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**Presenting EU Strategic Autonomy as Global Actorness?
The Role of Eurobarometer Surveys in Framing Foreign
Policy for Public Perception**

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Abstract

On the rising tides of public opinion, wars have been fought; elections were won; and strategy was changed. Communicating policy initiatives are crucial to the flow of natural governance discourse between the European public sphere and a ruling body like the European Union. This dissertation showcases an exploratory study into whether or not a rather ambiguous foreign policy concept like strategic autonomy is presented for public perception through communications messaging efforts by the European Union through its polling and publication of the Eurobarometer Standard Survey Series. In consideration of broader information messaging of policy initiatives by an organization that rests at the nexus of a global power, multilateral body, economic leader, and security and defence provider fresh perspectives contributing to the academic body of thought on the European Union and its interactions with its citizen public are crucial and often understudied. This paper aims presents a mixed methods, quantitative content and qualitative framing analysis of the Eurobarometer Standard Survey series public opinion polling mechanisms between 2013-2023. The examined research investigates whether and how intentional frames in questions and responses serve to present inherently ambiguous foreign policy expressions like strategic autonomy in more direct, concrete patterns of global actorness more readily understood and perceived by the layperson citizen of the European Union.

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Introduction

Actors and audiences. Policymakers and media. States and citizens. For each pair of communicator and receiver exists a dichotomy of intent and understanding. The message and the perception of that information can often be examined at face value. In both the fields of communication studies and international relations, the relationship between one party and another in the presentation and reception of information messaging remains at the forefront of academic discourse and wider public thought. Policy exists at the crossroads of the outputs of international relations practitioners and the communication of standards, values, and laws as inputs to the public sphere amidst the broader contract between a governing body and its citizens. For the European Union, however, the organization's level of governing legitimacy has been debated as the body evolved from an economic standards-making entity into a supranational, regional polity often mentioned in the same breath as other single state players on the international stage. Additionally, while certain fields of policy can lend themselves more easily to concrete, actionable messaging in communicating rules and regulations to the public, other more ambiguous and altogether ambitious policy initiatives, especially in the realms of foreign policy or security and defence capabilities strike an uneven balance in attempting to communicate concept into action. Strategic autonomy, for instance, is a policymaking concept woven into wider EU discourse and debate for years, with the initial publication of the direct term in European Council conclusions regarding a common security and defence policy (CSDP) in late 2013. Over the intervening decade, the phrase strategic autonomy appears in further policy paper publications by the European Union, such as the various mentions of strategic autonomy in the 2016 EU Global Strategy document. Accordingly, an attempt to define and contextualize the foreign policy concept would dominate discourse debates by academics and think-tank experts alike, both within and outside the multitude of EU institutions and official communications. It is vital, then, to attempt further, unexplored

elements of analysis regarding an ambiguous buzzword like strategic autonomy to further conceptualize a foreign policy expression that actively contributed to, challenged, and even frustrated stakeholders in the policymaking European universe over the last decade.

A further research avenue of note is exploring the nexus point of a foreign policy concept like strategic autonomy through the lens of public opinion. On the rising tides of public opinion, wars have been fought; elections were won; and strategy was changed. As already mentioned, communicating policy initiatives are crucial to the flow of natural governance discourse between the European public sphere and a ruling body like the European Union. An exploratory study into whether or not a concept like strategic autonomy is presented for public perception through communications messaging efforts by the European Union will be relevant in forging an analytical path forward for not only examining the rollout of EU foreign policy goals, but in consideration of broader communications of policy initiatives by an organization that rests in an ambiguous in-between status of that of a global power, multilateral body, economic leader, and security and defence provider. In understanding the need for fresh perspectives contributing to the academic body of thought on the European Union and its interactions with its citizen public, this dissertation aims to perform a mixed methods, quantitative content and qualitative framing analysis of the Eurobarometer Standard Survey series public opinion polling mechanisms between 2013-2023. This research will investigate whether and how intentional frames in questions and responses serve to present inherently ambiguous foreign policy expressions like strategic autonomy in more direct, concrete patterns of global actorhood more readily understood and perceived by the layperson citizen of the European Union.

