



**Normative Ideals and Geostrategic Interests:
The European Commission's representations and
justifications for the new Defence Industrial Strategies**

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ABSTRACT:

Scholars within the research field of ‘Normative Power Europe’ (NPE) have argued that the European Union is mainly a normative power that renounces all sorts of realpolitik (or pragmatic politics), which instead acts by its moral principles (normative justifications). However, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 led the European Commission (EC) to put forward new defence industrial strategies that would strengthen the European defence industry. This thesis examines how the EC, since the invasion, has discursively represented the EU (the ‘self’) and Russia (the ‘other’) in such a manner as to normatively and non-normatively justify the new defence industrial strategies. The previous literature and the results from the analysis show that the EC’s new ‘principled pragmatist’ identity demonstrates two discourses: one exhibiting a geopolitical mindscape and geostrategic interests, and one expressing normative justifications. My findings suggest that although these two discourses could be compatible within the NPE theoretical framework, the general lack of normative justifications in the former discourse challenges the EC’s normative claims and ultimately its representation of itself as a Normative Power Europe. As the EC’s self-perception has changed through its representations, external states might perceive the EU differently in the future, which in turn could significantly alter the geopolitical landscape.

Keywords: Normative Power Europe, European Union, European Commission, Critical Discourse Analysis, European Defence & Technological Industrial Base

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ABBREVIATIONS:

ASAP – Act in Support of Ammunition Production
 CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis
 CFSP – Common Foreign and Security Policy
 CSDP – Common Security and Defence Policy
 EC – European Commission
 EDF – European Defence Fund
 EDIP – European Defence Investment Programme
 EDIRPA – European defence industry Reinforcement through common Procurement Act
 EDIS – European Defence Industry Strategy
 EDTIB – European Defence & Technological Industrial Base
 EEAS – European External Action Service
 ESDI – European Security and Defence Identity
 EUGS – Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy
 EUISS – European Union Institute for Security Studies
 MS – Member States
 NPE – Normative Power Europe
 TEU – Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty (1992), and Lisbon Treaty (2007))

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1.INTRODUCTION

Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 and the European Commission (EC2022a) responded the same month by introducing new defence industrial strategies for a “more integrated and competitive European defence market, particularly by enhancing cooperation within the EU”. The most recent strategies were put forward in March 2024, the *European Defence Industry Strategy* (EDIS) and the *European Defence Investment Programme* (EDIP).

The academic gap does not lie in the research about the normative implications for the various possible responses to the Russo-Ukrainian war. For instance, newly published academic research in this field include Hans Herbert Kögler’s (2023) and Jan Zielonka’s (2023) articles about the seemingly dichotomous public discourses about the ‘right’ forms of interventions in the Russo-Ukrainian war and the normative principles implied within these discourses. Instead, the academic gap lies in the EC’s *discourses* and *representations* of the ‘self’ (the EU) and the ‘other’ (Russia) that are used to *justify* the new defence industrial strategies. In particular, how the EC has represented the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ as *normative* and *non-normative justifications* to strengthen the European defence.

By ‘normative justifications’ is meant justifications for their new strategies that are based on the EU’s ‘core norms’ (see section 2.2.1) and the normative discourses found in section 2.2.2. The theory of ‘Normative Power Europe’ (NPE) will be used as it sheds light on how the EU *represents* itself as a normative power and how it uses *normative justifications* rather than economic incentives or military instruments to demonstrate its normative power.

From this perspective, it is interesting to analyse the representations and the EC’s justifications for directing the EU into this seemingly one-lane approach in which investing billions of euros into the European defence industry remains one of the most prioritised strategies in handling the Russo-Ukrainian war. I argue that a critical discourse analysis (CDA) will be the most effective method for analysing the EC’s discourses. Having all the above in mind, the following research question naturally emerges: How does the European Commission (EC) discursively represent the EU (the ‘self’) and Russia (the ‘other’) to strengthen the European defence?

The question one might ask in return is why the EC in particular has been selected as an object of inquiry rather than the European Parliament or the Council. The short answer to this (which is further elaborated upon in sections 2.1.3 and 2.1.4) is related to how the EC has normatively argued for ‘strategic autonomy’ and discursively represented itself as a

‘geopolitical Commission’. Drawing upon e.g. Marianne Riddervold (2016), Pierre Haroche (2023), Calle Håkansson (2024), Kristi Raik et al. (2024), and Ana Juncos and Sophie Vanhoonacker (2024), the recent discourse of ensuring strategic autonomy has pointed to the EC having become an ‘ideational entrepreneur’ whose overall influence in the defence domain has grown.

1.1 Research question & aim of the thesis

1.1.1 Research question

How does the European Commission (EC) discursively represent the EU (the ‘self’) and Russia (the ‘other’) to strengthen the European defence?

1.1.2 Aim of the thesis and its relevancy

This thesis aims to contribute to NPE research by analysing the EC’s normative and non-normative justifications, as well as the EC’s representations of the ‘self’ (the EU) and the ‘other’ (Russia), to strengthen the European defence industry in light of the Russian invasion. Additionally, how the normative and non-normative justifications for implementing the new defence industrial strategies are connected to the EC’s representations and, in turn, what identity the EC is simultaneously constructing (‘identity formation’) based on its representations. The aim is in other words *neither* to analyse the exact concrete plans of the defence industrial strategies *per se* *nor* to examine the real-life consequences of them (e.g. how the new strategies *de facto* leads to an increase in arms production and the arms supplied to Ukraine).

The research question naturally derives from the assumption that the EC *is* justifying its new strategies based on Russia’s (the ‘other’s’) invasion of Ukraine. This assumption has, however, been drawn from e.g. Håkansson’s (2024) research as his findings show that the EC has seized the window of opportunity created by the Russian invasion to strategically expand its mandate on security and defence policy. The EC, since the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian war, has encouraged a more integrated and competitive European defence market and established several new defence industrial strategies pointing to the real-life relevancy of this thesis (see sections 2.1.2 and 2.1.3). However, not only is it a field filled with concrete political relevancy, but it is also a research field that increasingly attracts more scholarly attention, referring to e.g. Giselle

Bosse's (2022) and Marianne Riddervold and Pernille Rieker's (2024) studies (see section 2.2.2). The gap in NPE research (see section 2.3) about the EC's discourses within the new defence industrial strategies and its real-life consequences renders this thesis highly relevant. The following work will contribute to the field of NPE research by providing valuable insights into the EC's representations of the 'self' and the 'other' and the EC's normative or non-normative justifications to improve our understanding of the EU's fundamental identity.

A critical analysis of the discourses within the new defence industrial strategies will provide a better understanding of how the EC represents the 'self' and the 'other' as well as normatively or non-normatively justifies the new strategies. This may, in turn, signal which identity the EC mainly attributes itself to (e.g. as an NPE or geopolitical actor).

2. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS & LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Brief outline of historical developments

2.1.1 *The end of the Cold War's impact on the EU's identity and self-perception*

The following findings elucidate how the EU has represented itself historically. What is interesting is not only the recent developments of the EU's increasing willingness to invest in the European defence, but also the historical developments of the European defence cooperation which has provided an avenue for these new strategies to be established. While the Russo-Ukrainian war indubitably has had a major impact on European defence cooperation, there seems to be a pattern of increased integration throughout a longer period of time in defence policy, which has normally been deemed as constituting 'high politics' (considered a matter crucial for the state's survival (Oxford Reference, n.d.)).

Karen Smith (2000) explains that the impact of the Cold War's end on Europe was not to reassert its civilian power image but instead to acquire a defence dimension with the Maastricht Treaty (or *Treaty on European Union* – TEU) in 1992. Similarly, Ian Manners (2000) writes that the notion of the EU adding a military dimension to its international identity had remained taboo until the establishment of the TEU. According to Smith (2000), the development of a so-called 'European Security and Defence Identity' (ESDI) can be explained by the German unification, which prompted a deepened European integration, and by the US withdrawing troops from Western Europe, which meant that Europe had to become more independent in its territorial defence. (Smith, 2000). According to the EC (1996), establishing an ESDI necessitates the maintenance of a competitive 'European defence technological and industrial base' (EDTIB).

The EC (1996, p.3) communicated that "(t)he defence-related industries are facing an economic and political context which is changing completely and calls for responses going beyond the national level." As a cautionary forewarning, the EC (1996) informed that as the end of the Cold War meant a significant reduction of security risks to Europe, the defence-related industries were to scale down their production immensely. In connection, the EC (1996, p.6) reported that "(c)ompared to the US industry, the EU industry has lost ground and is now exporting less than half as much as the US industry." The EC seemingly write this to stress the magnitude of the defence industrial crisis. Furthermore, the EC (1996, p.3) reported that "the

crisis in the industry has prompted industrialists and industrial policymakers in the Member States to encourage the Union, particularly the Commission, to assume its responsibilities.” Nonetheless, the EC (1996, p.3) also pointed to the creation of the TEU which had “opened up paths for establishing a European armaments policy.”

Be that as it may, Haroche (2023) holds that the Maastricht Treaty, which founded the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CSFP) in 1992, was commonly perceived as an intergovernmental framework that would diminish the role of the EC and that supranational institutions also were given limited capabilities under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). However, the Treaty of Lisbon, which entered into force in 2009, established that the European Defence Agency (EDA) and the EC work in liaison when needed (Article 45(2) of the TEU), particularly regarding the EU’s research, *industrial* and space policies, and the treaty introduced a European military capabilities and armaments policy (Article 42(3) of the TEU) (European Parliament, 2024).

Timeline

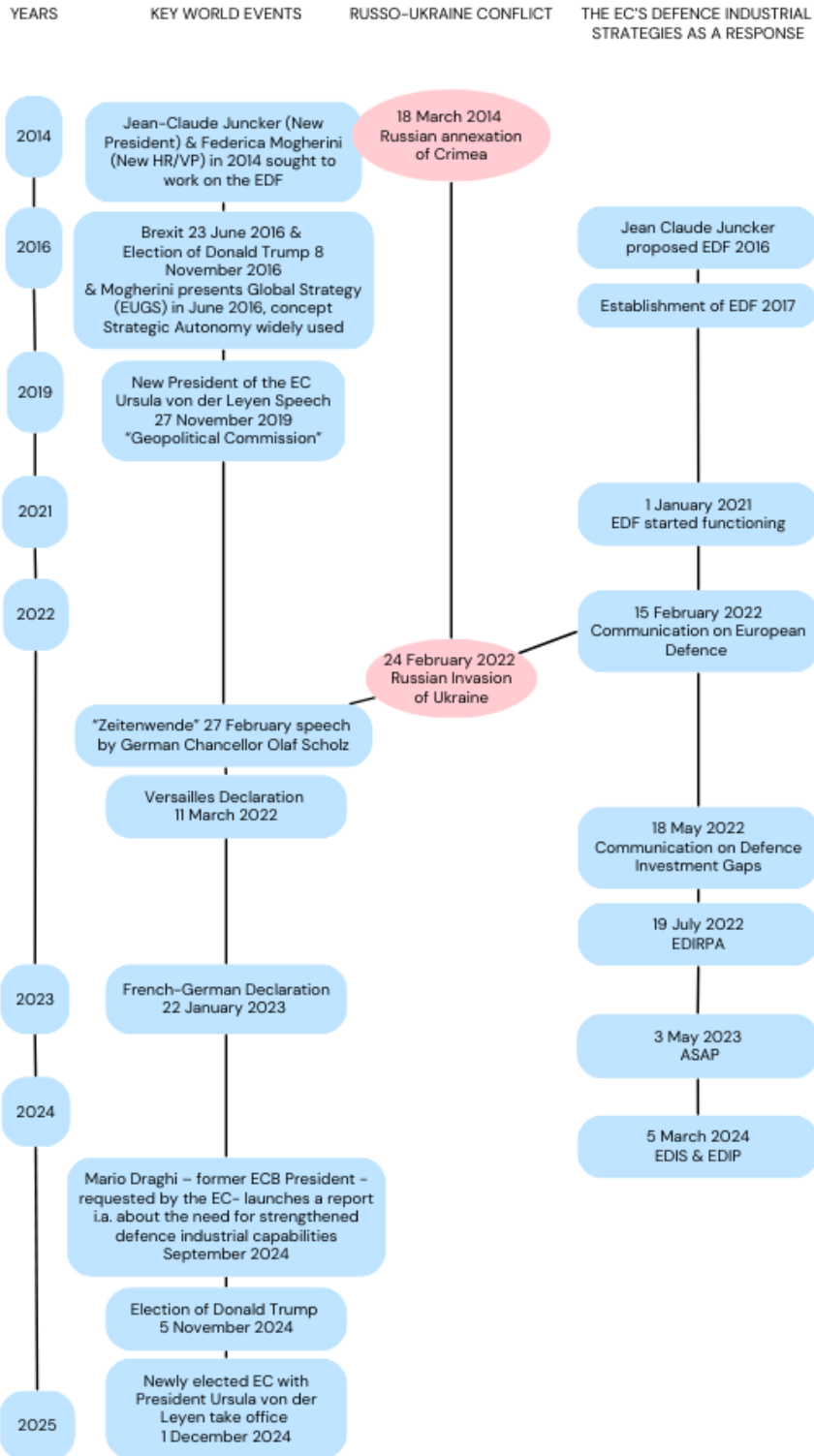


Figure 1: Timeline 2014-2025 (self-made, based on the section below)

2.1.2 More recent developments (2014 and onwards)

In 2014, Federica Mogherini became the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Vice-President (HR/VP) of the EC. Early on, she sought to work on the European Defence Fund (EDF) and to strengthen European defence. (Béraud-Sudreau & Pannier, 2021). The HR/VP heads the European Defence Agency (EDA), and the EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) and is representing the EU on issues relating to the CFSP (EEAS, 2024). Moreover, Jean-Claude Juncker became the EC's president in 2014 who also quickly exhibited his engagement with defence issues by using Russia's annexation of Crimea the same year to *justify* the EC's defence ambitions (Béraud-Sudreau & Pannier, 2021).

