# Make CSDP Great Again: Effects of Trump's rhetoric on public support for CSDP

Saldan, Stash

**Citation**

Saldan, S. (2025). *Make CSDP Great Again: Effects of Trump's rhetoric on public support for CSDP*.

5/12/2024

Stanislaw Saldan

s3422100

BAP Euroscepticism: Causes, Consequences, and Responses

Bachelor Thesis

Instructor: Nikoleta Yordanova

Second Reader: Karolina Pomorska

Word Count: 8000

# Make CSDP Great Again:

Effects of Trump's rhetoric on public support for CSDP

# Table of Contents

# Introduction

"We are the schmucks" thundered Donald Trump at a 2018 rally in Montana[1], highlighting continued concerns over the unfair distribution of the economic burdens of NATO security guarantees between the USA and its European allies. The costs of upholding the liberal international order (of which NATO is a part) were a central motif of Trump's first presidential campaign. Frequently, these sentiments were expressed in radical rhetoric congruent with the confrontational (Jacksonian) populist-nationalist style of the 45th POTUS (Mazur, 2020). This was most clearly exhibited in an extensive interview given to the New York Times (NYT) by the then freshly minted Republican presidential candidate after accepting his nomination during the Republican National Convention (RNC) on the 21st of July 2016, where he presented American commitments to come to allies' defense as conditional on allies meeting their financial obligations. On the eve of Trump's unexpected victory in November 2016, these threats gained unprecedented salience and credibility. Given both the centrality of NATO to the security of European states and their failure to meet the 2% of GDP expenditure guideline agreed at the 2014 Wales Summit, Trump's characterization of Article V as conditional deeply unsettled the core assumption underpinning the European security architecture: that the USA would always be the reliable, unconditional guarantor of collective security. Credibility of commitments is fundamental to alliance function; therefore (perceived) ***undermining*** thereof has significant implications for the security of alliance members (Walt, 1987). Trump's critical rhetoric on NATO undermined its credibility, prompting Europeans to reassess security arrangements and consider alternatives like the CSDP to hedge against potential U.S. abandonment. As such, this thesis will seek to investigate: *To what extent did individual evaluations of Trump's campaign rhetoric affect support for CSDP in joint EU/NATO member states, in the immediate aftermath of the 2016 US presidential election?*

This topic is currently incredibly salient due to the re-election of Donald Trump in the November 2024 American presidential elections which, in combination with the broader American strategic pivot to the Indo-Pacific away from Europe, and the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war are likely to continue to stress and transform the transatlantic security

---

relationship, exacerbating challenges to European security and prompting evaluations of alternative means to addressing a complex, evolving, threat environment.

Furthermore, a focus on individual level perceptions and attitude formation is both justified and insightful in this analytical context. In contrast to early scholarship on foreign and security policy influenced by the Almond-Lippman consensus and Realist IR theory, which disregarded public attitudes as inconsistent and volatile 'non-attitudes' formed by uninformed publics (Almond, 1950; Lippman, 1922; Converse, 1964), with no bearing on the opaque, rational decision-making of self-interested, 'black-box', unitary states wherein a lack of public scrutiny creates no incentives for elite responsivity to domestic factors like public opinion (Morgenthau, 1973), this thesis, drawing on revisionist literature, will work from the assumption that public opinion is relevant to the study of European defence integration. This notion is supported by Shapiro and Page (1988) and Holsti (1992), who provide empirical evidence and theoretical mechanisms of public opinion being structured and influential in shaping foreign policy through domestic political pressures. Similarly, Putnam's (1988) model of diplomacy as a two-level game where negotiators aim to appease peers at the international level as well as domestic stakeholders corroborates this view. Finally, Opperman and Hose (2007; 2008) working from a conceptualization of democratic political systems wherein the electorate (principle) delegates limited authority to a government (agent), argue that public opinion may significantly constrain foreign policy choices and act as a catalyst of either cooperation or conflict specifically within the US-EU relations and defense integration contexts, thereby justifying analysis of individual attitudes.

As such, understanding the influence of individual US leader evaluations on defence-policy preferences in 2016 may provide important insights into the future of European security, especially since early work by Mader and Schoen (2023), suggests that the Russian invasion has not precipitated significant nor permanent changes in European attitudes thus findings are likely to retain relevance. Hence, this thesis will attempt to illuminate the influence Trump's rhetoric may have had on individual attitudes towards CSDP by discussing competing theories regarding the sources of CSDP support, formulating falsifiable hypotheses grounded in literature, testing their validity through cross-sectional quantitative analysis of Eurobarometer survey data, and concluding with a discussion of the findings and their implications.

# Literature Review

This section will provide a brief overview of competing theoretical perspectives on the sources of CSDP support and identify opportunities to extend the literature.

## Rational Evaluations

Utilitarian approaches posit CSDP attitude formation is a function of individual's subjective cost/benefit calculus on both egocentric and sociotropic levels. Schoen (2008) identifies perceived national military capabilities and level of external threat as the main determinants of this calculation. Hence, he expects militarily weak states faced with significant external threats stand to gain more from pooling resources than their (subjectively) stronger and safer counterparts and thus be more supportive of CSDP. This is corroborated by findings from the field of political economy as public opinion was found to be responsive to perceived threat environments as evidenced by increased individual support for defense spending when provided with information about credible external threats DiGiuseppe et al. (2023). Furthermore, Mader et al. (2024) argue, using psychological literature, that significant external threats activate effortful (System 2) processing at the individual level privileging accurate and systematic reasoning thereby corroborating rationalist assumptions regarding individual thought processes. Therefore, in combination with the logic of functional pressures, individuals employing rational processing modes are expected to evaluate further integration as the most effective means of addressing external threats that current political authority structures are deemed to inadequate to handle

## Influence of Identity

On the other hand, identitarian explanations stress the potential for political factors to disrupt rationalist/functionalist pressures for integration. Identity shapes support for integration generally and CSDP in particular, because it determines who an individual perceives as their 'in-group'. This is significant as collective identification promotes in-group trust, cooperation, and even personal sacrifices for the good of the group (Gehring, 2022). Collective identities are often territorially bound as individuals feel attachments to towns, regions, nations or even global communities, often simultaneously (Carey, 2002). Territories, in turn, correspond to

political units which exercise authority within them, with the highest political unit individuals feeling allegiance to being the 'terminal community' (Carey, 2002). Thus, individual perceptions of the legitimacy of the exercise of political authority are dependent on collective identification with governments.

Therefore, governance may be conceived of not only as a means of co-ordinating human activity to achieve collective benefits but also as an expression of community (Hooghe & Marks, 2009). As such, competence is not the sole determinant of government legitimacy as communities demand self-rule because individuals emotionally prefer to have authority exercised by 'one of their own' (Harteveld et al, 2013). Consequently, competing demands result in divergent political pressures as territorial communities rarely overlap with functionally optimal levels of regional authority (Hooghe & Marks, 2009).

This is of relevance in the European context where extensive multi-level governance system of the EU which, through the pooling of state sovereignty seeks to achieve functionally optimal governance outcomes, inherently limits the autonomy and distinctiveness of national governments and communities respectively (Hooghe & Marks, 2005). Therefore, because individuals identify different collectives as their 'in-groups' with whom they are predisposed to cooperate, especially in the context characterised by external threats (Mader et al., 2024), (perceived) limitations to national self-rule engender contestation of (further) integration on identitarian grounds. This effect is particularly pronounced given the relative strength and thus political significance of national identities in the European socio-cultural context (Hooghe & Marks, 2004)

Hence, with regard to support for CSDP, individuals who identify inclusively with Europe consider the EU and its institutions as elements of their ingroup while those who identify exclusively nationally perceive integration as deeper collaboration with outgroups which necessitates compromises and additional costs (Mader et al., 2024; Schoen, 2008). As such, inclusive identities should increase the likelihoods of defence integration being perceived as enhancing security and thus engendering more support for CSDP a notion empirically enjoying empirical support (Mader et al., 2024; Schoen, 2008).

On the other hand, exclusively identifying individuals should view the transfer of sovereign attributes to supranational organisations via common defence policies with greater

scepticism as exclusive identification is strongly linked with traditional notions of the state as the only legitimate actor in defence policy. Moreover, national identities encompassing a neutral state role in international relations should further decrease likelihood of CSDP support as ceding autonomy in defence affairs corresponds to greater risk of embroilment in conflict. Overall, exclusive identification should decrease CSDP support as it is perceived as counterproductive to national defence efforts. However, the empirical record of this approach is mixed. While Schoen (2008) found neutral and exclusive conceptions of identity corresponded to lower CSDP support, more recent work by Mader et al. (2024) found contradictory evidence as CSDP support did not vary as a function of identity. However, this finding was likely influenced by the context of acute external threat felt across the continent because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine (Smith 2022a; b). This high-cost context universally privileged rational reasoning and hence support for CSDP overriding identitarian concerns over national sovereignty or concerns about out-group cooperation (Mader et al., 2024), a conditional effect also expected by Schoen (2008).

