

THE EU COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY: BALANCING NATIONAL INTERESTS AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSE

СПІЛЬНА ЗОВНІШНЯ ТА БЕЗПЕКОВА ПОЛІТИКА ЄС: ПОШУК БАЛАНСУ МІЖ НАЦІОНАЛЬНИМИ ІНТЕРЕСАМИ ТА КОЛЕКТИВНОЮ ВІДПОВІДДЮ

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Abstract. *This article examines the evolution and current functioning of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in the context of transformations in the European security environment caused by Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine.*

The research methodology is based on systemic, institutional, and comparative approaches, as well as the analysis of EU founding treaties, strategic documents, and practical instruments for the implementation of foreign and security policy. The study analyzes the role of key EU institutions, including the European Council, the Council of the European Union, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the European External Action Service, in shaping coordinated external actions.

The results demonstrate that the CFSP remains characterized by a significant level of intergovernmentalism, which preserves Member States' sovereignty in the field of foreign and security policy but simultaneously limits the effectiveness and promptness of collective decision-making. Russia's war against Ukraine has intensified political consolidation within the EU, strengthened sanctions mechanisms, expanded military and financial assistance to Ukraine, and stimulated the further development of defense cooperation initiatives, including the European Peace Facility and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). However, the unanimity principle continues to create structural obstacles to the rapid implementation of joint foreign policy decisions.

The scientific novelty of this research lies in substantiating the dual nature of the CFSP as a mechanism balancing national strategic priorities and supranational coordination under conditions of geopolitical instability. The practical significance of the study is determined by the possibility of using its findings to assess prospects for institutional reform of EU foreign and security policy and the strengthening of the Union's strategic autonomy.

Keywords: *European Union, Common Foreign and Security Policy, European security, Russia's war against Ukraine, national interests, collective response, strategic autonomy, sanctions policy, defense integration, European External Action Service, PESCO.*

Анотація. *У статті розглядається еволюція та сучасне функціонування Спільної зовнішньої та безпекової політики (СЗБП) Європейського Союзу в контексті трансформацій європейського безпекового середовища, спричинених повномасштабною агресією Росії проти України.*

Методологія дослідження базується на системному, інституційному та порівняльному підходах, а також на аналізі установчих договорів ЄС, стратегічних документів та практичних інструментів реалізації зовнішньої та безпекової політики. У дослідженні аналізується роль ключових інституцій ЄС, включаючи Європейську Раду, Раду Європейського

Союзу, Високого представника Союзу з питань закордонних справ та політики безпеки та Європейську службу зовнішніх дій, у координації та формуванні зовнішньої політики.

Результати демонструють, що СЗБП характеризується значним рівнем міждержавності, що з одного боку захищає суверенітет держав-членів у сфері зовнішньої та безпекової політики, але одночасно з цим обмежує ефективність та оперативність колективного прийняття рішень. Війна Росії проти України поглибила політичну консолідацію в рамках ЄС, посилила механізми санкцій, розширила військову та фінансову допомогу Україні та стимулювала подальший розвиток ініціатив у сфері оборонної співпраці, включаючи Європейський фонд миру та Постійне структуроване співробітництво (PESCO). Однак принцип однакості продовжує створювати структурні перешкоди для швидкої реалізації спільних зовнішньополітичних рішень.

Наукова новизна дослідження полягає в обґрунтуванні подвійної природи СЗБП як механізму балансування національних стратегічних пріоритетів та наднаціональної координації в умовах геополітичної нестабільності. Практичне значення дослідження визначається можливістю використання його висновків для оцінки перспектив інституційної реформи зовнішньої та безпекової політики ЄС та зміцнення стратегічної автономії Союзу.

Ключові слова: Європейський Союз, Спільна зовнішня та безпекова політика, європейська безпека, війна Росії проти України, національні інтереси, колективна відповідь, стратегічна автономія, санкційна політика, оборонна інтеграція, Європейська служба зовнішніх дій, PESCO.