Three structural factors enhanced the EU's defence integration: the EC's changed role in defence policy and its concrete strategies, Brexit in 2016, and the Franco-German push for increased defence cooperation (Tocci, 2018). In addition, China's rising power and Trump's presidency in 2016 strongly pressured the EU to assert a more active role in international defence politics (Haroche, 2023). The Member States' (MS)(at the time including the UK) real-term defence spending falling by 9% between 2008 (post-financial crisis) and 2016 also led to a perceived urgency to re-ignite the EU's defence cooperation (Béraud-Sudreau & Pannier, 2021). The European Defence Fund (EDF) arrived as a response to these crises. The creation of the EDF (adopted in 2019) laid a foundation for expanding the EC's role in what is otherwise generally regarded as a 'high politics' area, through its funding of defence research and industry competencies (Haroche, 2023).

Since 2016, developments such as the establishment of the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS, which set out the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) strategy) and the 'Military Planning and Conduct Capability' point towards increased defence cooperation within the EU (Béraud-Sudreau & Pannier, 2021). The CSDP is an integral part of the CFSP (European Parliament, 2024). Lucie Béraud-Sudreau & Alice Pannier (2021) explain that the discourse of 'strategic autonomy' was strongly connected to French actors' argumentation and desired outcomes in the EUGS drafting processes. In short, strategic autonomy refers to the capacity of the EU to act autonomously in strategic areas (European Parliament, 2022)(see section 2.2.1). Charlotte Beaucillon (2023) points out that boosting the EDTIB was initially perceived as the primary means for achieving strategic autonomy. It is for instance claimed in the EUGS that the EU "will systematically encourage defence cooperation and strive to create a solid European defence industry, which is critical for

Europe's autonomy of decision and action" (European Union, 2016, p.11). However, other MS perceived the idea of strategic autonomy as a disguised protectionism, in contradiction with the EU's conventional liberal-economic promotion of open markets. To persuade the MS of the idea of strategic autonomy and to address this argument, the concept of 'open strategic autonomy' was launched to emphasise that the idea of open markets is compatible with this framework. (Juncos & Vanhoonacker, 2024).

In 2019, Ursula von der Leyen (Germany's former defence minister) became the EC's new president and promoted the new concept of a 'geopolitical Commission', which she argued that "Europe urgently needs" (EC, 2019). The German term *Zeitenwende* (literally: page-turner), expressed by the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in 2022, would mark a historical turning point for German defence policy and include a €100 billion investment package in defence. However, the 'Zeitenwende' was according to Sven Biscop (2023) not hitherto to be seen. He holds that a so-called *European dynamic* (common strategic aspirations among MS) was absent and that Franco-German defence industrial cooperation is key for the rest of the MS to follow suit. (Biscop, 2023). A Franco-German declaration was announced in 2023 in which they proclaimed that "we will work together for a European Union that is more resilient... more capable to act independently" (Élysée, 2023). Moreover, they assert that "(s)trengthening European defence capabilities is crucial" and enhancing EU-NATO cooperation. They seek to strengthen the EDTIB and the European equipment procurement instruments, under the Versailles Declaration. (Élysée, 2023). Haroche (2024) observes that the Versailles Declaration emphasised market integrative solutions for further facilitating the development of the European defence industry.

Recently, Mario Draghi (former European Central Bank President) on request by the EC launched a report in September 2024 in which it is written that the safety of "the US security umbrella" made it possible to invest more in other areas than defence (EC, 2024e, p.1). Additionally, that "we had no reason to be concerned about rising dependencies on countries we expected to remain our friends" (EC, 2024e, p.1), which implies that the US security umbrella is absent. In fact, according to the European Parliament (2024), due to the "tense geopolitical context, the CSDP has been one of the fastest developing policies over the last 10 years. Since 24 February 2022, the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has acted as a geopolitical reset for Europe and created further impetus for what should become an EU Defence Union." In similarity, von der Leyen (EC, 2024d) argues, in her inauguration speech as the EC's new president, that due to "today's ever more dangerous world" with war "raging

on Europe's borders”, “(o)ur defence spending must increase. We need a single market for defence. We need to strengthen the defence industrial base.” She backs this up by informing that “Russia is spending up to 9% of its GDP on defence. Europe is spending on average 1.9%. There is something wrong in this equation” (EC, 2024d). Once again, to stress the magnitude of the issue of defence underspending, in similarity to the EC (1996).

The Russian invasion of Ukraine (as well as the effects of Brexit, the election of Trump in 2016, and perhaps the election of Trump in 2024) has shown similar consequences on the EU’s defence policy as the end of the Cold War in that it has exhibited an increased willingness to become more independent in its own territorial defence. This, in turn, has led to a resurgence in the EC’s willingness to invest in the European defence industry.

2.1.3 The EC’s changing role in defence policy

To understand how the EC has been able to become a norm (and ideational) entrepreneur, one must understand how the EC’s influence in defence policy has evolved.

Chantal Lavallée (2011) shows how the structure of European cooperation in security and defence is the result of interaction between supranational institutions and national governments, which renders the policy-making processes complex. Similarly, Jennifer Mitzen (2007) writes that the EU is not a state with a clear hierarchical structure or with the ability to coerce its MS. However, Lavallée (2011) points out that the EC constitutes the meeting point for security and defence actors and plays a coordinating role. Furthermore, Lavallée (2011) observes that the EC’s role has been strengthened in the security and defence domain and has coordinated MS, EU bodies, and civil society to gain legitimacy and increase its efficiency. More than the EC playing a coordinating role, the EC has also recommended MS to pursue increased cooperation within the European security market to become more competitive and efficient (Lavallée, 2011). An example of a policy document providing such recommendations is the EC’s (2003) *European defence industrial and market issues: Towards an EU defence equipment policy*.

Wolfgang Wagner (2007) warns that the democratic control within the CSDP may become increasingly compromised due to a ‘Europeanisation’ of defence policy. Drawing upon Andrew Moravcsik (1994), Wagner (2007) means that executives, referring to the EC, can impose an ideological ‘frame’ on an issue that is difficult for MS to object to. Furthermore, Wagner (2007) observes a trend of privileging the executive, which is intensified in security and defence policy due to increased military integration.

Håkansson (2024) observes that the EC has increased its capabilities in influencing the CFSP and surpassed intergovernmental cooperation. Furthermore, he notes that the Russo-Ukrainian war has provided a stronger geopolitical role for the EC and the EC has been using the war to expand its mandate in the EU's defence policy. (Håkansson, 2024). He also refers to Ana Paula Brandão and Isabel Camisã's (2022) study which shows that the EC has enhanced its competencies and therefore its leverage of influence in this domain. Riddervold's (2016) study finds that the EC's de facto influence can be seen through social factors such as informal cooperation, the provision of expertise, and the ability to present convincing arguments, suggesting that all these factors may have significant consequences for policy areas where MS commonly have had strong interests. She also mentions that although the MS remain the key players, the organisational structure of the EU and the MS' requests for expertise from the EC in interrelated policy fields can explain this trend of closer cooperation and deeper integration within the CFSP. (Riddervold, 2016).

Laura Chappell, Theofanis Exadaktylos, and Petar Petrov (2020) find that the EC and the European External Action Service (EEAS) have managed to pool defence resources through their advocacy and surmounted MS objections, hence having shown increased autonomy in defence policy leading to further integration within the CSDP. In addition, they observe that the EC to a larger extent than the EEAS has been able to take advantage of changes in the international security environment to weaken the norm of defence sovereignty and to promote the norm of pooling defence resources among MS instead. (Chappell, Exadaktylos & Petrov, 2020). This shows similarities to the findings of the EC becoming an ideational entrepreneur.

2.1.4 Key reasons for selecting the EC as the unit of analysis

Why then is the EC's discourses selected as an object of inquiry for this thesis? The short answer is that it is connected to the recent discourses of strategic autonomy and the EC's articulation of a 'geopolitical commission'. The MS' requests for the EC's expertise in related policy fields to defence policy have intensified the trend of supranational leverage within the CSDP. The more recent discourses of strategic autonomy and the EC asserting a geopolitical identity ('geopolitical commission') have pointed towards the EC having become an ideational entrepreneur. For all these above-mentioned reasons, I argue that the EC has been the *main ideational driver* in strengthening the European defence through the development of new defence industrial strategies and it is therefore selected for this thesis as a unit of analysis.

2.2 Literature review

The theoretical framework of NPE has been selected for this thesis because it can help explain how the EC through various discourses has represented the ‘self’ (the EU) and the ‘other’ (Russia). Both discourses before and after the Russian invasion will be covered in the literature review to gain an improved understanding of how the EC has and is currently normatively or non-normatively justifying the new defence industrial strategies through its representations.

2.2.1 Conceptualisations

This section will provide definitions for key concepts to enhance the intersubjectivity of this thesis.

Norm entrepreneur: According to Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink (1998, p.895), ‘norm entrepreneurs’ ”attempt to convince a critical mass of states (norm leaders) to embrace new norms” and ‘norm emergence’ is the first stage in the establishment of a norm and entails “persuasion by norm entrepreneurs.” *Nota bene*, I interpret the concept as a synonym for Juncos’ and Vanhoonacker’s (2024) concept of ‘ideational entrepreneur’.

Normative Power Europe: Manners (2000) introduced the theoretical framework of NPE and explained the concept of NPE as concerning the ‘power over opinion’, as an ‘idée force’ or ‘ideological power.’ It represents a desire to inquire how the EU is constructing itself through its normative power (Manners, 2000). According to Manners (2000), the EU is characterised by an ideational nature guided by core norms and principles.

Normative power (‘*pouvoir normatif*’): Manners (2013) means that the new form of ‘pouvoir normatif’ is translated into the ability to use *normative justifications* rather than the ability to use economic or military instruments. Moreover, Charlotte Wagnsson (2010) writes that an actor demonstrates normative power if it engages in *persuasive* actions.

Normative justifications: it is quite challenging to find an explicit definition for normative justifications per se in NPE literature. However, initially separating the two terms will render it simpler. ‘Normative’ refers to “moral principles or ideals which should, ought or must be

brought about. A wide range of political concepts are value-laden”, e.g. ‘liberty’ and ‘rights’... “Values or normative concepts therefore advance or prescribe certain forms of conduct.” (Heywood, 2015, p.xi). ‘Justifications’ can be understood as implying reasons for acting in a particular manner, which can reinforce certain discourses or representations (Forst, 2015).

The EC’s ‘normative justifications’ entails their justifications (by providing reasons based on moral principles or ideals and representations) for their new defence industrial strategies by referring to the EU’s ‘core norms’ and based on the normative discourses found in section 2.2.2. According to Manners (2000), the EU’s *core norms* are peace, liberty, democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms/rights. Non-normative justifications therefore refer to justifications *not* based on the EU’s core norms or the normative discourses mentioned in this thesis. Section 4.1 will clarify the relationship between justifications and representations.

