The 2016 European Global Strategy, European Union Defense Integration, and Asian–European Security Cooperation in a Declining Multilateral International Order

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On 10 November 2017, the European Council launched the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO),¹ completing a set of major steps in the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) and a key movement for an augmented and different European Union (EU) role in global affairs. In June 2016, the EU heads of state and government started this process at the European Council Summit, which was mainly dedicated to CSDP. The European Council received, from the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative (VPC/HR) Federica Mogherini, a new strategic vision, *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe; A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy* (often referred to as *EU Global Strategy* or *EUGS*). The new vision included a CSDP with a more defined role, opening a process for enhancing the effectiveness and strengthening of military capabilities and the European defense industry through an "Implementation Package." Undoubtedly, the process and creation of such a document and the subsequent initiatives represented a remarkable achievement in the European integration process. However, this is happening in a less than favorable context.

The internal and international environment that the EU faced was challenging due to several factors: first, the refugee/immigration crisis; second, one of the bloodiest years in terrorist attacks on European soil in 10 years; and third, the Ukraine crisis—all of which had marked European security with a dangerous conflicting dynamic since 2014. The United States under the Trump administration also suggested a difficult future track for transatlantic relations, and finally, the decision by the United Kingdom to abandon the EU, called into question the very viability of that organization.² All these have created a new scenario for the Euro-

pean integration process, for European security, and for the EU goal of "strategic autonomy." However, the seemingly most serious long-term strategic problem that the EU is facing is one of the main anchors regarding mission and vision for the organization: a declining ability to sustain an already embattled liberal multilateral international order.

What Liberal Order?

According to international relations theorist John Ikenberry, this would be an "open and rule-based international order . . . enshrined in institutions such as the United Nations and norms such as multilateralism." This order is composed of many elements, each mutually reinforcing. These elements include a set of legitimate global institutions—such as the UN and the World Trade Organization—as well as many issue-specific organizations; a set of international legal conventions as, for instance, the 1982 Convention on Sea Law; several arms control regimes, such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which constrain the actions of states; and an emerging set of inchoate, but often powerful, shared norms. However, Hedley Bull's definition of international order could explain better the structure and parameters: "a pattern of activity that sustains the elementary or primary goals of the society of states, or international society."4 These goals include the preservation of the states system, state sovereignty as a principle, general peace among states, and the limitations on violence to protect rules of property. However, this order would also be a "World Order" that "signifies the regimes of values, morals, and rights that extend to all humanity and infuse the international order with a sense of justice and purpose." It connotes the complex of Western liberal international law and economics that is currently institutionalized through international organizations, like the United Nations. Thus, any security order established by the states system would be an order in which what states can and cannot do is not simply determined by power. Rather, international law constrains the action of states. In this vein, the EU holds a proactive trade agenda supporting the multilateral liberal international order. On one hand, the EU promotes this agenda through a set of administrative areas with several regional actors in Asia and the Americas (states and organizations). For instance, the EU has closed a long negotiation with Japan, establishing one of the most extensive free trade agreements (FTA) in the world. The EU is also Association of Southeast Asian Nations' (ASEAN) second-largest trading partner and is a strategic area because the 20 percent of EU trade passes through the Malacca Strait and the South China Sea. The EU also is the biggest

provider of foreign direct investment (FDI) to ASEAN countries, accounting for almost a quarter of total FDI in ASEAN. The EU has concluded negotiations for bilateral FTAs with Singapore and Vietnam and is negotiating FTAs with several other ASEAN countries. These agreements are building blocks toward a future full-fledged EU-ASEAN region-to-region FTA. In a March 2017 joint statement, the EU and ASEAN agreed to take new steps toward resuming talks for this region-to-region agreement. On the other hand, the "2012 Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia," reinforced by Mogherini's address at the 2015 Shangri-La Dialogue⁸ and the 2015 Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council "The EU and ASEAN: A Partnership with a Strategic Purpose," includes a roadmap for strengthening EU-ASEAN security cooperation. These documents address challenges such as counterpiracy, cybersecurity, maritime security, energy security, environmental security, natural disaster response, conflict mediation, and even potential military contribution in East Asia. Meanwhile, EU member states are suppliers of military-relevant technology, including complete weapons systems and components, to Indo-Pacific countries, including Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam. These exports amounted to €44.1 billion in 2015 (€30.2 billion in 2014). However, the impact of the 2008 recession and the whirlpools of the political crisis in the several EU member states and the EU as a whole seemed to offer a bleak future. The economic crisis and subsequent political debates included the enacting of reduced budgets in the EU members states (even previous to the crisis) and has affected severely security and defense capabilities, including reductions on deterrence, crisis management, and political influence.

