

# Differentiated Integrations Lessons from Political Economies of European Defence

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**Abstract:** This special issue aims at contributing simultaneously to two key literatures within analysis of the European Union (EU) which, until now, have developed in isolation of each other: one on differentiated integration, the other on defence policies in Europe. In so doing, it also brings together different theories of political economy and, thereby, more general analyses of politics and international relations.

**Keywords:** differentiated integration, CSDP, European Union, defence co-operation, political economy, theory development

## Differentiated Integration as a Research Agenda for EU Studies: Strengths and Blind-spots

Analysis of the European Union in terms of differentiated integration first emerged in the mid-1990s (Stubb, 1996; Kölliker, 2001), and has since become one of the main prisms for studying the EU (Dyson, Sepos, 2010; Kelemen, Menon, Slapin, 2014; Leruth, Lord, 2015; Schimmelfennig, Leuffen, Rittberger, 2015; CEP, 2019). In particular, this perspective has enabled in-depth analysis of the different causes and effects of *opting-in* (Schimmelfennig, 2014a, 2014b, 2016b; Schimmelfennig, Winzen, 2017) or *opting-out* (Adler-Nissen, 2009, 2014; Duttler, Holzinger, Malang et al., 2017) of various EU policies. Beyond encapsulating a structural political phenomenon, the concept of differentiated integration has enabled analysis to distinguish between a logic of ‘horizontal’ differentiation, and a ‘vertical’ one. A ‘horizontal’ differentiation is defined as territorialised distinctions within the EU, whilst a ‘vertical’ one corresponds to the levels of power distribution between European, national and sub-national scales of political authority (Leuffen, Rittberger, Schimmelfennig, 2012; Rittberger, Leuffen, Schimmelfennig, 2014;

Schimmelfennig, 2014a, 2014b). It is therefore strictly distinct from the concept of disintegration (Vollaard, 2014; Rosamond, 2016), or that of the Europeanisation of national or subnational actors and practices (Fligstein, Mérand, 2002; Irondelle, 2003; Britz, 2010; Faure, Hoeffler, 2015).

To date, classical integration theories have been the primary source of variables to explain differentiation (Adler-Nissen, 2009, 2014; McNamara, 2015; Schimmelfennig, 2016a; Leruth, Gäntzle, Trondal, 2017; Schimmelfennig, 2019; Schimmelfennig, Winzen, 2019): intergovernmentalism (preferences and power bargaining), neo-functionalism and historical institutionalism (spillover, asymmetric interdependence, levels of politicisation), practice theory (professional routines). Partly as a consequence of this, more general theories beyond EU studies have largely been side-lined. This has meant that despite their theoretical and methodological differences in terms of levels of analysis, existing studies of differentiated integration have thus far either been *macro* (distinguishing between member states) or *meso* (distinguishing between sectors) (Schimmelfennig, Winzen, 2014a; Schimmelfennig, Leuffen, Rittberger, 2015; Schimmelfennig, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c; Winzen, Schimmelfennig, 2016).

However, remaining at these levels of analysis runs the risk of interpreting both of the key cleavages which divide actors in the EU, as well as the relationships that bring others together, from variables and criteria that are either legal (Guiraudon, El Qadim, 2017), or make purely deductive assumptions about national interests and power. In fact, the concrete formation and concrete manifestations of ‘interests’ and ‘power’ are rarely actually studied in depth. As a result, policy analysis variables are largely omitted, i.e. a type of approach designed to enable research to capture the relationship between differentiated integration and public decision-making by mobilising variables which require and guide primary data collation and new fieldwork. Indeed, apart from research into differentiated integration and politicisation (de Wilde, Leupold, Schmidtke, 2016), the overall research program of differentiated integration has yet to clarify how policies are actually made within the EU. Moreover, research on differentiated integration has largely ignored political economies of Europe, nations and sectors - i.e. the institutionally ordered forms of capitalism (Hall, Soskice, 2001; Jullien, Smith, 2014) within which deeper integration either takes place or does not (for some useful exceptions, Bickerton, 2019; Matthijs, Parsons, Toenshoff, 2019). In a nutshell, there is much to be gained by examining differentiated integration through the forms of policy analysis which incorporate political economy. Indeed, this approach can help explain both why differentiation occurred and how it has affected politics and economics within precise domains of policy.

