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The 'Magnificent Seven' of European Defence Integration

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June 2021
Policy Paper #73/2021

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Abstract

Defence cooperation in the EU is growing, reflecting the European citizens' view of the EU as a security enhancer. This policy paper takes stock of current developments and analyses the positions of seven EU member-states on defence integration (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Poland, Portugal, and Greece). The 'Magnificent Seven' are key players in this process, not least because of their large defence budgets and their engagement in the existing forms of cooperation. We examine the defence budget of the seven countries and their breakdown, as well as their participation in Battlegroups, EU military operations and missions, and PESCO projects. The analysis provides significant insights on the national defence priorities. The seven countries form overlapping clusters, according to their political status and aspirations in the European integration process, their economic condition, their geographical location, and their relations with the US and NATO. All of them are facing significant dilemmas and engage in subtle balancing acts, which explains the slow and arduous path of European defence integration.

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1. Introduction

In the classic Western *The Magnificent Seven*, seven wandering gun-slingers join forces to protect the inhabitants of a remote village from a cruel bandit and his gang. The film, which is a remake of the also seminal *The Seven Samurai* by the Japanese director Akira Kurosawa glorifies the sense of duty that exists among even outcasts and outlaws, but also the agonizing quest for a purpose worth living and dying for. The film highlights the different motives that can bring highly diverse personalities together for a just and common cause. Each of the seven has their own reason to join the group, whether it be money, action, recognition or simply redemption for past crimes and guilt.

What has this film to do with European defence integration? If security and defence integration is the Holy Grail of the next European narrative, taking the place of economic integration, which has reached its limits, then it is important to identify how member-states contribute to the existing European schemes of military collaboration. We argue that this participation, and the concomitant commitments undertaken, reveal national positions and intentions and are useful as proxy indicators for the operationalisation of the member-states' attitudes toward enhanced defence integration.

We focus on seven countries (the 'Seven') with quite different features, taking stock of their contributions and accounting for the underlying motives that drive them. First and foremost, we look at the **Franco-German axis**, without which the discussion on defence integration is meaningless both politically and substantially. The Southern rim countries are also included, namely, **Italy**, **Spain**, **Portugal** and **Greece**. This is not only because they face similar security challenges stemming from their being adjacent to areas of significant regional instability—Portugal to a lesser extent that the other three, and Greece with the additional external constraint of Turkish expansionism and revisionism. They also traditionally share an integrationist view on the future of the EU and have joined the *demandeurs'* camp on issues of political and foreign policy integration. **Poland** is the seventh country in our study. It is the largest of the bloc of states that joined after 2004 and often considers and presents itself as the political leader of the countries in the region. The size of the Polish military, its significant security preoccupations with Russia, as well as its aspirations to play a leading political role in the European integration process render the country a potentially influential actor in the process of deepening defence cooperation further.

Obviously, our venture does not claim to be a comprehensive review of all member-states. Countries with significant armed forces and an active role in the various forms of EU military cooperation, like Belgium and the Netherlands, are not included in our analysis. Likewise, with their divergent security concerns and needs, countries from Central and Eastern Europe are underrepresented. However, the comparison of the seven countries selected allows for substantial variation, useful insights, and credible conclusions.

To fill in the background to our analysis, back in the 1950s, the initiation of the integration process was based on the neo-functionalist logic of small incremental steps with cooperation in a limited number of sectoral policies to overcome the rivalries that had led to catastrophic military conflict in the past. Economic interaction and interdependence were considered the sword that would cut the Gordian knot of Franco-German antagonism and competition for dominance and political control in

Europe. This logic flourished in the protected and insulated security bubble provided by the United States, through NATO, in the broader geopolitical context of the Cold War.

However, the European integration process could have taken a different path. In October 1950, only a few months after the Schuman declaration of 9 May 1950 that is widely viewed as the formal launch of the European integration process, the French premier René Pleven announced a similar project for the defence integration of the same six partners. The Pleven plan envisaged a European Defence Community (EDC) based on a unified European army that would fully integrate the armed forces of France, (West) Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. This project never took off, mainly due to its rejection by the French National Assembly, in 1954. This negative development not only put the discussion on European defence on ice, it also highlighted for the first time the gulf often separating the governmental political elites from the national *demoi*—the same gulf that would dog the integration process in the decades to follow, causing significant political turmoil and frequent major upsets, most importantly through the several negative referenda on Treaty ratifications.

The shelving of the Pleven plan meant that European integration would evolve primarily as an economic project with political --but not security—ramifications. Other collaborative schemes would take on the task of enhancing security to (Western) Europe in the form of the Western European Union (WEU) and, most notably, NATO. Over the decades, timid efforts to institutionalize cooperation in the field of foreign policy did occur, either in parallel with the integration process (European Political Cooperation, 1973) or embedded in it (Common Foreign and Security Policy, in the Maastricht Treaty, 1992).

Nonetheless, the military dimension remained beyond the scope of the European Union until very recently. The Franco-British St Malo Declaration of 1998 constituted a breakthrough that paved the way for the 'Headline Objective' and the European Rapid Reaction Force agreed to at the Cologne and Helsinki European Councils in 1999. The concept of Battlegroups followed in 2004, and since the Treaty of Lisbon the protocol on Permanent Structured Cooperation has provided the institutional and political framework for enhanced cooperation between those member-states capable and willing to engage in closer military cooperation (PESCO projects).

There is no doubt that a 'European army' is not an option in the foreseeable future. However, to even discuss the 'wood' of European military and defence integration, we need to have a clear idea of its 'trees', which is to say the EU member-states. Hence, it is important to take stock of their military outlook, and especially their engagement and participation in the existing forms of collaboration. This stock-taking exercise will reveal how much effort and resources member-states currently invest in the European military integration venture, which will in turn help us to discuss and assess their future intentions and aspirations. This is the underlying rationale of this working paper.

Our comparative analysis is structured along **two basic axes**. Both are resource-oriented, with the first focused on **economic and financial resources** (i.e. the budgetary dimension) and the second on **human (and institutional) resources** (i.e. the participatory dimension in the existing collaborative EU military configurations). Starting with the former, we begin by examining the military expenditure of the seven countries, breaking it down into four categories to enable a more structured and insightful

analysis. These categories are: personnel cost, equipment, infrastructure, and other expenditure. Moving on to the latter dimension, we present the countries' level of participation in the existing forms of EU defence cooperation, namely the EU Battlegroups, contributions to the EU military missions and operations, and current engagement in PESCO projects.

For the needs of our analysis, we resort to data eclecticism, using four different data sources. We have chosen this path mainly because there is no single definitional measurement for military expenditure and the necessary information is spread between different databases. We make extensive use of the Military Expenditure Database maintained by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), which provides information on defence budgets as a percentage of the national GDP of each of the countries studied. The EU-27 average comes from Eurostat, which employs a different methodological approach, however. For example, SIPRI takes into account the spending on paramilitary forces that receive military training—the French "Gendarmerie National", for example, or the Portuguese "Guarda Nacional Republicana"—and the financial burden constituted by the pensions of retired military personnel. EUROSTAT adopts a stricter and narrower definition of military spending, which does not even include expenditure on military aid missions. For the above reasons, SIPRI's percentages tend to be higher than Eurostat's. It goes without saying that, given these discrepancies, the EU-27 average is used for indicative purposes only, and the comparison between the expenditure of individual member-states and the EU-27 average suffers in terms of its methodological purity. Still, it is useful to juxtapose these figures for illustrative purposes.

The data on the breakup of the military budget is taken from NATO's *Communiqués de presse*. Definitional differences exist here, too, but they are minor, since SIPRI uses NATO's statistics as a guide. The data used on military personnel as a percentage of the total labor force and on personnel contributions to a European army come from the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS).

As far as the second axis of our analysis is concerned—i.e. the participation of the seven member-states in the existing EU schemes of military cooperation—, we rely on two types of sources. The first contains information from official documents issued by the European institutions—Council Decisions and/or Conclusions, for example, or Reports of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Political and Security Committee (PSA)—as well as documents from the European Defence Agency (EDA). The second type is a database made available by the European University Institute's Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (EUI-RSCAS), which contains detailed information on CSDP military and civilian missions.

Our analysis highlights the seven countries' main dilemmas vis-à-vis further European defence integration. The countries form alternative and overlapping clusters along four axes. Their positions vary according to their **political aspirations** vis-à-vis European integration, their **economic situation**, their **geographical location**, and their envisaged **relations with NATO**. Political relations revolve around the countries' views of further European integration. However, participation in military cooperation schemes is not only a matter of will; it is also a question of resources. The economic crisis has impacted on the resources available for such ventures, especially in the four Mediterranean countries. Geography also plays a significant role, with some member-states facing immanent security threats. Those that do face such threats are, reasonably, more interested in defence cooperation than those that do not. Still, such cooperation should not jeopardize the future of NATO

as the predominant long-term security provider. Fine tuning all these often contradictory preoccupations necessitates a delicate balancing act. This means that all seven countries included in this analysis are, to some extent, 'fiddlers on the roof' of European defence integration.

2. 'No money, no honey': European defence budgets and EU defence integration

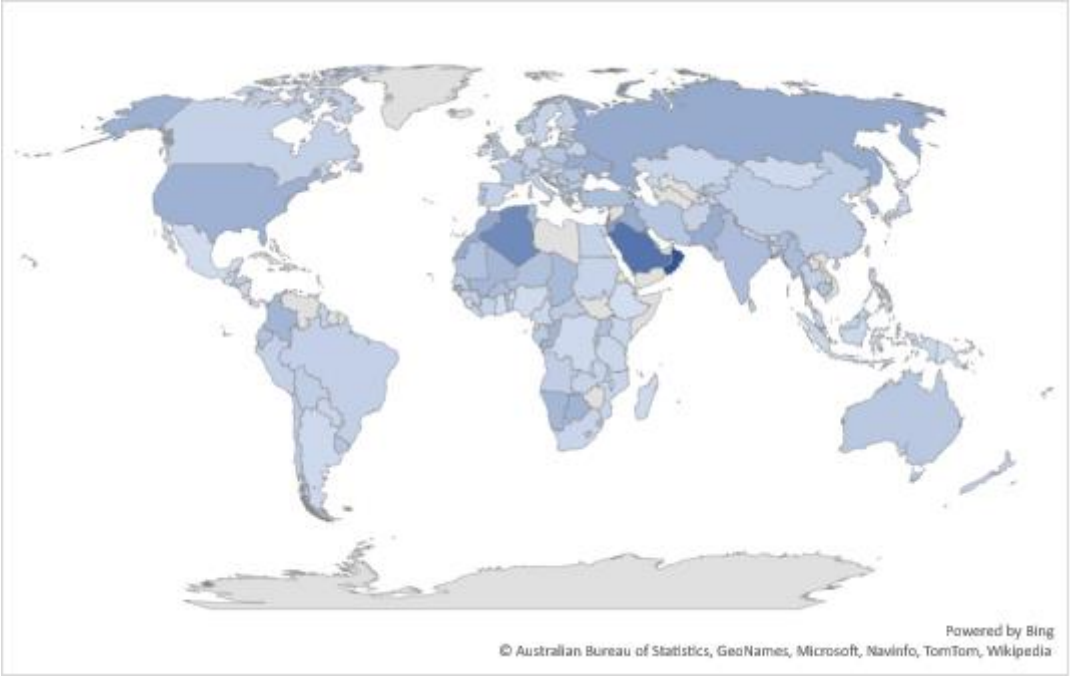
2.1 Defence Budgets: A Global Perspective

One of the main criticisms leveled by the United States at its European and NATO allies is that they have been systematically freeriding underneath the American security umbrella while investing domestically on 'butter' rather than 'guns'. Such complaints and pressures, expressed and exerted by several US presidents over the years and not just by the Trump administration, led the NATO allies to agree at the 2014 Wales summit on the threshold of 2 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which each member of the alliance should allocate to military expenditure.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI, 2021), military expenditure covers the full range of military forces and activities. More specifically, military expenditure is operationalized as the money used for military forces and operations, the Defence ministry and other governmental agencies involved in defence-related actions and programs, para-military forces if they have been trained and organized by state actors, as well as military-oriented space activities. In general, the demand for military expenditure depends on the extent and type of security challenges a state is facing, the positive externalities generated by diplomatic alliances, the availability of resources, and last but not least the political aspirations of the country and its strategic orientation (Sandler & Hartley, 1995).

From a global perspective, EU member-states invest a relatively small percentage of their GDP in military expenditure compared with global or regional hegemons or countries situated in or close to unstable and crisis-prone regions. States like Oman, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Kuwait and Israel are the highest spenders in relation to their GDP, with the US and Russia following close behind. The EU countries that spend the most in relation to their GDP are Bulgaria (3.2%) and Greece (2.6%), followed by the Baltic states, Poland and Romania, whose percentages are all just above or around the 2% threshold agreed by NATO. Given the precarious economic condition of some of these countries and their low GDP in comparison to most other EU member-states, these figures should not necessarily be considered a credible indicator of large-scale military investment. For Poland and the Baltic states, historic memory, their proximity to Russia, and the set of recent security crises in Georgia, Ukraine and the broader neighborhood account for their strategic choices. With the exception of Greece, which is an old member of NATO, the other states had to undergo a process of military reorganisation and modernisation in pursuit of NATO membership, which could also account for their increased military spending in recent years (Flanagan & et al., 2019).

Figure I: National military expenditure as a percentage of GDP, 2020



Source: SIPRI, 2021

Note: There is no data available for Cuba, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Laos, Libya, North Korea, Qatar, Somalia, Syria, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Vietnam and the United Arab Emirates. Data for Cambodia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, Myanmar and Swaziland is highly uncertain. Figures for Bahrain, China, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Serbia and Ukraine are SIPRI estimates.

2.2 Defence Budgets of the 'Seven'—A Macroscopic Overview

In Table 1, we present the military expenditure of the Seven as a percentage of their GDP from 2006 to 2020. Greece consistently spends more in relative terms than any other of the six countries (2.63% in average), followed by France, Portugal and Poland, which are close but not above the 2% NATO threshold. At the other end of the spectrum, Spain and Italy spend considerably less, with Germany occupying the last place in the list. All six countries, with the exception of Germany, are above the EU-27 average, although, as mentioned in the Introduction, this comparison is for illustrative purposes only. For 2020, the economic crisis brought on by the pandemic and the subsequent reduction in national GDPs globally led to a large nominal increase in military expenditure as a GDP ratio in all the countries under examination. This is worth stressing to avoid jumping to conclusions on the basis of the 2020 figures (SIPRI, 2021).

France is the EU-27's military leader in every respect. The increase in the French defence budget at the end of the first decade of the new millennium was artificial, since it occurred due to the shrinking

of the French GDP and not due to an actual increase in the country's military spending. Although the growth in French GDP obscures it in the Table, there was a substantial increase in military spending between 2014 and 2016. There were two main reasons for this: ISIS and related terrorist attacks. To counter these threats, France actively engaged in military operations abroad, with the launch of "Opération Chammal" against ISIS, the dispatching of the aircraft carrier "Charles de Gaulle" to the Persian Gulf in 2015 to participate in attacks against the jihadists, and the deploying of French troops in the field to support the Iraqi and Kurdish forces then fighting ISIS. At the same time, "Opération Sentinelle" led to 10,000 soldiers being deployed in France after the January 2015 Île-de-France attacks to protect sensitive home targets. This intensive military activity consumed significant resources (Marrone, De France, & Fattbene, 2016; De Hoop Scheffer, Michelot, & Quencez, 2016; Morcos, 2020).