Representations and identity-constructions: Ian Manners and Thomas Diez (2007, p.184, emphasis added) explain that “identities are seen always to require an *other* against which they are constructed; an other which they thus construct at the same time”, building upon poststructuralist ‘self’/‘other’ representations. Additionally, Diez (2004) refers to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985), who themselves have added valuable input into the method of CDA and the philosophical tradition of poststructuralism, when writing that identities’ discursively constructed nature entails that the dominant identity formation has to be defended against alternative constructions that may offer other discursive tendencies. In other words, identity formations can be regarded as a ‘hegemonic struggle’ for building a dominant discourse.

Hegemonic struggle: refers in this thesis to *discursive* struggles over competing norms. Norms are always contested and “hegemony does not start from a pre-given set of norms with fixed meanings, but rather puts the struggles about these norms at centre stage” (Diez, 2013, p.194). Diez’ (2013) idea of hegemonic struggle opposes Manners (2000) conceptualisation of normative power as being based on *fixed* core norms.

Geopolitics: considering that the thesis will conduct a CDA, a conceptualisation of *geopolitics* from a discourse-analytical perspective, thereby not in merely the traditional geospatial manner,

is provided. The 'traditional' manner is understood as analysing states' actions based on geographical factors, e.g. location and natural resources (Heywood, 2015).

Critical geopolitics, according to Elisabeth Johansson-Nogués and Francesca Leso (2024), examines 'geospatialised' notions of the 'self' and the 'other' and how they are articulated in discourses. Moreover, it "interrogates how spatialised discourses and practices come to inform and inscribe new ideas, identities and behavioural norms on territorial expanses and their inhabitants" (Johansson-Nogués and Francesca Leso, 2024, p.4).

Geopolitical actor (or identity): this concept is understood by Håkansson (2024) as entailing the strengthened role that the EC has actively pursued within security and defence policy. According to Haroche (2023), the EC has become a 'geopolitical actor' through the discourse of strategic autonomy and its adoption of a more strategic perspective through its geoeconomic pursuits.

Geoeconomics: this thesis uses the definition of geoeconomics as: "the application of economic means of power by states to realise geostrategic objectives" (Wigell et al., 2019, p. 9).

Strategic Autonomy: the term 'strategic' refers to securing the EU's long-term interests in the field of security and defence and 'autonomy' refers to being able to act on its own when necessary. The implication is that Europe should be perceived by other powers such as the US, China, and Russia, as a credible actor. (Zandee et al., 2020).

Principled pragmatism: that the EU's external action shall be "guided by clear principles", which "stem as much from a realistic assessment of the current strategic environment as from an idealistic aspiration to advance a better world." (European Union, 2016, p.8). In other words, a combination of strategic interests and normative ambitions.

2.2.2 Normative Power Discourses

While Manners (2000) developed the specific theoretical concept of NPE, how the EU as an international actor *ought* to act or be *perceived* has been widely discussed in both the academic and political realm, as shown in section 2.1. This section will highlight the broader themes of representational discourses of the 'self' (the EU) and the 'other' (Russia) found in NPE

literature, and other literature that relates to the normative discourses, which will help answer the research question.

The first theme concerns the EU's discourses of 'effective multilateralism'. Manners (2013) mentions the discursive tool of 'informational diffusion' (a form of norm diffusion), which refers to strategic and declaratory communications or policy initiatives by e.g. the EC's president or by the Council of the European Union. Informational diffusion includes persuasion and argumentative promotion of normative ideas (or norms) on how the 'international rules-based order' should be structured and practiced. Manners (2013) states that the informational diffusion in October 2003 by the EC represents normative power. In turn, one could interpret this as the EC *representing* the 'self' as a normative power through informational diffusion.

Manners (2013) explains that the EC's discourses of multilateralism in October, in the aftermath of the unilateral invasion of Iraq, conveyed the normative justification of *abiding by global rules*. Manners (2006) means that the ESS in 2003 stands as a symbolic signpost. In stark contrast to the EU's discursive normative path towards ensuring 'sustainable peace' in the 1990s, the EU began to develop strategies in 2003 for the potential need of utilising military instruments in the future. (Manners, 2006). In connection, the Council of the European Union (2003, p.9-11) writes that "(w)e want international organisations, regimes and treaties to be effective in confronting threats to international peace and security, and must therefore be ready to act when their rules are broken" and that "military instruments may be needed to restore order" in failing states. Additionally, they hold that the international order should be based on effective multilateralism, which among other things entails upholding a rules-based order, and in particular to abide by the United Nations' Charter (Council of the European Union, 2003). The discourse of effective multilateralism is a good example of representations of the 'self' as a defender of the international rules-based order.

Annika Björkdahl (2011) notes that effective multilateralism is a key concept that has been widely used in the EU's discourses since 2003, which served as a *justification* for the combination of both normative and military dimensions of power. Björkdahl (2011) means that the EU peace support operations constitute a channel for 'norm diffusion', wherein the objectives of ensuring peace and security (constituting normative justifications) have been promoted by external policies such as the CSDP. She writes that the EU has increasingly used both norm diffusion through soft foreign policy methods such as persuasion and demonstrated hard power by e.g. military coercion and the deployment of military forces to contribute to international peace and security (Björkdahl, 2011). Effective multilateralism becomes the

normative justification ad hoc. According to several scholars, the argument is made that normative power and acquiring military capabilities are not mutually exclusive (e.g. Björkdahl, 2011; Stavridis, 2001; Dunne, 2008). The limitation of this perspective is that neither Manners (2013) nor Björkdahl (2011) refer to *specifically* the European defence industry. Nonetheless, it constitutes a part of the NPE discourse.

The second theme is based Thomas Diez (2005), who means that normative power does not *rely* on military force, but on norms that can reach those ends which otherwise can be done by *military arsenals* or economic incentives. Furthermore, Diez (2005) explains that the EU historically has constructed a ‘new’ post-World War II identity as a ‘force for peace’ in which peace and respect for human rights have succeeded power politics and the use of military means. Diez (2005) further elucidates that normative power should be perceived as hegemonic, in the sense that it can shape the values of others. According to Diez (2005), representing the EU as a ‘force for peace’ is a common discursive depiction among nearly all EU institutions.

That being said, despite these findings, the ‘force for peace’ discourse will not be searched for in the analysis. The discourse does not entail utilising military instruments through the European defence industry for the purpose of peace. Therefore, I will instead analyse the discourses within the new defence industrial strategies in which the EC justifies increased investments into the European defence industry.

The third theme is based on Owen Parker and Ben Rosamond’s (2013) concept of ‘economic liberalism’ and Catherine Hoeffler’s (2019) insights about the promotion of a deepened European defence-market integration. Parker and Rosamond (2013) hold that economic liberalism is a key constitutive ideal of the EU and that NPE research has missed this component. Parker and Rosamond (2013, p.236) refer to the EC’s first President, Walter Hallstein, who stated in 1972 that “(t)he basic law of the European Economic Community is liberal. Its guiding principle is to establish undistorted competition in an undivided market.” Parker & Rosamond (2013, emphasis added) write that as economic liberalism has been central to the EU’s constitution, the EU has discursively portrayed markets as ‘unbounded’, ‘post-national’, and, in particular, ‘*European*’. Manners (2013) refers multiple times to Parker and Rosamond’s valuable input in NPE research and their theoretical framework of ‘market cosmopolitanism’ (Parker and Rosamond, 2013).

Within the same theme, Hoeffler (2019) finds that the EC has been the most prominent promoter of a frame that involves deepened European integration of armament-related issues into the CSDP, with the claimed reason being that national defence industries cannot develop

sufficient capabilities through national procurement alone. Hoeffler (2019) further explains that armaments policy is framed in two ways, as an industry through a *market frame* or as a source of military capabilities through a *military frame*. Meanwhile the former has emphasised supranational decision-making and the latter MS' authority within CSDP, the two frames have been combined in MS' approaches to European integration. In similarity, Haroche (2024) refers to the leaders of the MS' demands of a relaunch of EU defence industrial initiatives in 2022 in the March Versailles declaration to emphasise how the EU has increasingly moved towards market integrative solutions for the facilitation of the development of the European defence industry. Lastly, Hoeffler (2019) points to the successive French governments who have remained committed to framing European integration as vital for both the survival of the defence industries and for its military capabilities.

The arising caveat is naturally that neither Parker and Rosamond's nor Haroche's (2024) and Hoeffler's (2019) findings target the EU's core norms per se. Be that as it may, Manners (2013) refers several times to Parker and Rosamond's valuable input in NPE research and to the normative implications of European economic integration, which also adheres to Parker and Rosamond's idea of economic liberalism. Consequently, I will treat Parker and Rosamond's, Haroche's, and Hoeffler's findings as pointing towards establishing an NPE identity.

Regarding the fourth theme, e.g. Juncos (2011) writes that from the EU's perspective, the norms that the EU promotes are *prima facie* universal. Several scholars have written about the West as norm entrepreneurs for its discourses of protecting liberal values (which have been portrayed as 'universal' values) and thereby upholding a liberal world order (e.g. Wunderlich, 2020; Müller, 2014).

Andrej Krickovic and Richard Sakwa (2022) explain that the clash of normative interpretations and ideational contestation of the Russo-Ukraine conflict (not only since the invasion) has exacerbated geopolitical and great power competition. They describe how, in general, the West's ontology (view of the social reality) is based on liberal ideals of democratic peace and rights-based international law (what they call 'liberal hegemony'), which is assumed to be able to transcend security competition. Russia's ontological preconceptions, on the other hand, regarding 'sovereign internationalism', is that sovereignty and non-interference are perceived by Russia as guaranteeing the right to a 'sphere of privileged interests'. This includes the right for each state to determine its course of development. The West has opposed this discourse and instead perceived it as Russia *violating* the principle of sovereign internationalism itself as it is encroaching upon another state's sovereignty, and therefore has violated

international law. (Krickovic & Sakwa, 2022). Similarly, Elias Götz & Camille-Renaud Merlen (2019) have shown that there is a general portrayal by analysts of Russia as a ‘revanchist power’ that seeks to revise or even upend the very foundations of the liberal international order (e.g. Dibb, 2016).

Bosse (2022) finds that the EU has normatively justified its first set of sanctions against Russia by referring to Russia’s violation of rights-based norms, and the principles of the UN Charter and international law. Similarly, Riddervold and Rieker (2024) write that Russia’s breach of the UN Charter and its threat to the global rules-based order became the EU’s normative justification for its urgent and decisive response to Russia’s invasion.

This theme will also be important to include in the analysis as it may shed light on how the EC represents the ‘self’ and the ‘other’, and hence is normatively justifying the new defence industrial strategies. For instance, the EC may depict the ‘other’ as violating the principles of the UN Charter which would mean that the EC simultaneously depicts the ‘self’ as a defender of the international rules-based order.

2.2.3 The EC’s promotion of a ‘geopolitical identity’

This section will exhibit the literature review on the EC’s promotion of a geopolitical identity through both its representations of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ and through its discourses of strategic autonomy.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, the EC’s promotion of a ‘geopolitical identity’ under the discourse of ‘strategic autonomy’ has intensified (Haroche, 2023). Samuel Faure (2024) explains that the ideas of ‘strategic autonomy’ and ‘European sovereignty’ are founded upon the French ambition to boost the MS’s strategic capabilities to limit its military, industrial, and technological dependence on the US and China. More concretely, it has led the EC to emphasise its role in designing economic sanctions and policy responses regarding e.g. the defence industry (Haroche, 2023).

The EC has been able to gain a more extensive role in pursuing industrial autonomy (with defence industrial strategies to achieve this) and the EC has become an ‘ideational entrepreneur’ that has diminished MS’ reluctance towards adopting the idea of strategic autonomy (Juncos & Vanhoonacker, 2024). The concept of an ideational entrepreneur shares similarities to Finnemore and Sikkink’s (1998) concept of ‘norm entrepreneur’, as the EC as an ideational entrepreneur has attempted to convince the MS to embrace the new idea of strategic autonomy.

