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Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research

ISSN: 1351-1610 (Print) 1469-8412 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ciej20

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To cite this article: Benjamin Zyla (2015) Untying the Knot? Assessing the compatibility of the American and European strategic culture under President Obama, Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research, 28:2, 104-126, DOI: 10.1080/13511610.2015.1024637

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13511610.2015.1024637

Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research, 2015
Vol. 28, No. 2, 104–126, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13511610.2015.1024637

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Untying the Knot? Assessing the compatibility of the American and European strategic culture under President Obama

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(*Received 6 December 2013; final version received 26 February 2015*)

This article analyses the similarities and differences of the latest American and European security strategies under President Obama in order to make inferences about the degree of compatibility of their deep-seated and shared norms, beliefs and ideas regarding the means and ends of national security, and to better understand the normative continuity/discontinuity of those norms of the Obama vs. Bush administration. Building upon constructivist work on strategic cultures, the article concentrates on a qualitative analysis of elite security discourses and disaggregates them into their normative and ideational components. By studying strategic cultures empirically and comparatively, the study fills a known void in the literature on strategic cultures. It finds that American and European norms, beliefs and ideas about the means and ends of national security policy are compatible with regards to challenges and threats as well as preferred modes of international cooperation; they are incompatible with regards to commonly held beliefs about the international system and how to address threats, which is worry some politically. Moreover, the article finds that there is a continuity in the US security strategies from President Bush to Obama.

Keywords: constructivism; ESDP; European defence; norms; security; strategic culture

1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to analyse the similarities and differences of the latest American and European security strategies[1] in order to (1) make inferences about the degree of compatibility of their deep-seated shared norms, beliefs and ideas regarding the means and ends of national security, and (2) to better understand the normative continuity/discontinuity of those norms of the Obama vs. Bush administration. The paper will *not* examine the practice of strategic cultures – that is whether and how elite rhetoric is reflected in state actions. This tension between rhetoric and practice, as Campbell (1998, 12) reminds us, can never be solved and undoubtedly poses a limitation of the article. Doing justice to studying behaviours of international actors like the EU with a membership of 28 states is a complex methodological and theoretical task that requires much more space than is available here.

The US strategic culture under President Obama and its meaning for the transatlantic alliance has been much overlooked in the recent literature on strategic cultures (notable exceptions are Hemmer 2011; Rotte and Schwarz 2010; Terriff and Child 2009). The article tries to fill this gap and applies the concept of strategic culture as an analytical tool

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(Heiselberg 2003; Longhurst and Zaborowski 2005; Rynning 2003) to make inferences about the compatibility of transatlantic normative predispositions over the past decade. Specifically, being informed by recent constructivist work on strategic cultures (Meyer 2005; Norheim-Martinsen 2011, 2013), the paper offers a qualitative analysis of elite security discourses found in primary strategic documents, such as security strategies, and disaggregates them into their normative and ideational components (strategic culture), which forms the basis for the empirical comparison. Building on this theoretical framework, four types of deep-seated strategic norms, beliefs and ideas about the means and ends of national security policy are pre-identified[2]: ontological assumptions about the international system and the security actor's role within that system; the meanings assigned to future challenges and threats; behavioural predispositions of how to respond to those threats; and preferred modes of international cooperation.

To be sure, compatibility of deep-seated shared norms, beliefs and ideas does not necessarily suggest similarity or things being identical but rather a condition of complementarity – that is a status where few adaptations or modifications are necessary for collective action(s) in an alliance situation. This definition provides analytical space and allows for the possibility that the strength of an actor in one particular area could substitute the weakness of the other, or that normative predispositions of actors could be similar but incompatible.

Against this backdrop, this study helps to understand how strategic cultures *can* affect the behaviour of states in an alliance and to gain access to states' reasons and motivations for certain strategic choices (Duffield 1998; Finnemore 2003). Put differently, security strategies *can* guide foreign policy decisions, reveal state intentions and outline expectations and regulations in transatlantic affairs (Dannreuther and Peterson 2006, 2). In this sense, the article also fills a noted gap in understanding how strategic cultures come into being (Biehl, Giegerich, and Jonas 2013, 398) – that is, as one commentator put it succinctly, to understand "[…] the inherently constructed nature of identity and culture and […] the role of agency in producing such structures" (Lock 2010, 692). Thus, an empirical analysis of norms and beliefs is able to predict (at least to a certain degree) whether the "strategic behaviour of collective actor 'a' is possible on the grounds of defending a norm 'y' against violation" (Meyer 2005). It is therefore at least partially causal[3] and not an effect of something else.[4] Moreover, as the literature on strategic cultures is known to lack guidance on how to analyse strategic cultures empirically (Meyer 2005) and comparatively[5] due to a large focus on country studies, this article helps to also fill that void by showing how the concept of strategic culture could be studied empirically and in applied cultural research. In addition, while a recent study has shown that indeed there exist patterns of a distinct EU strategic culture (Biehl, Giegerich, and Jonas 2013), there appears to be a lacuna in the literature assessing the compatibility of the EU and US strategic cultures over time, which we will close with this study. In addition to using the American and European security strategies as source for normative comparisons, the article also analyses the national strategic cultures of the three biggest EU member states – France, Germany and the UK[6] – as supporting evidence to show the consistency of the evolving EU norms.[7] This helps to disperse discussions as to whether the EU has a strategic culture that is independent of that of its member states, which is a question that has been answered by recent scholarship (Biehl, Giegerich, and Jonas 2013; Schmidt and Zyla 2013).

By examining elite rhetoric, the article finds that American and European norms, beliefs and ideas about the means and ends of national security policy appear to be compatible with regards to the meanings and values assigned to challenges and threats,

as well as preferred modes of international cooperation. This also holds when they are assessed over time and means that the Obama NSS largely represents continuity rather than change compared to those of Obama's predecessor. At the same time, however, there also appears to be a normative incompatibility pertaining to commonly held beliefs about the makeup and nature of the international system and attitudinal structures of how to address these threats. Moreover, there is a remarkable continuity of the normative predispositions held by the Obama administration compared to the Bush administration.