Introduction. The relevance of this study stems from the sweeping changes in European and global security brought about by the Russian Federation's full-scale war against Ukraine. For the first time in decades, the European Union has been forced to respond to classic interstate aggression, accompanied not only by military threats but also by a wide range of hybrid challenges—from energy and information security to migration crises. This situation has brought into sharp focus the effectiveness of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as one of the key mechanisms for ensuring the EU's stability and strategic autonomy.

The CFSP aims to play a fundamental role in the European Union's current security architecture by combining the foreign policy dimension with elements of defense cooperation. Through it, the EU seeks to act as a unified actor on the international stage, coordinate the positions of member states, and formulate collective responses to global security challenges. In this sense, the war against Ukraine has served as a catalyst for deepening cooperation within the CFSP, but at the same time has revealed its limitations, stemming from divergences between the national interests of member states.

The problem of reconciling the national interests of individual states with the EU's collective strategic goals remains a key challenge for the functioning of the CFSP. For the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Russia's war against Ukraine has become a direct existential threat, driving their active stance on strengthening sanctions and providing military support to Ukraine. At the same time, a number of Western European states, which have deeper economic ties with Russia or are traditionally cautious on military policy issues, tend toward a more moderate approach. This creates a structural dilemma for the CFSP: how to achieve an effective collective response without losing unity or undermining the principles of solidarity.

The **purpose of this article** is to highlight the contradictions between the national interests of EU member states and the collective response within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy against the backdrop of current challenges to European security.

Literature review. The issues surrounding the formation and development of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy are the subject of active research by both Ukrainian and foreign scholars. In contemporary academic literature, the main focus is on the institutional mechanisms for implementing the CFSP, the relationship between the national interests of member states and supranational foreign policy instruments, as well as the transformation of EU security policy under the influence of new geopolitical challenges.

Among Ukrainian researchers, V. Shatun, V. Solovykh, and O. Moskalenko have made significant contributions to the study of the evolution of EU security policy, analyzing the process of shaping the European security architecture and the EU's interaction with international security

structures. Their works emphasize that the development of the CFSP is taking place amid increasing global instability and requires the coordination of member states' foreign policy positions.

Foreign scholars have made significant contributions to CFSP research. In particular, K. Smith views EU foreign policy as a complex system of multilevel governance that combines intergovernmental and supranational decision-making mechanisms. J. Howorth analyzes the development of the EU's defense component and emphasizes that the formation of a common security policy depends to a large extent on the willingness of member states to delegate part of their sovereign powers to supranational institutions. S. Biscop focuses on the concept of the European Union's strategic autonomy, linking it to the need to strengthen the EU's military-political capacity to act as an independent global actor. N. Tocci has made an important contribution to the study of the institutional aspects of the CFSP, emphasizing the role of strategic planning and the EU Global Strategy in shaping the Union's contemporary foreign policy.

At the same time, current research does not pay sufficient attention to the problem of balancing the national interests of EU member states with the need to formulate an effective collective response to contemporary security challenges, especially in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war, which underscores the relevance of further academic research in this area.

Main results of the research. The Common Foreign and Security Policy is one of the key pillars of European integration, shaping the foreign policy and security dimension of the European Union. It has developed gradually, responding to changes in the international system and internal challenges facing the EU, and has become an important instrument through which the Union seeks to act as a unified actor on the global stage.

The Foundations of the CFSP's Operations According to the Founding Treaties

At the Intergovernmental Conference on Political Union and the Maastricht European Council, heated debates took place regarding the CFSP due to concerns about its compatibility with NATO. France and Germany sought to achieve comprehensive common defense, while the United Kingdom advocated for the implementation of a simplified version of a common defense policy (Le Monde diplomatique, 1992). Ultimately, a compromise was reached in the form of a common defense policy that would eventually evolve into full collective defense. These objectives became part of an expanded framework for cooperation in foreign policy, which began in 1970 (Davignon Report, 1970) and was reinforced by the Single European Act on February 17, 1986, in Luxembourg and February 28 in The Hague, which provided for consultations among member states.

