

**Taking Off Together:
The Thrust of Franco-German Cooperation in FCAS**

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Introduction | 1 |
| 2. Theory..... | 2 |
| <i>a. Waltz.....</i> | <i>2</i> |
| <i>b. Walt</i> | <i>3</i> |
| <i>c. Kelemen & McNamara.....</i> | <i>4</i> |
| 3. Methods..... | 5 |
| <i>a. Research design</i> | <i>5</i> |
| <i>b. Method of data collection</i> | <i>5</i> |
| <i>c. Method of data analysis</i> | <i>6</i> |
| 4. Analysis | 8 |
| <i>a. Observations in the German case: Waltz.....</i> | <i>9</i> |
| <i>b. Observations in the German case: Walt</i> | <i>12</i> |
| <i>c. Observations in the Waltzian French case.....</i> | <i>14</i> |
| <i>d. Observations in the Waltian French case</i> | <i>17</i> |
| <i>e. Observations in the Kelemen & McNamara case.....</i> | <i>20</i> |
| 5. Discussion | 22 |
| <i>a. Waltz.....</i> | <i>22</i> |
| <i>b. Walt</i> | <i>24</i> |
| <i>c. Kelemen & McNamara.....</i> | <i>26</i> |
| 6. Conclusion..... | 27 |
| 7. List of references..... | 29 |
| 8. Appendix..... | 33 |

Abstract

By comparing the foreign policies of France and Germany, this thesis deals with the research question: “How much cooperation among France and Germany on the Future Combat Air System (FCAS) appears possible?” The present comparative case study delves into newspaper articles and statements by government officials concerning foreign policies and different motivations towards the FCAS. These will be analyzed through a coding scheme based on hypotheses drawn from Waltz’s neorealism, Walt’s balancing threats theory and the bellecist integration approach by Kelemen and McNamara. The congruence method makes it possible to utilize these theories to assess cooperation and strategic objectives. The documents used in this study will be examined through the tool atlas.ti. The current scrutiny will remain relevant due to the continuous developments and shifts needed to counter external aggressions, e.g., from Russia and China. France and Germany are crucial countries to look at due to their paradigmatic leadership in this continent and their key role in security, strategy and policymaking. The main goal of this thesis is to find out to what extent France and Germany are willing to cooperate for the sake of their individual and collective security.

1. Introduction

Developing advanced defense technologies is critical in shaping states' strategic priorities and foreign policies in the rapidly evolving landscape of international relations and global security. The Future Combat Air System (FCAS) project emerges as a cornerstone of European defense collaboration, symbolizing a crucial step toward enhanced collective security and technological innovation. “Both technologically and military, the project has the potential to set new standards and revolutionize the use of air power” (Vogel, 2021). According to Vogel (2021), the project is a litmus test for how much Europe can cooperate on security policy while developing its own capabilities and putting national interest to one side for this purpose. According to Vogel (2021), it will be ready for development in 2040 and will form the backbone of the Air Force in the long term. It is conceived as a network¹ that not only marks the next generation Euro Fighters or Tiger combat helicopters but also new platforms such as the Euro drone and a Next Generation Weapon System, according to Vogel (2020).

Europe's standing in the global structure is not always as straightforward as one might think, which is why this thesis aims to inform and analyze Europe's situation in terms of defense capabilities. This thesis also helps to think about the future of Europe's strategic defense aspirations since international crisis centers, such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, always harbor consequences. The FCAS sets the base for this scrutiny, which aims to look at European defense collaboration. Referenced sources deal with Germany and France's foreign and defense policies from 2014 until 2024.

Literature such as *The Origins of Alliance* (Walt, 1990), *The Theory of International Politics* (Waltz, 1979), and *the Bellicist Integration and the State-building Approach* (Kelemen et al., 2022), are essential for explaining cooperation and motives. These will guide the thesis, and their assumptions about the international global system contribute to exploring the FCAS project. Only a few researchers provided a nuanced analysis of how two leading countries, France and Germany, navigate their foreign policies regarding a major defense collaboration project, the FCAS. The defense policies of Germany and France are also particularly relevant because other member states of the EU might think of these countries as role models, given their standing within the European Union. Furthermore, the FCAS can serve to bridge the limited coercive power of the EU. It enhances the collective defense capabilities of EU member states, particularly France and Germany. However, as it will be investigated, the FCAS is far from that stage.

The aims of this study are to evaluate strategies to counter aggressions and to inform society about standard and latest practices in this field. Moreover, the present contribution intends to further knowledge in the field of global defense cooperation, because of the unique approach comparing France and Germany, which are involved in the FCAS. France and Germany are keen on safeguarding European values, such as the rule of law, respect for human rights, and many more. This is due to their own standing in Europe, but more importantly, for the sake of their own protection. Identifying this in the literature and discovering patterns in the states' behavior will prove crucial. Besides, the present scrutiny is particularly relevant due to aggressions or security threats, such as the Russian war in Ukraine, which leaves European member states no choice but to rethink their defense mechanisms to gain more strategic independence from other actors, such as NATO. This thesis, however, is not particularly concerned with the Ukraine war but more with the implications for the international relations between different stakeholders.

The main explorative research question is the following: “How much cooperation among France and Germany on the FCAS appears possible?”. This offers a first overview of the topic and seeks to evaluate

¹ The “FCAS system can be imagined as a range of concentric circles: In the center there is the NGF, the Next Generation combat aircraft. In the inner circle, together with the remote carriers, is the Next Generation Weapon System (NGWS), which is connected and controlled via the Air Combat Cloud. In the outer circle, the NGWS is linked with other systems. These include fighter aircraft, such as the Eurofighter or the French Rafale, but also tankers, naval vessels, satellites, and assets of the other integrated armed forces” (Vogel, 2021).

the level of cooperation among the two countries. To dive deeper, the sub-questions that will be investigated are the following: “What are strategic objectives?” and “How do the strategic objectives influence cooperation?” The main element of the sub-questions, strategic objectives, and their influence on the cooperation will investigate the FCAS further. For example, how similar or dissimilar objectives influence cooperation. The hypotheses drawn from the theories will help test the reasons for cooperation and the level thereof.

The theories of Waltz and Walt and the bellicist integration approach will provide a better understanding of how states act in the global setting and serve as an outline to grasp the phenomenon of European defense strategies. Additionally, the theories of Waltz and Walt can be used because of their practical relevance and strength in analyzing the behavior of international actors, such as France and Germany. The bellicist integration approach could offer a fresh lens to understand the dynamics of intergovernmental defense collaboration and the strategic objectives of both member states within the FCAS project. European defense cooperations, including the FCAS, will be investigated through an operationalization of the theories.

2. Theory

The theoretical framework will set the basis for the analysis of state behavior and the level of cooperation of France and Germany. On the one hand, the neorealist theory by Waltz (1979) determines the international system as an anarchic structure. The system and power constellations among it drive the need for states to prioritize security, according to Waltz (1979). The drive for security and resulting state behavior occur through either seeking self-sufficiency (internal balancing) and cooperation out of common interests (external balancing) without the presence of an acute threat, according to Waltz (1979). On the other hand, the second theory can only explain the state behavior through the perception of one threat, according to Walt (1990). Lastly, the approach by Kelemen and McNamara can explain state behavior with the occurrence of so-called external shocks, according to Kelemen et al. (2022). These can, for example, occur in the form of geopolitical tensions, military conflicts, or hybrid warfare. The last approach makes a connection between the occurrence of external shocks and the strengthening of institutions, which has implications for the FCAS. This angle will help examine the differences in perspectives by both governments on cooperation regarding the FCAS.

a. Waltz

In the literature, Waltz usually refers to “a system composed of a structure and of interacting units” (Waltz, 1979). Nation-states, which are part of the international political system, are equal to all the others, according to Waltz (1979). This notion results in no one being entitled to command and to obey, which explains the international systems, on the other hand: “International Systems are decentralized and anarchic” (Waltz, 1979). Consequently, state behavior is determined outside the state by the structure of the international system. The theory will be used as a foreign policy frame to characterize the EU states’ foreign policy. States can “seek self-sufficiency in critical resources, technologies, and infrastructure to ensure survival through strength and self-reliance [...] to secure a favorable balance of power” (Donnelly, 2023), which is the case in internal balancing. This implies that a state relies on its own capabilities rather than on the capabilities of potential allies.

States can also choose to cooperate through external balancing, according to Waltz (1979). “Alliances are made by states that have some but not all their interests in common. The common interest is ordinarily a negative one: fear of other states” (Waltz, 1979). When external balancing is the case, “states often pool their resources in order to serve their interests” (Waltz, 1979). Differences in foreign policies should be set aside to serve the balance of power. The foreign policy frames can be characterized as internal or external balancing, although a mix is also possible. France and Germany wish to be prepared for probable threats, which have not occurred yet. This probability will later be operationalized. Moreover, a first glance at the defense cooperation can be made, including the need to prepare against

probable threats. Following Waltz's reasoning that the international system is anarchical, the following hypothesis can be made:

H₀: European governments seek to increase their own capacities to secure their survival and position in the international system, on principle.

This hypothesis could explain that the internal balancing of power (independent variable), as mentioned in Waltz's theory, influences the cooperation within the FCAS (dependent variable). However, there could be more important factors to this cooperation, as could be explained in the following two theories. As it was mentioned beforehand, Waltz made his claims about the international order for the geopolitical landscape of a bipolar world order. This is a limitation to be considered since the world is not seen as bipolar anymore. A more current term is "multipolarity", which "harks back to the European balance-of-power system, which was managed exclusively by great powers, involving few multilateral institutions" (Acharya et al., 2023). In addition, according to Acharya et al. (2023), the concept of "polarity" usually measures the distribution of material power at single points in time. Therefore, ideas, norms, leadership, or patterns of interaction are all aspects that are critical to the global security setting and seem to be missing. Hence, the authors propose a new notion that they coined "multiplexity", which is "an interaction capacity-based concept to frame our understanding of the evolution of the international order" (Acharya et al., 2023). No single theory can account for all international relations' dynamics. And although the limitations of the chosen theoretical framework needed to be addressed, Walt's concepts of internal and external balancing are crucial to develop our thesis.

b. Walt

The theory of Stephen M. Walt (1990) paints a different picture when it comes to balancing. Instead of balancing against individual powers, he argues that states ally to balance against acute threats. This is an important distinction to recognize when comparing the notion of balancing to Waltz's theory. Walt's assumption is that although the distribution of power is crucial, factors like geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, and perceived intentions play an essential role when it comes to the level of threat a state is exposed to, according to Walt (1990).

This theory can be used as a measuring stick for the states' foreign policy frames. Diverging views of how France and Germany each perceive threats, not just from Russia but also a dependency on NATO, for instance, are likely to occur. Germany, for example, could be more careful when it comes to Russia since they are more dependent on energy supplies from Russia than France. France, on the other hand, has a robust nuclear power supply, which might enable them to act more individually compared to Germany. This might lead to France pushing for more cooperation, disregarding the perceived threat from Russia.

Furthermore, various events might have a direct influence on the foreign policy frames and shared policies, such as The Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, the migrant crisis in 2015, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. These events are critical for understanding the security landscape in which France and Germany operate and how these dynamics influence cooperation in the FCAS. Since the theory states that to balance against threats, an acute threat must exist from the beginning.

