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Strengthening of the EU's Common Security Policy as a source of possible conflict in Transatlantic relations

Abstract

The idea of a common EU security policy, originating from the so-called Pleven Plan announced in October 1950, has experienced many ups and downs. Never fully realized, it is now subject to two opposing impulses. The first was the dramatic deterioration of the European security environment caused by Russia's aggression against Ukraine; the second, President Trump's announcement that the American "security umbrella" over European NATO members would be conditional on their radical increase in defence spending. Analysing the United States' attitude toward its European allies, the article points out that throughout nearly the entire existence of NATO, this attitude has also been subject to significant fluctuations. This attitude results from the interplay of two conflicting needs: maintaining an adequate level of the United States' own military equipment resources and retaining the ability to influence the decisions of its allies. The strength of this influence, apart from the level of the threat environment and the state of American resources, is also conditioned by the allies' capacity to acquire military equipment. The current international situation has made most European NATO states realize that their armed forces are unable to fulfil their primary task – defending their own territory – and that domestic defence industries cannot rapidly supply the necessary equipment for this purpose. At present, the United States provides 64% of the armaments of European NATO countries, which in 2024 accounted for 35% of American arms exports. This places Europe in

the position of the largest American client, while at the same time giving it a strong bargaining position. Moreover, many products of the American defence industry could not function without components manufactured in Europe. In conclusion, the article proposes measures which, by strengthening in the short term both the EU's security policy and the material means to secure it, will help maintain mutually beneficial cooperation with the United States.

Key words EU, NATO, security policy, burden sharing

Introduction

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 permanently transformed the European security environment. While Russia's earlier military interventions in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 were regarded by most West European countries as local conflicts, this time they were perceived as a direct threat to their own security. By the end of 2024, this perception was further reinforced by the newly elected U.S. president, Donald Trump, who announced that the American "security umbrella" over European members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) would be conditional on their radically increasing in their defence spending[1].

Faced with mounting challenges, the European NATO states recognized that their armed forces were unable to fulfil their primary mission – defending their own territories – and that domestic defence industries could not quickly provide the necessary equipment.

Poland's front-line position makes it particularly vulnerable to potential Russian hostilities. As a member of the European Union (EU), it benefits from various forms of economic cooperation among member states, and as a member of NATO, it enjoys the "security umbrella" provided by the Alliance. This protection primarily takes the form of American troops stationed on its territory, the implicit guarantee of combat support in the event of enemy aggression (the so-called Article 5 assurances), and the access to advanced US-manufactured military equipment. Therefore, preserving strategic cohesion

1 Z. Gwadera, *US allies question extended deterrence guarantees, but have few options*, https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/military-balance/2025/03/us-allies-question-extended-deterrence-guarantees-but-have-few-options/ [access: 20.03.2025].

between NATO members that belong to the EU and those that do not, such as the United States, is of vital importance to Poland.

The aim of this article is to examine whether and how efforts to strengthen the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) may influence its relations with non-European members of NATO, primarily the United States. Based on this analysis the objective is to propose measures, that will enable Poland to sustain strategic cooperation with the United States while simultaneously contributing to the development of the EU's security policy. To achieve this, it is necessary to outline the main events that led to the creation of the CSDP, the key factors shaping transatlantic relations, and the changes in the international security environment that have affected NATO's internal dynamics.

Literature review

A substantial body of scholarship on transatlantic relations – encompassing both academic articles and monographs – has emerged over the decades, with a significant portion of these works analysing tensions and conflicts among the member states of the Atlantic Alliance. As Hallams[2] observes, crises and periods of strain have been recurring features of the transatlantic relationship, and there is little reason to expect that such frictions will cease in the future. At the end of the Second World War, approximately three million American military personnel were stationed in Europe. According to Koivula[3], the United States initially intended to delegate responsibility for post-war security arrangements to the United Nations – a vision reflected in the naming of the organisation's principal executive body as the "Security Council". What would later evolve into NATO was at first conceived as a temporary arrangement for the continued stationing of American forces in Europe. Their presence was expected to last only until a stable peace had been secured on the continent[4].