Germany is the country that spends the least on its army in relative terms. The small increase from 2007 to 2008 can be seen as a result of Russian aggression, as experienced in the political turmoil in Estonia and the mobilisation of the Russian-speaking population in Tallin in 2007, and the 2008 Russo-Georgian War in South Ossetia (Kunz, 2018). However, if this is the case, it is interesting to notice that the 2013–14 Russo-Ukrainian imbroglio did not elicit a similar response from the German government neither percentage wise nor in absolute numbers. Cybersecurity has emerged as one of the key German priorities, as evidenced by the establishment of the Cybersecurity Innovation Agency in 2020, with an initial budget of 350 million Euros, to ensure the country's 'digital sovereignty' (Deutsche Welle, 2020). According to state officials, Germany is committed to meeting the 2% NATO requirement. Von der Leyen, the former Federal Defence Minister and current President of the European Commission, stated in 2018 that Germany would be spending 1.5% of its GDP on defence by 2025. Kramp-Karrenbauer, the current Federal Defence Minister, noted that Germany will meet the 2% NATO requirement by 2031 at the latest (Buck, 2018; Von Krause, 2018; Kramp-Karrenbauer, 2019).

The financial and public debt poly-crises that hit the Southern periphery hard from 2009 on could be seen in the defence budgets of the countries, most strongly in Greece and Italy. **Greece**'s defence budget fell from 3.22% in 2009 to 2.33% in 2014. The drop in Greek military expenditure during this period is estimated to be in the region of 40% (Dokos, 2017, p. 209). **Italy**'s military spending also fell, though less sharply, from 1.56% in 2009 to 1.21% in 2015. The 2015 Italian White Paper highlighted an irrational and inefficient allocation of resources, with too much spending on military personnel, and proposed a plan to reallocate resources toward investments and operations (Ministro della Difesa, 2015). **Portugal** was hit by the crisis only after the country had launched a program of military modernisation in 2009–2010 which includes the acquisition of new equipment. Due to the crisis, this program had to be postponed and partly cancelled. **Spain** reveals modest defence budget cuts until 2012, but significant cuts between 2012 and 2016 (from 1.42% to 1.14%). In 2017, the Spanish government committed to increase its military spending by 80% over the next seven years in order to meet its NATO commitments. To meet this target, the Finance Ministry proposed to include the costs of the Civil Guard in the defence budget, which would lead to an artificial 0.2% increase (González, 2017).

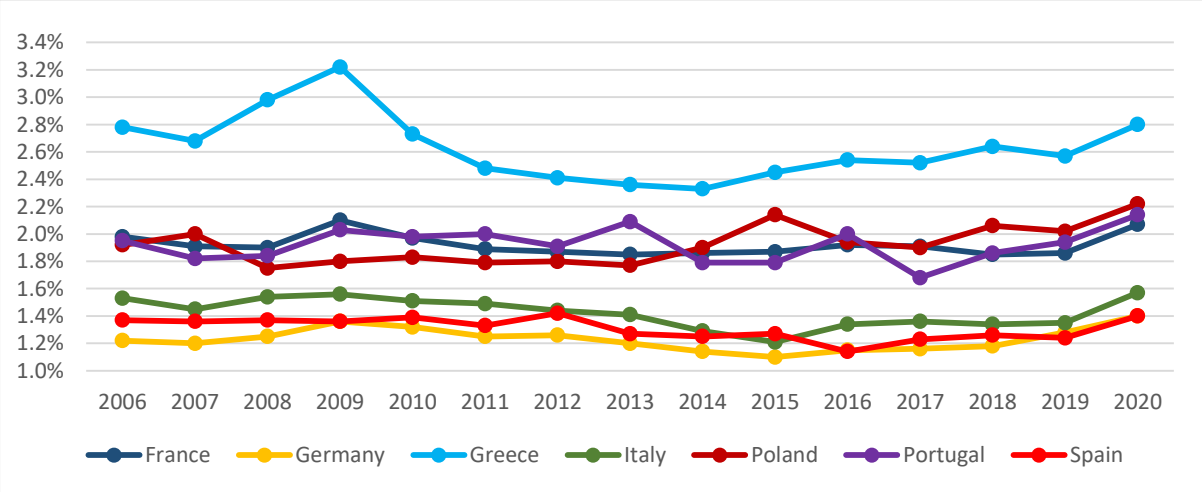
Last but not least, fueled by the country's concerns about the expansion of Russian influence westwards, **Poland** is an aspiring military partner. It is not by chance that the Polish defence budget reached its highest levels in 2015 after Russia's illegal annexation of the Crimea. Although strengthening NATO constitutes the main pillar of Polish foreign and security policy, prudence suggests a diversification of its defence portfolio, including support for European defence integration (Bajczuk, 2011; Jankowski, 2015; Zaborowski, 2018).

Table 1: Military expenditure as percentage of GDP, 2006–2020

Year	EU-27	France	Germany	Greece	Italy	Poland	Portugal	Spain
2006	1.30%	1.98%	1.22%	2.78%	1.53%	1.92%	1.95%	1.37%
2007	1.30%	1.91%	1.20%	2.68%	1.45%	2%	1.82%	1.36%
2008	1.30%	1.90%	1.25%	2.98%	1.54%	1.75%	1.84%	1.37%
2009	1.40%	2.10%	1.36%	3.22%	1.56%	1.80%	2.03%	1.36%
2010	1.30%	1.97%	1.32%	2.73%	1.51%	1.83%	1.98%	1.39%
2011	1.30%	1.89%	1.25%	2.48%	1.49%	1.79%	2%	1.33%
2012	1.30%	1.87%	1.26%	2.41%	1.44%	1.80%	1.91%	1.42%
2013	1.20%	1.85%	1.20%	2.36%	1.41%	1.77%	2.09%	1.27%
2014	1.20%	1.86%	1.14%	2.33%	1.29%	1.90%	1.79%	1.25%
2015	1.20%	1.87%	1.10%	2.45%	1.21%	2.14%	1.79%	1.27%
2016	1.20%	1.92%	1.15%	2.54%	1.34%	1.94%	2%	1.14%
2017	1.20%	1.91%	1.16%	2.52%	1.36%	1.90%	1.68%	1.23%
2018	1.20%	1.85%	1.18%	2.64%	1.34%	2.06%	1.86%	1.26%
2019	1.20%	1.86%	1.28%	2.57%	1.35%	2.02%	1.94%	1.24%
2020	-	2.07%	1.40%	2.80%	1.57%	2.22%	2.14%	1.40%
AVERAGE	**1.26%**	**1.92%**	**1.23%**	**2.63%**	**1.43%**	**1.92%**	**1.92%**	**1.31%**

Source: Eurostat 2021, SIPRI, 2021

Graph I: Military expenditure as percentage of GDP, 2006–2020



Source: SIPRI, 2021

2.3 Categorisation of military expenditure

Following this broad overview of the military expenditure of the seven countries, we will turn our attention to the individual budget lines to compare the expenditure priorities and the composition of the nations' defence budgets. The NATO database breaks total military spending down into four categories: personnel, equipment, infrastructure and other expenditure. Personnel expenditure captures the costs of military and civilian personnel, including wages and pensions. The equipment expenditure covers armaments and military equipment as well as R&D-related activities. Infrastructure covers expenditure on national military constructions (a national military base, for example) as well as the costs of common NATO infrastructure (like a NATO base). Other expenditure consists of costs for operations, maintenance and other R&D, plus expenditure that does not belong to any of the aforementioned categories (NATO, 2019).

2.3.1 Size of Armed Forces and Personnel Costs

2.3.1.1 Size of Armed Forces and Personnel Contributions to a European Army

The seven countries under examination account together for more than 70% of the total personnel of the EU-27 armed forces. Overall, the armed forces of the EU-27 consisted in 2018 of 350,000 fewer personnel than in 2006, a considerable reduction of approximately 15%. This reduction reflects the general trend toward professional, leaner and more specialized armed forces (Burk, 1992; Caforio, 2006; Sheehan, 2011). It is also a direct corollary of the major financial crisis that hit hard especially Southern member-states like Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Italy—all of which traditionally maintain large armed forces.

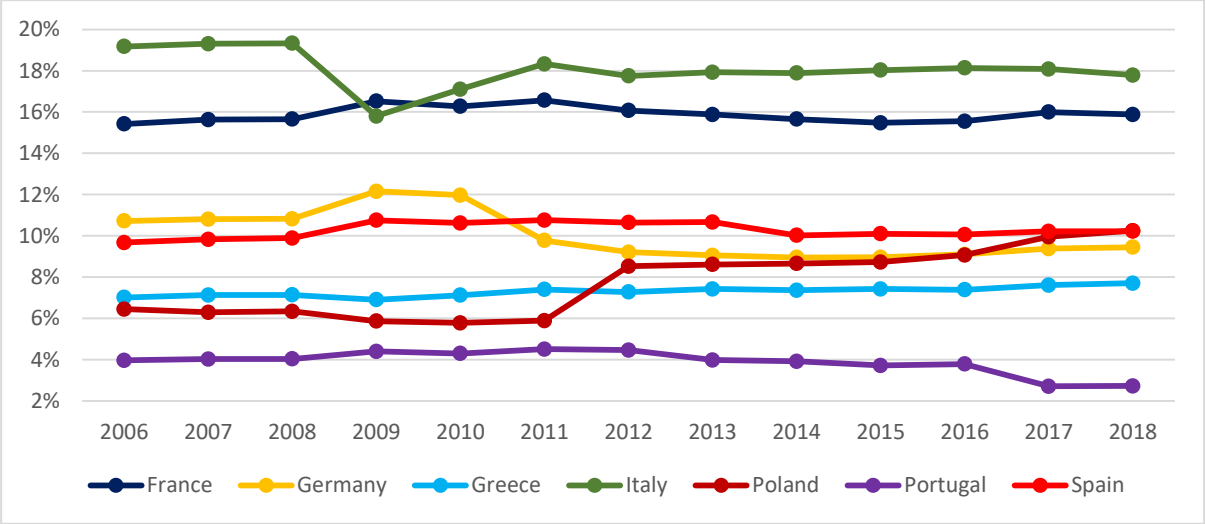
If a European Army were to be agreed upon by the EU member-states and the armed forces of all EU-27 countries merged, on the basis of the current figures Italy would be the largest contributor in terms of personnel (18%), although this share is smaller than it would have been a decade ago. Italy would be followed by France (*c*. 16%), Spain, and Germany (with approximately 10% each). Poland (7.7%) and Greece (7.3%) would come next, with Portugal in last place on this short list (at approximately 4%, but still falling). While the share of countries like Italy, Germany and Portugal are dropping, Poland is the only country whose share has significantly increased, from 6.45% in 2006 to 10.25% in 2018. This is illustrative of Polish political aspirations to move center stage by investing in its defence, but also indicative of the security challenges facing the country.

Table 2: Personnel contributions to a European Army

Year	EU-27 Army	France	Germany	Greece	Italy	Poland	Portugal	Spain
2006	2.294.862	15.43%	10.72%	7.02%	19.17%	6.45%	3.97%	9.67%
2007	2.257.862	15.63%	10.81%	7.13%	19.31%	6.29%	4.03%	9.83%
2008	2.254.962	15.65%	10.82%	7.14%	19.34%	6.34%	4.04%	9.89%
2009	2.069.093	16.53%	12.15%	6.91%	15.80%	5.87%	4.40%	10.75%
2010	2.101.107	16.28%	11.97%	7.12%	17.10%	5.78%	4.30%	10.62%
2011	2.004.680	16.57%	9.78%	7.40%	18.33%	5.89%	4.50%	10.76%
2012	2.025.550	16.07%	9.20%	7.27%	17.75%	8.53%	4.46%	10.64%
2013	2.005.400	15.88%	9.05%	7.43%	17.93%	8.61%	3.98%	10.67%
2014	1.995.100	15.66%	8.95%	7.37%	17.89%	8.66%	3.91%	10.02%
2015	1.979.130	15.48%	8.96%	7.42%	18.03%	8.73%	3.72%	10.10%
2016	1.967.550	15.56%	9.10%	7.39%	18.14%	9.07%	3.79%	10.06%
2017	1.919.000	16.00%	9.38%	7.61%	18.08%	9.95%	2.71%	10.21%
2018	1.919.805	15.88%	9.45%	7.70%	17.79%	10.25%	2.72%	10.23%
AVERAGE	**2.061.085**	**15.89%**	**10.03%**	**7.30%**	**18.05%**	**7.72%**	**3.89%**	**10.27%**

Source: IISS, 2019

Graph II: Personnel contributions to a European Army



Source: IISS, 2019

2.3.1.2 Personnel Costs and Military Personnel as a Percentage of the Total Labor Force

Having glanced at the size of the seven countries' armed forces, Table 3 lists their expenditure on personnel as a percentage of their total military spending. Italy, Greece, Portugal and to a lesser extent Spain are by far the top employers, using three fourths of their defence budgets to cover

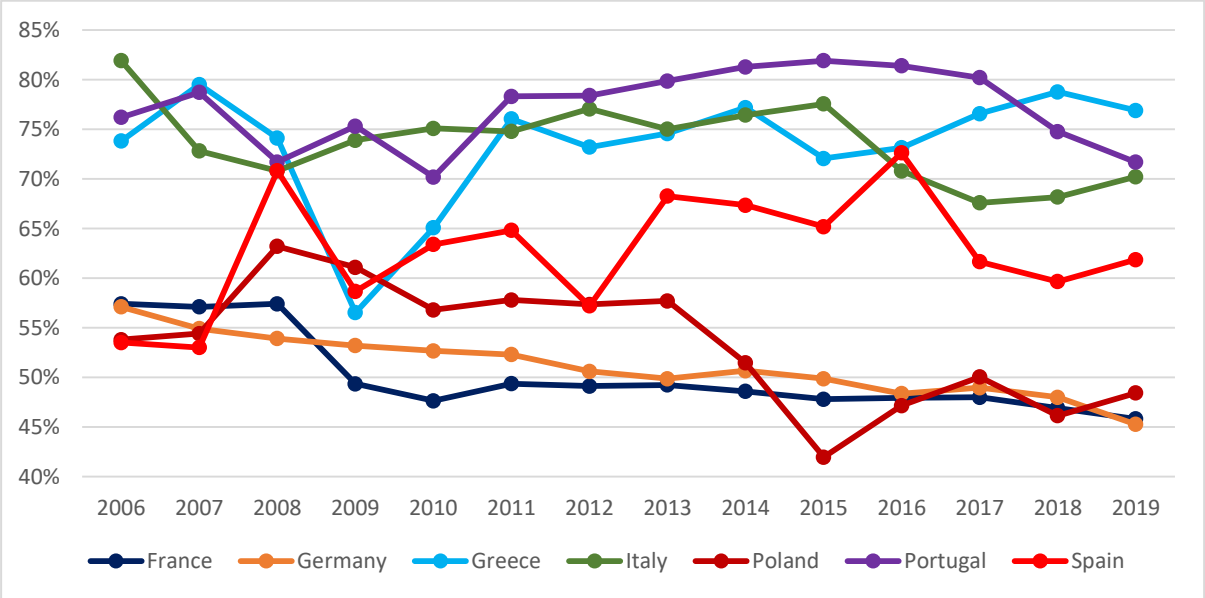
personnel costs. Italy topped the list initially, only to be replaced by Portugal and later on by Greece. At the other end of the continuum, France, Germany and Poland spend on average only around half of their defence budget to cover personnel costs.