Former US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stridently warned European governments in 2010 about not only defense budget limitations but also a dangerous state of affairs regarding going "to too far in the other direction." From Gates' perspective, large parts of the public and political class were so averse to military force and the risks that go with it that the climate had become an impediment to achieving real security:

These budget limitations relate to a larger cultural and political trend affecting the alliance. . . . I believes we have reached an inflection point, where much of the continent has gone too far in the other direction. . . . The demilitarization of Europe—where large swaths of the general public and political class are averse to military force and the risks that go with it—has gone from a blessing in the 20th century to an impediment to achieving real security and lasting peace in the 21st.

... Not only can real or perceived weakness be a temptation to miscalculation and aggression, but, on a more basic level, the resulting funding and capability shortfalls make it difficult to operate and fight together to confront shared threats. 11



Figure 1. VPC/HR Federica Mogherini in Indo-Pacific. Federica Mogherini meets with Dionísio da Costa Babo Soares, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Timor Leste, while attending the 51st ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting and related meetings. (Photo courtesy of European External Action Service)

This situation has generated a dangerous impact on the EU's political and strategic positions, not only in the short term but, and this is more important, in the long term. From an Asian point of view, in spite of the large EU-ASEAN economic and trade relation, this situation could show an image that would create a perception of declining ability concerning security cooperation in common security problems and a reduction in the perception of strategic assurance at a time of rapid global change. Nevertheless, an absence of a real global vision, instruments, and political will would reduce the EU's credibility for present and future commitments and cooperation. It seems clear the EU is committed to and defends an international rules-based order and an international fair-and-free trade system, but

the changing dynamics in the global security environment could represent a different challenge for the EU, which probably would represent a major game changer in the EU strategic vision and mission. Despite the impact of the economic crisis and the declining resources to face security and defense matters, a clear message regarding the political will, a strong strategic vision, and a clear role for the CSDP and its instruments could show further reliability and commitment in these areas—even with reduced mechanisms and options.

Beyond Economics and Trade: Strategic Autonomy and PESCO

However, for the European Union, a narrative of relative decline does not necessarily establish the strategic options available. Indeed, these positions come from a particular situation in the domestic politics of the member states and the EU—not merely from a social and economic crisis but also from a deep crisis about values and objectives. Despite the fact that the new 2016 *European Global Strategy* makes constant reference to the uncertainty in the international system, paradoxically it did not explicitly refer to the specific policies to be implemented in this context:

We live in times of existential crisis, within and beyond the European Union. Our Union is under threat. Our European project, which has brought unprecedented peace, prosperity and democracy, is being questioned. To the east, the European security order has been violated, while terrorism and violence plague North Africa and the Middle East, as well as Europe itself. Economic growth is yet to outpace demography in parts of Africa, security tensions in Asia are mounting, while climate change causes further disruption. Yet these are also times of extraordinary opportunity. Global growth, mobility, and technological progress—alongside our deepening partnerships—enable us to thrive, and allow ever more people to escape poverty and live longer and freer lives. We will navigate this difficult, more connected, contested and complex world guided by our shared interests, principles and priorities. Grounded in the values enshrined in the Treaties and building on our many strengths and historic achievements, we will stand united in building a stronger Union, playing its collective role in the world.¹²