The article proceeds as follows. Reviewing the history as well as ontological underpinnings of the strategic culture concept in part one lets us appreciate the origins and theoretical refinements of this concept since its inception as well as to clearly situate this article in the theoretical literature. The next section discusses the nexus between a strategic culture and a security strategy via elite rhetoric and explains of the methods employed for disaggregating the strategic documents into their normative predispositions regarding the means and ends of the use of force. The third section provides a structured comparison of the US and EU security strategies revealing deep seated norms, beliefs and values with regards to four identified clusters. The conclusion summarizes the empirical findings and provides some inferences for the degree of shared norms, beliefs and ideas about the means and ends of security policy.

2. Theoretical framework and methodology

2.1. Strategic culture: a brief history of the concept

Building on previous generations of strategic cultures, I distinguish broadly between four approaches: an interpretivist, a positivist, neo-Gramscian and a constructivist.

Starting with the end of the Second World War, analysts examined the ways in which national political culture(s) or "national characters" – defined as language, religion, beliefs, and values – *could* influence the way in which militaries would fight wars (Benedict 1946). Based on the seminal work of Almond and Verba (1965) who defined political culture as a "subset of beliefs and values of a society that relate to the political system", political institutions, democratic values, the use of force, the rights of individuals or collectivities, as well as societal predispositions towards the role of the country in world politics contribute to the development of a unique national strategic culture.

Jack Snyder then "imported" this conception into the domain of security studies. As a Soviet area specialist with an intent to predict Moscow's future behaviour, he defined culture as "symbolic vehicles of meaning, including beliefs, rituals, practices, art forums, and ceremonies, as well as informal culture practices such as language, gossips, stories, and the rituals of life" (Snyder 1977). Snyder found that elites articulate a "unique strategic culture related to security-military affairs that is a wider manifestation of public opinion, socialized into a distinctive mode of strategic thinking."

In 1981 Colin Gray (1981) built on Synder's work by pointing to distinctive national styles with "deep roots within a particular stream of historical experience" (see also Gray 1984) that influence the foreign policy behaviour of states. A strategic culture provides the milieu or context in which decisions regarding national security issues are made and that transcends both cause and effect (Haglund 2004). As such, this school sides more with the interpretivist side of epistemological debates on strategic cultures.

The second generation questioned such causal arguments and requested a more rigorous scientific method to studying strategic cultures. Scholars demanded a falsifiable methodology leading to a cumulative research programme to test the existence and endurance of strategic cultures over time (Johnston 1995b). More specifically, the behaviour of states was

detached from a general understanding of political culture to isolate strategic culture as the independent variable and the former as the dependent variable. The consistency of the independent variable over time then determined the coherence of a strategic culture (Johnston 1995a).

The third and often times overlooked Gramscian scholarship on strategic culture (Klein 1988) became known for, as one analyst put it, its inability to link cause and effects (Haglund 2011). It argues that the state system and the concept of security are constructed by existing social structures that either enable or deny social interaction. Strategic cultures are seen as intersubjective symbols of strategic affairs (Klein 1994).

The fourth generation and the one this article builds upon is the latest of strategic culture theories (Norheim-Martinsen 2013; Zyla 2011). Informed by a constructivist approach of international relations, it also rejects the search for falsifiable theories and pays particular attention to the formation of national identities resulting from history, tradition and culture. More specifically, scholars focus on the social structures operating at the international level because they contain normative elements (Ruggie 1983) and the development of international norms and identity (Wendt 1995). A strategic culture is conceived as an independent or intervening variable that affects the national security behaviour of states (Duffield 1998; Farrell and Terriff 2002; Gray 1999; Katzenstein 1996). It can therefore be seen as a reflection of a national identity ("who we are") and normatively informs "what it is that we do" or "should do" (Berger 1996, 1998). To put it another way, constructivist strategic culture scholarship attempts to understand national identities, as well as *how* a state, its policy-makers or citizens tend to see and interpret the world and specific events around them (also in relation to others), and how to react. While constructivist scholars do not negate the influence of material factors on social actions, they hold that ideas, knowledge, norms and rules that led, for example, to the formulation of national security interests also have an influence on the development of security identities (Wendt 1999; Campbell 1998). Identities and interests of states are shaped through practices and interactions with other states' norms and identities.[8] In this sense, social actors reproduce norms and structure. They act reflexively by basing their actions on their acquired knowledge, habits and routines. Put simple, strategic cultures are able to provide an *understanding* for the "reasons" of state actions (Finnemore 2003).

2.2. Norms

Generally speaking, norms are defined as "intersubjective beliefs about the social and natural world that define actors, their situations, and the possibilities of action" (Wendt 1995). Norms, according to Katzenstein, are social facts, which set standards of appropriate behaviour and express the agents' identities (see also Finnemore 2003; Katzenstein 1996; Klotz 1995a, 1995b). Thus, norms have an "oughtness" character – that is a prescriptive element how things ought to be in the world (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). Actor's knowledge of their social and political relations (e.g. symbols, rules, concepts, categories and meanings) shape the way in which individuals construct and interpret the world. Norms also help those actors to situate themselves in relation to other social actors, to interpret their interests and actions, and foster group identification. Because of this character, they can be studied as justifications for social actions,[9] be seen as the source of social power (Hurrell 2002; Kratochwil 2000) and create new actors, interests or categories of action (Katzenstein 1996; Ruggie 1998; Searle 1995). In short, because normative structures are part of a states' strategic culture, their analysis can

provide meaning to the social reality of international politics and thus transatlantic relations.[10]

Norms are also characterized as the least volatile components of collectivities (Elkins and Simeon 1979; Pye 1973). Compared to material conditions, they do not change easily in different situational environments (Berger 1996; Eckstein 1988), which has major implications for our conception of strategic culture and assessing their compatibility. First, strategic cultures are deeply ingrained, identity-derived collective expectations of what is appropriate behaviour. Second, strategic cultures are the "property of collectivities" (Duffield 1998) rather than individuals: they are held and shared by most (if not all) members of society or its political elite rather than by individuals or dominant stakeholders. Third, because of their complex and interrelated integral components, strategic cultures are resistant towards change. They are unique to states, not transferrable and heavily depend upon specific societal contexts (Elkins and Simeon 1979). Fourth, in comparison to material conditions, strategic cultures are rather stable (Berger 1996; Eckstein 1988; Legro 1995; Lijphart 1980), because it is difficult to establish the falsity of a claim, norm or value, and competitive concepts need to convince a large portion of society in favour of alternatives. Only dramatic historical events or traumatic national experiences, such as the terrorist attacks on 9/11 or national disasters, can catalyze change in nationally held beliefs, ideas and norms. However, even in those exceptional circumstances, states are most likely to rely on pre-existing national world-views as guidance for their security behaviour(s).

