

*Martin Dahl*\*

## **Germany and the Common Security and Defense Policy**

### **Abstract**

In the face of changes taking place in the global order and challenges in the immediate vicinity of the European Union, the member states are forced to redefine their own security priorities. The directions of the desired changes in the EU Common Security and Defense Policy have been the subject of numerous discussions and analyses. One of the key countries that have a significant impact on the architecture of European security is Germany. That is why the main goal of the article is to answer the question about the role and importance of Germany in shaping the European Union's security policy. The main conclusion resulting from the conducted analysis is the following: in the field of security policy, Germany's attitude is characterized by high ambivalence between the implementation of foreign policy goals by means of the so-called soft instruments and the necessity and inevitability of increasing its own military involvement. The resolution of this dilemma is fundamental to the future architecture of the Common Security and Defense Policy.

**Key words:** Germany, European Union, Common Security and Defense Policy

### **Introduction**

The second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been a period of crises, political upheavals and increasing instability for the member states of the European Union. This refers both to the situation within the integration group and in the immediate neighborhood of the EU. Such events as the prolonged crisis of the Eurozone, Brexit and the migrant crisis shook the

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foundations of European solidarity and exposed the institutional weakness of the European Union in the face of serious challenges. At the same time we are observing growing instabilities and unpredictability of processes taking place in the immediate vicinity of the European Union.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, there is the increasingly expansive and aggressive policy of the Russian Federation that aims to regain its former superpower status and expand its sphere of influence.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, actions taken by the American president Donald Trump are very worrying. For instance, his withdrawal from numerous international agreements such as the Paris Agreement or the nuclear agreement with Iran, as well as questioning the current framework for transatlantic cooperation. Because of the factors mentioned above the EU member states are forced to face completely new problems and challenges that contribute to disintegration processes<sup>3</sup> and pose a threat to European security.

One of the most serious challenges for the European Union is Brexit. In June 2016, the citizens of Great Britain for the first time in the history of the European Union made a referendum decision to leave the integration group. It is certainly a breakthrough moment in the history of united Europe, and makes it necessary to think over the future shape of the European Union, including the evolution of the Common Security and Defense Policy.<sup>4</sup> The British decision on Brexit will have a fundamental impact on the future shape of the Common Security and Defense Policy, at least because Great Britain is a state that has so far consistently opposed attempts to strengthen the EU defense policy,<sup>5</sup> which at first glance, may be an impulse for closer cooperation between the other states. However, it should be noted that Great Britain is leaving the European Union while being one of the two most militarily powerful EU states and one of the

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<sup>1</sup> B. Piskorska, *Nowa strategia na nowe czasy – konieczność redefinicji polityki zagranicznej Unii Europejskiej w jej sąsiedztwie (A new strategy for new times – the need to redefine the European Union's foreign policy in its neighborhood)*, "Myśl Ekonomiczna i Polityczna", no. 4/2015, pp. 208–241.

<sup>2</sup> J.M. Fiszer, *Zadania i cele polityki zagranicznej Władimira Putina (Tasks and goals of the foreign policy of Vladimir Putin)*, "Myśl Ekonomiczna i Polityczna", no. 1/2016, pp. 167–201.

<sup>3</sup> M. Holko, *Disintegration of European Union*, "Journal of Modern Science", vol. 2, no. 29/2016, pp. 199–236.

<sup>4</sup> T. Usewicz, *Brexit i jego konsekwencje dla Wspólnej Polityki Bezpieczeństwa i Obrony Unii Europejskiej (Brexit and its consequences for the Common Security and Defense Policy of the European Union)*, "Rocznik Bezpieczeństwa Międzynarodowego", vol. 11, no. 1/2017, pp. 119–121.

<sup>5</sup> K. Szubart, *Unia Europejska „dwóch prędkości”? Niemcy i WPBiO po Brexicie (The European Union of "two speeds"? Germany and CSDP after Brexit)*, "Biuletyn Instytutu Zachodniego", no. 281/2016, p. 1.

two European nuclear powers. All mentioned above puts a question mark over an array of military initiatives undertaken within the CSDP.