Consequently, it can be investigated what this means for cooperation. Can a perceived threat by France and Germany count as a strategic objective to counter the threat? What kind of consequences will occur for their cooperation? Walt argues that "states form alliances to protect themselves from states or coalitions whose superior resources could pose a threat" (Walt, 1990). Following Walt's reasoning, the following hypothesis can be made:

H₁: If the Russian invasion requires France and Germany to balance against this threat, then the motivation for bringing the FCAS further and the need for more defense cooperation increases.

This hypothesis could explain if the beginning of the Russian invasion requires France and Germany to balance against this threat (independent variable), then one can see a change in the behavior of both states, Germany and France, hence increasing the commitment (dependent variable) towards bringing the joint project further.

c. Kelemen & McNamara

Kelemen et al. (2022) claim the EU's institutional development to be highly imbalanced. It wields extensive legal and regulatory power but has only limited capacities when it comes to centralization of fiscal, administrative, and coercive powers, according to Kelemen et al. (2022). States can use coercion to deter another state from an unwanted action or force them to comply against will. Although the EU does not have this capacity, member states can use the EU's institution to advocate on their behalf. Consequently, member states can use the institutions as tools to facilitate behavioral change within the EU.

Unlike other academics, the EU is seen by these scholars through the historical perspective of state-building, according to Kelemen et al. (2022). This perspective allows the authors "to newly appreciate the impact of two key macro-historical political logics that have driven the emergence of new states in the past: the "bellicist" collective security logic of war, and the logic of "market integration for economic gain" (Kelemen et al. 2022). The institutional framework of the EU developed through market integration in the absence of war or immediate military threat, according to Kelemen et al. (2022). Events such as the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the migrant crisis in 2015, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 can induce changes within the EU's institutional architecture. These then can lead to the FCAS filling the gap concerning the lack of coercive powers of the EU.

Whether bellicist integration works can be put to the test by looking at the European Defense Fund (EDF). Here, resources are pooled within the institutions of Europe as well as in the case of the FCAS, only that the FCAS is a cooperation between three states outside of the EU's institutions. This can show probable pros and cons for the FCAS and will be looked at as well. The theory also examines the choices made by the states. Some questions to tackle are: Why taking defense matters into EU hands, and why not stick to NATO and the F35? Why do they seem to prefer taking a cooperative European approach with the FCAS?

This theory opens the possibility of observing geopolitical developments. The European institutions will be looked at, especially regarding the German and French cases, their contributions, and whether they qualify to drive changes within the institutions. Kelemen and McNamara therefore "take up a long and distinguished bellicist tradition in state theory" (Genschel et al., 2022), which is also based on the famous quote, "war made the state, and the state made war" (Tilly, 1992). The following hypothesis derives from this approach:

H₂: If external shocks or wars such as the Russian invasion occur, then European institutions become stronger, which in turn facilitates enhanced Franco-German cooperation in the FCAS.

Following the bellicist integration, the occurrence of shocks or wars (independent variable) can cause strong institutions (dependent variable). Strong institutions can be used by the member states to advocate for more cooperation, i.e., FCAS can get further on track.

3. Methods

a. Research design

A case study “scientifically investigates a real-life phenomenon” (Ridder, 2020). This research design is a comparative case study with a comparison of “most similar” cases (George et al., 2007). Both states are member states of the EU and advocate for more integration in the EU. There are, however, different reasonings and state behaviors that are observable, but both cooperate within the FCAS. Furthermore, both states perceive a threat from Russia, but their angle and motivation towards the FCAS differ. Moreover, both states must react towards a war on European soil. They, however, have different opinions on how to react to this and what to advocate for within the EU institutions. The hypotheses will be tested by utilizing the congruence method. “The essential characteristic of the congruence method is that the investigator begins with a theory and then attempts to assess its ability to explain or predict the outcome in a particular case” (George et al., 2007).

Waltz's notion of balance of power through internal balancing may have an influence on the form and extent of the cooperation between France and Germany. Walt focuses on the balance of threats, which France and Germany both face, potentially leading to further cooperation. Kelemen & McNamara's approach allows to add the EU into the investigation of the FCAS, stating that the occurrence of war can strengthen EU institutions. Strong institutions can then be used by the states as tools. The theories are able to inquire about the degree of cooperation and explain different positions by France and Germany on cooperation and towards the EU as well.

There are two main levels which will be analyzed. First, the international level can explain whether states increase their defense capabilities in response to global developments or cooperate based on common interests. These developments influence the strategic objectives of the cooperation. This would be the Waltzian case. States can also balance threats due to one perceived threat, which influences cooperation and the strategic objectives of the states in question, which would be the Waltian case. As well, the occurrence of war can significantly shape EU institutions to become stronger. This would be the case with Kelemen & McNamara's approach. Second, the comparative level allows us to understand the French and German perspectives on cooperation depending on which theory is involved. The EU and its institutions are also at this comparative level, which is crucial for the FCAS and its future. A clear and comprehensive methodology will give the thesis a structure that potential readers can follow up on.

b. Method of data collection

The data will consist of newspaper articles and statements made by high-ranking politicians who are involved in foreign affairs and related policy fields, such as former or acting heads of the nations in the given timeframe or heads of the defense ministries. This is also called triangulation. Going through the news helps discern developments that seem to indicate their motivations towards increasing cooperation.

In addition, different newspapers, such as the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), a rather conservative newspaper, Die Tageszeitung (Taz) positioned on the left of the political spectrum, Sueddeutsche Zeitung (SZ), a liberal newspaper, will be in the data set. The same procedure is applied to the French case. Le Figaro is rather conservative, while Le Monde Diplomatique is rather on the left of the political spectrum. Ouest France is rather liberal. Acknowledging these biases is key to provide a comprehensive and balanced data set. For this purpose, parliamentary debates from high-ranking politicians will be used as well. The FCAS was also recently part of the debate in the German army. Recent developments also lead Macron to talk about European strategies for countering threats from Russia, for instance. These will be coded by using atlas.ti. Daily news are essential sources, because all new developments are discussed there. Speeches, statements, and opinions by high-ranking politicians can be used to double check the framing by the newspapers. All documents analyzed will be listed in the Appendix. Translations will be made with the programs DeepL or ChatGPT 4o. To provide a

balanced data set, ten articles per newspaper will be used. These can vary slightly, but not extensively. For the parliamentary debates, two per country will be used for balancing the ideological frames by the newspapers. On top of the aforementioned sources, a press conference held by Macron and Scholz in January 2023 will be analyzed. The data sample adds up to sixty-five documents in total. Although including further speeches and text samples would have given a wider scope to the study, due to time and space limitations this was unfeasible.

c. Method of data analysis

The analysis of the data will be conducted through a congruence analysis. “A congruence analysis approach (CON) is a small-N research design in which the researcher uses case studies to provide empirical evidence for the explanatory relevance or relative strength of one theoretical approach in comparison to other theoretical approaches” (Blatter et al, 2012). Therefore, patterns, like probable threats, for example, can be inspected. The codes, which are the theory's operationalization, will be described in the following. The frequency of codes in the text can also unveil something about the probability of threat, for instance. For the coding scheme, an operationalization of the theories and the hypotheses based on them is needed to have a clear idea of how to analyze the documents. The tool which will be used is atlas.ti, which helps to code more efficiently.

Waltz's theory of neorealism deals with the anarchic system and various security pressures states face (Waltz, 1979). For operationalizing the theory, the codes below can be utilized for a thorough analysis of various documents:

| Main codes (MC) | Explanation (MC) | Sub codes (SC) | Explanation (SC) |
|----------------------|--|--|--|
| Level of cooperation | This code helps to assess the level of cooperation between the two states. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) non-existent 2) continuous, but low 3) mid 4) high 5) very strong | Ordinal scale, where values have a meaningful order. Intervals between the scale are not necessarily equal. This helps to categorize the level of cooperation. |
| Strategic vision | This code delves into the strategic objectives and motivations of the states. In the case of Waltzian realism this would be national security and senses of national security. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) very low 2) low 3) mid 4) high 5) very acute | Ordinal scale, where values have a meaningful order. Intervals between the scale are not necessarily equal. This helps to assess the strategic vision in the Waltzian case, which can be cross-referenced with probabilities of threat. |
| Internal balancing | Mentioning or implying to increase national defense capabilities, investment in self-sufficiency or national defense strategies in discussions, articles, and other sources. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) increasing national defense capabilities 2) investment in self-sufficiency 3) national defense strategies | These are a first idea of what internal balancing could look like. 2) can mean various things, such as decreasing dependence on other technology, infrastructure and so forth. Further codes will be added during the process of coding. |
| External balancing | Mentioning or implying alliances, partnerships, FCAS and other partnerships like this, cooperative defense initiative in discussions, articles, and other sources. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) cooperation 2) common threat | These are a first idea of what external balancing could look like. However, these are not final it is important to be able to add codes while in process of coding. |

Walt's theory emphasizes seeking cooperation when a state feels threatened. Therefore, the following codes will be used to operationalize the theory:

| Main Code (MC) | Explanation (MC) | Sub Code (SC) | Explanation (SC) |
|--------------------------|---|--|---|
| Level of cooperation | This code helps to assess the level of cooperation between the two states. | 1) non-existent 2) continuous, but low 3) mid 4) high 5) very strong | Ordinal scale, where values have a meaningful order. Intervals between the scale are not necessarily equal. This helps to categorize the level of cooperation. |
| Strategic vision | This code delves into the strategic objectives and motivations of the states. In the Waltian case this would be balancing against one acute threat. | 1) very low 2) low 3) mid 4) high 5) very acute | Ordinal scale, where values have a meaningful order. Intervals between the scale are not necessarily equal. This helps to assess the strategic vision in the Waltzian case, which can be cross-referenced with probabilities of threat. |
| Probabilities of threats | This is needed to compare it to Waltzian realism's probability of threat code. | Scale from 1-10 | Interval scale, where the intervals are equal. This helps to compare it to Waltzian realism. |
| Perception of threats | This allows to better compare potential different threat perceived by France or Germany. | 1) low 2) mid 3) strong | Ordinal scale, where values have a meaningful order. Intervals between the scale are not necessarily equal. This helps to assess the level of threat perception, since one acute threat is important to this theory. |

Lastly, the bellicist integration approach can explain if the occurrence of shocks or wars in the EU causes institutions to become stronger. The institutions can be used by the member states to facilitate more cooperation. Therefore, the following codes shall help to operationalize the theory:

| Main Code (MC) | Explanation (MC) | Sub Code (SC) | Explanation (SC) |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|
| External shock | This code is used when external shocks (e.g. Wars, conflicts) are mentioned and potentially influence policy changes within the EU. | Type of Shock 1) military conflicts 2) geopolitical tensions 3) hybrid | These sub codes help to categorize external shocks and increase the strength of the analysis. 1) refers to specific military engagements or wars, such as the Russian invasion in the Ukraine. 2) refers to diplomatic or economic confrontations that affect EU security. 3) refers to cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, hacking or media manipulation |
| Institutional Strengthening | If new policies, particularly linked to defense capabilities or integration are mentioned, this is coded here. An example could be the EDIDP. | Institutional Changes 1) increased budget 2) new defense mechanisms | 1) Increases in funding special initiatives, such as EDIDP or even FCAS. 2) New structures or systems within the EU |
| Defense cooperation | This is coded, when there are specific references to other cooperations in that regard, which can tell how they are linked to EU institutional changes, but also if other cooperations are being favored. | 1) European Defense 2) NATO 3) Intergovernmental 4) Other | The subcodes help to categorize defense cooperation. At the end it will be insightful to see, if there are tendencies towards one subcode. |

Analyzing these documents, which deal with or articulate threats, can help test the hypotheses. It is important to know whether France, Germany, or both feel threatened, for example, by having a scale that can measure how low or high a perceived threat alters the decision-making of the state. As indicated in the table, the sub-codes are not final. However, it is possible that during the process main codes could be added as well. This strengthens the analysis as the codes are not only directly derived from the theoretical context and the resulting hypotheses (deductive), but codes can be added during the coding of the documents (inductive).