2.3. How strategic culture manifests in rhetoric: the nexus between a national security documents and strategic culture

John Duffield reminds us that institutional sources of national predispositions of security are "likely to reside in the central government organs charged with the formulation and execution of policy" (Duffield 1998). They represent a "negotiated reality" of those societal predispositions. Specifically, it is political elites who are not only the primary holders but also the gatekeepers of societal norms, beliefs and ideas regarding national security issues, which they rhetorically express, for example, in national security documents. Robert Putnam defined elites as individuals "who in any society rank toward the top of the (presumably closely intercorrelated) dimensions of interest, involvement, and influence in politics" (Putnam 1971); they interpret and make decisions on national security issues, are the "spokespersons" of members of society, and function as an aggregate panel that accumulates diverse sets of norms, beliefs and values of civil society. Elites also maintain the capacity to "process" those norms and to "translate" them in to a publicly accessible language (e.g. through security strategies, policy white papers or policy memos). In that sense, elites "homogenize" norms that are vaguely expressed and shared by members of society. Because a national security strategy is rooted in the beliefs, attitudes and value systems of society as well as in societal interpretations of social reality (Berger 1996; Duffield 1998; Elkins and Simeon 1979; Meyer 2005), a security strategy can be conceptualized as a rhetorical expression of a specific set of deep seated strategic beliefs, values, norms and ideas of national security. Above all, such a document outlines and interprets a wide range of possible security scenarios, what role the security actor perceives for itself, the behaviour of others and justified action plans for governments. Moreover, a security strategy exhibits a relational component to other social actors because, as Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) remind us, "we only know what is appropriate by reference to the judgements of a community or society". In that sense, it establishes

the "other" in one's own strategic identity (Freedman 2006) as well as the process by which social actors learn from their peers (Barnes 2001; Neumann and Heikka 2005). Thus, security strategies can be conceived as speech acts through which security cultures reproduce themselves and tell strategic actors what they are allowed to do or not (Norheim-Martinsen 2011).

Studying elite expressions of national security values, norms and beliefs has a number of advantages over an analysis of studying broader political cultures of say American and European societies. First, as Duffield notes, elite political cultures are easier to describe and measure (Duffield 1998). While public opinion polls, for example, could also provide useful information on cultures of a particular country, they are usually too broad to reveal specific underlying cultural mind-sets on national security issues. Second, elite policy-makers rather than individuals are assumed to possess attitudinal structures that are more coherent in terms of the expressed values, beliefs and norms of the means and ends of national security policy (Kupchan 1994; Putnam 1971).[11] Finally, it is precisely these political elites rather than the public at large that are usually responsible for formulating national security policies while society at large often shows little interest in or knowledge about national security issues.

2.4. Methodology

Before we analyse the similarities and differences of the latest US and EU security strategy, it is important to elucidate the methodologies employed in this study. The principal challenge lies in delineating those actors' strategic cultures and to determine their behavioural implications (Kier 1997). While discourse is the medium through which strategic culture reveals itself (Neumann and Heikka 2005; Campbell 1998), the challenge is that non-material variables such as strategic cultures are difficult to measure. Above all, by describing the strategic cultures of specific countries, the researcher must be careful not to compound the inferences from behaviour, which would amalgamate the dependent and the independent variable and produce a tautological argument.[12] As noted, this is another reason why this study does not examine the security practices of states. In order to avoid such inference, this article unpacks the security cultures of France, Germany, the EU, the UK, and the USA into their normative and ideational components and examines elite ideas, norms and beliefs through elite rhetoric. We use the interpretive variant of content analysis to gain access to EU and US attitudinal structures, which in turn allows us to make inferences about their compatibility.

Four clusters or categories of ideational dispositions are pre-identified. The first one examines empirical beliefs about the nature of the international system (world views), how to interpret it and the state's place within it. These beliefs give meaning to the main actors that operate in that system, the likelihood of international conflict or cooperation and the state's self-image as well as its position in that system (Vertzberger 1990: viii, 447). The second cluster refers to the ways and degrees in which threats are believed to exist and how they are interpreted as well as what meaning is assigned to them (e.g. Are threats described as a novelty or being historically ingrained in the existing national belief system?). The third cluster refers to societal propositions of how these threats should be addressed: Should civilian or military resources of state power be employed, why and to what extent? What attitudes exist towards the use of force, what are the conditions under which it should be used? Should it be avoided at all times, used as a last resort or employed to project certain belief systems on other states? The final category asks about the preferred mode of international cooperation and the values of international law:

Should the practice of international politics be conditioned by rules and norms? What, for example, is the threshold of authorization for diplomatic and military engagements?

In terms of methodological limitations, it is important to remember that due to space constraints this article does *not* provide an extensive longitudinal study but rather a "snapshot" analysis of current US and EU strategic cultures. One may argue that there is a methodological inconsistency of comparing a state-based security strategy (the USA) with that of a supranational organization (the EU), especially since both were not written or published at the same time. Others may find the focus on security strategies too narrow or that comparisons between the two vastly different actors are infeasible. However, in addition to the explanations above the following reasons justify their selection. First, the making of Europe's foreign and defence policy still remains highly intergovernmental (as opposed to supranational), which justifies the EU focus. To counter a possible EU bias, the study also examines the normative predispositions of the three biggest EU member states (Britain, France and Germany) in the four normative clusters above to show consistency of normative dispositions between the EU and its member states. Second, as a number of recent studies have shown, the EU indeed has a unique strategic culture that is independent from those of its member states (Biehl, Giegerich, and Jonas 2013; Cornish and Edwards 2001; Giegerich 2006; Howorth 2002; Meyer 2005). Third, other studies have shown that when the EU acts collectively, narrow national interests are compelled into perceptions of how the EU should act internationally (Cornish and Edwards 2001; Howorth 2002; Kammel 2011; Meyer 2005). Fourth, even though the EU and US security strategies were neither written nor published at the same time, their comparison still provides access to *some* tendencies of cultural affinity on both sides of the Atlantic.