Thus, the Treaty on European Union includes a "pillar" on the common foreign and security policy, which is purely intergovernmental in nature. Its objectives are to "protect the Union's common values, fundamental interests, and independence" and to "strengthen the security of the Union and its Member States in every respect." It also aims to "preserve peace and strengthen international security," "promote international cooperation," and "develop and strengthen democracy and the rule of law, as well as respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms."

To achieve these objectives, the Treaty provides for "systematic cooperation among Member States on foreign and security policy." The Committee of Foreign Ministers may unanimously determine a "common position" in areas of mutual interest. Member States must ensure that their foreign policies are consistent with the position adopted by such a Committee. Thus, when Member States have "important common interests," and on the basis of guidelines established by the European Council, the Committee of Ministers may unanimously adopt "joint actions" and define their means and objectives. Only implementing measures may be adopted by a qualified majority, provided (as stipulated by the United Kingdom) that the Committee has authorized them by a unanimous vote. Given the obvious possibility of blocking through a veto, it is noted that "with regard to decisions requiring unanimity, Member States shall, as far as possible, refrain from blocking a unanimous decision if there is a qualified majority in favor of such a decision." In areas under CFSP jurisdiction, the European Council does not have the right to make proposals on which the Committee must decide. However, it may refer matters to the Committee, just as Member States may. Furthermore, the economic instruments used in the conduct of foreign policy (financial aid, embargoes, and trade negotiations) still fall within its sphere of responsibility. Thus, it participates in the CFSP. Although the European Parliament has the right to be informed, to hold debates on the CFSP, and may submit questions and recommendations to the Committee of Foreign Ministers, the Parliament's role is

purely consultative. The European Court of Justice has no jurisdiction, as member states do not participate legally in the CFSP. To implement the CFSP, the European Union, which de facto has no diplomatic representation of its own, must coordinate the diplomatic and consular missions of member states in non-member countries and in various international organizations, particularly the UN Security Council and various bodies of the United Nations. The Member State holding the Council presidency every six months represents the Union on matters relating to the CFSP and is responsible for implementing joint actions. It is assisted by the previous and future presidencies (known as the “trinity” system) to ensure policy coherence.

Further developments were enshrined in the Treaty of Lisbon (2009), which significantly strengthened the institutional capacity of the CFSP. It reorganized the EU’s “three-pillar” structure, making the CFSP an integral part of the Union’s general legal framework, and provided for the creation of new institutional mechanisms, notably the position of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European External Action Service (EEAS). This treaty sought to enhance the coherence and visibility of EU policy on the international stage.

Although the Treaty of Lisbon formally abolished the Union’s “pillar” structure, the distinct intergovernmental nature of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP, including the Common Security and Defense Policy–CSDP) was preserved. This meant that the European Council retained significantly greater direct responsibility for CFSP management than is the case with many other Union policies. Under the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Council is responsible for defining the strategic interests and objectives of the EU’s external action in general, and of the CFSP in particular. It is also responsible for establishing general guidelines and adopting the necessary decisions for the implementation of the CFSP, including issues with a defense dimension, defining a common approach to any foreign and security policy issue, shaping the strategic direction of EU policy in response to (extraordinary) international events, and establishing a common defense for the EU. Apart from its direct responsibilities within the CFSP, the European Council has another important function: to conduct regular assessments of the threats facing the Union. This enables the EU and its member states to respond in a timely and effective manner to challenges, particularly those related to terrorism, as well as natural or man-made disasters. Based on the “general guidelines and strategic directions defined by the European Council,” the Committee of Foreign Ministers is tasked with adopting the necessary decisions to define and implement the CFSP. The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, together with the member states, ensures the practical implementation of the CFSP. In this context, member states are required to “actively and unreservedly support the Union’s foreign and security policy in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity” and to “abide by the Union’s actions in this field.”

The Treaty also requires Member States to “work together to strengthen and develop their mutual political solidarity” and to “refrain from any action contrary to the interests of the Union or likely to undermine its effectiveness as a coherent actor in international relations.” Once the EU has defined an approach to a specific issue of a geographical or thematic nature, Member States are required to “ensure that their national policies conform to the Union’s positions.”