In the following section, there is a brief description of the codes that were added while coding. “FCAS” was added during coding to pinpoint quotations that mention cooperation specifically. “Defense actor” was added to give an impression about relevant actors, such as Airbus or Dassault Aviation. Moreover, “pressure on German government”, “pressure on Franco-German cooperation” and “pressure on French government” were added. These are ordinal-scaled, just like strategic vision. These give an overview of external pressures that potentially influence the actor in question. In addition, the strategic vision was specified into “national” and “Europe”. Consequently, the codes can be used for theories where, for example, only Europe is important. Codes like “France”, “Germany”, “Franco-German”, and “Europe” were added to make the filtering for cases in atlas.ti more efficient. “Potential Capabilities of other states” was added to the Waltzian theory to ensure a comprehensive analysis of geopolitical factors influencing both cases.

When one state possesses capabilities that another lacks, it can create pressure, insecurity and potentially even provoke action. In Kelemen & McNamara’s theory, the code “institutional strengthening” includes four additional subcategories: “Cooperation in the purchase of military equipment,” “empowering joint operations,” “expanded mandate,” and “undefined”. Empowering in this sense also means the request to become stronger and more efficient in doing things together, but it is also coded when joint operations are positively highlighted. “Expanded mandate” was coded when there are tendencies to be observed, which clearly indicate that, for example, the EU gained more competences in a specific area of defense cooperation, “Undefined” was coded when quotes did not match the previous categories, qualify as institutional strengthening as well, because the observation could be made that the area in which it was acted upon had a pull factor towards European institutions.

4. Analysis

The analysis will be structured as follows. First of all, observations collected through article coding will be described, starting with the German case, followed by the French case. Then, since the third theory examines whether European institutions strengthen in response to external shocks, those observations will be presented. The influence of both governments will also be considered as it is a crucial aspect of the theory, though tackled from a different angle. After each observation of the theory, there will be a short outlook on the speeches. Lastly, the observations described regarding the theories and hypotheses will be analyzed.

| | | FAZ 10 73 | Le Figaro 10 55 | Le Monde diplom... 10 96 | Ouest France 10 47 | SZ 10 65 | TAZ 10 75 | Summen |
|--|-----|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------|--------|
| Defense Cooperation: European Defense | 71 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 9 |
| Defense Cooperation: Intergovernmental | 22 | 5 | 3 | | 1 | 1 | 3 | 13 |
| Defense Cooperation: NATO | 22 | 3 | | | | 1 | | 4 |
| Defense Cooperation: other | 3 | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | | 3 |
| External Balancing | 12 | 4 | 1 | | 2 | | 2 | 9 |
| FCAS | 11 | 2 | | 3 | | | | 5 |
| Franco-German | 29 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 3 | | 1 | 18 |
| Germany | 110 | 26 | 14 | 12 | 10 | 18 | 25 | 105 |
| Internal Balancing: Increasing national defense capabilities | 23 | | | 2 | | | 10 | 12 |
| Internal Balancing: Investment in self-sufficiency | 14 | | | | 1 | 1 | 7 | 9 |
| Internal Balancing: National defense strategies | 4 | 2 | | | | 1 | | 3 |
| Level of Cooperation: Continuous, but low | 12 | 2 | | | 1 | | | 3 |
| Level of Cooperation: High | 84 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 22 |
| Level of Cooperation: Mid | 19 | | 1 | 1 | | | | 2 |
| Level of Cooperation: Non-Existent | 1 | | | | | | | 0 |
| Level of Cooperation: Very Strong | 6 | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Potential Capabilities of Other States | 26 | | 1 | | | 2 | | 3 |
| Pressure on Franco-German Cooperation | 4 | | 2 | | 1 | | | 3 |
| Pressure on German Government: Low | 1 | | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| Pressure on German Government: Mid | 3 | | 1 | | | 1 | | 2 |
| Pressure on German Government: Strong | 14 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 3 | 11 |
| Strategic Vision National: High | 59 | 6 | 1 | | 3 | 3 | 2 | 15 |
| Strategic Vision National: Low | 12 | | | 1 | 1 | | 3 | 5 |
| Strategic Vision National: Mid | 15 | 3 | 2 | 3 | | 1 | | 9 |
| Strategic Vision National: Very Acute | 1 | | | | | | | 0 |
| Strategic Vision National: Very Low | 1 | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Summen | | 75 | 38 | 29 | 29 | 36 | 61 | 268 |

Figure 1: Coding of the Waltzian German case

a. Observations in the Waltzian German case

The coding suggests that the category “internal balancing” and its subcodes “increasing national defense capabilities” and “investment in self-sufficiency” are coded more frequently than the category “external balancing”.

The first example is the article in Taz by Beucker (2022), which covers the so-called “Sondervermögen”. It is a special fund established for the German army in 2022. The total sum is 100 billion Euros. Here, the subcodes “increasing national defense capabilities” and “investment in self-sufficiency” apply.

Furthermore, according to Beucker (2022), Germany is procuring F-35 fighter jets from Lockheed Martin, which are capable of carrying nuclear bombs, as well as CH-47 Chinook heavy transport helicopters and P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft from Boeing in the USA. Here, the same subcodes apply.

In an interview with Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung, the Chancellor candidate from the Greens advocates for cooperation with America, containment of China, and a more stringent political approach towards Russia. This case is an example of the code “external balancing”. The code “FCAS” is crucial to the hypothesis because it will examine whether commitment to the project fluctuates. Alongside the ordinal scaled code “level of cooperation,” this will help identify trends.

Here is one illustration:

“Scholz recently elevated two major Franco-German projects launched in 2019 and key to Europe’s defense over the next 50 years to the rank of ‘absolute priorities’: the Future Combat Air System (FCAS; a network including drones, fighters and satellites) and Main Ground Combat System (MGCS; tanks)” (Leymaire, 2022).

This citation falls under the category “FCAS”, and the category “level of cooperation” exhibits a high-level rating. In another article published in Le Monde Diplomatique, the FCAS is also mentioned directly but falls under the “level of cooperation: mid” level category. The author declares that joint industrial projects often stall or restart with difficulty, such as the planned Franco-German FCAS project and the Main Ground Combat System, MGCS, according to De Villepin (2024).

It is also interesting to note that the code “Franco-German” appears 18 times, but only 4 out of 17 quotations specifically refer to the FCAS project. The other instances include references to peace accords jointly organized by both governments, collaborative military procurement or training

initiatives, and various perspectives on the French-German relationship, such as their separate military deployments in Mali in 2018.

The category “defense cooperation” is divided into four sub-categories: “European Defense,” “intergovernmental,” “NATO,” and “other”, which includes instances where the cooperation does not fit into the first three categories. “Cooperation” relates to governments collaborating in non-defense areas, such as monetary or trade policies. In the German case, the most frequently coded category is “intergovernmental,” followed by “European defense.” An example out of Owest-France is the development of the “framework nation” concept to fill capability gaps through cooperation by Germany. This includes personnel exchanges, pooling of resources, joint command structures and equipment acquisitions according to Arthuis (2017). This is an example for the sub-category “European defense”. There are also cases where the categories “NATO” and “European Defense” coexist.

The former president of Germany highlighted the significance of the alliances in which Germany plays a role. He underscored the value of NATO for global security, as well as that of the EU. “In our interconnected world, challenges cannot be addressed by a single state, regardless of its strength. Germany stands to benefit from enhanced collaboration.” He believes that “Germany will be a more effective friend and ally if it is more open to the world”, according to Hickmann et al. (2014).

Furthermore, the category “strategic vision” is rated as “high” level in the most cases. According to Beucker (2022) in an article from Taz, during Wednesday's Bundestag debate, deputy faction leader Gesine Löttsch expressed outrage over the SPD, FDP, Greens, and CDU/CSU—the largest coalition ever—joining forces to launch a massive economic stimulus program for the arms industry.). Second most rated category is a “mid” level strategic vision.

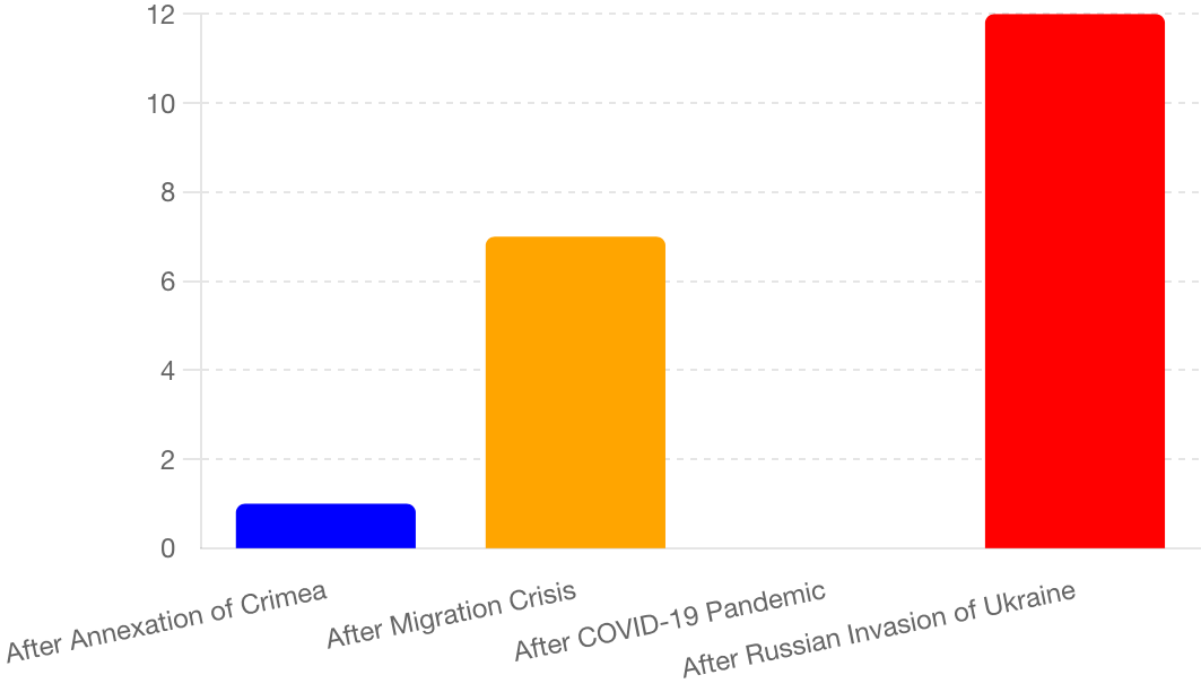


Figure 2: Coding of “Potential capabilities of other states” after critical junctures

Furthermore, “potential capabilities of other states” appears twenty times. As shown in Figure 2, the code frequency is illustrated in relation to the four critical junctures. An example of this is the following quotation:

“The European Union is naturally divided. It is not capable today of defining a strategic relationship with China or facing the United States. On Iran or trade, Trump is in a position of strength. He can easily stir up contradictions within the European Union: Brexit, taxation of large cars, insufficient defense effort by Europeans, particularly Germany, whose political-military status limits its capacity to "play in the big leagues," prohibitive sanctions against companies that do not follow American policy in Iran, the inherent weakness of the single currency in the face of foreseeable international shocks, etc.” (Chevenment, 2018).

| | | Speeches | Summen |
|--|-----|-----------|-----------|
| | | 5 79 | |
| ● ◆ Franco-German | 29 | 1 | 1 |
| ● ◆ Germany | 110 | 5 | 5 |
| ● ◆ Internal Balancing: Increasing national defense capabilities | 23 | 2 | 2 |
| ● ◆ Internal Balancing: Investment in self-sufficiency | 14 | 2 | 2 |
| ● ◆ Level of Cooperation: High | 84 | 1 | 1 |
| ● ◆ Pressure on German Government: Mid | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| ● ◆ Pressure on German Government: Strong | 14 | 1 | 1 |
| ● ◆ Strategic Vision National: High | 59 | 3 | 3 |
| Summen | | 16 | 16 |

Figure 3: Coding of the Speeches in the Waltzian German case

The codes that apply to the speeches in the Waltzian German case are identical to those in Figure 1. It is a condensed representation of the codes since it only shows cited codes.