## The Differentiated Integration of Defence in Europe: A New Analytical Challenge

Aspiring to begin to fill the gaps outlined above, the present special issue will focus uniquely on European defence policies, i.e. modes of public intervention regarding the military, their armaments and other equipment established by the member states (MS) and the EU itself. Since 2000, a rich literature has developed regarding

the birth of a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and the degree to which it reflects a logic of European integration or simply inter-state co-operation (Howorth, 2000, 2005, 2007; Irondelle, 2003; Joana, Smith, 2006; Mérand, 2008, 2010; Mérand, Bonneau, Faure, 2009; Menon, Irondelle, Bickerton, 2011; Sjørusen, 2011; M.E. Smith, 2011). Indeed, since 2010, this knowledge has been reinforced by detailed studies of the European governance of defence (Howorth, 2014; Faure, 2016a), the Europeanisation of military and defence procurement policies (Hoeffler, 2012; Blauburger, Weiss, 2013; Joana, Mérand, 2014; Faure, Hoeffler, 2015), the implementation of EU peace-keeping missions (Rayroux, 2017; Faure, 2018), the EU's engagement in crisis management around the annexation of the Crimea (Davis Cross, Pawel Karolewski, 2017) and Brexit (Duke, 2018; Johnson, Haaland Matlary, 2019). These contributions all converge around the same conclusion: national preferences have strongly structured the governance of CSDP (Meijer, Wyss, 2019), and this whether these preferences have been revealed using either a realist ontology of state-level interests (Posen, 2004; Rynning, 2011) or a constructivist analysis of the social representations of diplomatic and military actors (Mérand, 2006; Faure, 2017). At the same time, other research has shown that the CSDP is also deeply affected by transnational political and economic partnerships or competitive relations (Batora, 2009; Mérand, Barrette, Chicos, 2012; Fiott, 2015). There is therefore a great deal of variable geometry *within* the field of European defence which research is currently struggling to assess and explain, e.g. via 'European strategic culture' (Biava, Herd, Drent, 2011; Faure, 2017) or actor networks (Cross, 2011; Mérand, Hofmann, Irondelle, 2011).

If these studies of the European defence domain are largely complementary, they however focus chiefly upon the politico-military dimension of the CSDP, and this largely to the exclusion of its political economy (Mörth, Britz, 2004; deVore, Weiss, 2014; Faure, 2016b). Indeed, this gap has become a cause for concern given that over the last ten years major changes in European defence policies have been strongly linked to the constitution of a European single market in this area, as well as *rapprochements* between national military-economic rules and practices (Krotz, 2011; Thiem, 2011; DeVore, 2012, 2013, 2014; Hoeffler, Mérand, 2015; Schilde, 2017; Fiott, 2019). This trend has notably included the adoption of the 'defence package' in 2009, the creation of Airbus as a European company in 2015 and the launch of a European Defence Fund by the Commission in 2017 (Lavallée, 2011; Hoeffler, 2012; Blauburger, Weiss, 2013; Muravska, 2014; Faure, 2019a, 2019b; Haroche, 2019). Put bluntly, considerable efforts have been made to reinforce European defence 'by the market' (Commission, 2017; Macron, 2017), but for the moment EU studies has singularly failed to analyse the causes and consequences of this shift. In particular, it has neglected studying what has prompted differentiated integration on key topics such as strategic decision-making, military spending, research on defence and economic concentration (Howorth, 2019). It has thus largely overlooked the coherencies and incoherencies which the differentiated integration of the defence sector has engendered in Europe. More generally, the co-existence of varying, deeper co-operations over defence and the opt-outs made possible by the Lisbon treaty, suggest that EU-scale polity change is currently being deeply affected by policy change within CSDP (Faure, 2019c, 2019d; Haroche, 2019; Howorth, 2019).