Article 27 of the Treaty on European Union was pivotal in the creation of the European External Action Service, an institution designed to provide the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy with the necessary tools to carry out his or her mandate. It is to work in close cooperation with the diplomatic services of the Member States and be staffed from several sources: employees of the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, the European Commission, and diplomats seconded by national governments. This hybrid structure is designed to combine the EU’s institutional framework with the expertise of member states, but at the same time creates a number of challenges in terms of coordination and the division of responsibilities. The organizational principles and rules of operation of the EEAS are determined by a separate Council decision, adopted on the basis of a proposal by the High Representative following consultation with the European Parliament and with the consent of the European Commission.

Along with the establishment of the new institutional model, the creation of the EEAS was accompanied by special declarations (№ 13, 14, and 15) that accompanied the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon. These declarations held political and legal significance, as member states sought to define as clearly as possible the limits within which the Service could operate. These documents emphasized

that the creation of new instruments of the Common Foreign and Security Policy in no way alters the existing responsibility of member states for the development and implementation of their own foreign policies. At the same time, it was emphasized that they retain their powers regarding national diplomatic representation in third countries and participation in international organizations, including activities within the UN Security Council.

Particular emphasis was placed on the fact that the new provisions do not affect the specifics of national security and defense policy, which remains the exclusive domain of Member States. Furthermore, it was explicitly stated that the Lisbon Treaty does not grant the European Commission additional powers to initiate decisions in the field of security and defense, nor does it strengthen the role of the European Parliament in this area. This approach demonstrates the member states' desire to retain control over sensitive foreign and security policy issues, while allowing the EU to develop the institutional capacity to act in a coordinated manner on the international stage.

As a result, the European External Action Service emerged as a compromise mechanism: on the one hand, it became an important step toward the institutionalization of European diplomacy, providing the High Representative with more effective tools; on the other hand, its powers were significantly limited so as not to pose a threat to the national sovereignty of member states. The declarations accompanying the Lisbon Treaty effectively curtailed the potential of both the Service itself and the High Representative, transforming them into instruments of coordination and harmonization rather than fully-fledged autonomous decision-making centers in the area of EU foreign and security policy.

One of the defining principles of the CFSP's operation is the principle of unanimity, under which each member state has the right of veto when key decisions are made. This principle reflects the intergovernmental nature of security policy and simultaneously guarantees the preservation of states' sovereignty in the sensitive sphere of defense. In practice, however, it is precisely unanimity that often becomes the main barrier to the CFSP's effectiveness. In the face of deep divisions among member states, it slows down the decision-making process, especially in crisis situations where speed of response is critical. Examples of differing positions on sanctions against Russia, arms support to Ukraine, or relations with China demonstrate that the unanimity mechanism sometimes reflects compromise more than strategic effectiveness. In the current context, there is an increasingly active debate about transitioning to qualified majority voting in foreign policy, at least regarding certain aspects (sanctions policy, human rights protection, humanitarian aid). This could be an important step toward enhancing the effectiveness of the CFSP, although it raises concerns among states that fear a loss of sovereign control.

The Dilemma of National Interests and Collective Response

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has highlighted the significant limitations of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) governance system established by the Treaty of Lisbon, which has proven insufficiently effective in responding to the new configuration of European security, where the logic of force increasingly prevails over norms and rules. The initial political consolidation of EU member states partially offset the CFSP's structural dysfunctions, allowing the Union to act as a unified actor and become the world's largest donor of aid to Ukraine (consilium.europa.eu, 2022).

The diversity of national interests and historical memory has led to the formation of different political positions among Western states, which can be broadly divided into three main blocs. The first is the Anglo-Saxon bloc, led by the United States of America, with the United Kingdom as a key European partner; the second is the Eastern European bloc, in which Poland and the Baltic states play a leading role; the third is the Western European bloc, represented primarily by Italy, Germany, and France.