## Retrospective Performance Evaluations

Conversely, performance driven theories of CSDP support posit that attitudes are formed through retrospective evaluations of the EU's performance. Schoen (2008) divides these into two categories: evaluation of the specific content of collective decisions and actions undertaken by EU actors (Policy Support) as well as Regime/Diffuse support which considers constitutional elements of the union, such as its treaties, institutions, or democratic performance/legitimacy. As such, individuals positively evaluating the content of past EU foreign and defence policy are expected to support (expansion of) CSDP while those evaluating past policy performance negatively would not (Hobolt and De Vries, 2016). Such retrospective policy performance evaluations are distinct from short-term instrumental rationalist cost-benefit calculations because they place emphasis on factors such as responsiveness to public preferences, alignment with norms, consistency, or support for post-materialist goals like environmental protection or human rights thereby capturing a broader selection of factors (Schoen, 2008). Similarly, those perceiving the EU as legitimate due to its constitutional form or democratic performance are expected to be more supportive of CSDP and vice versa, however this theory did not receive empirical support (Schoen, 2008).

## Strategic Posture

Additionally, a budding literature has explored the influence of pre-existing social conceptions of security in shaping attitudes towards CSDP. The argument posits that individual's view on security in general are not reducible to, but interact with, appreciation of the EU, its policies, and instrumental calculations of national interest to shape attitudes towards CSDP (Irondelle et al., 2015). Specifically, strategic postures are conceptualized across two dimensions: representations of security, and representations of power projection. The former refers to the degree individuals conceives of security as relating to traditional 'hard' military factors as opposed to broader 'softer' conceptions which include considerations of economic, environmental or social factors too. In turn, the latter refers to the importance accorded to international security challenges and power projection on the international stage. This spectrum ranges from 'outward-looking' individuals subscribing to the view that assertion of the political and diplomatic importance of the EU globally ought to be a priority vis a vis domestic concerns to 'inward-looking' individuals who don't. Additionally, Steinbrecher (2018) conceptualizes a third dimension of strategic posture relating to the importance ascribed to international cooperation to address security crises i.e. multilateralism. While this model significantly supplements understandings of CSDP support its implications are complex due to interactions between preferences over political ideals and defence in a context where the meaning of 'European defence' is far from fixed. As such, constitutive questions of 'should a European defence policy exist?' are blurred with isomorphic questions regarding its (potential) function. However, in general, quantitative empirical public opinion analyses found inward-oriented Pacifists and outward-oriented Militarists ("Globalists") are significantly more likely to support European defence cooperation than outward-oriented advocates of soft power ("Humanitarians") or inward-looking advocates of hard power ("Traditionalists") moreover, significant positive effects on CSDP support were associated with advocates of multilateral cooperation (Steinbrecher, 2018; Mader, 2015; Graf, 2020; Irondelle et al., 2015).

## Member State Trust

Furthermore, Genna and Justwan (2018) postulate that CSDP support is affected by the trust placed in EU member states particularly powerful states like Germany. Working from the premise that integration and its development is influenced by and dependent on the resources

of (especially the more powerful) member states, trust therein is a variable crucial to understanding preferences over defence integration. Individuals who trust other European countries are likelier to support CSDP as they perceive the risk of exploitation by others through institutional arrangements to be smaller. Contrarily, individuals who do not trust other EU countries perceive ceding policy control to the supranational level as opening the door to being taken advantage of by others hence rejecting a common security policy. Moreover, this relationship is weighted by the relative power countries wield in intergovernmental decision-making processes. As such, trust in powerful pro-CSDP states should exert a positive effect on CSDP support. Overall, trust in other member states increases CSDP support as the risks of incurring tangible costs are discounted against the hope for longer term benefit resultant from supranational decision making in this policy area (Genna & Justwan, 2018).

## Anti-Americanism

Finally, any consideration of indigenous European security structures must include their implications for, and relationship with, the current institutional structure governing this policy area and its main guarantor in NATO and the United States respectively. Since the end of the second world war the transatlantic relationship has been a cornerstone of the European security architecture. American military and economic might exercised through the NATO alliance was, and continues to be, the primary framework through which the collective security of European states is guaranteed. As such, throughout the cold-war period indigenous security frameworks (Like the WEU) were relegated to irrelevance and dormancy due to lack of political consensus and dominance of NATO in this policy area (Peters, 2014).

The collapse of the USSR fundamentally reshaped the geopolitical threat environment by removing a powerful incentive for transatlantic cooperation as well as precipitating a reorientation of American foreign and security policy from the European to the Indo-Pacific theatre. These structural factors reduced the centrality of the US as guarantor of the European security order, thereby removing a degree of constraint on European states to consider other security arrangements (Ray & Johnston, 2007) given that support for NATO is highly correlated with the belief that US military presence is necessary to ensure European security (Everts, 1995).

However, opportunity alone is an insufficient condition for a redistribution of European defence preferences, for the status quo to be altered motive too is necessary, namely: Anti-Americanism (Ray & Johnston, 2007; Lawson & Hudson, 2015). This thesis defines Anti-Americanism as "a psychological tendency to hold negative views of the United States and of American society in general" (Keohane & Katzenstein, 2007). Anti-Americanism is a consistent attitude and has been directly linked to a preference for EU rather than NATO led defense policy (Ray & Johnston, 2007) because EU integration in the foreign policy sphere (of which defence policy is a constitutive element) is a means of counterbalancing and restraining the US on the world stage (Jensen et al., 2007).

Moreover, anti-Americanism is subdivided into liberal, social, and sovereign-nationalist varieties (Katzenstein & Keohane, 2007). The first liberal strand, focuses on critical evaluations of US government (foreign) policies which drive negative attitudes towards the US as whole in individuals otherwise positively identifying with American values due to the perceived hypocrisy of US actions inconsistent with said values. This was evident in the aftermath of the controversial 2003 US decision to invade Iraq. Disagreements over this US policy due to its perception as a hypocritical contradiction of the rules based international order (Habermas & Derrida, 2003) created a dispute within the transatlantic alliance an order of magnitude worse than previous crises resulting in a corresponding erosion of European goodwill towards the US (Ray & Johnston, 2007). Furthermore, the intense efforts of the Bush administration to obtain NATO involvement in Iraq forged a strong perception of NATO as an instrument of American foreign policy inextricably linking it to controversial American initiatives and damaging the organisations reputation in the process. Thus, critiques of US foreign policy resulted in negative attitudes towards the US, decreased desirability of NATO membership thereby providing a direct incentive to support CSDP as a means of counterbalancing American hegemonic unilateralism (Jensen et al., 2007).

Alternatively, (social) anti-Americanism may be driven by a rejection of capitalism and connected, disliked, social processes like globalisation as embodied abstractly by the US (Beyer & Liebe, 2015; Katzenstein & Keohane, 2007). The notion of negative attitudes towards the US originating in anti-capitalist attitudes enjoys empirical support given associations between indicators thereof such as negative evaluations of market economies, globalisation, or big business and more negative attitudes towards the US (Beyer & Liebe, 2015; Lawson & Hudson, 2015)

Finally, aversion towards the US may be shaped by distinct national histories of interaction with the US and collective memories thereof which influence individual attitude via socialisation processes (Beyer & Liebe, 2015; Lawson & Hudson, 2015). Sovereign-nationalist anti-Americanism reflects the significance of collective national identities, and the importance ascribed to state sovereignty. American cultural hegemony and exercise of coercive power over other states, depending on historical experience, may be perceived as a threat to these values and therefore lead to anti-American attitudes (Katzenstein & Keohane, 2007). Furthermore, because these country level effects are determined by collective memory they are assumed to be temporally stable as attitudes shaped by interaction are preserved and continue to influence behaviour and perception post-factum (Beyer & Liebe, 2015; McAdam, 2007).

While anti-American attitudes with socio-historical or anti-capitalist roots were not explicitly linked to support for further defence integration at the time of study, they were associated with demands for greater European autonomy from the US led security order. Lawson and Hudson (2015) speculate this was a result of perceived value convergence across the Atlantic. Crucially, such value convergence is not necessarily a stable state of affairs and may be subject to change given domestic political developments (McNamara, 2011) such as the election of an overtly NATO-sceptic POTUS with independent power to shape foreign policy/relations and who's unpredictability and rhetoric could reduce perceived reliability. Therefore, consideration of the various strains of anti-Americanisms are necessary for a comprehensive analysis of CSDP attitude formation given the centrality of the US and NATO to European defence policy.

## Research Gap

Overall, this extensive patchwork of micro and macro level determinants and their interactions provides a nuanced overview of public attitude formation towards common European defence policies. However, this body of knowledge is far from perfect. Availability of data frequently constrains the validity of causal arguments proposed as: reliance on cross-sectional rather than time-series data poses challenges to causal inference (Mader et al., 2024), single item/dimensional measures fail to fully capture complex latent concepts (Irondelle et al., 2015; Mader et al., 2024; Schoen 2008), significantly outdated data is used (Genna & Justwan,

2018; Irondelle et al., 2015), or analysis is constrained to a subset of EU states thus limiting finding generalisability and validity (Graf, 2020; Irondelle et al., 2015). Additionally, reliance on Eurobarometer data may influence findings beyond imperfect measurements given the survey's systemic pro-integration bias (Hopner & Jurczyk, 2015).

Beyond methodological considerations, insufficient attention has recently been explicitly afforded to the impact of US and NATO attitudes on individual-level CSDP attitude formation focusing instead on macro/institutional level analyses (Howorth, 2017; Mazur; 2020; McKay, 2023; Sperling and Webber, 2019; Schreer, 2019) or on influences on EU popularity in general rather than defence policy (Minkus et al., 2019). Moreover, while attempts to analyse the influence of transatlantic relations on CSDP support (Lawson & Hudson, 2015; Ray & Johnston, 2007) provide useful insights, they are limited by a) age as geopolitical developments (Mazur, 2020; Graf, 2020) as well as evolution and expansion of EU institutions and responsibilities (Genna & Justwan, 2018) have substantially transformed the context wherein European's form attitudes towards CSDP, b) use operationalisation of anti-Americanism which do not consider the influence of individual leader rhetoric on attitude formation and c) do not incorporate newer psychological insights into political attitude formation (Mader et al, 2024).