3. Empirical analysis of security strategies

3.1. Interpretation and meaning of the international system

The NSS of 2010 starts with the self-congratulating assertion that the international system was shaped and formed by rules, norms and institutions that America helped to create since 1945 (e.g. the Bretton Woods, NATO). These institutions were not only used to project American values like democracy, the rule of law and freedom – but also to institutionalize those values, beliefs and norms in Western societies. Put differently, in being at the forefront of building these institutions, America set normative standards of social behaviour in international politics and replaced the international with an American order. It is thus hardly surprising that exporting democracy and the rule of law have long been objectives of American foreign policy (Jervis 2003; McDougall 1997; Mead 2001; Posen 2003; Schley 2006), and that these normative value are reflected in every NSS examined in this study.

Moreover, these ontological assumptions are not novel to the Obama administration. For example, the NSS of 2002 under George W. Bush notes that the end of the Cold War bestowed a "decisive victory for the forces of freedom" (White House 2002) resulting into the role of the USA being the sole international hegemon (for similar arguments see Krauthammer [1990] 1991; Posen 2003) and transcending the international system from a bipolar to a unipolar system. Likewise, the 2006 document holds that "The 20th century witnessed the triumph of freedom over the threats of fascism and communism" (White House 2006, 1).

The perceived behavioural norm and responsibility derived therefrom for the USA is to defend the "[…] liberty, and the value of a free society" (White House 2002) because "these principles are right and true for all people everywhere" (White House 2002);

almost identical wording is used in the 2006 strategy (White House 2006, 2). The Obama NSS of 2010 picks up on this notion and reminds the world that America must not only preserve its global leadership (hegemony) but also that international normative standards must be followed: "Rules of the road must be obeyed, and there must be consequences for those nations that break the rules […]" (White House 2010). Not surprisingly, the 2010 document goes even so far to proclaim that global security depends on American responsibility and leadership in world politics (White House 2010). This clearly reveals the nature of the American belief system (and its interpretation thereof): America comes first and hegemony is good for world order and peace. As such, the NSS of 2010 does not depart at all from its predecessors.

In contrast, the European Union perceives the international system as multipolar and consisting of a network of interdependent states. Such interconnectedness has led to open borders "in which the internal and external aspects of security are indissolubly linked."[13] Cross border flows of trade and commerce, for example, became an integral part of spreading EU values of democracy, freedom and prosperity in an attempt to extend the zone of peace in Europe (ESS 2003). More precisely, those attitudinal structures include norms such as solving transnational conflicts peacefully, co-operating through international institutions (Peters 2011) and spreading the rule of law and democracy to help produce stable and prosperous democracies (Schimmelfennig 2003). Moreover, these structures helped to manage national aspirations and transnational tensions and provided the basis for cooperation, compromise and ultimately friendship among European states (Gareis 2005). This path to integration has not only "transformed relations between our states, and the lives of our citizens" (ESS 2003, 1); it has also shaped the meanings of peace, security and prosperity in Europe (Howorth 2007). It became the backbone of the EU's global actorness. As a consequence, the EU sees its power resources in its economic rather than its military might (Cameron 2007).[14]

This is consistent with normative predispositions expressed in the national security strategies of selected EU member states chosen for this study. The German Government, for example, speaks of its primary goals to strengthen "the European area of stability through the consolidation and development of European integration and the European Union's active neighbourhood policy with the states of Eastern Europe, the southern Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Mediterranean region" (BMVg 2006, 6). Likewise, France underlines the importance of continuing to build a prosperous and stable European Union.

3.2. Interpretation and meanings of future challenges and threats

The NSS of 2002, 2006 and 2010 identify the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in 2001 as a significant caesura in global order. Yet, unlike its two predecessors that aimed to stop "terrorist clients before they are able to threaten or use weapons of mass destruction against the United States and our allies and friends" (White House 2002), the 2010 version plays down the pre-eminence of terrorist threats noting that it "[…] is *one* of many threats that are more consequential in a global age" (NSS 2010, 8, my emphasis).[15] Yet, weapons of mass destruction – particularly nuclear weapons – are believed to pose the gravest danger to Americans and global security, which is consistent with the NSS of 2002 and 2006 (Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff 2006; White House 2006, 2010). Other threats listed in the NSS of 2010 include cyberspace attacks on critical infrastructure (e.g. power generation facilities) or those resulting from climate change and pandemic diseases as well as failing or failed states[16]

that are believed to provide a breeding ground for regional conflict and other globally operating criminal networks (White House 2010, 8).[17] In contrast, the NSS of 2002 and 2006 speak of "rogue states" rather than failed states, which are defined as agents that brutalize their own people, display no regard for international law and human rights, sponsor global terrorism or seek WMD's for their purpose (White House 2002). Certain rogue states were also added to the "axis of evil" (Miles 2002).

The meaning behind such an extensive laundry list of potential threats in the NSS of 2010 is an indication that the administration has moved away from a narrow to a broader conception of national security implying that a multi-dimensional application of state resources beyond the use of military force is necessary to address these threats. Unlike its 2006 and 2002 predecessors, the 2010 document also provides a genuine analysis of threats and rejects the distinction between low and high politics noting that any threat can be vital to US national security.

In the ESS, the catalogue and ranking of threats is almost identical to those of the NSS. This should not be surprising because the ESS was written essentially *in response* to the NSS and thus evidently relates to American perceptions of global instability. As a result, both terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are noted as "potentially the greatest threat to our security" (ESS 2003, 3), regional conflicts in the Middle East, Bosnia, the Caucasus and the Mediterranean (ESS 2003, 3–4,7), failed and failing states (such as Somalia, Liberia, and Afghanistan; ESS 2003, 4) and, finally, organized crime in form of cross-border trafficking of drugs, women, illegal migrants, weapons or more recently piracy. This list was updated in 2008 with the inclusion of energy security, cyber security and climate change as important security challenges (European Council 2008). Thus, on the surface, the EU and the USA seem to share similar threat perceptions while their rankings differ slightly.

There are, however, three notable differences in the documents. The first one relates to the framing of the severity of the terrorist threat. Terrorism is identified as a global rather than a strategic threat. The German document, for example, notes that "International terrorism represents a fundamental challenge and threat to freedom and security" (BMVg 2006, 5). It follows that global rather than regional solutions are deemed necessary to address these threats (Gnesotto 2004), and that the armed forces are not believed to be the only institution suitable for a response. Similarly, the British document charges that current and future threats originate from a myriad of sources and thus require complex responses (Cabinet Office 2010, 3, 19). Based on those national predispositions, it is thus hardly surprising that the ESS recognizes terrorism as a complex phenomenon that is ingrained in European societies: "[…] it [terrorism] arises out of complex causes. These include the pressures of modernization, cultural, social and political crisis, and the alienation of young people living in foreign societies. This phenomenon is also part of our own society" (ESS 2003, 4; for a similar line of argumentation see European Council 2008).