Table 3: Expenditure on personnel as a percentage of total military expenditure, 2006–2019

Year	France	Germany	Greece	Italy	Poland	Portugal	Spain
2006	57.40%	57.10%	73.80%	81.90%	53.80%	76.20%	53.50%
2007	57.10%	54.90%	79.50%	72.80%	54.40%	78.70%	53.00%
2008	57.40%	53.90%	74.10%	70.80%	63.20%	71.70%	70.80%
2009	49.34%	53.19%	56.52%	73.89%	61.08%	75.31%	58.67%
2010	47.64%	52.66%	65.07%	75.08%	56.79%	70.18%	63.38%
2011	49.35%	52.29%	76.03%	74.78%	57.80%	78.30%	64.81%
2012	49.11%	50.60%	73.19%	77.05%	57.34%	78.39%	57.19%
2013	49.23%	49.86%	74.56%	75.00%	57.70%	79.85%	68.25%
2014	48.59%	50.67%	77.18%	76.41%	51.45%	81.27%	67.34%
2015	47.79%	49.86%	72.05%	77.55%	41.96%	81.90%	65.18%
2016	47.94%	48.35%	73.13%	70.79%	47.15%	81.38%	72.61%
2017	47.98%	48.96%	76.56%	67.58%	50.04%	80.19%	61.64%
2018	46.90%	47.99%	78.76%	68.16%	46.14%	74.75%	59.64%
2019	45.81%	45.26%	76.88%	70.21%	48.43%	71.67%	61.86%
AVERAGE	**50.11%**	**51.11%**	**73.38%**	**73.71%**	**53.38%**	**77.13%**	**62.71%**

Source: NATO 2011, 2012, 2016, 2018, 2021

Graph III: Expenditure on personnel as a percentage of total military expenditure, 2006–2019



Source: NATO 2011, 2012, 2016, 2018, 2021

France has reduced its military personnel in two stages. During 2008–14, President Sarkozy announced a round of 54,000 layoffs; he was followed by President Hollande, who announced an additional round of 24,000 layoffs over 2014–19. However, these plans were not implemented in full, with the terrorist attacks limiting the second round of layoffs to only 7,500 employees. Thus, for a decade, France has been reducing both its military personnel costs and the number of people employed in the armed forces as a percentage of the total labor force. This is evidenced by Tables 3 and 4. President Macron has announced 6,000 hirings with a special focus on the intelligence services and cyber security. This relates to French aspirations to play a more active geopolitical role and signals a strategic change in terms of employment toward a leaner but more focused army (République française, 2013, p. 128; Major, 2008; McLennan, 2020).

Germany is percentagewise the smallest employer of the seven, with only 0.5% of its total labor force employed in the German army. In 2011, the country proceeded with a reorganisation of the services of the Federal Defence Ministry, resulting in 55,000 layoffs. The reorganisation also included the abolition of compulsory military service. As a result of the above, the personnel cost component declined still further in the following years, from 52.3% in 2011 to 45.2% in 2019. As did the size of German military personnel as a percentage of the country's total labor force, from 0.60% in 2010 to 0.42% in 2018.

When considering the percentage of the total labor force of each country represented by military personnel, as presented at Table 4, **Italy** leads by far, with 3% of its total labor force classified as military personnel.[1] The 2015 White Paper acknowledged this problematic situation and initiated a rationalisation process intended to produce a leaner, more flexible, more effective army. In practical terms, this envisaged a reduction in both military personnel, especially in the upper echelons of the military hierarchy, and the auxiliary civilian bureaucracy (Gilli, Ungaro, & Marrone, 2015).

These three countries are followed by Greece and Portugal. **Greece** has a sizable army due to the security challenges it faces. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that, as mentioned above, almost three fourths of the defence budget is spent on personnel costs, including the operational costs of the nation's compulsory military service. During the period of fiscal austerity and budget consolidation, new hiring was only possible on very strict terms, and this, coupled with many early retirements, led to a substantial decrease in the number of people employed in the armed forces as a percentage of the total labor force (from 1.20% in 2008 to 1% in 2018). **Portugal** also went through a process of budget consolidation, including structural reforms in 2013, which impacted on the size of its army. According to NATO data on military personnel, the number of people employed by the Portuguese armed forces has fallen from 43,000 in 2010 to 28,600 in 2019 (NATO, 2021; NATO, 2018). However, this reduction has not had a significant effect on this budget line as a percentage of overall defence budget, with Portugal remaining at the top of the list for almost all the years under consideration. Only in the last couple of years has a downwards trend been evident which could be indicative of the reforms' eventual success.

[1] Italy has two law enforcement agencies with military features: the *Carabinieri*, which is the fourth branch of the Italian Armed Forces, patrol the interior in cooperation with the police and are usually deployed in military operations abroad (Lutterbeck, 2013, pp. 24-26), and the *Guardia di Finanza*, whose duties are related to financial crimes, but is also entrusted with naval military tasks (Lioe, 2010, p. 70). Therefore, the high number of military personnel may not fully reflect the actual Italian military.

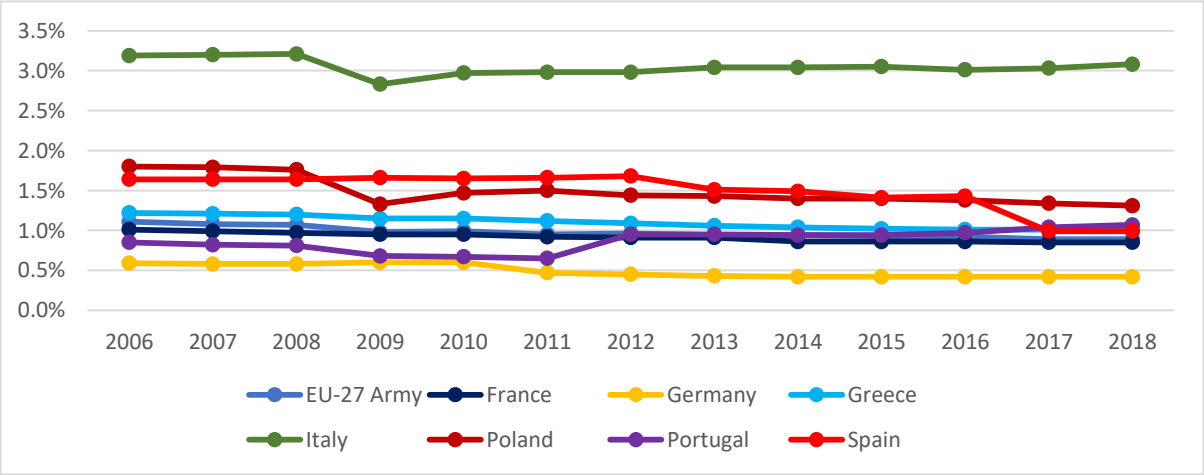
Spain and Poland come next, at approximately 1.5%. **Spain** has also engaged in recent years in a process of personnel rationalisation, with salary cuts of up to 5% and thousands of layoffs within the armed forces during the Spanish financial crisis, and especially in 2011 (Valasek, 2011; European Parliament - DG External Policies, 2011). **Poland** abolished compulsory military service in 2008, which lowered both its operational costs and the percentage of the labor force employed by the army. The preparations for and establishment of a new corps, the Territorial Defence Forces, in 2016, with an estimated 35,000 troops in its ranks, boosted personnel expenditure from 42% in 2015 to 50% in 2017 (Chadwick, 2016; Michta, 2020).

Table 4: Military personnel as percentage of total labor force (2006–2018)

Year	EU-27 Army	France	Germany	Greece	Italy	Poland	Portugal	Spain
2006	1.11%	1.01%	0.59%	1.22%	3.19%	1.80%	0.85%	1.64%
2007	1.08%	0.99%	0.58%	1.21%	3.20%	1.79%	0.82%	1.64%
2008	1.07%	0.97%	0.58%	1.20%	3.21%	1.76%	0.81%	1.64%
2009	0.98%	0.95%	0.60%	1.15%	2.83%	1.33%	0.68%	1.66%
2010	0.99%	0.95%	0.60%	1.15%	2.97%	1.47%	0.67%	1.65%
2011	0.95%	0.92%	0.47%	1.12%	2.98%	1.50%	0.65%	1.66%
2012	0.96%	0.91%	0.45%	1.09%	2.98%	1.44%	0.95%	1.68%
2013	0.94%	0.91%	0.43%	1.06%	3.04%	1.43%	0.95%	1.51%
2014	0.94%	0.86%	0.42%	1.04%	3.04%	1.40%	0.94%	1.49%
2015	0.93%	0.86%	0.42%	1.02%	3.05%	1.40%	0.94%	1.41%
2016	0.92%	0.86%	0.42%	1.01%	3.01%	1.38%	0.97%	1.43%
2017	0.89%	0.85%	0.42%	1.01%	3.03%	1.34%	1.04%	0.99%
2018	0.89%	0.85%	0.42%	1.00%	3.08%	1.31%	1.07%	0.99%
AVERAGE	**0.97%**	**0.91%**	**0.49%**	**1.10%**	**3.05%**	**1.49%**	**0.87%**	**1.49%**

Source: IISS, 2019

Graph IV: Military personnel as a percentage of the total labor force (2006–2018)



Source: IISS, 2019

2.3.2 Equipment and Infrastructure

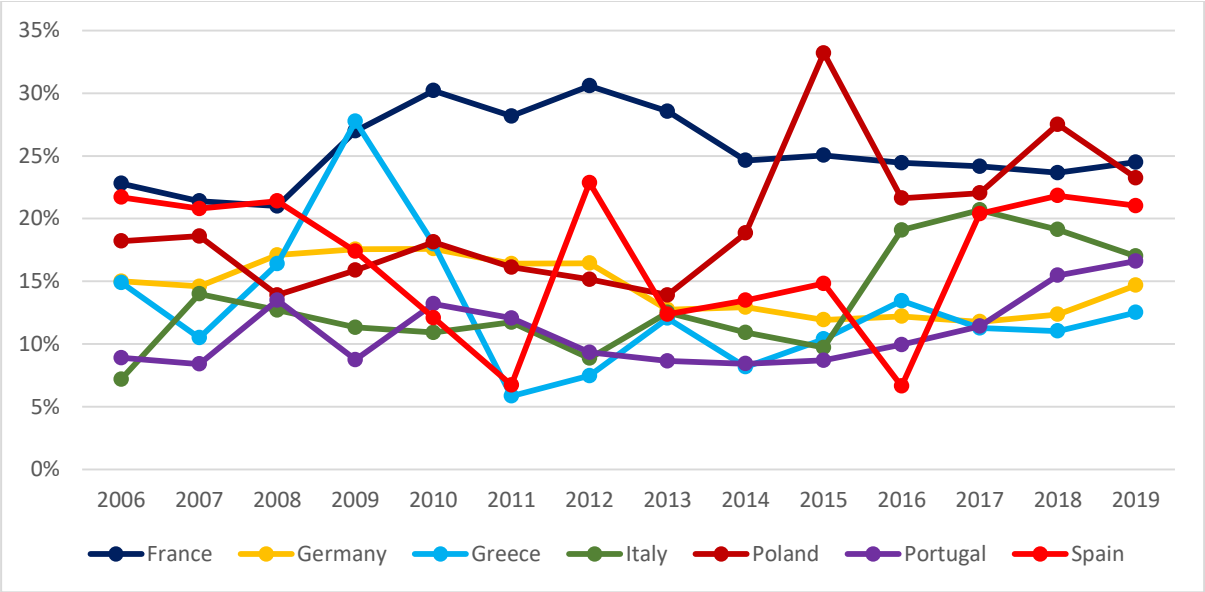
Table 5 offers a joint overview of equipment and infrastructure expenditure as a percentage of the total military expenditure of the seven countries. In most cases, these two categories go hand in hand because major equipment is stored, maintained and repaired in military bases, buildings and/or permanent installations. In addition, it is obvious that aircrafts need runways to take off and land and a strong navy requires appropriate port installations to meet its operational needs. For these reasons, we present and discuss them together. France is the country that invests the most on military equipment, followed by Poland and, to a lesser extent, Spain. Greece, Italy and Portugal have a significantly lower average, which is the mirror image of their high expenditure on military personnel discussed in the previous section.

Year	France		Germany		Greece		Italy		Poland		Portugal		Spain	
	Equipment	Infrastructure	Equipment	Infrastructure	Equipment	Infrastructure	Equipment	Infrastructure	Equipment	Infrastructure	Equipment	Infrastructure	Equipment	Infrastructure
2006	22.80%	3.70%	15.00%	3.60%	14.90%	1.00%	7.20%	0.60%	18.20%	3.80%	8.90%	1.80%	21.70%	2.80%
2007	21.40%	3.90%	14.60%	4.10%	10.50%	0.40%	14.00%	1.00%	18.60%	5.00%	8.40%	0.70%	20.80%	2.90%
2008	21.00%	3.70%	17.10%	4.10%	16.40%	0.40%	12.70%	1.60%	13.90%	4.70%	13.50%	0.90%	21.40%	1.90%
2009	26.98%	2.17%	17.56%	4.75%	27.75%	0.84%	11.33%	1.45%	15.88%	4.98%	8.75%	0.80%	17.39%	2.26%
2010	30.20%	3.13%	17.59%	5.16%	17.98%	0.76%	10.92%	1.40%	18.13%	3.96%	13.20%	0.43%	12.10%	1.25%
2011	28.17%	2.68%	16.41%	4.13%	5.86%	1.26%	11.74%	1.31%	16.13%	4.80%	12.07%	0.01%	6.74%	1.88%
2012	30.58%	3.42%	16.45%	3.53%	7.47%	0.79%	8.87%	1.02%	15.16%	4.76%	9.34%	0.04%	22.86%	0.85%
2013	28.56%	2.30%	12.74%	3.55%	12.06%	0.63%	12.51%	1.57%	13.90%	5.62%	8.65%	0.04%	12.37%	0.67%
2014	24.64%	2.33%	12.94%	3.75%	8.17%	1.10%	10.92%	1.40%	18.84%	5.47%	8.43%	0.11%	13.49%	0.66%
2015	25.04%	2.80%	11.93%	3.60%	10.40%	0.65%	9.72%	1.30%	33.20%	4.74%	8.70%	0.25%	14.82%	0.97%
2016	24.44%	2.70%	12.21%	3.39%	13.45%	0.58%	19.09%	0.70%	21.62%	4.62%	9.95%	0.06%	6.65%	0.97%
2017	24.17%	2.88%	11.77%	4.06%	11.28%	0.79%	20.68%	0.94%	22.04%	4.21%	11.42%	0.03%	20.39%	0.68%
2018	23.66%	3.51%	12.36%	4.15%	11.03%	0.62%	19.13%	1.29%	27.51%	3.45%	15.48%	0.05%	21.83%	0.64%
2019	24.50%	3.12%	14.69%	3.99%	12.51%	0.66%	17.00%	0.67%	23.24%	3.68%	16.61%	0.11%	21.02%	0.98%
AVERAGE	**25.44%**	**3.02%**	**14.53%**	**3.99%**	**12.84%**	**0.75%**	**13.27%**	**1.16%**	**19.74%**	**4.56%**	**10.96%**	**0.38%**	**16.68%**	**1.39%**