Hence, given that the unexpected election of Trump presents a critical juncture in the transatlantic relationship (Minkus et al., 2019) and his antagonistic campaign rhetoric was a significant departure from previous discourse shocking Europeans and undermining the perceived reliability of the US alliance as well as potentially being interpreted as a signal of diverging values across the Atlantic, this theses will argue that his election and leadership rhetoric generally, could be a consequential yet hereto unaddressed factor that could shape individual threat perceptions and thus CSDP support as a means of addressing said threat. As such, by integrating psychological insights, this thesis will propose a theoretical framework for understanding how interpretations of leader rhetoric may influence individual defence policy preferences.

## Theoretical Framework

Ray and Johnston (2007) outlined how the collapse of the USSR removed a structural constraining factor on European states security strategy. However, opportunity alone is

insufficient to alter European public collective defence policy preferences towards an indigenous solution in CSDP. For such an effect to be observed, motivation too is necessary (Ray and Johnston, 2007). This thesis will argue that this motivation should arise from the negative affect towards the US generated amongst European publics by the rhetoric of candidate (and then president-elect) Donald J. Trump during the immediate aftermath of, the 2016 US presidential election. To this effect, this section will propose a causal mechanism by which Trumpian rhetoric may have influenced support for CSDP amongst European publics by drawing on the Affective Reasoning Model (ARM) of alliance reliability assessment developed by Mingde Wang (2020).

## The Affective Reasoning Model

ARM diverges from Rational Choice models because it assumes agent rationality is considerably limited by cognitive and affective biases/heuristics. While agents still attempt rational interest calculations these are inescapably limited and shaped by prior beliefs and intuition (Wang, 2020). More significantly, emotions constitute an indispensable explanatory factor regulating certainty, shaping information interpretation and triggering perceptual change. As such, affective reasoners under ARM are far more closely related to homo sapiens than the homo economicus rationalist models propose. Therefore, ARM arguably is a far more useful and applicable framework to not only the study individual leaders as Wang (2020) proposes but also of regular citizens acting under generally relatively greater constraints on information and rationality. Additionally, as Sperling and Webber (2019) note, Trump's administration was chaotic and emotional and his views shaped by prejudices, ego, and flattery a context unconducive to analyses premised on actor rationality, yet one where a model which considers biases, heuristics, and affect may be a useful explanatory tool.

Rationalist models emphasise costly signalling i.e. provision of substantive evidence of costly commitments as the primary mechanism by which states communicate true intentions. This is because 'cheap' talk alone is insufficient to distinguish between genuine and deceptive actors (Wang, 2020). While parsimonious, this model rests upon a latent assumption that actors interpret signal meanings identically. ARM challenges this assumption. Costs incurred by senders are of secondary importance relative to receivers' subjective interpretations thereof as conditioned by socio-cultural contexts. Moreover,

psychological research challenges rational choice models of decision-making. McCabe and Smith (2000) found frequent violations of subjective utility maximisation logics as subjects engaged in reciprocal cooperation despite strong incentives to defect. Hence, given the significance of affect and prior beliefs in shaping cognition ARM posits reliability assessments are predicated not on signal costs but on saliency and credibility of sender's behavioural signals as determined by their: direct consequence vis a vis target self-interest, congruence with prior beliefs and emotions, as well as affective valence and intensity (Wang, 2020). As such, rational costs are supplanted by affective consequences information elicits in receivers.

## Trumpian Rhetoric Through the ARM Lens

Significant examples of Trumpian affective signalling throughout his campaign included: criticism of the inadequacy of European burden sharing[2], calling the alliance obsolete[3], as well as openly stating his commitment to upholding Article 5 guarantees was conditional on the fulfilment of financial obligations by NATO allies[4]. These threats and complaints gained immense salience, significance, and credibility as Trump's unexpected election brought them to the centre of European's attention and made their realisation a tangible possibility.

Evaluation of these signals through an ARM lens suggests they likely elicited strong emotional responses amongst European audiences. Portrayal of Article V as conditional implies direct negative consequences for European security interests, and therefore a negative affective signal valence. Furthermore, Trump's rhetoric can more broadly be interpreted as confrontational in tone given his framing American interests as superior to and often divergent from allied interests (Mazur, 2020) which similarly likely elicits negative emotions amongst Europeans. Finally, the stark departure from the tone of prior transatlantic communication of the unexpected victor of the 2016 elections was likely a major surprise to European publics thus intensifying affective reactions.

---

[2] Haberman and Sanger Trump Foreign Policy Interview for the New York Times (26 March 2016): https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/27/us/politics/donald-trump-transcript.html
[3] Milwaukee Republican Townhall Transcript (29 March 2016): https://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2016/03/29/full-rush-transcript-donald-trump-cnn-milwaukee-republican-presidential-town-hall/
[4] Haberman and Sanger Trump Foreign Policy Interview for the New York Times (21 July 2016): https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/22/us/politics/donald-trump-foreign-policy-interview.html

## Affect and the Transatlantic Relationship

Having established Trump's campaign rhetoric as likely generating intense emotions with a negative valence amongst European publics, the next step is evaluating the implications disaffection may have on the transatlantic relationship. Firstly, the strength of emotion elicited by Trumpian signalling likely increased its salience to European attitude formation as individuals tend to pay attention to affective signals which cause vivid emotional consequences as well as conflating affect intensity with signal credibility (Wang, 2020). In turn, credible, salient negative affective signals may influence the sender-receiver relationship: Disaffection diminishes perceived reliability (i.e. the ex-ante expectation of likelihood alliance partners will fulfil alliance commitments) due to its regulatory function over certainty (Wang, 2020). From a psychological perspective, uncertainty ought not to be conceived of as a neutral state of ignorance but rather an emotional configuration including affects with both positive and negative valence whose combined presence reduces certainty. This occurs because, negative affective signals decrease emotional attachment too and 'liking' of the target, hence weakening the feeling of likelihood that the actions of the target of said emotion can be relied upon when risks of opportunism arise (Wang, 2020). In summary, the sender of behavioural signals with a negative affective valence becomes perceived as less reliable.

Thus, via an ARM analysis a theoretical link has been established between the negative affective signalling of Trump and a reduction in his personal perceived reliability amongst European publics. Building from this foundation, the following section will attempt to establish how Trumps perceived reliability may have influenced European defence preferences. Distinctions between European evaluations of individual American presidential candidates become blurred with evaluations of the US as a whole following their election (Chiozza, 2009; Ray & Johnston, 2007). Moreover, general evaluations of the US also influence evaluations of NATO due the perceived role of the latter as an instrument of the former's foreign policy (Ray & Johnston, 2007). As such, it can be argued that affect based evaluations of Trumpian rhetoric spillover into general US and by extension NATO reliability assessments. Therefore, this thesis argues that the negative emotions Trumpian rhetoric elicited contributed to a decrease in perceived reliability of not only himself, but of the US and NATO too.

Hence, given public awareness of NATO's centrality in ensuring European security, doubts about its reliability likely reshape power distribution calculations, as allied capabilities are no longer guaranteed for deterrence and defense, thereby intensifying perceived threats (Walt, 1987). This heightened sense of threat, coupled with the erosion of confidence in existing alliance guarantees, likely drives European publics to support alternative collective security arrangements (Graf, 2020). Accordingly, following functionalist (Schoen, 2008; Mader et al., 2024) and transactionalist (Deutsch et al., 1957) theories of integration, diminished NATO credibility may produce a unifying "rally around the flag" effect amongst European publics, thereby encouraging the pooling of resources and sovereignty to address external threats.

Preliminary support for this notion is found in the alarmed responses of European leaders and publics with the former going so far as to openly propose the creation of a European army to hedge against dependence on an ally increasingly perceived as unreliable[5]. A sentiment seemingly consistent with public opinion[6] as evidenced by the erosion of trust in the US and its security guarantees through NATO.

Furthermore, this logic is expected to hold despite fears of a full-scale American withdrawal deemed unfounded post-factum, as deep institutionalisation of commitments made withdrawal unviable, and the overall record of the Trump administration being an increase in long term investment into and consolidation US of commitments to NATO (Sperling & Webber, 2019; Schreer, 2019). To understand this claim one must consider the information environment wherein European publics (re)formed their reliability assessments. Before the election ($T_{-1}$), individuals held some prior belief about American reliability. Under ARM prior beliefs shape interpretation of new information hence beliefs about perceived reliability at $T_{-1}$ will affect individual evaluations of American reliability at time $T_0$ i.e. the immediate aftermath of the 2016 election prior to Trump's assumption of office. Individuals are provided with information regarding the intentions of the new leader in the form of his campaign rhetoric. Crucially, in the immediate aftermath, the only information available to inform reliability

assessments towards the president-elect and thus the future administration, were subjective, affective interpretations of his intentions derived from campaign rhetoric, as substantive signalling through empowering actions or tangible demonstration of convergent interests could not be performed until the transfer of power was complete. Furthermore, other determinants of reliability assessment under ARM: capabilities, institutions, and reputation remain stable in the short term and thus should leave interpretations of Trump's rhetoric as the only source of information available for European reliability assesments.