Probably, the 2016 *EUGS* is not truly a grand strategy as it is far away from attaining that status devised by the major powers. It cannot reach such a level because the EU is not yet such a strategic, unitary, or autonomous player. Second, the *EUGS* is not a security strategy either, because it is undoubtedly weak in content, the hierarchy of threats and challenges, and the means to face such obstacles—although it sees the challenge of sophisticated threats as the effects of asymmetry, interdependence, and multipolarity, including the regional crises in the Union's eastern and southern neighborhoods. The EU faces a security dilemma

mainly created by the reduction of capabilities during the 2008 recession and the perception of a partial abandonment of the transatlantic alliance by the United States. Nevertheless, the EUGS is a foreign policy project, framing security and defense aspects within the context of the EU's external action and setting out the main principles, values, and operational patterns of the Union's international conduct. In this vein, and with the goal of strategic autonomy in mind, the EU institutions launched a set of initiatives during 2016, the so-called "Winter Package" the Implementation Plan on Security and Defense (to respond to external conflicts and crises). These initiatives cover the full range of CSDP tasks in civilian and military crisis management, capacity building of partners to strengthen the CSDP, and protecting the Union and its citizens along the nexus of internal and external security. The other main initiatives are a European Defense Action Plan and a joint NATO-EU declaration. The European Council also invited the VPC/HR and the European Defense Agency to create a Coordinated Annual Review on Defense (CARD) that will help foster capability development, addressing shortfalls, deepening defense cooperation, and ensuring more optimal use—including coherence of defense spending plans. Following this track, the next step was to launch the "Defense Package" in June 2017. This initiative includes two main elements: first, a "Reflection Paper on the Future of the European Defence." 13 This document establishes three possible scenarios for the period 2017-2025. First, security and defense cooperation under which member states continue to pursue individual agendas but work toward ad hoc measures aimed at EU solidarity. This scenario also calls for the establishment of a European defense fund, which would include two different programs: the European Defense Research Program created to stimulate research in the field of defense (\notin 90 million for the next three years). Additionally, a European Defense Industrial Development Programme (€500 million for the period 2019-2020) and, as from 2020, the European Commission will be prepared to invest in approximately €1 billion annually).¹⁴

In the second scenario, development of a shared security and defense agenda under which member states undertake measures to ensure "operational and financial solidarity," assisting one another on issues of border security, cybersecurity, intelligence sharing, and EU-NATO coordination. This scenario is seen as enhancing the Union's "ability to project military power and to engage fully in external crisis management and in building partners' security and defence capacities."15 Collaboration among member states would lead to development of joint acquisition programs and maintenance capabilities, focusing on enhancing interoperability and dramatically reducing duplication of efforts.

In the third scenario, member states would more dramatically deepen their integration to establish a common defense and security arrangement. The aforementioned European defense fund would be used to support common procurement of systems and materiel, and "cutting-edge knowledge would be pooled, enabling critical research and start-ups to develop key technologies to address Europe's security challenges. Efficient defense spending and more and better defense outputs would be achieved through the right mix of competition and consolidation, specialization, economies of scale, the sharing of expensive military assets and technological innovation aimed at getting the best value for money spent."¹⁶

The PESCO could be the primary mechanism to gather the member states progressively toward this new reality. Thus, the European Union established a Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), a permanent command-and-control structure at the military strategic level within the EU Military Staff as part of the CSDP. Composed of up to 25 staffers, the MPCC is devoted to assisting with the planning and conduct of so-called non-executive (i.e., training and assistance) missions.¹⁷

EU Defense and European Defense? "Eppur, si muove."