Three primary objectives drive the pursuit of empirical analysis and the contribution to wider spheres of academic knowledge surrounding the

European Union, public opinion research, the Eurobarometer surveys, and concepts such as strategic autonomy and global actorness in international relations. The first objective is to explore current academic discourse narratives on EU strategic autonomy, specifically relating to security and defence measures rather than traditionally siloed trade or technological development strategic endeavours to examine linkages among and between the ambiguity of an expression of EU strategic autonomy and wider perspectives from the European Union as a whole on the body's role as a global security actor. Secondly, an objective of this dissertation is to critically investigate the Eurobarometer Standard Survey series as a public opinion instrument of narrative framing by the European Commission, with particular attention paid to critiquing on balance both the contributions and limitations of the Eurobarometer surveys at their core and within prior representations and uses of the data it collects. Finally, the third objective of this research is to draw initial conclusions about the potential framing narrative of strategic autonomy related to the European Union through a thorough quantitative and qualitative analysis of the structure of the questions and responses posed to EU citizens through the Eurobarometer Standard Survey series between 2013-2023 to uncover any change-over-time evolutionary trends in the presentation of subsequently identified frames.

The following sections of the dissertation will begin broadly with a review of the relevant literature among the intersecting fields of study steeped in the previously outlined research question and primary three objectives. The structure of the literature review will navigate from the necessary starting point of contextualizing the research question and an overview of the evolution of EU foreign policy. Then, the body of knowledge pertaining to the EU's global role will be discussed in reference to the on-balance questioning of whether the organization utilizes its actorness internationally as a self-legitimation tool. To broaden further the scope of the literature review for this

dissertation as it exists at the intersection of many different fields of study, the next three subsections will interact with various academic viewpoints surrounding framing theory, strategic autonomy as an ambiguous analytical referent, and the evolution of public opinion research. Finally, the literature review will culminate in a comprehensive examination of academic discourse pertaining to the Eurobarometer series as cross-national surveys, creating space for linking the extensive literature review to the follow-on methodological summary and research design section. By including important elements of the reasoning behind the chosen content analysis and framing analysis methodologies as well as an introduction to the important elements to and limitations of the empirical section structure, the research design section will serve to contextualise the broader underpinnings of this dissertation's focus. Ultimately, a presentation of this paper's findings and analytical conclusions will bookend the outline of this dissertation's structure and provide comprehensive examples and crucial inferential insights in an empirical format to attempt a proof-of-concept approach complementary to the preceding sections outlining the current body of thought on European foreign policy, strategic autonomy, and the intentional instrumentalization of framing the EU's global actorness through the Eurobarometer Standard Survey series polls between 2013-2023.

Literature Review

[A Contextualization of the Research Question](#)

The pursuit of strategic autonomy by the European Union (EU) has emerged as a significant topic in contemporary international relations, within scholarly discourse and from think-tank roundtables to published policy documents. A European Parliament briefing paper titled, "EU strategic autonomy 2013-2023: from concept to capacity", presents a concise overview of the term's evolution in the last decade from the perspective of the European Union itself (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2022). Notably, European Parliament sees marked phases in its own interactions with the concept of

strategic autonomy, from an approach to security and defence matters in 2013, through geostrategic shifts in 2016 and during the COVID pandemic, to finally a recognition of the term and its many utterances as an all-encompassing concept applied across a variety of EU policy areas by 2021. It is cited in particular in the briefing that even the European Union's own publications and communications vary over its use of the exact term, strategic autonomy, with a report from the European Commission published using the phrase "open strategic autonomy 2040" and a report in that same year from the Commission with the much more ambiguous subtitle of "the EU's long-term capacity and freedom to act" (p. 4). An element of this literature review will be a critical unpacking of not only the exact term, EU strategic autonomy, but also the concept of EU global actorness in recognition of this ambiguity in terminology and understanding of the spectrum of autonomous actions upon which the European Union often positions itself in its own communications and policy documents.

Furthermore, a relevant literature review section will underscore equitably all elements of the research question by illustrating the intersectionality of the body of academic knowledge as it pertains to foreign policy, strategic autonomy, and public opinion. The ability of the EU to act independently in foreign policy matters not only relies on policy and diplomacy but also on garnering public support. Public opinion plays a crucial role in shaping the EU's foreign policy decisions and determining the success of its strategic objectives, therefore public opinion research and a synthesis of the interconnected arguments by leading scholars from that field that can be understood through an international relations lens will be crucial sections of the following review of the relevant literature.

