind since it has been closely associated and embedded within the Western world. Comparatively, Russia's exclusion was deemed as the norm and European policies against it are justified by this fact, while Turkey's recent divergence witness a spasmodic Europe.

To be sure, the relation of Turkey with the so-called West have never been homogenous and self-evident (as long as the West itself is not a centralized point of reference) (Dalay, Lesser, Talbot, & Tastan, 2020). Especially, regarding the more particular relation with the EU, and despite being a candidate for membership, it was not necessarily considered European (Neumann, 1998; Dursun-Özkanca, 2019; Alessandri, Lesser, & Tastan, 2018). Nevertheless, the long political inclusion of Turkey into the West causes uneasy reactions. Contrary to Russia, Turkey has not been the significant Other for political agents in Europe and the EU¹⁸ – excluding maybe Greece and Cyprus – despite indeed being an important agent. Saying that, it was not an anchor that dictated constitutive policy against it by the Europeans, as it was normalized as a part of Western policy making.

Interestingly, the case of Turkey going its own course could be considered part of a paradigm shift in progress in international relations. Considering that Turkey remains a puzzle for the EU – due to the spectrum of stances by member states for it, ranging from adversary to ally - the relevance of Turkey's policies vis-à-vis European foreign policy does not simply lie on their relation. In contrast, Turkey's foreign policy should be examined in parallel with those of other agents, including the EU, as a broader motif of strategic autonomy (Dalay, Lesser, Talbot, & Tastan, 2020). As long as international politics are relational and thus policies are intersubjective, it would not be naïve to assume that Turkey's and EU's policies are informed by each other, not only in content but also in form.

Furthermore, Turkey's case is exemplary of an intra-Western split that challenges security and foreign policy assumptions in the European Union. The argument carries connotations not exclusively for the Euro-Turkish relations, but more generally for the erosion of the idea of the 'West'¹⁹. Of course, Turkish foreign policy maintains its role in constituting the current debate, but the above serves as an introduction to a broader geopolitical phenomenon, that of the current affairs of intra-Western relations. Speaking of Western polities drifting apart and following their course, the EU and Turkey are not some kinds of exception. If Turkey remains at the margins of the Western imaginary, transatlantic relations account for the core of it. And central agents of this relation have not been spared from the autonomous tendency.

To be definite, transatlantic relations refer to those among European states, including the United Kingdom, and states of North America, mainly the United States. Both the UK and the US have major roles in the security politics of the west, stemming from their economic and military might. Both have been adherents of the transatlantic relationship, supporting its significance for the European and global stability. Nevertheless, both have followed policies that have shaken the transatlantic structure.

¹⁸ Neumann, cited above, argues that Turkey have been for years a significant Other for the formation of European identity and state-system. It is my opinion that while Turkey had a formative role before, it is not the case since post-WWII when it had been integrated politically in the West.

¹⁹ Interestingly, the outflow of Western norms in Turkish social and political life as the idea of a Western liberal order decays, presents a similar pattern with their influx when Turkey joined the consolidating West past the WWII. There is clearly a correlation between the crisis of intra-Western relations and the erosion of Western values, but there is no question of causality here, rather both phenomena reinforce each other.

The British decision to withdraw from the EU marked a significant point for their relations. Without further deepening on the relationship of the UK with the European project, a useful reminder is that the British were not among the staunch supporters of a closer Union, choosing to opt-out from many institutional policies that in their view would undermine their own sovereignty and autonomy (Adler-Nissen, 2014; Baker & Schnapper, 2015; Cardwell, 2017). Nevertheless, and despite its well-known position on integration, the decision to leave, a monumental declaration of “sovereignism”, was constitutive of the rift. It did not only alter the institutional relationship with the UK, it also harmed the legacy of the Union, and consequently its legitimacy. The kind of Euroscepticism that challenges the totality of the project celebrated British withdrawal (De Vries, 2018; Malik, 2018). The crisis provoked was an existential one for the Union, challenging both its internal coherence and external prestige.

However, the event seems to have a dual effect for the EU. UK’s approach might have favored minimum integration and was particularly suspicious of the Union achieving any role on foreign and security policies. With its withdrawal, an important barrier for further political and defence integration have been removed, allowing such tendencies within to gain ground. Additionally, with the UK outside the institutions, negotiations provided a test of a common foreign policy for the rest of the member states. Interestingly, the new relation with the British as an external partner may also pave the road of a closer cooperation between the EU and the UK, without producing the sovereignty insecurities for the latter (Boillot, 2021; de France, 2019; Cardwell, 2017; Laïci, 2019).