The Anglo-Saxon bloc is primarily focused on limiting Russia's strategic influence and establishing its status as a regional power. At the same time, this goal does not entail a desire to destroy Russian statehood, which distinguishes the position of London and Washington from the approach of the Eastern European bloc. For the U.S. and the U.K., the Russian threat is a matter of geopolitical competition, whereas for Poland and the Baltic states, it is perceived as a matter of national survival. The Kremlin's aggressive policy has led to the strengthening of alliances between states that were once in conflict, and has also contributed to the consolidation of Poland and Ukraine's

positions, allowing them to overcome historical differences. A symbolic marker of these differences was the incident involving a missile strike on Polish territory on November 15, which highlighted internal divisions within NATO and demonstrated the readiness of Eastern European states to act more decisively, even at the risk of further escalation. Furthermore, it was Poland and the Baltic states that became the most consistent advocates of severing energy ties with Russia, as historical experience and security considerations carry significantly more weight for them than economic benefits. Poland, which has twice disappeared from the political map of Europe due to its geopolitical position between two great powers, perceives current Russian aggression as an existential threat, a perception that has become particularly acute since the start of the full-scale war against Ukraine.

The Western European bloc, represented by Italy, Germany, and France, is characterized by a high level of economic interdependence with Russia, primarily in the energy sector. The German economic model was largely built on access to cheap Russian energy resources. The bet on Moscow's long-term reliability was based on the concept of "change through rapprochement," which envisaged the Kremlin's gradual integration into strong economic relations with the European Union. This approach was based on the expectation that, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia, as the empire's principal heir, would gradually align with the European sphere of values and norms; however, the events of recent years have demonstrated the illusory nature of these calculations.

Over the past three years, the EU has mobilized unprecedented resources: nearly 140 billion euros in financial and material support, a massive expansion of defense-industrial capabilities—including a threefold increase in annual artillery ammunition production—an increase in defense spending to 326 billion euros, the adoption of 16 packages of sanctions against Russia, and a reduction in Russian gas imports by more than 75 percent. In addition, the EU has provided shelter to nearly 6 million Ukrainian refugees, recorded over 40 million border crossings from Ukraine, and initiated negotiations on Ukraine's membership in the Union (Petrov & Hillion, 2022).

The return of war to the European continent served as a catalyst for deepening integration processes within the CFSP. At the same time, the EU's institutional response to Russian aggression revealed structural limitations: "special rules and procedures" for decision-making, the principle of unanimity, and the lack of accountability mechanisms remain key barriers to developing a swift and coordinated foreign policy.

The intensity of the EU's response gradually diminished. Most key initiatives were implemented in the early stages of the conflict, when the shock of the war helped consolidate the positions of member states. In 2022, the Union adopted the "Strategic Compass," launched the EUMAM UA mission, imposed nine rounds of sanctions, approved six of the seven tranches of the European Peace Facility (EPF), and, for the first time, supplied lethal weapons to Ukraine. However, a number of measures were slowed down by protracted diplomatic negotiations: the approval of the Ukraine Assistance Fund (UAF) and the Ukraine Facility took nine months, while the opening of negotiations on Ukraine's accession to the EU took 18 months. Sanctions also became more difficult to formulate: only six sanction packages were adopted in 2023–2024. The disbursement of the eighth tranche under the EPF has remained blocked since May 2023 due to a Hungarian veto (Politico, 2023), and both the operational implementation of the UAF and the transfer of €5 billion worth of weapons from member states remain on hold.

