

Marilena Koppa. The Evolution of the Common Security and Defence Policy: Critical Junctures and the Quest for EU Strategic Autonomy.
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The European Union's Strategic autonomy concept embraced in 2003 at the inception of the European Security Strategy (ESS), has undergone its ups and downs, while a bulk of scholarly literature on the topic was generated after the EU's Global strategy was introduced back in 2016. Since then, the tone of calling for strategic autonomy has lessened and the latest Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) document – Strategic Compass – mentions it only once.¹ Although the interest in strategic autonomy have lessened, Marilena Koppa, Professor of comparative politics at the Panteion University in Greece and former Member of the European Parliament, with her book “The Evolution of the Common Security and Defence Policy: Critical Junctures and the Quest for EU Strategic

¹ Council of the European Union, ‘The Strategic Compass for Security and Defence – For a European Union That Protects Its Citizens, Values and Interests and Contributes to International Peace and Security’, March 2022, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7371-2022-INIT/en/pdf>.

Autonomy,”² puts forward another attempt to unveil the EU’s quest for strategic autonomy through a temporal approach in the evolution of CSDP. The author’s focus over the years has been on the Balkans, as she has issued several books and articles on the matter,³ however, her latest book is already a second attempt to deliver on CSDP, as she issued a book on the history of CSDP back in 2017, in Greek language.⁴

There is a wealth of literature that describes the evolution of CSDP from different angles and different theories. To mention a few, Panos Koutrakos analysed the emergence of CSDP from the perspective of rule of law,⁵ with an impressive amount of cases and EU missions reviewed. Giovanni Faleg employs the evolution of CSDP to showcase how international institutions learn and change over time.⁶ The theoretical approach of institutionalism itself is challenged and improved by Nikki Ikani,⁷ who draws on the cases of the Arab Spring and the 2014 Ukraine Crisis to systematically account for how critical junctures influence CSDP and foreign policy change. Koppa’s approach is a bit different. She employs historical institutionalism not to go too deep into an epistemological realm but “to situate this project on the current theoretical debate on European security.”⁸ Being a former

² Marilena Koppa, *The Evolution of the Common Security and Defence Policy: Critical Junctures and the Quest for EU Strategic Autonomy*, St Antony’s Series (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-99158-6>.

³ Marilena Koppa, *Minorities in Post-Communist Balkans* (Athens: Livanis Publications, 1997); Marilena Koppa, *The Creation of States in the Balkans. Three Plus One Adventures* (Athens: Livanis Publications, 2002).

⁴ Marilena Koppa, *The Common Security and Defence Policy. The History, the Institutions, the Strategies* (Athens: Patakis Publications, 2017).

⁵ Panos Koutrakos, *The EU Common Security and Defence Policy*, First edition, Oxford European Union Law Library (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁶ Giovanni Faleg, *The EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy: Learning Communities in International Organizations*, Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

⁷ Nikki Ikani, *Crisis and Change in European Union Foreign Policy: A Framework of EU Foreign Policy Change*, European Politics (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021).

⁸ Marilena Koppa, *The Evolution of the Common Security and Defence Policy*, 6.

Member of the European Parliament (MEP), the author also “tries to infuse existing academic literature with personal policy insights,”⁹ employing her insider access to key actors in CSDP across different EU institutions: diplomats, functionaries in the Commission, European External Action Service and so on.

The evolution of the CSDP is portrayed through the classic tenets of historical institutionalism. While defining the critical junctures in the making of CSDP, the author stress-tests them with endogenous and exogenous factors and asks the book’s central question: “How temporal events and historical legacies shape policy practice.”¹⁰ Initially, the author sets the stage with theoretical explanations of historical institutionalism, the theory of strategic culture, and how these concepts are to be applied further in a book. The second part of the book lays down six critical junctures that are considered to have affected the evolution of CSDP: The Yugoslav wars in 1992 and 1999, the Second Gulf War, the 2011 Libyan campaign and the occupation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014, the Migration crisis in 2015 and a Rupture of Anglosphere, as author names the combination of BREXIT and comeback of US isolationism with the election of D. Trump. Finally, the book is concluded with an analysis of these junctures and what it is for EU’s Strategic Autonomy.

The book’s second part – the critical junctures – a detailed historical account of the evolution of CSDP, and the recent and up-to-date analysis must be the book’s most substantial part. Koppa writes in a simple narrative style, slowly progressing from the inception of EU CSDP to the latest iteration – the adoption of Strategic Compass. The Chapter very well describes the circumstances under which critical junctures occurred and what policy changes these junctures brought about the CSDP. The St. Malo declaration by French and British leaders as a result of the Yugoslav wars reduced the inherent tension between the nations to support both poles of the Euroatlantic Secu-

⁹ Ibid., 4.

¹⁰ Ibid., 6.

rity system; the divergence over the support to US second Persian Gulf campaign led to the existence of the ESS; the migration crisis in 2015 reinforced Frontex's mandate and elevated its competences to become a first uniformed agency of EU – all these are just a few examples of the matter.

Another slight but notable feature of the book is the introduction of the European Parliament's (EP) role in CSDP, as other scholars mostly overlook it. The author draws on her experience as a former member of The Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE) as well as interviews with MEPs to shed some light on how EP could influence the making of CSDP; however, this attempt immediately draws some criticism. First, it feels that being a former MEP, the author tries to inflate the importance of EP in the making of CSDP, i.e. "Although Council does make binding decisions <...> through Parliament, both the Council and the Commission will be contesting for political credibility and legitimacy" or "the Commission does not depend on parliamentary majorities in a manner directly equivalent to a national government, the Brussels executive does depend on MEPs and party delegations as national influencers."¹¹ Second, the overly promised "greater access to parliamentarians" and ability "to conduct series of interviews that yielded several valuable insights"¹² do not withstand the scrutiny: out of just six references to the interviews overall in the book, only three reference the MEPs.

The discussion on the EP's role in the evolution of CSDP is a missed opportunity that could have made great value for the book. Another miss is a more detailed account of the impact of the EU institutions on the evolution of CSDP. The book details how critical junctures led to the developments and creation of specific institutions, i.e. Political and Security Committee or European External Action Service. However, it does not provide any deeper analysis into how these newly developed institutions changed the dynamics in

¹¹ Ibid., 192.

¹² Ibid., 4.

decision-making, competition or collaboration amongst the EU institutions or member states and the evolution of CSDP in general. Being the insider and having greater access to those institutions, the author could have impacted the scholarly literature on the matter.

Finally, it has to be noted that the book was released in the middle of the year 2022, after the full-scale invasion by Russia of Ukraine. It immediately draws attention, and the invasion is expected to be analysed as the latest critical juncture in the CSDP realm. However, this is not the case, and the author acknowledges this at the very beginning, stating that the book was written just before the war erupted. Koppa agrees that this “is a watershed moment for European Security and Defence, as war has returned to the continent after nearly 75 years. <...> Undeniably, the Russian invasion will be the next critical juncture in the evolution of CSDP.”¹³

The book is the latest iteration in the field of EU security studies that provides a detailed and comprehensive account of the evolution of CSDP within the framework of historical institutionalism. While it successfully captures the key milestones and developments in the CSDP through the critical junctures approach, it is essential to acknowledge that it missed an opportunity to delve deeper into the EP role in the making of security policy of the EU and the impact of newly established EU institutions on the evolution of CSDP. Having said that, it must be stressed that the book achieved its aim and answered the question of how historical events shape policy practices and that readers of this book will benefit from the amount of information provided on the evolution of CSDP, making it a valuable resource for students, scholars, policymakers and practitioners.

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¹³ Ibid., vii.

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