

# **The challenges for an EU “Commissioner for Defence and Space”**

Essay

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## **Abstract**

This essay examines the creation of the European Union's first Commissioner for Defence and Space and assesses the challenges that define the portfolio. Using a qualitative document analysis grounded in International Relations research methods, the study compares the mandate expressed in the European Defence Industrial Strategy, the President's mission letter, and early Commission communications with contemporary academic and policy literature. The results are organised into two families of obstacles. Internal challenges stem from the EU's institutional design: ambiguity of competences between supranational and intergovernmental actors, persistent fragmentation of the defence market and procurement habits, procedural inertia, and risks of duplication with bodies such as the EDA and ESA. Circumstantial challenges arise from the strategic environment: the war-driven "production gap," divergent national threat perceptions, and the emerging, dual-use space domain amid delayed EU Space Law. The analysis finds that the Commissioner can influence industrial scaling, market integration, and space–defence coordination, but cannot on his own overcome sovereignty-based limits of CFSP/CSDP or long-standing procurement preferences. The role is therefore catalytic rather than transformative; its success ultimately hinges on Member-State will to empower common action.

*Keywords:* Commissioner for Defence and Space; EDIS; EDTIB; EU Space Law; Strategic Compass.

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## **2.Preface**

The balance of power as we have known it for the past decades is undergoing tremendous change at an increasingly brisk pace. As a military cadet, I am naturally drawn to topics that intersect the military, political, and societal spheres. The ability to coherently develop narratives and perspectives from the vast amount of information available in the twenty-first century is an essential skill for decision-making, whether at the personal level or in the grand magnitude of collective and strategic choices.

The topic at hand attracted me because the idea of a new European Union Commissioner for Defence and Space embodies precisely this challenge: the need to assess the current power struggles shaping modern Europe (as well as the rest of the world) whilst simultaneously deciding on the most appropriate course of action for the EU. Much like myself, as a cadet in the Portuguese Air Force, I believe such a Commissioner would place the utmost priority on the general welfare and prosperity of the European Union, leaving me, therefore, intrigued as to what restraints he may encounter on his aforementioned path.

This essay presents me with the opportunity not only to deepen my understanding of the European Union’s institutional dynamics but also to reflect on the strategic implications of innovation at the highest political level and the challenges that may underlie them. I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this timely and meaningful debate, and I hope that this work inspires other young Europeans to take responsibility and interest in the discussion at hand.

João Ferreira

Granja do Marquês, November 14 2025.

### 3.Introduction

The European Union today operates in a notoriously altered security environment. Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine has reintroduced high-intensity war to the continent, exposed long-standing dependence on external suppliers, and accelerated debates on Europe’s ability to defend itself.<sup>1</sup> This shift has coincided with broader geopolitical pressures—from uncertainty in the transatlantic relationship to the weaponisation of economic and technological interdependence—which have forced the Union to reassess the instruments through which it safeguards security and autonomy.<sup>2</sup>

Into this broader landscape, the EU’s security and defence efforts remain distributed across several institutions, most notably the European Council, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the European External Action Service. Yet, over the past decade, the European Commission has acquired a more visible role, especially where defence intersects with industrial policy, regulation, procurement, and the single market. Initially conceived as an institution of legislative initiative and economic management, the Commission gradually expanded into defence-related domains through instruments such as the European Defence Fund, the Act in Support of Ammunition Production, and the European Defence Industry Reinforcement through the Common Procurement Act.<sup>3</sup> These tools reflect a broader alignment between industrial integration and defence preparedness, particularly after 2022.

Against this backdrop, the appointment of Andrius Kubilius as the first Commissioner for Defence and Space represents a new institutional step. Although the portfolio is formally defined, its practical contours remain unsettled. The Commissioner inherits responsibilities rooted in the 2024 European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS), yet the relationship between this strategy and the new office is still evolving; beyond initial policy documents and early public interventions, limited empirical evidence exists on how the role will operate in practice.

The purpose of the present paper is therefore to examine the challenges that the Commissioner for Defence and Space is likely to face as he seeks to carry out the mandate he has been assigned. By focusing on obstacles that derive from both the EU’s institutional architecture and the broader geopolitical environment, this essay aims to clarify the constraints that may hinder the Commissioner’s effectiveness and the extent to which these lie within their capacity to influence.