The difficulty in reaching consensus reflects the political status quo within the EU. Member states pursue different foreign policy approaches, and the Union is obliged to take into account the "specific nature of the security and defense policies" of Ireland, Austria, Malta, and Cyprus. As demonstrated by an emergency meeting in Paris in February 2025, member states failed to reach a consensus on key issues: the creation of a joint army, defense funding, and the development of military capabilities. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's call for the formation of a unified European army at the 2025 Munich Conference was rejected by EU leaders (The Kyiv Independent, 2025). The White Paper on the Future of European Defense explicitly excludes centralized EU responsibility for troops, doctrines, and force deployment, merely referring in general terms to the possible creation of a Defense Union (Joint White Paper for European Defense Readiness 2030, JOIN (2025). A similar lack of coordination is evident regarding the creation of a European missile defense shield and the lifting of the veto on the use of EU equipment to strike targets on Russian territory (Foreign Affairs Council, 2024). Member states are also divided over the deployment of troops on

Ukrainian territory in the event of a conflict resolution, with France being the main proponent of such a move following signals from the U.S. regarding a lack of support for Ukraine's security. Hungary, in turn, broke with the EU's common position on the international stage by voting against a UN General Assembly resolution condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine (UN News, 2025).

In addition, Hungary exercised its veto over the European Council's conclusions regarding Ukraine, forcing the EU to publish separate final documents. Slovakia has suspended arms supplies to Ukraine, is considering withdrawing from the EUMAM UA and initiatives of the European Peace Fund, and has threatened to block new sanctions against Russia following the appointment of its prime minister in December 2023 (Politico, 2023). Poland has banned imports of Ukrainian grain, restricted border crossings with Ukraine, and announced a possible suspension of long-term military support until the border crisis is resolved (European Pravda, 2023). Austria, Malta, Cyprus, and Ireland maintain a neutral stance, refraining from supplying lethal weapons.

EU energy policy has also become an area of numerous complications. The inability to reach an agreement on banning imports of Russian oil and petroleum products has left the Union vulnerable to Russian energy blackmail. Although all member states formally agreed to "reduce dependence on Russian gas, oil, and coal as quickly as possible" (Versailles Declaration, 2022), political blockades by Germany, Italy, and Austria persisted for two years, and in early 2025, the EU even increased its purchases of Russian gas (Politico, 2025). As a result, a ban on Russian energy products was gradually introduced, and a price cap on oil was established, which took effect in December 2022 for crude oil and in February 2023 for petroleum products. The 14th package of sanctions against Russian liquefied natural gas, the most profitable segment of the gas market, was not introduced until June 2024, despite opposition from Hungary and Germany (Council Decision (CFSP) 2024/1738, 2024). There is still no general ban on Russian liquefied gas even after three years of war, despite calls from Northern and Eastern European countries.

In addition, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria continued to receive oil from Russia as a "temporary exemption" from EU sanctions, while Croatia remained dependent on gas supplies. As part of the 15th sanctions package, the EU extended this exemption for the Czech Republic regarding petroleum products until June 2025 and for Croatia regarding vacuum gas oil until December 2025 (Council Regulation (EU) 2024/3192, 2024).

Alongside practical difficulties, the very institutional structure of the CFSP significantly complicates decision-making and limits its actual impact. Both the European Peace Fund and the Ukraine Assistance Fund (UAF) are intergovernmental in nature, where the principle of unanimity is the norm, and budgetary decisions are directly linked to the national interests of contributing member states. As a result, they do not address the structural dysfunctions of the CFSP and are unlikely to accelerate the provision of military support to Ukraine.

Establishing a common EU defense requires a prior unanimous decision by the heads of state or government in the European Council and subsequent ratification by all member states in accordance with their constitutional powers, pursuant to Article 42(2), first subparagraph, of the Treaty on the European Union. The "Strategic Compass" does not provide a solid foundation for the development of a common defense. The implementation of a military mission under the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) by a "coalition of the willing" in accordance with Article 44 of the Treaty on European Union requires the unanimous approval of the Council and remains under its constant supervision throughout its duration. Although the "Strategic Compass" aims to operationalize the provisions of Article 44, it makes a limited contribution to strengthening the EU's role in European security, despite the expansion of the CSDP's toolkit.

