

Europe's Common Security and Defense Policy, Narratives, and the Transatlantic Security Community

An analysis of the EU's CSDPs regarding their justifications from 2016 to 2020

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Inhaltsverzeichnis / Content

1.	Introduction	5
2.	Theoretical Framework	6
	2.1 <i>Literature Review on (the Transatlantic) Security Community(ies) and the Role of Discourse</i>	6
	2.2 <i>Relevance for Research and Theoretical Expectations</i>	8
3.	Methodological Approach.....	9
4.	Empirical Analysis	11
5.	Conclusion	20
6.	References	21

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Abstract

Since the two narratives of strategic autonomy and European sovereignty first appeared in the EU in 2016 and 2017, they have been omnipresent. At the same time, Donald Trump was elected as U.S. president and a series of difficulties in transatlantic relations began. Although transatlantic relations have been tumultuous in the past, statements by experts and leaders prompt speculation that the Transatlantic Security Community (TSC) has undergone deeper changes this time around. Therefore, this paper analyzes the extent to which the EU's Common Security and Defense policies (CSDPs) have been justified from 2016 to 2020 given the evolving TSC. In doing so, it becomes clear that the TSC is not the only explanation for the EU's recent CSDPs but is merely one of many.

Key words: Europe's CSDP, Transatlantic Security Community, narratives, justifications

List of Abbreviations

EU	<i>European Union</i>
COM	<i>European Commission</i>
CSDP	<i>Common Security and Defense Policy</i>
TSC	<i>Transatlantic Security Community</i>
HR/VP	<i>High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission</i>
EUCO	<i>European Council</i>
EUGS	<i>EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy</i>
MS	<i>Member States</i>

1. Introduction

Federica Mogherini, former High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), released the EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) in June 2016, setting out a central objective of the EU's foreign and security policy by highlighting the need to achieve "strategic autonomy." (Dimitrova, 2016: 2, Koenig, 2020: 2) In the following year, French President Macron referred to "European sovereignty" in his famous speech at the Sorbonne University, which he defined as "our capacity to exist in the world as it currently exists, to defend our values and our interests." (Verellen, 2020: 307)

At the same time, the U.S. was holding presidential elections, in which Donald Trump was elected as the 45th president of the U.S.. The period that followed was dominated by widespread debates about how transatlantic relations have begun to erode under Trump's *America First* doctrine (Bilal and Imran, 2019, Dimitrova, 2016, Viola, 2020). Donald Trump "placed serious strain on the transatlantic relationship [...], especially for European allies who previously shared a collective identity with the US." (Bilal and Imran, 2019: 4) Although transatlantic relations have been tumultuous before and the idea of a neutral Europe independent of past and present great powers is not new (Rudischhauser et al., 2018: 197, Demetriou, 2016: 2), the discourse by both experts and leaders suggest that something more fundamental may have changed in the Transatlantic Security Community (TSC) this time around. Therefore, this paper discusses the questions to what extent the EU's Common Security and Defense policies have been justified in terms of a changing Transatlantic Security Community.

In order to pursue the answer to the question raised, this paper first examines the literature on security communities, discusses the role of discourse from a social constructivist perspective and outlines the relevance of this case as well as expectations derived from the literature regarding the research question. The methodological part that follows lays out the selection process of the speeches, the cases, and the time frame.¹ Based on these theoretical and methodological classifications, the results of the analysis are presented and discussed. Finally, a brief summary is drawn.

¹ In the course of this paper, it should be noted that the discourse on strategic autonomy within the EU has changed significantly since February 2022 in the wake of the war in Ukraine. As this paper was written before the outbreak of war, the resulting security challenges and geopolitical tensions are not considered here.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Literature Review on (the Transatlantic) Security Community(ies) and the Role of Discourse

This paper closely follows the literature on security communities and a social-constructivist perspective.

The conceptual roots of security communities can be traced back to Karl W. Deutsch (Deutsch, 1957). According to Deutsch, what distinguishes a security community from other kinds of communities is that a security community is a group of people who have the certainty that they will not physically fight each other, as there are dependable expectations of peaceful change (Deutsch, 1957: 5). In the case of the TSC, the process was facilitated by three factors in particular - compatibility of core values, states that responded quickly and well to the needs of other members, and the ability to anticipate the behavior of other members (Deutsch, 1957: 67).

Excluding Deutsch, social constructivists are convinced that there is more at play than just overlapping interests and common institutions (Larsen, 2018: 63). They generally argue that our knowledge of the social world is not a reflection of the world, but rather the result of our way of categorizing it. According to Ikenberry, the TSC must be considered “as an expression or manifestation of a shared Euro-American political identity, a constructed or imagined community that has evolved over the decades.” (Ikenberry, 2016: 23) Also coming from a constructivist perspective, Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett suggest that the expectation of peaceful coexistence arises when states are induced to upgrade their common security (Adler and Barnett, 1998: 38). In this process, a common identity emerges through structural and procedural factors (Adler and Barnett, 1998: 38). Wæver also attributes a special role to identities: the core of transatlantic relations is the “identity-based non-war community.” (Wæver, 1998: 71)