Beyond crisis and opportunity in Euro-British relations, the withdrawal should be reviewed in the context of - and on its effect on - the current debate of European foreign policy. Thus, while British withdrawal revives a haunting narrative that reads the British as marginal to the European identity via the antithesis to the continental project, it does also produce a significant stimulus towards strategic autonomy. To make the argument more clear, British decision to leave the Union echoes its desire to conduct politics with British means and values, in other words to be autonomous. This moment of British foreign policy is a mirror image of current European strategic ambitions. This is evident in the newest strategic text of the UK which features striking similarities with texts of European strategy, foremostly the EUGS. Again, the argument is that European and British policies are co-informed and co-instituted.

That said, it should not follow that UK and EU adopt identical approaches. A clear disagreement always existed in the domain of foreign and security affairs, at least among those in continental European states that supported more integration versus traditional British attitudes. Namely, the former pursued closer cooperation and enhancement of the CFSP, where the latter privileged NATO foremost and were skeptical, if not suspicious, of European initiatives. The current debate on strategic autonomy constantly engages with the role of the NATO and whether an enhanced political and military cooperation in the EU would undermine or strengthen the former.

The alliance has been politically constitutive of a post-WWII definition of the West. Discussing NATO and transatlantic relations from the European perspective, it foremost describes political-military ties of European states with the US, in which the latter enjoyed a prominent role. It should be emphasized, without being an exaggeration, that a discussion around NATO and Europe is mainly about the US’s position in Europe - whether interpreted as hegemony or as partnership. While NATO prevailed as the collective security pillar for Europe for more than half a century - expanded to include more CEE

countries since the end of the Cold War, most of which also joined the EU - transatlantic relations do not always seem to conform to common issues.

Actually, NATO had to reconceive its role by the early dawn of a post-Cold war era (Smith M. A., 2000; Aybet & Moore, 2010; NATO, 1991; 1999). As discussed above, war in Yugoslavia and Kosovo was an important stimulus for generating considerations for autonomous EU defence capabilities and the very same ideas stirred a degree of detachment between the two structures, especially since it was NATO that actually intervened in the area. Worries were raised over NATO declining in significance by an initiative inside the EU, and consequently US leverage in Europe's security affairs (Albright, 1998). Of course, owing to the reluctant steps towards defence integration in the EU, NATO have not lost ground in regard to its collective security role in Europe.

However, while the scope of the alliance was broadened outside member-states territory (Smith M. A., 2000), US policies after September 9th were not met by consensus from European partners. Invasion in Iraq, in specific, was a test for intra-Western relations, when voices for an independent European foreign policy to counter American interventionism were raised (Habermas & Derrida, 2003; Lewis, 2011; Gordon, 2002; Wood, 2003; Fakiolas & Fakiolas, 2006). Disagreement for Iraq created disputes not only between US and its European allies, but also among European states themselves. It was indeed a bitter test for the possibility of a common European foreign policy (Lewis, 2011; Wood, 2003).

This leads to another aspect of a transitional period of transatlantic relations, related to the accession of former socialist countries into Western structures – including both the EU and NATO. The issue of enlargement(s) does not only echo the espousal of Western-type institutions by the newest members (such as market economies and parliamentary democracies). It also reflects how the admissions created a diversity of new interpretations, regarding threats and expectations. For example, during early post-Cold War eastern members expected the West to accommodate their aversion for Moscow's policies, when at the same time and for the first time, old members were experiencing a less hostile Moscow (Aybet & Moore, 2010). This is also reflected on how newest members were more eager to support the US in their Iraqi expedition (verbally or materially) (Fakiolas & Fakiolas, 2006) and presents the differences of grade regarding perceptions of US role for European security.

