

# **In search of a gap:**

## **Assessing “strategic divergence” in US and European national security strategy documents from the 1980s to the present**

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*Draft - Comments welcome!*

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## 1 Introduction

In recent years, numerous International Relations scholars and policy commentators have warned against an increasing divergence of strategic worldviews among the United States and its traditional European allies, a divergence which is thought to endanger the extraordinarily stable security alliance established more than half a century ago. Perhaps most prominently Robert Kagan described a “strategic decoupling” of the traditional allies in his influential “Power and Weakness” article (Kagan, 2002).

Kagan’s explanation of strategic divergence by reference to power differences between the US and Europe has earned much scholarly criticism (e.g. Cox, 2003; Risse, 2003a; Szabo, 2002). Nevertheless, many others have concurred with his diagnosis that transatlantic security cooperation is increasingly inhibited by fundamentally different assessments of assessments of key security objectives, threats, and appropriate countermeasures on both sides of the Atlantic. This transatlantic strategic divergence is discussed both as a general phenomenon (Cox, 2005; Daalder, 2003; James, 2006; Kupchan, 2003: 155-9; Moravcsik, 2003; Van Ham, 2002) and with regard to specific strategic challenges such as terrorism, democracy promotion, or even climate change (Ceronisky et al., 2005; Rees, 2007; Wright, 2006).<sup>1</sup>

A popular point of reference in the debate about transatlantic strategic divergence are the US *National Security Strategies* (NSS) published by the US White House in 2002 and 2006. Particularly the 2002 NSS has been interpreted by many as expression of a radically new and internationally contested strategic worldview adopted by the Bush administration (Cox, 2005; Daalder, 2003; Gaddis, 2002; Rhodes, 2004; Risse, 2003b; Sousa, 2004). Since the publication of a common “European Security Strategy” (ESS) in 2003, NSS-ESS comparisons have been an obvious focus of research (Bailes, 2005; Berenskötter, 2005; Jäger et al., 2005; Skiba, 2004; Toje, 2005).

Intuitive as the argument about strategic divergence may be, it lacks analytical depth and clarity. One problem lies in the difficulty of identifying “degrees” of divergence: How can we tell whether a certain manifestation of strategic divergence constitutes a “crisis” of the transatlantic relationship or a tolerable difference of opinion in a vital alliance? Determining any absolute “threshold” of necessary convergence, or drawing inferences from individual policy conflicts, seems rather arbitrary. Another problem is that many analyses of transatlantic strategic divergence are based on an underlying assumption of intra-European *convergence* or

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<sup>1</sup> Contributions that express skepticism regarding the diagnosis of transatlantic divergence include Allin (2007), Blinken (2001); Peterson (2004).

homogeneity – most famously expressed in Robert Kagan’s bonmot that “Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus” (Kagan, 2002). While this assumption is also implicit in many other contributions, and receives further support by emerging discussions of a distinct “European strategic culture” (e.g. Cornish and Edwards, 2001, 2005), it is seldom explicitly tested.

Our study addresses these analytical shortcomings through a comparative analysis of selected US and European “national security strategy” documents from the 1980s to the present. By *comparing* the current divergence of transatlantic security strategies to earlier historical periods, our study offers a more systematic way of evaluating claims of a transatlantic crisis than “snapshot” views of the present-day alliance. In analysing documents from three major European countries – Britain, France, and Germany –, it puts the assumption of European homogeneity to a systematic test.

In addition to offering an improved descriptive measure of transatlantic strategic divergence, our study also addresses another weakness of the ongoing debate about transatlantic strategic divergence: its often loose connection to theoretical arguments made by International Relations scholars about the driving forces of security cooperation within the transatlantic divergence. *Realist* and *constructivist* scholars have long argued about whether the strength of the Atlantic alliance is mainly a function of unifying external threats, or of shared identity conceptions and norms within a democratic “security community”. What does any observable strategic convergence or divergence tell us about these theories? Do divergent strategic world views lead to a declining commitment to the Alliance as such? Does strategic convergence depend on the strength of shared identities and cooperation norms? Clarifying and testing potential implications of strategic divergence for theories of transatlantic cooperation is the second aim of our analysis.

In sum, our study makes two distinct contributions to the current debate about transatlantic “strategic divergence”: It offers a better *descriptive* measure of strategic divergence than individual historical “snapshots”, and it links the debate to long-standing theoretical controversies about the underlying causes of transatlantic security cooperation.

While we do not claim that a comparison of national security strategy documents is the only systematic way of evaluating arguments about transatlantic strategic divergence or competing theoretical claims about the causes of transatlantic cooperation, we see clear analytical advantages in our approach. Other than individual policy conflicts or even public opinion surveys of transatlantic attitudes – which have been conducted in a standardized way only in

recent years – national strategy documents constitute a continuous set of data, published over decades in a relatively uniform and consistent way, and specifically designed by national governments to give a *comprehensive* picture of the national strategic outlook beyond prominent issues of the day.

Our empirical analysis is based on a selection of security strategy documents from three time periods: the mid-1980s, the mid-1990s and the time period from 2002 to the present. Based on established concepts of “grand strategy”, we developed a comprehensive set of indicators that permit us to test both the popular claim of an increasing transatlantic strategic divergence, and implications for competing theories about the causes of transatlantic security cooperation through a qualitative analysis of text documents. While our “coding” of text documents is itself qualitative in nature, we quantify our findings on each indicator to summarize the evidence for and against each hypothesis.

The findings emerging from our analysis cast considerable doubt on the claim of an increasing transatlantic “strategic gap”. Although we do identify disagreements between US and European strategies on a number of dimensions, this a far from predominant pattern, and most importantly, not a new one. To the contrary, existing transatlantic differences appear to be shrinking rather than increasing over time, while intra-European developments do *not* confirm predictions of an increasingly unified European “strategic culture”. In terms of theoretical arguments about the development of post-Cold War transatlantic relations, our analysis supports the realist perspective only in part, but poses an even stronger challenge to constructivist arguments.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows: In section 2, we provide a more detailed definition of strategic divergence, and develop text-analytical indicators to operationalize the concept. In section 3, we discuss the implications of strategic divergence for competing theories of transatlantic security cooperation, and complement our list of empirical indicators with additional measures for testing competing causal claims. Section 4 provides a detailed overview of our empirical analysis. Section 5 summarizes the key findings of our study.

## **2 Conceptualising strategic divergence**

The first analytical task for our study is to define in greater detail what we understand by “strategic convergence”, and to develop empirical indicators operationalizing the concept. The subject of national security strategy documents is what has come to be known as “grand strategy”, a much broader concept than traditional, military understandings of strategy as the

“art of using battles to win the war.” (Clausewitz, quoted by Kennedy, 1991: 1). Grand strategy, according to a recent summary of influential definitions, “integrates military, political, and economic means to pursue states’ ultimate objectives in the international system” (Biddle, 2005: 1; also see Kennedy, 1991: 2-6).

According to this basic concept, security strategies are composed of three related elements: security interests, threat assessments, and strategic instruments to tackle threats. These elements can be understood in terms of certain framing questions: “What are our interests? What threatens those interests? What end state do we seek against that threat, and how quickly must we attain it? And how do we interrelate military and non-military means to achieve that end state?” (Biddle, 2005: 1). The tripartite nature of “grand strategy” as a concept is also reflected in the structure of the national strategy documents we study, which tend to proceed from statements of fundamental interests to threat assessments and finally more detailed discussions of strategy.

In our empirical analysis of transatlantic strategic convergence, we follow the established distinction between the three dimensions of grand strategy. In the following paragraphs, we propose a number of detailed indicators for measuring the convergence or divergence of national security strategy documents on each of these dimensions. This detailed operationalization is indispensable to go beyond sweeping generalizations about contradictions and commonalities among different strategies, which prevail in many existing analyses. The subcategories we analyse within each of the three dimensions were developed through an open pre-coding of selected documents, to ensure that no important elements of the strategy documents are missed.

## **2.1 Interest definitions**

States’ substantive definitions of security interests are examined in terms of *issue scope* and *ranking*. Issue scope is defined by the coverage of “new” as opposed to “traditional” types of security interests: Security interests are defined in a narrow way when reference is made exclusively or primarily to the avoidance of military violence, that is, to the protection of the state, its territory, and its citizens against external violent attacks, to the promotion of global and regional peace and stability, and to disarmament – the reduction of the means of violence – as fundamental objectives of the national security strategy.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, a broad conception of security interests includes objectives that are not directly related to the avoidance of

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<sup>2</sup> We chose to include disarmament as security *interests* wherever a world with fewer weapons was presented as an aim in itself.

external violent attacks; among these new interests, we included the promotion of democracy and human rights,<sup>3</sup> the protection of the (global or local) natural environmental, economic and energy security, as well as economic development in poor countries.

In addition to issue scope, we are also interested in how high governments *rank* different security interests. Our analysis focuses in particular on the relative weight attached to those types of interests that were most frequently cited as very important: the traditional interests of protecting the state from external attacks and of promoting global and regional peace and stability, and the new interests of promoting freedom and democracy. In this way, in other words, we “zoom in” on the ranking of the top security priorities, leaving aside those types of old and new interests to which neither of our four countries accord a central role.

## **2.2 Threat Perceptions**

The second dimension of our analysis concerns threat perceptions. We understand this category to include not only the classical definition of a *threat* (the enemy, his capacities and intentions are known), but also *risk*, a concept that incorporates a high degree of uncertainty (who is the enemy or the problem, what are his/its capacities and intentions?) (Daase, 2002). As interest definitions, threat perceptions are compared according to issue scope and ranking. We again introduce a distinction between “old” and “new” types of threats. As “old” threats we understand all forms of threats which concern traditional security interests as defined above – i.e. that include physical violence – *and* which are state-centred. This includes six sub-categories: The Soviet Union (only for the 1980s strategies), other major powers, European instability, regional stability elsewhere, weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and “rogue” states – states characterised as threatening others with an aggressive posture, seeking to obtain or use WMD, and/or supporting terrorists.

“New” types of threats include 12 subcategories, which all refer to threats emanating entirely or predominantly from non- or sub-state actors and/or not implying direct physical violence: Terrorism, ethnic strife, “failed states” – defined as states without a functioning governance structure –, human rights violations, humanitarian crises, threats to critical infrastructure, threats to economic and energy security, poverty, health crises and population pressure, mass refugee movements, threats to the (global or local) natural environment, and organised crime and drug trafficking.