The EU has, according to Raik et al. (2024), emerged as a ‘geopolitical actor’ in three ways: the EU has engaged in a conflict that concerns its defence of the European vision of an international rules-based order (could be connected to representation three, see the discussion in section 6.2), the EU is willing to utilise hard power (including military power) to defend this vision, and the EU has engaged in the contestation regarding its future ‘geographical borders’ (connected to representation 1). The latter by granting candidate state status to Ukraine. (Raik et al., 2024). For instance, Bosse (2024, p.1235) found that the “re-conceptualisation of the EU’s spatial identity to include Ukraine as ‘one of us’ enabled those actors arguing in favour of unprecedented measures to gain the ‘higher moral ground’ in discussions amongst the member states.” However, although the EU’s spatial identity began to be depicted as including Ukraine’s territory which justified the measures taken, this was not based on EU core norms.

Alena Vieira (2016) examines the categorisations of the ‘self’, ‘we’ and the ‘other’ in the EU’s discourses relating to its identity construction between 1991 and 2014. She finds that while the relationship between the EU and Russia has increasingly been discursively defined by a ‘self-other’ interaction, the relations between the EU and Ukraine have been discursively depicted as a ‘prospective we’. She notes that while the EU has recalibrated the ‘self’ by emphasising its aspiration towards a ‘we’ by the integration of Ukraine, the ‘other’ (Russia) has been depicted as an actor which it seeks distance from. (Vieira, 2016).

Similarly, Johansson-Nogués and Leso (2024) observe a ‘shift in geopolitical mindscape’ regarding the EU’s responsibilities towards Ukraine as the latter is increasingly perceived by the EU as part of the ‘self’, which it needs to protect. Furthermore, they mean that the HR/VP (from 2019) Josep Borell’s proclamation of the birth of a geopolitical EU might have been slightly unfit as they notice a changed judgement concerning the part of which Eastern-Europe play for the ‘self’ in the aftermath of the Russian invasion. This created an ambiguity about the EU’s role in the post-soviet region. (Johansson-Nogués & Leso, 2024).

Lastly, a ‘geoeconomics’ turn can be seen in the European defence market policy as it seeks to increase its military capabilities while protecting the internal market through the EDTIB in its response to the insecurity of defence supplies and geopolitical competition. (Fiott, 2024). Similarly, Haroche (2024) refers to ‘geoeconomics’ when explaining that the EU’s economic policy objectives are increasingly being impacted by great power competition due to the EU’s vulnerability to external actors. Taking a more holistic view, the EU is pursuing an interventionist European industrial policy and geopolitical market strategy, by safeguarding

Europe's technological sovereignty, to increase its defence capabilities. (McNamara, 2023; Seidl & Schmitz, 2024; Csernaton, 2022).

2.2.4 Challenges for the EU's normative ambitions

This section will exhibit the discussion about the challenges to the EU's normative ambitions and whether the EU's representation of the 'self' as a geopolitical actor challenges its normative claims.

Manners (2006) holds that militarising processes since 9/11, due to the growth of a European 'military-industrial simplex', are diminishing the trustworthiness of the normative claims (e.g. contributing to peace) made by the EU. Be that as it may, Diez and Manners (2007) also hold that military force can be used to back up the spread of normative values, for instance in humanitarian interventions. This theoretical response arose due to several scholars' criticism of the NPE theory's inattention to the EU's use of hard power (e.g. Hyde-Price, 2006). Criticism has also been directed towards the assumption that the EU's norms are universally valid and transcend other political communities' claims (e.g. Hyde-Price, 2008; Merlingen, 2007).

Nevertheless, more recent scholarly discussions neither concern the EU's claims about universal values, nor whether military instruments and the promotion of the EU's values can be combined. Instead, it concerns the EU's combining discourses of strategic geopolitical ambitions and normativity.

According to Diez (2022b), the EU's geopolitical and strategic discourses represent a distinct change from the discourses of 'normative power' and 'force for good' in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Diez (2022a) writes that the fundamental challenge to the international order that the Russian invasion poses limits the EU's possibilities of exhibiting its normative identity. Diez (2022b, p.166) refers to the EC's president von der Leyen's speech (EC, 2020), in which she calls for the EU "to be more assertive in the world", not to be reluctant towards utilising 'hard power' by increasing Europe's military capabilities, and to engage in "geopolitics of mutual interest". The two discourses of geopolitics vis-à-vis normative ambitions exhibit a new representation of itself as merging the old normative identity with the new geopolitical one (Diez, 2022b). Despite this attempt to merge the two discourses, the EU's newly acquired geopolitical identity is depicted by Diez (2022a) as eroding the EU's normative claims.

Similarly, Raik et al. (2024) refer to Vincent Della Sala (2023) when acknowledging that the Russian invasion and the return of great power rivalry have challenged the EU's *self-perception*

of being a unique international actor that renounces zero-sum geopolitics. Della Sala (2023) writes that the EU has held on to the grand narrative of the ‘self’ as being an ‘exceptional’ actor that does not participate in *realpolitik* but instead strives towards ensuring peace through interdependence, but that also must become a geopolitical and ‘pragmatic’ actor in international security. The two different discourses have, according to Della Sala (2023), both kept the EU from becoming a credible geopolitical actor and brought into question the EU’s fundamental identity. Niklas Helwig (2022) observes a ‘role ambiguity’ due to the emerging strategic autonomy discourse, in which the EU’s role as either a market, normative or realist power has been brought into question.

On another note, Riddervold and Rieker (2024) refer to Rieker and Steven Blockmans (2021) when writing that one cannot fully comprehend the EU’s foreign policy identity merely through the conventional theoretical lenses of NPE and neorealism. Instead, one should understand the EU’s new ‘principled pragmatist’ identity as a dual approach combining short-term strategic interests with long-term normative goals in its foreign policy. In similarity, Raik et al. (2024) argue that considering the EU leaders' rhetoric being filled with both geopolitical *and* normative considerations and the EU's vision of order being based on international law, the EU’s normative claims are not threatened. That being said, Riddervold & Rieker (2024) also found that when the EU perceives an event as a threat to the EU’s immediate security, the EU’s actions become more interest-based and strategic rather than based on normative principles, in particular in its neighbourhood.

As a response to the notion of a ‘principled pragmatist’s’ normative rhetoric, Juncos (2016) writes that the pragmatic approach still will undermine the EU’s moral principles underlying those universal values. Combining strategic interests with normative goals will not result in less criticism of its double standards and this combination will merely highlight the EU’s weaknesses as an international actor. It will erode its identity as a normative power. (Juncos, 2016). Similarly, Kamil Zwolski (2020) argues that the EC’s geopolitical turn risks undermining its core strengths of normative principles, which should inform the EC’s international security agenda. Additionally, the EC’s increased politicisation, in contrast to its former de-politicised bureaucratic identity which would ensure the maintenance of its normative standards and the human-centred approach to international security, will undermine its former unique identity. (Zwolski, 2020).

2.3 Research gap

Previous NPE literature on the EU's defence policy do neither address the discourses within the defence industrial strategies, nor the representations of the 'self' and the 'other' as justifications for these strategies. Even though Diez and Manners (2007) touch upon identity formations through representations of the 'other', they have not included representations of both the 'other' *and* the 'self'. What is also new about this thesis, and what has not been covered in earlier NPE research, is how in particular the *EC's* representations of the 'self' and the 'other' become justifications for strengthening the European defence industry. Additionally, it draws upon recent literature (section 2.2.4) that examines the two discourses of geopolitics and normativity. For instance, the thesis draws upon Diez's (2022b) observation of a new representation of itself as merging the old normative identity with the new geopolitical one, and upon Riddervold and Rieker's (2024) discussion of the EU's new 'principled pragmatist' identity. What can be considered the research gap within these two mentioned research papers (and in sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.4 in general) is how discourses of and justifications for strengthening the *European defence industry* in particular can be understood by the theoretical lens of NPE and through critical geopolitics. This will add valuable insights to the research field of NPE.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Normative Power Europe in practice

As the aim of the analysis is to analyse the EC's representations of the 'self' (the EU) and the 'other' (Russia), as well as its normative and non-normative justifications, I will investigate how the representations and justifications are discursively depicted. For instance, Diez (2005) writes that the manifestation of normative power (NPE) cannot be understood through an objective lens but is a practice of discursive representation.

While e.g. Diez and Manners (2007) write about the EU's representations of the 'other', it is also worthwhile investigating how the EC represents the 'self'. For this reason, I have included three representations of the 'self' and one of the 'other' in the analytical framework. Diez (2005) explains that the relationship of the 'self' and the 'other' is a dialectic one (based on poststructuralist work on self/other constructions) wherein the identity is simultaneously constructed by the construction of the 'other'. This can render an analysis blurrier as these perspectives easily get intertwined. Therefore, I argue that the distinction between representations of the 'self' vis-à-vis the 'other' will help render the analytical framework clearer. The representations are drawn upon the findings of the scholars mentioned in the parentheses. Lastly, I acknowledge that several of these representations intersect (e.g. the third and the fourth) but I anticipate that the distinctions will increase the thesis' intersubjectivity.

All the following representations are based on what previous literature (sections 2.2.2 & 2.2.3) exhibits about the EU's main normative and non-normative justifications for strengthening the European defence and its representational discourses.

3.1.1 Analytical framework

Representations of the *self* (the EU):

1. *Representation of the self as a geopolitical actor*

(Haroche, 2023; Raik et al., 2024; Vieira, 2016; Bosse, 2024;
Fiott, 2024; Faure, 2024; Johansson-Nogués & Leso, 2024)

2. *Representation of the self as a driver for deepened European market integration*

(Parker & Rosamond, 2013; Haroche, 2024;
Hoeffler, 2019, Manners, 2013)

3. *Representation of the self as a defender of the international rules-based order*

(Manners, 2000; 2013; Björkdahl, 2011)

Representations of the *other* (Russia):

4. *Representation of the other as violating the international rules-based order*

(Bosse, 2022; Krickovic & Sakwa, 2022;
Götz & Merlen, 2019; Riddervold & Rieker, 2024.)

The first representation is based on the findings in section 2.2.3. An analysis will be made on how the EC represents the 'self' as a geopolitical actor (and asserts a geopolitical identity) through the discourses of geopolitical contestations/competitions, strategic autonomy, European sovereignty, geoeconomics, and the EU's inclusion of Ukraine in its representation of the 'self' or within the 'prospective we'. If found in the analysis, then this will mark a move towards a representation of the 'self' as a geopolitical actor.

Regarding the second representation (NPE), which is based upon the findings in section 2.2.2, Parker & Rosamond (2013, emphasis added) find that markets have been discursively portrayed as 'unbounded', 'post-national' and, in particular, '*European*'. Moreover, that deepened defence-market integration has been promoted. Therefore, promoting *European* markets and integration is an added representation of the 'self'.

The third representation (NPE), based upon the findings in section 2.2.2, will be analysed through the search for representations of the 'self' as a defender of the international rules-based order, an abider of global rules (Manners, 2013), and a promoter of EU core norms (Manners, 2000). It will also include discourses on how military coercion and the deployment of military force can contribute to international peace and security (Björkdahl, 2011).

Although not much material has been found about representation four in previous literature by *NPE* scholars (e.g. Manners or Diez), I have found much literature regarding the perception that Russia is violating the international rules-based order. What is more, I deem it necessary to include this perspective as it may shed light on representation three and how it simultaneously can depict the ‘other’ as violating the rules-based international order. Lastly, it is based on the previous literature on hegemonic struggles of norms.

4. METHODOLOGY & RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Critical discourse analysis – representations and justifications

I argue that CDA is the most appropriate method to answer my research question of how the EC discursively represents the ‘self’ (the EU) and the ‘other’ (Russia) to strengthen the European defence. Moreover, I hold that CDA is the most relevant method for testing the theory of NPE.

Firstly, Manners and Diez (2007) point out that the most interesting aspect of NPE revolves around the power inherent in the *representation* of the EU as a normative power and analysing representations through CDA will be the most effective method ad hoc. Secondly, as the concept of normative power (NPE) concerns the ability to use normative justifications, a CDA will render it possible to critically examine how the EC discursively justifies the strengthening of the European defence through representations of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’, as well as based on the EU’s core norms and normative discourses in section 2.2.2. Thirdly, CDA can examine normative claims through an analysis of argumentation. In other words, how the EC through argumentation seeks to persuade others to either accept or reject certain standpoints, which also can be connected to the EC’s role as an ideational (or norm) entrepreneur and representing the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ in a particular manner to justify specific actions.

