

EDITORIAL

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EUROPEAN UNION SECURITY GOVERNANCE: FROM INTEGRATION TO STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

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All traditional concepts are being rendered obsolete by a rapidly changing reality, one that is sufficiently complex to preclude any confident discernment of emerging trends (Moreira, 2014). The European Union (EU) is an intricate project: each step forward has depended on a delicate equilibrium. Its success has often been portrayed as a “miracle” (Jones, 2003)—one underpinned by an international security architecture that now hangs in the balance. As confidence in the American security umbrella wavers, EU leaders are pressing for more tangible and autonomous capabilities, particularly in the security domain. “This must be Europe’s Independence Moment,” declared von der Leyen in 2025. Achieving greater resilience will require European countries to set aside differences and take bold steps towards a unified front, as shown possible by the collective support for Ukraine’s defence.

Against the background of the EU’s Strategic Compass, governance stand as a major and current concept. Nevertheless, it is often too broad to yield meaningful insight. The EU unique complexity exacerbates this problem. One solution to tackle the referred challenge is to adopt a sectoral approach (Champagne, 2026), which this dossier does.

The dossier explores central challenges to the European security framework, spanning economic sovereignty through foreign direct investment (FDI) screening; digital threats in data governance; external border management amid migration pressures; the securitisation of critical minerals in Ukraine; and power projection in Mali. The contributions analyse the relevant EU legal framework, identify specific policy gaps, highlight tensions between national and EU levels, and assess the influence of extra-EU actors, concluding with a critical reflection on the EU’s nascent—yet still tentative—grand strategy.

This thematic dossier is a collaborative project with the Portuguese Air Force,¹ encompassing academic outputs of master’s research conducted at the Portuguese Air

¹ The views expressed are solely those of the authors and do not reflect the opinions of the institutions mentioned.



Force Academy (Articles 2, 3 and 6). The critical review is authored by a master student at the Academy. Two articles are written by the editors—who are professors at the Portuguese Air Force Academy (Articles 1 and 4). The fifth article was prepared for a guest lecture at the Air Force Academy.

The themes brought together in this dossier largely match the security priorities highlighted at the latest Munich Security Conference—for example, in Rubio (2026). They include industrial capability protection (Article 1), digital innovation (Article 2), borders and migration (Articles 3 and 4), energy policy and supply chains (Article 5), and external security provision through military engagement (Article 6).

This project also captures key tensions in the EU security policymaking. In particular, the first article examines the dynamic balance between national and common interests—sovereignty *versus* union—that has marked the entire history of European integration. Focusing on FDI screening in the Portuguese case, it compares Portugal’s national-security and FDI framework with the EU’s current and prospective rules on FDI screening, assessing the sovereignty implications of the Commission’s drive to strengthen European economic security.

The dossier does not overlook the new challenges brought by emerging technologies. The second article provides an extensive account of contemporary data governance within the digital security framework. It discusses EU data-management legislation, its significance and implications, and the effects of data mismanagement in a global intertwined environment shaped by intensifying disputes.

The migration and refugee crises, given their longstanding nature, receive double attention in this dossier (two articles). The third article offers a thorough analysis on the evolution of EU migration policy over the last decade, including its legal and institutional framework and external border management, namely the role of relevant agencies such as Frontex. It concludes by mapping the main challenges and opportunities, and by reflecting on how border management can be more effectively aligned with the coherent pursuit of humanitarian, security, and development objectives.

The fourth article situates large-scale migration through the lens of internal security framework. It develops its argument at three levels of analysis: (1) the EU and Member States policies; (2) the potential strengths and vulnerabilities associated with non-European citizens currently residing in Europe; and (3) the effects of rulings and treaties between Europe and non-EU states in addressing this issue. The article argues that, because migration constitutes a structural element for European development, its management requires comprehensive policy measures to mitigate associated vulnerabilities.

The most pressing issue in European security since 2022 is also included: Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The fifth article uses the Ukraine case study, however, in a novel approach, to critically examine the EU securitisation of Ukraine’s critical raw materials. This study analyses two modes of securitisation: discursive construction and bureaucratic practice. It concludes that while EU external action in this regard may accelerate European decarbonisation and reduce dependence on extra-European suppliers, it also



risks reinforcing centre–periphery dynamics and prioritising the EU’s energy security over Ukraine’s own concerns.

Following the outward perspective, the sixth article provides a comprehensive analysis of the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy engagement in Mali. It links EU action to the political, military, economic, social, information, and infrastructure (PMESII) dimensions of Mali’s crisis. This article concludes on both the limitations—related to political cohesion, local ownership, and structural instability—and the EU’s potential—notably in comprehensive crisis management and multilateral coordination—as a global security actor.

Lastly, the critical review engages with *European strategy in the 21st Century*, concluding this dossier with a broad and policy-oriented reflection. The examined book successfully reintroduces strategic thinking into EU policy discussions by translating the drive for autonomy into concrete, assessable options. A central contribution is its diagnosis of the persistent gap between proclamation and implementation, making the book less of a blueprint and more of a tool for informing public debate on the effective formulation of a grand strategy—an effort that closely mirrors this dossier’s contribution to European security governance.

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