Thus, within the temporal bounds of the immediate post-election period, individuals form attitudes based on subjective interpretations of Trump's behavioural signalling. If the negative affect signalled by Trump in interviews and on the campaign trail is congruent with prior beliefs, negative priors are reinforced. If negative affective signalling by Trump is incongruent with prior beliefs two contingencies are possible: if Trump induced negative emotional response are sufficiently vivid/intense, individuals may undergo perceptual change overhauling deep-seated belief systems by overriding pre-existing yet conflictual memories resulting in ambivalent or even negative evaluations of US reliability. Alternatively, if such a threshold is not reached individuals may assimilate novel information into pre-existing understandings (schema). This occurs through a practice dubbed 'beliefs defence', symptomatic of an underlying consistency bias whereby negative novel information is discounted against positive priors resulting in persistence of positive evaluations of US reliability.

## Hypotheses

Therefore, when evaluated through an ARM lens, Trump's behavioural signals transform from political posturing which may be deemed 'cheap talk', to salient, credible indicators of potential alliance unreliability and thus incentives to support indigenous collective defence regimes, given the emotional responses Trump likely elicited and the lack of alternative sources of information regarding the president-elect's true intentions. As such:

$H_1$: Negative evaluations of the USA will increase the likelihood of an individual supporting CSDP.

While, conceiving of CSDP support through a rationalist/neo-functionalist lens as a reaction to perceived US unreliability (Ray & Johnston, 2007; Wang 2020) and elevated threat perception (Mader et al., 2024) is an elegant theoretical account which enjoys empirical support, it fails to consider how differential conceptions of individuals' 'in-group' may mediate this relationship. Individuals with exclusive national identification while also less supportive of NATO in response to negative attitudes towards the USA, displayed a preference for national-led defence policy not CSDP (Ray & Johnston, 2007) This phenomenon is likely a result of individuals, with an emotional preference for governance by 'one of their own', perceiving defence cooperation with other Europeans they perceive as 'out-groups' as counterproductive to legitimate national defence efforts due to the compromises and costs CSDP could necessitate (Mader et al, 2024).

While Mader et al. (2024) find contradictory evidence: support for CSDP did not vary as a function of identity configurations. This finding was likely influenced by the context of acute threat resultant from Russian aggression. This is because, when conditioned by acute external threat occurrence, rational System 2 processing is prioritised (Mader et al., 2024) and thus defence integration may be regarded as enhancing national sovereignty and self-determination by effectively addressing external threats to the nation-state (Schoen, 2008). Consequently, even Europhobes may reluctantly recognise the merits of CSDP in effectively addressing Russian aggression (Mader et al., 2024). However, while subjective interpretations of Trump's sudden election as a socio-political threat are expected to increase support for CSDP (Minkus et al, 2019), given the abstract, intangible, non-military nature of this threat it is unlikely to produce sufficiently intense threat perceptions to universally override identitarian opposition to CSDP. Hence:

H$_2$: Negative evaluations of the US will not increase the likelihood of CSDP support in individuals holding exclusive national identifications.

# Research Design

## Data

This thesis will utilise data from Eurobarometer (EB) 86 to test the hypotheses outlined above. EB86 is a cross-sectional public opinion survey conducted across 35 European countries between the 3rd-14th November 2016 on behalf of the European Commission. This data was selected for its large sample size, coverage of all relevant countries and most importantly its perfect coincidence with the critical juncture of the 2016 US presidential elections. An evaluation of the influence of Trumpian rhetoric in the immediate aftermath of his election is beneficial because a) it facilitates an analysis of the influence of rhetoric in isolation. Prior to Trump's assumption of office no substantive costly signalling was possible by his administration, hence evaluations of the president-elect should be shaped primarily by interpretation of his rhetoric and not substantive policies his administration later implemented like European Deterrence Initiative funding nor Operation Atlantic Resolve which could be interpreted as empowering actions and demonstrations of convergent interest respectively i.e. costly substantive signal to reassure allies of US reliability (Sperling & Webber, 2019; Wang, 2020).

Moreover, the unexpected nature of Trump's victory constitutes a most likely scenario for observing effects of emotional responses under ARM. Given that most polls indicated a Clinton victory as the most likely outcome, Trump's election likely took Europeans by surprise (Minkus et al, 2019). Therefore, given that shocks provoke highly intense emotional experiences (Wang, 2020), EB86 likely captured a moment of peak emotional impact on public attitude formation and thus is conducive to ARM analysis.

To conduct the analysis, the original dataset was transformed to remove responses collected before November 9th to ensure respondents were aware of the election in line with best practice from prior research (Minkus et al, 2019). Secondly, given the theoretical link between Trump's rhetoric and CSDP support is mediated through NATO, only respondents from states with membership in both the EU and NATO are included. Finally, 'don't know' or otherwise invalid responses were recoded as NA, rendering the enclosing case incomplete and subject to listwise deletion, reducing the final sample size to 9930 observations.

## Method

This thesis will utilise a multi-step quantitative research design. Logistic regression with be used given the categorical nature of the response variable. Initially a bivariate model will be used to establish, prima facie, if Trump's rhetoric and CSDP support are related. Subsequently, through progressive inclusion of interaction and control terms conditional hypotheses formulated in the previous section will be tested. Finally, a fixed effects model with country dummy variables will be used to analyse micro-level determinants of CSDP support without the influence of inter-country variance.

## Operationalisation

The following section will justify decisions taken during variable operationalisation variables based on best practices, data limitations, and theory.

### Dependent Variable

Support for CSDP will be measured using item QA17_4: "What is your opinion on each of the following statements? Please tell me for each statement, whether you are for it or against it: A common defence and security policy among EU Member States". Responses are encoded into a binary factor variable as either 'for' or 'against' While this variable does not capture intensity of support nor the meaning of CSDP in terms of form or function to the individual, it is a satisfactory measure given this paper's focus on abstract support for defence integration.

### Independent Variable

This thesis posits Trump's rhetoric likely undermined perceived reliability of the US amongst European audiences following his election due to negative affective reactions. To capture this effect, item D73A_3: "At the present time, would you say that, in general, things are going in the right direction or in the wrong direction, in the USA?" is used as a best-available proxy. Responses are encoded as a 3-point Likert scale: 'right direction', 'wrong direction', and 'neither one nor the other' and treated as an ordinal approximation of a continuous variable in line with established practice (Sullivan & Artino, 2013).

While not ideal, the use of this item can still be justified. The question asks about the attitudes towards the perceived 'direction of travel' of developments in the US rather than an

evaluation of the US at a point in time. Hence, given the temporal proximity to the election (i.e. a development open to interpretation) and the well-documented conflation of attitudes towards newly elected US leaders with those towards the US as a whole (Chiozza, 2009; Ray & Johnston, 2007), responses to this question are likely shaped by, and capture, individual attitudes towards the president-elect formed on the basis of subjective interpretation/affective responses to behavioural signals sent during the campaign (Wang, 2020).

However, as the question does not mention the election nor their victor explicitly, the above interpretation's validity is contingent on the disaggregation of the effects of other factors that may shape responses to this question via the inclusion of the following control variables, in line with theoretical expectations:

## Control Variables

Due to the lack of explicit mention of Trump it must be assumed that responses to item D73A_3 are likely capture general attitudes towards the US exogenous of leadership evaluations, namely: social and sovereign-national anti-Americanism, evaluations of US foreign policy i.e. liberal anti-Americanism, trust in the US, respondent political sophistication, as well as age. Therefore, these factors will be controlled for in the following manner:

**Social Anti-Americanism**

Anti-American attitudes can stem from rejections of capitalism and its corresponding social phenomena, therefore anti-capitalism is a necessary factor to control for to isolate the effects of leadership evaluations. As such, given that globalisation is both a symbolic and material representation of American economic hegemony and has been empirically linked to social anti-Americanism, attitudes towards globalisation will be used as a proxy control for anti-capitalism. Globalisation attitudes are measured using item QA10_2: "Could you please tell me for each of the following, whether the term 'Globalisation 'brings to mind something very positive, fairly positive, fairly negative or very negative." Responses were dichotomised to distinguish between broadly pro-capitalist (1) and anti-capitalist respondents (0). While

this decision reduces data granularity, the coding aligns with the theoretical framework and eases interpretation therefore it is justified.

**Cultural Anti-Americanism**

To account for the influence of anti-American attitudes driven by negative collective memories of interactions with the US, a binary country-level indicator of cultural anti-Americanism will be constructed as no relevant survey items were present. Respondents from countries identified in the literature as explicitly holding anti-American views will be assigned 'negative' (1) reflecting the increased likelihood that respondents from these countries have been socialised into such attitudes. All other countries will be placed in a 'neutral' (0) reference category[7].

**Liberal Anti-Americanism**

Negative attitudes towards the US due to critical evaluations of US government (foreign) policies perceived as hypocritical, may positively influence support for CSDP (Lawson & Hudson, 2015) as a means of counterbalancing American hegemonic unilateralism (Jensen et al., 2007). However, given the substantial departure from the Obama era status quo in the transatlantic relationship Trump's election likely implied, these attitudes are likely to be driven by expectations of the impact of potential future Trump administration policies vis a vis European's ego/socio-tropic interests (Wang, 2020) rather than retrospective evaluations considered by previous literature. Therefore, because forward-looking interest calculations and allied reliability evaluations are mutually constitutive under ARM (Wang, 2020), they are considered endogenous to the 'direction of travel' measure used for the IV and thus do not require additional controls.