Table 5: Expenditure on equipment and infrastructure as a percentage of total military expenditure, 2006–2019

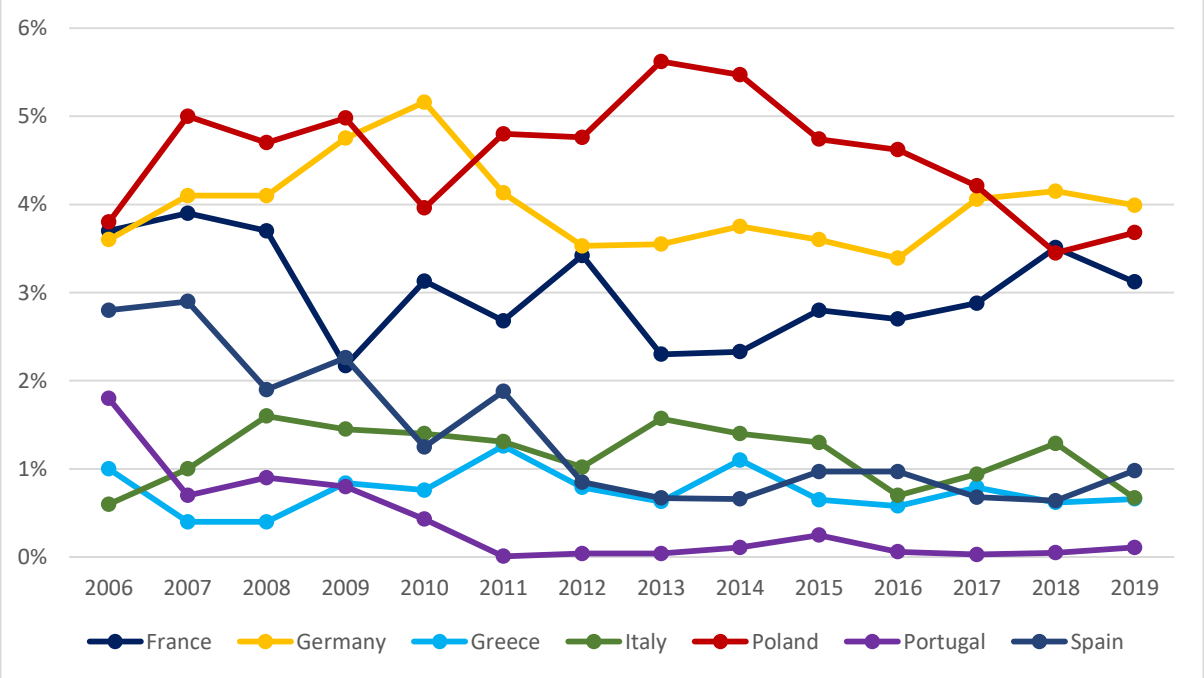
Source: NATO 2011, 2012, 2016, 2018, 2021

Graph V: Expenditure on equipment as a percentage of total military expenditure, 2006–2019



Source: NATO 2011, 2012, 2016, 2018, 2021

Graph VI: Expenditure on infrastructure as a percentage of total military expenditure, 2006–2019



Source: NATO 2011, 2012, 2016, 2018, 2021

For **France**, investment in equipment and infrastructure is considered indispensable if its military strength is to be maintained and appropriately projected (Ministère des Armées, 2018). The military planning law for the period 2019–2025 envisages the upgrading of the Armed Forces' conventional

equipment, new nuclear submarines and frigates, new aircraft, the upgrading of the nuclear arsenal, and a significant increase in defence research and development. In general, the military expenditure on both purchasing new and maintaining existing equipment is expected to increase by more than a third between 2017 and 2025 (Mentz, 2019).

Germany's equipment expenditure puts the country in fourth place behind France, Poland and Spain. This modest performance is due to two main reasons: firstly, Germany is still reluctant to invest in military equipment (Buras, 2018). Secondly, the Bundeswehr is bogged down by severe bureaucratic inertia and outdated procurement systems that discourage large-scale modernisation plans, which would lead in turn to a significant demand for smarter and more efficient military equipment (Barrie & Giegerich, 2020). This is acknowledged in several parliamentary reports that have repeatedly noted that the identified bureaucratisation has a negative impact on the effectiveness of the German Armed Forces (German Bundestag, 2019; German Bundestag, 2020). Infrastructure expenditure is higher than in the other countries under examination because Germany has invested in NATO-related construction and infrastructure projects and installations used mainly by American troops stationed in Germany (Winter, 2019).

In the case of **Italy,** the 2012 defence sector reforms and, still more significantly, the 2015 White Paper paved the way for the modernisation of the Italian army, placing an emphasis on equipment, maintenance, and military research and development. The procurement of new equipment was prioritized, which led to the significant increase in this budget line from 10% in 2015 to 17% in 2019 (Sabatino, 2017). Lately, the Italian government has shown great interest in the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), European Defence Fund (EDF), and the Permanent Structure Cooperation (PESCO)counting on their co-financing potential to achieve a further upgrade of the national defence capabilities (Muti & Varvelli, 2021).

The equipment expenditure of **Spain** is characterized by significant peaks and valleys, which are very much associated with the country's financial crisis. Spending reached its nadir in 2011 and again in 2016, when it absorbed less than 7% of the defence budget, which is far below the Spanish average. Between 2010 and 2016, the main defence budget cuts were felt in the procurement of new and the modernisation of existing equipment (Ortega, 2012). The two programs most affected by these cuts were the Leopard II tank and the EF-2000 fighter jet (European Parliament - DG External Policies, 2011, p. 26). During this period, the national shipbuilding company Navantia had to reduce its running costs by 30% (European Parliament - DG External Policies, 2011). The same holds for **Portugal** which had to postpone payments to arm suppliers due to the economic crisis, and freeze or suspend some programs that were already underway, including the NH90 helicopter and PANDUR II 8/8 armored vehicle (Teixeira & Pinto, 2014, p. 4).

Greece's expenditure on equipment suffered a heavy blow during the financial crisis. Due to budget cuts, expenditure on equipment dropped from 27% in 2009 to 8% in 2014; in practice, this meant the halting of almost all armament projects. The domestic defence industry, which had historically faced a wide range of problems, struggled hard to survive, though not with much success (Slijper, 2013, p. 13). In the post-2015 era, expenditure on equipment rose a little without reaching pre-crisis level. However, it is important to note that the country launched a massive rearmament plan in 2020 worth 10 billion euros. This plan entails the purchase of new anti-tank weapons for the Greek army,

Rafale fighter jets from France for the Hellenic Air Force, and new frigates for the Hellenic Navy. This program, which will be implemented over the next decade, will significantly increase the share of this budget line in the country's overall defence budget.

Poland's expenditure on military equipment shows a remarkable increase. There are two main reasons for this. The first relates to the need to modernize much of its Soviet-era arsenal, which had become essentially obsolete by the turn of the millennium. The second relates to politics since th political semantics of this modernisation program are hard to miss. Poland portrays itself as the star pupil in the Central and Eastern European class and is engaged in an ongoing attempt to meet all NATO guidelines (defence budget equivalent to 2% of GDP with 20% of the budget spent on military equipment). These efforts took the form of two large-scale projects, namely the 2001–2006 'Program of Restructuring and Technical Modernisation of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland' and its 2015 update. The former legally obliged the Polish government to spend 1.95% of the country's GDP on defence and at least 20% of this expenditure on technical modernisation. The latter restated this legally binding commitment, which brings Poland very close to the NATO threshold. Poland purchased significant amounts of military equipment from Germany in the period 2013–15 and from the United States, in 2018 and 2020 (Świerczyński, 2018; U.S. Embassy & Consulate in Poland, 2020).[2] As regards its infrastructure expenditure, the construction of NATO bases in Poland accounts for the size of this budget line in the Polish defence budget (Feickert, McInnis, & Mix, 2020). In a 2018 proposal, the Polish Ministry of Defence suggested that Poland could develop the necessary infrastructure to house an even larger permanent US military presence (Polish Ministry of Defence, 2018). This is illustrative of Poland's intention to 'purchase' more security by hosting American and NATO forces in its territory and shouldering the related financial burden.

2.3.3 'Other Functions'

Table 6 provides information on the seven member-states' expenditure on 'other functions', which include the costs for operations, maintenance, other R&D and other categories. A quick look reveals that Germany spends an impressive thirty percent of its military expenditure on average on other functions, followed by Poland, France, and Spain, which allot roughly twenty percent for these purposes. Greece, Italy, and Portugal form a third group for whom other costs do not account for more than fifteen percent of their defence budgets.

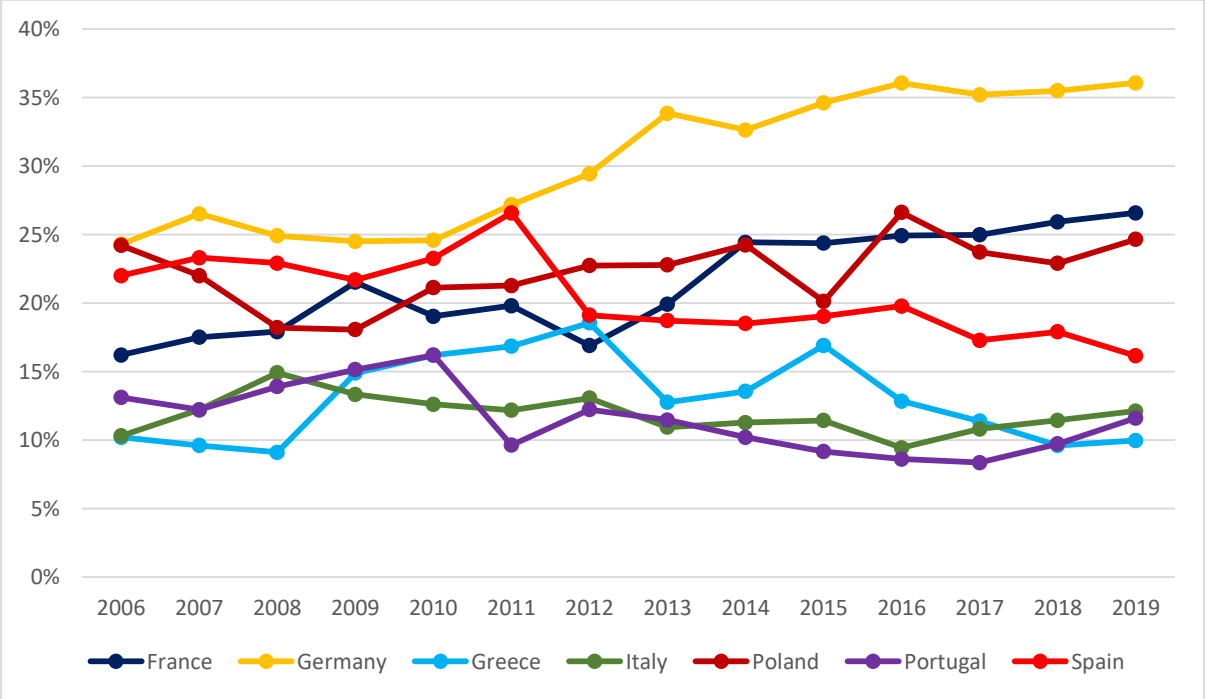
[2] Poland purchased 105 Leopard 2A5 main battle tanks, 14 Leopard 1A4 main battle tanks, 18 Bergepanzer 2 armored recovery vehicles, 200 trucks and peripheral material from Germany, worth 180 million euros in total. The 2018 and 2020 purchases from the US consisted of the US Patriot Missile System (from the Raytheon Company in 2018) and aircraft (from Lockheed Martin in 2020) (Świerczyński, 2018; U.S. Embassy & Consulate in Poland, 2020).

Table 6: Expenditure on other functions as a percentage of total military expenditure, 2006–2019

Year	France	Germany	Greece	Italy	Poland	Portugal	Spain
2006	16.20%	24.30%	10.20%	10.30%	24.20%	13.10%	22.00%
2007	17.50%	26.50%	9.60%	12.20%	22.00%	12.20%	23.30%
2008	17.90%	24.90%	9.10%	14.90%	18.20%	13.90%	22.90%
2009	21.51%	24.49%	14.88%	13.33%	18.06%	15.14%	21.68%
2010	19.03%	24.58%	16.19%	12.60%	21.12%	16.19%	23.26%
2011	19.80%	27.17%	16.84%	12.17%	21.27%	9.62%	26.58%
2012	16.89%	29.42%	18.55%	13.06%	22.73%	12.22%	19.11%
2013	19.91%	33.84%	12.75%	10.93%	22.78%	11.46%	18.71%
2014	24.43%	32.63%	13.55%	11.27%	24.24%	10.19%	18.50%
2015	24.37%	34.61%	16.90%	11.42%	20.11%	9.15%	19.03%
2016	24.92%	36.05%	12.84%	9.42%	26.61%	8.61%	19.78%
2017	24.97%	35.20%	11.37%	10.80%	23.71%	8.35%	17.28%
2018	25.92%	35.49%	9.60%	11.43%	22.89%	9.72%	17.89%
2019	26.57%	36.06%	9.96%	12.11%	24.65%	11.60%	16.14%
AVERAGE	**21.42%**	**30.37%**	**13.02%**	**11.85%**	**22.33%**	**11.53%**	**20.44%**

Source: NATO 2011, 2012, 2016, 2018, 2021

Graph VII: Expenditure on other functions as a percentage of total military expenditure, 2006–2019



Source: NATO 2011, 2012, 2016, 2018, 2021

In **France**, the 'Other Cost' expenditure has risen in the defence budget after Islamist terrorist organisations started to orchestrate and launch attacks on French and European soil (Nesser, Stenersen, & Oftedal, 2016). Operational and maintenance costs are included in this budget line, so this increase is associated with the extensive mobilisation and deployment of the French Armed Forces both abroad in operations against jihadists, as well as domestically to protect the country's critical infrastructure (Lasserre, 2014; Deni, 2021, pp. 91-94). French President Emmanuel Macron's stated intention to reduce the French military presence in Sahel is expected to reduce the share of this budget line (Campbell, 2021).

With the exception of Germany, this defence budget line remains relatively stable, albeit at different levels, with just small fluctuations. **Italy**'s expenditure in this category has been largely determined, at least until 2015, by the financial constraints imposed on new defence procurement and the subsequent need to maintain its existing equipment in good operational condition. Post-2015, it could be argued that the mobilisation of Italian forces in the context of the migration crisis, including the large Italian presence in the EU Mediterranean Naval Force (EUNAVFOR MED/Operation Sophia) has kept this budget line at the same level. Despite the effects of the pandemic on its economy, Italy has recently decided to boost its military expenditure and focus more on military R&D (Marrone, 2020; Kington, 2020). **Spain** reveals the same level of 'Other expenditure' as Poland and France, but with an overall downward trend, unlike the other two countries. **Greece** and **Portugal** spent more on maintenance during the crisis years—2009-2015 in the Greek case and 2009-2011 for Portugal—basically to extend the working life of existing military equipment. **Poland** has spent a good deal on this category over the last fifteen years, to complete the modernisation of its army, maintain it at a high level of readiness and increase its participation in military operations, but also, as we will discuss in the next section, to invest in a nascent domestic defence industry (Terlikowski, 2017).