2 E. Hallams, *The United States and NATO since 9/11: The Transatlantic Alliance renewed*, New York 2010, p. 129.

3 T. Koivula, H. Ossa, *NATO's Burden-sharing disputes: Past, Present and Future Prospects*, Cham 2022, p. 36.

4 Ibidem, p. 40.

However, increasing Soviet assertiveness and the growing influence of domestic communist movements created new security concerns that necessitated a revision of these assumptions. The founding of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in April 1949 thus gave permanent institutional form to the American military presence in Europe.

The first major political rift in transatlantic relations following the Second World War occurred in November 1956, when the United States condemned the joint Israeli–British–French invasion of Egypt[5]. Although not the principal cause, this episode was one of the factors that influenced France's 1966 decision to withdraw from NATO's integrated military command structure and to expel all non-French Alliance forces from its territory. A subsequent and equally significant conflict unfolded in the lead-up to the Second Gulf War in 2002–2003, when several long-standing West European NATO members, led by France and Germany, refused to support the United States in its bid to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq[6].The support that Washington received from newly admitted and aspiring NATO members was met with open derision by the French president[7]. As Longhurst and Zaborowski note[8], the ensuing diplomatic friction between the administration of U.S. President George W. Bush and key European allies became a hallmark of the transatlantic relationship during that period.

One of the most enduring and recurrent sources of tension within NATO, Koivula argues[9], concerns the issue of burden-sharing. This dispute, he explains, stems from the continual need to determine how the Alliance's costs and responsibilities should be apportioned among its members. Deni[10.] similarly observes that burden-sharing disagreements have troubled NATO

5 E. Hallams, op. cit., p. 14.
6 T. Lansford, B. Tashev, *Old Europe, new Europe and the US: Renegotiating Transatlantic Security in the post 9/11 era*, Burlington 2005, p. 7.
7 T. Lansford, B. Tashev, op. cit., p. XXII.
8 K. Longhurst, M. Zaborowski, *Old Europe, new Europe and the transatlantic security agenda*, New York 2005, p. 193.
9 T. Koivula, H. Ossa, op. cit., p. 1.
10 J. Deni, *NATO and Article 5: The Transatlantic Alliance and the twenty-first-century challenges of collective defense*, Lanham 2017, p. 77.

for decades, while Haglund characterises[11] them as a long-standing and inherent feature of the Alliance. Blankenship[12] notes that as early as the Kennedy administration, the United States had threatened to withdraw its troops from West Germany unless it received compensation for the costs associated with their deployment. Although much of the literature on burden-sharing has focused on disputes between the United States and its European partners, Haglund[13] demonstrates that similar tensions have also arisen among European members themselves, notably between France and Germany.

NATO is financed through both direct and indirect contributions. Direct funding levels are determined in proportion to each member's Gross National Income and are channelled into the Alliance's civilian and military budgets. Indirect contributions – comprising the maintenance of national armed forces – represent a substantially larger share of overall NATO-related expenditure[14]. The question of fairness in these contributions has been conceptualised in various ways, the most prominent being the notion of "common" or "collective goods". Such goods possess two defining characteristics: they are universally available, and their use by one actor does not diminish their availability to others[15]. Koivula identifies[16] NATO-provided security as such a collective good. Those who benefit from it without offering equivalent contributions are labelled "free riders". Lansford contends[17] that the possibility of free-riding and the pursuit of self-interest make NATO particularly appealing to new entrants – a perspective that contrasts sharply with the prevailing view among constructivist scholars, who, according to Hallams[18] emphasise shared ideological values as the principal source of cohesion within the Alliance.