In the literature influenced by social constructivism, security communities are often not only discussed in terms of their formation, but also regarding their duration and challenges. In general, there are many different explanations for the erosion of the TSC (Ikenberry, 2016, Kupchan, 2016, Risse, 2016). Regarding the duration of its existence, Risse developed four categories, the so-called four “I’s,” in order to assess the state of the transatlantic community: interests, interdependence, institutions and identities (Risse, 2016: 23). As soon as one of the four “I’s” is questioned and no longer provides an incentive for cooperation, the TSC is in danger (Risse, 2016: 26). However, the most important cornerstone of a security community, according to Risse, is a collective identity (Risse, 2016: 25). Shared identities and values are particularly important because they

can affect transatlantic relations in a variety of ways. Once disagreements arise, allies can point to the shared values and express the identity that originally represented common consensus (Kitchen, 2009: 111). Besides identity, according to Risse, political and economic elites are of particular importance, as they are “responsible for the transatlantic community.” (Risse, 2016: 36) Once this support is damaged, the community will be in trouble (Risse, 2016: 35).

Since these elites express their opinions in discourse, it is worth examining discourses. Within the framework of social constructivism, discourse is important because “it mediates norms and identities that shape foreign policy directly through the logic of appropriateness or through the shaping of interests that in turn shape foreign policy.” (Diez, 2014b: 30) This also leads to the discourse, which includes norms, and therefore becoming an independent variable that then explains the outcomes of foreign policy (Schmidt, 2010). In social constructivist thinking, actors who advocate for these norms play an important role (Diez, 2014a: 322).

The role of discourse is also frequently mentioned in the context of security communities, “because the creation of discursive structures is one of the ways in which a community is constructed.” (Kitchen, 2009: 101) According to Kitchen, the best way to identify change within the Atlantic community is through an analysis of the public pronouncements of security elites as the members of the TSC have employed the strategy of *Grand Design* (Kitchen, 2009: 100). The technique of *Grand Design* is a way of communication and aims to change the discourse, builds on discursive structures, and expands the rhetorical resources available to political elites (Kitchen, 2009: 103). *Grand Designs* are thus used when members are dissatisfied with the status quo of alliance relations, global changes force a rethinking of the community’s boundaries, or when there are points of contention within the community that need to be highlighted and discussed (Kitchen, 2009: 104). For this reason, it can be expected that the TSC, and more precisely a change in the TSC, is expressed and can be best identified within the elites’ opinion and therefore in discourse.

Of particular interest are the narratives that the EU has developed in relation to how it presents itself in its external relations. Chris Bickerton states that these narratives about the EU’s foreign policy and external relations are functional in the way that they positively promote European integration at times when internal development is not progressing (Nițoiu, 2013). However, it should also be noted that there is undoubtedly a discrepancy between, on the one hand, the goals that are defined within the framework of narratives and, on the other hand, the real political performance of the EU’s external relations (Nițoiu, 2013: 241). Narratives, as continuous discursive redefinitions, contribute to a dynamic context in which goals are always revised as soon as the political reality no

longer coincides with them (Nițoiu, 2013: 241). Compared to discourses, which are considered impermanent and always interacting with each other, narratives are formed only by the discourses that are institutionalized through social and political practice (Nițoiu, 2013: 252).

As this overview illustrates, on the one hand, the TSC as well as its changes and, on the other hand, the European CSDPs are reflected and expressed in discourses and more precisely in narratives of political elites. For this reason, it is particularly relevant to look at such narratives.

2.2 Relevance for Research and Theoretical Expectations

After World War II, there was no longer a need for Europe collectively to arm itself defensively, as the U.S. was always present (Demetriou, 2016: 4). The U.S. presence developed an apparatus of Euro-Atlantic institutions and procedures in which the EU's defense policy was integrated (Demetriou, 2016: 4). However, while the U.S. "defense umbrella" was a simple defense and security solution for Europe, Europe was also left without the capacity to develop an independent security and defense policy (Demetriou, 2016: 4). However, this has changed and the erosion of the transatlantic relations has been ubiquitously discussed for several years now, especially since the Bush Administration began to abandon international commitments (Bilal and Imran, 2019: 7). Although many scholars do not claim that "the West" is disappearing altogether (Kupchan, 2016, Ikenberry, 2016, Hall, 2016), they speak of a transformation of the Atlantic community into a new kind of Western order (Ikenberry, 2016: 5/6).

In this regard, the literature claims that especially the loss of a shared EU-U.S. identity has led Europeans to question the reliability of this long-standing alliance (Bilal and Imran, 2019: 5). According to Risse, the "feeling of mutual indifference" (Risse, 2016: 34) is spreading. Kupchan adds to that by stating that the identities of the U.S. and Europe have become increasingly antagonistic rather than common (Kupchan, 2016). The security community in the Euro-Atlantic region still exists, but the Atlantic "we-feeling" has diminished (Kupchan, 2016: 123).

This fractured partnership has been particularly visible under the Trump administration. Without doubt, Trump is not the first president under whom U.S. national and global interests differed from those of European partners (e.g., Churchill and Roosevelt, Johnson and de Gaulle, and Kohl and Reagan). The difference, however, is that Trump's hostile foreign policy toward Europe and the lack of diplomacy threatened to further damage transatlantic relations (Bilal and Imran, 2019: 9). The common values that have

held Europe and the U.S. together are the principles of democracy, the rule of law, the willingness to strengthen and defend the system of international rule-making as well as its enforcement and institutions (Rudischhauser et al., 2018: 184). One indication that this changed under the Trump administration is the long list of U.S. withdrawals from international agreements.

