

# Review: The Political Economy of European Security

Written by Antonio Calcara

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ANTONIO CALCARA, AUG 15 2018

***The Political Economy of European Security***  
**By Kaija Schilde**  
**Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017**

In recent years, the European integration project has seen major developments in the two very sensitive fields of defence issues and justice and home affairs. In the defence sector, following the publication of the EU Global Strategy in 2016, the European Commission has launched a European Defence Fund (EDF) to incentivize cooperation on defence capabilities development and acquisition (European Commission 2017). Likewise, European member states, under the impetus of the Franco-German political leadership, have re-launched the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in the defence sector, which is a binding framework of cooperation that allows EU member states to develop joint defence capabilities, to invest in shared projects, and to strengthen the operational preparation and contribution of member states' armed forces (Fiott, Missiroli and Tardy 2017). Similarly, the growing migration and refugee crisis and the terrorist attacks on European soil have generated a number of changes in the field of internal security. For instance, Europol and Frontex have both received increased funding and been sites of institutional innovation. (Servent and Trauner 2017). Moreover, EU internal security and external defence have been effectively combined into a single policy area. The most striking example is the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operation in the Mediterranean to fight human trafficking to Europe (Operation EUNAVFOR Med), which was designed to cooperate with internal security organizations such as Frontex and Europol (Cusumano 2018). How can we explain these important developments in Europe?

Building on literature from political economy, European integration and security studies, *The Political Economy of European Security* by Kaija Schilde represents a timely and very innovative analysis of the relationships between interest groups and EU institutions in the fields of justice, home affairs and defence. The book is structured in 7 chapters. In the first three chapters, the author focuses on the development of their theoretical argument and on the analysis of interest groups and lobbying in Brussels. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 trace the political economy and political development of European defence, immigration and security policies. Finally, in the concluding chapter, Schilde focuses on the blurred division between internal security and external defence and on how this division impacts more generally on the EU's governing capacity. The author explains that, in order to understand the development of EU authority in these very sensitive fields, we should look at the process of mobilization of interest groups at the European level and at the relations between representatives of private interests and European institutions in this context.

From the theoretical point of view, the author contends that the EU can be compared to a developing state, since its governing capacity is at least partially the result of the timing and intensity of the relationship between EU bureaucracies and interest groups. The mobilization, density and character of interest groups massively influence the activity of EU developing institutions because they provide external sources of capacity, which in turn can produce EU authority in a specific sector. For example, institutional developments in the field of European defence have been strongly conditioned by the fact that the aerospace industry was the first mover when it came to establishing EU offices and lobbying the EU, having a clear presence in Brussels since the 90s (p.174). In other words, this book "questions that the only source of formal EU authority comes from member states" and suggests "that bottom-up functional demand from interest groups has prompted the political development of the EU" (p. 8).

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Through an accurate empirical analysis based on industry documents, interviews, interest group data and an original survey, Schilde shows how the mobilization of European arms industry actors explains the timing, content and direction of EU defence-related initiatives and agendas. In this regard, the case of the European Defence Agency (EDA), which has been institutionalized thanks to strong pressures from defence industries and, in its activity, relies heavily on outside industry's expertise about markets, national politics and technology (p.188-189), is emblematic. More specifically, the author argues that, since the 80s, the defence industries have been able to create informal institutions and to provide expertise in the building of defence institutions.

On the contrary, in the justice and home affairs sector, Schilde demonstrates that there was no comparable mobilization of interest groups (especially by NGOs and human rights activists) at the EU level. This is surprising given that the EU has included, since the Amsterdam Treaty, border security, immigration, visa policy, asylum procedures and rules for judicial cooperation among its competences. Only recently interest groups have mobilized in this area. However, as emphasized by Schilde, the protagonists of this mobilization were the traditional armaments, defence and aerospace industries, which, thanks to the financial incentives provided by the European Commission in civilian security research markets, have shifted their focus to business opportunities in the internal security sector.

This work, in addition to generating unexplored theoretical and empirical insights on the governance dynamics in the defence sector and the home affairs sector, clarifies, in the concluding chapter, the inextricable link between internal security and external defence. This link, rather than the result of strategic and/or geopolitical factors, is instead a bottom-up phenomenon, in which technology and markets come first, whereas the security policies and institutions come later. As demonstrated in the accurate empirical analysis of chapters 4, 5 and 6, Schilde's analysis convincingly traces how market considerations have strongly affected the EU's initiatives in defence and security issues.

Overall, *The Political Economy of European Security* represents an important contribution to the literature on EU Security and Defence for two main reasons. First, it proposes an original political economy theory explaining EU governing capacity within a comparative institutionalist framework for European political development. Second, and what is certainly a key strength of this book, is the accurate empirical analysis that characterizes the central part of the research, in which the author is able to use a wide range of sources to trace the evolution of defence and security policies. However, because of the complexity of the technical issues that are dealt with, some parts of the book will not be easy to understand for a non-specialist readership. At a more substantial level, this book should be expanded with a parallel analysis of member states-defence industry relations. More attention to the heterogeneous political-economic base of EU member states would generate unexplored theoretical and empirical research avenues on how states, industries and EU institutions interact on multiple levels. Moreover, given the activism of defence-industrial groups in the justice and home affairs sector, expanding on this strand of research would also generate important insights to explain the militarization of EU border management and counter-terrorism policies.

In conclusion, this is an important book which will be of interest to students, academics and practitioners in the field of EU security and defence. In my opinion, the book demonstrates how it is possible to combine theoretical ambition and empirical accuracy to study new EU political developments in strategic sectors. As demonstrated by the author, paying more attention to the peculiarities of the relationship between interest groups and European institutions can lead to fruitful avenues for future research in the EU security and defence literature.

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Antonio Calcara is a post-doctoral researcher at LUISS University in Rome. He won the Egmont and the European Security and Defence College “Global Strategy Ph.D. Prize” in 2019 and is the author of *European Defence Decision-Making: Dilemmas of Collaborative Arms Procurement*.