In summary, by choosing to study European defence through its political economy, and the role public policies have played within it, this special issue aims not only to contribute to the literature on the CSDP. By being tied firmly to a line of questioning regarding differentiated integration, it seeks to contribute both theoretically and methodologically to wider debates about how the EU is now best studied. From a theoretical point of view, the aim is to deepen engagement between theories of policy analysis and that of other relevant parts of social science, in particular political economy, International Relations, comparative politics and political sociology. Far from being a scholastic point of principle, this intra-disciplinarity is necessary in order to capture the interdependencies between contemporary administrations, politicians, corporations and the armed forces (Jullien, Smith, 2011, 2014; Hay, Smith, 2018). Indeed, the articles for this special issue are each underpinned by one of three different theories of political economy: intergovernmentalism, rationalist institutionalism and constructivism. Meanwhile, from a methodological point of view, the production of primary data and original fieldwork on the causes and consequences of differentiated integration in the defence field will be privileged. Indeed, it is only through such original research that the tensions between and within public organisations and firms, at both EU and national scales, can be discerned and explained both over time, and across the societies which make up the EU.

## Variety Within The Political Economy of European Defence: The Articles that Follow

The first contribution to this special issue revisits Realist IR theory to analyse the outcomes of a wide cross-section of inter-national collaborations in the European defence field. Specifically, from this angle Marc DeVore and Nora Kristine Stai argue that in this respect the most successful partnerships have all required strong and sustained backing by national governments; backing that is motivated by what they call ‘realist interests’, in particular ‘the sense of collectively balancing against threats’. When armed with this legitimacy, they claim, governments have been able to defeat domestic opposition and pressure for either nationally produced equipment, or buying ‘off the shelf’ from countries like the USA. A second argument that can motivate such backing concerns the collaboration’s interoperability advantages. Finally, what these authors label as ‘supply security’ – the ability to assure that a military alliance would stick together if threatened – provides a third reason why many European national governments have engaged so heavily in steering armament programmes through to their completion.

In contrast to this realist approach and conclusions, in her contribution to this special issue Catherine Hoefler adopts a constructivist perspective from which to argue that differentiated integration in the defence field is the product of the very definition of ‘interdependence’. Specifically, she amends Schimmelfennig, Leuffen and Rittberger’s (2015) explanatory variable by stressing first that in each instance of European defence co-operation, what counts is the projected level of, and motivation for, interdependence that is constructed by the actors concerned. From there, her second focus is much less upon EU law and much more upon what she calls ‘practice-

level elements of CSDP'. It is therefore through these two mechanisms – defining interdependence and regularising practices – that armament-related issues have progressively been linked to more trans-industry issues of single market regulation. Specifically, this linkage has been dynamised by the very question of the military and security capabilities actors consider would be enhanced by European co-operation. More fundamentally, because defining interdependence and regularising practices is so contingent and thus uncertain, this in turn explains CSDP's policymaking hybridity, that is to say how and why it combines modes of intergovernmental policymaking with more supranational aspects of decision-making. This also helps explain CSDP's horizontal differentiation.

Focusing specifically upon state-arms industry relations in the case of Italy, Antonio Calcara's contribution then begins a set of three papers which tackle the choice between co-operation and non-cooperation around case studies of arms procurement. Calcara has studied in particular how Italian actors have positioned themselves within the two major European defence procurement organisations (the European Defence Agency and OCCAR), as well as within new EU defence policy initiatives (PESCO and the European Defence Fund). He argues in particular that three variables explain why both Italian actors have often been pro-active within the aforementioned organisations and initiatives, but also why a desire to enhance purely Italian defence know-how still remains strong. The first of these variables is the degree of protection of firms by the government. Although single market rules have weakened the capacity of the state to intervene in this way, public actors continue to seek ways of ensuring Italian firms are not disadvantaged during instances of European defence collaboration. This point spills over into a second variable: the high degree of interpenetration between public and private sector elites that continues to mark the Italian political economy, and defence industry in particular. State shareholding is the most obvious manifestation of this interpenetration, but how Italian actors co-ordinate whenever they 'go to Europe' is just as important. Indeed, this in turn underlines the importance of Calcara's third variable: the status and autonomy of Italy's procurement agency as regards the nation's defence manufacturers.