In addition, polls also show a worsening impression of the TSC. As shown by a survey conducted by the *Pew Research Center* in 2020 in 13 countries, the reputation of the U.S. in Europe has continued to decline compared to earlier polls (Wike et al., 2020: 3). In France, only 31% viewed the U.S. favorably and Germans give the U.S. some of the worst ratings in the survey (Wike et al., 2020: 10). Only 26% of people surveyed in Germany have a positive image of America, while only 10% have confidence in Trump when it comes to his handling of world politics (Wike et al., 2020: 10). These views are in stark contrast to the very positive assessments Germans had during Barack Obama's presidency, but are roughly on par with views at the end of George W. Bush's term (Wike et al., 2020: 10). Another representative poll, conducted by *Atlantik-Brücke* and the *American Council on Germany*, examined public perceptions of the transatlantic relationship and the challenges facing Europe and the U.S. in April 2018 (Atlantik-Brücke, 2018). The survey found that while shared values exist in the transatlantic alliance, they are eroding (Atlantik-Brücke, 2018). This can be determined based on the fact that only 14% of Germans and 12% of Americans believe that a foundation of shared values is intact (Atlantik-Brücke, 2018). In addition, one in five Germans believed there was no foundation of shared values at all (Atlantik-Brücke, 2018).

To claim in general, though, that transatlantic relations are no longer intact and that there are no longer any shared values is very daring. It should also not be forgotten that the passive and active resistance of some state department employees in the past showed that Trump does not necessarily represent the majority, especially among the U.S. political elite, and therefore transatlantic relations cannot be described as completely broken. However, based on the existing literature and the surveys presented, it can be assumed that the TSC has changed, especially since Trump's election, and that the political elites in this case predominantly justify the new EU policies regarding more strategic autonomy and European sovereignty with a changing, and perhaps a weakening TSC.

3. Methodological Approach

In order to empirically analyze the link between the changing TSC and the narratives of strategic autonomy and European sovereignty, a qualitative content analysis was

conducted. This method is usually utilized to evaluate qualitative data and interpret their meaning (Elo et al., 2014: 1, Schreier, 2012). Qualitative content analysis was chosen because data can be interpreted and coded in a valid and reliable manner (Moretti et al., 2011)²

According to Coffey, content analysis of speeches should be considered more often as a useful method to assess the views of public officials, as they provide a direct measure of actors' preferences, values, and ideologies (Coffey, 2005). Therefore, speeches of politicians from the EU institutions as well as the MS were examined as specifically in public speeches, the justifications, and reasons why they chose a certain policy are accurately stated. Moreover, only speeches that were delivered to particularly large audiences were selected, as it can be assumed that these speeches have a particularly wide reach.

At the executive level, according to Carta and Wodak, the management of foreign policy issues within the EU is assigned to the Council of the EU, the EU Commission, and the HR/VP (Carta and Wodak, 2015: 2). For this reason, the speeches of the President of the Commission, the President of the Council of the EU and the HR/VP were selected. On the member state level, and as France and Germany have become the most important actors in the field of security and defense in the EU, especially after Brexit, the speeches of German and French political actors were studied (Zieliński, 2020: 2).

Since the narrative of strategic autonomy first appeared in Mogherini's EUGS in June 2016, and the narrative of European sovereignty first appeared in President Macron's speech in front of Sorbonne in 2017, June 2016 represents the starting point of this analysis. The end of the analysis framework is December 31, 2020, as Joe Biden was sworn in as the new U.S.-President starting in January 2021 and the term under Trump is particularly interesting as an object of analysis.³

This paper defines strategic autonomy and European sovereignty in such a way that these concepts can be understood as the ability to act and cooperate with partners whenever possible, while acting independently whenever necessary. However, these concepts do not necessarily question the TSC, but emphasize the need to become a relevant partner as a global security provider (Zieliński, 2020: 7).

² In this paper, category formation was conducted both deductively and inductively. Overall, the codebook contains 15 different justifications. In total, $n = 517$ justifications were coded in the 111 speeches, an average of 4.6 justifications per speech. How exactly the category formation was carried out can be requested in form of a coding agenda with category definitions from the author.

³ How exactly narratives and justifications are defined and discernible in the speeches can be requested from the author.

4. Empirical Analysis

Overall Findings and all Identified Justifications

111 speeches were selected in which at least one of the two previously analyzed narratives (N1: strategic autonomy and N2: European sovereignty) appears. In each of these speeches, at least one justification for the found narrative could be identified in addition to the narrative. The graph below (Figure 1), on the one hand, clearly shows a differing number of speeches between the categories of politicians (e.g. Chan: 9; Min Armées: 12; EUCO: 17) and, on the other hand, shows that the number of speeches between 2016 and 2020 varied. When Europe’s reorientation toward greater defense and security independence entered the European discourse in 2016 and 2017, politicians used the narratives less than in the subsequent years. Whereas German policymakers used the CSDP narratives by far the most in 2018, French politicians and those working in EU institutions referenced the narratives most often in 2020. Although no definite conclusions for these findings are drawn, some possible explanatory propositions could be inferred.