The speech held by the German Minister of Defense Boris Pistorius was in June 2024. It was part of a survey of the German government and was coded with the categories “Strategic vision: high”, “increasing national defense capabilities”, and “investment in self-sufficiency relevant for the Waltzian case. He emphasizes the importance of maintaining defense and operational readiness, highlighting that Putin's war economy is preparing for future conflicts. It is crucial to be war-ready by 2029 to provide deterrence and prevent escalation, focusing on three key areas: personnel, material, and finances, according to Bundesregierung (2024).

Additionally, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and the French president Emmanuel Macron held a press conference on the occasion of the Franco-German Ministerial Council in January 2023.

Scholz speaks about the break of a tradition that Germany never exported armaments into territories involved in wars. This has changed since the imperialistic attack by Russia against Ukraine, and they will continue doing so. “We have closed an agreement with each other on this”. He refers to the French government and Macron as partners, according to Bundesregierung (2023). This quotation falls under the category “level of cooperation: high” level.

| | FAZ 10 73 | Le Figaro 10 55 | Le Monde diplom... 10 96 | Ouest France 10 47 | SZ 10 65 | TAZ 10 75 | Summen |
|---|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------|--------|
| Cooperation | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 13 |
| Defense Cooperation: European Defense | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 9 |
| Defense Cooperation: intergovernmental | 5 | 3 | | 1 | 1 | 3 | 13 |
| Defense Cooperation: NATO | 3 | | | | 1 | | 4 |
| Defense Cooperation: other | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | | 3 |
| FCAS | 2 | | 3 | | | | 5 |
| Franco-German | 5 | 7 | 2 | 3 | | 1 | 18 |
| Germany | 26 | 14 | 12 | 10 | 18 | 25 | 105 |
| Level of Cooperation: Continuous, but low | 2 | | | 1 | | | 3 |
| Level of Cooperation: High | 8 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 22 |
| Level of Cooperation: Mid | | 1 | 1 | | | | 2 |
| Level of Cooperation: Non-Existent | | | | | | | 0 |
| Level of Cooperation: Very Strong | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Perception of Threats: Low | 1 | | | | | 2 | 3 |
| Perception of Threats: Mid | | 1 | | | 1 | | 2 |
| Perception of Threats: Strong | 4 | 5 | | 3 | 8 | | 20 |
| Probabilities of Threats: 3 | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| Probabilities of Threats: 4 | | | | | | | 0 |
| Probabilities of Threats: 5 | | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| Probabilities of Threats: 6 | 2 | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Probabilities of Threats: 7 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 1 | 19 |
| Probabilities of Threats: 8 | 2 | 2 | | 2 | 1 | | 7 |
| Probabilities of Threats: 9 | | | | | | | 0 |
| Strategic Vision National: High | 6 | 1 | | 3 | 3 | 2 | 15 |
| Strategic Vision National: Low | | | 1 | 1 | | 3 | 5 |
| Strategic Vision National: Mid | 3 | 2 | 3 | | 1 | | 9 |
| Strategic Vision National: Very Acute | | | | | | | 0 |
| Strategic Vision National: Very Low | | | | | | 1 | 1 |

Figure 4: Coding in the Waltian German case

b. Observations in the Waltian German case

Essential for the Waltian theory are the categories “Probabilities of threats” and “Perception of threats”. The first category shows the respective probability on a nominal scale. In the German case, the probability distribution is most cited between six and eight, but overall, the highest is seven. One citation that exemplifies this is:

“**Who will stop this madness?**” The extravagant European Union (EU) is auctioning off the fate of its peoples, applauding behind an overzealous Germany, the invasion of illegal migrants forcing the gates of Schengen” (Rioufol, 2015b).

The probability of threat is rated with a seven. Another citation marked with probability eight is the following:

“[...] How could the world's fourth-largest economy become so dependent on Russian gas? How could a country [...] find itself tied hand and foot to the dictator of the Kremlin? How could it have reduced alternatives over the past twenty years, even after the invasion of Crimea in 2014?” (Marchand, 2022).

Another article from Taz wrote about the special fund for the German army being created based on the premise that Germany could be the next target of an aggressive war by Russia after the Baltic states. However, this premise appears less plausible given the course of the war in Ukraine, as Russian aggression is proving to be a military disaster rather than a successful model according to Beucker (2022). This citation is an example for the categories “probabilities of threats: 3” and “perception of threats: low” level.

In addition, the category “perception of threats” ranks the perceived threat of the state in an ordinal scale. The most coded category is a strong-level perceived threat rather than mid-level or low-level.

“[...] other phenomena such as Russian aggression policy, illegal migration, cyber-attacks on data networks, [...] the dangers posed by pandemics have only been recognized in their potential threat since then” (Leithäuser, 2015).

This marks a strong-level perceived threat. In addition to these categories, “strategic vision national” is also relevant to the Waltian theory. The article following up on an interview with the German minister of external affairs Annalena Baerbock is an illustration for the category and its high-level of “strategic vision national”.

According to Buborowski et al. (2021), Baerbock’s statement emphasizes that a different approach to authoritarian regimes is crucial for Germany’s future government, highlighting the competition between authoritarian forces and liberal democracies. This applies to China as well, where the New Silk Road project and its global investments in infrastructure and energy are seen as hard-nosed power politics, not mere niceties. Europeans, therefore, should not be under any illusions. This was also categorized as “perception of threats: strong” level and “probabilities of threat: 8”. Another citation that was rated as “low” level in the national strategic vision, but also as “perceived threat: strong” level and “probabilities of threats: 8” is the following:

“Germany’s geopolitical vulnerability became glaringly apparent as its mercantilism had developed over decades under the dual security guarantees of military (American) and legal (European) protection” (Marchand, 2022).

The category “defense cooperation” is also applicable here. One example of the sub-category “intergovernmental” is a statement made by former German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

According to Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (2018), she stated that France and Germany closely collaborate on defense matters, including joint aircraft procurement, squadron training, and foreign missions. Consequently, it is consistent for training and operations to be jointly shaped as well. Both countries are actively bringing the idea of a European defense union to life. Further quotes on this topic will be illustrated in the French case later on.

| | | Speeches 5 79 | Summen |
|-------------------------------------|-----|------------------|-----------|
| ● ◇ Franco-German | 29 | 1 | 1 |
| ● ◇ Germany | 110 | 5 | 5 |
| ● ◇ Level of Cooperation: High | 84 | 1 | 1 |
| ● ◇ Perception of Threats: Strong | 107 | 2 | 2 |
| ● ◇ Probabilities of Threats: 7 | 92 | 3 | 3 |
| ● ◇ Probabilities of Threats: 8 | 49 | 1 | 1 |
| ● ◇ Probabilities of Threats: 9 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| ● ◇ Strategic Vision National: High | 59 | 3 | 3 |
| Summen | | 17 | 17 |

Figure 5: Coding of the speeches in the Waltian German case

Quotations from the Waltian case, which are categorized as “level of cooperation” and “strategic vision national,” also apply in the Waltian case.

However, the statement made by Boris Pistorius from the same speech as used before was categorized with “perception of threats: strong” level and “probabilities of threats: 7”, as well, and this applies to the Waltian perspective.

“Just over six months ago, I spoke about "war fitness" for the first time. [...] Russia's brutal war against Ukraine, which violates international law, is an attack on peace in Europe and the world. It is an attack on freedom and the international order” (Bundesregierung, 2024).

| | | FAZ 10 73 | Le Figaro 10 55 | Le Monde diplom... 10 95 | Ouest France 10 47 | SZ 10 65 | TAZ 10 75 | Summen |
|--|-----|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------|--------|
| Defense Cooperation | 109 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 22 |
| Defense Cooperation: European Defense | 71 | | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 9 |
| Defense Cooperation: intergovernmental | 22 | 4 | 3 | | | | 4 | 11 |
| Defense Cooperation: NATO | 22 | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| Defense Cooperation: other | 3 | | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| External Balancing | 12 | 3 | 1 | | | | 1 | 5 |
| FCAS | 11 | 2 | | 2 | | | | 4 |
| France | 121 | 11 | 25 | 32 | 12 | 10 | 18 | 108 |
| Franco-German | 29 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 3 | | 1 | 18 |
| Internal Balancing: Increasing national defense capabilities | 23 | | | 1 | | 1 | | 2 |
| Internal Balancing: Investment in self-sufficiency | 14 | | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| Level of Cooperation: Continuous, but low | 12 | | | | 2 | | | 2 |
| Level of Cooperation: High | 84 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 19 |
| Level of Cooperation: Mid | 19 | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 7 |
| Level of Cooperation: Very Strong | 6 | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Potential Capabilities of Other States | 26 | | | | | | | 0 |
| Pressure on Franco-German Cooperation | 4 | | 2 | | 1 | | | 3 |
| Pressure on French Government: Mid | 4 | | 1 | 2 | | | | 3 |
| Strategic Vision National: High | 59 | 5 | 2 | 15 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 30 |
| Strategic Vision National: Low | 12 | | 1 | 4 | 1 | | | 6 |
| Strategic Vision National: Mid | 15 | | 5 | 1 | | | | 6 |
| Summen | | 41 | 57 | 72 | 31 | 20 | 38 | 259 |

Figure 6: Coding of the Waltzian French case

c. Observations in the Waltzian French case

One observation of the French case suggests that the category “external balancing” appears slightly more often than all the categories of “internal balancing”. The following is an example of a citation, which was categorized as “internal balancing: increasing national defense capabilities”.

“France’s chief of defense staff, General Pierre de Villiers, is calling for the defense budget — which he calls the war effort — to be increased from 1.77% of GDP to 2% (the NATO target, equivalent to €32.1 bn) by the end of the next five-year planning period” (Leymarie, 2017).