11 D.G. Haglund, *Alliance within alliance? Franco-German military cooperation and the European pilar of defense*, New York 2018, p. 153.
12 B.D. Blankenship, *The burden-sharing dilemma: Coercive diplomacy in US alliance politics*, London 2023, p. 45.
13 D.G. Haglund, op. cit., p. 154.
14 T. Koivula, H. op. cit., p. 15.
15 D.G. Haglund, op. cit., p. 155.
16 T. Koivula, H. Ossa, op. cit., p. 6.
17 T. Lansford, B. Tashev, op. cit., p. 299.
18 E. Hallams, op. cit., p. 106.

Koivula identifies[19] four primary factors shaping the dynamics of NATO's burden-sharing disputes: geopolitical shifts related to Russia, changes in American foreign policy, the degree of European strategic activism, and the conduct of out-of-area operations. He employs a two-axis framework to analyse these variables: a horizontal axis representing NATO's internal unity and solidarity, and a vertical axis capturing the scope and integrity of the future burden-sharing agenda. The intersection of these axes produces four potential scenarios for the Alliance's evolution into the early 2020s, which Koivula labels[20] "incapacitated NATO", "self-interested member countries", "transatlantic bargaining", and "transatlantic solidarity".

In contrast to Koivula's structural approach, Blankenship[21] advances the concept of "alliance control theory". This framework posits that patron states – such as the United States – adjust their burden-sharing pressures on allies according to three key variables: the ally's latent military potential, the external threat environment, and the patron's own resource constraints. Whereas Koivula's typology delineates hypothetical scenarios, Blankenship's theory offers a more predictive analytical tool capable of anticipating concrete outcomes in burden-sharing disputes.

Methodology

This article is primarily descriptive in nature. Its sources consist mainly of primary materials, including official EU and NATO documents, published interviews and statements by key figures, as well as assessments produced by leading analytical organisations such as the Atlantic Council, Chatham House, and the IISS. It also engages with recent scholarship on burden-sharing in the context of military alliances.

The article adopts a hybrid methodological approach that integrates a constructivist theoretical framework with systems analysis. Constructivism, as a theoretical approach in international relations, emphasises the social construction of international reality – particularly the roles of identity, norms,

19 T. Koivula, H. Ossa, op. cit., p. 11.
20 Ibidem, p. 184.
21 B.D. Blankenship, op. cit., p. 5.

and discourse in shaping state behaviour[22]. Systems analysis, on the other hand, treats the European security order as a dynamic and interdependent system composed of states, institutions, and strategic interactions. This perspective facilitates the examination of structural change, feedback loops, and interdependencies – especially in response to the systemic shock produced by Russian aggression.

Case description

An examination of post-Second World War military alliances reveals striking similarities across contexts, regardless of their geographical scope or membership composition. Such alliances are inherently asymmetrical in power: one member – the patron – constitutes a clearly dominant military force, while the others – the allies – rely on the patron's capabilities to deter potential aggressors that they could not withstand alone. The principal benefit derived by the patron from its allies lies in the ability to project power across a much broader geographical area than its own territory would permit.

Friction within alliances typically manifests in two recurring forms. The first arises from the patron's perception that the costs of maintaining troops abroad are excessive. The second emerges from the allies' perception that the presence of foreign forces on their territory diminishes their sovereignty.

Another consequence of the Second World War was the destruction of much of Western Europe's defence-industrial capacity. Moreover, the war accelerated technological innovation, most of which occurred in the United States – whose territory remained largely untouched by the conflict. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, most Western European states, convinced of the permanence of peace in Europe and reassured by the American "security umbrella", drastically reduced their defence expenditures. This led to the closure of numerous production lines and, in some cases, entire military manufacturing facilities[23]. The United States, by contrast, engaged in military operations across the globe – from Afghanistan to the Middle East – and

22 A. Wendt, *Social theory of international politics*, Cambridge 1999, p. 1–2.

23 K. Giles, *Who will defend Europe? An awakened Russia and a sleeping continent*, London 2024, p. 110.

expanded its arms production accordingly. As a result, Europe became doubly dependent on United States' "outsourcing": not only for security guarantees but also for the material means of ensuring them.