All in all, CDA provides an encompassing tool that can be utilised for detecting discourses, representations, justifications, and argumentations. Representations and discourses can be detected in the analysis through a CDA on how the EC represents the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ to normatively or non-normatively justify their new defence industrial strategies.

For the purpose of clarification, an explanation of how representations, identity formations, normative and non-normative justifications, and discourses are connected will be provided. Isabela Fairclough and Norman Fairclough (2015) explain that the role of representations is key when *justifying* standpoints, as a basis for actions and decisions. Fairclough and Fairclough (2015) also write that representational texts are multifunctional as they are not only forms of action or representations but also a part of the *enactment of identities*. For instance, Norman Fairclough’s (2000) analysis *New Labour: a language perspective* serves as a source of inspiration for this thesis as it targets a political discourse regarding identity formations in particular. In similarity to his analysis on how the UK Labour Party represented the ‘self’ as the ‘New Labour’ (identity formation), by the shifts in the discourses of the party by e.g. the

promotion of the ‘Third Way’ in 1997, this thesis will analyse the discourses regarding the EC’s self-representations as a ‘normative power’, ‘geopolitical actor, or as a ‘principled pragmatist’ through its discourses. Hence, the EU’s identity is constructed through the representation of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ through its discourses.

However, the other way around works as well. The EC’s identity formations are connected to its normative and non-normative justifications. For instance, the representation of the ‘self’ as a defender of the international rules-based order and promoter of the EU’s core norms (e.g. for ‘the sake of peace’) constitutes a normative justification in itself for implementing its new defence industrial strategies, which in turn simultaneously constructs the EU’s identity as a normative power. Thus, establishing a dialectic relationship between representations, justifications, and identity formations.

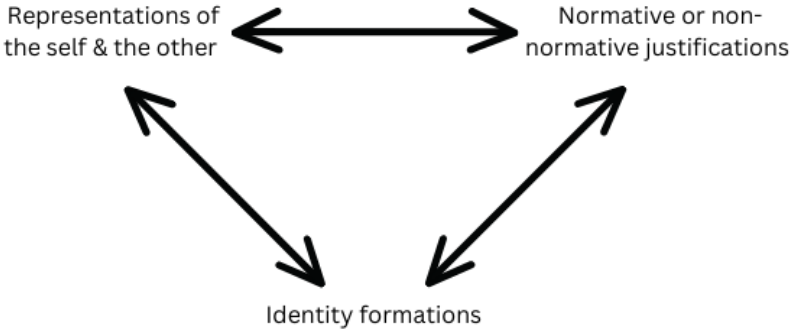


Figure 2: The dialectic relationship between representations, justifications, and identity formations. (self-made)

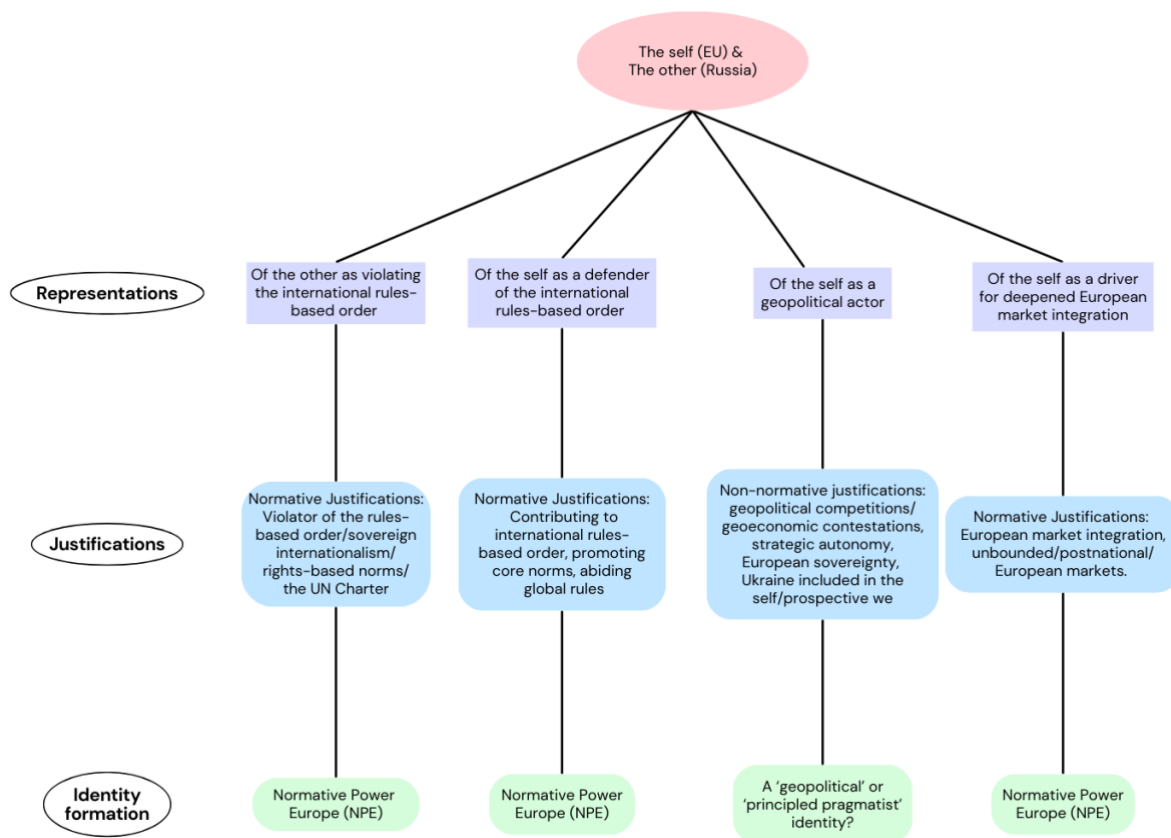


Figure 3: The four representations, normative and non-normative justifications, and identity formations. (self-made)

Figure 3 exhibits the connection between the four representations, normative and non-normative justifications, discourses, and identity formations. Due to these concepts' dialectic relationships, the lines should not be treated as one-directional movements starting from representations of the 'self' and the 'other' and ending in identity formations. The normative and non-normative justifications will represent the 'self' and the 'other' in various ways which will direct them into a certain identity formation, and the very representations of the 'self' and the 'other' can also reinforce certain discourses which in turn will construct particular identities. For instance, the representation of the 'self' as a defender of the international rules-based order can exhibit discourses of e.g. abiding by global rules (demonstrating the EC's use of normative justifications), which in turn constructs the EU as an NPE. All the discourses above are based on the literature in sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3.

Concerning the evaluation of normative claims (what an actor *should* do), representations of the EU as either an NPE or another form of actor become premises in the practical arguments regarding what the EU *ought* to do. Therefore, CDA can examine normative claims through an

analysis of argumentation. Fairclough and Fairclough (2015) explain how argumentative texts can be analysed from a rhetorical perspective as they are seeking to persuade people to either accept or reject certain standpoints through representations.

As an additional perspective in CDA research, Norman Fairclough (2001) writes that what is deemed problematic and thus calls for change is inherently a contested issue. What is *depicted* as an issue may according to Fairclough (2001) become hegemonic, become part of the reinforcement of what is considered as ‘common sense’, and in turn, become a *justification* for taking certain measures. For instance, building upon Fairclough (2001), an example of an issue being portrayed as problematic could in practice be detected when the EC (2024b, p.31, emphasis added) argues that “Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as the rising tensions at EU’s doorsteps, *call for* the EU and its Member States to take up strategic responsibility.” The representation of the ‘other’s war of aggression and threat is portrayed as a justification for the EU and its MS to take up strategic responsibility.

4.2 Interpretive research design

For the sort of inquiry that this thesis is aiming at, the most suitable research design is that of interpretivism. The methodology, according to Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow (2012), rests on a conviction that social and political truths are *intersubjectively* constructed and that understandings of the material analysed can only be co-generated between the researcher and researched (epistemological premises). A consequence of interpretivism’s epistemological presuppositions is for instance that the puzzles that one finds as a researcher generally derive from what the researcher observes, and the researcher's expectations are based on their prior knowledge of the field. Interpretivism acknowledges the unavoidable risks of biases of a researcher. Therefore, being aware of one’s own biases and personal background will help address these problems. (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012).

It is vital to incorporate ‘self-reflexivity’ into the whole research process to increase the ‘trustworthiness’ of this thesis, wherein reflexivity renders the reader aware of the researcher’s active consideration of and engagement with the material which in itself is related to the knowledge claims that the researcher will advance (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). Connected to this is the disclosure of the researcher’s ‘positionality’. In other words, how the researcher’s identity might affect the research process in one way or another. For instance, the demographic or geographic background of the researcher. My positionality of being from

Sweden (an MS) and raised in two MS (Belgium and Sweden) may affect how I perceive the EU. There is the possibility that my perceptions of the EU may affect the research process as my preconceptions could subconsciously strive towards confirming my expectations of what I might find. This could indicate selection bias as the thesis would include texts that affirm my own line of thought while excluding others that discredit it.

However, by adding critical and contrasting perspectives to that of normative power, e.g. not merely confirming the EU's normative power (through a preconception of the EU as being an NPE rather than another sort of actor), the trustworthiness will improve. For instance, the first representation is perceived as moving towards the opposite direction of establishing an NPE identity. That being said, the research process may still be subconsciously directed towards one direction rather than the other and for this reason, I will attempt to incorporate self-reflexivity into this thesis to the greatest extent possible. The practice of reflexivity involves active reflection about the emerging patterns that the researcher is discovering by for instance discussing what seems hitherto clear or unclear.

Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012) explain that the epistemology of interpretivism is neither based solely on deduction nor induction, but on 'abduction'. In practice, it entails a process of 'back-and-forth', which allows the researcher to *simultaneously* work with the empirical material and the theoretical literature (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012). The concept of the 'hermeneutic circle' entails no fixed point of departure for an inquiry and the idea of a 'circular sense-making' suggests that there are no conclusions per se that one can reach. Instead, merely that one can obtain richer and deeper understandings in a continual process. In other words, abduction follows more of a *circular-spiral pattern* which requires an engagement with multiple pieces of a puzzle at once rather than to follow a *linear* logic (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012).

4.3 Material

Acknowledging that the Russo-Ukrainian war can be considered to have started with the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, the time period selected will be that of the Russian full-scale invasion in 2022 and onwards due to the limits of time and scope of this thesis.

The texts that will be analysed consist of official documents accessed through EUR-lex (providing access to European Union legal documents) such as strategic communications, joint communications, and proposal documents written by the EC. These are all, I argue, documents

of a persuasive nature, addressed to for instance the European Parliament, the Council, The European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions.

The communication on European defence is selected as it is included in the timeline and as this was released nine days before the Russian invasion and because they were fully aware of the “(t)he recent **Russian military build-up along the eastern border of Ukraine, in Belarus, and in the Black Sea region**” (written in bold letters in the communication). The only other event in the timeline before the 15th of February is the launch of the EDF on the 1st of January 2021. However, the term “launch” as it is written in the timeline is slightly misleading as the EDF was established in 2017 (EC, 2017) and started *functioning* on the 1st of January 2021 (EDA, n.d.), whereby there are no strategic communications about the launch of the EDF except for the one in 2017.

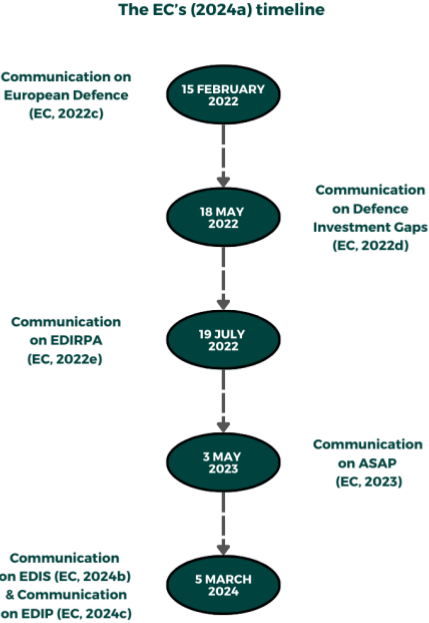


Figure 4: Self-made timeline based on the EC’s (2024a) own timeline

The concept of ‘defence industrial strategies’ is operationalised as the *European Defence Fund* (EDF), the *European defence industry Reinforcement through common Procurement Act* (EDIRPA), the *Act in Support of Ammunition Production* (ASAP), the *European Defence Industrial Strategy* (EDIS) and the *European Defence Investment Programme* (EDIP). These were all selected based on the EC’s (2024a) own timeline of the principal strategies addressing the defence investment gaps. The EC (2024a) explains that the EDIRPA was established for

short-term common defence procurement and the ASAP to urgently deliver ammunition and missiles to Ukraine and to help MS refill their stocks. Moreover, they write that the EDIS is the first-ever European defence industrial strategy at the EU level and that the communication on EDIP concerns a legislative proposal for a European defence industry programme. (EC, 2024a).