3. EU Schemes of Military Cooperation

In this section, we shift our attention to the various forms of military cooperation that have been developed within the framework of the European integration process. These comprise the EU Battlegroups, the EU Military Missions and Operations, and the PESCO Projects. Each sub-section kicks off with a very brief overview of the institutional arrangements that underpin them and then discusses the role played by the seven countries in each.

3.1 EU Battlegroups (EUBGs)

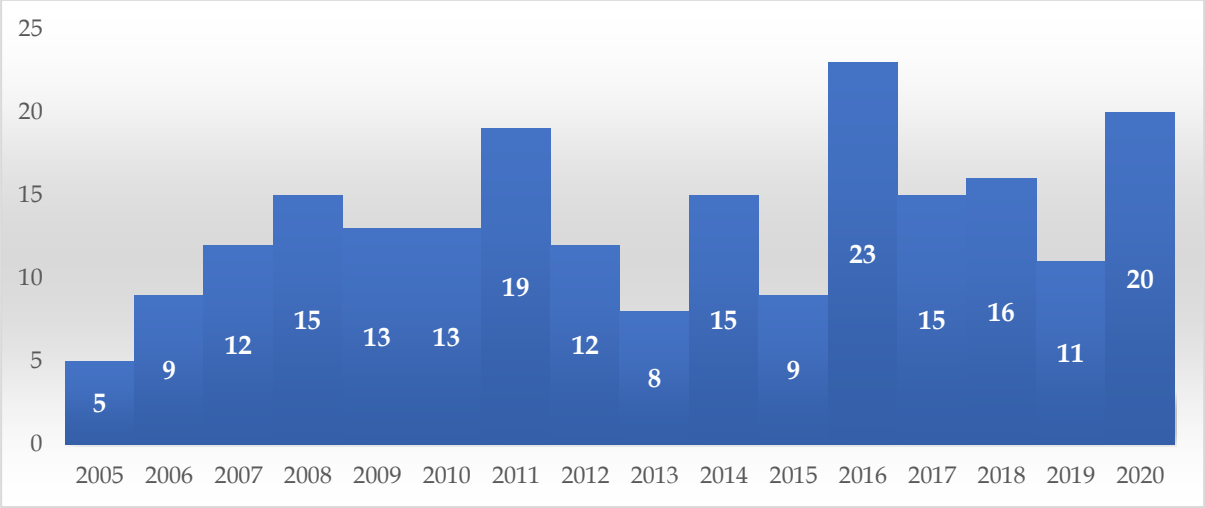
3.1.1 Overview

As a concept, the EU Battlegroups follow on from the Headline Goal agreed at the Helsinki European Council in December 1999. According to this Headline Goal, by 2003 the EU should have developed a

military capacity of 50,000 to 60,000 soldiers which could be put in the field within sixty days and be able to remain there for up to a year to perform the Petersberg Tasks, most importantly peace keeping. This broad objective would be realized through numerically small but mobile units that would remain in a high state of readiness for immediate deployment upon request (European Council, 1999). This significant development owed much to the Franco-British military cooperation launched at the *St Malo* meeting in 1998 and reaffirmed at the *Le Touquet* meeting in 2003 (Missiroli, 2003, p. 39). The success of the first ever Operation 'Artemis' in the PR Congo, paved the way for the further development of the Battlegroups concept in 2004. The core idea of establishing small, mobile, rapid-reaction forces gained the support of France, Germany and the United Kingdom (Lindstrom, 2007). The first Battlegroups were formed in 2005, with full operational capacity achieved in 2007.

The Battlegroups are small, usually multinational military units of about 1,500 soldiers supported by secondary units. Each Battlegroup varies in its composition according to the participating countries and their military capabilities. Third countries like Norway, Serbia, Ukraine and North Macedonia have participated in various Battlegroups. One member-state or group of states takes the lead, acting as the 'lead nation' and usually contributing the Battlegroup's operational headquarters. Figure II below shows the number of countries that participated in at least one such Battlegroup between 2005 and 2020.

Figure II: Number of countries that participated in at least one Battlegroup, 2005–2020



Source: Authors' elaboration from Chappell, 2009, EEAS 2014, 2016, 2019, EUISS 2017, Fiott 2019, Śmaguc 2013, UK Parliament, 2012

The Battlegroups are expected to provide support for the EU Global Strategy and mobilize in cases of crisis management, conflict prevention, peace keeping, and peace enforcing operations (EEAS, 2017). Two Battlegroups are on standby mode, however, their mobilisation is not compulsory, and participating countries have the right to decline, or choose the exact size and modality of, deployment. The Athena mechanism covers the common costs, but otherwise the Battlegroups

operate on the basis of the 'costs lie where they fall'. This means that the lion's share of the operational cost is shouldered by the participating countries, which discourages states with scarce economic resources from actively participating in the scheme. For example, in 2007, Sweden was unwilling to mobilize the Battlegroup it led in Chad on economic grounds (Wade & Jones, 2008). In the same vein, in 2013, Greece refused to deploy the Battlegroup it led during the crisis that erupted in the Central African Republic due to the financial burden the operation would place on it (Nováky N. I., 2016).

For these reasons, and despite the initial enthusiasm, the existing Battlegroups have remained idle and never been deployed. According to the former Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Karel de Gucht, they are 'an army on paper' (Brunnstrom, 2008). The European Parliament has repeatedly stressed that the concept should be revisited and perhaps function as a reserve plan rather than the main thrust of European defence integration (European Parliament, 2013; European Parliament, 2010). Still, the concept has not been officially dropped, and the Battlegroups remain in place, at least in theory. Examining the participation of the seven countries in them will therefore offer some useful insights.

3.1.2 Battlegroup Participation

Table 7 depicts the total number of Battlegroups the seven countries have joined and the number they have led.

Table 7: Participations in EU Battlegroups, 2005–2020

Member-state	Total participations	Participations as lead nation
France	16	9
Germany	13	6
Greece	11	7
Italy	13	8
Poland	4	4
Portugal	9	1
Spain	11	6

Source: Authors' elaboration from Chappell, 2009, EEAS 2014, 2016, 2019, EUISS 2017, Fiott 2019, Śmaguc 2013, UK Parliament, 2012

It is not surprising that **France** has been very actively engaged in this venture, joining sixteen Battlegroups and acting as lead nation in nine of them. The French participation has been underpinned by a dual rationale: First, the EU rhetoric has presented the Battlegroups as the nucleus

of a future European Army. This perspective has traditionally been embraced by French governments and has been a permanent feature of French security doctrines. In all four such doctrines, issued between 1972 and 2013, France has been supportive of European strategic autonomy, including the upgrading of the military capacity of the European defence cooperation framework (République française, 2013; République française, 2008; République française, 1994; République française, 1972). Second, the Battlegroups would be deployed in crisis-prone regions, most of which—like the Maghreb and Sahel regions and the Middle East—are traditionally important for French foreign policy. After all, even prior to the establishment of the Battlegroups, France had seized the opportunity to promote its national foreign policy objectives under the guise of an EU initiative. This is why Operation Artemis, for example, was described as a "…French operation under European cover", in view of its overwhelmingly French participation (Hooman, 2007, p. 153). Overall, France has invested a good deal of effort in the Battlegroups concept, both through participating and through pressing for a more effective funding mechanism to expand the existing Athena financial framework and support their operation (Journal officiel de la République française, 2013, p. 21).

Germany has participated in thirteen Battlegroups leading six of them. It is interesting to note that, unlike France, Italy and the United Kingdom, Germany has not formed a unilateral Battlegroup, but has always joined multinational efforts instead. Together with the small number of Battlegroups it has led, one can credibly attribute to Germany the role of 'reluctant leader'. This obviously owes much to historical memory, an anti-militarist legacy, and a strong societal reluctance to resort to the use of force to resolve international crises (Major & Mölling, 2021; Baumann & Hellman, 2001). It is also explicable in terms of the constitutional constraints that exist with regard to the deployment of German armed forces beyond its borders. The Constitutional Court has consistently opined that the executive must seek the approval of the legislative authorities before taking any such decision. Such an opinion creates political complications, legal hurdles and inevitable delays. Thus, while Germany is keen on presenting itself as a country which specializes in crisis management and post-conflict society building[3], these international aspirations often clash with its domestic policy-making idiosyncrasies (Peters, 2018). This undermines the reliability of the German commitment to military deployment, despite the country's intention to increase its international military presence. Such a goal, which stems from an acknowledgment of the country's responsibility toward global geopolitical stability, was restated in the most recent German security doctrine in 2016 (The Federal Government, 2016). However, it has not been supported to date by the country's engagement in the EUBGs.

Italy's participation in EUBGs is vital for the country's interests, given that crises calling for their deployment usually occur in neighboring regions, like North Africa, and accentuate Italian security concerns. Italy is therefore very active both in terms of its participation in thirteen Battlegroups, but also in terms of its leadership of eight -two more than Germany. In general, Italy is in favor of easily deployable and capable EUBGs. However, its support for the EUBGs concept goes even further, reflecting Italy's political aspirations in the field of military cooperation and integration. In an

[3] See, for example, the number of relevant Departments and General Directorates within the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Federal Foreign Office, 2014).

informal paper from 2016, Italy noted that a "joint permanent European Multinational Force (EMF)" was necessary, accompanied by a new, permanent EU military Headquarter (Barigazzi, 2016).

The Iberian nations, **Spain** and **Portugal,** have also actively engaged with the EUBGs, though their participation may not have been proportionate with their security concerns. They have joined eleven and nine groups respectively, with Spain taking the lead in six and Portugal in only one. Spain traditionally supports all CSDP initiatives as a way to upgrade the country's political status within the European integration process. Portugal, though willing to join such ventures, lacks the political weight and will to take on a more active role. It seeks to capitalize on the existing CSDP cooperation to consolidate its political position in the Lusophone world (Branco, 2015, pp. 83-84). However, it prefers to participate in EUBGs with at least three more partners to avoid a possible Spanish predominance that could lead to the deployment of the Portuguese Armed Forces in areas which are of no interest to the country (De Melo Palma, 2009, p. 12).

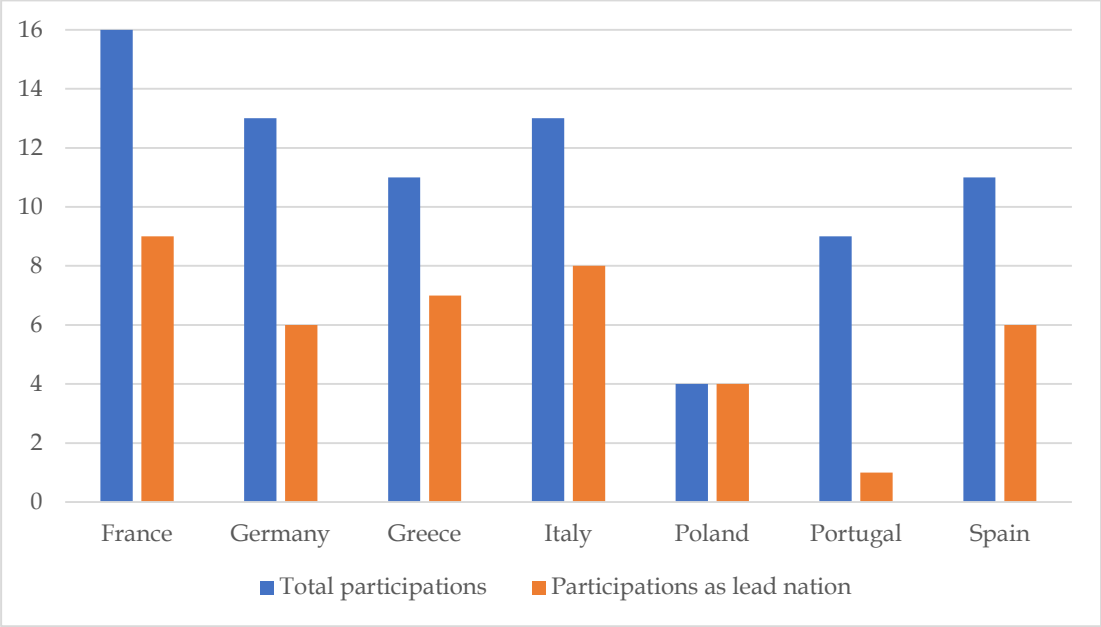
Greece has long believed that EU defence integration is a significant multiplier of military strength and a security deterrent to Turkish revisionism (Nestoras, 2015, p. 61; Tsakonas & Tournikiotis, 2003) This explains the country's impressive participation in and embracing of the EUBGs, even if they do not contribute to territorial defence *per se*. Greece has joined eleven Battlegroups and acted as lead nation in seven of them. It has also committed a brigade-sized force in the EUBGs' early years, before the financial crisis (Markantonatou, 2010). For Greece, the political connotations of the venture have been more important than their actual crisis management and conflict resolution capacity. When launched, the EUBGs were considered a potential first step in the process of defence integration, and the speed with which Greece rushed to support them is an indication of the country's political readiness and wish to participate in the vanguard of European integration. EUBG participation has also been a means of strengthening cooperation with its Balkan partners and expanding its broad political presence in the Balkan peninsula. It has done this by taking the lead in the HELBROC Battlegroup, which brings together six countries (Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine and Serbia). In addition, Greece has built on the opportunity provided by the EUBGs for closer relations with Italy and Spain by joining the Spanish-Italian Amphibious Battlegroup every five years or so.

Finally, **Poland** has joined just four Battlegroups, but always as a lead nation. Thus, while not particularly impressive overall, the Polish participation has been very targeted, with a focus on the Visegrád Battlegroup (V4 EU Battlegroup), which brings together the four Visegrád countries (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary) with the *ad hoc* participation of Ukraine and Croatia. The Polish personnel contributions to this EUBG is up to 50%, while its financial contributions cover the lion's share of the cost (Fałkowski, 2017).[4] The Polish approach is underpinned by three factors: first, the country's political aspirations to lead the Visegrád group politically and establish itself as an influential political actor in the European integration process; second, its reluctance to support European defence integration schemes for fear of alienating the US and undermining the security

[4] Poland was also an active member of the Weimar EUBG, which was formed in 2011 and comprised Poland as lead nation supported by Germany and France. The Weimar EUBG was in standby mode during the first half of 2013, but military cooperation between the three countries has remained frozen since then (Janning, 2016; Koopman, 2016).

predominance of NATO[5]; and third, its need for external support for its large-scale army modernisation process that would benefit from military interactions with the country's EU partners. Participation in the Visegrád Battlegroup has improved Poland's operational capacity substantially (Paulech & Urbanovská, 2014). Furthermore, the 'Asian pivot' of the US has fed into the insecurity syndrome of a country that suffered much in the past as a result of its buffer zone status between Russia and Germany. As a result, Poland has to engage in a delicate balancing act: on the one hand, it does not want to distance itself from NATO and the American security umbrella; on the other hand, it will need a credible European deterrent to Russia should the 'Asian pivot' of the US proceed further (Zoltán et al., 2013).[6]

Graph VIII: Participations in EU Battlegroups, 2005–2020



Source: Authors' elaboration from Chappell, 2009, EEAS 2014, 2016, 2019, EUISS 2017, Fiott 2019, Śmaguc 2013, UK Parliament, 2012

[5] Testifying to the degree to which NATO is foremost in the minds of Polish statesmen, Poland invested considerable effort to take the lead, for 2020, of NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), contributing some 3,000 personnel (NATO, 2019).