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<sup>3</sup> While human rights do include security from physical violence, this conception of “human security” differs from traditional “national security” conceptions focused on violent attacks from *outside* the state.

As with interest definitions, we are interested in the *ranking* of different threats, focusing on the relative weight attached to six types of top threats: the Soviet Union (in the 1980s), European instability, terrorism, WMD, and “rogue” states. This selection is based (again) on which types of threats were most widely cited as very important.

### **2.3 *Strategic preferences***

Strategic preferences concern the different means through which the security interests formulated by a strategy can or should be reached and through which the threats identified by it can or should be tackled. In our analysis, we focus on examining six *cross-cutting* strategic questions, that is, questions regarding the appropriate means to achieve *various* types of objectives. In particular, we examine in detail the positions of each document on the value of multilateral institutions and the multilateral coordination of military action; the active use of military force; the importance of non-military means compared to military means,<sup>4</sup> and on three specific aspects of military defence posture: deterrence, missile defence systems, and the pre-emptive use of force. This general strategic orientation can be expected to display greater continuity than issue-specific strategies, which change in response to short-term developments.

### **2.4 *The divergence hypothesis and alternatives scenarios***

Following our definition and operationalization of the concept, we have to measure the development of interests, threat perceptions, and strategies in US and European national security strategy documents to test claims of “transatlantic strategic divergence”. The popular “transatlantic crisis” diagnosis suggests that US and European security strategies have increasingly diverged in the two decades following the end of the Cold War. According to our operationalization, we should thus expect the gap between US and European interest definitions, threat perceptions, and strategic preference to widen over time, while the three European strategies should remain equally convergent, or even gradually converge *more*. The latter scenario presumes that transatlantic strategies were not perfectly convergent during the Cold War either, but that the transatlantic divide has become more prevalent than other disagreements within the alliance. The general claim of “transatlantic strategic divergence” thus gives rise to two distinct hypotheses, both of which must be confirmed to verify it:

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<sup>4</sup> In this category, military means include both the active use of force and passive forms of military defence, including deterrence and missile defence systems. Non-military means include strategies such as peace diplomacy, dialogue, crisis prevention and arms control.

*H 1(a): Interest definitions, threat perceptions, and strategic preferences will increasingly diverge between US and European strategies*

*H 1(b): Interest definitions, threat perceptions, and strategic preferences will remain unchanged or will increasingly converge among the three European strategies.*<sup>5</sup>

What are conceivable alternative scenarios to this crisis hypothesis? First, it is conceivable that although security strategies within the transatlantic alliances generally diverge over time, we do not see a growing *transatlantic* gap, in other words: both the US-European distance and intra-European distances, or only the latter, could increase over time.

A second alternative possibility is that although there is a clear transatlantic cleavage in the Alliance, this is essentially nothing new, but in fact a constant of the transatlantic alliance. According to this hypothesis, we should identify a gap between the US and European governments in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, but no growing divergence over time.

Finally, a third alternative hypothesis holds that assumptions of strong strategic convergence during the Cold War are in fact misplaced, and that we should see strategies among the four countries becoming *more* divergent over time. To the degree that there was a discernible transatlantic gap in Cold War security strategies, this should increasingly disappear.

### **3 Testing theories of transatlantic cooperation**

#### **3.1 The realist paradigm**

The end of the East-West-confrontation in 1990, and particularly the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1993, raised obvious questions for International Relations theorists, particularly for the dominant approach of realism. Based on underlying assumptions about the anarchical character of the inter-state system and the inescapable security dilemma in the international realm, realists explain alliances as temporary and instrumental arrangements through which states cooperate to balance the factual or perceived threat of a third state (Walt, 1987; Waltz, 1979). The Cold War alliance between Europe and the US was thus interpreted as a “balancing” tool against the Soviet threat. Consequently, realists predicted in the early 1990s that the disappearance of this unifying threat would inevitably lead to the decline of the Atlantic alliance (Mearsheimer, 1990; Waltz, 1993).

It should be noted that these early realist analyses did not necessarily predict that the Atlantic alliance to disintegrate neatly into an American and a largely unified European component.

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<sup>5</sup> The methodological approach used to measure “divergence” is explained in detail in section 4.4.

To the contrary, theorists such as Mearsheimer expected a resurgence of power competition as a characteristic of intra-*European* relations, including “scenarios in which Germany uses military force against Poland, Czechoslovakia, or even Austria” (Mearsheimer, 1990: 33). Later contributions to the debate about post-Cold War transatlantic relations arrived at a very different interpretation of “balancing” theories, predicting instead that European states – particularly the members of the European Union – would increasingly unite to balance against the US – not necessarily in terms of military capabilities, but in the form of “soft balancing” against US policies, and intensified competition over economic relative gains (Bergsten, 1999; Cox, 2005; Kupchan, 2002: 73; Pape, 2005; Walt, 1998/99). While many realists have remained sceptical about the possibility of such transatlantic power balancing (e.g. Brooks and Wohlforth, 2005; Wohlforth, 2002), the idea of a Europe joining forces to oppose US power has also been echoed by European policy-makers, particularly but not only in France. Another twist to realist thinking about post-Cold War transatlantic relations came with the onset of the global, American-led “war on terror” after 11 September 2001. Islamist terrorism against Western societies was interpreted by many as a threat that could reunify the traditional Atlantic allies, if realist predictions were correct (Duffield, 2001: 97; Risse, 2003a: 4).

### **3.2 *Realism and strategic divergence***

To realist theorists, (perceived) external threats are the main factor underlying the strength – and possible decline – of the transatlantic alliance. Realism thus ascribes a causal role to *one* of the three dimensions of strategic convergence as we define it. Convergent threat perceptions should strengthen the alliance, while divergent threat perceptions should weaken it. How can we operationalize this hypothesis for our analysis of security strategy documents? For realism’s main independent variable, threat perceptions, we have already developed indicators above. The dependent variable, alliance strength, can obviously *not* include threat perceptions and can therefore not be equated with strategic convergence as measured by hypothesis 1. We argue, however, that realists would expect converging threat perceptions to produce convergence at the level of states’ strategic preferences (that is, our third dimension of strategic convergence).<sup>6</sup> As an additional measure of alliance strength, we introduce an indicator of “alliance commitment”, which includes explicit statements about the importance of the Atlantic alliance. Measuring alliance strength through this combined approach might

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<sup>6</sup> By contrast, realism remains agnostic to whether or not alliance members will develop shared conceptions of their basic security interests.

not be elegant, but in our view best captures the realist argument. This operationalization gives rise to the following hypothesis:

*H 2: The more threat perceptions diverge, the more strategic preferences should diverge and the more alliance commitment should decline.*

### **3.3 The constructivist challenge**

In the 1990s, realist predictions of alliance decline provoked a counter-prediction for transatlantic continuity, notably on the part of constructivist scholars of International Relations, who argued that socially constructed identities and norms – rather than external threats – were the “kit” that had held the alliance together during the Cold War.

Most prominently, Thomas Risse-Kappen characterized the transatlantic relationship as a “security community” (Risse-Kappen, 1995, 1996; also see Ruggie, 1998). This term was coined originally by Karl Deutsch in 1957 (Deutsch et al., 1957), and was “modernized” more recently by Risse-Kappen, but also by Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (1998b), by giving it an explicitly constructivist theoretical grounding. In this constructivist understanding of the term, a security community is based on a shared identity conception among its members, which in turn gives rise to common interests definitions and certain behavioural norms. Since states define themselves as community members, they tend to incorporate the interests of their partners into the definition of their own security interests. The state thus partially becomes an “agent that furthers the [...] wants of the community” (Adler and Barnett, 1998b: 36).

Community identities also entail certain norms, that is, forms of behaviour that are appropriate and acceptable for community members. In addition to the most fundamental norm – non-violent change – “mature” security communities are characterized by common understandings of vital security interests, formal collective security institutions, as well as informal norms of consultation and joint decision-making (Adler and Barnett, 1998a: 55; Risse-Kappen, 1995: 34-7).<sup>7</sup> In contrast to realists, constructivists do not view external threats as central to transatlantic cohesion. Although Risse-Kappen does not deny the existence of a shared perception of the Soviet threat in the Western alliance and admits that a common “Other” can strengthen a shared sense of identity, this is not central to the persistence of a functioning security community (Risse-Kappen, 1996: 378). This constructivist analysis of

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<sup>7</sup> In a more recent discussion of the transatlantic security community, Risse argues that the transatlantic security community is founded upon “three Is”, namely, collective identity, economic interdependence, and strong institutionalization of the relationship “creating social order and enduring norms among the members of the community” (Risse, 2003a: 5). Since economic interdependence is not directly relevant to a study of national security strategies, and has clearly remained invariably strong over the past decades, we bracket this dimension in our analysis, focusing instead on manifestations of collective identity and behavioural norms.

transatlantic security cooperation logically entailed that the security partnership would remain alive and well after the end of the Cold War, as it was not based on a unifying threat, but on a foundation of shared identity conceptions and norms (Risse-Kappen, 1996: 393-6).

While proponents of the concept have continued to argue even in recent years that the transatlantic security community has remained strong even in the face of challenges such as the crisis over Iraq (Risse, 2003a), other scholars studying the transatlantic relationship from a constructivist perspective have espoused far more pessimistic views. While sharing the assumption of “security community” theorists that socially constructed identities are a key to understanding the evolving US-European relationship, they argue that a unified *European identity* is likely to replace common Western identity conceptions, or that Europe will even construct its common identity by delineating itself from an American “Other” (Baumann, 2006; Hampton and Sperling, 2002; Scheipers and Sicurelli, 2007).