The idea of institutionalised collective defence among Western European states actually predates the establishment of NATO by more than two years and was initially conceived with a different purpose. In March 1947, Great Britain and France signed in Dunkirk a treaty of mutual defence in the event of renewed German aggression or threatening behaviour[24]. Known as the Franco-British Alliance or the Treaty of Dunkirk, it was subsumed a year later into the Treaty of Brussels. The latter established the Western Union, which also included Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, in addition to France and Great Britain. Beyond addressing the perceived danger of German militarism, the Treaty of Brussels explicitly sought to counter the growing threat posed by the Soviet Union[25].

The Soviet-sponsored communist coup d'état in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 and the Soviet blockade of West Berlin from June 1948 to May 1949 finally convinced France that the Soviet Union – rather than Germany – constituted the primary threat to Western Europe. In October 1950, French Prime Minister René Pleven proposed a plan[26] to create a supranational army composed of contingents from multiple member states under a unified military command, with a common budget and joint procurement. This force, the so-called European Army, was to form part of the European Defence Community (EDC), established in 1952 under the Treaty of Paris. Its signatories included Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, France, Italy, and West Germany. By 1954, however, only four of the six signatories had ratified the treaty, as the French National Assembly indefinitely postponed its own ratification[27].

The concept of a collective European security framework was revived with the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which established the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as one of the three pillars of the newly created European Union. Subsequently, the Treaty of Lisbon, signed in

24 S. Rynning, *NATO: From cold war to Ukraine, a history of the world's most powerful alliance*, London 2024, p. 45.
25 Ibidem, p. 45.
26 T. Koivula, H. Ossa, op. cit., p. 56.
27 Ibidem, p. 57.

2009, formally created the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) as the institutional framework for the EU's civilian and military activities in the field of security and defence[28]. The CSDP also encompasses the work of the European Defence Agency (EDA), established to support EU member states in acquiring, developing, and operating military capabilities.

Findings

Until the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the CSDP remained primarily a foreign policy and crisis management forum[29] without significant influence on EU members' arms acquisition. The invasion exposed Europe's vulnerability to Russian aggression and its inability to mount a coordinated response. Despite numerous meetings of EU institutions, by the end of October 2025, no agreement had been reached on a joint procurement framework covering all member states. On 27 May 2025, the Council of the European Union adopted the Security Action for Europe (SAFE) instrument[30] and on 27 June 2023, the European Parliament adopted the European Defence Industry Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act (EDIRPA), while the European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP)[31], in the autumn of 2025, was still awaiting adoption. All three instruments, however, remain frameworks enabling joint acquisition rather than concrete procurement contracts.

The SAFE loan instrument, projected at €150 billion, constitutes one of three mechanisms – alongside the planned expansion of the European Investment Bank's role in financing defence projects and the invocation of the "escape clause" in the Stability and Growth Pact to allow member states to increase their own defence spending – designed to raise the €800 billion envisaged under the ReArm Europe Plan[32]. Launched in March 2025 and also known as "Readiness 2030", this plan's core objectives include increasing European

28 Ibidem, p. 95.
29 L. Ratti, *NATO and the CSDP after the Ukraine war: the end of European strategic autonomy?*, „Canadian Journal of European and Russian Studies" 2023, no. 2, p. 79.
30 S. Clapp et al., *ReArm Europe Plan/Readiness 2023*, „EPRS Briefing" 2025, no. 4, p. 3.
31 Ibidem, p. 7.
32 Ibidem, p. 3.

defence spending, addressing critical procurement gaps, and revitalising the defence industrial base.