[6] This issue is extremely important, even with the Biden administration, which seems to remain focused on the Indo-Pacific region, thus "obliging" the European partners to take on more responsibility to better protect themselves from their neighbours (Ellenhuus, 2021, p. 3).

3.2 EU Military Missions and Operations

3.2.1 Overview

The EU military missions are a core component of the CSDP. Missions with an executive mandate take on the tasks of local governments, while those with a non-executive mandate usually have a training goal and do not undermine the national sovereignty of the state in question (Le gleut & Conway-Mouret, 2019). For example, the EUNAVFOR MED/Operation Sophia had both kinds of mandate, patrolling for human trafficking networks in Libyan territorial waters, but also training Libyan naval forces (EEAS, 2020). Thirteen EU military operations have taken place since 2003, six of which are still ongoing in 2021.

The missions are funded primarily by national contributions. The Athena mechanism, which is mentioned above in the section on Battlegroups, covers part of the overall cost, focusing on the expenditure associated with maintaining Headquarters, basic field infrastructure, medical services and some administrative costs.[7] It is estimated that the Mechanism covers just 5-15% of the overall cost of a mission, which means that the participating countries shoulder a substantial financial burden (Nováky N. I., 2016). For example, the overall cost of the EUFOR TCHAD/RCA was about one billion Euros, with only 120 million provided through the Athena mechanism (Bulut & et al., 2009). The European Peace Facility (EPF), which replaces the Athena mechanism and the African Peace Facility, is an off-budget fund worth approximately 5bn Euros for the period 2021–27, more than 700 million per year (Council of the EU, 2021). In practical terms, this means a tenfold increase over the Athena mechanism. Like the Athena mechanism, the EPF will be financed through contributions from the EU member-states in proportion to their GDP. Given its larger budget and the fact that it will cover more areas of expenditure than its two predecessors, the EPF is expected to facilitate the launch of more missions in the years to come (EEAS, 2020; EEAS, 2018).

3.2.2 Participation in the EU Military Missions

In the absence of a European pool of armed forces, participation in the EU missions depends on national foreign policy priorities and capabilities. This is reflected in the size of the forces committed by each member-state to each mission. The military hierarchy, including the Head of the mission, are appointed by Council Decision following intensive interactions between the interested nations.

Table 8 provides an overview of the contributions of the seven member-states to the twelve EU military missions. Comprehensive and reliable data for the EUNAVFOR MED/Operation Irini could not be found for all seven countries and has consequently not been included in the Table.

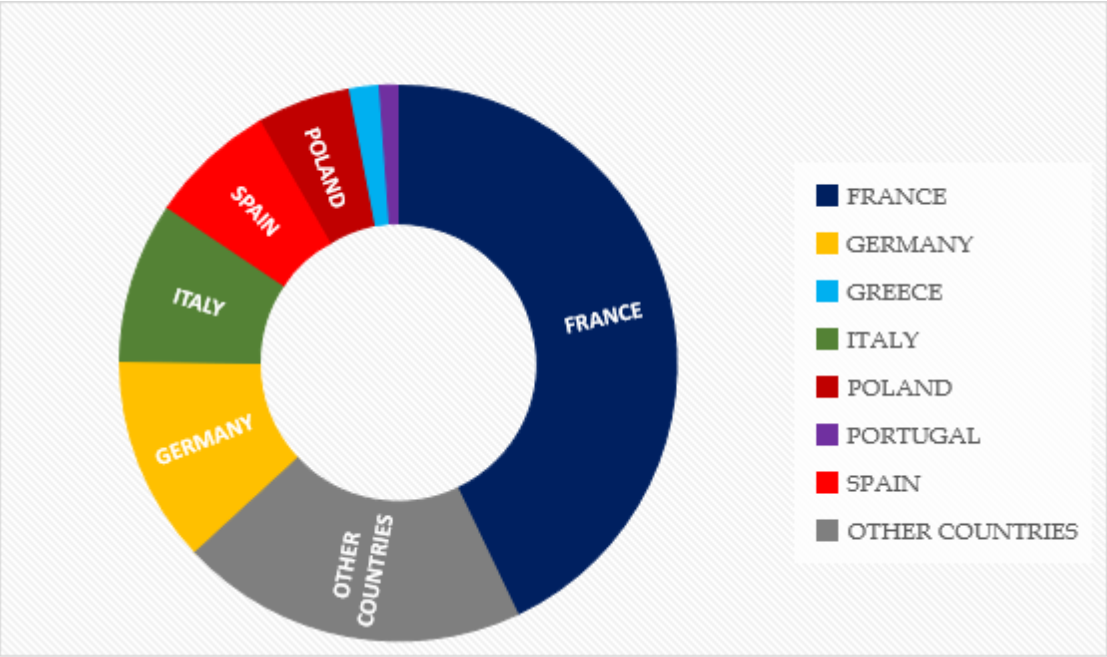
[7] See Annexes I, II and III of Council Decision 2015/528.

Table 8: National contributions to EU military missions and operations

Mission/Operation Name	Year(s)	EU Personnel	France	Germany	Greece	Italy	Poland	Portugal	Spain
EU Military Mission ARTEMIS	2003	1.807	1.639	7	2	1	0	0	1
EU Military Mission CONCORDIA	2003	313	145	26	21	0	17	6	16
EUFOR ALTHEA/BiH	2004-present	1.451	4	111	49	194	184	51	0
EUFOR RD Congo	2006	2.259	975	745	1	56	125	53	132
EUFOR TCHAD/RCA	2008–2009	3.250	2.100	0	0	0	350	0	0
EU NAVFOR ATALANTA/Somalia	2008-present	1.943	410	496	195	233	0	1	387
EUTM Somalia	2010-present	121	25	13	0	5	0	15	38
EUTM Mali	2013-present	465	207	0	0	7	20	1	59
EUFOR RCA Bangui	2014–2015	531	250	4	0	49	50	0	99
EUMAM RCA	2015–2016	59	20	0	0	0	2	8	22
EUNAVFOR MED SOPHIA	2015–2020	1.666	155	285	0	765	0	0	240
EUTM RCA	2016-present	129	80	0	0	0	2	11	22
SUM	-	13.994	6.010	1.687	268	1.310	750	146	1.016

Source: EU Global Engagement Database 2.0, European University Institute, Global Governance Programme

Figure III: National contributions to EU military missions and operations



Source: EU Global Engagement Database 2.0, European University Institute, Global Governance Programme

It is immediately clear that **France** has the greatest participation by far in these missions. France has contributed to every mission and has constituted an overwhelming presence in the missions to

Congo, Chad, Mali and the RCA, all of which are areas of considerable interest to the country.[8] Overall, the country contributes about 85% of the European military forces in these countries, along with a high number of commanding officers, as indicated in Table 9.

Table 9: Total number of Commanders and French Commanders on EU missions in Central and Western Africa

Mission/Operation	Total Number of Commanders*	Number of French Commanders
EU Military Mission ARTEMIS	2	2
EUFOR RD Congo	2	1
EUFOR TCHAD/RCA	2	1
EUTM Mali	13	3
EUFOR RCA Bangui	3	3
EUMAM RCA	1	1
EUTM RCA	6	2

**Commanders include the Operation Commanders and Force Commanders*.

Source: Compilation of Council Joint Actions

France has also been one of the top contributors to the Athena mechanism, covering a 15% share of its total budget. This is why it has consistently put pressure on other EU countries to increase their financial contributions (Fiott, 2019). France argues that the principle of burden sharing should apply, and that countries which contribute significantly in terms of personnel should make a smaller financial contribution to the Mechanism (Terpan, 2015). France was adamant during the negotiations that led to the establishment of the Athena mechanism back in 2003 to include a clause providing for its operation to be reviewed very frequently. The aim was to put the Mechanism in place and then to incrementally evolve it in line with French positions (Nováky N. I., 2016). This approach met staunch opposition from the United Kingdom and only managed to enter the EU policy-making pipeline after Brexit, eventually leading to the EPF.

Germany is first and foremost important because it contributes one fifth of the overall Athena budget. The 2020 German Presidency orchestrated the upgrade to the EPF, moving closer to the French views on the financing of the EU military missions (Morcos & Ruy, 2021). However, in terms of personnel, Germany contributes only twelve percent of the total number of armed forces in the EU missions. This reflects German hesitance to deploy forces abroad for all the reasons mentioned in the discussion of the German participation in the EU Battlegroups above. The German participation is very targeted at the Balkans (and in particular at EUFOR ALTHEA in Bosnia-Herzegovina) and at the security of key naval routes—Germany contributes 25% of the EU military forces of EU NAVFOR ATALANTA/Somalia and 11% of the EUTM Somalia. However, the mission to which Germany has contributed the most is the EUFOR RD Congo, deployed in 2006. The German federal government sought the stabilisation of Congo to limit the massive refugee flows triggered by the crisis

[8]France has contributed 90% of the European forces on the EU Military Mission ARTEMIS, 43% of the EUFOR RD Congo, 65% of the EUFOR TCHAD/RCA, 45% of the EUTM Mali, 62% of the EUTM RCA, 47% of the EUFOR RCA Bangui, and 34% of the UMAM RCA.

(Bordonaro, 2006). The operation was commanded by a German General, despite intense domestic political controversies (The New Humanitarian, 2006).

Italy and Spain follow France and Germany in terms of their contributions to the overall Athena budget, primarily contributing to the EU naval missions EUNAVFOR ATALANTA/Somalia and EUNAVFOR MED SOPHIA. **Spain** has quite a widespread presence in almost all EU military missions, whereas Italy shows little if any interest in the EU's African military operations and is more interested in the Balkans and the Mediterranean basin, especially since the start of the refugee crisis. Although, as mentioned before, Spain has always been positively inclined toward the European military missions and operations, it has become more assertive since Brexit. For example, Spain lobbied intensively for the EU's Operational Headquarter (OHQ) of Operation ATALANTA in Rota to replace the Northwood OHQ in the UK (González, 2018; Pirner, 2018). In general, Spain seeks to consolidate its presence and influence in its immediate neighborhood and protect its economic interests, with a special focus on Africa (Gobierno de España, 2021, p. 1).[9]

Unlike Spain, **Italy** focuses more on the Mediterranean, the Balkans and Somalia, mainly due to its geographical position. Rome has been actively lobbying for EU military operations in the Mediterranean (SOPHIA and IRINI) to promote the stabilisation of the State of Libya and avoid mass migration flows (Boșilcă, Stenberg, & Riddervold, 2020). Rome's interest in the Mediterranean is also evidenced by its desire and efforts to persuade other European capitals to take active and decisive measures to secure and stabilize the 'Central Mediterranean Route' by launching EU naval operations (Nováky, 2018, p. 198). In addition to this, Italy emphasizes the significance of the Mediterranean Basin for the EU in its "Strategy Paper in the Mediterranean", in which Angelino Alfano, then Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated that Europe's *"destiny is written in the Mediterranean"* (Farnesina, 2017, p. 2).

Greece's contribution to EU military operations is rather small, if one takes into account the large size of the Greek armed forces and its military expenditure as a percentage of its GDP. However, the time period of the analysis coincides with the country's financial crisis. At the same time, Greece faces an existential security threat from Turkey, which further constrains the country's capacity to contribute in a more substantial way to EU military operations. The Greek participation has focused on the Balkans and naval counter-piracy operation in Somalia. The former reflects Greek concerns about the stability of its Northern neighborhood, the latter the economic interests of the Greek shipping industry (Economides, 2013, p. 153).

Portugal's participation has been rather timid, deploying forces less than half the size of Greece's. It has a substantial presence in two operations mainly, one ongoing in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the other now concluded in Congo (2006). However, its share of the overall EU personnel in both operations is very small at only 3.5% and 2.5% respectively.

Poland contributes a rather small 3% to the Athena mechanism in economic terms, but its personnel contributions are more substantial. During its 2011 Presidency, the country explicitly stated NATO's

[9] In March 2021, Spain announced its foreign action in Africa through until 2023. One of the objectives described in this new document is the promotion of peace, security and development in Africa by *"…strengthening Spain's participation in EU initiatives in the Sahel"* (emphasis added) (Gobierno de España, 2021, p. 1).

predominance on defence and security issues (Republic of Poland, 2012). Poland has been supportive of a broader sharing of the economic burden within the Athena mechanism, which would include the transportation cost of the deployed units (Lauenroth & von Ondarza, 2014). It has also lobbied for the idea of a shared Operational Headquarters for all EU military operations (Major & Wassenberg, 2011), which testifies to its overall positive take on enhanced military integration, as long as it does not undermine NATO. In terms of personnel, Poland took part in EU military operations even before it officially became a member, with Polish troops present in the EU's CONCORDIA Military Mission and one year later in the EUFOR ALTHEA/BiH (Polish Ministry of National Defence, 2020). Poland has shown a particular interest in the Balkans, mainly because it is concerned with the region's destabilizing potential. A destabilized Balkans could have a domino effect on the security of all the countries on the EU's eastern flank, including Russia, with dire consequences for EU-Russian relations (Hadzovic, 2020). At the same time, this active involvement in the Balkans testifies to Poland's broader political aspirations, especially in view of a further EU enlargement with the accession of the Western Balkan countries. Poland is also very active in Africa, with three fourths of Polish troops deployed in the EU military operations there. This is a conscious decision by Poland, which is pursuing a strategy of expanding its general presence in the continent, including stronger economic and trade cooperation with many African states in the context of the 'Poland-Africa Congress' (Radio Poland, 2018; The Chancellery of the Prime Minister, 2013).

3.3 Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO Projects)

3.3.1 Overview

The Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) introduced formally differentiated integration in the EU defence realm. It was agreed in the Lisbon Treaty to overcome objections to enhanced cooperation in this critical sector. Participation in the PESCO is optional, but once it is agreed upon, participating member-states are committed to its concrete objectives. The decision to launch a PESCO project is reached unanimously on the Council of Foreign Affairs. Such projects can promote defence cooperation in seven main areas, including training and common facilities, equipment and systems for land, naval and air forces, the development of joint capabilities, and cyber- and space-related activities (PESCO Secretariat, 2020). Every project is coordinated by a lead nation and is open to the participation of additional member-states. PESCO projects can receive more funding from the EDF than other cooperative schemes (European Defence Agency, 2020). This financial incentive contributes to the strengthening of cooperation between the defence industries of member-states to create additional economies of scale and avoid full dependence on the EDF level of funding. The far-reaching—and perhaps even utopian— proposal to issue defence bonds would increase the financial resources used by the EDF exponentially and enhance the defence industry consolidation process (Brichet & et al., 2021, p. 6). To this end, PESCO projects serve as a 'facilitator' with the potential to homogenize the defence capabilities of the participating member-states (Giuglietti, 2021, p. 2).