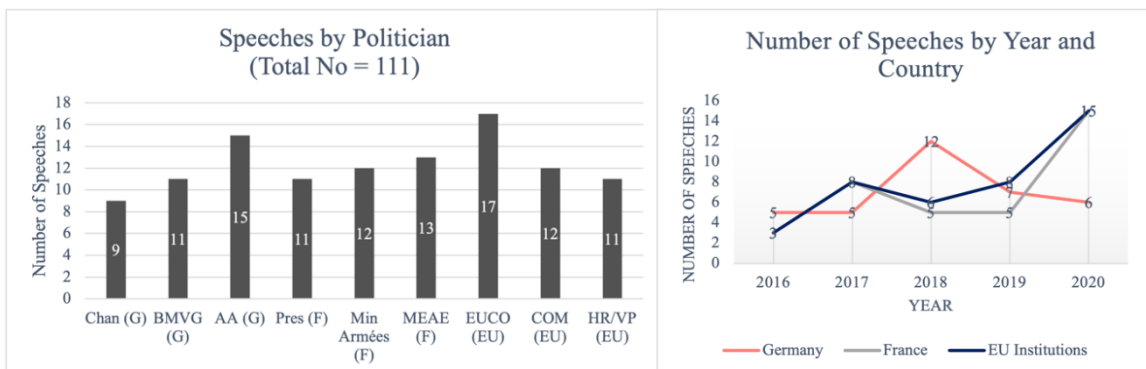


Figure 1: Overall findings (Source: Own illustration)

The increase in the use of CSDP narratives at the EU level in 2020 may be due, on the one hand, to the new EU Commission starting in 2019, which resulted in more geopolitical as well as security and defense policies. On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic hit Europe in 2020, with dependency structures in the EU being reconsidered and rethought in all aspects. The fact that German politicians most frequently used CSDP narratives in their speeches in 2018 may be due to the fact that the global security situation became more critical. Donald Trump announced in 2018 that he would withdraw from the multilateral nuclear agreement with Iran, multilateral structures were increasingly coming apart, and at the same time tensions between the U.S. and North Korea were coming to a head.

However, the focus of this analysis lies with the justifications. In addition to the deductively established category of “Transatlantic Security Community,” a further 14

justifications were inductively identified (see Table 1; for a more detailed account, see Annex 2).

All Identified Justifications

J1: Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need for more European sovereignty and strategic autonomy is linked to emerging and/or continuing tensions on the African continent (excluding the Eastern Mediterranean region)
J2: Brexit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need for more European sovereignty and strategic autonomy is justified in terms of Brexit
J3: New Global Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need for more European sovereignty and strategic autonomy is justified by a changing world and a new global order, the U.S.-China duopoly and new future threats
J4: China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategic autonomy and European sovereignty are justified by an increasingly strong and unpredictable China
J5: Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need for more European sovereignty and strategic autonomy is linked to the dangers and consequences of climate change affecting Europe and its security
J6: Digitization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need for European sovereignty and strategic autonomy is justified by advancing digitization and technologies and/or the resulting security threats
J7: Decline in Multilateralism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • with multilateralism in crisis, it is argued that Europe needs more strategic autonomy and European sovereignty
J8: Eastern Mediterranean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European sovereignty and strategic autonomy are justified by tensions and conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean affecting the EU
J9: Eastern Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Eastern Partnership serves as a justification for more strategic autonomy and European sovereignty
J10: Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need for more strategic autonomy and European sovereignty is justified from an economic perspective due to a changing global economy and restrictions on free trade
J11: Migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European sovereignty and strategic autonomy are justified by migration flows to Europe
J12: Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European sovereignty and strategic autonomy are justified with (an aggressively acting) Russia, in particular Russia's behavior towards Ukraine
J13: Terrorism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need for more strategic autonomy and European sovereignty is justified by the dangers posed by terrorism
J14: Transatlantic Security Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need for more strategic autonomy and European sovereignty is justified by a changing TSC
J15: Unanimity in the EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need for European sovereignty and strategic autonomy is justified by the fact that there is disunity within the EU and populist forces are on the rise

Table 1: All justifications identified (Source: Own illustration; Information retrieved from own data (see Annex 1))

Assumptions and explanations for these justifications can again be made. The justification "TSC" (J14) has been set up as a deductive category and was also found in the speeches as a justification for more strategic autonomy and European sovereignty. The changing transatlantic relationship serves as a justification for Europe to reorient itself in terms of security and defense, Brexit removes an important security anchor for

the EU (J2), the Sino-American duopoly creates a new global order that poses dangers for Europe (J3), multilateralism, which is very important for Europe, is in crisis (J7), and populist forces and disunity increasingly divide the EU and call for Europe to reorient itself (J15):