The European Union has tried, in a tortuous and challenging way, to define itself and its role in an international system in a transformation that will hardly respond to the global framework integrated by Western countries since the end of the Cold War. Thus, the EU understands what it is currently facing: the world today is a more complicated space that is interconnected regarding dependency, connectivity, migration, citizenship, and development. This international system is increasingly anarchic, sustaining a set of uncertainties, regarding issues and reliable actors of the past. These geopolitical issues include the political future of the United States, the rise and possible leadership of specific powers such as China and India, the positioning of Russia, and the direct implications on the EU derived from the Brexit. From the geo-economic point of view, the main issues range from the incipient economic recovery to the global situation regarding energy, water, and other resources, which do not allow observers to predict the next stages regarding international politics. Likewise, the EU considers that the world today is a place in controversy or in question. In this sense, the global system today has many more actors, less and worse leadership, and a more complex agenda than in the

past. Nevertheless, the EU sees itself as a promoter of peace and guarantor of the security of its citizens and territory. 18 Thus, Europeans, working with partners, must have the necessary capabilities to defend them and live up to their commitments to mutual assistance and the solidarity enshrined in the treaties that bind their member states together. Still, certain European elites and major allies have harbored a worrying perception. Again, former US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stridently warned European governments in 2011:

If you told the American taxpayers, as I just did, that they're bearing 75 percent of the financial burden of the alliance, this is going to raise eyebrows. And so my hope is that the reality—that the fact that reality is changing in the United States will get the attention of European leaders to realize that the drift of the past 20 years can't continue—not if they want to have a strong transatlantic partnership with the United States. 19

This resounded as a warning for the European allies when most of them do not invest enough in military capabilities to deal with the threats the Union identifies in the 2016 EUGS. From this point of view, it was clear that the European Union still ought to operate with allies and partners. Thus, the EU itself signed a joint declaration with NATO at the Warsaw Summit in July 2016. Paradoxically, most of the first efforts responded precisely to create a core around collective defense: first, Article 47.2. (Lisbon Treaty), which creates a mutual assistance clause (a NATO article V (and IV)); second, Article 222 (Lisbon Treaty, which establishes a solidarity clause); and, finally, Article 42.6 (Treaty on European Union), creating the PESCO. In fact, France, due to the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, invoked, for the first time, Article 47.2, which, unlike the other listed articles, directly addresses terrorist attacks. In direct response, 28 European governments pledged their unconditional support of French counterterrorist operations, initiating a continentwide security clampdown.²⁰

This incident offered a slightly different vision about the EU defense integration goals for the member states, opening a debate about the central role of all these structures because power projection appears as the primary goal for France, but for other countries, collective defense is emphasized. Still, some member states continue to look to NATO for this mission in the aftermath of the Ukraine crisis that began in 2014.

At the same time, Germany and France have been taking steps outside the NATO and EU frameworks to advance European defense. Berlin, using the Framework Nations Concept, which consists of around 20 partner nations and covers a wide array of defense cooperation in different areas such as medical;

chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear; civil-military cooperation; logistics; and so forth, started to put military units from other European countries under German command.

Meanwhile, France, understanding the difficulties in moving decisively and quickly in some vital regions (mainly Europe's southern periphery), has also launched defense cooperation outside the EU framework. The European Intervention Initiative would allow willingly European states to act militarily independently from the existing institutional structures of the EU or NATO. French president Emmanuel Macron launched the idea in his September 2017 Sorbonne speech,²¹ and the 2017 French *Defense and National Security Strategic Review* established the European Intervention Initiative as a priority.²² In this regard, Paris' delegation at the 2015 Shangri-La Dialogue mentioned France's bases and forces deployed in the Asia-Pacific. The German and French postures seem a duplication of effort, although both could not match very well nor develop a proper European strategic culture.

The Next Debate: Collective Security, Deterrence, and Power Projection

The EU has emphasized the cooperative nature of security engagement in Asia, with a priority on mutual security, focusing on nontraditional security issues, inviting cooperation, and arguing for greater diplomatic engagement on hard security issues. Consequently, the EU sees itself as a diplomatic broker on hard security issues and not as a strategic actor. Thus, most of Indo-Pacific experts in Europe frame the discussion of Asian security around "the allegedly limited influence the EU exerts through diplomatic statements."23 As a result, the EU has only had a negligible impact on the motivations and behaviors of Asian states, leading many in Europe to conclude that involvement in Asian security is hopeless. At the same time, there are critical postures concerning the costs for the EU's interactions in the region, including fears that standing up for international sea law in the Indo-Pacific would have a negative impact on EU-China relations, concerns that EU resources should focus more on national security priorities, apprehension over the handling of Russian assertiveness, and worries of further jihadist terror attacks. Nevertheless, the 2016 EUGS has an enthusiastic approach toward Asia, focusing on supporting collective security all across the board: "We will also develop a more politically rounded approach to Asia, seeking to make greater practical contributions to Asian security."24 This approach includes support to an ASEAN-led regional security architecture, with a particular focus on freedom of navigation; re-