5. ANALYSIS

The EC's discursive representations of the 'self' and the 'other' will be analysed based on the four representations and on a CDA of the empirical material.

5.1 The EC's discursive representations of the *self* (the EU)

5.1.1 Representation one – the self as a geopolitical actor

This section will exhibit representations of the 'self' as a geopolitical actor and discourses of strategic autonomy for strengthening the European defence industry.

The following discourses by the EC both imply and explicitly articulate the need to take an active part in the geopolitical contestation within strategic domains, and that the EU cannot afford falling behind in the global race for defence-technological supremacy. Therefore, these discourses can be interpreted as representing the 'self' as a geopolitical actor.

In all the communications between 2022 and 2024, the EC portrayed the geopolitical situation as 'unprecedented', as a non-normative justification for coordinating action and implementing the new defence industrial strategies at the EU level. For instance, the EC (2023, p.6, emphasis added) argues that "(i)n view of the *unprecedented* geopolitical situation and the *significant threat for security* of the Union, there is a *clear need* for a coordinated action at EU level." One can interpret this as the EC portraying itself as a geopolitical actor that must act firmly within the geopolitical context and respond to the significant threat. They use the term "clear" as a presupposition that it is clear what needs to be done.

Related to the notion of a "clear need" and arguably with a sense of urgency, the EC (2022c, p.2, emphasis added) writes that the EU "*needs to act now* to advance its defence capabilities in the *present* context." In similarity, the EC (2022d, p.9, emphasis added) asserts that the MS "*need to restore* defence combat readiness as a matter of urgency in light of the security situation." Within this context of urgency, the EC situates itself within a larger frame of a geopolitical situation. The EC (2024b) is further expressing the sense of urgency implied in the struggle for technological sovereignty and the availability of defence goods and services in sufficient quantities. For instance, the EC (2024b, p.3, emphasis added) writes that "(a)ddversaries have engaged in a *global race for technological supremacy* requiring from all actors ever faster and increasingly costly investment cycles: *the EU cannot afford falling*

behind.” Furthermore, they mention that “strategic competitors are investing heavily in military capabilities, defence industrial capacities and critical technologies” (EC, 2024b, p.2). On multiple occasions, the EC (2024b; 2024c) warns about the strategic competition in defence industrial capacities. The EC does *not only* acknowledge that there is a global race for technological supremacy, but the EC also emphasises that the EU cannot afford falling behind and needs to compete. Therefore, it represents itself as a geopolitical actor which needs to take an active part of a geopolitical competition for achieving defence-technological supremacy.

In several sections throughout the EC’s documents, one finds the notions of “new geopolitical circumstances” (EC, 2022d, p.14), “new security landscape” (EC, 2022d, p.10), “new security paradigm” (EC, 2022d, p.12) or “change of the security paradigm” (EC, 2024b, p.24). The notion of “new” implies a transition from the old and drawing inspiration from Fairclough’s (2000, p.28) observation that “signifying that the world is changing” implies that “we have to change too”, the same could be said in this context: that a new security paradigm necessitates new actions to be taken. One can perceive this discourse of “new geopolitical circumstances” as seemingly underlining the magnitude of this *new* security reality as a logical premise for the justification of implementing *new* defence industrial strategies. For instance, the EC (2022e, p.1, emphasis added) that:

“the Union’s geopolitical context has *changed dramatically* in light of Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine” and that “(t)he return of *territorial* conflict and high-intensity warfare on *European soil requires* Member States to rethink their defence plans and capacities.”

From a critical discourse perspective, that it *requires* MS to rethink their defence plans and capacities is depicted as a ‘common sense’ response to the dramatically changed geopolitical context. That the MS *must* act accordingly to the changed context. This can also be seen in the EC’s (2024b, p.2, emphasis added) sentence that “*in particular* the return of high-intensity conventional warfare in Europe *requires an urgent step-change* in the speed and scale at which EDTIB can identify, develop and produce the requisite military equipment across the full spectrum.” Once more, stressing the *urgency* in the step-change that is required. Additionally, the EC (2024c, p.13, emphasis added) writes that “(t)he return of high-intensity warfare and territorial conflict *to Europe* has a negative impact on the security of the Union and the Member States and *requires* a significant increase in the capacity of Member States to reinforce their defence capabilities.” Attention can be directed towards the word “requires” as it can be

interpreted as a presupposition for the argumentative logic that *a* (return of territorial conflict to Europe) requires that *b* (reinforce defence capabilities) is enacted. That the return of territorial conflict to Europe *requires* MS to reinforce their defence capabilities is depicted as ‘common sense’, as something which MS *must* act upon. This could be interpreted as the European territorial conflict becoming the justification for introducing an urgent step-change in the EDTIB’s speed and scale. In addition, the EC (2022e) also points to the dramatic change of the EU’s geopolitical context as a justification for the MS to rethink their defence plans and capacities by depicting the geopolitical situation as ‘unprecedented’ and ‘new’.

What is more, the EC (2022e) holds that the Russo-Ukrainian war is exerted on *European soil*, which becomes the justification for the imperative directed to the MS to change accordingly. As the EC (2022e) portrays the invasion of Ukraine as one being exerted on *European soil*, one can interpret this as Ukraine being perceived by the EC as part of the ‘self’. Moreover, the EC is constructing Ukraine as one day (“possible future integration”) becoming part of the ‘self’ and in particular a ‘prospective we’ when writing that: “(a)ctions contributing to the recovery, reconstruction and modernisation of the Ukrainian DTIB (defence technological and industrial base) shall take into account its possible future integration into the EDTIB (EC, 2024c, p.30). This is in line with Vieira’s (2016) findings of a trend in emphasising its aspiration towards a ‘prospective we’ by the integration of Ukraine, representing the ‘self’ as a geopolitical actor. The justification by the re-conceptualisation of the EU’s territory (drawing on Bosse, 2024) by including Ukraine’s territory as European soil makes the EC representing the ‘self’ as an active geopolitical actor. This is both in line with representation one and with Vieira’s (2016) findings, as well as with Bosse’s (2024) and Johansson-Nogués and Leso’s (2024).

However, in contrast to the EC’s (2022e) representation of Ukraine as part of the ‘self’, the EC (2024b, p.3, emphasis added) portrays Ukraine as a “partner” when writing that “the geopolitical developments point to a *compelling need* for Europe to take *increased strategic responsibility* for its *own security*, including to assist *key partners* such as Ukraine.” If “partner” is to be interpreted as an external state which it seeks to cooperate with, then Ukraine could be perceived by the EC as an actor which is not part of the ‘self’. However, this is yet unclear. Furthermore, “compelling need” implies that the need for increased strategic autonomy is convincing, persuasive or even conclusive (as these are interpreted by me as synonymous with ‘compelling’). In accordance with Faure’s (2024) observation of the discourses of *strategic autonomy* and *European sovereignty*, and in line with Juncos’ and Vanhoonacker’s (2024)

findings that the EC has become an ideational entrepreneur that has attempted to convince the MS to embrace the new norm of strategic autonomy, to boost the MS's strategic capabilities is portrayed by the EC as crucial.

On several occasions, the EC in 2022 emphasised increased defence spending as an economic instrument for the exhibition of hard power, showing an increased willingness to utilise such power, which is in line with the findings of Raik et al. (2024). For instance, the EC's (2022d, p.1) aim is to ensure an "increased defence spending" by MS which leads to a strengthened EDTIB, which in turn will result in an "increased conventional deterrence for any kind of potential adversary." By investing and increasing EU MS' military spending, it enhances its ability in the future to 'use' hard power to enact change advantageous to itself. While the EU's discourse is invariably of a passive/defensive nature, the fact that it aspires to increase its defence spending is itself evidence that it strives towards having the ability to make use of hard power in the future. What is more, the "conventional deterrence" will be used against "any kind of potential adversary" to dissuade this opponent from using hard power itself.

In line with Haroche's (2023) findings that the EC has emphasised its role in the design of economic sanctions, the EC suggests utilising such economic instruments. For instance, to use "the windfall profits of frozen Russian assets to jointly purchase military equipment for Ukraine" (EC, 2024b, p.23). Similarly, the EC (2024c, p.15) mentions "how extraordinary revenues held by private entities stemming directly from immobilised Russian assets could be directed to support Ukraine, including its defence technological and industrial base." Not only does the EC justify its sanctions by referring to its geopolitical support to Ukraine, but they also justify using those "extraordinary revenues" to support Ukraine's defence technological and industrial base, which, in turn, would strengthen the EDTIB. This is related to the willingness of utilising hard power through economic instruments, which is in line with the findings of Raik et al. (2024), and which exhibits a representation of the 'self' as a geopolitical actor.

The EC (2022d, p.1) notes that the war has "underlined the effects of years of defence underspending." In addition, they report that "the share of investment in the defence spending of the United States, China and Russia is significantly higher than that of EU Member States" (EC, 2022d, p.4). This issue of defence underspending in comparison to other states and the implied 'risk' of this therein share similarities to the report of the EC (1996)(section 2.1). The 'problem' is depicted as defence underspending. This is in line with Fairclough's (2001) observation that what is *depicted* as an issue may become hegemonic, become part of the

reinforcement of what is considered as ‘common sense’, and in turn, becomes a justification for taking certain measures. As defence underspending becomes the depicted ‘problem’, the ‘common sense’ solution, and hence the *justification* for investing in the defence industry, is to spend the ‘required’ amount instead of ‘under’ it. The EC is representing the ‘self’ as a geopolitical actor by exhibiting its willingness to invest in hard power for its potential use in the future.

In line with Daniel Fiott’s (2024) and Haroche’s (2024) arguments about a ‘gloeconomic turn’, the EC writes on multiple occasions that it seeks to reach its economic policy objectives through its strategy (strategic autonomy) of decreasing the EU’s dependencies (and thus the EU’s vulnerability) on external actors’ military, industrial, and technological capabilities. Additionally, a gloeconomic turn can be seen in the EC’s discourses in the sense that it seeks to increase its military capabilities while protecting the internal market as a response to the insecurity of defence supplies (i.e. goods and services) and geopolitical competition. For instance, the EC (2023, p.4) holds that “(e)nsuring the security of the territory of the Union constitutes an overriding public policy objective and this security depends also on the availability of defence goods and services in sufficient quantities.” They inform of “the *imminent danger* for the security of supply brought about by Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine” (EC, 2023, p.20, emphasis added), “exposing the Union’s defence industry sector to dependencies” (EC, 2023, p.10-11). In other words, the EC (2023) also promotes the idea of strategic autonomy in which the need for a stronger security of Europe’s defence supplies is expressed, in line with representation one. Furthermore, the notion of an imminent danger for the security of supply represents an ‘issue’ which needs to be dealt with by diminishing the EU’s defence industry’s dependencies.

In summary, the EC does not represent the ‘self’ as an NPE as it does not use normative justifications when explaining why the new defence industrial strategies are needed. Instead, the EC represents the ‘self’ as a geopolitical actor, which cannot afford to fall behind in the global strategic race for defence-technological supremacy and in its investments into the defence industry. All these are non-normative justifications for introducing an urgent step-change in EDTIB’s speed and scale.

5.1.2 Representation two – the self as a driver for deepened European market integration

This section will exhibit representations of the ‘self’ as a driver for deepened European market integration through discourses that are promoting both ‘European markets’ and European defence integration for strengthening the European defence industry.