**Trust**

Another potential confound explaining attitudes towards both the US and CSDP is individual trust in: institutions like NATO or the EU (Economou & Kollias, 2023; Schoen, 2008), their national governments (Lawson & Hudson, 2015), other (powerful) EU member

---

[7] Full explanation of Cultural Anti-Americanism country coding decisions is available in Appendix A.

states (Genna & Justwan, 2018), or the US (Harteveld et al., 2013; Lawson & Hudson, 2015). However, the findings of Harteveld et al. (2013) indicate that trust in these various objects is not dependent on their characteristics, rather stemming from a common source: a 'trust syndrome' i.e. an individual psychological propensity for generalised social trust. This 'moralistic trust' was found to be a very strong predictor of diffuse support for the EU regardless of rational evaluation, emotional identification/attachment, or sophistication. Hence, this thesis will control for the general 'trust syndrome' rather than trust in specific institutions.

To measure this latent 'trust syndrome', a score was calculated based on responses to items:QA8A_6, 10, 12 ,13, and 15: "I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it: justice / the (NATIONALITY) legal system, political parties, the (NATIONALITY) government, The (NATIONALITY PARLIAMENT), and The United Nations". Responses are encoded as 'tend to trust' (1) and 'tend not to trust' (0) Trump administration. In line with Harteveld et al.'s (2013) methodology, Mokken Scale Analysis is used to demonstrate these items form a strong scale (H = 0.575). Hence, an institutional trust variable was computed as: the number of positive responses to the battery of questions out of five:

$$Institutional\ Trust = \frac{\sum(Positive\ Responses)}{5}$$

**External Threat**

External threats should result in functional pressure to, and instrumental benefits from, pooling military capabilities via CSDP to effectively address security challenges (Mader et al., 2024; Schoen, 2008). Due to a lack of survey items addressing individual external threat perception another binary country level indicator will be constructed with respondents from former Warsaw pact states assigned (1). All other countries are placed in the reference category and assigned (0).

While this operationalisation vastly oversimplifies the myriad factors affecting threat perceptions) it was deemed the most suitable and theoretically coherent measure available.

The decision to focus solely on the effects of the Russian threat was made because Russia, unlike alternative sources of threat perception like terrorism analysed by Mader et al. (2024), is a state actor capable of threatening European sovereignty thus granting it a unique capacity to influence defence integration. Under Walt's (1987) 'Balance of Threat' framework, the combination of Russia's substantial military capabilities and geographic proximity of former Warsaw pact states make it a significant external threat. Furthermore, collective memories of historical Russian aggression/domination likely intensify threat perceptions by increasing the likelihood geopolitical developments like Russian annexation of Crimea being perceived as signifying aggressive intent and a threat to state sovereignty. Therefore, this operationalisation should provide a somewhat accurate measure of threat perception as former Warsaw pact states share histories of subjugation by and vulnerability too Russia which through socialisation shape threat perceptions that their Western counterparts do not. Furthermore, geographic classification of threat enjoys support in the broader literature e.g. Pezard et al. (2017).

**Sophistication**

Given that effective rational reasoning about the merits of security policy requires a degree of expertise (Mader et al, 2024) and that a lack thereof often forces evaluations based on prior beliefs, heuristics, or affect rather than systematic processing (Wang, 2020) sophistication is a likely confound as it both enables appraisals of CSDP effectiveness, and decreases the relative influence of affective responses to Trumpian rhetoric in shaping perceived US reliability given increased likelihood of awareness of structural constraining factors limiting American exit options from NATO (McKay, 2023; Sperling & Webber, 2019).

Hence, sophistication is operationalised in line with Mader et al. (2024) using the 'euknowl' summary variable from EB86 which collates responses to questions regarding objective knowledge of the European Union across 3 levels: 1 Bad (no correct answer / DK), 2 Average (one or two correct answers), 3 Good (three correct answers) which will be treated as an ordinal approximation of a continuous numerical variable.

**Age**

Finally, age is included as a control because it may act as a confound affecting both CSDP support and US Attitudes as socio-cultural contexts experienced during formative years (such as growing up during the Cold War) or direct memories of earlier, more favourably evaluated US leaders, actions, and administrations can shape threat perceptions and thus CSDP support (Schoen, 2008; Lawson & Hudson, 2015) or provide potent positive prior schema against which novel information regarding Trump may be discounted thus biasing US reliability evaluations respectively (Wang, 2020). Age was operationalized as the respondents age in years (item D11).

## Interactions

**Identity**

Finally, given that identity configurations should theoretically mediate the US attitude - CSDP support relationship by determining whether decreased perceived reliability of the US/NATO translates to individual support for alternative, national or supranational defence policies (Ray & Johnston, 2007), an interaction term between US Attitude and Identity configuration will be included.

Territorial identities may be conceived of as inclusive or exclusive of other territorial identities (Carey, 2002; Hooghe & Marks, 2004). In line with Mader et al. (2024), items: QD1A_2 and 4: "Please tell me how attached you feel to: (OUR COUNTRY) and Europe", were used. Responses were dichotomised above the scale midpoint indicating if an individual felt attachment to a political object. Respondents reporting attachment to their nation alone were classified as "exclusive", those attached to both their nation and Europe or just Europe were classified as "inclusive," while those scoring below the midpoint on both items were classified as "unattached". Subsequently, two dummy variables using (0) as the reference category were constructed: **Inclusive** (1 = inclusive identifiers, 0 = others) and **Exclusive** (1 = exclusive identifiers, 0 = others). The former will act as a control variable while the latter will be interacted with US Attitudes. Separation, into dummies justified to isolate the theoretically relevant exclusive identity factor, simplifying interaction analysis and enhancing interpretability.

# Results

Preliminary analysis indicated minor multicollinearity issues due to coding decisions rather than data problems. Elevated VIFs for Cultural anti-Americanism and Historical Russian Threat (country-level variables) reflect regional overlap in Central and Eastern Europe. Similarly, coding exclusive and inclusive identity as separate dummy variables, as well as interaction terms, introduced multicollinearity without affecting overall model validity. Logit linearity assumptions were met. Outlier (SRE > 1.96) frequency exceeded expectations, but had no significant impact on model fit, as Cook's D remained below threshold. Overall, no significant issues emerged[8].

Full regression results can be found in Table 1 (Appendix B). Results are reported in Odds Ratios (OR) and 95% confidence levels are employed. Model 1 regresses CSDP support over the US Attitude Likert Scale, Model 2 introduces theoretically justified control variables, Model 3 introduces an interaction between US attitude and exclusive identification but omits the controls to isolate interactive effects, Model 4 reintroduces controls, and finally Model 5 replaces macro-level control variables with country-level fixed effects to account for any potential omitted between-country variance to focus analysis on individual level determinants of CSDP support. Analysis will focus primarily on Model 4 (plotted in Figure 1) given the inclusion of all theoretically relevant indicators, with comparisons to other models when relevant.

Across Models 1-3 and 5, a trend contradictory to theoretical expectations emerges. A one unit increase on the US Attitude Likert scale, increases the odds of a respondent supporting CSDP between 26.4% (M1) and 8.9% (M5) ceteris paribus, this association is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Model 4 exhibits a weaker (6.5%) and

---

[8] For full overview of logistic regression assumption testing view datafile.

insignificant ($p = 0.126$) effect. As such, $H_1$ is rejected as no instance of US attitudes decreasing CSDP support probability were observed.
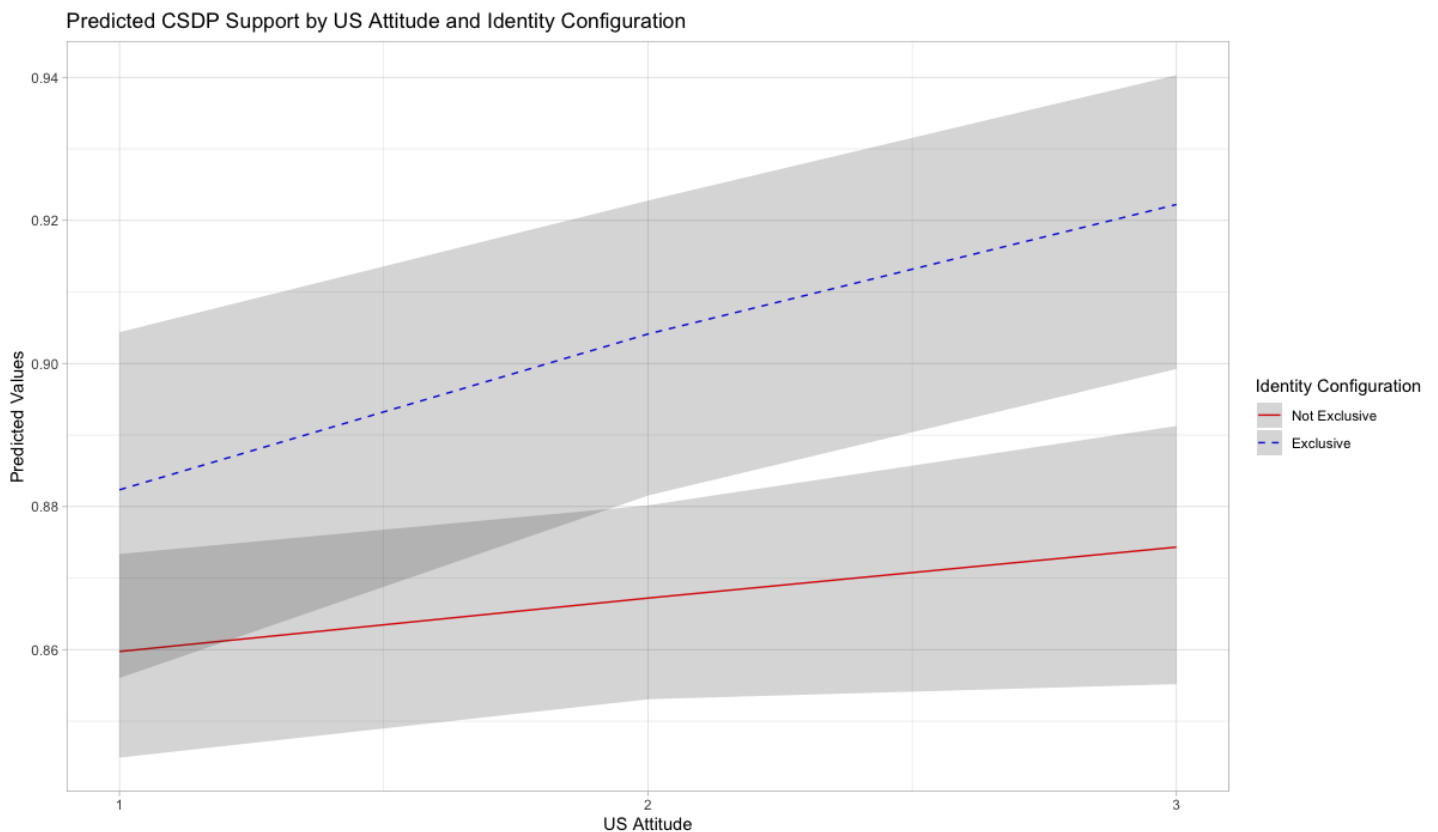