*Footnotes*

EEAS, *Strategic Compass for Security and Defence*, 2022

European Commission, *European Defence Industrial Strategy*, 2024.

European Parliament & Council Regulations establishing EDF, EDIRPA, and ASAP.

## 4. Current State of the Research

Research on the European Union’s evolving role in security and defence has expanded considerably over the past decade, reflecting a broader shift in the Union’s strategic posture after the return of large-scale war to Europe and the increasing importance of technological sovereignty. Scholars generally agree that, while defence remains primarily an intergovernmental domain, the EU’s institutional landscape has become more complex, with supranational instruments complementing the actions of Member States.

A significant body of literature traces the roots of this evolution to the period following the 2016 EU Global Strategy. Analysts such as Fiott argue that the European Commission began expanding its influence through industrial policy, positioning itself as a key actor in capability development by leveraging its competences in the single market and research funding.<sup>1</sup> The establishment of the European Defence Fund (EDF) in 2017, the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) are widely recognised as milestones in this process, marking the first time EU resources were used to support defence research and capability development directly.<sup>2</sup> This shift is reinforced by policy documents such as the Strategic Compass (2022), which emphasises industrial preparedness and defence investment as core pillars of EU security.<sup>3</sup>

Parallel to these developments, academic research has increasingly focused on Europe’s fragmented defence industrial landscape. Numerous studies highlight the inefficiencies created by diverse national standards, parallel procurement processes, and limited collaborative spending. Béraud-Sudreau notes that this fragmentation undermines both cost-effectiveness and interoperability, thereby limiting the EU’s ability to respond collectively to crises.<sup>4</sup> The European Defence Agency’s regular defence data reports provide empirical backing, showing persistently low levels of joint procurement and cross-border acquisition.<sup>5</sup> As a result, scholars view Commission-led initiatives such as the Act in Support of Ammunition Production (ASAP) and the European Defence Industry Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act (EDIRPA) as attempts to incentivise cooperation and strengthen the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB).<sup>6</sup>

Institutional questions remain central to the academic debate. Intergovernmentalist authors such as Menon maintain that Member States continue to dominate defence policy, arguing that the Commission’s expanding role does not fundamentally alter the intergovernmental nature of the CSDP.<sup>7</sup> By contrast, integration-oriented scholars point to the Commission’s growing financial

clout, particularly through the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)—as evidence of gradual supranationalisation. Bickerton and Fiott describe this as “integration by instrument,” whereby budgetary tools shape state behaviour even without formal transfers of sovereignty.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, hybrid perspectives such as those proposed by Riddervold and Sjørusen suggest that EU defence governance is best understood as differentiated integration, with influence split between supranational agenda-setting and intergovernmental decision-making.<sup>9</sup>

The intersection between defence and space policy has garnered increasing scholarly attention. Space is now recognised as a strategic enabler of security, and EU initiatives such as Galileo, Copernicus, and IRIS<sup>2</sup> have sparked debates about governance models. De Man argues that the EU is entering a new phase of space governance where security considerations are becoming unavoidable, raising questions about regulatory authority, industrial strategy, and institutional coordination.<sup>10</sup> Kolovos similarly observes that Europe’s space and defence ecosystems are becoming more interconnected, yet they remain governed by separate regulatory frameworks, creating gaps in oversight and coherence.<sup>11</sup> These analyses highlight the growing importance of space in Europe’s security posture and suggest that institutional innovation will be necessary to manage this convergence.

Against this backdrop, the creation of the Commissioner for Defence and Space in 2025 marks a notable institutional development. However, since the portfolio is new, academic work focused solely on this role remains limited or even speculative. The most substantive early assessment is offered by Pilar Maria Bolognesi, who identifies three main challenges: defence market fragmentation, political reluctance to centralise procurement, and possible overlaps with existing EU actors such as the High Representative (HR/VP) and the Commissioner for Industry.<sup>12</sup> A second early contribution is Guntram Wolff’s “Memo to the Commissioner responsible for defence,” which outlines recommendations for how the new Commissioner might manage institutional and industrial constraints. Although insightful, Wolff’s analysis is forward-looking, as it was written before the portfolio began functioning in practice.<sup>13</sup>

Taken together, this literature provides a solid foundation for understanding the institutional, industrial, and political dynamics shaping EU defence policy. It highlights the Commission’s expanding involvement, the structural challenges of Europe’s defence market, and the increasing relevance of space to security. However, because the office of the Commissioner for Defence and Space is extremely recent, existing work has understandably focused on broader institutional trends rather than an assessment of this new role itself.