First of all, it seems as though the terms “single”, “internal” and “European” market are used interchangeably throughout the policy documents concerning the new defence industrial strategies, equivalenting these terms as to underline the *European* characteristics of an internal and single market. The EC emphasises the importance of a deepened integration of the European defence market, which has been discursively portrayed as in particular a ‘European’ market and this is in line with Parker and Rosamond’s (2013) findings. For instance, an equivalence between ‘European’ and ‘internal’ is made when the EC (2022c, p.3) writes that they are striving “towards a more competitive and harmonised European defence market” as well as enhancing “both cooperation in the framework of the EDF and the integration of the internal defence market” (EC, 2022c, p.5).

On several occasions, the EC (2022d) holds that there is a ‘risk’ that states will opt for national solutions, depicting it as the less desirable alternative in juxtaposition to the more desirable option of ‘European’ solutions. As an example, the EC (2022d, p.1-2) argues that “(b)ased on the historical record”, there is a “risk” that MS “opt for national solutions, because of industrial and security of supply considerations” and that “(d)efence industries may be inclined to serve as a matter of priority their national government as opposed to a more European-wide client-base.” The defence market is discursively portrayed as *post-national* and, in particular, *European*, wherein the latter is depicted as desirable. In other words, that the defence industries should turn towards the European-wide client-base rather than to serve their national governments. In similarity with the earlier findings, the EC (2022e, p.7) is warning about the ‘risk’ of increased national investments rather than European.

Moreover, they hold that the future EDIP regulation “could serve as the anchor for... the reinforcement of the European defence industrial base, in particular for projects which *no single Member State could develop or procure alone*” (EC, 2022e, p.2, emphasis added). One could view the latter as a presupposition for the logic of the argument that, due to the single MS’ impossibility to procure or develop these projects alone, the solution logically becomes that several MS need to cooperate to procure these projects *together*, which is portrayed as a necessary response. The EC (2023, p.5) holds that “(p)roviding a comprehensive response to

the sudden increase of relevant defence products demand requires a rapid and coordinated action at European level as no single Member State is capable of achieving this alone.” In similarity to the previous findings, they emphasise that no single MS is capable of achieving these objectives alone. In addition, that ”the consequences of the Union’s supply shortages are so far-reaching that intervention at the level of the Union is best placed to address such issues” (EC, 2023, p.5). Furthermore, the EC (2023) writes that the ASAP will contribute “to the further integration and smooth functioning of the Internal Market for relevant defence products” (EC, 2023, p.16). This is in line with Hoeffler’s (2019) findings that the EC has promoted a frame which involves further European integration of armament-related issues into the CSDP, with the justification for this being that national defence industries cannot develop sufficient capabilities through national procurement *alone*.

The EC promotes further integration and stresses the vitalness of an intervention at the EU level for dealing with such post-national matters as supply shortages via the internal market. The EC (2024b, p.5), in similarity with the EC (2022d), accentuates the “risk” of a “(p)ersistent industrial fragmentation along national lines”, which “also acts as a hindrance to the optimum efficiency of defence investments.” They further point out that “this results in a scattered EDTIB, acting in different, too narrow defence markets, rather than in a single, much larger and integrated one” (EC, 2024b, p.5). The EC juxtaposes the notion of ‘too narrow defence markets’ as the less desirable alternative with the ‘single, much larger and integrated’ markets which is more desirable. In a similar vein, the claimed ‘solution’ to the change of the geopolitical environment is according to the EC (2022d, p.2) to invest 1) “(t)ogether, by exploiting economies of scale”, 2) “(b)etter”, by supporting MS to focus on the EU’s capability priorities, and 3) “European” by enhancing the EDTIB, which has ”become of strategic importance in the deteriorating geostrategic environment.” To invest European, in juxtaposition to invest in national solutions, is depicted as the most desirable option wherein a deepened European defence-market integration is promoted.

The EC (2024b) also uses the term *solidarity* as a positively value-laden normative justification for why the EDIS should be implemented. For instance, they write that the EDIS will “establish an EU Security of Supply regime to enhance solidarity and effectiveness within the Union in response to crises” (EC, 2024b, p.7). Along with the EC (2024), the EC (2022e, p.11, emphasis added) emphasises the importance of fostering competitiveness and efficiency of the EDTIB which in turn will contribute to “*solidarity*, interoperability, prevention of crowding-out effects, avoiding fragmentation and increasing the effectiveness of public

spending.” To enhance solidarity becomes the desired goal and hence the normative justification for why the EDIS as a means should be implemented.

To sum up the findings of representation two, the EC has used terms such as ‘single’, ‘internal’ and ‘European’ interchangeably when describing markets and has emphasised the importance of a deepened integration of the European defence market. Moreover, they have asserted that no single MS can ensure the security of defence supplies alone and have underlined the need for *investing European*, which is both in line with Parker and Rosamond’s (2013) and Hoeffler’s (2019) findings. In addition, the EC has normatively justified their investments in the EDTIB by emphasising the need for defence capabilities that are *European* by nature through the establishment of a more European-wide client-base. What is more, in accordance with Hoeffler’s (2019) findings of the armaments being simultaneously portrayed through a market frame and military frame, European integration has been depicted as vital both for the survival of the European defence industry and for its military capabilities. In addition, the concept ‘solidarity’ has been used as a normative justification for establishing an EU ‘Security of Supply regime’ and enhancing the efficiency of the EDTIB. The EC represents the ‘self’ as a driver for deepened European market integration as the promotion of increased integration within the European defence market has been detected. Ultimately, these findings signal a representation of the ‘self’ as an NPE.

5.1.3 Representation three – the self as a defender of the international rules-based order

This section will exhibit representations of the ‘self’ as a defender of the international rules-based order, by e.g. the promotion of the EU’s core norms, for strengthening the European defence industry.

In the earlier communications from 2022, the empirical findings of the EC representing the ‘self’ as a defender of the international rules-based order and promoting the EU’s core norms are limited. However, e.g. the EC (2022e, p.5) resonates in terms of means (enhancing the security through the EDTIB) towards its desired normative goal (safeguarding fundamental rights) when they write that “(e)nhancing the security of EU citizens can contribute to safeguarding their fundamental rights.” The EC (2024c, p.10) writes the exact same sentence. The expressed ambition of contributing to safeguarding their fundamental rights is a normative justification and the EC is thereby representing the ‘self’ as a defender of the international rules-based order and contributor to the EU’s core norms.

In the EC's communications from 2023 and onwards, it is noteworthy how the EC repeatedly is normatively justifying its new defence industrial strategies by arguing that a strengthened EDTIB (through the new defence industrial strategies) will positively contribute to international peace. Regarding the EC (2023), the term democracy (core norm) is not used at all. However, the term "peace" is used either in the context of production capacities within the Union's defence industry having been "tailored for peace time" (p.1, 4 & 6) or as in *contributing* to peace. For instance, the latter shows itself in the sentence: "(t)he Union('s) defence industry is a crucial contributor to the resilience, security of the Union, and *therefore* to peace and social sustainability" (EC, 2023, p.19, emphasis added). In this manner, the EC (2023) is reasoning in terms of the Union's defence industry as a "crucial" means that is deemed to achieve the goal of bolstering the EU's security, which in turn will contribute to peace.

Moreover, the EC (2023) uses the term "therefore" to demonstrate the argument's logical order, that the EU's defence industry is a crucial contributor to the security of the Union (a), which "*therefore*" will contribute to peace (b), as in 'a' will lead to 'b'. In similarity, the EC is writing that "the Ukrainian DTIB (defence technological and industrial base) shall take into account its possible future integration into the EDTIB, *thereby* contributing to mutual stability, security, peace, prosperity and sustainability" (EC, 2024c, p.30, emphasis added). The EC is using the term "thereby" to demonstrate the argument's logical order, that the Ukrainian DTIB's future integration into the EDTIB (a) will contribute to peace (b). In similarity, the EC (2024b, p.25) asserts that the EDTIB "enhances sustainability, given its contribution to resilience, security and peace." Attention can be directed towards the word "given" as it can be interpreted as a presupposition that 'a' (the EDTIB) in fact contributes to 'b' (peace). However, is it a *given* that the EDTIB will contribute to security and peace? In addition, how does it in turn enhance sustainability? Again, they portray it as a 'given', or as 'common sense'.

A pattern can be observed in the manner the EC puts forward normative justifications for why strengthening the EDTIB is desirable. The EC asserts that the means of a strengthened EDTIB will contribute to the normative goals of e.g. international peace, preserving peace in Europe and protecting democratic values. The EC portrays the 'self' as a defender of the international rules-based order as the EC is normatively justifying the new defence industrial strategies by referring to its ambition to contribute to the EU's core norms. What is more, the EC is not only normatively justifying its actions but is simultaneously implying that using military instruments through a strengthened EDTIB is compatible with the EU's normative

ideals. This can be connected to the arguments of Björkdahl (2011), Stavridis (2001), and Dunne (2008).

In addition, the EC (2024b, p.2) writes that "(t)he rules-based global order is challenged to its core, and countries in the Union's vicinity and beyond are increasingly affected by tensions, instability, hybrid threats and armed conflicts." Hereby, to my understanding and drawing upon poststructuralist 'self'/'other' constructions, the EC represents the 'self' as a defender of the international rules-based order in the same moment as it is portraying the 'self' as being *challenged* by external actors. The argument is that the notion of the rules-based global order being *challenged* (passive form) by other external actors implies that the EU's internal actors (MS) are not *challenging* (active form) the rules-based order as they instead are *affected* (passive form) by (as I interpret it) external actors, e.g. by the latter's hybrid threats. This results in a representation of the 'self' as a defender of the international rules-based order. These discourses are a form of norm diffusion (Björkdahl, 2011) and informational diffusion (Manners, 2013) through the discourse of *effective multilateralism*, as the EC represents the 'self' as a defender of the international rules-based order and as promoting the norm of abiding global rules.

Lastly, while I have encountered self-representations as a defender of the international rules-based order in NPE literature through its discourses of contributing to peace, I have not found any discursive arguments within NPE literature regarding how a strengthened EDTIB per se (hence also new defence industrial strategies) will contribute to international peace. The latter has become a normative justification for strengthening the European defence industry and the EC represents the 'self' in this manner as a defender of the international rules-based order and as promoting the EU's core norms (contributing to peace).

5.2 The EC's discursive representations of the *other* (Russia)

5.2.1 Representation four – the other as violating the international rules-based order

This section examines the EC's representations of the 'other' as violating the international rules-based order and the normative statements used in order to justify the new defence industrial strategies.

First of all, a few days before the invasion, the EC argues that "(t)he recent Russian military build-up along the eastern border of Ukraine, in Belarus, and in the Black Sea region, together

with Moscow's attempts to disrupt, divide, and redefine the security architecture in Europe, *challenge the international rules-based order.*" (EC, 2022c, p.1, emphasis added). This is not only in line with this representation but could also be in line with the findings of representation three, if this sentence is to be interpreted as the EC simultaneously depicting the 'self' as defending the international rules-based order which is *challenged* by Russia's military build-up. Furthermore, this is somewhat in line with Götz and Merlen's (2019) findings that Russia is portrayed as a 'revanchist power' which seeks to revise the foundations of the liberal international order. However, this is the only occasion in which the EC *explicitly* portrays the 'other's actions as challenging the international rules-based order. Apart from this, the EC portrays the 'other's invasion as violating international law, and this can be interpreted as *implying* that the 'other' is seeking to revise or even upend the foundations of the current international rules-based order of which the 'self' seeks to protect.

On numerous occasions, the EC uses the terms 'unjustified' and 'unlawful' as to underline that Russia's invasion of Ukraine violates international law, which is in line with e.g. Bosse's (2022) findings that the EC justified its sanctions by referring to Russia's violations of rights-based norms. Within the context of normatively justifying the new defence industrial strategies, the EC (2022e, p.6, emphasis added) for instance holds that "(t)he *unjustified* invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on 24 February 2022 and the ongoing armed conflict in Ukraine has made it *clear* that it is critical to *act now* to address the existing shortfalls" of the European defence capabilities. Attention can be directed to the term "clear", in similarity with the findings of representation one, as the term presupposes that it is visible what needs to be done. The normative justification for addressing "the existing shortfalls" of the European defence capabilities is the *unjustified* Russian invasion and the 'other's violation of the international rules-based order.