### **3.4 Constructivism and strategic divergence**

In contrast to realists, constructivists do not accord *causal* importance to any of the three dimensions of strategic divergence as we define it. Rather, they argue that alliance strength is a function of the strength of shared identity conceptions and norms. These identities and norms can be assumed to *influence* both explicit commitments to the Atlantic alliance, and convergence or divergence of strategic worldviews, particularly on the fundamental dimension of shared interest conceptions. Constructivism remains agnostic vis-à-vis threat perceptions and strategic preferences: Threat perceptions can, but need not converge as a result of constructing common “Others”, and strategic divergence does not challenge the community, because it is non-instrumental at its core. In sum, constructivism would lead us to expect that weakening shared identities and norms should lead to divergence in interests and declining alliance commitments, and stable identities and norms to stability in these factors. To test constructivist arguments, we must again introduce additional indicators, but this time to track the development of the shared identities and norms, the *independent* variable of the constructivist argument. We operationalize shared identities and norms through five of “community indicators” that are derived from the security community concept: If the transatlantic partners identify with each other, their security strategies should refer to (1) allied interests as part of their own interests, or to (2) shared values and culture. Furthermore, they should (3) perceive threats not just a threats to their national security but to also to allies

and the Atlantic community as a whole.<sup>8</sup> Finally, constructivist arguments about transatlantic cooperation norms would lead us to expect that strategies should emphasize the importance of (4) consultation among the Atlantic allies, and of (5) acting jointly on threats within the framework of NATO.

These additional “community” indicators enable us to formulate the following hypothesis:

***H 3:** The more “community indicators” decline, the more interest definitions should diverge and the more alliance commitment should decline.*

Summarizing our discussion of realist and constructivist claims about transatlantic cooperation, we argue that both theories relate to measures of strategic divergence we developed in the preceding section. It would be oversimplifying to assume, however, that they do provide alternative explanations of strategic divergence across all three dimensions: Realism ascribes some causal role to one dimension of strategic convergence, whereas constructivism does not, viewing strategic convergence rather as the *product* of other, underlying forces. However, we argue that by distinguishing individual dimensions of strategic divergence and relating them to additional indicators of alliance commitment and community identities and norms, we can nevertheless find new and interesting evidence for and against each of the two prominent theoretical perspectives.

#### **4 Studying strategic divergence among four countries across three time periods**

For our empirical analysis of transatlantic strategic divergence, we focus on national security strategy documents published by the US and the “big three” among the US’ traditional Western European allies – the UK, France, and Germany – in three time periods: the mid-1980s, the mid-1990s, and the period from 2001 to the present. This selection allows us to track changes following both the end of the Cold War and the September 11 terrorist attacks, the two events most frequently cited as critical turning points for transatlantic strategic convergence. In the following sections, we provide a brief overview of the historical background against which the different national security strategy documents were drafted. This overview is essential to understand the specific issues on which European and US strategies could converge or diverge within each time period, and gives a sense of the international as well as domestic developments that shaped the drafting of the documents.

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<sup>8</sup> Note that this indicator differs from the mere substantive *convergence* of threat perceptions, which is key for realist arguments.

#### ***4.1 The late Cold War period (1983-1989)***

The first period covers the time span from the mid- to late 1980s. The documents from this period we analyse are the 1988 US National Security Strategy, the British Defence White Papers from 1984 and 1988, the German Weißbücher from 1983 and 1985, and the French 1987 Loi de Programmation Militaire (LPM).

The late Cold War period was marked by a final relapse into the Cold War after earlier successes of détente policy in the 1970s, and before the eventual end of the East-West confrontation in the 1990s.

As Ronald Reagan was elected US president in 1980, the UK and Germany also experienced a “shift to the right”, with government changes from Labour Prime Minister Callaghan to Margaret Thatcher in 1979, and from Social Democrat Chancellor Helmut Schmidt to Helmut Kohl in 1982/83. Only France moved in the opposite direction, from conservative President Giscard d’Estaing to François Mitterand in 1981.

1979 saw a sharp deterioration of East-West relations, with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the stationing of Soviet intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe, followed by NATO’s Dual-Track Decision. Reagan took a harder stance toward the Soviet Union, relying on a conventional build-up, new missile technology, and support of anti-Soviet and anti-communist rebellions in Afghanistan, Nicaragua and other developing countries.

While the Cold War dominated global security agendas, Western countries were also increasingly confronted with the problem of state-sponsored terrorism, particularly on the part of Arab states such as Iran and Libya.

Michail Gorbachev’s coming to power in the Soviet Union in 1985 marked a final turning point in East-West relations. Accompanied by internal reforms in the Soviet Union, Reagan and Gorbachev achieved new successes in disarmament, particularly the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty banning US and Soviet intermediate-range missiles from Europe. The Berlin wall fell in 1989, and the following years brought the rapid dismantling of the Eastern bloc, and eventually of the Soviet Union itself.

#### ***4.2 The post-Cold War period (1995-1998)***

The second period covers the mid-1990s, the period following the disintegration of the Eastern block and the disappearance of the Cold War security agenda in the early 1990s. From this second time period, we included the 1995 and 1998 US NSS, the UK 1998 Strategic Defence Review, the 1994 German Weißbuch and the 1994 French Livre Blanc.

The domestic setting in which the new security strategies of the mid-1990s were developed was marked a shift from centre-right to centre-left governments. In the US, Democrat Bill Clinton succeeded George Bush in 1993; in all three European countries, conservative governments were replaced between 1996 and 1998 by a younger generation of social-democratic governments with Tony Blair, Lionel Jospin and Gerhard Schröder.

On the international scene, the former East-West divide was eroding rapidly, a process that culminated in NATO's 1999 enlargement to include former Warsaw Pact states. At the same time, the vanishing Cold-War threat was swiftly replaced on Western security agendas by new challenges, including both "classical" state-centred threats such as Saddam Hussein's Iraq, and a seeming explosion of ethnic nationalism, civil war and genocide that erupted in the Balkans as well as in Somalia, Rwanda and other African countries. International terrorism was also on the rise, with bombings against US facilities in Aden, Nairobi, and Dar-es-Salaam, some of them triggering retaliatory strikes by the US.

#### ***4.3 Post-9/11 (2002-today)***

The third period covered by our analysis begins with the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 against New York's World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in Washington, and includes the 2002 and 2006 US NSS, the 2003 UK White Paper, the 2003 Verteidigungspolitische Richtlinien (Defence Policy Directives, VPR), and the 2003 French LPM.

The 9/11 attacks were widely perceived as a watershed event for international politics. The immediate consequence was a US-British military intervention to topple the Afghan Taliban regime and destroy Al Qaida's terrorist training camps in October-December 2001. Although NATO— for the first time in its history – invoked article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, military action took place outside the alliance framework; it was only in August 2003 that NATO got involved in Afghanistan, taking over the command and coordination of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

Transatlantic differences had started in the early months of the George W. Bush administration, focusing mainly on Bush's National Missile Defence (NMD) project, his abrogation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty with Russia, and the administration's lack of support for multilateral arms control initiatives, such as the Verification Protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention or the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Rejection of these multilateral instruments came in a context of mounting transatlantic tensions about multilateral treaties in general, the Bush administration both abandoning the Kyoto Protocol and taking drastic measures to undermine the operation of the new International Criminal Court.

Moreover, dissatisfied with Iraq's compliance the US launched a military campaign in March 2003 to oust the regime. The conflict over this decision split the UN Security Council as well as NATO and the European Union.

Reacting to both this display of European disunity and the growing threat of international terrorism – which came to hit Europe in the large-scale March 2003 and July 2005 attacks on Madrid and London – EU leaders decided to demand the EU's High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, to draft a European Security Strategy. It was adopted in December 2003.

#### **4.4 Methodology: Coding and measuring strategic divergence**

To compare the selected documents systematically across countries and time periods on the various dimensions “grand strategy” as elaborated in section 2, we took three successive analytical steps: First, we coded each document with the qualitative text analysis software QSR N6 (Nudist), assigning text passages to relevant analytical categories and subcategories we developed for our codebook, for instance to “terrorism” as a subcategory of “threat perceptions”, or to “importance of multilateralism” as a sub-category of “strategies”, etc. While the complete code book with all subcategories and coding instructions cannot be discussed in full within the constraints of this paper, important questions and keywords that guided our coding of to different categories are footnoted in the discussion of our findings below.

Following the coding of documents, we compared all passages coded under each category across all countries and time periods, and assigned one of four values – high, medium, low, and 0 – to each document.<sup>10</sup> These values are not absolute but *relative*, that is, they express how the different documents compare to *each other*, as opposed to an abstract “ideal value”. Furthermore, the values are not strictly objective, but express our own *interpretation* of the differences across years and countries, taking into account both the quantity and quality of statements within each category. As with the first analytical step of coding, footnotes in the following sections give some indication of the considerations that are reflected in the choice of different values for each variable.

In a third step, we converted the values assigned to the different documents into numerical values to measure the divergence of strategies.<sup>11</sup> We measure divergence between the US strategy on the one hand and the three European strategies on the other hand by calculating

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<sup>10</sup> The value 0 expresses that no relevant statements at all were found for the respective category.

<sup>11</sup> 0=0, Low=1, Medium=2, High=3

the distance between US values and the average of European values. Internal European divergence is measured by taking the average of all distances between the three European “pairs”, UK-Germany, UK-France and France-Germany. We can speak of a “transatlantic cleavage” if the US-European distance is higher than the internal European average distance. Lastly, we also measure the *overall* substantive divergence of all four strategies for each time period and category is measured by calculating the standard deviation of the four values.<sup>12</sup> In addition to this quantitative assessment of *substantive* strategic divergence, we also quantify observable developments on the additional “community indicators” introduced to test realist and constructivist hypotheses, but on these categories we simply measure the average strength of alliance commitment as it develops over time, rather than convergence/divergence across countries.

The following two sections present key findings of our empirical analysis. In the next section, we examine strategic convergence/divergence at the substantive level of interests, threats and strategies, and summarize the implications of our findings for our hypotheses about strategic divergence (H1a-d). Following this, we analyse indicators of alliance commitment and transatlantic community, and confront the results with realist and constructivist hypotheses on the underlying causes of transatlantic security cooperation (H2 and H3).

## 5 Empirical analysis 1: Substantive strategic convergence

### 5.1 Interest definitions

**Issue scope:** Regarding the scope of interest definitions, we observe new interests gaining considerable importance after 1990, as would be expected.<sup>13</sup> Yet there is no discernible transatlantic cleavage, but a convergence trend for the four strategies over time. While the trend is not linear, convergence is clearly higher in the 1990s and 2000s than in the 1980s.