In many senses, Samuel B.H. Faure's contribution provides a French comparator to Calcara's account of 'the Italian job'. Having also studied state-arms industry relations in depth, Faure's central question is: why did French governments choose to collaborate in the A400M airlifter programme, and thus endorse what he calls 'European unilateralism', rather than engage in bilateralism with the US (by buying more C-17s and C-130s)? Specifically, Faure develops an Elias-inspired 'configurational' argument which highlights the historical sociology of the political economy of arms procurement. By tracing the procurement of this airlifter back to the 1970s, the paper shows the relationships, but also the animosities, that developed over time within France between certain key industrialists, politicians, military officers and segments of the senior civil service.

In the paper that follows, Benoit Giry and Andy Smith also examine the case of the A400M airlifter, but this time from the angle of the arrangements that have been developed to service and maintain this equipment, thereby transforming its theoretical capacity to participate in defence operations into actual military capability. Although, as Faure's paper underlines, high levels of European co-operation were required to design, build and buy this airlifter, they largely disappeared during the equally costly part of its life cycle that requires servicing and support. In order to

elucidate this enigma, and by focusing on the French and British cases, two levels of explanation are developed. Firstly, the paper describes how, in order to support their A400Ms, each defence ministry has contracted quite differently with the aircraft's manufacturer (Airbus): the British have delegated nearly all support activity to this firm, whereas the French have retained most of it 'in-house'. Secondly, and more fundamentally, Giry and Smith show how and why both countries' defence industrial policies continue to differ significantly. In the British case, defence industrial base concerns are now addressed on a bespoke basis centred upon market conditions in general, and competitiveness of supply in particular. Conversely, neo-*dirigiste* interventionist industrial policy still dominates French equipment support. They conclude that weak bilateral integration over supporting the A400M is therefore best explained by using constructivist political economy to unpack the problem-definitions and policy instruments maintaining this aircraft has engendered, together with the national hybrids between interventionism and liberalism that it has bolstered.

Such a focus upon the relations between defence administrations, air forces and aircraft manufacturers begs however the question of the extent to which defence firms in Europe have themselves become integrated at the European level. Why has European integration affected some of Europe's defence firms more than others? Specifically, what explains the co-existence of national, transnational and European champions in this industry? In the last empirical paper of this special issue, Samuel B.H. Faure, Thibaut Joltreau and Andy Smith tackle this question from two complementary angles. First, they examine the business models and turnover of the four largest companies in Europe (BAe Systems, Airbus, Thales, and Leonardo). In so doing they confirm an intuitively consensual hypothesis: that firms who mostly produce military goods are less likely to undergo strong European integration. Secondly, however, by using an original database on the social backgrounds of these firms' board members, two more complex hypotheses are then tested. Using data on higher education and careers, on the one hand they show that the relationship of board members to their respective state varies from close (Thales and to some extent Airbus) to distant (BAe Systems and Leonardo). On the other, their data reveals that when the careers of these actors are frequently internationalised, this correlates to either strong European integration at the level of the firm (Airbus and Thales) or, alternatively, strong Transatlanticism (BAe Systems or Leonardo). The article as a whole thus both opens up new avenues for research on the defence industry, whilst adding both political economy and sociological dimensions to existing scholarship on differentiated European integration.

Finally, this special issue closes with a review article written by Jean Joana. Centred on European defence during and since the Brexit referendum, his piece attempts to evaluate the effects of this event on European defence cooperation based on an analysis of four recently published books on this subject. Indeed, since 2016, the possible effects of Brexit on the EU have elicited abundant comments in political science. This line of questioning has been particularly strong with regard to the initiatives taken in the field of defence – a policy area in which actors from the United Kingdom have always been deeply ambivalent. The four books he analyses show that the assessment of the effects of Brexit depends largely on the assumptions that can be made as regards the analysis of European defence cooperation more generally. As such they, like the rest of this special issue, tell us a great deal about differentiated integration and the importance of how it is studied.