With reference to the statement made by former chancellor Angela Merkel in 2018, which presents an example for the Waltzian German case was also categorized as “level of cooperation: high” level. It highlights the intensive Franco-German cooperation, including the collective shaping of training and operations. The category “level of cooperation” is also rated most frequently “high” level, and there are two cases with the rating “continuous, but low”. One of which as follows:

“Yet, both in France and in Europe, fraternity is often more of a pious wish than a reality. The fate of the 12,000 refugees on the Greek island of Lesbos, after the fire at the Moria camp, sadly demonstrates this” (Bouthors, 2020),

For the categories “FCAS” and “level of cooperation” the citation above in the German case can be referenced here as well.

According to Carstens (2022), Berlin and Paris have chosen to invest in their own aviation technology rather than becoming fully dependent on the United States, despite the high cost, which exceeds 100

billion euros. This applies to the category “level of cooperation: high” level and “FCAS”. Overall, there is only one case, where “FCAS” and “level of cooperation” was ranked as mid-level, and it was already mentioned above in the German case but can also be applied here. The category “Franco-German” applies 18 times, just like in the German case. Moreover, like in the German case, the sub-categories “intergovernmental” and then “European defense” of “defense cooperation” were the most prominent. Here is another example for the category “intergovernmental”:

“[...] officers from the Franco-German Brigade monitor troop movements in the dark. [...] Outside, on the Munster military training ground (Lower Saxony), the largest of the Bundeswehr with 102 hectares [...]” (Avril, 2023).

This citation also falls under the category “Franco-German”. The article deals with a joint task force deployed to defend Altraverdo, which Russia assaulted.

Observations indicate that the category “Strategic vision national” is most rated as “high” level. However, there are six quotations where strategic vision is rated “mid” level and “low” level. One illustration that was rated high follows.

“[...] The military planning law will augment its budget by more than €400bn by 2030. This law, which recognizes the underinvestment of recent years, still pursues the idea of a necessarily reduced, generalist force, a miniature army serving the giant ambitions of a global great power. We must accept narrowing our ambitions to continental and territorial defense. [...]” (Villepin, 2024).

One which was rated as low-level is the following:

“France’s Russian policy is "ambivalent, marked by mistrust towards Putin and economic voluntarism," according to Marie Mendras, a political scientist at CNRS and Ceri. She also regrets France’s "silence" during the Ukrainian crisis” (Lasserre, 2014).

The frequency distribution of the category “potential capabilities” in the French case does not differ from the German case since this category does not apply to the case specifically. The following citation, however, is from an article that deals with France's worldview and strategic compass.

“We must also be vigilant in East Asia, where, from Taiwan to Korea, threats of new possible fronts are proliferating along the fault lines between the two major blocs. The choice of muscular containment in the Indo-Pacific carries risks of an uncontrollable slide into war” (De Villepin, 2024).

Besides, the following is another citation from the same article:

“Rarely has the world been as combustible and dangerous as today. Daily we witness the confrontation of two damaged worlds: a Western camp acting in the name of progress which is destabilizing, fearing its own decline, and sometimes too quick to resort to force; and a camp keen to revise the world order in its favor, at the risk of making it a patchwork of fenced-off imperial enclaves, in which ultimately any change would be stifled at birth in the name of stability” (De Villepin, 2024).

| | | Speeches 5 79 | Summen |
|--|-----|------------------|-----------|
| ● ◆ France | 121 | 13 | 13 |
| ● ◆ Franco-German | 29 | 1 | 1 |
| ● ◆ Internal Balancing: Increasing national defense capabilities | 23 | 5 | 5 |
| ● ◆ Internal Balancing: National defense strategies | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| ● ◆ Level of Cooperation: High | 84 | 2 | 2 |
| ● ◆ Level of Cooperation: Very Strong | 6 | 1 | 1 |
| ● ◆ Strategic Vision National: High | 59 | 8 | 8 |
| ● ◆ Strategic Vision National: Very Acute | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Summen | | 32 | 32 |

Figure 7: Coding of the speeches in the Waltzian French case

A tendency can be observed in the Waltzian French case speeches. The sub-category “internal balancing: increasing national defense capabilities” was the most frequently observed among the two applicable sub-categories of internal balancing. This indicates that only these two sub-categories were relevant, with the first being the most common. The following statement made by Emmanuel Macron in April 2024 was during his last speech at Sorbonne.

“We have begun to awaken. France, for its part, has doubled its defense budget. We are in the process of doing so with our second Military Programming Act” (Élysée, 2024).

Interesting to observe is that the category “strategic vision national” with the rating “high” level applies eight times and even once with the rating “very acute”. From the same speech as the last quotation, this quotation is categorized as “very acute”:

“We have a comprehensive army model, with the aim of being the most effective army in Europe, and also possess nuclear weapons, and therefore the deterrence capacity that goes along with them. Nuclear deterrence is central to France’s defense strategy. It is, therefore, essentially a critical element of defense of the European continent” (Élysée, 2024).

He previously stated that he wanted to invite all his partners to build a European defense initiative with capabilities such as anti-missile and other useful capabilities and, therefore, France would play its full part, according to the speech.

| | FAZ 10 73 | Le Figaro 10 55 | Le Monde diplom... 10 95 | Ouest France 10 47 | SZ 10 65 | TAZ 10 75 | Summen |
|--|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------|--------|
| Cooperation 30 | | 3 | 3 | | 1 | 2 | 9 |
| Defense Cooperation: European Defense 71 | | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 9 |
| Defense Cooperation: intergovernmental 22 | 4 | 3 | | | | 4 | 11 |
| Defense Cooperation: NATO 22 | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| Defense Cooperation: other 3 | | | 1 | | | | 1 |
| FCAS 11 | 2 | | 2 | | | | 4 |
| France 121 | 11 | 25 | 32 | 12 | 10 | 18 | 108 |
| Franco-German 29 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 3 | | 1 | 18 |
| Level of Cooperation: Continuous, but low 12 | | | | 2 | | | 2 |
| Level of Cooperation: High 84 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 19 |
| Level of Cooperation: Mid 19 | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 7 |
| Level of Cooperation: Very Strong 6 | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Perception of Threats: Mid 10 | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Perception of Threats: Strong 107 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 18 |
| Probabilities of Threats: 6 29 | 2 | 1 | | | | 3 | 6 |
| Probabilities of Threats: 7 92 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | | 3 | 11 |
| Probabilities of Threats: 8 49 | | 5 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 10 |
| Probabilities of Threats: 9 2 | | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Strategic Vision National: High 59 | 5 | 2 | 15 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 30 |
| Strategic Vision National: Low 12 | | 1 | 4 | 1 | | | 6 |
| Strategic Vision National: Mid 15 | | 5 | 1 | | | | 6 |
| Summen | 38 | 69 | 76 | 31 | 21 | 44 | 279 |

Figure 8: Coding of the Waltian French case

d. Observations in the Waltian French case

First, the categories “probabilities of threats” and “perception of threats” will be examined from the French government's perspective. In the French case, the distribution of the probability of threats is, like in the German case, highest between six and eight, but unlike in the German case not lower than six. However, there is one case, where the probability is rated nine. The quotation, however, also accounts for Europe.

“Anyone who opposes its expansion will be targeted. This is evidenced by the hybrid attacks already launched against EU countries, primarily France, which has been a victim of cyberattacks orchestrated by the Russian government—these are exactly the same hybrid methods, combining disinformation campaigns, hacking, and media manipulation, that preceded the aggression against Ukraine, even before the annexation of Crimea” (Le Drian, J.-Y et al., 2024).

One citation for a probability rated as six is as follows:

“The initial contacts between Donald Trump and European leaders—France, Germany, and Great Britain—did not serve to reassure the EU. The decision to have his first meeting with a foreign leader since his inauguration be with Theresa May, the Prime Minister of a country in the process of leaving the Union, was seen as a provocation by the other Europeans” (Lasserre, 2017).

The “perception of threats” is consistently rated as “strong” level, except for one case. Here is one quotation ranked with a “strong” level.

“When Roger Cukierman, president of the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions in France (CRIF), acknowledged on January 3 in Le Figaro: “We are facing an Islamist danger that threatens all of France. This overall climate is driving French Jews away (...) Most of the acts are perpetrated by young people from immigration backgrounds,” this testimony sparked no indignation among “anti-racists”” (Riouful, 2015a).

The statement which was rated as “mid” level of perception of threats was the following:

“On the German side, there is always the fear of engaging in a colonial war under French leadership, while Paris sometimes struggles to think in European terms. At the same time, the Bundestag's institutional constraint is often used as a pretext by Berlin not to intervene,” notes Stefan Seidendorf, deputy director of the Franco-German Institute in Ludwigsburg. Indeed, some Brigade units were deployed to Mali in 2018 but separately [...].

The “strategic vision national” coding is also rated with a “high” level most frequently. Here is an instance of it:

“Despite this, the French military retains some prestige from Operation Serval, generally considered a success. It is now learning from the experience of fighting a small-scale regional war that also demonstrates the combat-worthiness of equipment produced by French arms manufacturers, giving France an aura of European leadership in security, especially in conflicts to its south” (Leymaire, 2022).

Furthermore, this excerpt indicates a “mid” level strategic vision of France.

“It has plunged headlong into a series of military interventions, acting as the US’s deputy and ramping up tensions with Germany” (De Villepin, 2024).

This citation is from the same article as mentioned in the Waltzian French case, which situates France in a rather unfortunate situation since the disappearance of the Soviet bloc, the regained power of Germany, and the loss of influence in Africa, according to De Villepin (2024).

The sub-categories of “Defense cooperation” apply similarly to the German case, except for the fact that “NATO” and “other” only apply once in each sub-category. Furthermore, the sub-category “intergovernmental” is the most frequent, like in the German case, but has two citations less.

According to Carstens (2020), both countries and Spain met at a military facility in Berlin to discuss the probably most expensive future project of the German army and friendly armed forces, the Next Generation Weapon System). It will be constructed and built together, which was agreed upon between France and Germany in 2017, and Spain wants to join as well. This marks the first time Germany and France shoulder such a project together. This example highlights the Franco-German cooperation and falls under the sub-category “intergovernmental”.

| | | Speeches 5 79 | Summen |
|-----------------------------------|-----|------------------|-----------|
| Cooperation | 30 | 1 | 1 |
| France | 121 | 13 | 13 |
| Franco-German | 29 | 1 | 1 |
| Level of Cooperation: High | 84 | 2 | 2 |
| Level of Cooperation: Very Strong | 6 | 1 | 1 |
| Probabilities of Threats: 7 | 92 | 4 | 4 |
| Probabilities of Threats: 8 | 49 | 2 | 2 |
| Strategic Vision National: High | 59 | 8 | 8 |
| Summen | | 32 | 32 |

Figure 9: Coding of the speeches in the Waltian French Case

Continuing with the Waltian French case speeches, the category “strategic vision national” applies almost as frequently as in the previous case. This is the same for the “level of cooperation” category. The classification “probabilities of threats” is most frequently rated at seven.