Several technical agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) have recently been signed among European partners, though they remain predominantly bilateral or multilateral in nature. These include a Polish–Ukrainian MoU between PGZ and the Ukrainian Defence Industry covering ammunition, armoured vehicles, artillery, and air defence; another between Poland's WITU Institute and South Korea's Hanwha Aerospace concerning cooperation on 155 mm ammunition, modular charge systems, joint testing, and R&D; as well as four agreements, primarily among Scandinavian countries. Most of these arrangements concern matériel such as ammunition, drones, and heavy combat vehicles – areas in which the war in Ukraine has revealed acute shortages. They do not, however, address key strategic deficiencies that could critically affect the conduct of future conflicts. A recent assessment by the IISS[33] highlights five principal areas of concern.

Europe's NATO members face severe hardware shortfalls, including:

a) intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) aircraft;
b) space launch capacity;
c) long-range conventional land-strike systems;
d) naval long-range strike and air-defence capabilities.

For example, European NATO members currently depend on eight American ISR platforms, and according to IISS estimates, developing domestic replacements would cost up to USD 4.8 billion. They also lack land-attack capabilities beyond 1,000 kilometres.

These deficiencies are compounded by software limitations. Europe lacks sovereign hyperscale cloud-computing capacity, leaving its armed forces dependent on major U.S. commercial providers. While Europe does possess a number of companies capable of delivering edge cloud-computing services and maintains a well-developed command-and-control software sector, interoperability problems persist due to the absence of common frameworks and standards.

33 *Progress and shortfalls in Europe's defence, an assessment, An IISS strategic dossier*, London 2025, p. 1–102.

Europe also lacks adequate Integrated Air and Missile Defence (IAMD) across nearly the entire threat spectrum. Although it possesses a solid technological base for guided weapons, national priorities risk duplication of effort in several areas. European terminal-phase missile-defence capabilities rely heavily on U.S. systems – either American-made systems operated by national militaries or U.S. systems deployed in Europe, most notably the Patriot system.

Although European countries are reforming their procurement processes and, as IISS research indicates, the total value of signed defence contracts nearly doubled between February 2022 and July 2025, European defence procurement remains primarily determined by national political priorities. Leading states continue to pursue sovereign industrial capabilities, perpetuating a fragmented industrial landscape.

The IISS assessment notes a major increase in European defence expenditure – 55% higher in nominal terms in 2025 than in 2022 – alongside a surge in venture capital investment in defence start-ups. However, it cautions that success is far from assured, as defence industries require long-term strategies, multiannual funding commitments, and firm contractual assurances to invest confidently.

While the exponential growth of European NATO members' armaments is broadly welcomed on both sides of the Atlantic, certain aspects of its implementation have proved controversial in Washington. As an EPRS brief notes, the SAFE regulation includes a clause stipulating that the infrastructure, facilities, and resources of contractors and subcontractors benefiting from this facility must be located in an EU or EFTA/EEA member state[34]. This reflects a long-standing European complaint that increased NATO military spending disproportionately benefits American defence manufacturers – a sentiment famously expressed by French President Emmanuel Macron, who objected to European states raising their defence budgets merely to buy American equipment[35]. While such views were once motivated by opposition to U.S. political dominance, they have since been reinforced by concerns

34 S. Clapp et al., op. cit., p. 6.

35 D.M. Herszenhorn, *Macron wants Europe to buy its own military hardware*, https://www.politico.eu/article/macron-wants-europe-to-build-its-own-military-hardware/ [access: 5.03.2025].

– particularly since the first Trump presidency – about the reliability and timeliness of American arms deliveries. Analysts from the Bruegel think tank warned[36] that if a future U.S. administration recalibrates defence exports to prioritise domestic stockpiles or Asian allies, Europe could face acute shortages. IISS experts have gone further, advising European leaders[37] to focus on building indigenous defence capacity rather than devising strategies to placate Washington. Foreign Affairs similarly cautioned[38] that purchasing more U.S. systems might please Washington but represents an inefficient – and potentially imprudent – way to strengthen European security, especially given the U.S. defence industry's substantial backlogs. For instance, the lead time for a new Patriot missile-defence system currently stands at seven years, while, according to Bruegel[39] 91% of F-35 aircraft ordered in 2023 were delivered late.