## European Defence in the Twenty-First Century: Directions for Future Research

In the 2000s, research on the political economy of European defence was rare (Mörth, 2000, 2003; Mörth, Britz, 2004). Ten years later, an active scientific community has emerged. This special issue has sought to play a part in it through the analysis of differentiated integration it develops. In addition to analysis of the transformations of military policies and the restructuring of the defence industry in Europe it contains, this special issue offers a pluralistic set of original theoretical contributions. Indeed, the study of European defence represents a heuristic case study for developing explanatory or interpretative approaches that contribute not only to a better understanding of the EU, but also to theoretical renewal.

The results and contributions of this issue therefore confirm the scientific interest of continuing this work of comparing and, where relevant, articulating approaches sourced from political economy, EU studies and International Relations theory. This research strategy aims at avoiding any reproduction of the scholastic boundaries that artificially separate disciplines, by focusing on the institutional interstices where states, firms and international organisations encounter each other – and this in both collaborative and conflictual modes. Such a task – which is demanding since it requires mastering different sets of literature – is a means of realising the ambition of producing interpretative analyses and explanatory models which will foster better understandings of the empirical reality observed. Yet beyond merely deepening this study of differentiated integration, a number of complementary lines of questioning could also be pursued in the future. Is the international ordering of defence changing because of inter-state alliances (Europeanisation or NATOisation?), the continued existence of varieties of capitalism in the defence industry (divergence or convergence?), or the dynamics of the (neo)liberalisation of European states (end of the state or reconfiguration of its prerogatives)? Moreover, within this shifting environment, what role has the challenge of technological innovation played? (military drones, fighter jet, AI – Artificial Intelligence). Indeed, to what extent is it linked to shifts within and between national forms of capitalism?

All the above could usefully structure research questions for future fieldwork on the defence industry. In so doing, three further avenues of research could be built into the projects and studies involved. First, one of the main findings of this special issue dissuades research from focusing exclusively either on the EU (Haroche, 2019) or on the national policy level (Meijer, Wyss, 2019). The study of ‘European strategic autonomy’, the creation of a ‘European champion’ in the field of land armaments (KNDS), or the development of a Franco-German fighter jet (SCAF), all entail articulating varying levels and types of bilateral, minilateral and multilateral European cooperation (Faure, 2019; Howorth, 2019).

Second, this special issue has not devoted sufficient space to the study of Germany (Krotz, 2011, 2015; Deschaux-Dutard, 2014, 2017), Poland (Faure, 2014; Zima, 2015), or the smaller European states (Chovancik, 2018). The acquisition of the American F35 fighter jet by Belgium (2018) and Poland (2019) provides an opportunity for future research to address this gap. As for Germany, the current Franco-German bargaining on the joint production of a fighter jet and of a tank has created another empirical terrain that simply must be investigated.

And, thirdly, beyond the United Kingdom's specific effects upon the political economy of European defence following the activation of Brexit, the aim of future research must simply be to expand so as to include the study of 'new' players, in particular India and China, in our research agendas (Weiss, 2018). These actors are not only key producers and exporters of arms, but in the case of India, at least, they are also huge consumers.

As a last comment, and although this may appear curious at first blush, simultaneously studying the relationship between differentiated European integration in the defence sector, and the various commercial and political 'partners' this entails, provides a rigorous and stimulating means of capturing how 'Europe' and its development is so strongly connected to events and trends way beyond its own borders. As such, this perspective on differentiated integration could also be used to compare what has happened in the field of defence with shifts within other industries. As research on the pharmaceutical, automobile, wine and aquaculture industries has already shown (Jullien, Smith, 2014), when seeking to understand the EU's government of industries, a lot can be learned from inter-industry comparisons. In a word, it may be time to move away from seeing the defence industry and its world as singular, if only to understand better how it has been impacted by, and contributed to, the differentiated integration of the EU more broadly.

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