A statement by Emmanuel Macron during his speech in front of the French Military in January 2023 is particularly important for the Waltian case. He declared that it is not only about bringing armed forces into line, but also about transforming them to be prepared for the next conflicts of the future. “Therefore, we rely on the excellence of our armed forces and their dedication, and we must change as well and be prepared for even more brutal and numerous wars. This includes the law on military expenditure planning” (Phönix.de, 2023).

| | | FAZ 10 73 | Le Figaro 10 55 | Le Monde diplom... 10 95 | Ouest France 10 47 | SZ 10 65 | TAZ 10 75 | Summen |
|--|----|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| Defense Cooperation: European Defense | 71 | 13 | 2 | 8 | 13 | 13 | 14 | 63 |
| Defense Cooperation: intergovernmental | 22 | 6 | 3 | | 2 | 3 | 5 | 19 |
| Defense Cooperation: NATO | 22 | 15 | 2 | 3 | | 2 | | 22 |
| Defense Cooperation: other | 3 | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | | 3 |
| External Shock: Geopolitical Tensions | 28 | 5 | 4 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 24 |
| External Shock: Hybrid | 13 | | | | 3 | 9 | | 12 |
| External Shock: Military Conflicts | 37 | 5 | 4 | 12 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 29 |
| FCAS | 11 | 4 | | 3 | | | 1 | 8 |
| Franco-German | 29 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 4 | | 1 | 19 |
| Institutional Strengthening: Cooperation in the Purchase of Military Equipment | 5 | | | | 2 | | | 2 |
| Institutional Strengthening: Empowering Joint Operations | 6 | | | | 2 | | | 2 |
| Institutional Strengthening: Expanded Mandate | 6 | 1 | | | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Institutional Strengthening: Increased Budget | 6 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 2 | 1 | 6 |
| Institutional Strengthening: New Defense Mechanisms | 18 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 18 |
| Institutional Strengthening: Undefined | 5 | 2 | | 1 | | | | 4 |
| Level of Cooperation: Continuous, but low | 12 | 2 | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 11 |
| Level of Cooperation: High | 84 | 21 | 3 | 11 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 57 |
| Level of Cooperation: Mid | 19 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 18 |
| Level of Cooperation: Non-Existent | 1 | | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| Level of Cooperation: Very Strong | 6 | 1 | 1 | 2 | | | | 4 |
| Pressure on European Union: Mid | 7 | | | 2 | | 5 | | 7 |
| Pressure on European Union: Strong | 70 | 5 | 8 | 10 | 11 | 8 | 19 | 61 |
| Pressure on Franco-German Cooperation | 4 | 1 | 2 | | 1 | | | 4 |
| Strategic Vision Europe: High | 99 | 12 | 1 | 15 | 9 | 9 | 11 | 57 |
| Strategic Vision Europe: Low | 13 | 2 | | 4 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 13 |
| Strategic Vision Europe: Mid | 38 | 2 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 7 | 32 |
| Strategic Vision Europe: Very acute | 5 | | | 1 | | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| Summen | | 108 | 51 | 92 | 75 | 84 | 95 | 505 |

Figure 10: Coding of the Kelemen & McNamara case

e. Observations in the Kelemen & McNamara case

This chapter looks at the findings of the third theory with the main categories “external shocks”, “institutional strengthening”, and “level of cooperation”. Observations include which country contributed to changes within the institutions. First, “external shocks” will be scrutinized. The most common sub-category is the occurrence of “military conflicts”, followed by “geopolitical tensions”. The first example is from an article published by FAZ in 2014, which deals with sanctions against Russia. It was also categorized with the sub-code “undefined” of institutional strengthening.

According to Busse (2014), Germany approved resolutions by the EU and NATO, including the sanctions against Russia, shortly after the annexation of Crimea in March 2014. In public statements, former chancellor Merkel and former minister of foreign affairs Steinmeier did not deviate from opinions on the annexation voiced by Washington, London or Paris. Another article, which deals with the criticism of former French president Hollande faced due to the planned delivery of two warships to Russia, falls under the sub-category “military conflicts” as well. In light of the annexation, this was debated heavily by the French government.

“Yesterday, during a visit to Saint-Nazaire, Yannick Jadot, head of the Europe Écologie-Les Verts list in the West for the European elections, set up camp by the Penhoët basin, opposite the first of the two ships, to launch his protest. "The situation in Ukraine, with Russia orchestrating a civil war at our borders, makes the idea of military cooperation with significant technology transfers unacceptable," he declared” (Le Tiec, 2014).

The following citation falls can be attributed to the category “military conflicts” as well and is a more recent one:

“Just two days before Emmanuel Macron's declaration in Germany, a French diplomat still warned against the decision to allow Ukrainians to strike Russian soil. "If you extend the scope of the fight, it could escalate. I do not know who would be ready for that." As for Chancellor Olaf Scholz, he seems to have softened his stance, stating alongside Emmanuel Macron that "Ukraine has the right to defend itself”” (Lasserre, 2024).

The article deals with the proposal to allow Ukraine to fight Russian military sites from where strikes are launched against Ukraine. After several discussions, the German government and the majority of the EU member states approved this proposal as well. The pressure came from the British and French governments as well as NATO.

The category “institutional strengthening” indicates that the most frequent form is “New defense mechanisms”.

According to Bonse (2024), the commission vice-president in charge of coordinating the EU’s external action, Josep Borrell, stated that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine brought back war to Europe. The EU must invest more into its defense after decades of underfunding, but better and together. The Commission’s proposal is to tackle defense projects together. This is an illustration of the category “institutional strengthening”, as well as the sub-category “military conflicts”. Another example for the sub-category, but also for “expanded mandate” and “defence cooperation: European defence,” appears in an article that reports that the EU has done a lot in the last two years. It established the EDP and the European Military Staff (EMS), which is part of the European External Action Service (EEAS). The EMS employs 2500 staff members who manage missions within the EEAS. Furthermore, the plan is to identify 30 capacity gaps and fill them within the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), for example, the drone project MALE, according to Leymaire (2019).

Additionally, the category “level of cooperation” indicates a clear tendency towards a high-level rating. The second most frequent is a rating with “mid” level. The following quotation is a further example of a high level but can also be associated with the category “strategic vision Europe” and a high-level rating.

“Next, we must consider, within a European framework, the reorganization of defense industries to ensure the greatest French and European sovereignty while securing financing facilities. Defense expenditure should be excluded from the financial objectives of the new stability pact, underscoring its value as an investment in the future. Then, a European armament agency should be provided with at least €100bn raised through mutualized debts, and finally, coordinated planning should be organized among member states to geographically distribute activities, production sites, research and development, and intellectual property while ensuring globally competitive output” (De Villepin, 2024).

The observations for the category “level of cooperation” indicate a high-level rating as well. The most frequent rating in the category “strategic vision: Europe” is also a high-level, followed by a mid-level rating.

| | | Speeches | Summen |
|--|-----|------------|------------|
| | | 5 79 | |
| Defense Cooperation: European Defense | 71 | 8 | 8 |
| Defense Cooperation: intergovernmental | 22 | 1 | 1 |
| Europe | 245 | 62 | 62 |
| External Shock: Geopolitical Tensions | 27 | 3 | 3 |
| External Shock: Hybrid | 13 | 1 | 1 |
| External Shock: Military Conflicts | 37 | 6 | 6 |
| FCAS | 11 | 1 | 1 |
| Franco-German | 29 | 4 | 4 |
| Institutional Strengthening: Cooperation in the Purchase of Military Equipment | 5 | 3 | 3 |
| Institutional Strengthening: Empowering Joint Operations | 6 | 4 | 4 |
| Institutional Strengthening: Expanded Mandate | 6 | 1 | 1 |
| Institutional Strengthening: Undefined | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| Level of Cooperation: Continuous, but low | 12 | 1 | 1 |
| Level of Cooperation: High | 84 | 22 | 22 |
| Level of Cooperation: Mid | 19 | 1 | 1 |
| Level of Cooperation: Very Strong | 6 | 2 | 2 |
| Pressure on European Union: Strong | 70 | 9 | 9 |
| Strategic Vision Europe: High | 99 | 42 | 42 |
| Strategic Vision Europe: Mid | 38 | 6 | 6 |
| Strategic Vision Europe: Very acute | 5 | 1 | 1 |
| Summen | | 179 | 179 |

Figure 11: Coding of the speeches in the Kelemen & McNamara case

In the speeches, the category “strategic vision Europe: high” level has the highest attribution. Interesting to observe is that twenty-nine citations out of forty-two are from Macron’s speech held in 2024. One quotation from that speech illustrates the category:

“Our European future, but, by definition, the future of France. They cannot be addressed separately” (Élysée, 2024).

The category also appeared in Scholz's speech in Strasbourg from 2023.

“And we should remember that the extent to which we invest more in our security and defense, in civilian resilience, in technological sovereignty, in reliable supply chains, in our independence with respect to critical raw materials, that is the extent to which we will be better allies to our transatlantic friends” (Bundesregierung, 2023a).

The press conference of Scholz and Macron from 2023 in Paris dealt with geopolitical challenges. Scholz highlights that the return of war to the European continent has reinforced the belief that Europeans must be able to stand up for themselves, including enhancing European defense capabilities. In recent weeks, progress has been observed in the strategic partnership, particularly in the area of FCAS, which is a positive development according to Bundesregierung (2023b). This statement made by Scholz can be attributed to the categories “Defense cooperation: European defense”, “External shock: military conflicts”, “FCAS”, “Institutional Strengthening: Cooperation in the purchase of military equipment”, as well as “Empowering joint operations” and was rated high in both “Strategic vision” and “level of cooperation”.

5. Discussion

a. Waltz

H₀: European governments seek to increase their own capacities to secure their survival and position in the international system, on principle.

Looking at the cases through Waltz’s theory was a necessary and traditional approach since Waltz’s neorealism is frequently consulted in this field. Thanks to the broad scope of the theory, it is possible to identify factors required by the theory’s notion. In both cases, there are clear tendencies to be observed, especially after the Russian aggression trends, such as increasing military capabilities, were determined. Both governments and Europe realized the importance of being able to defend themselves since war returned to Europe. The security of the nation needs to be guaranteed at all times. Germany is in a difficult situation since military expenditure has remained at a low level throughout the last 15 years. The special fund established by Germany in 2022 was necessary to improve its capabilities and marks an important state intervention.

The French case implicates more trends towards external balancing than internal balancing. However, looking at statements from Macron, for instance, and the French government’s stance towards Europe, one can see that the French government pushed for more integration towards the EU. Macron affirmed the aim to be the most effective army in Europe, according to his speech in 2024, since France remains the only nuclear power in Europe. Nuclear deterrence is central to France’s defense strategy and, therefore, a critical element of the European defense. He also emphasized the identical interests of the French and Europeans. This being said, the trends towards external balancing are not able to answer the favored preference of France. There is not enough evidence for this. The German government’s statements and opinions are not as extensive and clear as in the French case. Both governments are often seen as the European engine since they advocate for more integration. Germany, however, often relied on NATO to be the main defense entity of the European continent. Over time, especially since the election of Donald Trump as US President, Europe learned the hard way that the American partner is not as reliable as it had traditionally been.

Furthermore, with the special military fund established in 2022, Germany bought several F-35 combat jets and helicopters from American manufacturers. How does this fit into the bigger picture? First of all, this fund acted as a wake-up call. Unprecedented consensus across the political landscape, but also in a heavily debated topic, such as defense, was a significant turning point. This also shows the motivation and vision for Germany to be able to react to geopolitical developments. These include measurable capabilities of other states, such as China and Russia. The EDF can also be seen as an answer to insecure partners and new geopolitical developments, such as unreliable partnership with the USA. The procurement of armaments from foreign manufacturers was necessary to increase military readiness. This does not mean relying on NATO per se.