In the face of numerous threats in the immediate environment of the European Union, it should be emphasized that without the development of the Common Security and Defense Policy, the member states will not be able to achieve their strategic goals, and the integration group itself will become an inefficient and unreliable partner of international politics.<sup>6</sup> In this context, the question of the future shape of the CSDP in the light of the existing challenges and the role of Germany in the process of change and evolution of the European Union's security policy becomes a fundamental issue. This study attempts to examine this issue.

### **Genesis and Development of the European Union's Common Security and Defense Policy**

The security of the citizens of the European Union is determined by internal and external factors, particularly by processes that take place in its immediate neighborhood. The contemporary security paradigm involves a holistic approach and applies a systematic point of view. The consequence of this approach was the establishment of the European Security and Defense Policy in the late 1990s as part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy.<sup>7</sup> According to Teresa Usewicz, "the initiation of this policy was an extremely important phenomenon in the development of the EU, but at that stage it was somewhat forced. The exacerbating situation in the Balkans and finally the war in Kosovo in 1999 drew attention to the impotence of the European armed forces".<sup>8</sup> It was a turning point in the history of the European Union, as in the face of the ongoing war in Yugoslavia, European economic power and political integration were insufficient to resolve the conflict.

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<sup>6</sup> K. Miszczak, *Przyszłość Polityki Bezpieczeństwa i Obrony Unii Europejskiej (The future of the Security and Defense Policy of the European Union)*, "Krakowskie Studia Międzynarodowe", no. 1/2017, p. 53.

<sup>7</sup> B.R. Posen, *European Union Security and Defense Policy: Response to Unipolarity?*, "Security Studies", vol. 15/2006, pp. 149–186; S. Sandawi, *Gemeinsame Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik (Common Security and Defense Policy)*, "Jahrbuch der Europäischen Integration" 2010, p. 251; J. Karlas, *Europe's Foreign and Security Policy: The Institutionalization of Cooperation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2004; A. Ciupiński, *Wspólna Polityka Bezpieczeństwa i Obrony Unii Europejskiej. Geneza. Rozwój. Funkcjonowanie (Common Security and Defense Policy of the European Union. Genesis. Development. Functioning)*, Warszawa 2013.

<sup>8</sup> T. Usewicz, op. cit., p. 121.

The development of European defense policy for a long time remained in the shadow of initiatives undertaken within the framework of NATO. Besides that, the United Kingdom was not interested in building autonomous and independent European capabilities in the field of military and security policy. Traditionally, a different position was represented by France, for which the EU was and still is an important guarantor of security. Germany's policy on this matter, on the one hand, is similar to that of France. On the other hand, Germany has been using the United States' security umbrella for years, which has led to a limitation of the necessary increase of defense expenditures. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Germany, in cooperation with France, supported the initiative of creating the European Union Security Policy, the main objective of which was to continue the process of communitarisation of security policy and later the defense policy of European states.<sup>9</sup>

After the Treaty of Lisbon came into force in 2009, Germany sought to strengthen the civilian-military capabilities of the European Union and establish permanent multinational structures, accelerating the process of civil-military integration within the framework of EU structures. According to Germany's stance, closer cooperation within the Weimar Triangle would play a special role in this respect,<sup>10</sup> which corresponded with the German vision that the European External Action Service must form an integral part of the Common Security and Defense Policy.<sup>11</sup> The goal of such an approach was to increase Europe's defense capabilities. One of the steps towards this was a decision taken by the defense ministers of the member states on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2004 to create 13 EU battle groups. Each battle group has from 1500 to 3000 thousand soldiers and must be prepared to commence a military operation in a maximum of 15 days after a political decision is made.<sup>12</sup> Combat groups can be of two types: national or multinational. National groups are created by wealthy EU countries that make up the so-called motor of Europe, i.e. France, Great Britain, Spain and Italy. The Federal Republic of Germany hasn't set up its own battle group, but focused more on cooperation with smaller

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<sup>9</sup> K. Miszczyk, *Polska i Niemcy a realizacja Wspólnej Polityki Zagranicznej, Bezpieczeństwa i Obrony Unii Europejskiej (Poland and Germany in the global strategy of the European Union as a conceptual foundation for European security)*, „Krakowskie Studia Międzynarodowe”, no. 1/2016, p. 88.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, p. 92.