According to SIPRI[40] European NATO members are the largest clients of American arms producers, accounting for 35% of U.S. arms exports during 2020–2024, which represented 64% of their total military acquisitions in that period – up from 52% during 2015–2019[41]. This growing dependence nevertheless affords Europe considerable leverage, both as a buyer and as a supplier of components for U.S. military systems. CEPA reports[42] that European manufacturers already produce key parts of the F-35's fuselage (soon to be made in Germany) and components of the Patriot PAC-3 MSE

36 A. Burilkov, J. Mejino-Lopez, G.B. Wolff, *The US defence industrial base can no longer reliably supply Europe*, https://www.bruegel.org/analysis/us-defence-industrial-base-can-no-longer-reliably-supply-europe [access: 5.03.2025].

37 *Without US it's all about us in European defence*, https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2025/03/without-the-us-its-all-about-us-in-european-defence/ [access: 5.03.2025].

38 D. Rohac, E. Castellet Nogues, *Funding Europe's firepower: how the EU can funnel Its wealth into its defence*, Foreign Affairs 19.09.2025, https://www.aei.org/op-eds/fixing-europes-firepower-how-the-eu-can-funnel-its-wealth-into-its-defense/ [access: 5.03.2025].

39 A. Burilkov, J. Mejino-Lopez, G.B. Wolff, op. cit., p. 4.

40 K. Djokic, *Are the European NATO states moving towards self-reliance in arms procurement?*, https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-backgrounder/2025/are-european-nato-states-moving-towards-self-reliance-arms-procurement-qa-katarina-djokic [access: 19.03.2025].

41 Ibidem.

42 C. Badhwar, *Europe needs to keep buying American*, https://cepa.org/article/europe-needs-to-keep-buying-american/ [access: 18.02.2025].

system (manufactured in Spain and Poland). Poland, notably, is currently the world's largest producer of TNT.

Aware of Europe's determination to develop its own manufacturing base and reduce dependency on American suppliers, U.S. officials – according to Reuters[43] – have sent mixed signals. A State Department spokesperson stated that President Trump "welcomes recent efforts from European allies to strengthen their defence capabilities and take responsibility for their own security", while simultaneously warning against the creation of new barriers that would exclude U.S. companies from European defence projects.

The uneven sharing of defence costs within NATO has long been a source of U.S. dissatisfaction. Washington's response to what it perceives as European "free-riding" has typically taken the form of threats to withdraw U.S. troops from Europe or demands that host nations cover the cost of stationing American personnel. Since the Vietnam War era[44] Congress has occasionally linked funding for U.S. forces in Europe to increased allied spending, while also encouraging European states to purchase American military equipment. This dynamic reflects a persistent dilemma in U.S. alliance policy: applying enough pressure to boost sales of U.S.-made weapons without driving allies to seek alternatives.

While complete European autarky in defence procurement would sharply limit U.S. leverage, such a scenario remains unrealistic in the short-to-medium term. As Djokic notes[45], the European and U.S. arms industries are deeply intertwined through supply chains, joint ventures, and licensed production arrangements. Messmer adds[46] that the procurement challenge is "incredibly complex", and poor decisions will constrain the German armed forces – and by extension NATO – for decades. CEPA further highlights[47] Europe's limited production capacity for strike missiles and numerous other categories

43 G. Slattery, J. Irish, D. Psaledakis, *US officials object to European push to buy weapons locally*, https://www.reuters.com/world/us-officials-object-european-push-buy-weapons-locally-2025-04-02/ [access: 12.11.2025].

44 J. Deni, op. cit., p. 9.

45 K. Djokic, op. cit.

46 M. Messmer, *Will Germany rearm quickly enough?*, Chatham House Expert Comment, 26.07.2025, https://www.chathamhouse.org/2025/08/will-germany-rearm-quickly-enough [access: 15.04.2025].