Thus, the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) faces a number of structural, political, and institutional challenges in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine. The lack of unanimity among member states, differences in national interests, and procedural constraints significantly hinder rapid decision-making and reduce the effectiveness of the CFSP. Military support for Ukraine and the imposition of sanctions against Russia have demonstrated the EU's potential to act as a unified bloc; however, numerous exceptions, blockages, and delays underscore that the mechanisms of the EPF and UAF funds do not address the policy's fundamental dysfunctions. Challenges in the energy sector, the lack of a common strategy for collective defense, and the limited role of CSDP instruments and "coalitions of the willing" demonstrate that the CFSP is not yet fully

capable of providing a collective response to contemporary threats to European security. These conclusions underscore the need for further reform of institutional mechanisms and enhanced coordination among member states to improve the effectiveness of the EU's foreign and security policy.

Areas for Strengthening the Collective Response

One of the key potential avenues for reforming the CFSP is a gradual move away from the principle of unanimity in foreign policy decision-making, with the introduction of a qualified majority mechanism. The introduction of the qualified majority principle reduces decision-making time, minimizes the risk of blockage by individual states, and enhances the speed of response to crisis situations, including issues of defense, sanctions policy, energy security, and humanitarian aid.

Implementing the qualified majority principle in the CFSP involves several key aspects. Firstly, it is necessary to clearly define the areas where the use of a qualified majority is possible and appropriate, particularly in crisis and operational matters where the speed of decision-making is critical. Secondly, the introduction of this decision-making format requires the development of coordinated procedures to balance national interests with the EU's collective goals, in order to ensure the legitimacy of the decisions adopted and avoid the perception of a restriction on member states' sovereignty.

Additional measures are possible to enhance the effectiveness of the CFSP in the context of implementing the qualified majority principle. These include establishing independent expert groups within the Council of the EU to assess foreign policy proposals, introducing a transparent mechanism for monitoring the implementation of decisions, and a system of prior consultations with member states to minimize potential conflicts. It is also important to combine the qualified majority principle with a more active role for the EEAS: the service can act as a coordinator, ensuring the preparation of expert assessments, the coordination of strategic proposals, and the operational management of the implementation of adopted decisions.

Implementing the qualified majority principle will not only speed up decision-making but also promote greater coherence and predictability in EU foreign policy. This will enable the CFSP to become more flexible, effective, and capable of responding promptly to contemporary challenges, including armed conflicts, energy crises, and hybrid threats, thereby strengthening the Union's collective security and enhancing its strategic autonomy on the international stage.

Strengthening the role of the European External Action Service (EEAS) is one of the key areas for improving the effectiveness of the CFSP. The EEAS is capable of coordinating the activities of member states, ensuring the rapid exchange of information, and formulating coordinated proposals on foreign policy measures. At the same time, the service's current structure is limited in its powers, and its role in implementing strategic decisions often depends on the political will of individual states.

Several reform directions can be proposed to enhance the EEAS's effectiveness. First, its mandate in the area of crisis planning and management should be expanded, including the ability to rapidly formulate proposals on the use of CFSP instruments without the need for prior coordination with all member states. Second, it is important to strengthen the EEAS's analytical capacity by establishing specialized expert groups on regional and sectoral issues, which will enable a faster and more accurate response to threats. Third, it is advisable to introduce a system for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of EEAS initiatives, which will ensure transparency of processes and accountability to the European Council and Parliament.

At the same time, these measures will contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of the CFSP as a whole. A more autonomous and well-coordinated EEAS will help reduce delays in decision-making, minimize the impact of diverging national interests, and create the conditions for a rapid collective response to external threats. Integrating its work with initiatives in the areas of defense, sanctions policy, and energy security will enable the CFSP to become more flexible, strategically coherent, and capable of addressing the complex challenges of modern European security.

A separate area of integration involves strengthening defense capabilities through initiatives such as Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European Defense Fund (EDF). These initiatives allow member states to cooperate in developing joint defense capabilities, create joint armaments projects, and enhance the interoperability of their armed forces. Expanding PESCO and effectively utilizing the EDF can not only strengthen the EU's defense capabilities but also stimulate

the formation of a single defense space, which is critically important in the context of countering Russian aggression.