<sup>11</sup> A. Chojan, *Europejska Służba Działań Zewnętrznych – postęp czy regres w politycznej integracji Europy?* (*European External Action Service – progress or regression in the political integration of Europe*), „Myśl Ekonomiczna i Polityczna”, no. 1/2012, pp. 142–179.

<sup>12</sup> T. Stępniewski, *European Union Battlegroups – Challenges and Risks at the Time of Brexit*, „Myśl Ekonomiczna i Polityczna”, no. 4/2017, p. 287.

EU countries. As a result, Germany is a member of 4 out of 9 multinational battle groups.<sup>13</sup> Battle Groups of the European Union are, however, created within the framework of the European Rapid Reaction Force assuming that they form their core and carry out tasks resulting from the European Security Strategy. It was also assumed that these would be anti-crisis measures.<sup>14</sup> The European Union is currently conducting 15 CSDP missions and operations. Six of them are of a military nature.<sup>15</sup>

When analyzing the current implementation of the European Union security and defense policy, it should be noted that it has been focused on civilian and military crisis management based on the capabilities of the member states. The European Union has had limited military and civilian missions with low intensity in the eastern and southern neighborhoods of the EU. The rapid-reaction forces in the form of battle groups that were developed in the EU have not been used so far. The European Defense Agency has supported projects that aim at strengthening the industrial cooperation of the member states to a limited extent, however. The reason behind the poor capability of the Common Security and Defense Policy mainly comes from the reluctance of the member states to expand EU competences in this field.<sup>16</sup> The situation changed in mid-2016. Such events as Brexit, Donald Trump's victory in the United States presidential election and the adoption of the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy by the European Council, which took place in June of 2016, have revived the discussion on the development of EU security policy.

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<sup>13</sup> J. Stańczyk, *Grupy Bojowe jako instrument polityki reagowania kryzysowego Unii Europejskiej (Combat Groups as an instrument of the European Union crisis response policy)*, „Studia Europejskie”, no. 4/2009, pp. 33–58; A. Konarzewska, *Grupy Bojowe UE. Zaczątek Euroarmii? (EU Battle Groups. The beginning of a Euroarmy?)*, „Bezpieczeństwo Narodowe”, no. 3–4/2007, pp. 154–173; *European security and defence: Core documents 2007*, ed. C. Gliere, ISS EU, “Chaillot Paper”, vol. VIII, Paris 2007.

<sup>14</sup> J. Stańczyk, *Znaczenie Grup Bojowych w rozwoju Wspólnej Polityki Bezpieczeństwa i Obrony Unii Europejskiej (The importance of Combat Groups in the development of the Common Security and Defense Policy of the European Union)*, „Doctrina. Studia Społeczno-Polityczne”, no. 6/2009, p. 146.

<sup>15</sup> A. Czekaj, T. Usewicz, *Koncepcja sieci węzłów transportowych na potrzeby Wspólnej Polityki Bezpieczeństwa i Obrony Unii Europejskiej (The concept of a network of transport nodes for the needs of the Common Security and Defense Policy of the European Union)*, „Unia Europejska.pl”, no. 3/2017, p. 37.

<sup>16</sup> J. Gotkowska, *Renesans wspólnej polityki bezpieczeństwa i obrony UE. Szanse i wyzwania dla wschodniej flanki (The renaissance of the common EU security and defense policy. Chances and challenges for the eastern flank)*, „Komentarze OSW”, no. 243/2017, p. 1.

## **Germany and the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy and PESCO**

The adoption of the EU Global Strategy in 2016 was a very important step in building and strengthening European security policy. The most important element of this process was the launch of the project of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) at the end of 2017.<sup>17</sup> What was stressed in the Global Strategy is the strengthening of the European Union as a security community and its protection against external threats and conflicts.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the strategy points to the issues of developing operational activity in the area of civil management, support missions, training and missions supervising civil-military operations.<sup>19</sup>

The points adopted in the Global Strategy assume a deviation from the European Union playing the role of a global player in the structures of international order, moving towards extended regionalism, including Eastern Europe with its Central Asian extension and areas of the Mediterranean and North Africa.<sup>20</sup> The strategy also draws attention to threats such as transnational terrorism, countries' economic weakness, climate change, cyberattacks, organized crime and the incursion of external borders. One of its important elements is a close connection between internal and external security policy, especially in the context of terrorism and migration processes.<sup>21</sup> It should be emphasized that the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy does not deal with the protection of territories of the member states. It instead focuses on diplomacy.