47 C. Badhwar, op. cit.

of military equipment, noting that many systems are not manufactured by European firms at all. One reason is the fragmented nature of the European defence-industrial base: governments still tend to view defence investment primarily as a tool for stimulating local economies, which leads to duplication of effort. Messmer warns that this tendency risks creating rival national systems within NATO, citing competing projects such as the GCAP and SCAF next-generation fighter programmes and the ELSA and updated Storm Shadow long-range strike initiatives[48]. CEPA cautions[49] that if Europe wishes to develop sovereign defence capabilities, it must avoid vanity projects that yield inferior systems at higher cost compared to American alternatives – such as France's proposed replacement for the M270 MLRS.

This problem of fragmented European procurement is not new. As early as 1987, a Western European Union study found[50] that the lack of cooperation in weapons production cost European states approximately USD 35 billion annually – roughly 27% of their total defence spending that year. More than three decades later, Ratti observes[51] that little has changed, despite the 2016 and 2018 EU–NATO Declarations acknowledging that European defence mechanisms remained inadequate for addressing emerging security challenges. Consequently, if the strengthening of the CSDP is to meaningfully influence relations between European NATO members and the United States, rhetorical commitments – particularly from France – about achieving procurement self-sufficiency must match reality first.

Discussion

As previously noted, much of the literature on the subject identifies the cost of maintaining the American security umbrella over Europe as the main source of potential conflict in transatlantic relations. It also anticipates several future scenarios resulting from the patron's pressure on its allies to increase burden-

48 Ibidem.
49 Ibidem.
50 D.G. Haglund, op. cit., p. 168.
51 L. Ratti, op. cit., p. 74.

sharing – ranging from an incapacitated NATO to transatlantic solidarity[52] – while observing[53] – that such pressure is conditioned by two competing priorities of the patron: the need to conserve its own resources and the desire to preserve its influence within the alliance. My findings indicate that allies' susceptibility to this pressure depends largely on their own capacity to replace the patron's security guarantees with their own defence capabilities. This, in turn, varies according to each country's perception of its role and place within both NATO and the CSDP.

There is a sharp contrast between France's strategic identity, shaped by its Gaullist legacy, and that of Poland. As Longhurst and Zaborowski point out, like most Central and Eastern European states, Poland was subjected to the direct hegemony of its neighbours and deprived of sovereignty and statehood for much of its modern history[54]. From this perspective, the United States – as a distant, non-colonial liberal democracy – appears a far more attractive patron than the Franco-German axis that the development of the CSDP might lead to[55] Therefore, as the results of my research suggest, when Poland's transatlantic strategic identity comes into conflict with a European or CSDP-oriented one, the transatlantic orientation will prevail. This preference is likely to be shared by most of the so-called "new" NATO members – particularly the former involuntary members of the Soviet bloc.

As also noted earlier, the relationship between a patron and its allies is influenced by the strategic advantages that the patron derives from the alliance. This is particularly evident in U.S. alliance policy. At the height of the Vietnam War – when American military engagement in East Asia was at its peak – there were 66,531 U.S. troops stationed in South Korea and roughly 60,000 in Japan[56]. In 2025, South Korea, which faces an immediate threat from

52 T. Koivula, H. Ossa, op. cit., p. 11.
53 B.D. Blankenship, op. cit.,, p. 14.
54 K. Longhurst, M. Zaborowski, op. cit., p. 23.
55 Ibidem, p. 124.
56 B.D. Blankenship, op. cit., p. 98; T. Inoguchi, J. Ikenberry, Y. Sato *The U.S.–Japan Security Alliance*, Cham 2011; M. Priebe et al., *Balancing Act – How Allies Have responded to limited U.S. Retrenchment*, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RBA739-3.html [access: 30.10.2025].

its northern neighbour, hosts about 28,500 American troops. Japan, facing no comparable threat, still hosts around 55,000 U.S. military personnel[57].