This dissertation also specifically aims to critically examine question framing in Eurobarometer surveys conducted between 2013 and 2023, presenting a

cross-section of said intersectionality between and among public opinion research, EU foreign policy, strategic autonomy, legitimation, framing, and survey analysis. A structure for the literature review was built thus, winding a multidisciplinary path through the political and social sciences to appropriately contextualize the primary thrust of this dissertation's research question: In studying Eurobarometer survey questions from 2013-2023, what public opinion trends can be identified through content analysis of question framing pertaining to the European Union's foreign policy role as an autonomous, geostrategic actor?

Notably, while previous research has primarily analysed Eurobarometer survey results when discussing public opinion trends or value changes among citizens of EU Member States, this dissertation will take a novel approach by critically analysing the survey questions themselves. In performing framing content analysis via indicator phrases tied to European Union global actorness, this research will respond to and fill in a perceived lack of academic engagement with public opinion research through extrapolating data-driven findings on the largely ambiguous concept of EU strategic autonomy. Through this examination, the research seeks to draw conclusions about the construction of framed narratives around government policies through public opinion measurement instruments and add a worthwhile contribution to critical literature in the wider study of the European Union.

[An evolutionary perspective on EU foreign policy](#)

In contributing to the body of work examining the European Union, it would be important to categorize this dissertation as resolutely outside the traditional academic engagement with the European Union from an economic perspective, and to position its contribution solely within the realm of international relations. Most contemporary scholars writing within the international relations field about the EU do so on the basis of the

organization's key driver in global politics, that of its foreign policy; these authors map chapters and entire books dedicated to both nuanced and comprehensive critical extrapolations on foreign policymaking, foreign policy efficacy, and the future of foreign policy for the European Union (Hill et al., 2017 ; McCormick, 2020 ; Nuttall, 2000 ; Tonra and Christiansen, 2004). In particular, Bindi and Angelescu (2012) argue that the beginnings of EU foreign policy in the early 1970s stemmed from efforts to grow an identity capable of political and diplomatic consultation that shirked previous transatlantic perspectives on regional versus global areas of responsibility. As the EU successfully negotiated transnational, global agreements amidst a very bipolar global order, the call for specific instruments like the European Political Cooperation or the European Council itself were created as concrete measures of the polity expressing global interests (p. 328). For this dissertation's purposes, it is important to note the parallel timelines of the formation of the European Political Cooperation and the Eurobarometer Standard Surveys, the first as a recognized action toward the evolution of a political identity focused on foreign policy as Bindi and Angelescu and similar scholars discuss at length, but with the second as a sociopolitical instrument for measuring and thereby shaping through its consistent application and publication, an EU identity capable of supporting more visible and concrete policy initiatives with an external bent.

Foreign policy in the European Union covers a broad range of areas, from security and defence to trade and development, with scholars revisiting the topic throughout their careers as the various elements of foreign policy for a polity such as the EU evolves. For example, Keukeleire and Delreux (2022) are on their third edition of their book, "The Foreign Policy of the European Union", which slightly chaotically must broach larger contextual realities, such as a mutating international order and external crises and regional conflict pressures not at the forefront of prior editions. The second edition, published

in the mid-2010s, continued the authors' counterbalancing argument diverging from broader scholarship that member states never sought a comprehensive approach to external actions in a supranational function and that there exists a general absence of political will to broaden the institution's foreign policy scope (Keukeleire and Delreux, 2014). Specifically, these authors delineate this political will impediment into five subcategories of obstacles: 1) a general lack of will to strengthen the EU as a global actor, 2) a lack of will to lead on international issues, 3) a lack of will to assert EU foreign policy goals globally due to cost or risk to member states, 4) a lack of 'common' political will when a diverse interest in various courses of action exist, and finally 5) a lack of 'public' will tied to trends in positive opinion poll responses among EU citizens to generally supporting a common foreign security policy, but a disappearing EU-wide public support for any specific foreign policy issue actions or strategic intents. (p.128-129). A primary driver of the argument presented in this dissertation's subsequent analysis speaks to the fifth obstacle outlined by Keukeleire and Delreux by critically analysing where such EU-wide public support of an EU foreign policy strategy data comes from - as the lack of public support for more specific policy actions could indicate a fabricated public will or false harmony indicators from the vague question framing of the Eurobarometer surveys. Although some would argue that various strategic documents through the years presented by the European Union would constitute a clear showing of political will, authors like Dijkstra (2016) take to task this concept, concluding that while a document like the European Union Global Strategy (EUGS) of 2016 was an end-result of two years of pain-staking debate by foreign policy elites, its timing of publication amidst Brexit, counter to some rather well-constructed and reasonable policy recommendations mean that it could only be given a paltry grade of good job, but not quite. Under similar conditions, the recently published Strategic Compass of 2022 may fall under similar auspices from scholarly critique by

Dijkstra and colleagues, but as with many EU policy documents, it remains to be seen to be applauded or forgotten.