Although transatlantic relations seemed to have moved towards a compromise past the invasion in Iraq, US unilateralism left its mark. Indeed, it was the foreign policy of the US that first showed the world an example of strategic autonomy. Consider the issue of burden sharing in the alliance, and while there has always been a minimum requirement for defence spending in NATO, voices in the US have become noisy of it only lately, a fact which might as well be reflected by their strategic shifts (Knutsen, 2016). Trump's administration only helped to exaggerate such criticism against US allies, and in conjunction with his unpredictable and reactionary style of foreign policy, amplified security concerns in Europe. During his administration, both parts have questioned NATO's relevance (Aggestam & Hyde-Price, 2019; Fiott, 2018). Albeit a Biden administration has been met with relief by the EU, recent unilateral decisions such as the disengagement from Afghanistan or the AUKUS agreement, strengthened calls for the Union to reconsider reliance on the US and NATO and imagine European security through its own means.

The role and relevance of NATO in contemporary world politics is a significant debate on its own. Its dialectics, for the current context of EU-NATO relations, are reflected on the official consensus, verbal and institutional. Despite that, EU's CFSP/CSDP collide with NATO policies due to their shared domain, security of Europe – with definitions of security involving territorial defence as well as external intervention. Inevitably, leaving aside the temporary mutual understanding, this conflict of interest (re)generates debates of 'Atlanticism' versus 'Europeanism'. It is not foreseeable whether NATO will eclipse from the continent at some time, and even in such possibility, if it will be accompanied by a stressed transatlantic relation, either as a cause or as an effect. However, a receding NATO would cease to be the defining trait of a concrete Western identity. When NATO, as a dominant definition of the West, becomes shaken and appears more as a dividing line of Western Others along the Atlantic, the growing distinction of European Us against American Them contributes to an identity crisis. Through the lens of the subject, an alliance in question does challenge security assumptions and strategic thought in the continent and the Union, raising questions over the credibility of reliance on US for national and regional security and fostering considerations for strategic autonomy.

The above list of cases and their brief analysis presented could not be exhaustive. Additional consideration could be put on particular member states strategies, such as France (which received a brief mention) or Germany. Since national politics have a strong say in the articulation of European policies, inter-European hierarchies must be assessed. Furthermore, with the concepts of EU's strategic autonomy and global role going mainstream in broader discourse, the list will normally expand thematically and geographically. For instance, the geographical scope could be extended up to Asia, including cases such as relations with China or India²⁰. Similarly, the list does not necessarily follow a chronological order, as long as the debate cannot be viewed as an end-product of a particular event, but rather as constantly changing, constituted by policies and constituting policies. Nevertheless, the geopolitical considerations described above are indicative of the current dominant understanding which revolves around practices perceived as threats for the security and the interests of the EU.

²⁰ The examples of strategic documents on China (EU-China - A strategic outlook, 2019) and Pacific (EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, 2021) are such moments that both build upon strategic considerations and reinforce them.

Chapter 4 – Critical Comparative Analysis of the debate of Strategic Autonomy

Strategic Autonomy or Barbarism: A tale of international (in)security

'We live in times of existential crisis, within and beyond the European Union. Our Union is under threat.' (EUGS, 2016)

The claim of an EU which can achieve its own ends with its own emerges from the international imaginary described in the debate with the general observation is that is shaped by crises near, around and inside Europe/the EU. These include cases of traditional security threats in the form of military aggression, but also non-traditional security threats. The indefinite designation of this category literally allows the securitization of any issue, including migration, terrorism, cyberspace and trade. The debate moves at times towards the issue of interventionism in outer areas, approached either as the intervention of third parties against EU's security and interests or as the possibility of the EU to intervene for its own interests. Another source of insecurity is also located in the strained relations with partner countries which cause anxiety in the EU.

The concept of strategic autonomy is subject to three interrelated observations. The first one concerns an egotist and relativist conception of security and interests. The second point relates to the material aspect of international agency, in the forms of hard power and self-sufficiency. The third observation considers the intensified role of the boundary as the site of security.

The prevailing pattern of the debate's storytelling is danger. International relations are sketched as conflictual, unpredictable and insecure. Whatever the empirical validity, these descriptions are normalized into ontological definitions of the international. They are assumed as a priori conditions on which international politics takes place. This interpretation of the international is an old story told anew. It echoes a Hobbesian view of social life, which is rendered as primitive and unbearable outside the political community (Hobbes, 2010). The tale of insecurity normalizes the domestic as a safe haven and condemns the international as a dangerous place, and it is essentially a legitimation act which bestows the authority of a referent political community to ensure its security.