The PESCO concept was ambitious, but despite its great potential it fell short of initial expectations as a result of the financial turmoil (Dossi, 2019). Another reason for this inertia was the divergence of views within national administrations, and especially between Ministries of Foreign Affairs that were supportive of the venture on political grounds and Ministries of Defence that had a less supportive attitude (Fiott, Missiroli, & Tardy, 2017, p. 20). For almost a decade, the PESCO remained the 'sleeping beauty' of European defence integration, according to former Commission President Juncker (Juncker, 2017). That it eventually awoke owes much to the need to provide a significant political boost for the European integration process in the post-Brexit era. The activation of the PESCO scheme in 2017 was linked to the Global Strategy and calls for a more assertive EU international presence. Twenty-five member-states chose to participate in it. The first seventeen projects were approved in 2018, and the number of ongoing projects has gradually risen to forty-six.[10]

Figure IV provides an overview of the bilateral networks of cooperation that have evolved within the framework of the PESCO projects. The most active participants are clear at a glance, as are the most frequent collaborations: France is collaborating with Italy on sixteen projects and with Spain on nineteen, while it cooperates with Germany fourteen times. Italy and Spain have developed a close collaboration with joint participations in fourteen projects. For Germany, Spain is its second most preferred partner, with thirteen collaborations, which is only one less than its twelve joint projects with France. Greece's top partner is Italy, followed (after Cyprus) by Spain and Portugal with France in only fifth place. Portugal's four top partners are Spain, France, Italy, and Greece. In general, it is easy to discern a strong Southern cluster and networking. Poland has a more balanced pattern of collaboration, joining forces an almost equal number of times with France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, Hungary, and others.

[10] Forty-seven projects have been agreed upon, but the PESCO Secretariat informed the Council in February 2020 that the "EuropeanUnion Training Mission Competence Centre (EU TMCC)" project would be terminated by decision of its members.

Figure IV: Bilateral Cooperations in PESCO Projects

	France	Italy	Spain	Greece	Germany	Belgium	Netherlands	Czechia	Cyprus	Poland	Portugal	Romania	Slovakia	Croatia	Austria	Hungary	Sweden	Finland	Bulgaria	Estonia	Latvia	Slovenia	Ireland	Lithuania	Luxembourg
France		16	19	4	14	10	8	6	4	6	6	9	4	3	4	6	7	4	4	2	2	4	1	2	3
Italy	16		14	9	9	6	7	5	5	6	5	7	5	5	4	4	3	4	3	2	1	2	2	3	3
Spain	19	14		5	13	9	9	7	5	5	7	5	4	4	4	6	7	4	3	2	2	2	2	2	3
Greece	4	9	5		3	3	3	1	6	4	5	4	3	4	4	3	1	1	4	1	2	2	1	2	1
Germany	14	9	13	3	3	7	8	7	3	6	4	4	3	2	3	5	3	3	2	2	2	3	1	2	3
Belgium	10	6	9	3	7		7	4	3	6	3	4	3	2	1	4	3	3	2	2	3	2		2	1
Netherlands	8	7	9	3	8	7		6	2	6	3	5	3	3	2	4	3	5	2	3	3	2	1	3	2
Czechia	6	5	7	1	7	4	6		1	2	1	3	2	1	2	3	3	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	2
Cyprus	4	5	5	6	3	3	2	1		2	2	1	2	3	2	3	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	2	1
Poland	6	6	5	4	6	6	6	2	2		4	3	2	3	1	5	1	4	2	3	3	3		3	1
Portugal	6	5	7	5	4	3	3	1	2	4		4	1	1	3	2	2	2	1	1	2	1		1	2
Romania	9	7	5	4	4	4	5	3	1	3	4		2	1	3	2	4	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	2
Slovakia	4	5	4	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	1	2		2	1	3	3	1	2	1	1	2		2	1
Croatia	3	5	4	4	2	2	3	1	3	3	1	2	2		3	3	1	2	3	2	1	3	1	3	1
Austria	4	4	4	4	3	1	2	2	2	1	3	3	1	3		3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Hungary	6	4	6	3	5	4	4	2	3	5	2	2	3	3	3		2	1	2	2	2	4		2	1
Sweden	7	3	7	1	3	3	3	3	1	1	2	4	3	1	2	2		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Finland	4	4	4	1	3	3	5	2	1	4	2	2	1	2	1	2	1		1	3	2	1		2	1
Bulgaria	4	3	3	4	2	2	2	1	3	2	1	2	2	3	1	2	1	1		1	1	2	1	2	1
Estonia	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	2	1	3	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	3	1		2	1		2	1
Latvia	2	1	2	2	2	3	3	2	1	3	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	2		1		1	1
Slovenia	4	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	3	1	1	2	3	1	4	1	1	2	1	1			2	1
Ireland	1	2	2	1	1		1	1	1			1		1	1		1		1						1
Lithuania	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	2	3	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	2			1
Luxembourg	3	3	3	1	3	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	

Source: European Union Institute for Security Studies, Yearbook of European Security 2020

3.3.2 Participation in PESCO Projects

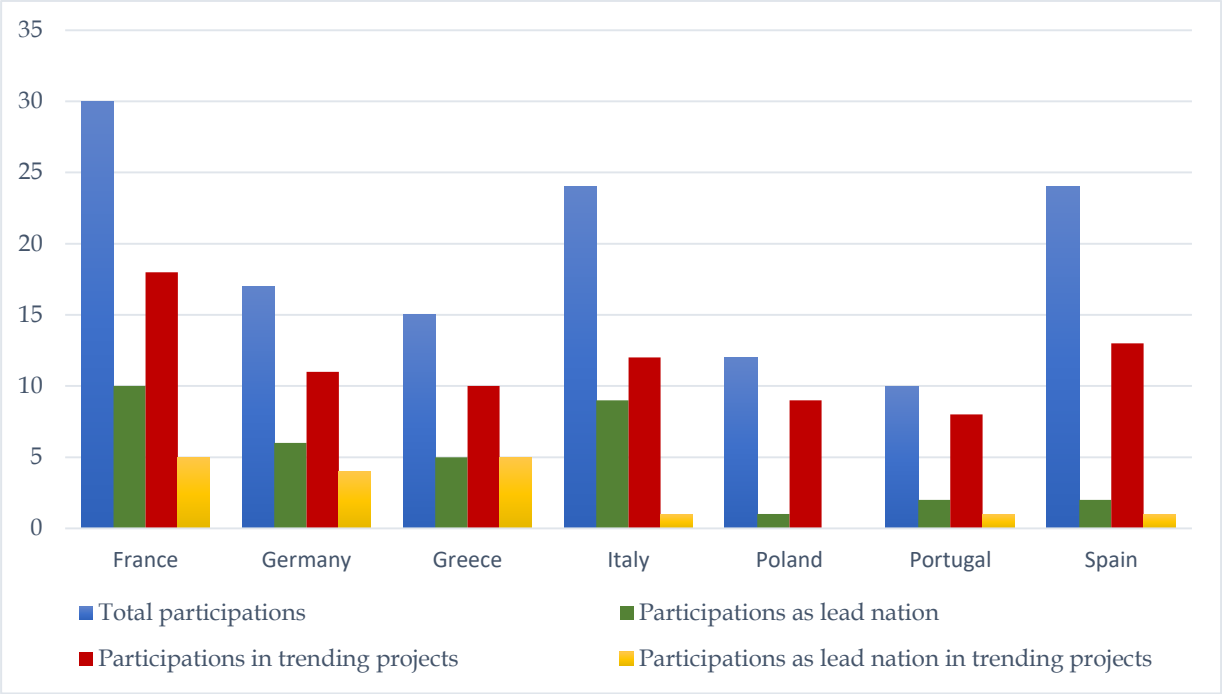
Table 10 shows the total participation of the Seven in PESCO projects, their participation as lead nations, and also their engagement in 'trending projects'. The latter group comprises the most mature projects, which are expected to reach full operational status by 2025 (Council of the EU, 2020). Table 11 portrays the number of projects in each of the seven areas covered by PESCO, along with the participation of the Seven in each of them.

Table 10: Participations in PESCO projects

Member-state	Total participations	Participations as lead nation	Participations in trending projects	Participations as lead nation in trending projects
France	30	10	18	5
Germany	17	6	11	4
Greece	15	5	10	5
Italy	24	9	12	1
Poland	12	1	9	0
Portugal	10	2	8	1
Spain	24	2	13	1

Source: PESCO (2020), Council of the EU (2020)

Graph IX: Participations in PESCO projects



Source: PESCO (2020), Council of the EU (2020)

Areas	France		Germany		Greece		Italy		Poland		Portugal		Spain	
	Total Projects	Lead	Total Projects	Lead	Total Projects	Lead	Total Projects	Lead	Total Projects	Lead	Total Projects	Lead	Total Projects	Lead
Training, Facilities (9)	3	1	1	0	3	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	0
Land, Formations, Systems (6)	3	1	2	1	2	0	4	2	1	0	0	0	3	0
Maritime (6)	4	0	0	0	5	1	3	2	2	0	3	1	3	0
Air, Systems (4)	4	1	2	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	3	1
Enabling, Joint (11)	11	5	6	3	3	0	7	1	4	0	3	0	8	0
Cyber, C4ISR (8)	3	1	4	1	2	2	4	1	2	0	3	0	4	1
Space (2)	2	1	2	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
SUM	30	10	17	6	15	5	24	9	12	1	10	2	24	2

Table 11: Countries' participation in PESCO Projects by area

Source: Authors' own compilation

France has the most extensive participation in PESCO projects by far, joining thirty of the forty-six and leading ten of them. As shown in Table 11, these projects cover all seven areas, with a particular emphasis on the development of joint capabilities. This is reasonable, considering the French pursuit of European strategic autonomy and the need for further cooperation in this field to avoid a new 'capabilities-expectations' gap. To this end, France leads both the "Co- basing" and "EU Collaborative Warfare Capabilities (EcoWAR)" projects, which focus on sharing military bases between participating partners and preparing participating member-states to collectively address future security threats (PESCO Secretariat, 2019).

However, France is not totally satisfied with the current functioning and evolution of PESCO. As the French see it, cooperation should not be inclusive but limited instead to member-states with a high technological and military potential (Keohane, 2018). This more elitist approach would help form the nucleus of a European Army. The German side, in contrast, is concerned about the negative spillover of exclusive differentiated integration that would leave outside countries willing but not capable of participating (Gotkowska, 2018, pp. 8-9). In this respect, France focuses more on PESCO's operational dimension, whereas Germany emphasizes its political connotations. The clash between the two led to the compromise solution of "…an inclusive and ambitious" PESCO, as mentioned in the joint letter co-authored by France, Germany, Italy and Spain and addressed to the then High Representative/Vice President (HR/VP), Federica Mogherini. This wording was adopted by the June 2017 European Council and is used in the Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/2315 that set PESCO in motion. The combination of the words "inclusive" and "ambitious" reflects the political compromise made by France and Germany to make PESCO work (Blockmans, 2018, p. 1812).

The path followed to date has not satisfied France, which has expressed concerns about the heterogeneity of the participating member-states and about the currently dysfunctional PESCO *modus operandi* which virtually negates the added value of the venture. These concerns were formally expressed with reference to "… void formulas and unrealistic plans" that could undermine the momentum toward defence integration (République française, 2017, p. 15). This was why France proposed the European Intervention Initiative (EII)[11] in 2018, which evolves outside the EU framework and comprises thirteen EU member-states plus Norway. Although the French side—and the EU High Representative—have stated that this initiative complements PESCO rather than competing with it, the political signaling is clear: France is looking for a leaner, more effective and more ambitious defence cooperation framework since PESCO does not currently meet its expectations (Koenig, 2018).

Germany's participation in PESCO projects is not particularly impressive, having joined seventeen in total and lead only six. Germany prefers those projects which have a less clearly-defined military identity—the European Medical Command, for example, the Geo-meteorological and Oceanographic (GeoMETOC) Support Coordination Element (GMSCE), the Cyber and Information Domain

[11] The EII (or EI2) is a French-led, flexible and non-binding forum for cooperation in which 13 European countries which are willing, capable and experienced in crisis-management participate (Sweeney & Winn, 2020, p. 227). Its aim is to protect European security interests by engaging the military capabilities and armed forces of the participating members. Nevertheless, it is not (yet) clear if this initiative offers added value to European defence, since it is uncertain whether all the participants can undertake full-spectrum military operations, or are happy focusing mostly on the Sahel region, which is relevant primarily to French needs and interests (Nováky, 2018).

Coordination Centre (CIDCC), or the Network of logistic Hubs in Europe and support to Operations (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung, 2020; PESCO Secretariat, 2020). At the same time, it acknowledges the political and economic added value of PESCO to the process of consolidating the European military industry (Major & Mölling, 2019). However, this does not prevent Germany from pursuing other, bilateral or multilateral, military collaborations outside the PESCO framework—the Franco-German agreement on a common air transport unit, for example, or the trilateral agreement with Spain and France to develop 6th-generation fighter jets (Terlikowski, 2020; Vogel, 2021). In addition, Germany places great emphasis on maintaining its good relations with NATO and on the symbiotic development of PESCO and NATO structures and programs. This explains why it has lobbied for the opening up of PESCO projects to NATO partners under specific terms and conditions, an issue that was finally settled during the German Council Presidency in 2020. As a result, the US, Canada and Norway have recently entered the Military Mobility project, while Turkey is currently "knocking on the same door" (Reuters, 2021; Brzozowski, 2021).

After France, Italy and Spain are the two countries that participate most in PESCO projects, having joined twenty-four projects each. Like France, **Italy** is keen on taking the lead, whereas Spain is more hesitant in this respect. Italy focuses on military research and development-intensive projects that can generate economies of scale in the production of competitive weaponry for export to the global market (Marrone, 2018, p. 4). EDF financial support is indispensable to the achievement of this goal. Italy prefers to cooperate in small groups of countries to ensure high homogeneity and the interoperability of developing systems. According to Italy, the EDF should aim to finance ambitious projects which would be hard to implement in a national or bilateral context— like the European Patrol Corvette (EPC) (Marrone, 2019, p. 5). In general, Rome sees the PESCO projects and the EDF as an enormous opportunity to further develop its capabilities and keep alive its domestic defence industry, without exceeding its budgetary limits (Cladi & Locatelli, 2021, p. 466). The Italian commitment to PESCO is not an indication that the country is turning its back on NATO. Italy firmly believes that the evolution of PESCO does not impact negatively on transatlantic defence cooperation and strongly supports third-state participation in PESCO as well as industrial collaboration (Maulny & Di Bernardini, 2019).

From the very beginning, **Spain** was a keen supporter of the nascent PESCO and a co-author (along with France, Germany and Italy) of the letter addressed to the HR/VP at the time, Federica Mogherini, which revitalized the discussion on PESCO (Zandee, 2018, p. 2). This commitment was reaffirmed in May 2020 with a letter co-signed by the Defence Ministers of France, Germany, Italy and Spain pleading for greater coordination between PESCO, CARD and EDF (Parly & et al., 2020). Spain's continuous support for this kind of defence cooperation is also confirmed by the significant Spanish participation in PESCO projects, which has mainly been focused on the development of joint capabilities. In general, Spain prioritizes cooperative projects that are eligible for European funding, seeking to take advantage of the European defence initiatives to enable its national Defence Technological and Industrial Base (DTIB) to participate on (almost) equal terms in the emerging European DTIB (Arteaga, 2018).

Greece has participated in fewer projects overall, but leads one third of the projects it has joined. It has emphasized naval cooperation schemes (Upgrade of Maritime Surveillance, 'Divepack', European

Patrol Corvette—EPC, 'HARMSPRO', and 'MAS MCM'), with no participations in projects related to air or space. This is reasonable in the light of Greece's long maritime tradition, its geographical location surrounded by sea, and of course its domestic shipping lobby's powerful economic interest in securing the main maritime arteries of international trade. However, the Greek defence industry has long been in crisis, with little current potential for capitalizing on EDF financial support (Efstathiou, 2018), although recent developments in the last couple of years may signal a new beginning[12]. Greece is ambivalent about the participation of NATO countries in PESCO projects: it would naturally welcome an American presence, but not a Turkish one (Maulny & Di Bernardini, 2019). Greece was therefore quite satisfied with the 2020 Council Decision allowing third countries to join only after an invitation issued by all the countries participating in a project and with *ad hoc* evaluation and assessment unanimously decided upon.