In contrast to a large swath of scholarly engagement with EU foreign policy analysis, some scholars do not begin with the question of external efficacy or impact of published policy documents, but instead offer new perspectives on the internally facing functions and obstacles of EU foreign policy (Bickerton, 2010 ; Smith, 2013). Specifically, internal functions of EU foreign policy can impact the organization by allowing for avoidance of state level action in favour of EU supranational discourse, by offering a political power tug-of-war policy arena, and by injecting ontological ambiguity debates on the EU's organizational purpose. Smith expands on internal functional challenges to EU cohesion in external action by introducing a broad picture and then detailed critique of the foreign policy instruments themselves used by the organization across pillars and amidst tension between EU Commission and Council spheres of responsibility. Smith further argues for a bottom-up approach in leaning on individual Member States to push for unanimity combined with the conscious pursuit of 'vertical consistency' in the institution, even at the expense of less measurable impact in its foreign policy choices to avoid the functional and instrumental stalemate. Where this dissertation will diverge from a black-and-white stance from Smith's approach, in which compromising practices by Member States in foreign policy choices and subsequent dissonant political messaging means that the instrument of deliberate manipulation of communications is impossible from the umbrella entity of the organization overall (p. 54). While Member States may require unanimous decisions on several policy fronts, from economic to foreign, the Eurobarometer surveys exist as a survey research and data led communication instrument of the overarching organization that operates outside of the national-supranational policymaking obstacles, positioning it as a method for

doing the impossible in intentionally framing foreign policy choices to the citizens of the European Union.

The discourse on the EU's global role: a (legitimate) actor?

The concept of global actorness has been at the centre of debates in wider scholarly circles in the field of International Relations, with the European Union (EU) being a prominent example of an economic power, regional political body, and often a diplomatic force that in its mere creation opened an academic discourse on what exactly *is* an international organization like the European Union and whether it can *act* cohesively in speaking with one voice on key foreign policy issues, for example. For the purposes of this literature review, the focal point for the following section will be on the actorness of the European Union and whether from an actor lens, there is a potential critique of this role as a byproduct of a pursuit of organizational legitimacy on the world stage. To begin with the critical step of defining the EU's global role as actorness, it would be necessary to outline the concept to subsequently test whether the organization meets that definition. Importantly, Kaunert and Zwolski (2013) delineate how scholarly approaches to defining the EU's global role are either from state-centric realist approaches to considering the EU in the wider international system, which exclude the body from categorization as 'actor', while later theoretical applications like liberal institutionalism or social constructivism attempt to offer a convergence of agency and structure that includes the EU in consideration of global 'actors' within IR scholarship. Further, the authors illustrate frameworks for analysing the EU's global actorness built upon previous scholarship by Sjöstedt (1977); Bretherton and Vogler (1999); Jupille and Caporaso (1998) to map further, observable criteria of actorness to appropriately assess the EU's international security role using elements like scope of integration, capabilities, and *de jure* and *de facto* recognition. The work of all of these authors laid necessary

foundations for both defining the European Union as a global actor and subsequently analysing the organization on the basis of its actorness.