This representation of the international does not occur in vague but in parallel with the identity construction of the EU. The debate is essentially an identity performance on the Union. Identity emerges through differentiation, which is political in the Schmittian notion, an identification of friend or foe (Schmitt, 1932). Political differentiation in discourses of external action, through their geopolitical nomenclature, is conducted in spatial terms. The most obvious connotation is the identification of an agent with its territory, its exclusive space, followed by the depiction of the international as a fragmented space. Such geopolitical depiction does not only spatialize the world into distinctly divided and exclusive places, it also unfolds a hierarchical taxonomy of them. With the outside represented as insecure, unlawful and unreliable is also assumed a threat for the inside, which is imagined as the closed area which must be protected.

In essence, the debate adopts a binary logic of inside/outside, generating a spatial framing of political agency. It does so through geographical representations such as states (Russia, the US), regions (eastern and southern neighbourhood) and other imaginary geographies (the West), through and on

which political power is performed. Such spatial framing is qualitative as it constructs the difference with the EU's Others, thus (re)defining its identity.

The narrative builds upon an expanding conception of perpetual crisis and the normalization of such an anxiety, drawing geographies of an inner order and outer chaos. This dual political geography impacts strategic thought by generating assumptions towards the necessity for the EU to reclaim its sovereignty by acquiring its own agency. This is a subsequent dichotomy emanating from the inside/outside logic, one that differentiates foreign from domestic politics and lays the ground for claims of sovereignty. Voices in support of strategic autonomy will urge to distinguish strategic autonomy from sovereignty (Tocci, 2021, p. 8), albeit others call explicitly for European sovereignty (Fiott, 2018). Surely though, sovereignty must not be read via legal interpretations. Again the Schmittian notion of the political explains sovereignty, which is the egotist and relativist perception of security and interests contra those of Others. The interests and the security of the community are depicted through a self-centric ontology, measured relatively to Others and as individual pursuits.

The debate serves as a discourse legitimating the EU's security role via juxtaposition with foreign agents. Either as representations of threats or of inadequate security providers, they justify the case for enhanced agency and shift the gravity for a security role towards the EU. Presenting them as high priorities, it urges for external agency with the appropriate dilemma, strategic autonomy or barbarism.

Both strategic autonomy and integration debates rest upon an identity of a united Europe. Undoubtedly, the current idea of a Europe under threat stems genealogically from the very establishment of the first European Community. However, both debates utilized a European identity for very distinct reasons and with different contents. As seen in the genealogy of integration theories, the idea of supranational Europe was raised in differentiation with a fragmented Europe. The political differentiation, the identified enemy, was not some external Other. The Other of the supranational was the egotist agent and the anarchical structure. Wæver (1998) offers an interpretation the integrated Europe's Other as its own past, describing a temporal differentiation on which the the project was conceived.

Respectively, the perception of security and interests as individual endeavours stands in contrast with integration ethics. Especially, consider the earlier phase of integration theory prior to the establishment of European Communities. Both federalism and functionalism urged exactly for the transcendence of this conception and the establishment of an institutional framework of common interests. Their motives was based on an understanding that any interest could be better pursued collectively but also that egotist practices were inherently harmful.

Defence integration – A contradiction in terms?

The egotist-relativist conception of security and interests deduces the capacity of an international agent into the ability to defend for its domestic community from external threats. This eternal recurrence of *raison d'état* dictates the means of foreign and security policy, namely hard power and autarky. In the context of strategic autonomy, both imply a broader than military means definition since the debate incorporates other issues beyond conventional defence, such as cyberwarfare, migration, disinformation and trade wars. The presentation of the international

as conflictual legitimates hard power as a means of foreign policy, whether it concerns deterrence of external threats or intervention elsewhere. Additionally, the self-centric signification of security renders the acquisition and support of hard power means as crucial, implying that the agent must produce them with own resources. Accordingly, the debate expands the notion of autonomy to include other material needs of the Union. Subsequently, any interdependence is considered a vulnerability and a possible source of external undermining.

The ambition of strategic autonomy is tied to hard power by definition. Former High Representative of the Union, Mogherini Federica, introduces the EUGS by explicitly correlating the ambition with hard power (2016, p. 4). While put forward carefully, justified for various aims ranging from territorial defence to peace building, the diffusion and banality of hard power as an instrument of external action is obvious. After all, the concept of strategic autonomy derives from the defence sector where hard power has a vital role. By securitizing international relations and legitimating hard power, the debate also brings into consideration the prospect of a defence Union. It argues for either a centralized European army or an enhanced cooperation. Of course, the claim is not new in debates of European integration. However, it is still problematic for integration theories because it simply shifts the issue of military rivalry in a bigger geographical scale.