The British, French and German security strategies also agree with the complexity of the terrorism phenomenon. The British document notes that "we aim to tackle problems at root overseas, to reduce the likelihood of risks turning into actual attacks on us at home" (Cabinet Office 2010, 25; see also 33). Similarly, the German document charges that root causes of terrorism must be addressed effectively, namely by preventive, efficient and coherent means at the national and international level (BMVg 2006, 5): "Poverty, underdevelopment, poor education, shortage of resources, natural disasters, environmental destruction, diseases, in-equality and human rights violations are just some of the factors that provide a breeding ground for illegal migration and secular as well as

religious extremism" (BMVg 2006). Once again, these predispositions are in stark contrast to the NSS of 2010, which does not discuss the root causes of terrorism or ways to address them but their effects.

Second, using the technical term of failed and failing states allows for the interpretation that the EU perceives those states as dangers rather than national security threats. Such assessment is also reflected in the security strategies of EU member states. In the German case, for example, the government notes that risks and challenges today "lie less in the strength of other states than in their weakness" (BMVg 2011, 1; see also BMVg 2006, 5). These states "cause threats such as civil war, regional destabilisation, humanitarian crises and related phenomena including radicalisation and migration movements that help create safe havens and retreats for international terrorism and organised crime" (BMVg 2006). Moreover,

> […] risks and threats are emerging above all from failing and failed states, acts of international terrorism, terrorist regimes and dictatorships, turmoil when these break up, criminal networks, climatic and natural disasters, from migration developments, from the scarcity of or shortages in the supply of natural resources and raw materials, from epidemics and pandemics, as well as from possible threats to critical infrastructure such as information technology. (BMVg 2006)

In that sense, security is not defined only in geographical terms, and failed and failing states are interpreted as injustices of the global system in which people continue to live in poverty (Dannreuther and Peterson 2006, 12).

Third, the European security strategy is short of expressing a normative aspiration of actively changing regimes as a way to address transnational insecurity (Vennesson 2007). In so doing, it is consistent with the most recent NSS of 2010, yet disagrees with its two predecessors of 2002 and 2006. Against this backdrop, normative predispositions of how to respond to international threats and challenges posed by failed and failing states now appear to be more closely aligned than they were during the tenure of the Bush administration.

3.3. Behavioural norms in response to threats

America's foremost behavioural imperative in all NSS documents examined is to maintain its military superiority, enhance the capabilities of its armed forces and defeat asymmetric threats (NSS 2010, 5). In an effort, as earlier NSS documents note, "to help make the world not just safer but better" (White House 2002) America will "[…] kill or capture the terrorists, deny them safe haven or control of any nation; prevent them from gaining access to WMD; and cut off their sources of support" (White House 2006). US "greatness" results from sturdy alliances, its unmatched military as well having the world's largest economy, a strong and evolving democracy, and a dynamic citizenry (White House 2006, 1). Phrased differently, hegemony is the first and foremost normative predisposition guiding American internationalism (Jervis 2003; Merlini 2002): "Going forward, there should be no doubt: the United States of America will continue to underwrite global security" (White House 2010, 1). This condition will ensure an unwavering commitment to the foremost principle of providing safety and security for the American people as well as its allies and partners (White House 2006, 4, 17, 20). The behavioural preference is to rely on the institution of the military as a primary tool to protect the US homeland, which is a consistency of all NSS documents since 2001: "Our Armed Forces will always be a cornerstone of our security […]" (White House 2006,

preface) and to be able to export security to allies and partners, and access to the global commons (White House 2006, 14; see also White House 2002, 30, 32). Moreover, security at home could only be achieved by strengthening civil defence, emergency, law enforcement, customs, border patrol and immigration responses. On this point, however, the NSS of 2010 differs significantly from its two predecessors. While embarking on a global war against terrorism, which the EU categorically denounced (Andreani [2004] 2005), and justifying the pre-emptive use of force (White House 2006),[18] the NSS of 2002 and 2006 prescribe regime change as an acceptable behavioural norm (White House 2006)[19] – that is changing corrupt and dictatorial regimes that suppress their own people and to actively turn them into prosperous democracies.

The meaning behind such intersubjective beliefs seems to be a securitization[20] of the American homeland and the law enforcement services, which assigns a pre-eminent role for the armed forces. America's military strength must defeat "al-Qa'ida and its affiliates in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and around the globe" (NSS 2010, 1). The behavioural and strategic norm is to dismantle, disrupt and defeat terrorist organizations such as al-Qa'ida by denying them safe haven in places like Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, as well as the Maghreb and Sahel zone (NSS 2010, 19–22). All other normative predispositions and behaviours appear to be secondary to this norm. It is considered the chief deterrence for aggression and prevents the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Contrary to earlier NSS documents, however, the 2010 version also recognizes a need to reform the US economy, the health care and education system (NSS 2010, 2, 7), which is considered the basis to maintain US hegemony and national security.[21] It is believed to retain America's economic competitiveness, military might, moral leadership and global engagements (NSS 2010, 7, 51).

However, in contrast to earlier documents, the norm of American hegemony and military superiority in the 2010 document is qualified by way of specifying the objectives for which the military can be used. Renounced are the use of force to impose American values, democracy and human rights on other states (NSS 2010, 5); regime change is considered morally improper (NSS 2010, 35). Nonetheless, the NSS of 2010 strongly advocates the promotion and export of American values and just peace abroad. Indeed, it continues to aspire to export "America's greatness," yet by relying on its soft rather than hard power resources (Nye 1990, 2004) such as diplomacy, economic might, development resources, intelligence assets and strategic communication (NSS 2010, 14). Put differently, the State Department and USAID rather than the military are to enhance its "international capacity to prevent conflict, spur economic growth, improve security, combat climate change, and address the challenges posed by weak and failing states" (NSS 2010, 11).