- *“This takes me [...] to our relationship with the United States [...]. But we have lived in its protective shadow for decades now, perhaps too comfortably. We ourselves must take more of our own responsibility for security”* (J14)
- *“One of the effects of Brexit was the new impetus this has given to go further in defence cooperation”* (J2)
- *“but in the big confrontation that is coming between the US and China we have to look for our own way”* (J3)
- *“We want a stronger Europe that puts even more weight behind the multilateral system and progress towards a fairer world”* (J7)
- *“today more than ever we need European unity. We cannot afford to leave Europe half-finished”* (J15)

Besides these political events and/or developments, the justification “Africa” (J1) was used by politicians to illustrate the need for Europe to become more sovereign and autonomous in order to respond to the conflicts on the African continent. This need to respond to conflicts/tensions in a specific region also applies to a similar extent to some of the other justifications found, that are regions or countries (“China” (J4), “Eastern Mediterranean” (J8), “Eastern Partnership” (J9), “Russia” (J12)):

- *“Au Sahel aussi, les Européens doivent poursuivre leurs efforts collectifs”* (J1)
- *“wirklich souverän ist Europa nur, wenn es seine Werte und Interessen auch in Zeiten von [...]‘China first‘ wirklich auch durchsetzen kann“* (J4)
- *“I am referring to the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean, where the attitude of Turkey, which is violating the maritime area of a European Union Member State, is utterly unacceptable”* (J8)
- *“The Eastern Partnership region is one of old and new security threats, and of conflicts that [...] affect your independence”* (J9)
- *“The European Parliament agrees: Russia’s strategy is to weaken the EU and the EU must react”* (J12)

In addition to these justifications related to geographical locations, others were identified that refer to the dangers of global phenomena or developments. The first is climate change (J5), as it is argued that the need for more European sovereignty and strategic autonomy exists due to the dangers and consequences of climate change for Europe and its security. Furthermore, the need for European sovereignty and strategic autonomy is justified by advancing digitalization and technology and the resulting security threats (J6), by the changing global economy, the restrictions on free trade (J10), by migration flows coming to Europe (J11), and by the threats of terrorism (J13):

- “climate transformations are paving the way for a stronger and more resilient Union” (J5)
- “Et enfin, la sécurité et la défense se jouent aussi dans ce nouvel espace de conduite des relations internationales qu’est le domaine numérique, où nous devons également viser l’autonomie stratégique” (J6)
- “It applies on foreign trade, an area where we have to step up diplomatic pressure” (J10)
- “Cette souveraineté européenne doit prendre plusieurs visages, c’est d’abord une réponse commune au défi des migrations” (J11)
- “Im Angesicht der internationalen Dimension des Terrorismus muss das Europa der Sicherheit unser Schutzschild sein” (J13)

Although this list is undoubtedly incomplete, it can serve to provide an initial overview of the identified justifications.

The Most Prevalent Justifications and their Meanings

In order to present the results more clearly and draw more precise conclusions, the nine most prevalent justifications were extracted from the 15 found in the 111 speeches. Here, the justifications were sorted and titled as not prevalent enough if they did not make up at least 15% of all justifications for any of the politicians (see Figure 2 and Table 2). The question can be raised whether all these prevalent justifications were nevertheless used by each of the politicians. It must be noted here that there were various changes in office (in France, Germany and within the EU) within the period of analysis and that it is therefore only possible to speak in general terms for the presidents and ministers.

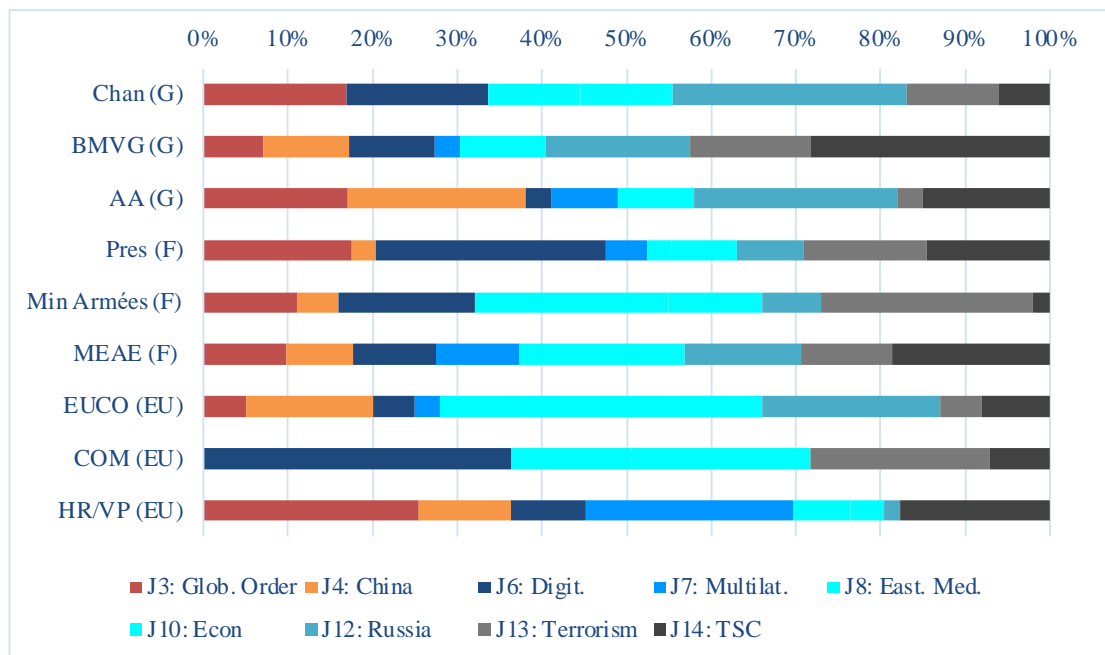


Figure 2: Shares of the most prevalent justifications per politician (Source: Own illustration; Information retrieved from Table III (see Annex 2))