This difference in treatment of allies can be reasonably explained by geopolitical considerations. The geographical spread of Japan's islands across the Pacific provides the United States with an incomparably larger area for strategic power projection than South Korea could ever offer. Thus, when assessing the potential consequences of a U.S. troop withdrawal from Europe, it must be recognised that the inability to project power on the European continent would significantly diminish the United States' role as a global power.

Conclusions

The findings of this study demonstrate that the United States derives both economic and strategic benefits from its membership in NATO. Whether these benefits outweigh the costs depends on two factors: first, the shifting geopolitical environment, and second – and perhaps more importantly – the perception of these benefits by American policymakers. Given that the current U.S. administration treats unpredictability as a deliberate instrument of political and economic strategy, threats to leave or downgrade NATO should not be dismissed outright. My assessment of efforts to create a common European security and defence policy reveals several weaknesses. Despite repeated attempts to launch joint EU-wide armament projects, very few have succeeded. For most European countries, these projects serve not only military purposes but also domestic economic ones. As a result, production is fragmented – not only across countries but often across multiple sites within a single country. Consequently, to date, attempts to implement the CSDP have failed to produce either pooled resources or economies of scale.

57 L. Shane, *US Forces Korea commander defends troop levels amid talk of cuts. Military Times*, https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2025/04/10/us-forces-korea-commander-defends-troop-levels-amid-talk-of-cuts/ [access: 30.10.2025]; *U.S. Forces Japan. About USFJ*, https://www.usfj.mil/About-USFJ/ [access: 30.10.2025].

It must also be noted that France, which possesses the largest military manufacturing base in Europe, is the world's third-largest arms exporter (accounting for 9.6% of global exports), a position that significantly benefits its balance of payments. France's prioritising of national interests in joint defence initiatives has contributed some times to their failure. Conversely, several bi- and multilateral armament projects – particularly among the Scandinavian countries – demonstrate that successful cooperation is possible when mutual interests align.

The main conclusion of this study is that, owing to its current limitations, the strengthening of the CSDP does not yet represent a serious challenge to American arms production and therefore is unlikely, for now, to become a major source of conflict in transatlantic relations. However, this conclusion should be qualified by several recommendations.

a) European politicians should refrain from making statements that antagonise the United States about "going solo" in defence procurement, particularly in areas or products that Europe will be unable to supply independently for some time;

b) Europe should avoid developing indigenous alternatives to American systems in fields such as multi-role strike aircraft, where U.S. products remain demonstrably superior;

c) European legislators should avoid introducing measures – such as the "Europeanisation clause" in the SAFE instrument – that effectively bar U.S. firms from participating in European defence markets;

d) Europe should instead seek to expand transatlantic cooperation in new armament projects on both sides of the Atlantic.

For Poland, the current situation presents both opportunities and challenges. Accordingly, in addition to the above, the following Poland-specific recommendations are proposed:

1. Participate in joint European armament projects only when clear national interests dictate it;

2. When given a choice between competing multilateral European armament projects of comparable value, prioritise cooperation with Scandinavian countries;

3. Take an active role in all discussions concerning the future development of the CSDP to ensure that Polish interests are reflected in the resulting provisions;

4. Develop much stronger and more comprehensive cooperation with Great Britain, particularly in the areas of air defence and complex weapons procurement, taking into account that such cooperation is also envisaged in the recent British Strategic Defence Review[58];

5. Closely monitor U.S. developments in military R&D and production – potentially through a dedicated defence attaché in Washington – and seek to offer U.S. companies cooperative opportunities or facilities in Poland, where feasible;

6. Maintain strong relationships with the U.S. Congress, remembering that it is Congress that approves appropriation bills.

We are living in an era of particularly fluid security dynamics. New and unforeseen developments may alter some of the findings and recommendations presented here. It is therefore essential that the issues examined in this study be continuously monitored and re-evaluated in light of changing circumstances.

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