The ESS as well as the British, French and German strategies share America's normative ambitions to make the world a better place, to maintain open markets (BMVg 2006; Cabinet Office 2010, 4), ensure the free flow of goods and services, protect their citizens and ensure the territorial integrity of the country (Meunier 2008; The French White Paper on Defence 2008; BMVg 2011, 4; Cabinet Office 2010, 4). At the same time, the ESS as well as its British, French and German counterparts exhibit an activist interpretation of security (Vennesson 2007) and agree on preventing, mitigating and managing international crises that pose a danger to their territorial integrity. They also all agree on fostering the universality of human rights and international law as well as principles of democracy. For example, the German Government notes that "[e]nsuring security for our nation today means above all keeping the consequences of crises and conflicts at bay and taking an active part in their prevention and containment" while

employing a "comprehensive and goal-oriented interaction of the foreign service, development cooperation, police, armed forces, civil protection, disaster control, and the intelligence service must be enhanced at all levels" (BMVg 2011, 4). The White Paper of 2006 further specifies this by charging that "The United Nations is the only international organisation that is universal in nature. Its Charter provides the fundamental framework of international law that governs international relations" (BMVg 2006, 8).

In contrast to the NSS and by recalling the normative predisposition to foster pan-European integration, the EU as well as Britain, France and Germany show a more regional focus and vow to export the success of EU integration, especially to the immediate European neighbourhood[22] (European Council 2003). This norm has been translated into the ultima ratio of statecraft (Gareis 2005; Keulman 2006): military force cannot be used to defend moral principles of liberty or democracy abroad. Above all, pre-emption without a UN mandate is considered illegitimate (Giegerich 2007). This is a normative principle that is consistent with the British, French, German national security strategies. The use of force should be reserved for the Petersberg Tasks (humanitarian and rescue missions, humanitarian aid, separation of warring factions and conflict prevention tasks[23]) and for cases of self-defence (ESS 2003, 7).[24] Such provisions reveal a strong normative aversion of using military means to achieve political objectives and comprehensive definitions of security threats (Kammel and Zyla 2011; Kirchner and Sperling 2002) as well as behavioural preferences for civilian crisis management capabilities such as policing, the rule of law, strengthening civilian administration, as well as negotiation and consultation over violent military interventions (ESS 2003, 9),[25] which is also known as a comprehensive approach. That is to say that conflicts require a mixture of responses, including sanctions, export controls and political and economic engagements (Kirchner and Sperling 2007, 9).

This idea of responding to international crisis comprehensively and holistically is further explicated in the French, German and British national security strategies. The French White Book, for example, charges that "the complexity of international crises requires the definition of strategies bringing together the diplomatic, financial, civilian, cultural and military instruments, both in the prevention states and in crisis management proper, as in the post-conflict sequences of stabilization and reconstruction" (White Paper 2008, 58). This idea is also echoed in the German Defence Policy Guidelines (BMVg 2011, 1, 2, 5) and the 2006 White Paper (BMVg 2006). The latter states that "[a] successful response to these new challenges requires the application of a wide range of foreign, security, defence, and development policy instruments in order to identify, prevent, and resolve conflicts at an early stage" (BMVg 2006, 5). Similarly, the British strategy notes that "We will use all the instruments of national power to prevent conflict and avert threats beyond our shores: our Embassies and High Commissions worldwide, our international development programme, our intelligence services, our defence, diplomacy and our cultural assets" (Cabinet Office 2010, 9; see also 10). In response to the NSS and by referencing their own experience in Northern Ireland, the UK strategy also notes that the threat of global terrorism must be dealt with differently (Fox 2005).

In terms of exporting EU values and normative principles such as freedom, respect for human and humanitarian rights, the rule of law, democracy, tolerance and solidarity, the ESS charges that "Spreading good governance, supporting social and political reform, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the rule of law and protecting human rights are the best means of strengthening the international order" (10, 19). These values are also reflected in the national security strategies of the biggest EU member states. France, for example, has a self-understanding as the country of human rights

(Irondelle and Schmitt 2013, 125) resulting in an officially stated ambition to defend democratic values worldwide (The French White Paper 2008). Similarly, the German Government wants to pursue a foreign and security policy based on humanitarian and moral principles (Paterson 2011; Junk and Daase 2013, 2) that are couched into a culture of military restraint (Longhurst 2004) and a respect for the parliamentary privilege over the armed forces (Gilch 2005, 147–157) while at the same time trying to avoid any suspicion of revering to great power politics (Kundnani 2011). The UK national security strategy similarly notes that

> Our national interest requires us to stand up for the values our country believes in – the rule of law, democracy, free speech, tolerance and human rights. Those are the attributes for which Britain is admired in the world and we must continue to advance them, because Britain will be safer if our values are upheld and respected in the world. (Cabinet Office 2010, 4)

3.4. Role and significance of third parties and international organizations

While pursuing its interests in a globalized world, the NSS of 2010 acknowledges that America has not succeeded with living up to its previous norms, ideas and beliefs about how to manage its foreign relations and by stepping outside of the currents of international cooperation. It goes on to remind its readers that "[w]e succeeded in the post-Second World War era by pursuing our interests within multilateral forums like the United Nations – not outside of them" (NSS 2010, 12). Such acknowledgement sets the norm of multilateral engagement and cooperation to galvanize collective action in areas such as "combating violent extremism; stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and securing nuclear materials; achieving balanced and sustainable economic growth; and forging cooperative solutions to the threat of climate change, armed conflict, and pandemic disease" (NSS 2010, 3). Indeed, international institutions are noted as "indispensable vehicles for pooling international resources and enforce international norms" (NSS 2010, 12).[26]

Such normative predispositions are in stark contrast to those in the NSS of 2002 and 2006, which insisted on America's right of pre-emption and treating international allies and partners as "secondary" players to American national interests. Unilateralism[27] was presumed to precede multilateralism while allies and friends in international organizations were *invited* to join the USA in so-called coalitions of the willing, but only if those were to promote American interests (Kurlantzick 2006; Trachtenberg 2004).[28] US Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, put it succinctly by noting that "When it comes to our security we really don't need anybody's permission" (Baltz 2003),[29] which made coalitions of the willing become the "new" norm (Council on Foreign Relations 2004, 1).