Strategic documents such as the “Strategic Compass” and the “European Security Strategy” play a key role in shaping collective foreign and security policy. The “Strategic Compass” defines the key directions and priorities of the CFSP for the coming decade, establishing a framework for planning military operations and developing defense capabilities, while the “European Security Strategy” outlines the EU’s long-term security objectives, including cybersecurity, countering hybrid threats, and strengthening partnerships with third countries.

Despite their importance, these documents have a number of limitations that reduce their practical impact. They do not always provide clear mechanisms for monitoring implementation, do not provide for flexible procedures for responding to crisis situations, and take limited account of differences in the national interests of member states. To enhance the effectiveness of the CFSP, strategic documents could be supplemented with concrete implementation roadmaps, clear performance indicators, and monitoring tools that would allow for tracking progress toward achieving set goals. Furthermore, integrating scenario planning and risk analysis will help the documents better adapt to unpredictable threats, such as armed aggression or hybrid attacks, while regularly updating the documents based on lessons learned during crises will ensure their relevance and practical utility for member states.

Such updates to strategic documents will not only improve the speed of decision-making within the CFSP but also promote greater coordination among member states, creating the conditions for an effective collective EU response to contemporary security challenges.

The prospects for CFSP reforms are also closely linked to the EU’s further enlargement. An increase in the number of member states in the future could both strengthen the Union’s political influence on the global stage and complicate the decision-making process. In this context, it is particularly important to develop coordination mechanisms, enhance the role of institutions capable of ensuring an effective policy, and integrate defense capabilities while taking new members into account. Effective adaptation of the CFSP to an enlarged EU will create a more flexible, coherent, and capable collective security system, able to respond to contemporary challenges and safeguard the Union’s strategic interests amid growing instability in Europe.

Conclusions. An examination of the dilemmas of interests within the framework of the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy allows for a number of important generalizations. Russia’s full-scale war against Ukraine served as a catalyst for intensifying the European Union’s collective actions, yet at the same time revealed structural weaknesses and dysfunctions within the CFSP itself. In the short term, the Union has demonstrated the mobilization of significant financial, humanitarian, and military resources, becoming the main donor of aid to Ukraine; however, this success has not masked the fundamental problems that undermine the effectiveness of its foreign policy.

The greatest systemic vulnerability remains the principle of unanimity in decision-making. It is this principle that prevents a rapid response to crisis challenges, causes delays in the adoption of sanctions packages and military programs, and allows individual member states to block key initiatives. As a result, the CFSP proves to be excessively slow and dependent on political compromises, which calls into question its effectiveness in countering acute threats.

Another significant challenge is the deep fragmentation of member states’ national interests. Differences in geopolitical orientations, historical experiences, and economic dependencies lead to varying views on the EU’s role in the security sphere, which complicates the development of a unified strategy. This is clearly evident in the differing approaches to sanctions policy, energy security, or military support for Ukraine. Such divergence of positions not only slows down decision-making but also erodes trust in the EU as a coherent global actor.

Special attention should be paid to institutional constraints. The European External Action Service lacks sufficient authority to coordinate foreign policy initiatives, and strategic documents (the “Strategic Compass,” the “European Security Strategy”) remain largely declarative, outlining directions for development but failing to provide adequate mechanisms for implementation and oversight. Thus, even in the presence of common goals and political rhetoric, the real impact of these instruments remains limited.

An additional risk factor is the prospect of further EU enlargement. The accession of new

members, particularly Ukraine, could, on the one hand, strengthen the Union's political weight, but on the other, further exacerbate the problem of fragmentation. Without reforming decision-making procedures and strengthening institutional capacity, the EU may face the threat of political paralysis.

Thus, Russia's war against Ukraine has demonstrated both the European Union's ability to mobilize resources and act collectively, as well as the limits of its foreign policy capacity. The main task for the near future is to reform the CFSP: a phased move away from the unanimity principle, expanding the role of the EEAS, transforming strategic documents from declarative to operational, and deepening defense integration through PESCO and the EDF. Only by overcoming institutional dysfunctions and reconciling national and collective interests can the EU become a truly strategically autonomous and effective actor in the European and global security system.

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