*Footnotes*

1. Fiott, Daniel. EUISS, “EU Defence and Industrial Policy,” 2023.
  2. European Commission, *EDF Factsheet*, 2017.
  3. EEAS, *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence*, 2022.
  4. Béraud-Sudreau, Lucie. IISS, *Europe’s Defence Market Fragmentation*, 2022.
  5. European Defence Agency, *Defence Data 2023*.
  6. European Commission, *ASAP and EDIRPA Regulations*, 2023–2024.
  7. Menon, Anand. "Defence Policy and Intergovernmentalism," *JCMS*, 2020.
  8. Bickerton, Christopher. *European Integration*, OUP, 2012.
  9. Riddervold, Marianne & Sjursen, Helene. “Institutional Influence in EU Foreign Policy,” *EFA Review*, 2018.
  10. De Man, P. “EU Space Governance at the Threshold of a New Era,” *Global Policy*, 2025.
  11. Kolovos, A. “Strengthening Links Between EU Space and Security,” *Space Policy*, 2023.
  12. Bolognesi, Pilar. “The New EU Commissioner for Defence and Space,” UKICE, 2025.
  13. Wolff, Guntram. “Memo to the Commissioner Responsible for Defence,” Bruegel, 2025.
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## 5. Research Gap

Although the European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS) and the European Union’s broader defence-industrial initiatives have received considerable scholarly and policy attention, the creation of the Commissioner for Defence and Space remains largely underexplored in academic literature. Existing research considers the development of EU defence instruments, the strengthening of the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base, and the increasing importance of space for European security. These analyses provide valuable context, yet they do not examine how these developments interact with the establishment of a new Commissioner whose portfolio combines defence and space under a single supranational mandate.

Since the position is new, research has not yet assessed the Commissioner’s role beyond initial programme statements and early expectations. Although the mandate is officially outlined in institutional documents, its practical impact remains unclear, and there is limited empirical evidence of how the role operates in practice. Consequently, most early evaluations are prospective rather than evaluative.

Among these, the most direct contribution is Guntram Wolff’s Memo to the Commissioner Responsible for Defence, which outlines potential priorities and structural obstacles. While analytically valuable, it was written before the office began operating and therefore lacks the hindsight needed to evaluate the actual challenges faced by the Commissioner. Other early commentaries, such as those by Pilar Maria Bolognesi and several policy analysts, remain descriptive and dispersed.

Consequently, no study has yet offered a structured analysis of the challenges inherent to the Commissioner’s mandate or distinguished between those stemming from the EU’s institutional architecture and those influenced by contemporary geopolitical and technological factors.

## 6. Research Question(s)

The establishment of the Commissioner for Defence and Space introduces a new and largely unexplored dimension within the European Union’s institutional framework. As the role is recent and its practical limits are still forming, understanding the challenges associated with this new portfolio is crucial for evaluating its potential influence. The Commissioner operates at the intersection of long-standing institutional constraints and swiftly changing geopolitical conditions, and it is precisely at this junction that the main question of this essay arises:

**“How does the Commissioner for Defence and Space confront the internal and external challenges that define his mandate, and which of these challenges may hinder his effectiveness within the responsibilities assigned to him?”**

Our previous central question gives way to multiple supporting questions, such as **“which internal, structural challenges arise from the distribution of competences among EU institutions, and how these limitations shape the Commissioner’s room for manoeuvre”**.

The analysis then turns outward, raising a second question: **which external or circumstantial challenges—geopolitical, technological, and strategic—form the environment in which the Commissioner must operate, and how do these external pressures influence the internal dynamics of EU defence governance?** This allows us to examine how the broader security context interacts with institutional limitations.