Moreover, the geopolitical landscape has changed significantly since Waltz. There are more entities from which power is being exerted compared to the times of the Cold War. A bipolar world order, which is the case in his theory, does not comply with today's geopolitical landscape. Consequently, as mentioned before in the theoretical framework, the concept of polarity in this sense is arguably outdated. For further research, the concept of multiplexity would be an alternative, as it seems to reflect global dynamics more accurately, see Acharya et al. (2023). Today the framing of internal and external balancing has shifted, as well. At least in this case study the framing of Waltz's internal and external balancing is different from his traditional view.

European member states are closer than ever when it comes to defense. Internal balancing can now also be seen as evident when European governments seek to align capabilities and shoulder huge tasks like defense together. It is a huge task since China and the USA have extensive military capabilities, and it is challenging to keep up. External balancing, on the other hand, can be seen as cooperating with the US or relying on them. However, the tendency to make European efforts to defense more self-sufficient is evident. This does not mean turning the back on NATO, but being able to defend the EU without NATO is an aim that is being pursued and significantly reinforcing the pillar of NATO within the EU.

The FCAS does not fit into the picture of Waltz, since the interacting units, in this case France and Germany do not form an alliance out of fear of other states but to efficiently align resources. The aim is to be more self-sufficient, not in the national context, but in the European sense. They both advocate for more European defense mechanisms, and the FCAS is a first step. Therefore, Waltz's theory and the formulated hypothesis H0 fail to analyze cooperation.

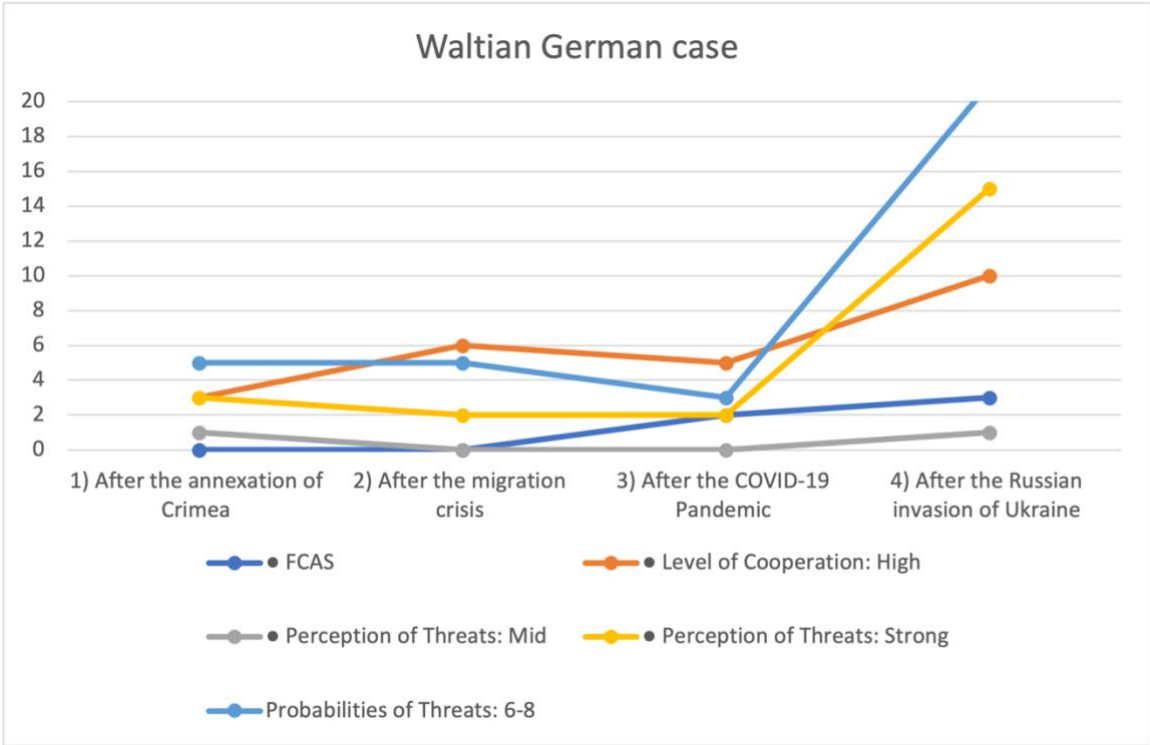


Figure 12: Concepts of the Waltian case with regard to critical junctures

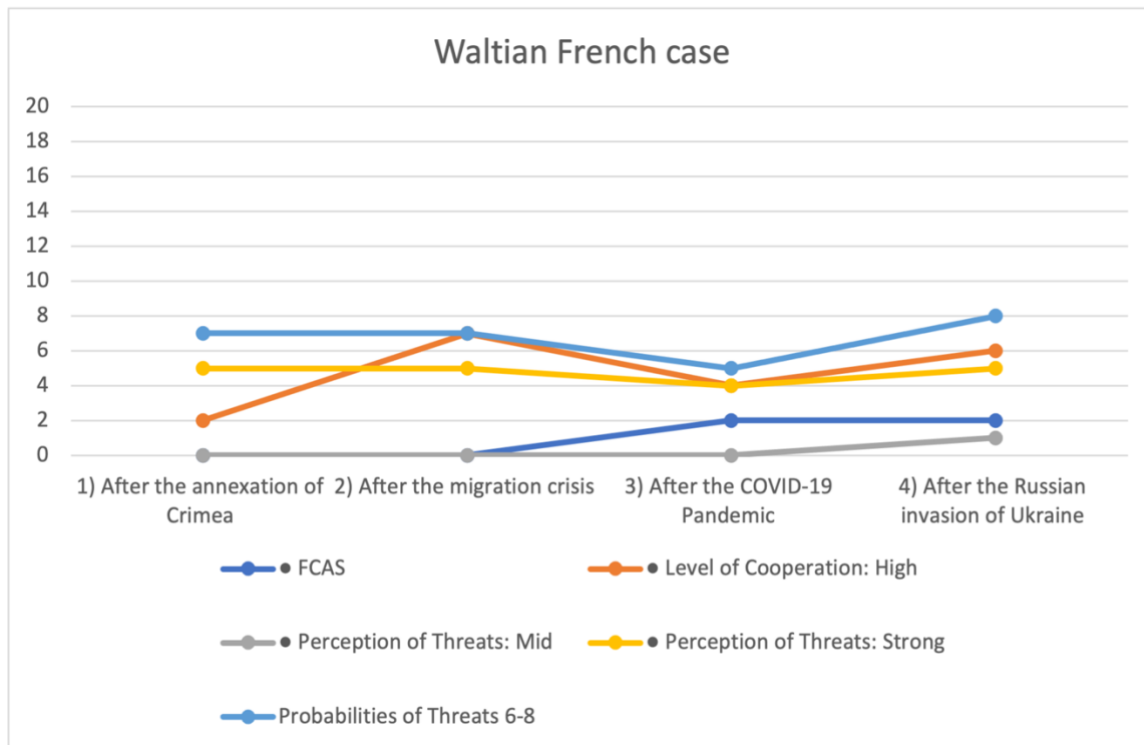


Figure 13: Concepts of the Waltian case with regard to critical junctures

b. Walt

H₁: If the Russian invasion requires France and Germany to balance against this threat, then the motivation for bringing the FCAS further and the need for more defense cooperation increases.

Compared to Waltz, Walt determines state behavior as evolving due to concrete threats and their perceived probabilities by governments in the geopolitical landscape. Figures 12 and 13 illustrate the frequency of the main codes used to analyze the documents through Walt's perspective. Germany finds itself in a unique position, heavily reliant on Russian gas, which became problematic after the war in Ukraine began. Despite the war's lack of success for Putin, Germany was hesitant to impose sanctions on Russia. The government faced pressure from all sides, including the US and Europe, and this hesitation was noticeable. Its efforts to keep communication channels open, including with Russia, made it increasingly difficult to satisfy all parties involved. It maintained a liberal stance towards Russia, viewing Nord Stream 2 primarily as an economic project. However, the government was slow to recognize the vulnerabilities this project created, such as exposure to Russian aggression. This had implications for the FCAS as well. It led to political and strategic vulnerabilities since Germany's firm stance against Russia was hard to defend. Eventually, the German government acknowledged the need for a different approach towards authoritarian regimes in the future. It highlighted the limitations of the liberal attitude towards Russia, which clashed with aligning defense strategies and national interests, especially regarding energy security and economic dependencies.

Feeling close to the European identity, like France, it advocated for increasing integration and more collective defense mechanisms. After the special fund to strengthen the German army, it became evident that due to geopolitical events, such as President Trump having severe consequences for reliability on the US and also NATO, but also the Russian invasion, the Germans could not only not handle things alone, but also needed to invest in their defense capabilities. However, this was a long process that cannot be directly associated with either of the two exemplary events. These events lead to more discussions about the topic, but the idea to handle defense collectively within the EU is older.

France continuously invests in its military strength. After Brexit, it is the only remaining nuclear power within the EU. Macron often offered nuclear deterrence to safeguard Europe, which he last mentioned

in his Sorbonne speech. Looking at the French government’s military presence on the African continent, Operation Serval, for example, the military was able to gain experience in a small-scale war. The quality of the army’s abilities increased over time, and it became evident that their combat equipment made them a European leader in security matters. This is also seen in debates over manufacturers of military equipment, Macron emphasizes the combat-readiness and quality of the manufacturing by Dassault Aviation and Systems, for example. However, not only the French are promoting and supporting their own. Rheinmetall, for instance, is one of the world’s biggest manufacturers of heavy machinery and munitions, and Heckler und Koch is vital for the German arms market. The EU even subsidized Rheinmetall to manufacture great amounts of ammunition.

The FCAS is a novum since it is the first time the Franco-German cooperation has committed to a large-scale project like this. Both countries have a long-standing history of friendship, but also rivalry. The cooperation can be seen as an expression of aligning interests since combat readiness is a significant factor for both governments. The pursuit of economic interests is met through including manufacturers from both countries, which is crucial for both, since both countries want what is best for their economy. It is essential to acknowledge the liberal interests within this cooperation.

Besides, the cooperation is not dominated by threats, such as Russian aggression, as the hypothesis dictates. It plays a part, but collective action is preferred here mainly. Although not all European member states see it that way, the Franco-German engine pushes for more in that regard. The FCAS aims to pool resources, expertise and achieve technological breakthroughs. This endeavor aims to tackle common defense goals. This fact and the countries’ support and emphasis on domestic industries also qualifies as a reason for a not threat-induced cooperation.

With this being discussed, one can state that Walt’s theory and the deriving hypothesis fail to analyze the most important factors of this military cooperation.