Reviewing the history of defence integration, the idea of a European Defence Community was established as early as European integration itself, despite being fruitless. While it was conceived around an external other – the Soviet threat, the mentality behind integrating national armies under a European banner carries different connotations. Firstly, it was an attempt to establish a checks and balances system upon national forces, with an eye on a possible German rearmament. Western European states favored the possibility of delegating supranational authority upon their own forces if it meant that it could counter a reemergent German militarism (Pleven, 1950; Netherlands Government, 1951). Secondly, the idea of a defence union presented itself as an opportunity of establishing political bonds among European states. Federalists, in particular, enjoyed the idea of a defence union as a prerequisite for establishing a European Federation, some of them abandoning their earlier international federalism after disillusionment with Soviet accommodation (Zwolski, 2018, p. 61). Defence integration was deemed as another step of overcoming national differences and fostering political cooperation. If the story of the EDC has something to demonstrate is how common defence institutions can help to institutionalize political cooperation.

Of course, there always remains the claim of hard power as a prerequisite of the existence of a political community, the European project being no exception and possible only due to hard power. For the case of European integration, this is a two-fold argument. On the one hand, the hard power of an aggressive USSR inevitably brought the states of Western Europe together. On the other, the hard power of the US both guaranteed and dictated the integration of Europe. Whatever the role of threat perceptions and US involvement in fostering unity between European states, these could not amount for the totality of institutional innovation in Europe. Actually, what Soviet threat mostly amplified was the transatlantic relations, witnessed in the economic and military bonds established between the US and Europe. In other words, while the Soviet Other contributed to a shared identity among Western states, it was not the condition for integration. The most concrete empirical example is the case of NATO, which as the dominant institution to counter the Soviet threat remained an inter-state endeavor

– not a supranational one. Thus, while hard power retained its role in (in)security, neither Cold War macropolitical relations cannot explain the ontological novelty offered by integration nor hard power can be described as a prerequisite for integration.

The argument put through the current thesis does not concern the existence or the necessity of hard power instruments as such. It rather problematizes the conditions upon hard power is legitimized as a means of international conduct. The problematics on the legitimacy of hard power lies upon the logic on which is based, which is essentially conflictual. With realist terminology, it refers to the construction and expansion of the security dilemma. The Othering process which takes place through hard power logic, based on the continuous search and evaluation of threats and military build-up, is by definition alienating. Through the lens of integration theories, the legitimation of hard power capabilities is problematic because the militarization of international relations is causal and not enabling of security.

The Supranational and Geo-politics of Boundaries

The logic of the insecure international sets the boundaries of a political community as the sites of its security. Necessarily, it intensifies their role both symbolically and functionally. The symbolic role of boundary is exclusion, through the demarcation of membership in the political community. Then, there is its role in the construction of places beyond it. The functional role is intensified by the utilization of the boundary as a means to ensure security inside the political community. A securitized boundary control mobility, with the term implying the movement of people, goods, services and information.

The fact of the intensified border brings to the fore the main contradiction between strategic autonomy and integration. The claim for strategic autonomy defines political boundaries as the sites of security in complete contrast with integration theories which presents them as the exact condition of international rivalry. The intensified presence of boundaries, as practice of controlling mobility, contributes to a fragmented political geography. Practically, it enables territoriality which is the one principle that integration theories condemned as harmful to international relations. These territorial geopolitics sketches the boundary as a site of suspicion and as a divining line, denying them any conception as sites of a different engagement with the Other.

The reduction of the geopolitical imaginary to a territorial logic negates the possibility of other geographies. Applied integration can provide empirical examples of overlapping spaces of ethnic and religious groups. Mitigating the presence of the boundary, integration allowed irredentist claims to vanish. One can consider the cases of Tyrol or Alsace. Having for years been reasons for ethnic and national enmities, they have been emancipated from the territorial logic of exclusionary homogeneity, allowed to exist by their demographic diversity. Integration allows the practice of a more pragmatic political geography which responds to the actual, blurred and overlapping human geographies, especially at boundaries.