Lastly, we shall consider a more pragmatic and forward-looking question: **what do the Commissioner’s early public statements and initiatives reveal about how this new role is beginning to mold into shape, and under what conditions might the position contribute meaningfully to greater coherence in European defence and space policy?**

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## 7. Methodology

To best address the questions at hand, a qualitative research design grounded in document analysis will be employed, following the methodological principles outlined by Christopher Lamont, who emphasises the value of systematically interpreting texts to understand political processes and institutional behaviour.<sup>1</sup> This approach is suitable given the novelty of the Commissioner for Defence and Space and the scarcity of empirical data, making primary documents central to evaluating how the role is defined and how it is beginning to operate.

The research proceeds in two steps. First, it examines the Commissioner’s mandate and intended objectives through official EU documentation, including the European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS), early Commission communications and a distinct spotlight on President Ursula von der Leyen’s Mission Letter.<sup>2</sup> These sources provide the baseline of expectations against which the Commissioner’s initial actions can be assessed. Second, the essay analyses academic and policy literature to contextualise these developments within broader debates on EU defence governance, institutional competence, and defence–industrial integration.<sup>3</sup>

This methodological combination enables an internally consistent examination of the challenges facing the Commissioner by comparing formal institutional ambitions with early real-world performance, while situating both within established theoretical and empirical research in the field of European security.

### *Footnotes*

Christopher Lamont, *Research Methods in International Relations*, 2nd ed., 2022.

Ursula von der Leyen, *Mission Letter to the Commissioner for Defence and Space*, 2024; European Commission, *European Defence Industrial Strategy*, 2024.

Fiott, Daniel. “EU Defence and Industrial Policy,” *EUISS*, 2023; Bolognesi, Pilar Maria. “The New EU Commissioner for Defence and Space,” *UKICE*, 2025.

## **8. Research and Results of Research**

The purpose of this chapter is to apply the methodological approach defined earlier and present the concrete findings that emerge from the academic literature, institutional documents, policy analyses, and the mission letter addressed to the Commissioner for Defence and Space. Building on the existing research, the results are presented along the two categories identified in the research design: internal challenges, which arise from the institutional and political structure of the European Union, and circumstantial challenges, shaped by the geopolitical and technological environment in which the Commissioner must operate. The final section synthesises these findings by distinguishing which challenges lie within the Commissioner’s ability to influence meaningfully, and which remain outside his effective control.

### **8.1 Internal Challenges**

#### **8.1.1 Ambiguity of Role and Competence**

One of the most recurrent findings across scholarly and policy-oriented literature is the ambiguity surrounding the Commissioner’s formal position within the EU’s architecture. Defence remains a domain dominated by the Council and the Member States under the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The High Representative (HR/VP), the European Defence Agency (EDA), and the Council all hold authority that the Commission cannot override. Academic analyses note that the Commissioner therefore occupies a structurally hybrid space, located at the intersection of intergovernmental and supranational dynamics.<sup>1</sup>

Guntram Wolff explicitly identifies the need for “clarity on the job description” as the Commissioner’s first challenge.<sup>2</sup> The portfolio encompasses defence industry, procurement incentives, space governance, and dual-use capability development, yet none of these areas provide full legislative autonomy. Even the 2024 European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS), which is formally under the responsibility of the Commissioner, relies on voluntary cooperation by Member States and complementary action by the Council.<sup>3</sup>

The mission letter issued by President von der Leyen reinforces this ambiguity. It assigns ambitious tasks—such as delivering a “simpler and faster” Europe, advancing defence industrial preparedness, and strengthening space strategy—yet simultaneously emphasises that the Commissioner must “work closely with the High Representative” and “ensure full coherence with Council-led decision-making.”<sup>4</sup> The research shows that this structural overlap

is an inherent challenge: the Commissioner must assert a new institutional role while lacking exclusive competence over the policy areas he is expected to shape.