Predicted CSDP Support by US Attitude and Identity Configuration

*Figure 1*

Turning to $H_2$, in M3 the independent effect of exclusive identity is to decrease the odds of supporting CSDP by 38.6% in exclusively identifying individuals compared to the rest of the sample, and this effect is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). However, when the interaction between exclusive identity and attitudes toward the US is considered, the relationship changes: for individuals with exclusive national identity, each 1-point increase in the US Attitudes Likert scale results in a 14.8% higher likelihood of supporting CSDP. This interaction effect is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). This trend continues in M4 and M5 with exclusively identifying individuals being 18% and 15.8% more likely to support CSDP per unit increase in the US Attitudes Likert scale, ceteris paribus. This association too is statistically significant ($p<0.05$) although the independent effect of exclusive identification is not ($p>0.05$).

These findings are further illustrated by Figure 1; a graph of the effect of Attitudes towards the US on predicted probability of supporting CSDP across different identity

configurations in M4. M4 includes both the US attitude – exclusive identity interaction, and theoretically justified control variables. It differs from the other models due to the joint insignificance of the independent effects of both US attitude and exclusive identity ($p>0.05$). This phenomenon is visually represented by overlapping prediction line confidence intervals at the lowest value of the US Attitude Likert scale. This can be interpreted as no significant difference in the predicted probability of supporting CSDP between respondents of different identity configurations reporting the most negative attitudes towards the US. However, as US attitudes become more positive, the line predicting exclusively identifying respondents' likelihood of supporting CSDP diverges from its counterpart and confidence intervals cease to overlap providing a visual representation of the positive (OR>1) statistically significant ($p<0.05$) interaction between US attitude and exclusive identification.  Furthermore, the steeper slope of exclusive identifying respondents predicted probability curve signifies their relatively greater sensitivity to changes in US attitude.

Hence, $H_2$ is also rejected as exclusive identification did not decrease nor weaken the effect of US attitudes on respondent's likelihood of supporting CSDP. As such, given not only a rejection of both hypotheses but also direct empirical contradiction of theoretical expectations, the following section will attempt to diagnose the any potential causes of this divergence and evaluate mans of addressing these shortcomings.

# Discussion

As a first step, this section will dive deeper into Model 4 to assess the consistency of empirical evidence with theoretical expectations. Subsequently, through an evaluation of model performance, structure of key predictors and a critical review of the theoretical framework an attempt to explain contradictory empirical findings will be made and potential alternative explanations suggested from the literature.
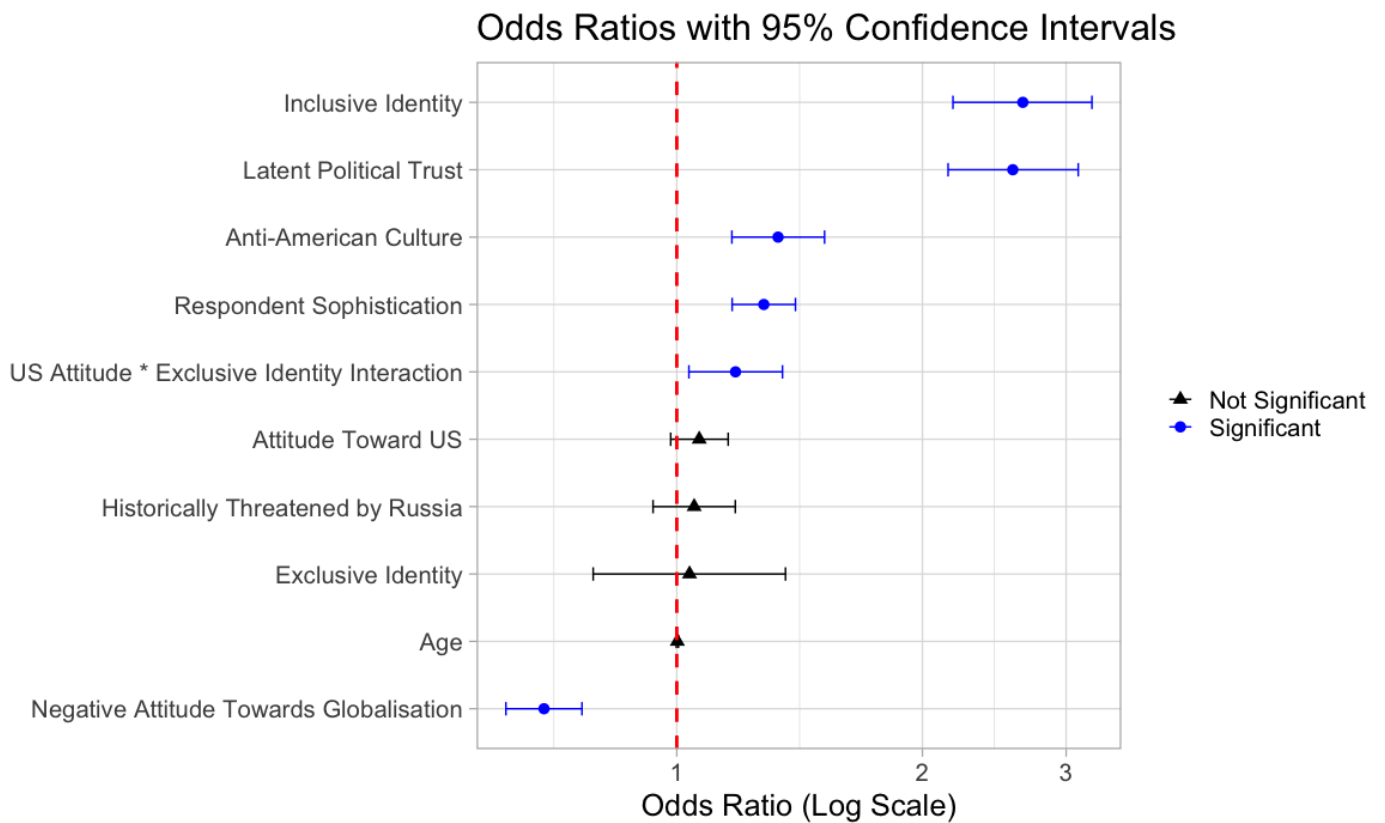
*Figure 2: Odds Ratio Plot (Model 4)*

Beyond a lack of statistical significance for the independent effects of US Attitudes and exclusive identity, M4 does not qualitatively differ significantly from its siblings. However, an analysis of Figure 2 reveals inconsistencies between observed and theorised effects, a divergence potentially attributable to methodological or theoretical shortcomings.

Firstly, Social Anti-Americanism defies theoretical expectations by exerting a significant negative effect on respondent's likelihood of supporting CSDP. While anti-capitalist attitudes enjoy strong theoretical links to anti-American attitudes (Beyer & Liebe, 2015; Katzenstein & Keohane, 2007), the reliance on a single survey item addressing attitudes toward globalization as a proxy for anti-capitalism limits the measure's validity (Schoen, 2008). Future research should address this by using multi-item scales (including questions on trust in big business (Beyer and Liebe, 2015) for instance), validated through factor analysis, to more accurately capture anti-capitalist attitudes. Additionally, an alternative theoretical approach, may consider potential influences of anti-capitalism on CSDP support due to the neoliberal nature of the EU.