After the United Kingdom made a decision to leave the European Union, Germany took steps to intensify CSDP activities. France has been Germany's important partner in this respect, as it has been willing to develop European defense capabilities over the years.<sup>22</sup> Both states presented a joint document demonstrating mutual aspirations to strengthen integra-

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<sup>17</sup> S. Koziej, *Polityka Bezpieczeństwa i Obrony Unii Europejskiej: od Strategii Globalnej do PESCO (Security and Defense Policy of the European Union: from the Global Strategy to PESCO)*, "Pulaski Policy Papers", no. 1/2018, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> A. Bendiek, *The Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy*, "SWP Comment 38" 2016.

<sup>19</sup> J. Bund, D. Fiott, T. Tardy, Z. Stanley-Lockmann, *EUISS Yearbook of European Security*, 2017, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup> K. Miszczak, *Przyszłość Polityki...*, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>21</sup> S. Koziej, *Strategia globalna Unii Europejskiej jako koncepcyjny fundament bezpieczeństwa europejskiego (The global strategy of the European Union as a conceptual foundation for European security)*, „Myśl Ekonomiczna i Polityczna”, no. 4/2017, p. 187.

<sup>22</sup> K. Szubart, op. cit., p. 1.

tion processes, including reinforcing cooperation within the framework of the CSDP. The presentation of the document took place just several days after the announcement of the result of the British referendum. Germany recognizes the CSDP as one of the key pillars of Germany's security and a forum for articulating German strategic interests. Due to the historical past, German interests must be included in the framework of wider multilateral cooperation with the participation of partner and allied countries. Moreover, one can get the impression that some German politicians perceive attempts to intensify cooperation within the CSDP as the last chance to fulfil the EU's global ambitions.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, Germany and France together intend to strive to create and make the European Union an international player with the right to directly influence the political, economic and military systems of the immediate surroundings. Germany also indicates the willingness to actively influence the creation of a new international order to ensure a peaceful balance of interests.<sup>24</sup>

On June 28, 2016 Frederica Mogherini presented information on the new EU Security Strategy at the European Council meeting. The same day, the foreign Ministers of Foreign Affairs of France and Germany, Jean-Marc Ayrault and Frank-Walter Steinmeier, presented a proposal of strengthening the CSDP, which was an attempt to balance the seriousness of the threats coming from the east and south of Europe. In addition, on September 12, 2016, Ministers of National Defense of two countries, Jean-Yves Le Drian and Ursula von der Layen, presented another initiative within the European security policy. It was a document entitled "Revitalizing CSDP. Towards comprehensive, realistic and credible Defense in the EU".<sup>25</sup> The document once again underlined the will to accelerate the creation of a common European Union security and defense policy.

In 2017, Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) became an essential initiative within the CSDP. The initiative is expected to significantly increase the contribution of the EU countries to ensure European security. However, from the very beginning the differences between countries in terms of expected commitment have become apparent. Germany turned out to be restrained in the use of its military instruments in solving crises and conflicts, treating PESCO primarily in political terms. Berlin rejects the idea of creating an EU military vanguard, fearing that this will increase Germany's military involvement in Africa and the Middle East. Germany was also opposed to making any additional divisions in the EU that would exclude Central European countries. Considering the above,

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<sup>23</sup> Ibidem, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> K. Mischczak, *Przyszłość Polityki...*, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, p. 65.

the Federal Republic of Germany put forward some proposals, which it had already tried to submit previously. The proposals were expected to be implemented within the framework of PESCO and aimed at strengthening the competence mainly in non-combat zones (including medical service or logistics). The issue of integration of arms industries in the EU is also important from the Berlin's point of view, as it will be profitable for German companies.<sup>26</sup>