Upon the issue of geopolitical fragmentation, considering that the established demarcation of the EU precedes the debate, it might seem an exaggeration to claim that the ambition of strategic autonomy raises boundaries. Actually, the issue of external boundaries is no new to European integration but has followed the project since its inception, not only because the problem of geopolitical boundaries was the stimuli for integration but also due to the emergence of new boundaries in a

regional scale. While it could be claimed that the geographical limits of the supranational community had been determined in its inception, such a claim would be false for several reasons. Thus, some issues on the historical delimitation of the supranational community must be resolved.

In a first phase, we should talk for the Europeanization of integration. The initial scope of integration was global (more evident in the earlier theories of federalism and functionalism). Zwolski (2018) argues that these should both be read not as theories of European but of international integration. Both ideas of a global federation or international functional agencies referred to a structural transformation of international anarchy, and not to the creation of closed regional entities. The debate on boundaries had become evident only when Western Europe appeared as the sole place with the prospect of integration. The historical limitation of the project from a global to a regional scale seem to generate an aporia.

The aporetic schema stems from the fact that the supranational is established to transcend national boundaries, yet new boundaries are generated in a bigger scale. Thus, the issue is two-fold. The first aspect is about the transformation of those international boundaries inside the supranational. The second aspect is the emergence of supranational boundaries and their uneasy relation with the normative prompts of integration. The above two-fold issue was apparent in the early days of integration, first in the question of how the fragmenting nature of boundaries should be dealt with and then where should the limits of the supranational community be. That second part was extremely controversial because it was obvious that, in the attempt to solve geopolitical fragmentation, it could be reproduced anew.

The emergence of supranational boundaries must not lead to the assumption of an always exclusionary project. It was not necessarily a question of the European Community excluding Others, but at times Others excluding themselves. The delimitation of integration, to an initially small number of states, is a product of its historical context and the infeasibility of a global integration is tied to other geopolitical phenomena of the post-WWII era, namely Cold War divisions and decolonization. In regard to the first, the socio-political divergence between the West and the East could not allow conditions for integration past the Iron Curtain. As for the case of decolonization, it would be incompatible for the former colonies sharing the sovereignty which have just acquired to share it, even more with their previous masters.

Even if the supranational was to be limited in the continent, the feasibility of a geographical definition of Europe is raised. Considering the geographical ambiguity of Europe, any demarcation is socially and politically constructed. This holds true for geographical representations prior and past the beginnings of integration. Leaving aside pre-1945 (re)constructions of Europe, the ambiguity of who was to be included in the European project was still evident in the early days of integration. For example, the issue of British membership was a contested topic (no less by the British themselves). Therefore, the notion of a predetermined Europe with objective borders is a misconception. Questions such as 'where Europe is' or 'where Europe ends' have been asked repeatedly, and apparently without a definite answer. Boundaries of Europe are historically susceptible to different standards, resting upon ambiguous political, cultural and ideological criteria, even if some boundaries have been conveniently defined by culture and the sea.

To be fair, the gradual adoption of a European identity with political criteria such as democracy and human rights seems a significant acquis. However, this is accepted up to the point where values are not projected as an ethical advantage against others as a legitimation for ambitions. John Agnew makes this clear when writing that 'related to a spatially exclusive definition of political identity, is the rigid separation between those people within the territorial space pursuing 'universal' values (politics) and those outside practising different, and inferior, values' (1994, p. 63).

The early delimitation of integration in Western Europe simply proved that inseparability of politics and space. In other words, demarcation of political communities is indivisible from international politics, and it is exactly the presence of boundaries that defines external action/foreign policy. However, while geopolitical boundaries represent the assumed end of a community, they cannot be strict dividing lines, other than in a purely cartographic depiction. The meaning of the boundary is contingent to the interpretation applied by political discourse and practice, ranging from a 'frontier' to a site of cooperation.

The then newborn European Community have been for years an open project. This is a fact reflected in earlier treaties, as well as in the main – for years – trait of a common foreign policy, enlargement. Here, the geographical ambiguity of Europe is celebrated rather than condemned, and the supranational imaginary avoided the territorial trap. Again, Wæver (1998) argued that the significant Other of integrated Europe have been not an external Other, rather its own fragmented past. This lies in contrast with the political differentiation claimed by the debate of strategic autonomy, through which Europe/the EU is defined in relation to external Others.