Only the French President (Pres), the French foreign ministers (MEAE) and the presidents of the European Council (EUCO) used all of the nine most prevalent justifications in their speeches. The German Chancellor (Chan) did not use China (J4) nor the decline of multilateralism (J7) as justifications for more strategic autonomy and European sovereignty in Europe. Although there are numerous explanations for this, one of them could be that there is a closer economic tie between Germany and China. Moreover, it could be because fewer speeches by the German Chancellor were analyzed and those by the other politicians and therefore comparatively few reliable comparisons can be made (see Figure 1).

The German defense ministers (BMVG) did not use the dangers resulting from changes in the global economy (10) as a justification and the French defense ministers (Min Armées) did not use the justification of the decline of multilateralism (J7). Both could be due to the functions of this office, as neither economic developments nor multilateral structures fall within the purview of a defense minister. German foreign ministers (AA) also did not justify the need for more strategic autonomy and European sovereignty with changes in the global economy (J10), just like the German defense ministers (BMVG).

The EU HR/VPs did not justify the EU's reorientation in security and defense matters with terrorism (J13), which has been a security issue often discussed over the last few years. Although this is definitely surprising, further analysis is required in order to answer the question why they did not use terrorism as an explanation. Presidents of the European Commission (COM) used the fewest of the nine justifications - only five out of the nine most prevalent justifications were found in their speeches. Neither the new global order (J3), China (J4), the decline of multilateralism (J7), nor Russia (J12) were used as justifications.

However, if one looks at which politicians used which of the justifications most frequently, further explanations can be derived (see Table 2).

Justifications	Chan (G)	BMVG (G)	AA (G)	Pres (F)	Min Armées (F)	MEAE (F)	EUCO (EU)	COM (EU)	HR/VP (EU)
	<i>Germany</i>			<i>France</i>			<i>EU</i>		
J3: Glob Order	17%	7%	17%	18%	11%	10%	5%	-	26%
J4: China	-	10%	21%	3%	5%	8%	15%	-	11%
J6: Digit	17%	10%	3%	28%	16%	10%	5%	36%	9%
J7: Multilateralism	-	3%	8%	5%	-	10%	3%	-	25%

J8: <i>East Med</i>	11%	10%	9%	3%	23%	10%	10%	14%	7%
J10: <i>Econ</i>	11%	-	-	8%	11%	10%	28%	21%	4%
J12: <i>Russia</i>	28%	17%	24%	8%	7%	14%	21%	-	2%
J13: <i>Terrorism</i>	11%	14%	3%	15%	25%	11%	5%	21%	-
J14: <i>TSC</i>	6%	28%	15%	15%	2%	19%	8%	7%	18%

Table 2: Shares of the most prevalent justifications per politician (Source: Own illustration; Information retrieved from Table IV (see Annex 2; Rounded shares; Most frequent justification for each politician bold))

As can be seen from the bolded figures in Table 2, the German Chancellor (Chan) and German foreign ministers (AA) most often justified Europe's need for more strategic autonomy and European sovereignty by referring to an increasingly dangerous Russia (12). This is particularly interesting given that Germany was considered one of the most important links in Europe between the EU and Russia, and the German chancellor frequently advocated for mediation between Russia and the EU. However, the French President (Pres) and the Presidents of the European Commission (EUCO) most often used the impacts of digitization and technologies (J6) on Europe's security as a justification. This cannot be seen as surprising either, since all politicians used this justification in the context of the present analysis and the dangers posed by technologies have been playing an increasingly important role as a new security threat in Europe for some years now.

The fact that the French foreign ministers (MEAE) used the threats posed by terrorism (J13) and the Presidents of the European Council (EUCO) used the changing world economy (J10) most frequently as justifications for more strategic autonomy and European sovereignty, shows that politicians employ these narratives to refer to any challenge that is important for security at home and at European level. The EU HR/VP's most frequently used the new global order (J3), primarily created by the Sino-American duopoly, as a justification. This may be due to the fact that the new European Commission, which was elected in 2019, placed a focus on the geopolitical strategy of the EU in a world with a new global order. In addition, most of the speeches by politicians from the EU institutions analyzed in the context of the present analysis were held in 2020, which may have influenced these results.

The Transatlantic Security Community as Justification and Comparisons Across Borders

Previously, within this paper, it was assumed that the changes in the TSC could affect the discourse of the European CSDP and are reflected in it. As a result, the changes in

transatlantic relations were expected to be used as a justification for more strategic autonomy and European sovereignty.