spect for international law, including the Law of the Sea and its arbitration procedures; and encouraging the peaceful settlement of maritime disputes. The range of this approach includes cooperation on counterterrorism, antitrafficking, and migration, and enhances transport, trade, and energy connectivity. However, the endeavor focuses on nonproliferation challenges in the Korean peninsula—although the EU has a minor role there. Thus, the EU capability for reinforcing collective security and defending the status quo of the multilateral international order and international law is reduced due to a (perceived) lack of will and credibility. Nevertheless, one must acknowledge the growing security relations of some EU member states such as France and the United Kingdom with Indo-Pacific powers like Japan and Australia. With military presences and territories in the Indo-Pacific, it is unsurprising that the two latter countries remain more engaged in the concerns of the region. For example, the UK is a member of the Five Power Defence Arrangements, a series of defense relationships established by a series of multilateral agreements between the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Singapore. Signed in 1971, these arrangements bind the signatories to consult one another in the event or threat of an armed attack on any of these five countries for the purpose of deciding what measures should be taken jointly or separately in response. Additionally, the UK maintains a military presence in the area in Brunei and a support facility in Singapore. According to Michael Fallon, former British defense secretary, Britain will increase its presence in the area, and by the 2020s, one of the two Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers will be in the region. Likewise, France has military installations and territories, specifically in Polynesia and New Caledonia. The UK and France have plans to increase power projection capabilities as the strategic importance of the Indo-Pacific region grows, but the Brexit and the current developments of EU defense integration complicate any overarching EU approach other than security cooperation as outlined above.

However, the European Union does not rely mainly on its capacity for the projection of power. Instead, the EU prides itself on being a model for prosperity and a facilitator for the peaceful resolution of problems and reconciliation. Europe leads this model as an example for the rest of the world, and there is a compelling logic behind this notion. Unfortunately, this position also maintains a series of postulates that are either outdated or have not responded to the evolving dynamics of the international system. The influence of European leadership decreases rapidly with an increase in geographical distance and the reduction of the EU's economic capacity. Paradoxically, the states on its borders present a whole series of strategic

problems, which can no longer be addressed by normative power alone. The EU's behavior, as demonstrated during the Arab Spring, the civil war in Syria, and the Crimea/Ukraine crisis showed a worrying disconnect between the EU's vital interests and the necessary military, economic, and technological capabilities and instruments to protect those interests. Not only does the EU need a realistic understanding about the nature, rules, and consequences of a new and evolving international system-in-the-making, it also requires the will to develop the necessary changes and adequate policies to work in this new environment. Failing to do so, the EU could enter a security dilemma, not perhaps in the short or medium term but in a longer term—strongly affecting the future of the multilateral liberal international order.