In the 1980s, US and German strategies cover a much broader issue scope than the French and especially the British documents. The US document explicitly rejects a security conception focusing on “protection from external attack” as “too narrow” (NSS 1988: 7), and

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<sup>12</sup> The standard deviation is the most common way to measure the *spread* of values on a given variable, it expresses how far on average different values diverge from the mean. The higher the value of the standard deviation for a given time period, the more strategies can be said to diverge. The formula is as follows:

$$\sqrt{\frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N (x_i - \bar{x})^2}$$

<sup>13</sup> The protection of a nation’s state, territory, citizens, and constitution, the guarantee of survival, as well as the maintenance of global and regional peace and stability were coded as “old” interests; “new” interests include environmental protection, the promotion of democracy and human rights, economic security and development. The values between low and high assigned to each document reflect how many old or new interests, respectively, were mentioned.

includes both economic welfare and the spread of freedom and democracy into its interest definition. The German Weißbuch echoes American concerns about economic and development objectives, while the British and French strategies focus more narrowly on traditional security objectives such as protection from external attack.

In the 1990s, new interests gain more ground, as all four countries include objectives related to “human rights”, “global development”, “economic prosperity” and other non-traditional categories (Livre Blanc, 1994: 7; NSS, 1995: 7, 1998: iii, 5-6; SDR, 1998: ch. 2; Weißbuch, 1994: 25-6). For instance, the French Livre Blanc states:

“Pour la première fois de son histoire, la France ne connaît plus de menace militaire directe à proximité de ses frontières. En revanche, des risques nouveaux peuvent affecter sa sécurité et sa défense. Elle continue et continuera de se trouver confrontée à des menaces sur son économie, son industrie, sa culture mais il s’agit de rapports de forces d’un autre ordre” (Livre Blanc, 1994: 7).

The trend of the 1990s is consolidated in the post 2001 period – with the striking exception of the French strategy, which returns to a more traditional, narrower interest definition.

**Table 1: Scope of interest definitions<sup>14</sup>**

	US	UK	DE	FR	US-EU3	EU3	Stdev
<i>1980s</i>	high/high	low/-	high/high	high/low	1.17	1.67	1.08
<i>1990s</i>	high/high	high/high	high/high	high/high	0	0	0
<i>2000s</i>	high/high	high/ high	high/high	high/low	0.33	0.67	0.43

**Interest Ranking:** Regarding the relative importance attributed by different strategies to the three top security interests, we observe a persistent transatlantic cleavage which is, however, rather narrowing over time. The importance attributed to “freedom and democracy” relative to the traditional security interests of protecting the state from external attacks and maintaining global peace and stability has remained at a stable “medium” for the US throughout all periods, but has increased slightly after the end of the Cold War for the three European states. In the 1980s, the German preoccupation, in the Weißbuch (1983: 5,7), is almost exclusively with stability in East-West relations and the French Loi de programmation militaire emphasizes “l’équilibre de forces entre les grandes puissances” (LPM, 1987: 5649). The US NSS, by contrast, explicitly qualifies this goal by giving equal importance to the aim of promoting “freedom”:

<sup>14</sup> Values assigned to “old” interest are located on the left side of each box, and “new” interest values on the right side.

“Undergirding all of this is our continuing commitment to [...] the ultimate objectives of US foreign policy: peace, yes, but world freedom as well. We refuse to believe that it is [...] an act of hostility to proclaim publicly the crucial moral distinction between democracy and totalitarianism.” (NSS, 1988: 28).

The US strategy thus clearly attaches less value than European strategies to a viable status quo arrangement with the Soviet Union, with important strategic implications (see below).

From the 1990s onwards, the three European strategies are beginning to refer to the promotion of democracy and human rights as security objectives, but remain reluctant to fully embrace the US’ emphatic agenda for freedom and democracy. The very first lines of the introduction to the US NSS are devoted to the goal of “freedom”:

“The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom—and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise. In the twenty-first century, only nations that share a commitment to protecting basic human rights and guaranteeing political and economic freedom will be able to unleash the potential of their people and assure their future prosperity.” (NSS, 2002: i).

And in a phrase strikingly reminiscent of the Reagan strategy’s “peace, yes, but world freedom as well”, the 2002 document calls for the US to “make the world better not just safer” (NSS, 2002: 1). The 2006 German Weißbuch, for example, only discusses “democracy” and “democracy” promotion in the context of specific examples and only as one objective among others. On the Western Balkans the Weißbuch (2006: 47) states:

“Germany’s special interest is due to its proximity to the region. Stability in the region is jeopardised by poverty, high levels of unemployment, corruption and organised crime, including human and drug trafficking, so that it is of paramount importance to establish democratic and constitutional structures, prosecute war crimes, successfully implement economic reforms and effectively protect minorities.”

**Table 2: Interest Ranking**<sup>15</sup>

	US	UK	DE	FR	US-EU3	EU3	Stdev
<b>1980s</b>	Protection: high Stability: high Freedom: medium	Protection: high Stability: high Freedom: -	Protection: high Stability: high Freedom: -	Protection: high Stability: high Freedom: -	0.67	0	0.29
<b>1990s</b>	Protection: high Stability: high Freedom: medium	Protection: high Stability: high Freedom: low	Protection: high Stability: high Freedom: low	Protection: high Stability: high Freedom: low	0.33	0	0.14
<b>2000s</b>	Protection: high Stability: high Freedom: medium	Protection: high Stability: high Freedom: low	Protection: high Stability: high Freedom: low	Protection: high Stability: high Freedom: low	0.33	0	0.14

<sup>15</sup> Values assigned to “stability” are located on the left side of each box, and “freedom” on the right side.

## 5.2 Threat perceptions

**Issue scope:** Similar to the development of interest definitions, new types of threats gained importance after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. We identify a transatlantic cleavage in the 1980s which disappears subsequently. In general, strategies are more convergent in the 1990s and 2000s than in the 1980s, but divergence has increased again in the last decade, compared to the 1990s, especially among the European strategies.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1980s, US threat perceptions were far broader than those of all European strategies, including the “new threats” of state-sponsored terrorism, low-intensity conflicts, financial shocks, drug trafficking, radical politico-religious movements, racial tensions, WMD proliferation, as well as poverty and environmental problems (NSS, 1988: 9-13). The German strategy exhibits a strong concern with economic vulnerabilities (Weißbuch, 1983: 20, 1985: 11).

In the course of the 1990s and 2000s, we can observe European strategies gradually “catching up” with broader US threat perceptions. All strategies list a multiplicity of diverse threats and risks, ranging from ethnic conflict, WMD proliferation and terrorism to refugee flows and environmental degradation (Livre Blanc, 1994: 8-22; LPM, 2003: Ch. 1, 3; NSS, 1995, 2002: 1-11; SDR, 1998: Art. 29-32; Weißbuch, 1994: 23-6, 2006: 17-20; White Paper, 2003: 6-8). The UK displays the strongest agreement with the US, followed by Germany and, lastly, a still more traditional French perspective.

**Table 3: Scope of threat perceptions<sup>17</sup>**

	US	UK	DE	FR	US-EU3	EU3	Stdev
<i>1980s</i>	high/medium	low/-	low/low	low/-	1.33	0.33	0.85
<i>1990s</i>	high/high	high/high	high/medium	high/medium	0.33	0.33	0.25
<i>2000s</i>	high/high	medium/high	Medium/high	High/low	0.67	1	0.68

**Threat ranking:** Regarding the ranking of threats cited most often as important – the Soviet threat during and Russia after the Cold War, terrorism, WMD proliferation, “rogue” states and regional instability – we identify a small and persistent transatlantic cleavage, which is, however, substantially narrowing over time. Within Europe, strategies diverge strongly in the

<sup>16</sup> Statements on the “Soviet Union” and “world communism”, regional instability and conflicts outside Europe, proliferation of WMD, “rogue” states were coded as “old” threats. Under “new” threats we coded international terrorism, poverty, health, economic challenges, drug trafficking, international crime, environmental degradation, and nationalistic, ethnic or religious violence. The values between low and high assigned to each document reflect how many old or new interests, respectively, were mentioned.

<sup>17</sup> Values assigned to “old” threats are located on the left side of each box, and “new” on the right side.

1990s and slightly re-converge after 2000, although not at the Cold War level. As a result, the overall trend for all four strategies shows an increased divergence in the 1990s, and a return to Cold War levels after 2001.<sup>18</sup>

In the 1980s there is strong convergence on the SU as the main threat, but apart from this top priority, Europeans differ from the US in according less weight to other threats emphasized by the NSS, such as the Iranian threat to Middle Eastern stability, terrorism, WMD proliferation beyond the two superpowers.

In the 1990s, we observe a somewhat greater divergence in threat rankings, with one particularly strong, if unsurprising transatlantic cleavage: For France, Britain and Germany, the “high” threat of the Soviet Union (SU) is replaced by threats to European stability (Livre Blanc, 1994: 22; SDR, 1998: ch. 1; Weißbuch, 1994: 43). The US, by contrast, appears to feel much more secure overall, laying much less emphasis on European instability and according “medium” weight to terrorism, WMD proliferation and “rogue states”. Moreover, the NSS is different from especially German and British strategies because of characterizing terrorism as a direct threat: terrorists “increasingly likely to attack US territory and American people in unconventional ways” (NSS, 1998: 7). On the other side terrorism is not seen as threatening vital interests as it is ranges among other secondary threats: “Terrorism, international crime, drug trafficking, illicit arms trafficking, uncontrolled refugee migrations and environmental damage threaten U.S. interests, citizens and the U.S. homeland itself” (NSS, 1998: 6). Similarly, the French Livre Blanc states: “L’action terroriste est sans doute la principale menace non militaire qui soit en mesure d’affecter notre sécurité” (Livre Blanc, 1994: 17).

Unsurprisingly, this picture changes starkly in the 2000s. Following the 9/11 attacks, all strategies rank terrorism as a “high” threat, with WMD proliferation an almost consensual equal. To illustrate, the 2006 German Weißbuch states that “International terrorism is a threat to freedom and security and a central challenge.” (Weißbuch, 2006: 14). The US NSS continues to differ from European strategies in its emphasis on “rogue” states, while regional instability has lost its urgency also for Europeans.

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<sup>18</sup> The ranking of threats was assessed based on explicit qualifications in the strategies such as “vital”, “important” and “secondary” threats or risks, as well as other characterizations of individual threats and the quantity of statements on each of them. “High” was assigned to “vital”, “medium” to “important”, and “low” to other secondary risks.