Perceiving the boundary as the finite limit of a political community leads to construction of imaginary geographies (Said, 1978). These are products and producers of binary conceptions of the international. Through them, the Others are represented as qualitatively different from the Self. In the debate, one can locate persistent Orientalisms such in the case of Russia, Turkey and the Global South, or intra-Western differentiations such as the non-continental UK or the unreliable US. These representations are totally ideological, in the Gramscian notion which Cox uses, that is conservative narratives which perpetuate the geopolitical status quo.

Imaginary geographies are not merely symbolic but they impact international relations by enabling political action. Constructing a space by attributing it specific features is itself a political means, an epistemological instrument of foreign policy which prescribes conduct against the Other through differentiation and hierarchization. Consider the examples of Syria and Libya constructed as delegitimized states through several discourses, rendering them as immoral or incapable which then led to intervention and exercise of hard power. Another representation worthy visiting is the representation of the Global South. Its depiction as an underdeveloped area, as a source of problems for Europe is a binary differentiation of progress/backwardness. It describes the naturally given border of the Mediterranean not only as the geographical limit but also as the line south of which mobility is not taken for granted. Additionally, this representation of the Global South does not only obscure the effects of European colonialism, but also institutes new patterns of unequal relationships through the self-declaration of Europe as the bearer of developmental knowledge and the establishment of economic dependencies.

In the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war, Euro-Russian relations confirm territoriality's causal effect through the worst scenario. Inability to perceive overlapping political spaces as the result of essentialist understandings of identities and their identification with the spatial extent of the political community led to incommensurable imaginaries. This holds true both for Russian irredentism in Ukraine, as well as for the attempts to construct an independent Ukrainian identity. The narratives of Russian 'near abroad' and EU's neighbourhood policy are equally problematic because they are normative interferences on geopolitical spaces. Not only they promote incommensurable political geographies over Ukraine but also deny Ukraine's own individual agency. For the time, Europe's eastern boundary can be only conceived as frontier, as a new Iron Curtain. The normalization of these representations constitutes Euro-Russian relations more irreconcilable than ever, and more worrying is that the current political distinction is grounded more on ethnic-cultural than on ideological criteria.

Indeed, what the tale of the 'end of history' can demonstrate is that past the ideological singularity, political differentiation is expected to occur in other ways. It might seem an exaggeration to adopt the view of a universal ideological convergence, however the fact of tense intra-Western relationship simply points to novel patterns of political differentiation. The case of Turkey displays another occasion towards a hardened boundary, despite its peculiar hybridity in Western-Eastern margins. While grades of political differentiation inside the Union, namely Greek-Turkish relations, always render the Turkish boundary a securitized one, what set Euro-Turkish relations apart is both choosing to be strategically autonomous and independent of each other. British withdrawal from the Union reinstates a hard Euro-British boundary and de-institutionalize their relations. And with the US itself presented as a threat, might 'de-atlanticizes' Europe but through a securitized and alienating way.

Consequently, what seems to be an aporia is only such when conceiving boundaries as finite sites of territorial sovereignty. Places and boundaries are inseparable from international politics but what content is applied on them does not ascribe to any essentialist differentiation, which the debate performs by representing the international as hazardous. In contrast, integration is not about the de-spatialization of politics but their de-territorialization. The case of supranational is itself an example of a post-territorial international.

What European integration can demonstrate about international relations does not come from the external boundaries of the Union, but from inside its structure and the transformation of inter-European boundaries as sites of mobility. Therefore, the contradiction with the debate for a strategically autonomous Union lies on the signification, not the presence, of geopolitical boundaries. The usefulness of integration is measured by the theoretical diagnosis of territoriality as constitutive of international rivalry and insecurity, its ethical rejection as a legitimate principle to organize political life and its practical mitigation. The critique on strategic autonomy concerns the interpretation and reconstruction of boundaries as securitized sites of exclusion.

Reading the debate through integration theories, the claim of strategic autonomy appears as a reproduction of state-centric ideal types of international agency on the supranational. It refers equally to the identitary perception of the EU as qualitatively superior to its external, the promoted paradigm of foreign and security policy and the fragmented political geography enabled, which all lead to the intensification of international rivalry and alienation.