Germany's moderate and conservative attitude towards the expansion of military and defense capabilities of Germany, and thus also of the European Union, is primarily influenced by two factors. The first factor is the wide-spread pacifism of German society, which is a result of historical experience. The second factor is that Germany lacks the feeling of a real threat. It comes neither from the Russian Federation, nor from an unstable Africa and Middle East. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Germany's attitude is gradually changing and evolving. Officially, Germany took the stance that Europe must show the world that it is united and safe, because in the face of the growing strength and influence of other global powers, no European country is capable of facing and resist global challenges alone in a long-term perspective. In this context, the German President, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, advocated the development of specific instruments of European foreign policy, because of which the EU's effectiveness in the international arena will increase. Germany strives to ensure that the European Union has effective tools for resolving conflicts in the immediate neighborhood, and is able to limit the negative effects of, for example, migration and climate change.<sup>27</sup> That is why Germany is an advocate of closer cooperation within the framework of the European Security and Defense Policy and strives to establish a joint European army. The problem, however, is that the actions of the Federal Republic of Germany are still characterized by great ambivalence. On the one hand, Germany declares the increase of its commitment to European security issues, while on the other hand, Germany constantly fails to comply with the declared 2% of GDP by NATO member states for defense purposes. German defense spending oscillates around 1.3% of GDP. Another example of German ambiguity may be Angela Merkel's statement that she gave to the German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* on

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<sup>26</sup> J. Gotkowska, *The Trouble with PESCO. The Mirages of European Defence, "Point of View"*, no. 69/2018, p. 9; H. Linnenkamp, *Germany and the CSDP in: The Common Security and Defence Policy: National Perspectives*, ed. D. Fiott, Brussels 2015, pp. 31–32.

<sup>27</sup> F.-W. Steinmeier, *Europa ist die Lösung. Churchills Vermächtnis (Europe is the solution. Churchill's legacy)*, Wals bei Salzburg 2016, pp. 34–35.



June 3, 2018. In that interview, she declared her support for the French plans to set up the armed forces of the European Union and subsequently stated that the Bundeswehr will not have to participate in all of the organized military missions.<sup>28</sup> This approach is a part of an eternal dilemma, German but also European, between the need to increase military involvement and the lack of political will of the member states to carry out military activities on a large scale.<sup>29</sup>

## Conclusion

According to the official position of the German government, the priority for Germany's international policy is to strengthen the European Union through the development of the European integration process. This approach results from the fact that the objectives of German foreign policy and economic policy are implemented through the European Union to a large extent. One of the key elements of deepening and strengthening the European integration process is reinforcing the Common Security and Defense Policy. The paradox of the situation is that Germany is very cautious and greatly restrained about increasing its military involvement. German foreign policy is known for referring mainly to so-called soft power tools. Unfortunately, this comes at the expense of the decline in the defense capabilities of the country, and thus the European Union as a whole.

Germany declares its support in all initiatives aimed at strengthening European security, but to a large extent uses diplomatic and non-military instruments, while the challenges of the modern world increasingly require the use of military means to safeguard the nations of Europe and protect their own interests. The unpredictability of the processes taking place in the immediate neighborhood of the European Union, as well as the ongoing transformations of the global order, however, force the European states to increase their commitment to their own security. The development and strengthening of the Common Security and Defense Policy of the European Union is a priority to guarantee the security of the member states. The Germans, if they desire to pursue their regional and global ambition, must focus on increasing the operational capabilities of their

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<sup>28</sup> *Europa muss handlungsfähig sein – nach außen und innen (Europe must be able to act – externally and internally)*, „Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung“, 3.06.2018.

<sup>29</sup> B. Piskorska, *Nie tylko miękka siła: Unia Europejska jako aktor w dziedzinie bezpieczeństwa europejskiego (Not only soft power: the European Union as an actor in the field of European security)*, „Roczniki Nauk Społecznych”, no. 3/2013, p. 123.

armed forces.<sup>30</sup> This cannot be achieved without a significant increase of defense expenditures and investment in the Bundeswehr. In addition, Germany also must demonstrate its readiness to extend its commitment to European security, both at financial and military level, because this is the only way for the state to be able to guarantee itself the possibility of pursuing its strategic national interests.

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<sup>30</sup> J.A. Stacey, *Merkel's Military Revival*, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/28/merkel-military-revival/> (1.06.2018).

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