In several sections in the EC's (2024c) communication, they also refer to the war of Russia against Ukraine as either unlawful (e.g. p.2 & 5) or unjustified (e.g. p.5 & 13). For instance, the EC (2024c, p.5), writes that "Russia's unlawful war of aggression against Ukraine has drastically and structurally modified the security environment in Europe which results into a new market situation for the EDTIB." They further assert that "(y)et two years after the outbreak of Russia's *unjustified* war in Ukraine, the EDTIB still *needs* to adapt to this new reality" (EC, 2024c, p.5, emphasis added). That the EDTIB *needs* to adapt to this new security reality can be connected to the findings of representation one, as it is both implied and explicitly expressed that the structurally modified security environment *necessitates* an adaptation to it, which in turn

implies that the EDTIB in particular needs to adapt. Once again drawing upon Fairclough's (2000, p.28) observation that "signifying that the world is changing" implies that "we have to change too", the structurally modified security environment implies in this context that the EDTIB needs to adapt to the changing circumstances and that the new defence industrial strategies can help achieve this.

If one can equate the notions of 'unlawful' and 'unjustified' wars with violating the international rules-based order, then one can argue that the EC's emphasis on Russia's unjustifiableness and unlawfulness represents the 'other' as violating the international rules-based order. Nonetheless, it may be considered as more explicitly expressed when the EC writes that:

Russia must be held fully accountable and pay for the massive damage caused by its war of aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a *blatant violation* of the Charter of the United Nations. The Union and its Member States should, in close cooperation with other international partners, continue to work towards this goal, in accordance with Union and international law, taking into account Russia's serious *breach* of the prohibition on the use of force enshrined in Article 2(4) of the Charter of the United Nations and the principle of State responsibility for internationally wrongful acts (EC, 2024c, p.15, emphasis added).

The EC is discursively depicting the 'other's war as e.g. a "blatant violation" of the UN Charter, and a "serious breach of the prohibition on the use of force", in discordance with international law. This is very much in line with Riddervold and Rieker's (2024) findings that Russia's breach of the UN Charter and its threat to the international rules-based order became the primary normative justification for its urgent and decisive response to Russia's invasion. However, what cannot be found is an *explicit* condemnation of Russia's violation of the principles of sovereign internationalism per se, drawing upon Krickovic and Sakwa (2022), i.e. by infringing upon another state's (Ukraine's) sovereignty. Nonetheless, all in all, the EC has represented the 'other' as violating the international rules-based order by normatively justifying the strengthening of the European defence based on the 'other's violations of the UN Charter and international law.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

6.1 Findings

The aim of this thesis was to analyse the EC's normative and non-normative justifications as well as the EC's representations of the 'self' (the EU) and the 'other' (Russia) to strengthen the European defence industry in light of the Russian invasion. In addition, how these justifications for implementing the new defence industrial strategies are connected to the EC's representations and, in turn, what identity the EC is constructing based on its representations of the 'self' and the 'other'.

To summarise the findings, all four representations of the 'self' and the 'other' have been detected within the EC's new defence industrial strategies through both explicit and implicit normative and non-normative justifications. For instance, the EC has not *explicitly* represented the 'self' as a defender of the international rules-based order, but I interpret the EC's language as *implying* it. Moreover, one can find many instances in which the EC demonstrates its persuasive language as an ideational entrepreneur, which in turn is in line with Juncos' and Vanhoonacker's (2024) findings that the EC has attempted to convince the MS to embrace the new idea of strategic autonomy. Not only the idea of strategic autonomy, but also of contributing to the EU's core norms such as peace and fundamental rights via the strengthening of the European defence.

Related to the EC's persuasive language as an ideational entrepreneur and from a critical discourse-analytical perspective, the EC has used persuasive terms such as 'requires' and 'compelling need' for increased investments into the European defence. Furthermore, the EC has persuasively justified its actions by using terms that demonstrate the logic of an argument such as 'therefore', 'thereby', and 'given'. What is more, the EC has affirmed that it is 'clear' what 'needs' to be done, which 'necessitates' certain actions. Lastly, the EC has signalled that the geopolitical circumstances are 'new', implying that the EU but in particular the EDTIB must adapt accordingly, but also that there is a 'risk' in opting for national solutions rather than 'investing European' and exhibiting 'solidarity'. These are all, I argue, a language of justifications for strengthening the European defence which are based on representations of the 'self' and the 'other'.

The EC has utilised both normative and non-normative justifications for strengthening the European defence. The normative justifications have involved references to a strengthened

EDTIB's contribution to international peace and the protection of democratic values (which both constitute the EU's core norms) and enhancement of solidarity between MS. In this manner, and through its normative justifications, the EC has represented the 'self' as a defender of the international rules-based order and as a driver for deepened European market integration, and hence constructed the 'self' as an NPE (identity formation). I have not found any previous literature that exhibit the normative justification and argument made by the EC that a strengthened EDTIB *in particular* will contribute to international peace. Although Björkdahl (2011) did detect the argument that military coercion and the deployment of military forces can contribute to international peace and security, she does not write about the EDTIB *per se*.

While the EC represents the 'self' as a defender of the international rights-based order by its normative justifications, the discursive act of representing the 'other' (Russia) as the opposite (violating the rules-based international order), reinforces the dichotomy of who is following/upholding a rules-based international order and who is not, at least in the eyes of the EC. For instance, the EC has represented Russia as challenging the international rules-based order by its 'blatant violation' and 'breach' of the UN Charter and international law, as well as referred to Russia's invasion as 'unjustified' and 'unlawful' on multiple occasions. The representations of Russia became the normative justifications for strengthening the European defence and for implementing the new defence industrial strategies.

The EC has also non-normatively justified the implementation of the new defence industrial strategies and the strengthening of the European defence by pointing to the 'new geopolitical circumstances', the war taking place on 'European soil' (territory), the (in)security of defence supplies (geoeconomics), and to the geopolitical competitions in key strategic areas. Due to these reasons, the EC argues, it 'requires' and there is a 'compelling need' for investing in the European defence. What is more, Ukraine has been included in the 'prospective we' which in accordance with Johansson-Nogués and Leso's (2024) findings represents a shift in 'geopolitical mindscape'. This has also contributed to the EC's representation of the 'self' as an active geopolitical actor.

In connection to what was earlier touched upon in section 2.2.3, the EC may seem to represent the 'self' as both a geopolitical actor *and* a defender of the international rules-based order in the results of the analysis, which might appear arbitrary. Nonetheless, and although Raik et al.'s (2024) findings show that the EU has emerged as a 'geopolitical actor' by defending the European vision of an international rules-based order, the EC's general lack of normative justifications within its representations of the 'self' as a geopolitical actor shows that

the EC is *not only* using NPE discourses. The EC's justifications in the analysis section 'representation one' should be interpreted as non-normative as they neither refer to moral principles (e.g. 'liberty' or 'rights') nor to the EU's core norms.

The question that naturally arises from these observations revolves around the EU's fundamental identity through the EC's representations and its hegemonic struggles of competing norms. In other words, are the two separate discourses of geopolitics vis-à-vis normative claims compatible and possible to merge into one 'principled pragmatist' identity? Della Sala (2023) meant that these two discourses have kept the EU from becoming a credible geopolitical actor and brought into question the EU's fundamental identity, and Helwig (2022) has observed a role ambiguity.

However, Riddervold and Rieker (2024) as well as Rieker and Blockmans (2021) maintained that one cannot fully comprehend the EU's foreign policy identity merely through the conventional theoretical lenses. Instead, one should understand the EU's new 'principled pragmatist' identity as combining short-term *strategic* interests with long-term *normative* goals in its foreign policy. Perhaps my finding of the normative justification made by the EC that a strengthened EDTIB will contribute to international peace is a case in point. Still, Juncos (2016) questioned the potentiality of a 'pragmatic approach', since combining strategic interests with normative goals will not result in less criticism of its double-standards, and that it will instead merely highlight the EU's weaknesses as an international actor.

Based on the findings in the analysis, which shows that the EC has represented the 'self' as both an NPE and a geopolitical actor, and on previous literature, I conclude that it seems as though Helwig's (2022) observation of a role ambiguity is here to stay. The EC's new 'principled pragmatist' identity's ambivalent nature have the potential to fundamentally challenge the EU's NPE identity, and to weaken its normative claims, as the EC's geostrategic justifications are *not* based on the EU's core norms or normative discourses. Finally, as the EC's self-perception has changed through its representations, external states might perceive the EU differently in the future, which in turn could significantly alter the geopolitical landscape.

6.2 Limitations and delimitations

Delimitations have been made regarding the material selected, which is mainly due to the time and scope limit for this thesis. For instance, the empirical material ranges from 2022 to 2024

and I have not compared the period before and after the invasion due to the reasons above. In addition, there are several limitations with this thesis.

Firstly, the data was only collected from one sort of text (written communication), solely produced by the EC through EU channels (i.e. primary material). Press releases, news articles, speeches (by for instance the EC's president Ursula von der Leyen), fact sheets, work programmes, documents regarding the EC's implementation-decisions could all have been selected as material for this thesis. However, due to their lack of focus on *specifically* defence industrial strategies, these do not provide sufficient data for answering the research question. For instance, von der Leyen's speech at the Summit of Versailles (EC, 2022b) merely mentions defence investments in Europe once and focuses more on the dependency on Russian fossil fuels. Moreover, the Versailles Declaration provides limited discussion about the defence industrial strategies per se, which renders it more difficult to justify the inclusion of such a document in an analysis of argumentative representations. Consequently, this material has not been analysed.

Implementation-decisions, fact sheets and work programmes mainly focus on the financing aspect of the strategies, rather than the argumentations of why they would implement such strategies. In similarity, the press releases tend to merely focus on the concrete ways to implement these strategies, by including e.g. the financial input needed, the exact military technologies to use, and the annual work programmes. What is more, although 'texts' can be understood not merely as written but as multimodal texts, e.g. a mixture of verbal communication, visual images and sounds, I have decided to only analyse written communications mainly due to the time limit and scope of this thesis.

Acknowledging that there are other dates in the timeline that have been excluded in the list above, the selection process of these particular dates was based on the launches, presentations, or adoptions of the industrial defence strategies themselves and on official communication soon after the invasion. The EDF, EDIRPA, ASAP, EDIP and EDIS are all included in these.

The study uses a single theoretical perspective (NPE) and while it is an appropriate theory to use for representations two, three and four, the first representation is not explicitly connected to earlier NPE literature (e.g. in Manners or Diez' research or in other NPE literature from the early 2000s). However, I argue that the first representation is necessary to include as it offers a counter perspective, and as it sheds light on what the EC does *not* justify based on normative claims and on the research field's current discussions.

Due to Raik et al.'s (2024) explanation of the EU's new geopolitical characteristics as involving the readiness to defend the European vision of an international rules-based order, one could interpret this as a normative justification for strengthening the European defence. Be that as it may, I deemed that a distinction should be made between the representation of the 'self' as a geopolitical actor and an NPE as this renders it simpler to distinguish between the EC's normative and non-normative justifications. All the other justifications that a 'geopolitical actor' utilises in this context should be interpreted as non-normative justifications (according to this thesis) as these do neither refer to moral principles deemed necessary to bring about (e.g. 'liberty' or 'rights') nor to the EU's core norms.

Despite the thesis' several limitations and delimitations, this thesis has contributed to the field of political science with a specialisation in crisis management and security, as it has added valuable insights to NPE research, which is a widely used and discussed theoretical framework within political science research. In particular, it has contributed to the field of security studies (European security studies) as the thesis has provided a CDA on the EC's discourses that are related to the CSDP and the EU's security measures of deterrence through the EDTIB.

6.3 Future research

Regarding future research, I recommend examining how a representation of the 'self' (the EU) as a geopolitical actor may be compatible with an NPE identity formation and particularly how discourses exhibiting a geopolitical mindspace can be included in future NPE research. In other words, how for instance the EC's re-conceptualisation of the EU's spatial identity by the representation of Ukraine as part of the 'self' could be based on EU core norms and normative discourses. Acknowledging that recent research have already discussed the EU's new principled pragmatist identity and its combination of articulating strategic interests and normative ambitions, a study of the sort mentioned would provide an even more distinct picture of the EU as a whole as it would shed further light on what the EU's identity as an NPE might entail.

Finally, I recommend investigating how the EC's ideological framings or representations render it more difficult for single MS to object to increased defence integration (building upon Moravcsik's (1994) and Wagner's (2007) arguments). This may, in turn, entail a 'neutralisation' of politicisation rather than democratic deliberation (drawing upon e.g. Natorki's (2020) study).

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