**Table 4: Threat Ranking**

	US	UK	DE	FR	US-EU3	EU3	Stdev
<b>1980s</b>	SU: high Regional: medium WMD: low Terrorism: low	SU: high Regional: - WMD: - Terrorism: -	SU: high Regional: - WMD: - Terrorism: -	SU: high Regional: low WMD: - Terrorism: -	0.92	0.17	0.42
<b>1990s</b>	Terrorism: medium WMD: medium Rogue: medium (Former) SU: low Regional: low	Terrorism: low WMD: medium Rogue: medium (Former) SU: - Regional: high	Terrorism: - WMD: medium Rogue: - (Former) SU: low Regional: high	Terrorism: medium WMD: medium Rogue: - (Former) SU: - Regional: high	1	0.67	0.64
<b>2000s</b>	Terrorism: high WMD: high Rogue: medium Regional: low	Terrorism: high WMD: high Rogue: - Regional: low	Terrorism: high WMD: medium Rogue: - Regional: low	Terrorism: high WMD: high Rogue: - Regional: medium	0.67	0.33	0.43

### 5.3 Strategic preferences

**Multilateralism:** The first of these cross-cutting questions concerns the importance accorded by different strategies to multilateral institutions, and to military action in the framework of multilateral rules and groupings.<sup>19</sup> Our analysis shows that multilateralism has generally become more important in post-Cold War strategies, and that contrary to popular assumptions, there is *no* growing transatlantic cleavage between a “unilateralist” US and “multilateralist” Europeans. To the contrary, the transatlantic cleavage of the 1980s has disappeared, with internal European divergence considerably growing over time.

Prior to 1990, the US NSS was, somewhat surprisingly, the *only* security strategy that made at least some positive reference to international organizations: “Multilateral diplomacy and participation in international organizations such as the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund provide opportunities to address common global problems and share the tasks of solving them” (NSS, 1988: 20-1).

<sup>19</sup> “Multilateralism” was assigned to general statements on the importance of multilateral frameworks and international institutions such as UN, OSCE, EU or NATO for foreign policies, but also as a framework for military action. The degree of “unilateralism” was evaluated by the quantity and quality of statements on the importance to act alone, or by statements weakness of international institutions. „Low“ represents the dominance of “unilateralism“, and „high“ stands for the prioritizing „multilateralism“. In case we assigned the value of „medium“ we found that both were balanced.

The 1995 and 1998 NSS explicitly emphasize the general value of multilateral institutions (NSS, 1995: 7-8, 1998: iii, 2), but at the same time formulate clear caveats regarding multilateral military action: The US should act unilaterally when “direct national interests” are at stake, through alliances in case of shared interest, and in a multilateral framework when interests are less vital (NSS, 1995: 7). Similarly, the 2002 NSS recognizes that “multilateral institutions can multiply the strength of freedom-loving nations” but states that “coalitions of the willing can augment these permanent institutions” (NSS, 2002: iii), and asserts the US right to act alone if necessary (NSS, 2002: 6). British strategies in the 1990s and 2000s share some of the US reservations about the value of multilateral organizations and multilateral military action. While strongly stressing the value of international organizations in general and of the UN, NATO, and EU institutional fora in particular, the 2003 UK strategy warns against a “potential for a breakdown in international consensus on the handling of crises and some of the risks arising from such a breakdown”, and concludes, by reference to the Iraq crisis, that “ad hoc coalitions of the willing remain appropriate” in many instances (White Paper, 2003: Essay 1, ).

There is an increased divergence among the four strategies in the post-2000 period, but interestingly, this development is *not* due to the “unilateralism” of the US strategy, but to the complete disinterest of the *French* strategy in multilateral action or institutions. The 1994 Livre Blanc was more positive stating that “l’action de la France s’inscrit de croissante dans un cadre multilatéral coopérations, Union Européenne, Alliance Atlantique, CSCE, ONU, notamment.” (Livre Blanc, 1994: 23). In the post 9/11 era, the LPM states in a similar way: “our country intends both to preserve its freedom of assessment and choice, and to diversify its capacity to act within coalitions - European, allied or ad hoc - under less foreseeable circumstances.” (LPM, 2003: ch. 3).

Germany, on the other hand, has taken a discernible “Sonderweg” since 1990 in placing the highest value on multilateralism. Only the German paper devotes many pages to emphasizing the importance of multilateral organisations and their usefulness. Especially the UN and OSCE provide “normative guidelines” for national security policy (Weißbuch, 1994: 47).

“The ultimate principle is that Germany will never act alone, but always in concert with allies and partners“ (Weißbuch, 1994: 45), and „Coercive military actions are always the means of last resort. They are only an option if there is a clear UN Security Council mandate for the resolution of a conflict“ (Weißbuch, 1994: 68).

**Table 5: Multilateralism**

	US	UK	DE	FR	US-EU3	EU3	Stdev
<i>1980s</i>	Low	-	-	-	1	0	0.43
<i>1990s</i>	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	-0.33	0.67	0.43
<i>2000s</i>	Medium	Medium	High	-	0.33	2	1.09

**Use of Force:** In general, all strategies attach increasing importance to the *active* use of military force.<sup>20</sup> Although the use of force is a highly sensitive issue, we can observe an only temporary transatlantic cleavage in the 1990s, and a general convergence trend for all four strategies.

In the 1980s, only US and French strategies refer explicitly to uses of military force as an element of their strategic responses to threats. The 1988 NSS promotes a strategy of “liberation” vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, including the support of anti-communist insurgencies. And the French LPM indirectly mentions the willingness militarily support and engage in partner countries in both Africa and the Caribbean (LPM, 1987: 5849).

In the 1990s, all four strategies refer to the use of military force as a necessary strategic tool to tackle threats and challenges, and the scope of application is noticeably widened. Whereas Germany remains reluctant and refers to constitutional restrictions, both France and the UK fall short of clarifying the conditions under which they are ready to use force. In contrast, the US NSS place most emphasis on the use of force because it sets out a detailed doctrine of “diplomacy backed by American power”, specifying also its implementation regarding specific countries and threats (NSS, 1995: iii).

In the 2000s all three European countries have “caught up” with the US in placing strong emphasis on the use of force as a strategy of tackling almost all threats including terrorism. The use of force becomes a “normal” instrument in each country’s toolbox, it can be used “out of area”, and the normative barriers appear to be significantly reduced as none of the strategies states that force can only be authorized by a respective UN Security Council resolution. Even Germany, in its 2006 White Paper clearly overcomes its historical and constitutional reservations and “normalizes” the use of force: “Risks and threats have to be

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<sup>20</sup> For “use of force” we coded statements referring to the use of military capabilities other than defensive uses as for deterrence, defense, or even missile defense. Moreover, the likelihood of the use of military force was relevant and also the range of problems for which the use of military force is to be seen as solution. The more those statements occurred in terms of quantity, but also quality (decisiveness, clearness etc.), the higher the value was attributed.

addressed with a suitably matched range of instruments. These include diplomatic, economic, development policy and policing measures as well as military means and, where called for, also armed operations.” (Weißbuch, 2006: 22).

**Table 6: Use of force**

	US	UK	DE	FR	US-EU3	EU3	Stdev
<i>1980s</i>	Low	-	-	Low	0.67	0.67	0.5
<i>1990s</i>	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	1	0	0.43
<i>2000s</i>	High	High	High	High	0	0	0

**Civilian vs. Military Means:** The third cross-cutting strategic question concerns the balance between military means – including the active use of force but also deterrence and missile defence – on the one hand and civilian means on the other hand.<sup>21</sup> Our findings show that with the notable exception of the 1990s, military means were emphasized more strongly than civilian means in most strategies. Over time, the four strategies converge, with no discernible US-European cleavage. Interestingly, two European countries “play solo” in adopting extreme positions on the issue: Germany consistently attributes more or equal importance to civilian means, whereas France relies even more than the US on a predominantly military approach.

In the 1980s, only the US and France clearly prioritise military over civilian means. While the German Weißbuch underlines the general goal of a world with fewer or even no weapons (Weißbuch, 1983: 23), the US strategy explicitly weakens this assessment: “Arms control is not an end in itself, but only one of several tools to enhance our national security” (NSS, 1988: 45). And France is even more sceptical as the LPM says that despite efforts between the two superpowers to reduce strategic weapons, France will continue to improve its capability (LPM, 1987: 5849).

For the 1990s, we observe an interesting phenomenon: While for three of four countries the use of force in general became much more important, as shown in the previous table, this trend did *not* entail a devaluation of civilian means. To the contrary, civilian means cover a wider range of instruments and are more important than military means for the US, UK, and Germany. The UK’s SDR 1998 clearly states that it follows a “diplomacy first” approach in which diplomacy is backed by “firmness and force” (SDR, 1998: 7) of the military, and in

<sup>21</sup> The importance of diplomacy, arms control, dialogue, negotiations, peace-processes, development and economic aid was coded as “civilian means”. “Military means” refer to statements on the relevance of the use of force, deterrence, defence, missile defence, counter-terrorism etc. The value “high” reflects the dominance of military means over civilian, “low” represents the dominance of “civilian”, and “medium” is for equal importance of both approaches.

which the role “preventive diplomacy” should even increase (SDR, 1998: 92). The same clarity marks US guidelines on the use of force: “diplomacy if we can, force if we must” (NSS, 1995: ii). Even if the use of force seems to present a prominent option, the NSS acknowledges that force can only defeat an enemy, but it cannot solve the underlying problem (NSS, 1995: ii). Only France sees both options as equally important:

“Une conception globale de la défense, associée à la défense militaire une dimension civile et économique, mais aussi sociale ou culturelle. S’appuyant sur des moyens civils et militaires coordonnés, cette approche est la seule réponse adaptée à la diversité des menaces pesant sur nos sociétés. Les volets de cette défense non-militaire sont aussi divers qu’essentiels”(Livre Blanc, 1994: 27-8).

This all changes after 2001 with an almost total transatlantic harmony on the priority of military means with the exception challenged only by the more explicitly civilian German approach. The Weißbuch states that

“Germany’s political and economic structures as well as its critical infrastructure have become more vulnerable as a result, not least where criminal activities, terrorist acts, or military attacks from or on cyberspace are concerned. These types of risks cannot, however, be countered by solely or predominantly using military means” (Weißbuch, 2006: 17).

In contrast, the 2003 British White Paper assigns a “key role in the new international security environment” for the “projection of power” and British “expeditionary forces” (White Paper, 2003: 3), and notes:

“Defending the UK, protecting our interests overseas, dealing with the proliferation of WMD and addressing the threat from international terrorism require a clear focus on projecting force, further a field and even more quickly than has previously been the case.” (White Paper, 2003: 7).