However, while pursuing those multilateral engagements, the NSS of 2010 reminds readers not only of the strengths that international institutions (e.g. UN, G8) have but also their shortcomings (Council on Foreign Relations 2004, 3). At times, "they cannot effectively address new threats or seize new opportunities" (Council on Foreign Relations 2004, 8). Thus, institutions should undergo a modernization process and become more representative of today's diffusion of influence (Council on Foreign Relations 2004, 12) while America aspires to lead such a transformation process (Council on Foreign Relations 2004, 46). This strong commitment to reforming international institutions suggests that America intends to preserve the norm of multilateralism. For international norm violators, the USA gives them a choice to either abide by those norms and enjoy the

political and economic benefits that come with it, or bear the consequences and be isolated.[30] In that sense, the Obama NSS is consistent with those of his predecessor.

For the EU, acting in concert with others was noted as the foremost normative principle of international politics. International institutions are believed to be independent international actors who play a role in (1) addressing the main threats identified in the security strategy; (2) fostering security in the EU's neighbourhood; and (3) building an international based order of effective multilateralism and cooperation among states (Johnson 2006). The UN stands at the "apex of the international system" by holding the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace (ESS 2003, 2) and is the primary sources of international law (ESS 2003, 9).

These normative predispositions are identical with those found in France, Germany and the UK. The French strategic document clearly anticipates a strong yet independent role for France in those organizations and leading the European quest for more strategic autonomy (Bozo 2005; Gnesotto 1998). More specifically, France, due to its perceived special status as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and by being a nuclear power, anticipates special duties to contribute to international security and to defend republican values as well as "individual and collective freedoms, the respect for human dignity, solidarity and justice" (The French White Paper 2008, 62). It also foresees a strong role in fostering the political integration of the EU, to make a contribution to the NATO alliance as being the cornerstone of European security, to renew the strategic partnership with the USA, and to promote multilateralism through the United Nations (French White Paper 2008). While the British, French and German security strategies all emphasize a need for a UN resolution for the use of force, such strong commitment to multilateralism sometimes conflicts with France's strive for political and military independence (Meunier 2008, 243). In short, like the USA, France also reserves a right for unilateral intervention without and explicit UN resolution to protect its citizens abroad (French White Paper 2008).

Germany's international responsibilities for peace and freedom, on the other hand, result from "our interests as a strong nation in the centre of Europe" (BMVg 2011, 3) and are inextricably linked to the political developments in Europe. Berlin traditionally has enjoyed close ties with the USA and France and considers both as elementary for the future of transatlantic relations (Junk and Daase 2013, 146). The Weissbuch of 2006 holds that "The transatlantic partnership remains the foundation of Germany's and Europe's common security" (BMVg 2006, 6). Moreover, like its European counterparts, Germany perceives itself as an active member of the international community who "pursues its interests and is actively striving for a better and safer world" (BMVg 2011, 3). At the same time, the European Union with its newly developed security apparatus has become the guarantor for "political stability, security, and prosperity in Germany as well as its other member states. It has evolved into a recognised actor in international crisis management […]" (BMVg 2006, 6). The government, therefore, aims to strengthen the EU as a source of stability and to foster the process of European integration (BMVg 2006, 33). These predispositions reveal that Germany considers multilateralism as unquestionable (Bulmer and Paterson 2010; Karp 2009) and German actorness could only be envisioned in concert with key partners like the UN, NATO and the EU, which are "of key importance for our national security and also for our prosperity" (BMVg 2011, 5). Indeed, they define the framework for Germany's security policy. Moreover, the EU and NATO are considered complimentary rather than competing institutions (Howorth 2010; Ghez and Larrabee 2009); yet, they should not duplicate their resources and mandates, and the EU should be given autonomy with regards to conducing autonomous operations (BMVg 2006, 48–51).

"It is therefore our duty and our mission," the government charges "to preserve the unique quality of transatlantic relations, to strengthen our ties and our exchanges and to continue to develop the partnership with the United States by performing our tasks responsibly" (BMVg 2011, 7). Above all, however, for Germany, "Franco-German relations play a pivotal role owing to their special nature, underlined in the Élysée Treaty, and their unique closeness" (BMVg 2011, 8). To put it succinctly, for Germany alignment with the West, reconciliation, European integration and effective multilateralism are the essential framework for the pursuit of its values and interests.

The UK, on the other hand, as Paul Cornish notes, are "driven by a singular determination to remain involved in international affairs" (Cornish 2013, 372). They also underline their special relationship with the USA, which is above and beyond that with the EU, NATO and the UN (in that order;(Cabinet Office 2010, 4). Above all, NATO is paramount in the UK's strategic thinking because it provides collective security "as a basis for territorial defence of the UK, and stability of our European neighbourhood" (SDSR 2010, 12). In contrast, the EU is only relevant in UK thinking in so far as it promotes security and prosperity (not defence).

4. Inferences and conclusions

Following the terrorist attacks on 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq in 2003, analysts questioned the pervasiveness of shared and deep-seated transatlantic norms, beliefs and ideas about the means and ends of national security policy (Heiselberg 2003; Longhurst and Zaborowski 2005; Rynning 2003). They argued that the growing strategic incompatibility between the European allies and the USA was the product of a shift in transatlantic strategic cultures (Kagan 2002; Leffler and Legro 2008). Building upon constructivist's work on strategic cultures, this article disaggregated the latest American and European security strategy into their normative and ideational components in order to assess (1) the degree of normative compatibility regarding the means and ends of national security policies, and (2) the question of normative continuity/discontinuity of the Obama vs. Bush administration. This framework allowed us to study strategic cultures empirically, which filled a recognized gap, and produced the following findings: first, the USA and EU, beliefs and ideas about the means and ends of national security policy are aligned with regards to the meanings assigned to challenges and threats, as well as preferred modes of international cooperation. Both share practically identical normative predispositions with regards to their beliefs and interpretations of threats, especially that global terrorism poses the chief threat to transatlantic security, which is followed by weapons of mass destruction, and failed or failing states.[31] We also witness a normative continuity of the Obama administration from its predecessor (Bush). This suggests that the degree of shared transatlantic norms, beliefs and ideas on both sides of the Atlantic vis-à-vis challenges and threats is very high.