Notes

- 1. According to the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, the Council is likewise the institution responsible for adopting decisions relating to civilian and military tasks, defining their objectives and scope and the general conditions for their implementation (Article 43.2) Treaty of the European Union (TEU) and may entrust the implementation of a task to a group of member states (Article 44.1 TEU). Thus, The Council shall adopt a decision establishing permanent structured cooperation (Article 46.2 TEU), a decision confirming the participation of a member state in structured cooperation (Article 46.3 TEU), a decision suspending the participation of a member state in structured cooperation (Article 46.4 TEU). This mechanism has been regulated in arts. 42 and 46 of the TEU and in an annexed Protocol. Then the Permanent Structured Cooperation, PESCO, is defined as: "Those Member States whose military capabilities fulfill higher criteria and which have made more binding commitments to one another in this area with a view to the most demanding missions shall establish Permanent Structured Cooperation within the Union framework." Unlike ordinary enhanced cooperation (open to the participation of all member states), structured cooperation requires a member state to possess military capabilities that fulfill high criteria and a wish to make more binding commitments in this military sphere. The participation of such states in the mechanism for structured cooperation entails belonging to the European Defense Agency. All the member states of the Union, except Denmark, are currently members of the agency. This PESCO is not limited exclusively to the states that originally established it; other member states are allowed to join provided, of course, that they notify their wish to the Council and the High Representative. The Council, comprised solely of the member states participating in the structured cooperation, shall be responsible for authorizing the decision acting by qualified majority, after ensuring that the member state in question fulfils the criteria and takes on the commitments established in articles 1 and 2 of the Protocol on Permanent Structured Cooperation.
- 2. The UK probably means a 25 percent EU's military capability, but also a solid actor regarding intelligence capabilities and power projection.
- 3. G. John Ikenberry, "The Future of the Liberal World Order," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (2011), 56.

- 4. Bull, Hedley, The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 16–18.
 - 5. Ibid., 20–21.
- 6. European Commission, "Countries and Regions: Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)," website, 1 August 2018, http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/regions/asean/.
- 7. General Secretariat, Council of the European Union, "Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia" (policy guideline, Brussels, Belgium, 15 June 2012), http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/asia/docs/guidelines_eu_foreign_sec_pol_east_asia_en.pdf.
- 8. Federica Mogherini, "Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue 2015" (speech, Singapore, 1 June 2015), https://eeas.europa.eu/ headquarters/headquarters-homepage/6254/speech-high-representativevice-president-federicamogherini-iiss-shangri-la-dialogue-2015_en.
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- 10. Mathieu Duchâtel and Mark Bromley, "Influence by Default: Europe's Impact on Military Security in East Asia" (policy brief, European Council on Foreign Relations, May 2017), https:// www.ecfr.eu/page/-/Influence_by_default.pdf.
- 11. Robert M. Gates, "Remarks as delivered by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates" (lecture, NATO Strategic Concept Seminar, National Defense University, Washington, DC, Tuesday, 23 February 2010), http://archive.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1423.
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- 13. European Commission, "Reflection Paper on the Future of European Defence" (Brussels: European Commission, 7 June 2017), https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/ reflection-paper-defence_en.pdf
 - 14. Ibid., 12–13.
 - 15. Ibid., 13.
 - 16. Ibid., 14–15.
- 17. European Commission, "The Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC)" (fact sheet, EU Defence, November 2018), https://cdn4-eeas.fpfis.tech.ec.europa.eu/cdn/farfuture/ aGKF41zrLDLuNeg8csm24scxmjEwj4JBvrRbaLeaY4M/mtime:1542656575/sites/eeas/files/ mpcc factsheet november 2018.pdf.
 - 18. European Union, *Shared Vision*, Common Action, 7.
- 19. Robert M. Gates, "Remarks by Secretary Gates at the Security and Defense Agenda, Brussels, Belgium" (presentation, Security and Defense Agenda, Brussels, Belgium, 10 June 2011), http://archive.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=4839.
- 20. Michel Cabirol, "Terrorisme: la France a-t-elle les moyens de faire la guerre contre Daech?," La Tribune (France), 19 November 2015, https://www.latribune.fr/entreprises-finance/industrie/ aeronautique-defense/terrorisme-la-france-a-t-elle-les-moyens-de-faire-la-guerre-contredaech-523477.html#xtor=EPR-2-[industrie-services]-20151119.

- 21. Emmanuel Macron, "Sorbonne Speech of Emmanuel Macron" (speech, Sorbonne, Paris, France, 26 September 2017), http://international.blogs.ouest-france.fr/archive/2017/09/29/macron-sorbonne-verbatim-europe-18583.html.
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 - 23. Duchâtel and Bromley, "Influence by Default," 1.
 - 24. EUGS, 38.



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