Similarly, the US NSS states that the “new strategic environment requires new approaches to deterrence and defence.” (NSS, 2006: 22). This means that the US has, “if necessary, to respond with overwhelming force” and will develop “a new triad composed of offensive strike systems (both nuclear and improved conventional capabilities)” in order to address those challenges (NSS, 2006: 22). Moreover, France focuses exclusively on military means without mentioning any civilian means.

**Table 7: Military v. Civilian Means**

	US	UK	DE	FR	US-EU3	EU3	Stdev
<i>1980s</i>	High	Medium	Low	High	1	1.33	0.83
<i>1990s</i>	Low	Low	Low	Medium	-0.33	0.67	0.43
<i>2000s</i>	High	High	Medium	High	0.33	0.67	0.43

**Deterrence:** As the key military strategy to counter the Soviet threat, deterrence naturally lost importance in 1990s and 2000s.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, the remaining usefulness of deterrence for tackling post-Cold War security challenges has been contested. We observe a transatlantic gap on the issue opening in the 2000s, while the three European strategies also increasingly diverge. The strongest disagreement developed between the US, which has gradually devalued deterrence, and France, which was the only country *not* to reconsider the central strategic value of deterrence after 1990.

The 1980s unanimous agreement on the critical importance of deterrence toward the Soviet threat is broken up in the 1990s, as three countries “downgrade” this strategic tool, but France continues to treat it as central: “La dissuasion elle-même reste la base de notre stratégie.” (Livre Blanc, 1994: 54).

In the post-2001 era, the US and France are at two extremes of the spectrum of opinions on the value of deterrence. Influenced by the attacks of 9/11, the 2002 NSS characterizes deterrence as insufficient tool for tackling many contemporary threats:

“(…) we know from history that deterrence can fail and we know from experience that some enemies cannot be deterred (….) we cannot let our enemies strike first (….) we can no more rely on deterrence or defensive measures (….) the new strategic environment requires new approaches to deterrence and defence (….) if necessary responding with overwhelming force.” (NSS, 2002)

France, on the other hand, continues to hold that “(…) our security will be guaranteed most of all by our nuclear deterrence.” (LPM, 2003)

**Table 8: Deterrence**

	US	UK	DE	FR	US-EU3	EU3	Stdev
<i>1980s</i>	High	High	High	High	0	0	0
<i>1990s</i>	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	-0.33	0.67	0.43
<i>2000s</i>	Low	Medium	Medium	High	-1.33	0.67	0.71

**Deterrence v. missile defence:** Missile defence systems – as a major alternative to deterrence based on carefully balanced military capabilities – has been a controversial issue ever since US President Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative proposal.<sup>23</sup> Despite continued public

<sup>22</sup> We coded statements on the usefulness of deterrence for addressing specific threats and risks, and we compared those statements to the usefulness of other military strategies as pre-emption, missile defence, defence, and various forms of the use of military force. In case we assigned a “high” value, deterrence was the dominant military strategy; “medium” means that deterrence is as important as other strategies, and “low” means that deterrence has a secondary role.

<sup>23</sup> We measured potential conflicts between “deterrence” and “SDI/NMD” as two competing military strategies that cope with enemy weapons of mass destruction. The more the value raised in Table 9, the more conflicting were those two military strategies.

debate over the issue, the national strategy documents we analyse surprisingly show that at the level of official national security strategies, the issue was only subject to a transatlantic disagreement in the 1980s.

The 1980s strategies reveal a clear transatlantic cleavage: The US NSS reflects the administration’s preference for a ballistic missile defence (SDI), which it does not judge to be in conflict with the importance of deterrence and NATO’s established doctrines (NSS, 1988: 42-3). By contrast, European views on SDI range from cautious to negative. The UK 1988 White Paper states that SDI research consistent with the ABM treaty should continue, but affirms that the “Western aim is not to achieve superiority but to maintain balance” (SDE, 1988: 4). German objections are even more pronounced as they state that Reagan’s project has the potential of “decoupling” European from US security (Weißbuch, 1983: 32, 85).

By contrast, during the 1990s and the post 2001 era, European views on the issue – now under the new name of “National Missile Defence” – were surprisingly uncritical. Neither the British nor the French strategy identify a conflict between the NMD project and other important areas of security strategy, and the German papers do not even mention the plans.

**Table 9: SDI/NMD in conflict with deterrence**

	US	UK	DE	FR	US-EU3	EU3	Stdev
<i>1980s</i>	-	Low	Low	n.a.	1	0	0.47
<i>1990s</i>	-	-	n.a.	-	0	0	0
<i>2000s</i>	-	-	n.a.	n.a.	0	0	0

**Pre-emption:** Pre-emptive military action against threats emerged as an extremely controversial issue during the first term of President George W. Bush. This is clearly reflected in our comparison of the four strategies.<sup>24</sup> However, our analysis also suggests that pre-emptive action has been gaining importance for all four countries, and that there was no clear transatlantic cleavage in the 1990s.

In the 1980s the concept of pre-emption was absent from national security strategies. In the 1990s, however, together with the US, France mentions pre-emption as a possible military doctrine:

“l’action militaire limitée vise à maintenir une crise ouverte ou naissante à son plus bas niveau possible, soit par une action préemptive, soit par des actes de rétorsion permettant de réduire de façon significative le potentiel militaire adverse.” (Livre Blanc, 1994)

<sup>24</sup> We assessed the relevance of pre-emption first by its coverage (number of threats it addresses) and second if has been characterized as a positive concept. The higher the value assigned to pre-emption, the more coverage and positive assessments.

On the other side, Germany and UK totally ignore the question.

After the attacks of 9/11 the US strategy develops in greatest detail the concept of pre-emption, stating that it will replace deterrence:

*“Traditional concepts of deterrence will not work against a terrorist enemy whose avowed tactics are wanton destruction and the targeting of innocents; whose so-called soldiers seek martyrdom in death and whose most potent protection is statelessness. (...) Legal scholars and international jurists often conditioned the legitimacy of preemption on the existence of an imminent threat—most often a visible mobilization of armies, navies, and air forces preparing to attack. We must adapt the concept of imminent threat to the capabilities and objectives of today’s adversaries. Rogue states and terrorists do not seek to attack us using conventional means.” (NSS, 2002: 15).*

But also the European strategies affirm the importance of the new doctrine, albeit to a lesser extent. The French LPM states: “La possibilité d’une action préemptive pourrait être considérée, dès lors qu’une situation de menace explicite et avérée serait reconnue.” (LPM, 2003: 2.3.1). The Germans White Paper clearly affirms that “preventive security can hence be guaranteed most effectively through early warning and pre-emptive action, and must incorporate the entire range of security policy instruments.” The British SDR (1998) is more vague while saying: “(there is the) need to be prepared to prevent, deter, coerce, disrupt or destroy international terrorists or the regimes that harbour them; while cantered on the need to confront international terrorism abroad rather than waiting for attacks within the UK.”

**Table 10: Importance of Pre-emption**

	US	UK	DE	FR	US-EU3	EU3	Stdev
<i>1980s</i>	-	-	-	-	0	0	0
<i>1990s</i>	Medium	-	-	Medium	0.33	1.33	1
<i>2000s</i>	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	1	0	0.43

**5.4 Summary**

In sum, the findings of our analysis cast considerable doubt on the popular claim of a growing divergence of US and European security strategies preferences. Hypothesis 1(a) receives very little support: Out of ten indicators, only two revealed a clearly growing transatlantic gap, in the post-2001 period: the importance of deterrence, and pre-emption. On five other indicators – interest rankings, scope of threat perceptions, threat rankings, multilateralism, and missile defence – we identified a clear *convergence* trend, and on two indicators – scope of interest definitions and the balance of civilian and military means – no transatlantic gap at all. On the use of force, the trend was unclear, with a temporary transatlantic gap opening only in the 1990s. Hypothesis 1(b) also receives mixed support at best: Intra-European convergence was

discernible on only three indicators: interest scope, the use of force, and the balance of civilian and military means. Two other indicators were stable and four even diverging: the scope of threat perceptions, threat rankings, multilateralism, and deterrence. The intra-European divergence on deterrence further qualifies our finding on a recent transatlantic gap on the issue.

If the “transatlantic divergence” diagnosis is thus refuted, how can we characterize the picture emerging from our analysis? Our findings can be summarized two key conclusions: First, it is striking that on a majority of six indicators, all four strategies within the alliance are increasingly *converging*. Second, we did confirm that on eight out of ten dimensions, there was a discernible transatlantic strategic gap at least in one time period. Since this gap is predominantly narrowing over time, our analysis lends support to those analysts who argue that transatlantic strategic divergence is an old rather than a new feature of the alliance.

In addition to these broad findings, our analysis also shows that convergence and divergence trends have been far from evenly distributed across the different dimensions of national security strategies.

On interest definitions, the trend is toward stronger convergence, both generally and across the Atlantic. In terms of scope, the US and Germany are pioneers in adopting “new” interests in the 1980s, with others catching up in the 1990s. On interest rankings a transatlantic cleavage persists but narrows over time. The general scope of interest definitions broadens after 1990 and democracy/HR become more important.

On threat perceptions, the picture is mixed, with a growing transatlantic cleavage on threat rankings, but a general and transatlantic convergence on the *scope* of threat perceptions. This convergence trend is not linear, as convergence was strongest in the 1990s. On threat rankings, by contrast, the 1990s were a time of increased divergence, which is due in part to the contrast between the US feeling relatively secure and the Europeans strongly concerned about instability in Europe, especially in the Balkans. An aspect which decreased the transatlantic cleavage on threat rankings was the fact that both France and the US already focused on terrorism in the 1990s.

On the choices of strategies, we also observe partial convergence and partial divergence trends, both generally and between the US and Europe. A trend of transatlantic divergence is discernible on deterrence and pre-emption, but we find surprising convergence on both multilateralism and missile defence. The surprisingly high European divergence on several strategic questions is due to national particularities on different strategic questions: Germany

has adopted a “Sonderweg” in its particularly strong emphasis on *Multilateralism* and on civilian over military means. Interestingly, France was closer to the US than other Europeans in several time periods on issues including *multilateralism*, the *use of Force*, and the balance of *military and civilian* means, and pre-emption.