Conclusion

The debate of strategic autonomy defines the ambition for the EU's foreign and security policy, shifting the intellectual trajectory towards the capacity of the Union as an international agent. It unfolds a claim of hard power and autarky as means to achieve individually defined notions of security and interest, as an ontological precondition for international agency. Drawing from an international imaginary of a fragmented political geography and egotist individual units, the debate normalizes danger and insecurity prescribing strategic autonomy as the urgent aim for the EU's foreign and security policy. Yet, it misses the intellectual roots of the integration project, which warns against geopolitical fragmentation and egotist perception of security as the exact conditions of insecurity and rivalry.

The claim rests upon a conventional perception of international agency, which assumes its relationship with hard power. Strategic autonomy has its roots in defence policy which justifies the preoccupation. However, the concept has expanded thematically and geographically to include issues beyond conventional military issues, locating threat and insecurity in practically any aspect of international relations.

Various concepts and approaches have been utilized to evaluate the EU's international agency, yet most remain attached to the unitary state as the ideal type of agent. Drawing upon a social constructionist approach, the normative character of any theory is expected not only to describe its subject but also prescribe its interpretation. Thus, conventional theories are deemed inadequate not only to explain the ontological novelty of the Union as a supranational entity, but also to evaluate the claim for strategic autonomy which at large shape. Instead of examining the claim of strategic autonomy, the thesis examined its implication on foreign and security policy by treating the broader debate as intertextual theoretical framework in itself. As the defining condition of international affairs are the boundaries of political communities, emphasis was given on the geopolitical representations of the debate. The concern was to define the implications of its international imaginary on how the boundary is perceived and practiced.

The preoccupation with geopolitical implications is also justified by the basic aim of the thesis which is to locate the semantic antinomies between strategic autonomy and integration. As the brief intellectual genealogy of integration theories attempted to show, the crucial ambition of the project was to transcend the geopolitical fragmentation of the international system. It was both a theoretical rejection of the territorial sovereignty which integration defined as the causal condition of insecurity, and practical attempt to mitigate boundaries and institutionalize a novel political geography. As such, integration theories' semantic framework revolves around the negation of the international imaginary through which the claim of strategic autonomy emerges, rejecting self-centric conceptions of security and interests and the subsequent means of foreign and security policy legitimized by the debate.

The genealogy of integration theory served at least these roles. First, it provided a narration upon which integration and subsequently its product can be theorized as an ontological novelty. Second, by reading integration theory as international theory, it provided a critical rearticulation of the international imaginary against the banal perceptions of the territorial, egotist and self-sufficient unit as the ideal type of international agent. Third, beyond theory integration was signified as a paradigm for foreign and security policy, through which security is perceived as a common end, disregard hard

power and autarky as means towards it and attempts to regulate international relations by mitigating the functional and symbolic roles of the boundary.

Contrary, the debate of strategic autonomy is found to deny such opportunities. It tells the story of an insecure international world. The turmoil in European neighbourhood and tension in intra-Western relations transcend their empirical status towards the articulation of an ontology of insecure and unreliable international relations. Danger and anxiety are elevated into the level of existential angst for the continuity of the Union, which leads to the prioritization of its external relations and the justification of the urgency to enhance its international agency. The representation of the international constructs a dual geography, along binaries of inside/outside, order/chaos, security/ threat, which is a political differentiation of the EU with a pre-defined foe. The geo-political differentiation of the EU and its Others normalizes the assumption of an inherently conflictual international place, intensifies the symbolic exclusion and disables mobility across boundaries. As such, it contributes to the fragmentation of the international political geography and thus the perpetuation of international alienation.

The analysis appears to draw a hierarchical binary of integration/strategic autonomy. The analysis did not attempt to declare integration as a flawless practice or theory, nor to deny alternatives. Mostly, it was not an attempt to criticize the acquisition of defence means, not to negate the differences between political communities. It is firstly a critique on the frameworks which allow such conditions at first, and secondly a suggestion of *in varietate concordia* not only as a motto for the EU but as a choice of foreign and security policy against the territorial and egotist understandings of the strategic autonomy debate. Whereas integration is clearly privileged as a mode of international conduct through this thesis, the aim is rather to deconstruct those binaries which the debate put forward, mainly the one which hierarchizes the domestic political community over an inferior international sphere. In this perspective, integration is deemed as a foreign and security policy choice which dissociates international politics from the recurrent patterns of a fragmented political geography towards a more pragmatic political geography, in juxtaposition with the power politics of the debate and its false dilemma of strategic autonomy or barbarism.

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