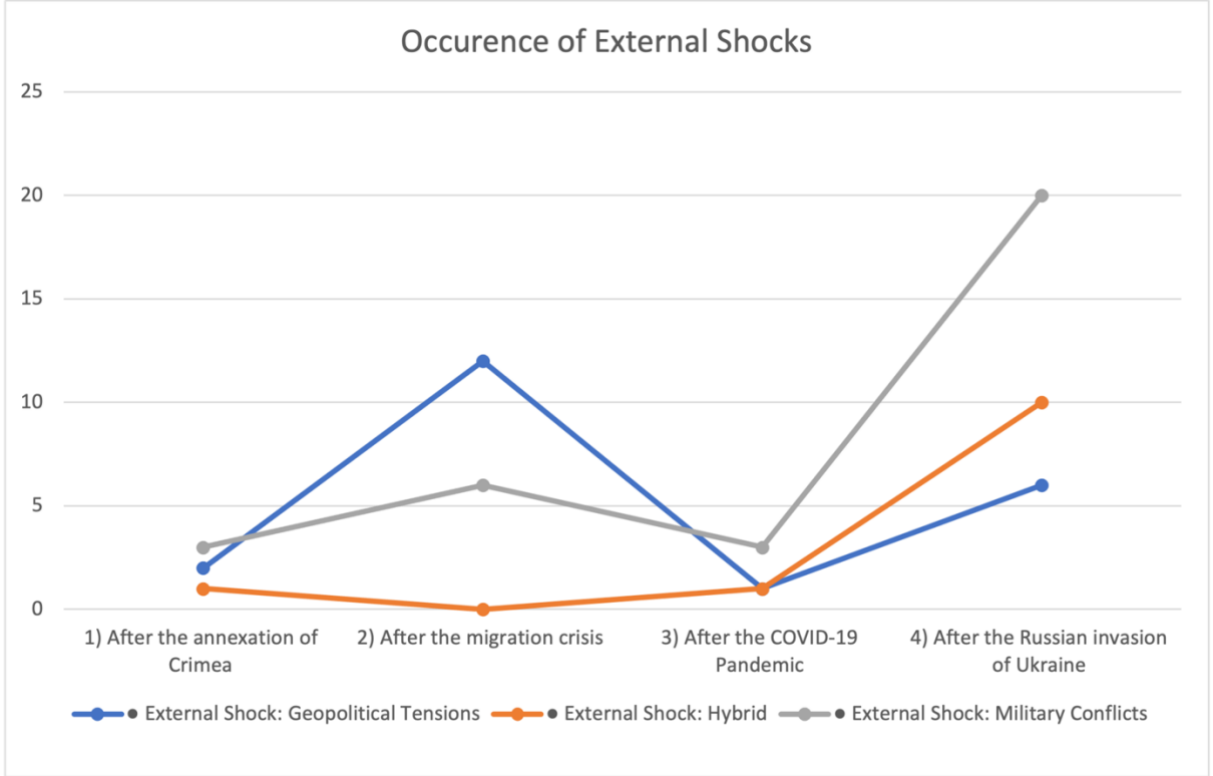


Figure 14

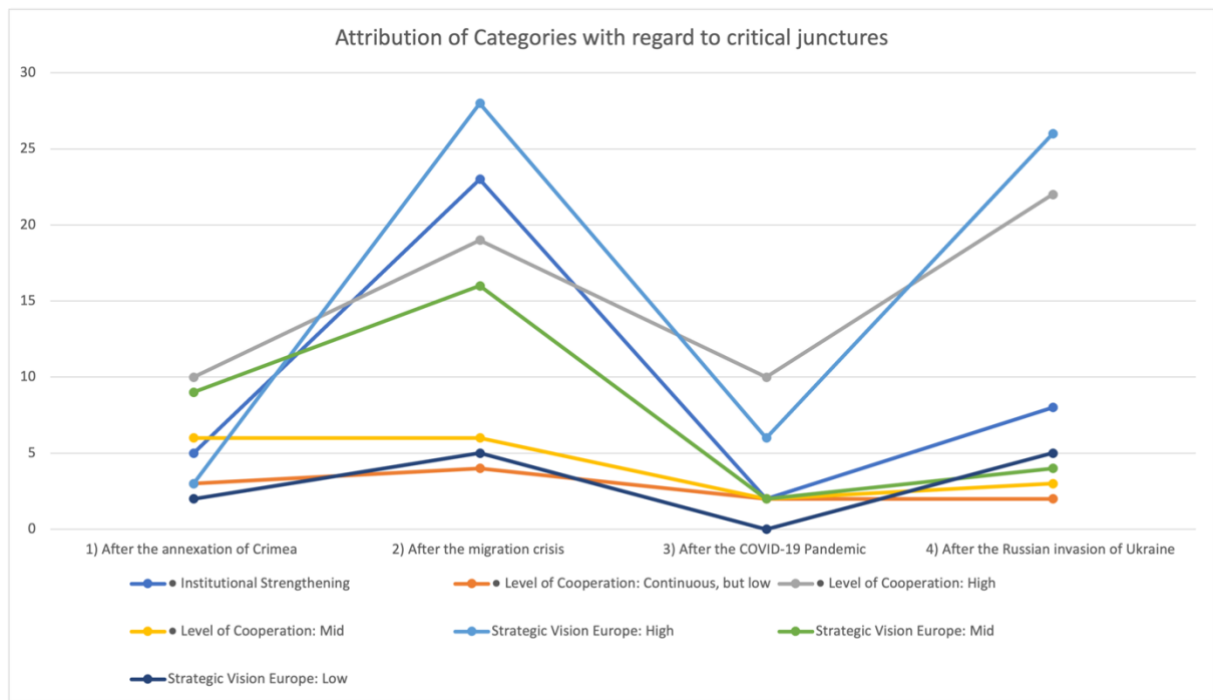


Figure 15

c. Kelemen & McNamara

H₂: If external shocks or wars, such as the Russian invasion occur, then European institutions become stronger, which in turn facilitates enhanced Franco-German cooperation in the FCAS.

Defense cooperation is an important but complicated topic for these strategic partners. This can be said in the case of the EU as well. Due to certain complications in voting procedures, the EU is sometimes said to be over-regulated. This can be observed when there are states blocking decisions, which can only be adopted if voted unanimously. As mentioned before, among other frameworks, the EU has adopted the EDF as part of the EEAS. The fund allocates means for collective missions that are carried out by the EEAS. Similar to this framework, the EU wants to do more and fill potential capacity gaps within the PESCO. The EDF qualifies as the first major test of whether bellocist integration works. One could argue that capability building is not enough and that it does not go further. However, what started as capability building developed over time and grew with the geopolitical landscape. Important to note is that there are always countries that are in favor of building their own capacities rather than delegating this task to the supranational level. Therefore, the Franco-German “engine” always pushed for more integration.

As one can observe in Figure 14, the mention of the category “external shocks” increased substantially over time and peaked with the Russian invasion, except for the sub-category “geopolitical tensions”, which has its peak after the “migration crisis”. However, do these events qualify as changing the European institutions? What must be noted is the progression of the category “strategic vision Europe” and the rating “high”. It progresses similarly to the category “level of cooperation” and a “high” level rating. The category “institutional strengthening” summarizes all the occurring sub-categories. What can be said is that after the migration crisis there are many citations attributed to it, after that, it decreases and increases again with the Russian invasion. When it is compared to Figure 14, one can make a connection between the occurrence of shocks and the category “strategic vision Europe: high” level and a high level of the category “level of cooperation”. At least the sub-categories “military conflicts” and “hybrid” both increase similarly to the aforementioned categories in Figure 15.

Moreover, a pull factor towards European institutions is observable. The initiation of the EDF marks an example of that. With this, EU institutions have been attributed more competencies to managing joint

efforts towards defense mechanisms. It depends on whether the EDF can be declared a success. There are still different priorities and interests of the EU member states to consider, such as how to allocate funding. Another critical aspect of defense endeavors is to complement NATO and not duplicate it. The FCAS is far from a stage where it influences the Commission to adopt legislation that produces positive effects and gets other member states into cooperation. It is still an intergovernmental cooperation, but it definitely has the potential to become a prime example to create something even more substantial.

Circling back to the hypothesis, one can observe that EU institutions become more robust with the occurrence of external shocks. It is a process in which discussion on relevant aspects begins and continues. Actions follow from these discussions, and member states attribute competencies that they otherwise would not be able to handle alone. The hypothesis qualifies to explain the Franco-German cooperation.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the level of cooperation and strategic objectives of France and Germany within the FCAS project with regard to the theoretical frameworks of Waltz's neorealism, Walt's balance of threats, and Kelemen & McNamara's bellecist integration approach. The analysis revealed that both countries prioritize increasing their national defense capabilities while simultaneously pushing for more European defense mechanisms through collaborative endeavors like the FCAS. Statements made by both French and German governments heads also reveal that geopolitical events require common reactions and must foster collective strength. The Russian aggression, for instance, had severe consequences for the geopolitical landscape, including trends towards boosting military capabilities and recognizing the importance of European defense projects.

Germany's establishment of the special fund in 2022 marked a momentum in which the intent to increase military capabilities and war preparedness were top priorities. This also marked a strategic shift towards self-sufficiency and being aware of the importance of being a reliable ally and partner in the EU and NATO. In the French case, the distinction of whether the government behaved according to internal and external balancing was clear, but unfortunately, the findings were not as far-reaching. It is evident that France, too, intends to boost its military capacities and sees itself as strategically indispensable for the European course in defense matters. This can be observed through the repeated statements of Macron highlighting the nuclear deterrence. Besides, it can be seen as essential for European security. As was stressed, there are always difficulties with cooperations as such. The motivations for cooperation within the EU vary for the different member states. Advocating for the cause through the institutions by Germany and France helped to substantiate the aims of the cooperation. Both governments have a long-standing tradition of favoring integration and cooperation; often referred to as the Franco-German engine.

The research enhances the understanding of European defense cooperation through the comparative case study of France and Germany within the FCAS. This study offers a unique view since not only the international level but also through incorporating the bellecist integration approach, the supranational level is included as well. Other scholars may have focused on unilateral national strategies aligning with EU defense practices. Furthermore, the extent to which this cooperation, and further kinds of cooperation similar to the FCAS, changed the European institutions was also explored. European defense became inevitable in the European Parliament and the Commission drafted more legislations in that regard.

The findings align with but also extend the existing literature by including how geopolitical events, such as the war in Ukraine, influence shifts in defense policies and cooperation. Therefore, it is also up to date. While Waltz's neorealism helps to understand these dynamics, the findings indicate an evolution of the framing of the concepts of internal and external balancing. The emphasis on European self-sufficiency and the shaping of collaborative defense mechanisms represents a different approach from dependencies on NATO. Future research could delve deeper into the specific impacts of these

cooperative defense projects since it is yet to be determined which impact it yields. Furthermore, it would be interesting to look at governments that do not wish to cooperate in this matter and find out why that is. Moreover, investigating other countries within the EU that cooperate in other projects would contribute to a broader understanding of the dynamics at hand.

There are a number of steps worth considering when enhancing European defense capabilities and increase efficiency. Looking at technical developments over the last decade, one can observe that these are rapidly evolving. Consequently, there needs to be more funding as well, since new technologies come at a cost. These countries should continue investing in joint efforts, but expertise needs to be cultivated even further. Competing with the US or China will be a challenge that can only be mastered if well-educated personnel are at the disposal of the EU or of those governments involved. While relying on other global players, such as the US always harbors risks, having own solutions increases strategic ambiguity. There must be a balance between striving for self-sufficiency within the EU and cooperating with NATO. The European mechanisms and NATO must neither exclude nor duplicate each other. If this balance is found, it will ensure a robust defense of the continent.

Additionally, a holistic approach toward defense needs to be established by policymakers. To tackle reoccurring threats affecting both countries, as well as the continent, one should consider cooperation in the non-traditional sense of security, as well. For instance, in relation to human security, migration crises and climate change. This will also improve readiness and resilience. By addressing these steps, European nations can better align their strategies, enhance their collective security, and respond more effectively and immediately to external shocks, if necessary.

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