**6 Empirical analysis 2: Alliance commitment and “community” indicators**

In the second part of our empirical analysis, we discuss our findings on the additional measures introduced to test realist and constructivist hypotheses: the strength of general commitments to the transatlantic alliance, and the strength of statements that indicate an identity- and norm-based transatlantic “security community”. Concerning these additional measures, we are not interested in their *convergence* or *divergence* over time, but rather in the development of their absolute strength.

**6.1 General alliance commitment**

As the following table shows, US and European commitments to the transatlantic alliance are highly stable over time.<sup>25</sup> The table also reveals a marked difference between Germany and the UK as the most fervent “Atlanticists” on the one hand, and the US and France with a consistently weaker commitment to the transatlantic partnership.

**Table 11: Commitment to Alliance**

	US	UK	DE	F	Total strength	European strength
<i>1980s</i>	Medium	High	High	Low	2.25	2.33
<i>1990s</i>	Medium	High	High	Medium	2.5	2.66
<i>2000s</i>	Medium	High	High	Medium	2.5	2.66

In the 1980s, Germany and the UK are the clear “champions” of the transatlantic alliance. The German paper comprises more than fifteen pages emphasizing NATO’s importance (Weißbuch, 1983: 141). The US strategy also devotes six pages to stressing the strategic importance of the NATO (NSS, 1988: 77-81), but qualifies this assessment by listing the Alliance as one “vital component of US national security” among others (NSS, 1988: 77). By

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<sup>25</sup> “Alliance commitment” refers to explicit statements on the importance of NATO, the Alliance, and the transatlantic community. The degree of importance has been measured by both quantity (number of pages and chapters on the issues), and quality (strong expressions). For instance, high values were been assigned to characterizations of the alliance as “vital” to national security, or statements suggesting that the maintenance of the Alliance is regarded as a security interest in itself.

contrast, France attaches no explicit importance to the Alliance even at a time the SU was still threatening Europe.

In the 1990s, little is changing, with only France placing greater emphasis on the Alliance than in the 1980s:

“L’Alliance doit constituer le lieu essentiel de la consultation entre Européens et Nord-Américains, pour les grandes questions affectant directement la sécurité des Etats membres. Ce dialogue va donc au-delà des thèmes traditionnels de la défense commune contre des agressions et ne saurait ignorer les nouveaux risques auxquels les Alliés peuvent être confrontés.” (Livre Blanc, 1994)

After 2001, the picture remains unchanged. While German and British strategies stress that NATO remains the “cornerstone” (Weißbuch, 2006: 7) of national defence policy, and British White Paper states that “The UK recognises the pre-eminence of NATO as the alliance upon which Europe and North America depends for collective defence and global crisis management” (White Paper, 2003: 6). French and US strategies, by contrast, see the Alliance as one option among others. The French strategies states that: “Our country intends both to preserve its freedom of assessment and choice, and to diversify its capacity to act within coalitions - European, allied or ad hoc - under less foreseeable circumstances.” (LPM, 2003: ch. 3). The US 2002 NSS frequently emphasizes the importance “alliances” in plural, but does not refer specifically to NATO in this context. Its support for NATO is remarkably conditional on the organization’s ability to reform itself:

“NATO’s core mission—collective defense of the transatlantic alliance of democracies—remains, but NATO must develop new structures and capabilities to carry out that mission under new circumstances. NATO must build a capability to field, at short notice, highly mobile, specially trained forces whenever they are needed to respond to a threat against any member of the alliance” (NSS, 2002: 25).

## **6.2 Indicators of a value/identity-based “security community”**

**Importance of allied interests:** The data suggests that all four countries have devalued the interests of allies in defining their own interests over time.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the table clearly shows a French “outsider” role, as France does not refer to allied interests at all in two time periods, the 1980s and the 2000s.

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<sup>26</sup> The indicator “allied interests” refers to the quality of statements on the importance of allied interests to the definition of national security interests and, generally, the mentioning and valuing of “Western” interests. The more explicit references to the importance of allied interest and, generally, “Western” interest are made, the higher is the value attributed.

**Table 12: Allied Interests**

	US	UK	DE	F	Total strength	European strength
<i>1980s</i>	High	High	High	-	2.25	2
<i>1990s</i>	High	Medium	High	Medium	2.5	2.33
<i>2000s</i>	Low	Medium	Medium	-	1.25	1.33

In the 1980s, the UK strikingly frames *all* security interests as community interests. Both British papers start by “reaffirming Britain’s commitment to NATO” in the first sentence (SDE, 1988: 1; White Paper, 1984: 1), the first objective is the “guarantee of our collective security” (SDE, 1988: 1). The German paper even states that there is no national German security outside the Alliance: „For the Federal Republic of Germany there is no such thing as national defence, and therefore there is no national security strategy” (Weißbuch, 1985: 157). The US NSS also states emphatically that „Western Europe is a vital component of US national security” and that “even if we could afford [...] to chart our National Security Strategy without allies – which we cannot – we would not want to do so” (NSS, 1988: 77).

For the 1990s, we observe that both the US and German strategies still attributes high value to allied interests. The NSS states:

“The first involves America's vital interests, i.e., interests which are of broad, overriding importance to the survival, security and vitality of our national entity — the defense of U.S. territory, citizens, allies and economic well-being.” (NSS, 1995: 12).

By contrast, the British strategy adopts a more sober tone, treating allied interests as relevant but not vital:

“These dangers seem unlikely to diminish and may grow. Many of our Allies and Partners have similar important interests and friendships in these areas. We would therefore expect to work with them in responding to any future crises.” (SDR, 1998: 17)

But on the other side of the spectrum, the French move to a “medium” value represents a significant change in the opposite direction. The Livre Blanc states that “(...) l'interdépendance de nos intérêts avec ceux de nos principaux partenaires ne cesse de grandir.” (Livre Blanc, 1994: 23).

In the post-2001 era, the value attached to allied interests diminishes sharply, particularly for the US and France. The French strategy says almost nothing on allied interest and the NSS (NSS, 2002: 189) frames those interests in exclusively economic terms:

“A return to strong economic growth in Europe and Japan is vital to U.S. national security interests. We want our allies to have strong economies for their own sake, for the sake of the global economy, and for the sake of global security.”

By contrast, both the UK and Germany still stress the maintenance of the transatlantic relationship as a fundamental security interest, and define their own interests as members of the community (VPR, 2003: 8-9; White Paper, 2003: 4).

**Shared values:** The second indicator of a transatlantic “security community”, references to shared values, culture and history as a foundation of the Atlantic alliance, is weakened slightly over time for the US, and somewhat for the UK.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, however, on this indicator it is Germany but also the US which score the highest values, whereas both the UK and France take a markedly more sober view of the alliance in each of the three time periods.

**Table 13: Shared values**

	US	UK	DE	F	Total strength	European strength
1980s	High	Medium	High	-	2	1.66
1990s	Medium	-	High	-	1.25	1
2000s	Medium	-	High	-	1.25	1

In the 1980s, both the US and Germany legitimised their membership in NATO and the importance of the Alliance by strongly referring to common historical and cultural ties. The NSS states that the US and Western Europe “share a common heritage and democratic values” (NSS, 1988: 77).

This type of reference to common values completely disappears from British White Papers in the 1990s and 2000s. The trend also catches the US which slightly reduced reference to shared transatlantic values. Only Germany and France remain unchanged in their extreme positions. The 1994 German Weißbuch (1994: iv) describes the transatlantic alliance as „Werte- und Schicksalsgemeinschaft“ (community of values and fate).

**Threats to the community:** On the third community indicator, the perception of a shared threat to the Western community, we identified a trend of a general decline.<sup>28</sup> The notable exception to this is France, which attaches more value to this indicator after than before the end of the Cold War. In the 1990s, the community indicator is strongest for the UK and Germany, but this picture is replaced by total transatlantic harmony in the 2000s.

<sup>27</sup> The “shared value” indicator refers to statements on the relevance of common history, shared values and other cultural ties. The more often those statements occur, and more direct and strong they are, the higher the value attributed.

<sup>28</sup> “Community threats” refers to explicit statements on threats, risks as not only challenging national security, but the security of the Alliance, single members of the Alliance, or even “Western” security. The more those statements in numbers and the more they are prominent, the higher the value of “community threats”.

**Table 14: Community threats**

	US	UK	DE	F	Total strength	European strength
1980s	High	High	High	-	2.25	2
1990s	Low	High	High	Medium	2.25	2.66
2000s	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	1.5	2

The 1980s row shows that three countries clearly perceived the SU as threat to the common security of the Western allies. By contrast, France perceives the SU only as threat to its *national* security (LPM, 1987: 5848).

Interestingly, as the US devalues its threat perception during the 1990s, France increasingly starts to refer to threats to “Western states”.

“Les crises actuelles ou virtuelles en Europe présentent des caractères auxquels les Etats occidentaux ainsi que leurs institutions de défense collective ne sont guère préparés. Elles ne semblent pas, au moins dans un premier temps, devoir mettre en cause les intérêts vitaux nationaux. Elles suscitent donc une attention et une implication diverses des Etats selon la conception de leurs intérêts stratégiques, l’histoire ou la géographie” (Livre Blanc, 1994: 13).

At the same time, the high values for Germany and the UK are also striking even after the disappearance of the major threat SU: “NATO no longer faces a Cold War threat but circumstances could arise in which Alliance members were threatened by a smaller scale but still militarily demanding regional crisis or conflict.” (SDR, 1998: 22).

In contrast, the US NSS makes no specific references to threats to its European or Transatlantic allies:

“These efforts are essential to sustaining our alliances, forcefully articulating U.S. interests, resolving regional disputes peacefully, averting humanitarian catastrophe, deterring aggression against the United States and our friends and allies, creating trade and investment opportunities for U.S. companies, and projecting U.S. influence worldwide.” (NSS, 1998: 8).

After 2001, transatlantic harmony is complete. Also the French position is stabilized, as the LPM states very generally but in a balanced way that its efforts are directed against

“grandes menaces, directes ou indirectes, le développement de situations de crise ou de conflits susceptibles de mettre en cause notre sécurité et nos intérêts et ceux de nos partenaires de l’Union européenne et de l’Alliance atlantique” (LPM, 2003: 7).

Similarly, the German strategy states: “Threats, conflicts and crises in the global environment are affecting the security needs of the NATO member states.” (Weißbuch, 2006: 28).