Taking inspiration from these authors' subcategorization of EU global actorness criteria, this dissertation, while recognizing the importance of external recognition in orienting the EU among other actors, it will also introduce the need for an analysis of the organization from a domestic legitimation standpoint. This repositioning of an analytical lens from external state and non-state stakeholders of the European Union recognizing its actorness to a review of internal citizen stakeholder opinions. While some scholars, like Kahn-Nisser (2017), have also argued from an internal to external perspective that the EU has successfully become an actor *sui generis*, the author claims the organization's actorness simply paralleled institutional changes, which seems to ignore both internal and external contextual pressures which preceded any institutional reforms necessary for the EU to step further into its role as an international security actor. Furthermore, a more simplistic view of institutional changes equating to actorness does not account for intentionality, which in consideration of a broader and deeper conceptualization of EU global actorness discourse would argue that the organization engages in everyday reiterative foreign policy practices that attempt to counter contestation among Member States while simultaneously chasing consistent production of successful foreign policy outcomes to underscore its position in regional and global security affairs (Bremberg et al., 2022). This dissertation will bridge these institutional and intentional perspectives on the EU's global actorness from an internal to external lens by considering the way in which the EU uses its information communication tools like the Eurobarometer surveys to portray domestic public support for its foreign policy decisions, thereby self-actualizing its global actorness.

Alongside the body of scholarship that considers the European Union as a bona fide global actor on the foreign policy stage, there are arguments for seeing the EU's security role as an ambiguous one, even to the organization itself in some ways, necessitating a more holistic research approach to demarcating the geopolitically diplomatic and strategic elements of the EU's position in the global order (Helwig and Sinkkonen, 2022 ; Simão, 2022 ; Zwolski, 2012). One category of research perspectives that embraces the foundational concept of the EU's global actorness as ambiguous and knits together that idea with the aforementioned work of the EU to self-actualize is the thread of discourse discussing the actions and capabilities of international organizations through their pursuit of legitimation practices and policies that therein support both a resounding status as *actor* capable of global governance as well as pride of place positioning in the global order vis a vis individual states (Dellmuth and Schlipphak, 2019 ; von Haldenwang, 2017 ; Tallberg and Zürn, 2019 ; Čmakalová and Rolenc, 2012). An example of a theoretical approach to the question of legitimacy as it applies outside the structures of a traditional nation-state is the work by Steffek (2003), which was an original comment on prior scholarly engagement with legitimation and international organizations as too quickly reductive in saying that legitimacy is out of reach without a priori democratic underpinnings, whereas through Steffek's application of theories of legitimation, analysing international institutions like the European Union simply requires a different set of questions on how the body would attempt to self-legitimate through its policies and practices in pursuit of democratic legitimacy as a non-state actor. Further contemporary analysis of the processes of legitimation by the European Union specifically by Aagaard (2022) helped to deepen this theoretical questioning of democratic legitimacy drivers for international institutions by applying a systematic and quantitative research design to the specific context of self-legitimizing actions of the European Union in the ever-widening digital public sphere. Aagaard's analysis concluded that especially in the case study of the European

Commission's communication strategy, it was pursuing democratic legitimacy through a concerted top-down, vertical information campaign across many channels in the digital public sphere. By highlighting this narrower thread of discourse concerning the European Union's drive for augmenting its capabilities as a global actor as well as a legitimate one, this section of the literature review ideally serves as the basis for examining the Eurobarometer survey questions as focused on the polity's role as a global actor for a purpose, to self-legitimize its foreign policy objectives through vertical communication using framed narratives.

[Framing theory and agenda-setting in EU research, in brief](#)

Prior to a discussion of what framed narratives the European Union sketches out using information communication instruments like the Eurobarometer survey as the basis of this paper's later analysis, it will be important to briefly introduce the concepts of framing theory and agenda-setting as applicable for this dissertation. Framing theory at its core is the way in which referent objects being communicated to an audience are presented as salient and in service to a particular interpretation, problematization, evaluation, or treatment by said public, which in turn informs the basis of public opinion on a given topic (Chong, 1993 ; Entman, 1993). Issue framing inherently impacts whether or not a theme presented to the public sphere is placed on a polity's policy agenda by either the elites who framed the topic originally or by public opinion increasing its issue salience, which scholars like McCombs (2005) present as an integral element of wider discourse on agenda-setting in social science fields of mass communications. For example, in a trend overtime study of an American election survey series, scholars determined important interactions between traditional and social media, big data, and issue framing that illustrated core elements of agenda-setting at the intersection of the study of mass communications and politics, which assists in narrowing framing discourse to EU foreign policy questions as presented in later analysis