As can be seen in Figure 2 and Table 2, the changes in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership were used as justification for more strategic autonomy and European sovereignty by all politicians in their speeches, but only constituted the most frequent justification by the German defense ministers (BMVG) and the French foreign ministers (MEAE). Germany's former Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer often stressed Europe's need for the U.S. as a security guarantor during her term in office. Since transatlantic relations have changed and this implies consequences for U.S.-European security and defense cooperation, it can be concluded that German defense ministers are advocating for more European capacity to act and more independence in security matters, using America's partial withdrawal from Europe's security affairs as an explanation.

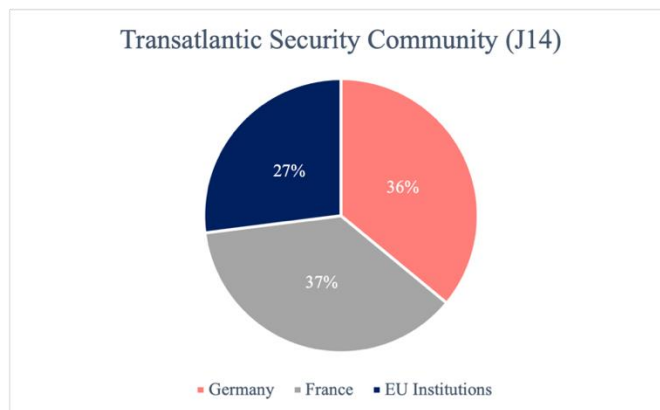


Figure 3: Shares of the justification 'Transatlantic Security Community' per country (Source: Own illustration; Rounded shares; Information retrieved from Table IV (see Annex 2))

When looking at Figure 3, however, further conclusions can be drawn. Although only the German defense ministers and French foreign ministers most frequently cited the TSC as a justification, the chart shows that German and French politicians, as well as those from the EU institutions, cited this justification with roughly equal frequency. Therefore, it can be assumed that changes in the TSC were on the agenda of all countries and served as an explanation for the need for more strategic autonomy and European sovereignty in equal measure. However, since a total of 15 justifications were analyzed as part of the analysis, it cannot be concluded beyond reasonable doubt that the narratives of European sovereignty and strategic autonomy arose solely from a changed TSC. In addition, it should not go unmentioned that the narratives may also partially overlap and that it is not necessarily possible to make a clear distinction between the narratives. This finding also shows how complex political decisions and changes at the EU level have been and that narratives or discourses are difficult to describe with just one explanation.

Further Findings and Results

Although no general conclusions can be drawn, within the framework of the analysis, the prevalence of justifications can be compared at the country level.

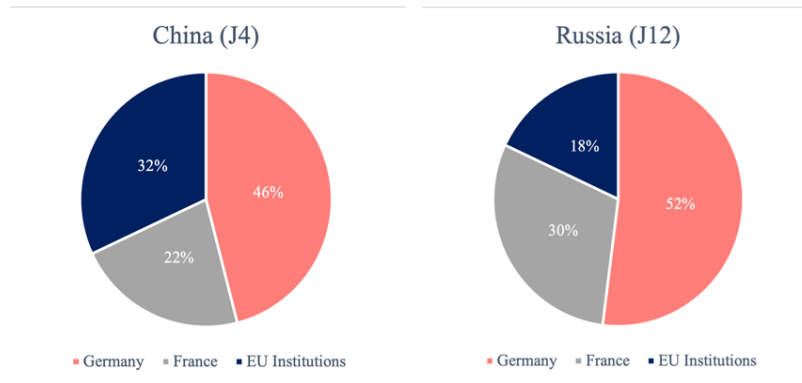


Figure 4: Shares of two justifications most frequently mentioned by German politicians (Source: Own illustration; Rounded shares; Information retrieved from Table IV (see Annex 2))

When looking at China and Russia as justifications (see Figure 4), these two countries are used significantly more often as justifications in Germany compared to France and EU institutions. This is particularly surprising, since the general tenor in France and the EU institutions is that the actions of China and Russia are to be observed critically and that Europe must take countermeasures. Nevertheless, there are possible explanations for this result. Former HR/VP Federica Mogherini used the narrative of strategic autonomy for the first time in 2016 and the French president used the narrative of European sovereignty in 2017 for the first time. Since the EU institutions and France thus “introduced” these narratives and therefore may have had clear ideas as to the meanings of these narratives, it is possible that these meanings persisted at the EU level and within the French government and that they simply included neither Russia nor China as explanations of strategic autonomy and European sovereignty.

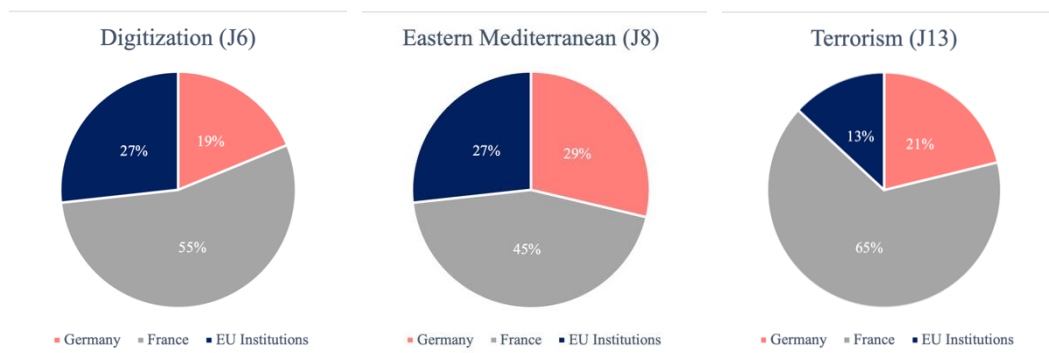


Figure 5: Shares of three justifications most frequently mentioned by French politicians (Source: Own illustration; Rounded shares; Information retrieved from Table IV (see Annex 2))