### **8.1.2 Fragmentation of the Defence Market and Procurement Mechanisms**

A second major internal challenge concerns the persistent fragmentation of the European defence market. Academic literature consistently highlights the inefficiencies that arise from parallel national industries, divergent operational requirements, and long-standing procurement habits rooted in domestic preferences.<sup>5</sup>

Empirical data from the European Defence Agency and independent studies underline the scale of the problem: although EU defence spending reached a record €270 billion in 2023, 78% of acquisitions between March 2022 and June 2023 were made from outside the EU, with the United States alone accounting for 63%.<sup>6</sup> Despite the political momentum generated by the war in Ukraine, collaborative procurement within the EU remains weak and uneven.

EDIS attempts to reverse this trend by setting ambitious targets:

- 35% of intra-EU defence trade by 2030;
- 50% of procurement sourced from the EDTIB by 2030;
- 60% by 2035;
- 40% of equipment purchased collaboratively.<sup>7</sup>

Yet several analyses—including Wolff’s critique—note that these goals may be unrealistic without profound cultural, industrial, and political shifts among Member States.<sup>8</sup> The Commissioner is tasked with creating incentives for cooperation, but cannot compel states to change procurement behaviour. The findings therefore suggest that defence industrial integration is the central challenge within the Commissioner’s remit, but also the one most constrained by entrenched national practices.

### **8.1.3 Bureaucratic and Procedural Hurdles**

A further internal challenge emerges from the complexity of European procedures. Both the mission letter and the White Paper Readiness 2030 identify administrative inertia and slow decision cycles as structural obstacles to defence responsiveness.<sup>9</sup> The Commissioner is instructed to contribute to a more agile Union, reducing bureaucratic burdens and streamlining implementation across the defence and space portfolios.

However, the research shows that while the Commissioner can propose simplification

measures, he cannot unilaterally reform the regulatory frameworks that require Council agreement. This creates a discrepancy between political expectations (rapid scaling of production, accelerated procurement, more flexible funding) and institutional reality. The challenge is therefore both procedural and political: the Commissioner’s ambitions depend on coordination across multiple actors who do not fall under his authority.

#### **8.1.4 Avoiding Duplication with Existing Institutions**

The literature on EU defence governance repeatedly warns of overlap between supranational bodies. Analysts underline the risk that the new Commissioner may duplicate, rather than complement, existing structures such as the EDA, PESCO frameworks, or the HR/VP’s CSDP leadership.<sup>10</sup> The same problem appears in the space domain: De Man describes a “dual institutional ecosystem” in which the European Space Agency (ESA) and the European Commission share responsibilities but remain governed by distinct legal and political logics.<sup>11</sup>

As the Commissioner inherits responsibility for space through DG DEFIS, he must coordinate industrial programmes like IRIS<sup>2</sup>, manage links with ESA, and support the development of the upcoming EU Space Law. This institutional complexity represents a structural challenge that cannot be removed, only managed.

## **8.2 Circumstantial Challenges**

### **8.2.1 The War in Ukraine and the “Production Gap”**

Across institutional documents and independent studies, the war in Ukraine is presented as the catalyst that transformed defence industrial policy from a long-term aspiration into an urgent necessity. The conflict turned into a war of attrition, making production capacity and ammunition output decisive factors.<sup>12</sup>

Wolff’s memo argues that Europe must demonstrate leadership in industrial scale-up, cost-effectiveness, and willingness to pay—a triad in which the EU still lags.<sup>13</sup> Demand for equipment has surged but domestic production remains insufficient. Even if EU output increases, critics argue that import shares may remain high because replenishment cycles cannot keep pace with wartime consumption.<sup>14</sup>

The research, therefore, identifies Ukraine not only as a geopolitical shock but as an ongoing structural pressure that exposes weaknesses in procurement, stockpiling, supply chains, and production incentives—domains in which the Commissioner has influence but not command authority.

### **8.2.2 Divergent Threat Perceptions and Political Fragmentation**

Scholars such as Biscop and Fiott, among others, consistently argue that Europe’s greatest external challenge is not geopolitical but political: Member States do not perceive threats uniformly. Eastern states prioritise Russia; southern states emphasise instability in the Middle East and North Africa; northern states focus on maritime domains and Arctic competition.

Additionally, sovereignty concerns persist. Bolognesi notes that even states most vocal on defence resisted supporting candidates for the Commissioner’s role, fearing supranational encroachment on national prerogatives.<sup>15</sup> The lack of cohesion limits any supranational initiative, regardless of the Commissioner’s ambitions. The research shows that this challenge remains one of the key external factors shaping internal feasibility.