Secondly, the External Threat Perception exerts an insignificant positive effect (p>0.05). While correct in sign, lack of statistical significance may be attributed to unaddressed, contextual, inter-country/individual variance overlooked by the top-down projection of structural factors approach employed in variable operationalisation. Binary classification of countries based on historical experience of Russian domination overlooks the influence of geographic proximity as not all 'threatened' countries share borders with Russia (Walt, 1987), other sources of threats like terrorism (Mader et al., 2024), or how contemporaneous national-political-climate could shape public perceptions of threat via elite/media framing (Fernandez et al, 2023), as well as the generally more positive attitude towards the US and NATO found in 'New Europe' (and specifically within countries with populist governments ideologically aligned with Trump such as Hungary or Poland which suffered less harsh rhetorical lashings) which work in tandem to disincentivise defection from NATO. This is corroborated by statistically significant negative country fixed effects[9] for many countries classified as threatened indicating that unobserved variance stemming from for example the victorious left-populist and euro-sceptic Smer and PiS governments in Slovakia and Poland respectively suggesting the need for better accounting for country level variance a la Peters (2014). Thus, further studies, ought to avoid top-down generalisation instead emphasising instead multi-faceted individual threat perception indexes like Mader et al. (2024).

The observed positive correlation between favorable attitudes toward the US and support for the CSDP, despite theoretical expectations of a negative relationship, may be attributed to several factors. Firstly, and most probable, the single-item proxy measure of US attitudes likely fails to capture accurate individual perceptions of US reliability and crucially the intensity of these feelings, due to the questions overly general wording. While it was assumed and theoretically justified that this question could be interpreted as an evaluation of the 2016 election it is likely that this item captured attitudes towards developments different than, and independent of, Trump's victory. Therefore, future research should reassess this relationship with questions directly prompting respondents to directly evaluate perceived reliability of US security guarantees, the intensity of these measures as well as other sources of external threat perception. Furthermore, another very significant problem  is the distribution of responses in both IV and DV measures was heavily skewed with the majority

---

[9] See Appendix C

of respondents supporting CSDP and evaluating the US positively, which may artificially inflate correlations and decrease model power because modal classes are likelier to be predicted; as evidenced by the very low (0.392) precision-recall area under curve (PR AUC) of M3 indicating poor predictive performance for the minority class (Negative US Attitude). While M4 improves on this with both receiver operating curves (ROC) AUC and PR AUC of (0.678) it still remains a weak discriminator (not far above the 0.5 AUC expected of a random/null classifier). Similarly, only Model 5 has a higher correct prediction percentage than the null model and Nagelkerke pseudo-$R^2$ values remain low 0.0092, 0.0422, 0.1003, 0.1419 for models M1, 3,4, and 5 respectively, Thus, these models have weak explanatory power suggesting further refinement is necessary[10]. Finally, the distribution of incomplete responses subject to listwise deletion was not equally distributed across country groups which may have introduced potential unaddressed bias into the dataset. This was not addressed due to lack of time and knowledge, but future research should investigate thoroughly and adopt different methods to avoid introduction of bias in this manner.

Additionally, improvements to the model could be made by incorporating theories of CSDP support outlined in the literature but not used in this analysis due to time and data constraints. These may include consideration of individual strategic postures (Irondelle et al., 2015), more nuanced questions regarding the form and function of CSDP rather than a binary support metric a la Graf (2020), effects of bilateral member-state relations with the US, media/elite cueing/framing (Fernandez et al., 2023), and conditional/interactive effects between e.g. threat perception and sophistication a la Mader et al. (2024) which were omitted from this analysis limiting validity and understanding of the key relationship.

Beyond methodological shortcomings, there may be flaws in the theoretical framework underpinning expectations. Firstly, NATO and CSDP may still have been perceived as complementary and that even the unexpected election of a unilateralist unpredictable leader was not significant enough a shock to signal Transatlantic interest divergence sufficiently severe to consider abandoning NATO (Beyer and Liebe, 2015). This notion is supported by results from Figure 1 showing exclusive identifiers are increasingly likely to support CSDP when holding more positive attitudes towards the US, which can be interpreted as a desire for continued alliance on more equal footing rather than full separation

---

[10] Full model evaluations available in datafile

(McNamara, 2011). Alternatively, Lawson and Hudson (2015) suggest that the positive correlation observed may capture an underlying anti-superpower sentiment. Hence, negative evaluations of the US and CSDP are expected to correlate as citizens are opposed to both US hegemony and the potential for European superpower status achieved through defense integration.

## Conclusion

This thesis argued, using an interdisciplinary approach integrating psychological insights to augment traditional rational choice models, that individual leaders and their rhetoric can shape public attitude formation towards defence policy through both affective and instrumental modes of reasoning. Specifically, that Trump's surprising election combined with overtly confrontational and NATO-sceptic rhetoric, could have undermined perceptions of US security guarantee credibility amongst European allies incentivising support for CSDP as an alternative to or hedge against alliance unreliability conditional on territorial identity configurations. Quantitative analysis reveals trends contradictory to theoretical expectations as CSDP support was associated with positive rather than negative attitudes towards the US in the immediate aftermath of the 2016 election. These results must be taken with a strong pinch of salt given the limitations outlined above, however they provide opportunities for further investigation.

Specifically, by challenging assumptions of traditional rational choice models through considerations of the roles of affect and constrained rationality on attitude formation this thesis provides a starting point for future research to expand understandings of the interplay between affective and instrumental reasoning across the study of individual attitude formation. Moreover, exploring the impact individual leader agency may have on both macro level state interactions and micro level attitude formation can prove a useful tool for analysing IR. This is especially true given the contemporary geopolitical landscape shaped by the re-election of Donald Trump, the ongoing war in Ukraine, and increasingly emotionally charged political discourses across the western world which emphasise the continued relevance of topics broached by this thesis including the role of leader agency, alliance reliability, and the role of emotion, bounded rationality, and identity in political decision making in political attitude formation and the future of European (defense) integration.

Additionally, this thesis contributes more broadly to the Euroscepticism literature by providing confirmatory evidence for the validity and usefulness of 'moralistic' conceptions of political trust developed by Harteveld et al. (2013).

This research could be expanded by collecting longitudinal data to enable causal inference by tracking changes over time as well as capturing effects of longer-term substantive intent signalling by the Trump administration. Furthermore, given the focus on individual level analysis through a psychological lens, qualitative approaches like interviews, specifically of statistically outlying cases, have the potential to greatly deepen understandings of the cognitive and affective processes that shape interpretations, evaluations, and attitude formation towards defense and foreign policy.

# Reference List

Almond, G. A. (1950). *The American People and Foreign Policy.* Brace and Company.

Beyer, H., Liebe, U. (2015) Anti-Americanism in Europe: Theoretical mechanisms and empirical evidence, *European Sociological Review*, *30*(1), 90–106.

Carey, S., (2002). Undivided loyalties: Is national identity an obstacle to European integration?. *European Union Publications. 3*(4). 387-413.

Chiozza, G. (2009). *Anti-Americanism and The American World Order*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Converse, P. E. (1964). The nature of belief systems in mass publics. *Critical review*, *18*(3), 1-74.

DiGiuseppe, M., Aspide, A., & Becker, J. (2023). Threats and the public constraint on military spending. *British Journal of Political Science*, *54*(3), 649-666.

Economou, A., Kollias, C. (2023). In NATO we trust(?): The Russian invasion of Ukraine and EU27 citizens' trust in NATO. *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy*, *29*(2), 129-144.

Everts, P. (1995). NATO, the European Community, and the United Nations. *Public opinion and internationalized governance*, *2*(1), 402-29.

Fernández, O., Vandendriessche, M., Saz-Carranza, A., Agell N., Franco, N., (2023) The impact of Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine on public perceptions of EU security and defence integration: a big data analysis*, Journal of European Integration. 45*(3). 463-485.

Gehring, K. (2022). Can external threats foster a European Union identity? Evidence from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. *The Economic Journal*, *132*(644), 1489-1516.

Genna, G.M., Justwan, F. (2019). Public perceptions of the European power Hierarchy and support for a single European security and defense policy. *The Social Science Journal*.

Graf, T. A. (2019). Unity in the face of threat? Exploring the empirical relationship between strategic threat perceptions and public support for a common European army in Germany. *European Security*, *29*(1), 55–73.

Habermas, J., & Derrida, J. (2003). February 15, or what binds Europeans together: A plea for a common foreign policy, beginning in the core of Europe. *Constellations*, *10*(3), 291-297.

Harteveld, E., van der Meer, T., de Vries, C. (2013). In Europe we trust? Exploring three logics of trust in the European Union. *European Union Politics*, *14*(4), 542–565.

Hobolt, S., de Vries, C., (2016) Public support for European integration. *Annual Review of Political Science. 19*(1). 413-432.

Holsti, O. R. (1992). Public opinion and foreign policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann consensus. *International Studies Quarterly, 36*(4), 439-466.

Hooghe, L., Marks, G. (2004). Does Identity or Economic Rationality Drive Public Opinion on European Integration? *Political Science and Politics*, *37*(3), 415–420.

Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2005). Calculation, community and cues: Public opinion on European integration. *European Union Politics, 6*(4), 419-443.

Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2009). A postfunctionalist theory of European integration: From permissive consensus to constraining dissensus. *British Journal of Political Science*, *39*(1), 1–23.

Höpner, M., Jurczyk, B. (2015). How the Eurobarometer Blurs the Line between Research and Propaganda. *MPIfG Discussion Paper*, *15*(6), 27.

Howorth, J. (2017). EU–NATO cooperation: The key to Europe's security future. *European Security*, *26*(3), 454– 459.