At the same time, however, there is a normative incompatibility pertaining to commonly held beliefs about the makeup and nature of the international system, the role of international organizations and attitudinal structures of how to address these threats, which suggests that transatlantic norms are not as deep seated "all the way down." This should be worrisome for politicians as it is an indication of an emerging or growing transatlantic rift; it can also be interpreted as the prolongation of earlier cultural predispositions that analysts identified during the Bush administration (Daalder and Lindsay 2005; Gaddis 2004; Gurtov 2006). However, additional, longitudinal research designs are needed to better understand whether this is a temporary trend, because

attitudinal structures, as noted, only change very slowly over time and only do so in exceptional historical circumstances (Snyder 1990), which makes generalizations over a relatively short period of time (as used in this study) inconclusive. Having said that, the snapshot here provides a strong call for a much larger and multi-variable research project, perhaps in the context of a book project. A second avenue of future research is to follow up on the aspect that this study excluded entirely – that is to examine whether states actually practised what they preached as part of their written rhetoric.

Third, there is the possibility that states hold more than one strategic culture, a subculture (Massie 2008) or multiple strategic identities (Campbell 1998, 3). Moreover, they may all be competing with one another at different times and circumstances. However, such an analysis was also outside of the scope of this article, but may provide a fertile ground for future research projects, and underlines the call for a multi-variable analysis.

Finally, future studies on transatlantic norms may be able to reveal whether strategic cultures are elastic (and if so, to what degree) and to get a firmer grip on the question of causation between culture and behaviour. More specifically, any normative changes that appear to deviate from the state's strategic culture do not necessarily mean that a change in that strategic culture is, or may be, about to occur. It is also possible that just the particular strategic behaviour does not conform well with the state's strategic culture, or that its strategic culture is not exerting influence. This discussion, however, get us into the realm of analysing state's practices, which was outside of the scope of this article.

In sum, while strategies always portray a particular snapshot of the situational contexts in which they were drafted, this article does *not* find sufficient evidence to conclude that the transatlantic relationship is widening or that it has become more elastic, normatively speaking. Most surprisingly, perhaps, is that neither the ESS nor the NSS discuss the transatlantic relationship explicitly; only the selected national security strategies discussed here do. There is, however, evidence that in certain issue areas the EU and USA are *en train* to show significant differences, which should not be underestimated and certainly requires careful attention by politicians. Yet, to speak of a transatlantic normative rift is too strong of an interpretation.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) (2009–2011), and am thankful to Alexandra Gheciu, Srdjan Vucetic, Elke Winter and the anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions. All errors, of course remain mine.

Notes

1. This article will not look at the practice aspect of strategic cultures – that is if states behave the way they suggested they would in their security strategies.
2. This cluster is adopted from Berenskoetter (2005) and Meyer (2005).
3. Martha Finnemore, for example, uses the US intervention in Somalia in 1993 to argue that this particular intervention would have been inconceivable without the norms of humanitarian interventions that allow for a coercive breach into the domestic affairs of sovereign states.
4. This is how Robert Kagan and his compatriots conceived strategic culture.
5. Exceptions are Johnson, Kartchner, and Larsen (2008) and Kirchner and Sperling (2007).
6. I thank the reviewers for asking me to include this important aspect into the study.
7. There has been some talk whether the ESS would be updated, possibly within the next two years. However, as long as the EU has not made any official announcements, this remains speculation and methodologically and empirically irrelevant for this study.

8. This assumes that identity implies difference (Neumann and Welsh 1991; Ruggie 1998).
9. However, the purpose of the article is not to discuss the norm evolutions and, consequently, this study will not analyse the processes of "norm emergence", "norm cascade" and "norm internalization" as described by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998, 895–905).
10. This, of course, is only a brief scan of a much larger literature on norms; for further discussion, see Rawls (1955), Krasner (1984, 1988) and Ruggie (1983, 1993).
11. For a challenge of this view, see Hymans (2006), Montgomery (2005), Sagan (1996) and Solingen (2007).
12. The danger of tautological inference is explicitly noted in Aberbach, Putnam, and Rockman (1981), Almond and Verba (1965), Berger (1996), Kupchan (1994) and Legro (1995).
13. European Council (2003), which will be abbreviated in the following as "ESS".
14. These normative predispositions, as one analyst argued, qualified the EU as a "transformative" or "positive power" (Biscop 2005).
15. The NSS of 2006 talks about political alienation, grievances, sub-culture of conspiracy and an ideology of murder as the causes for terrorist activities (White House 2006).
16. The term state failure is an overarching concept defined by the State Failure Task Force. It refers to a collapse of authority within a particular state to impose authority and order in situations of civil war, revolutionary war, genocide, politicide and regime transitions (Goldstone 2000).
17. This list is consistent with the 1999, 2002 and the 2006 versions of the NSS; the latter also talks about political alienation, grievances, sub-culture of conspiracy and an ideology of murder as the causes for terrorist activities.
18. The strategy of pre-emption was first developed by Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld (Woodward 2004).
19. Some authors have pointed out that regime change in the Middle East and the promotion of democracy there is not necessarily a bad policy (Ajami 2003). For a critical analysis of regime change see Gordon (2003).
20. There is no space to discuss this concept here in detail; see Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde (1998).
21. This is a point that is only shared with the UK national security strategy (Cabinet Office 2010, 14), which is also the only one recognizing that the relative weight of economic activity is shifting from developed economies in Europe to growing economies in Asia and Latin America.
22. For further analysis, see Vaisse (2007); on the EU neighbourhood policy, see, for example, Vennesson (2007).
23. The negotiations were held in a hotel on the Petersberg near Bonn/Germany, and the tasks were adopted from the Western European Union (WEU), which was dismantled (Jørgensen 1997).
24. This is also reflected in the national security strategies of Britain, France and Germany (BMVg 2006, 38).
25. 2385th European Council meeting, General Affairs, Brussels, 19–20 November 2001.
26. Interestingly, there are no geographical or functional limitations of international organization; they range from North America, to Europe, to Asia and the Middle East (NSS 2010, 39–43).
27. This is a hypothesis succinctly summarized by Kagan (2002, 2004), Leffler and Legro (2008), Lundestad (2008), Pond (2004) and Sloan (2005).
28. Indeed, the USA did not feel constrained by those allies and explicitly reserved the right to act unilaterally (Jervis 2003).
29. The literature also calls this "multilateralism à la carte" (Cameron 2002). For a disagreement that America has disregarded international institutions, see Zyla (2006, 2007).
30. Those consequences, however, were not further detailed.
31. For a similar argument see Dannreuther and Peterson (2006).

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