### **8.2.3 Space as a Strategic Frontier**

The literature on space provides a distinct set of circumstantial challenges. Space has become a competitive, dual-use strategic domain in which the EU seeks autonomy in satellite navigation, observation, and secure communications. As De Man observes, the EU is transitioning from a regulatory actor to a genuine space power.<sup>16</sup> Multiple sources highlight the significance of IRIS<sup>2</sup>, the delays surrounding the EU Space Law, and the growing integration of space into defence planning.<sup>17</sup>

However, overlapping responsibilities between ESA and the EU complicate governance. Kolovos and others identify gaps in communication, fragmented standards, and the absence of a shared vision between space and defence actors.<sup>18</sup> These findings point to a structural-strategic challenge: the Commissioner must coordinate industrial, defence, and space policy simultaneously while the regulatory foundations are still being constructed.

## **8.3 Challenges Within and Beyond the Commissioner’s Reach**

Drawing on the evidence, it is possible to distinguish between challenges the Commissioner can realistically influence and those that remain outside his formal authority.

Within his influence:

- promoting defence industrial integration through EDIS, EDF, and procurement incentives;
- addressing fragmentation by coordinating Member State initiatives;
- accelerating space–defence integration, including IRIS<sup>2</sup> and the future Space Law;
- improving supply chain resilience and encouraging EU-based technological development;
- contributing to procedural simplification as mandated by the mission letter.

Beyond his structural control:

- sovereignty-based limits of CFSP/CSDP;
- divergent national political priorities;
- dependence on U.S. capabilities and imports;
- the political will of Member States to pursue the European Defence Union;
- institutional overlap with the HR/VP, EDA, ESA, and the Council.

These findings indicate that the Commissioner’s role is characterised by a tension between ambition and institutional constraints: he has significant influence in industrial policy and space governance but remains limited in traditional defence issues dominated by intergovernmental logic.

### **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Fiott, “EU Defence and Industrial Policy,” EUISS, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Wolff, *Memo to the Commissioner Responsible for Defence*, 2025.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, *European Defence Industrial Strategy*, 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Ursula von der Leyen, *Mission Letter to Andrius Kubilius*, 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Béraud-Sudreau, *Europe’s Defence Market Fragmentation*, IISS, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> *The Growing Role of the European Commission in Defence Capability Development*, pp. 304–305.

<sup>7</sup> EDIS targets, 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Wolff, *The European Defence Industrial Strategy: Important, But Raising Many Questions*, 2024.

<sup>9</sup> European Commission, *White Paper for European Defence – Readiness 2030*.

<sup>10</sup> Menon, “Defence Policy and Intergovernmentalism,” 2020.

<sup>11</sup> De Man, “EU Space Governance at the Threshold of a New Era,” *Global Policy*, 2025.

<sup>12</sup> EEAS, *Strategic Compass*, 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Wolff, *Memo*, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Wolff, *EDIS critique*, 2024.

<sup>15</sup> Bolognesi, “The New EU Commissioner for Defence and Space,” UKICE, 2025.

<sup>16</sup> De Man, *EU Space Governance*, 2025.

<sup>17</sup> DEFIS, *EDIS Factsheet*; Copernicus Conference Reporting, 2024.

<sup>18</sup> Kolovos, “Strengthening Links Between EU Space and Defence,” *Space Policy*, 2023.

## 9. Discussion of Results and personal Conclusions

The findings of this research reveal that the creation of a Commissioner for Defence and Space sits at the crossroads of ambition and limitation. On one hand, the EU has never before equipped itself with such an institution. On the other, the environment in which this role now functions remains structurally resistant to centralisation. These two forces conflict throughout the Commissioner’s agenda, and this tension influences both the progress achieved so far and the obstacles that will continue to shape the mandate.