In a further country-level comparison, however, it becomes clear that French politicians used digitization, the Eastern Mediterranean region and terrorism as justifications significantly more often than politicians from the EU institutions and Germany (see Figure 5). It is relatively unsurprising that France uses threats as terrorism and conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean region as justifications. On the one hand, France is the one in which terrorist attacks have occurred most frequently. On the other hand, France is also a MS that is particularly engaged in North Africa and the Mediterranean, as some countries are former colonies of France and, most notably, the French military is stationed there. However, why France uses the impacts of digitization and technologies on Europe’s security as a justification significantly more frequently than politicians from the EU institutions and Germany would require further analysis.

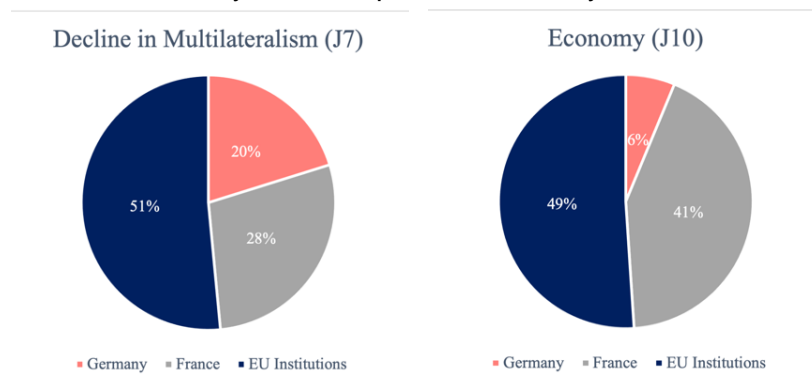


Figure 6: Shares of two justifications most frequently mentioned by politicians of the EU institutions (Source: Own illustration; Rounded shares; Information retrieved from Table IV (see Annex 2))

The crisis of multilateralism and the impact of a changing world economy, as well as restrictions on free trade, are the justifications used predominantly by EU institutions (see Figure 6). First of all, the EU is based and functions on multilateral structures; within the framework of multilateralism, the EU’s goal is to fight global problems and to benefit from cooperation with other states. Since the crisis of multilateralism has had and continues to have a direct impact on the EU and, moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this crisis, it can explain why the EU institutions are using the decline of multilateralism as a justification for why Europe should become more autonomous and sovereign. The fact that politicians from EU institutions frequently reference the changing global economy in their speeches may be due to the fact that the EU was founded as an economic community and has made the most progress regarding integration in the field of economics and trade. It thus stands to reason that the EU would want to break new ground if the global economy changes.

5. Conclusion

As a first step, the literature on security communities and the role of discourses were examined. In addition to the characteristics of security communities in general and the TSC in a narrower sense, it was shown that changes in a security community are most likely to show up in the discourses of elites. For this reason, a qualitative content analysis was conducted in which speeches of key security elites from Germany, France, and EU institutions were coded and analyzed. It was shown that the changes in the TSC were used by all politicians in their speeches as a justification for more strategic autonomy and European sovereignty but were only used as the most frequent justification by the German defense ministers (BMVG) and the French foreign ministers (MEAE). The fact that 14 other justifications were found in addition to the TSC shows that the TSC is not the only explanation for the EU's common security and defense policies but is merely one of many.

These differences in the justification of the narratives (could) indicate that the EU did not have a truly unified idea of what strategic autonomy and European sovereignty mean in the analyzed timeframe. As was pointed out in chapter 3.3, there are many definitions for the two narratives, but no single one from the EU. For this reason, the differences in justifications could be due to the fact that the justifications represent different conceptions of strategic autonomy and European sovereignty, or different priorities. This, in turn, seems to have implications for implementation - everyone in the EU is talking about strategic autonomy and European sovereignty, but the likelihood that there is at least some "talking past each other" occurring is undoubted.

However, it cannot be left unmentioned that the discourse on strategic autonomy within the EU has changed significantly in the course of Russia's war in Ukraine, which has been ongoing since February 24, 2022. The resulting security challenges and geopolitical tensions have injected a renewed sense of complexity and urgency into the debate. Key actors within the EU, including Germany, France, have reevaluated their strategic priorities and enhanced their collective security measures. This conflict has not only underlined the need for a more autonomous and robust European security framework, but has also influenced the narrative on strategic autonomy, i.e. strengthening the ability to act independently. This development adds a further layer to the ongoing discussions on strategic autonomy and European sovereignty and underlines the dynamic nature of these debates in response to real-time geopolitical challenges. Therefore, the results of this analysis, and the new shifts since the war in Ukraine, offer a starting point for numerous further investigations.

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