Irondelle, B., Merand, F., Foucault, M. (2015). Public support for European defence: Does strategic culture matter? *European Journal of Political Research. 54*(1). 363–383,

Jensen, C., Slapin, J., Konig, T. (2007). Who calls for a common EU foreign policy? Partisan constraints on CFSP reform. *European Union Politics. 8*(3). 387-410.

Katzenstein, P. J., & Keohane, R. O. (Eds.). (2007). *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics*, (1st ed.). Cornell University Press.

Lawson, C. W., & Hudson, J. (2015). Who is anti-American in the European Union? *Sage Open*, *5*(2)

Lippmann, W. (1922). *Public opinion*.

Mader, M. (2015). Grundhaltungen zur außen- und sicherheitspolitik in Deutschland. ed. Biehl, H., Schoen, H. (Eds.), *Sicherheitspolitik und Streitkräfte im Urteil der Bürger.* (pp. 69–96). Springer VS.

Mader, M., Gavras, K., Hofmann, S., Reifler, J., Schoen, H., Thomson, C., (2024). International threats and support for European security and defence integration: Evidence from 25 countries. *European Journal of Political Research, 63*(1), 433-454.

Mader, M., Schoen, H., (2023). No Zeitenwende (yet): Early assessment of German public opinion toward foreign and defence policy aster Russia's invasion of Ukraine. *Politische Vierteljahresschrift. 64*(1). 525-547.

Mazur, K., (2020). Doubtful ally or ally full of doubts? The course of the transatlantic relations under Donald Trump's presidency. *Studies in European Affairs. 2*(1). 21-36.

McAdam, D. (2007). Legacies of anti-Americanism: A sociological perspective. *Anti-americanisms in world politics*, 251-69.

McCabe, K., Smith, V. (2000) A comparison of naïve and sophisticated subject behaviour with game theoretic predictions, *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A. 97*(7) 3777-3781,

McKay, S. (2023). Common-pool resources and democracy. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 1-24.

McNamara, S. (2011). How President Obama's EU policy undercuts US interests. *Heritage Foundation.*

Meunier, S. (2005) Anti-Americanisms in France. *French Politics, Culture & Society, 23*(2), 126-141.

Minkus, L., Deutschmann, E., & Delhey, J. (2019). A Trump Effect on the EU's Popularity? The U.S. Presidential Election as a Natural Experiment. *Perspectives on Politics, 17*(02), 399–416.

Morgenthau, H. J. (1973). *Politics among nations*.

Oppermann, K., Höse, A. (2007). Public Opinion and the Development of the European Security and Defence Policy. *European Foreign Affairs Review. 12*(2), 149-167.

Oppermann, K., Höse, A. (2007) Transatlantic conflict and cooperation: What role for public opinion?, *Journal of Transatlantic Studies, 5*(1). 43-61.

Peters, D., (2014) European security policy for the people? Public opinion and the EU's Common Foreign, Security and Defence policy. *European Security. (23)*4. 388-408.

Pezard, S., Radin, A., Szayna, T., Larrabee, S., (2017) European relations with Russia: Threat perceptions, responses, and strategies in the wake of the Ukrainian crisis. *RAND Corporation.*

Putnam, R. (1988). Diplomacy and domestic policy: The logic of two-level games. *International Organization*, *42*(3)

Ray, L., Johnston, G., (2007). European anti-Americanism and choice for a European defence policy. *Political Science and Politics, 40*(1). 85-91.

Schoen, H., (2008). Identity, instrumental self-interest and institutional evaluations: Explaining public opinion on common European policies in foreign affairs and defence. *European Union Politics. 9*(1). 5-29.

Schreer, B. (2019). Trump, NATO and the Future of Europe's Defence, *The RUSI Journal*, *164*(1), 10–17.

Shapiro, R. Y., & Page, B. I. (1988). Foreign policy and the rational public. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *32*(2), 211-247.

Smith, M. (2022a, May 05). Support for EU army grows across Europe following Russian invasion of Ukraine. *YouGov Report.*

Smith, M. (2022b, March 16). What impact has the Russian invasion of Ukraine had on European attitudes to NATO? *YouGov Report*.

Sperling, J., Webber, M., (2019). Trump's foreign policy and NATO: Exit and voice. *Review of International Studies. 45*(3). 511-526.

Steinbrecher, M., Biehl, H., Bytzek, E., Rosar, U. (2018). *Freiheit Oder Sicherheit?* Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.

Sullivan, M., Artino, R., (2013). Analyzing and interpreting data from likert-type scales. *Journal of graduate medical education*, *5*(4), 541–542.

Walt, S. (1987). *The Origins of Alliance*. Cornell University Press.

Wang, M. (2020). Dependable partners? Assessing reliability in alliance politics [PhD thesis]. University of Oxford.

# Appendix A

Countries identified as having particularly negative collective memories of interactions with the USA in the literature are France (Meunier, 2005), Greece and Spain (McAdam, 2007), (Former) East-Germany (Beyer & Liebe, 2015), and Cyprus, Slovenia, Portugal and Luxembourg (Lawson & Hudson, 2015). The remaining countries were not explicitly mentioned and hence form a neutral reference category.

# Appendix B

*Table 1: Logistic Regression Results*

| | Model 1<br>Bivariate | Model 2<br>Controls | Model 3<br>Identity Interaction | Model 4<br>Identity Interaction + Controls | Model 5<br>Identity Interaction + Fixed Effects |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constant | 2.772*** | 0.882 | 4.084*** | 0.794 | 1.299 |
| | (0.147) | (0.126) | (0.284) | (0.130) | (0.263) |
| Attitude Toward US | 1.264*** | 1.135*** | 1.171*** | 1.065 | 1.089* |
| | (0.040) | (0.038) | (0.046) | (0.044) | (0.046) |
| Age | | 1.002 | | 1.002 | 1.002 |
| | | (0.002) | | (0.002) | (0.002) |
| Latent Political Trust | | 2.590*** | | 2.581*** | 2.822*** |
| | | (0.242) | | (0.242) | (0.281) |
| Negative Attitude Towards Globalisation | | 0.687*** | | 0.687*** | 0.647*** |
| | | (0.038) | | (0.038) | (0.037) |
| Anti-American Culture | | 1.334*** | | 1.331*** | |
| | | (0.089) | | (0.089) | |
| Respondent Sophistication | | 1.288*** | | 1.278*** | 1.275*** |

| | Model 1 Bivariate | Model 2 Controls | Model 3 Identity Interaction | Model 4 Identity Interaction + Controls | Model 5 Identity Interaction + Fixed Effects |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | (0.059) | | (0.058) | (0.060) |
| Historically Threatened by Russia | | 1.052 | | 1.050 | |
| | | (0.062) | | (0.062) | |
| Inclusive Identity | | 2.090*** | | 2.655*** | 2.838*** |
| | | (0.112) | | (0.265) | (0.296) |
| Exclusive Identity | | | 0.386*** | 1.037 | 1.184 |
| | | | (0.042) | (0.143) | (0.170) |
| US Attitude * Exclusive Identity Interaction | | | 1.148* | 1.180* | 1.158* |
| | | | (0.076) | (0.079) | (0.080) |
| Country Fixed Effects: | No | No | No | No | Yes |
| Num.Obs. | 9930 | 9930 | 9930 | 9930 | 9930 |
| Log.Lik. | -4956.401 | -4666.166 | -4851.162 | -4659.498 | -4517.872 |
| Correct Prediction Count | 7932 | 7929 | 7932 | 7932 | 7956 |
| Correct Prediction Percentage | 79.88% | 79.85% | 79.88% | 79.88% | 80.12% |
| ROC AUC | 0.5467 | 0.6770 | 0.6081 | 0.6783 | 0.7140 |
| PR AUC | 0.4533 | 0.6770 | 0.3919 | 0.6783 | 0.7140 |
| Nagelkerke $R^2$ | 0.0092 | 0.0983 | 0.0422 | 0.1003 | 0.1419 |

+ = $p < 0.1$, * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$

| | Model 1 Bivariate | Model 2 Controls | Model 3 Identity Interaction | Model 4 Identity Interaction + Controls | Model 5 Identity Interaction + Fixed Effects |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Odds ratios with standard errors in parentheses

# Appendix C

*Table 2: Model 5 Country Fixed Effects*

| | |
|---|---|
| Bulgaria | 0.693 |
| | (0.159) |
| Czech Republic | 0.522*** |
| | (0.085) |
| (Former) East Germany | 0.792 |
| | (0.189) |
| (Former) West Germany | 0.875 |
| | (0.180) |
| Denmark | 0.303*** |
| | (0.052) |
| Estonia | 0.994 |
| | (0.218) |
| Spain | 1.127 |
| | (0.204) |
| France | 1.060 |
| | (0.201) |
| Great Britain | 0.334*** |
| | (0.053) |
| Greece | 0.591** |
| | (0.096) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Croatia | 0.561*** |
| | (0.090) |
| Hungary | 0.366*** |
| | (0.059) |
| Italy | 0.564** |
| | (0.099) |
| Lithuania | 1.706* |
| | (0.413) |
| Luxembourg | 0.805 |
| | (0.203) |
| Latvia | 1.795* |
| | (0.423) |
| Netherlands | 0.736+ |
| | (0.133) |
| Poland | 0.642* |
| | (0.116) |
| Portugal | 0.346*** |
| | (0.060) |
| Romania | 0.372*** |
| | (0.057) |
| Slovenia | 1.034 |
| | (0.191) |
| Slovakia | 0.527*** |
| | (0.085) |