The internal challenges identified—particularly the ambiguity surrounding competences, the fragmentation of the defence market, and the risk of duplication with pre-existing institutions—reflect deeper characteristics of the EU system. Defence remains largely intergovernmental, even though industrial and space policies fall under the Commission’s responsibility. This division creates a persistent mismatch between expectations and authority. It explains why the Commission can develop instruments such as the European Defence Fund or EDIRPA, but cannot oblige states to use them in a coordinated or exclusively European manner.<sup>1</sup>

The circumstantial factors, including the war in Ukraine, the pressure to expand industrial output, and the increasing importance of the space domain, raise expectations even further. These developments demonstrate why a more cohesive European defence posture is becoming increasingly necessary. At the same time, they reveal the limits of the Commissioner’s authority. Member states still purchase most of their equipment from outside the EU—78% between 2022 and 2023<sup>2</sup>—and divergent national priorities continue to hinder integration.

Taken together, the results point to a simple but important conclusion: the Commissioner can facilitate, but not transform. He can encourage cooperation, strengthen industrial tools, and push for clearer frameworks, especially in defence procurement and space governance. But he cannot, on his own, resolve structural constraints rooted in sovereignty, institutional complexity, and longstanding political habits.

Ultimately, the success of this new role depends less on the Commissioner’s ambition and more on whether member states are willing to allow the EU to act as a genuine defence actor. For now, the mandate represents progress—but it is only the beginning of a much longer political journey.

***Footnotes***

European Commission, European Defence Industrial Strategy, 2024.

“The Growing Role of the European Commission in Defence Capability Development,” *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 2024, pp. 304–305.

## 10. Annexes

### 10.1. List of Abbreviations

- CSDP – Common Security and Defence Policy
- ASAP — Act in Support of Ammunition Production
- CARD — Coordinated Annual Review on Defence
- CFSP — Common Foreign and Security Policy
- DG DEFIS — Directorate-General for Defence Industry & Space
- EDA — European Defence Agency
- EDIRPA — European Defence Industry Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act
- EDIS — European Defence Industrial Strategy
- EDTIB — European Defence Technological and Industrial Base
- EDF — European Defence Fund
- EU — European Union
- HR/VP — High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission
- IRIS<sup>2</sup> — Infrastructure for Resilience, Interconnectivity and Security by Satellite (EU secure satcom)
- NATO — North Atlantic Treaty Organization

### 10.2 List of Literature

#### 10.4.1 Books

Lamont, C. (2022). *Research Methods in International Relations* (2nd ed.). London. SAGE Publications.

#### 10.4.2 Academic Papers

Béraud-Sudreau, L., & Scarazzato, M. (2023). *Beyond Fragmentation? Mapping the European Defence Industry in an Era of Strategic Flux*. CSDS In-Depth Paper, No. 11. Brussels School of Governance, Brussels.

De Man, P., & Wouters, J. (2025). "EU Space Governance at the Threshold of a New Era." *Global Policy* (early view).

Kolovos, A. (2023). "Strengthening Links Between European Union Space and Defence: Adopting a Combined Approach." *Space Policy*, 63, 101534.

Molnár, A. (2024). "The Growing Role of the European Commission in Defence Capability Development." *European Integration Studies*, 20(2), 291–317

### 10.4.3 Official EU documents and reports

EEAS – European External Action Service. (2022). *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence – For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security*. Brussels.

European Commission. (2024). *European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS)*. Joint Communication JOIN(2024) 10 final, 5 March 2024. Brussels. [CSDS](#)

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European Commission. (2024). *White Paper for European Defence – Readiness 2030*. Brussels.

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### 10.4.4 Think-tank studies and policy briefs

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## 11. Affidavit

I declare that I have written the present essay independently and on my own. I have clearly marked any language or ideas borrowed from other sources as not my own and documented their sources. The essay does not contain any work that I have handed in or have had graded as a previous scientific paper earlier on. I am aware that any failure to do so constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's thoughts or words as if they were my own – even if I summarise, paraphrase, condense, cut, rearrange, or otherwise alter them. I am aware of the consequences and sanctions plagiarism entails. Among others, consequences may include nullification of the essay, exclusion from participation in the CSDP Olympiad. These consequences also apply retrospectively, i.e. if plagiarism is discovered after the essay has been accepted and graded. I am fully aware of the scope of these consequences.

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(Cadet Portuguese Air Force Academy Alumni João Ferreira, Aeronautical Military Sciences)

Granja do Marquês, Portugal in November 2025