Portugal participates in a relatively small number of projects: just ten. It aims to build a stronger domestic industrial base that can take advantage of the financial opportunities provided by the EDF. PESCO projects can also be seen as an opportunity for Portugal to address its geographical peripherality and strengthen its political role within the EU's core (Möller, 2018). In addition, while the emergence of the EU as a security—and, to a lesser extent, defence—actor is in accordance with Portuguese interests, Lisbon does not want to undermine the structures of NATO, to which it remains committed. That is why it promotes, and adheres to, a symbiotic relationship between the two organisations (Silva, 2018, pp. 3-4).

Poland has a rather limited PESCO presence with just twelve participations and only one as the lead nation. It is particularly interested in capability activation projects such as 'Military Mobility' (or 'Military Schengen') (Herszenhorn, 2017). While a similar NATO-based program has encountered several legal obstacles and not progressed far, the PESCO project has got further, allowing its use as a core argument countering claims that PESCO projects undermine NATO. Poland has adopted this rhetoric to dispel any doubt about its allegiance to NATO (Terlikowski, 2018). Polish participation was only confirmed after a formal letter was sent by the Polish Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence to the High Representative stating the supremacy of NATO and urging the EU to take a greater interest in Eastern Europe (Blockmans & Macchiarini Crosson, 2019). This is indicative of Poland's lack of enthusiasm for the PESCO venture.

[12] From 2017 onwards, Greece has made conscious efforts to bring the national defence industry back to life, acknowledging the need of economic viability, extroversion, and cooperation between the public and private sector (Ministry of National Defence, 2017, p. 2). The Greek government has sought strategic partners for the Hellenic Vehicle Industry (ELVO) and the Hellenic Aerospace Industry (EAV). Companies of Israeli (SK Group, Plasan) and American (Lockheed Martin) interests have invested in the Greek defence industry and have given it new impetus (Bellos, 2020).

4. Discussion

4.1 **"We deal in lead, friend"**

"We deal in lead, friend", says Vin Tanner, one of the 'Magnificent Seven', when he confronts the film's villain, a ruthless bandit named Calvera. For the seven defenders of the unprotected village, used to solving their problems and moving on in life through gunfights, their power rests in their guns. Their collaboration has a multiplying power effect, which eventually delivers the purging and catharsis they seek. The trigger that mobilized and brought together such diverse personalities was finding something to be part of, for whatever reason. Only then could they combine their skills and deliver the poor villagers from the despotic tyrant.

It may well be that the EU has not yet had to face a despotic tyrant that seeks to deprive the peoples of Europe of their goods and lives. Although there are several possible candidates for the role in the vicinity of Europe, the EU member-states are still in a position to keep them at a distance. But with rising or existing revisionist powers bolstering insecurity, how long they will be able to continue doing so is anyone's guess. The question is therefore whether the EU will invest in this 'lead' and build a serious and deterring military identity. Who will join the EU's 'Magnificent Seven' and which country will take the lead in assembling the force?

Our paper examines seven countries without claiming that these are the only candidates for the job. We have focused on the Franco-German axis for obvious reasons of political leadership, the Mediterranean Four (Med-4) for their vicinity to major sources of regional instability, and Poland as a politically aspirant member-state from Eastern Europe with quite a divergent point of view on what constitutes a security threat to Europe. We have analyzed the defence budgets of these seven countries, as well as their participation in the existing forms of military cooperation within the EU framework. The former indicates their available resources and spending priorities; the latter is a proxy for their intention to invest in even closer cooperation. Table 12 offers a summarized overview of the empirical findings that have been discussed and accounted for in the relevant sections above.

Table 12: Summary of Empirical Findings

CSDP Parameters	France	Germany	Greece	Italy	Poland	Portugal	Spain
Military expenditure (%GDP)	1.92%	1.23%	2.63%	1.43%	1.92%	1.92%	1.31%
Participations in EUBGs	16	13	11	13	4	9	11
Personnel contributions to EU military missions and operations	6.010	1.687	268	1.310	750	146	1.016
Participations in PESCO	30	17	15	24	12	10	24

Source: Authors' compilation from various sources

4.2 On Defence Budgets: The 'High-spending Enforcer', the 'Unwilling Investor', the 'Expensive Guardian of the Borders', and the Others

France spends the most in defence, both because of the large size of its military forces and as a result of its participation in a series of military operations both within and beyond the EU framework. Especially after Brexit, France is the only country that can credibly claim the 'enforcer' title, on the basis both of its military capabilities and of its willingness to deploy and make use of them. This relates not only to its privileged position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and its nuclear arsenal, but also to the country's political intentions and its aspiration to be a global power. In contrast, Germany is the country that invests least in its defence; indeed, it has had to be dragged very slowly toward the 2% threshold imposed by NATO. As for **Greece**, it is anything but surprising that the country heads the list in terms of its defence budget as a percentage of the overall state budget. Being vulnerable and exposed to multiple security threats ranging from its traditional territorial disputes with Turkey to more hybrid threats in the form of, for example, uncontrollable migration flows, creates a precarious security position that necessitates such heavy expenditure on its armed forces. Being the guardian of Europe's external borders does not come cheap! This is true of all the countries in the Mediterranean and on the EU's eastern borders, and should be accepted by all the partners in a common European defence system. Polish military expenditure is also very high, close to France and second only to Greece, and is once again closely bound up with the security environment in its vicinity.

Analyzing the defence budgets of the seven countries brings several interesting stories to light. Firstly, the Med-4 spend a far larger proportion of their military budget on personnel costs than any other nation. It is true that this trend is accounted for by the need to maintain a large army to counter real security challenges, as Greece does. However, it is also indicative of the traditional Southern growth model in which the public sector is a very significant employer—a model illustrated by the Italian example. It is not accidental that those countries with a large army have cut, or are in the process of reducing, their personnel, reflecting the trend for leaner, more professional and more specialized armed forces. This holds true not only for the Med-4, but also for France, Germany and Poland. France is more infrastructure- and equipment-oriented, and so is Poland and, to a lesser extent, Spain. Poland has invested a good deal of effort and resources in modernizing its obsolete armed forces, a process that has continued to evolve throughout the 2000s. For the Southern countries—and for Greece, Italy and Portugal, in particular—the effect of the financial crisis has been obvious, with every country cutting their expenditure on this budget line severely during the crisis, and restoring them to pre-crisis levels only gradually, if at all. Finally, France and Germany have been increasing their expenditure on their 'other cost' budget line. In the case of France, this can be attributed to the operational costs of the more intensive and extensive French military deployment after 2014.

4.3 On Military Cooperation: The 'Unsatisfied Leader', the 'Hesitant Partner', the 'Aspiring Powers', the 'Security Demandeur' and the 'Ambivalent Débutante'

If EU defence integration process was a remake of the 'Magnificent Seven', albeit with a different script, the main characters would have some very distinctive features. France would play the role of the 'unsatisfied leader', leaving to Germany the role of the 'hesitant partner' and to Greece (and Poland) the role of the 'security *demandeurs*'. Italy, Spain, and Poland could form the group of 'aspiring powers', with each having its own reasons for becoming brothers-in-arms, and with some coordination between them, especially between Italy and Spain. Poland could take the role of the 'ambivalent *débutante*', skillfully balancing with one foot in the European and one in the NATO boat. Portugal would be a member of the supporting cast, though trying to diversify from its star neighbor, Spain.

Analyzing the seven countries' participation in the existing schemes of military cooperation, it is possible to discern four main axes that enable the formation of alternative clusters: **political aspirations** vis-à-vis European integration, **economic situation**, **geography**, and **relations with NATO**. These clusters may overlap and a country's motivation for joining military formats of this sort is often accounted for with reference to more than one axis.

Starting with **political aspirations**, defence integration goes hand in hand with political integration. This means that enhanced cooperation in defence entails and presupposes a high level of convergence vis-à-vis the sharing of national sovereignty in this critical realm. However, increased participation in existing military frameworks can also be read in a different way, whereby military cooperation does not follow on from political integration, but is rather a sign indicating adherence to

and support of such integration. More specifically, participation signals a member-state's intention to be considered part of the political vanguard of the European integration process. France pushing for additional defence collaboration is consistent with the country's political role in the European integration process. For its part, Germany has joined the launched schemes, but rather hesitantly, since defence integration is not part of the country's traditional agenda. For member-states like Italy, Spain and Poland, joining these schemes is proof of their status and an indication of their intention and desire to belong to the political inner circle of the European integration process. Italy and Spain have also expressed a keen interest in the economic underpinnings of the PESCO scheme with a view to consolidating and supporting their defence industries. Moreover, both Poland as a relative newcomer and Greece in the wake of a long period of turbulent relations with the EU during the financial crisis demonstrate and promote their European credentials by rhetorical adherence to, and active participation in, these schemes. Poland does so in order to upgrade its political status to reflect its population, size, and own estimation of its political significance. Greece, as a mid-range country, is more interested in not being left behind or concerned about not being able to capitalize on the security multiplying benefits of enhanced cooperation, should the exclusive approach championed by the French end up driving the process. Portugal's participation is also largely motivated by its broader political support for, and embracing of, the European integration process and its intention to become part of the European core.

As far as the **economic situation** is concerned, it plays a key role and directly influences a country's willingness and ability to participate in European military cooperation frames. Budgetary constraints in recession-torn countries, such as the Southern nations hit by the economic crisis, make it difficult to support large-scale military engagements. This undermines closer security cooperation, since willing member states that could form the necessary 'critical mass' and provide the impetus for further defence integration are unable to deliver on their political promises or commitments (Nováky N. , 2020).

In terms of the third axis, simply put, 'It's the **geography**, stupid!' France as a global power with interests far from the European continent has grasped the opportunity to project its power while avoiding criticism for neo-colonialism. This is evidenced by the extensive presence of French troops in EU military operations in and around the francophone zone, while the country's interests in the Mediterranean basin have, of course, not been neglected. Similarly, those EU member-states that are surrounded by or situated close to sources or regions of instability are keener and more willing to participate in any scheme that addresses their security concerns, even partially or illusively. The Med-4 are very active for precisely this reason. Given that Greece has the additional concern of Turkey, the country cherishes any security-enhancing initiative. Although it is facing security challenges of a different sort, Poland is also in favor of such cooperative formats, as long as they do not jeopardize the country's relationship with NATO and the US.

This latter point shifts the analysis on to the elephant in the room, namely **NATO** and how these EU initiatives relate to this US-organized collective defence system. Both Poland and Greece have to perform delicate balancing acts, because the US has long been a significant parameter in their security functions. However, Greece has engaged more with the military cooperation schemes than Poland, which is concerned about their political connotations and their possible undermining of the

country's relationship with the US. Portugal is also seeking to balance its long-held Atlanticist orientation with political adherence to the European integration process, as mentioned above. It therefore comes as no surprise that the country is keen on highlighting the complementary and potentially symbiotic nature of the NATO and EU schemes. Germany has adopted a very cautious approach. Striving to leave the *status quo* intact, it also seeks to avoid alienating the US while simultaneously accommodating the French vision of EU strategic autonomy. Together with the country's traditional constraints and hesitations, these two factors account for Germany's timid participation in the analyzed forms of military cooperation. For their part, Spain and Italy have signaled their readiness to allow the EU a greater footing in the light of the benefits of such cooperation. However, only in a time of crisis will their real intentions be revealed!

5. Conclusions: the 'Fiddlers on the Roof' of European Defence Integration

In the classic musical *The Fiddler on the Roof*, the main character, Tevye, preaches about the life-long act of balancing conflicting needs and wills. Every one of the 'Magnificent Seven' is to some extent a 'fiddler on the roof' in the European defence integration process. Some are trying to find the right level of engagement to upgrade their political status within the European integration process without overcommitting. Others are striving to strike a balance between European security concerns and their national security concerns that are currently better addressed by NATO. In practice, this means that they need to embrace European security and defence integration without alienating the United States. Finally, a few member-states are trying to navigate between the Scylla of financial consolidation and fiscal prudence and the Charybdis of a turbulent region that forces them to invest more in 'guns' than 'butter'. Even France, an ardent and unequivocal supporter of European defence integration, faces significant dilemmas given that the existing schemes of defence cooperation have failed to date to evolve fully in line with its terms and views.

Bearing in mind this quest for balance, how can we assess the seven countries' overall engagement with the European defence process? **France** is the indisputable leader of the process, although it is not entirely happy with its pace and format. That it would welcome more flexible and functional schemes is clear from the French-inspired European Intervention Initiative set out in 2018. The key question for the future development of the process is whether France really is seeking credible alternatives, or whether such initiatives have been put in place primarily to put pressure on its European partners to embrace the French view and terms of defence integration.

Germany lags behind the other member-states, given its economic and political status and might. This is unsurprising, given the multiple and contradictory preoccupations of German foreign policy. Germany is one of the indisputable leaders of the European integration process in both economic and political terms, so it would be reasonable to expect the country to push for defence integration along with France. However, Germany's security is simultaneously bound up to a considerable extent with the US and with NATO. Thus, while on the one hand Germany is rhetorically committed to closer

European military cooperation so as not to upset the Franco-German axis, on the other it has also to entertain American concerns about the potential autonomisation of the European defence initiatives. With great might comes great responsibility, and Germany cannot keep on juggling these two balls into perpetuity. The main question for Germany is whether the time has come to choose sides, or whether the country can still afford to remain passive in what may evolve into the new overarching narrative of the European integration process.

The Mediterranean-4 share a geographical proximity to highly unstable regions. They also share a common view of the need to enhance the political dimension of the integration process to include foreign and security policy. For **Italy** and **Spain**, active participation entails a clear signaling of their aspirations to belong to the elite leading the process, while for **Greece** and **Portugal**, it is an indication of their political intent to join the inner group of EU member-states. Greece is also one of the few EU countries that faces a clear security challenge from a neighboring state. This further reinforces Greek support for such military cooperation schemes, not because they alleviate the country's security concerns in their current format, but rather in light of their future potential, if they have any. All these countries are also NATO members, however, and they are not willing to relinquish the American security umbrella. In other words, the Med-4 face the same dilemma, more or less, as Germany. Their main preoccupation at the moment is how much 'EU defence integration' NATO will tolerate, so they will not be forced to choose sides. Making the former option viable and substantial entails a great leap forward in sovereignty-sharing in the field of security and defence. Hence, a related question is how much further the Med-4 are currently willing to go in this respect. At the same time, all four Mediterranean countries have undergone a painful process of fiscal consolidation. Even if the worse phase of this crisis seems to be over, its marks remain visible. Therefore, in addition to political and security considerations, the need for fiscal prudence also conditions the extent of the Med-4's commitment to European defence integration.

Finally, while **Poland** is clearly prioritizing NATO over the EU at present in the security realm, it has no intention of being left out of the EU military cooperation schemes. Its participation in them is very focused on networking with its neighbors in Central and Eastern Europe, thereby reinstating its aspirations to regional political leadership. The 'Asian pivot' of the US may push Poland to seek new security partnerships, in which case the EU may emerge as an enticing alternative, which explains why Poland does not close the door of European defence integration half-open.

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