**Consultation norms:** The empirical measurements of this indicator reveal highly unstable values without a clear trend.<sup>29</sup> AS the following detailed analysis suggests, one interpretation of this seemingly unclear finding would be that national security strategies make only

<sup>29</sup> Under “Consultation norms” we coded references to consultation procedures within the Alliance or with single members of the Alliance. Values assigned reflect both the quality and quantity of statements.

reference to the consensual resolution of conflicts within the alliance when there are in fact important conflicts to tackle. Another striking aspect is the outsider role of France - even during the 1990s.

**Table 15: Norms – consultation**

	US	UK	DE	FR	Total strength	European strength
<i>1980s</i>	High	Medium	High	-	2	1.6
<i>1990s</i>	-	-	-	High	0.75	1
<i>2000s</i>	Medium	Medium	High	-	1.7	1.6

During the 1980s, most of the countries, except France, specify the role of the community as a forum for consultation. Having an institutionalised consultation mechanism becomes even more relevant in situations of conflict. This is the case with both Germany and the UK, who are campaigning for consultation on the contested US SDI project inside the Alliance. The British SDE (1988: 4) states that:

“...the SDI research programme, permitted by the ABM treaty, should continue, that the US and Western aim is not to achieve superiority but to maintain balance [...], that SDI-related deployment would have to be a matter for negotiation, that the overall aim is to enhance, not to undermine, deterrence, that East-West negotiations should aim to achieve security with reduced levels of offensive systems on both sides, and that these matters should continue to be subject to close consultations within the Alliance”.

In a general way, the German Weißbuch (1985: 121) affirms the importance of NATO as an important framework for consultations:

„NATO is an association of free and sovereign states. The unity of the Western alliance is based on the solidarity and equality of all partners. This unity requires collective consultations, common situation assessments, a common definition of interests, and an a clear division of labour.” [our translation]

For the 1990s, we surprisingly only found a clear one on the importance of consultation in the French Livre Blanc:

“L’Alliance doit constituer le lieu essentiel de la consultation entre Européens et Nord-Américains, pour les grandes questions affectant directement la sécurité des Etats membres. Ce dialogue va donc au-delà des thèmes traditionnels de la défense...”(Livre Blanc, 1994: 36).

For the period after 2001, we found data which is similar to the 1980s, with only the US having slightly reduced the importance of transatlantic consultation.

**Joint action norm:** It is surprising how little importance three out of our four countries attach to the principle of acting jointly on threats within the NATO framework,<sup>30</sup> although these low

<sup>30</sup> “Joint action norms” refer to statements on the importance of the Alliance as framework for various engagements and actions. The more those statements, and the clearer and stronger those commitments, the higher the value.

figures indicate a slight positive trend. The notable exception is Germany, which takes an extreme position in its very strong support for the principle of joint action.

**Table 16: Norms – joint action**

	US	UK	DE	FR	Total strength	European strength
1980s	-	-	High	-	0.75	1
1990s	Low	-	High	Low	1.25	1.3
2000s	Low	Low	High	Low	1.5	2

We observe that three of four of the community members do not refer to the community as an asset for joint action during the 1980s and the massive threat of the SU. In contrast, the German White Paper underlines that only NATO-membership can guarantee Germany’s security and that a “national” military strategy and defence policy is even unthinkable (Weißbuch, 1983: 157).

During the 1990s Germany again had an extreme position by strongly favouring the alliance as the only permissible context for military action. France and the US are more positive but still very reluctant on the issue. It is striking that the UK as a strong advocate of transatlantic cooperation ignores the issue completely.

In the 2000s, there is convergence across the Atlantic on the low importance attached to joint actions. Yet Germany’s position still remains unchanged:

“The bonds between Germany and the United States must be continually fostered and deepened, though, by means of mutual consultation and coordinated action. Maintaining a close and trusting relationship with the USA is paramount for Germany’s security in the 21st century”(Weißbuch, 2006: 7).

In contrast, the 2002 NSS states: “While the United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community, we will not hesitate to act alone” (NSS, 2002: 6).

**6.3 Summary**

In sum, our findings show a highly stable general commitment to the transatlantic alliance but at the same a weakening of four out of five specific indicators of a value/identity-based transatlantic “security community”. Only the importance of *Joint Actions* is increasing, which could at least in part reflect the overall increase in references to the use of military force.

In terms of general alliance commitment, there is a clear distinction between highly “Atlanticist” UK and Germany, and less committed US and France. On the “community” indicators, Germany scores the highest values, followed by the US and UK, and very low, France. Interestingly, the US scores higher than the UK on several community indicators.

What do these findings, together with our earlier findings on the substantive divergence of security strategies, tell us about the respective merit of realist and constructivist arguments about the evolution of the post-Cold War transatlantic alliance? The realist hypothesis (H2) predicts that convergent threat perceptions should lead to convergent strategic preferences, and a high commitment to the alliance, whereas divergent in threat perceptions should have the opposite result. The constructivist hypotheses (H3) predicts that decline in community indicators should lead to divergent interest perceptions and a declining general commitment to the alliance.

While neither of these two hypotheses is fully confirmed by the evidence, the realist account fares still better than the constructivist one. As we discussed earlier, we find a transatlantic convergence trend on both the scope of threat perceptions and on the ranking of different threats, which is broadly in line with the highly stable values we measured for one of the realist hypothesis' dependent variables, alliance commitment. Our findings thus confirm *more recent* realist expectations that threat perceptions would remain highly convergent among the US and the Europeans and thus stabilize the transatlantic alliance. Earlier realist predictions of diverging threat perceptions followed by alliance decline were, however, clearly inaccurate. Finally, it must be noted that the evidence is not a "perfect match" for our realist hypothesis, because the development of alliance commitment does *not* mirror the increased divergence of *all four* strategies on threat rankings in the 1990s and on the scope of threat perceptions after 2000. Another problem is that strategies are partially converging and partially diverging on its second dependent variable, strategic preferences.

If we can thus speak of an only weak confirmation of realist predictions, the constructivist hypothesis is even more clearly refuted by the evidence. The unequivocal decline in "community indicators" over the two past decades has *not* lead to a related divergence of substantive interest definitions, which have in fact been converging both in general and across the Atlantic, or to a decline in general alliance commitment, which has remained stable. What this suggests is that although we could speak of an increasing "de-emotionalisation" of the transatlantic alliance, this has not in any way affected substantive strategic convergence or the strength of general alliance commitments. The alliance has come to be viewed in an increasingly sober light, but has not lost its strategic value or coherence as a result. It must be emphasized that this findings does not suggest constructivists were *wrong* to identify a strong basis of shared identities and norms as a key characteristic of the transatlantic security community: This shared normative basis is clearly visible in our analysis, and persists even

into the 2000s. However, constructivist predictions from the early 1990s that this normative foundation would remain unchanged and would thus stabilize the transatlantic alliance after the end of the Cold War are contradicted by our findings. And although later constructivist analyses did point to a gradual erosion of shared transatlantic identities, their assumption that this would come as the result of increased intra-European cohesion also receives little support in our analysis.

## **7 Conclusion**

Our empirical analysis casts strong doubt on the popular claim of transatlantic strategic divergence: Based on our long-term, systematic study of national security strategy documents, we must conclude that Kagan is wrong in diagnosing a “strategic decoupling” of the allies following the end of the Cold War. The arguments of Kupchan, Edwards and others who have identified an increasing intra-European convergence on strategic issues, or even the emergence of a shared strategic culture or a “European superpower” (Kupchan), are equally called into question. Rather to the contrary, we find that the transatlantic Alliance is marked by growing strategic *convergence*.

At the level of substantive interest definitions, threat perceptions, and strategic preferences, we found little evidence for an increasing “gap” between the US and the big three EU’s Germany, France and United Kingdom after the end of the Cold War. Instead, our analysis shows that there have always been transatlantic conflicts and that they were even more numerous during Cold War than in the 1990s and post 9/11 periods. Thus, the “gap” is an old feature of the Alliance and is more likely to disappear in the future than to grow, because there are clear signs of a transatlantic convergence trend on many dimensions of national security strategies. By contrast, prospects for inner-European coherence has not are not as promising as is widely assumed, as we actually measured more divergence than convergence among the three European strategies. One reason for this partial “strategic decoupling” *inside* Europe is the special position of two European countries, which frequently play “outsider” roles: France and Germany. Germany is isolated regarding its strong emphasis on multilateralism, and France in the value it places on deterrence, and on military means. Far more often than one would expect, the US and France converge on strategic issues like terrorism and especially on the use of force.

In addition to substantive convergence and divergence trends, our study also yields a number of striking findings on direct measures of alliance commitment and of a value- and identity

based “security community “. In terms of the overall strength of these additional indicators, we find that the commitment of all four countries to the transatlantic alliance has remained highly stable over time, while community indicators have substantially declined. Viewed together with our findings on interests, threat perceptions, and strategic preferences, these findings lend some – although not complete – support to realist predictions, but cast doubt on the constructivist hypothesis. In line with realist expectations, highly convergent threat perceptions have coincided with high alliance stability. The clear decline in community indicators did *not* affect general alliance commitments or common interest definitions, as predicted by the constructivist hypothesis. This analysis does not imply that constructivists are wrong to point to the identity and value basis of the transatlantic partnership, but it shows that the alliance has come to be viewed in an increasingly sober and instrumental light.

The analysis of alliance indicators also reveals some interesting intra-European cleavages. The German and British commitment to the alliance was clearly stronger than that of the US and France. On the value-based community indicators, however, the picture is strikingly different: Germany is the clear champion of the “security community”, followed surprisingly by the US before the UK, and lastly, France.

Our approach has proven very helpful in undertaking an analysis of continuity and change in the multiple dimensions of transatlantic security strategies. Comparing 16 indicators in four countries across three time periods provides a both complete and nuanced picture of the evolution of strategic thinking on both sides of the Atlantic. The complex pattern of partial convergence, partial divergence and shifting cleavages that is revealed in our analysis is simply not captured by the typical black and white pictures of “transatlantic harmony” and “transatlantic strife” that dominate the policy debate. Obviously, an analysis of security strategy *doctrines* has its clear limitations, as an assessment of transatlantic strategic divergence is certainly incomplete without an analysis of the doctrines’ *implementation*. Nevertheless, an in-depth comparative analysis of doctrines constitutes an important first step in subjecting the broad and often unsubstantiated claims made in the contemporary debate to a rigorous test.

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