(Neuman et al., 2014). Similar principles are applied in the work by Princen (2011) to narrow a framework of analysis specifically to policy agenda-setting in the European Union, with a typology of both challenges and opportunities faced by the organization in its communications strategies, such as building credibility and applying issue frames by the political elite to promote more contentious or ambiguous policy goals. While Princen's creation of an analytical typology of agenda-setting offers a practical boon to this dissertation's broadening of the discourse, Della Sala (2018) writes from a decidedly theoretical lens, presenting an argument for how the European Union creates framed narratives to ensure ontological security for the body as a global actor, constructing a self-promoting sociopolitical worldview for the European public sphere to comprehend policy choices and actions by the organization. A counter-argument to Della Sala's perspective in practice, however, is the view that the European Union and its political elites' communication efforts at disseminating a narrative of European identity and organizational legitimacy in their 'New Narrative for Europe' campaign failed due to narrative inconsistencies in creating transnational memory and a lack of a pluralistic approach to citizen first voice promotion (Kaiser, 2015 ; 2017).

The question remains within Kaiser's work, however, as to whether the 'New Narrative for Europe' initiative that itself culminated in an EU resolution only in 2021 as an overture to the Conference on the Future of Europe perhaps indicates that narrative framing should be studied at the European Union level in a trend-over-time, mixed-method approach to fully understand the impact of vertical communications by the organization and determine the efficacy of policy agenda-setting efforts in hindsight (European Economic and Social Committee, 2021). In answer, this dissertation will build out further into this line of questioning on trend over time results of how survey series question framing within Standard Eurobarometer editions from 2013-2023 have presented the topic of the EU's global geostrategic role and what potential

conclusions could be drawn based on public opinion response selection options in the survey structure to this framed narrative tied to the more ambiguous issue of strategic autonomy for the body.

[Strategic autonomy, a contested and ambiguous referent](#)

In contributing to the body of scholarship on the European Union's foreign policy goals, an introduction to the contemporary pursuit of a more geostrategic, autonomous approach by the organization is crucial to orienting this dissertation amidst the broader academic field of International Relations. Also, by way of introduction to the terminology of 'strategic autonomy' requires both a recognition of prior attempts to define the idea as well as a brief summation of the EU's efforts toward such an ambiguous concept. The European Union itself defines strategic autonomy as the capacity to act independently of other countries on strategically influential policy initiatives, with an ambiguous bent to its definition that allows for broad-ranging application across several policy areas, from trade to defence to democratic values promotion (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2022). The German Institute for International and Security Affairs' 2019 report from Lippert et al. (2019), presents an outside scholarly definition more in line with this paper's focus on the nexus of the EU's actorness, capabilities, and connected logistical or policy drivers of the body's push for strategic autonomy by understanding the term:

...as the ability to set one's own priorities and make one's own decisions in matters of foreign policy and security, together with the institutional, political, and material wherewithal to carry these through – in cooperation with third parties, or if need be alone. (p.5)

It is important to highlight that this dissertation will be grounded in this more external, academic formulation of the definition for strategic autonomy

presented in Lippert et al.'s report because of the recognition that the EU's more ambiguous representation of the term is arguably intentional, either to promote the idea where convenient in its own framing of a meta-narrative of what the future of Europe should look like in a cross-policy capacity or to avoid further contestation of the concept internally in the politicised realities of contemporary European politics. The first potentiality for intentional framing in a narrative building pursuit is a line of the discourse on European Union public diplomacy spearheaded by scholars such as like Davis Cross (2021), wherein narrative frames around strategic autonomy serve to convince internal publics as much or more so than external ones of the polity's regional hegemony and global actorness, purpose-fit to its role in moulding the future of global affairs. Similarly, Helwig (2022) concludes that it will remain to be seen whether from an application of role theory to a qualitative study of the EU's promotion of the more ambiguous concept of strategic autonomy constructively or destructively allows for an international security role that is equally as transmutable to developing crises or calls for particular actions or responses from the organization in future. Helwig's theoretical questioning of the EU's more ambiguous motives, while limited in its own ability to draw conclusions that in themselves do not raise more theoretically-grounded questions of the European Union's role within wider International Relations discourse, other recent scholarship has attempted to orient the use of intentional ambiguity in defining strategic autonomy by analysing the concept of digital sovereignty in the more concrete policy considerations of emerging technologies and innovative research and development (Broeders et al., 2023 ; Csernaton, 2022). Specifically, while Broeders et al. crafts a more comprehensive view of the process of geopoliticization of EU policies in service to the body's pursuit of strategic autonomy as applied across strategic areas of policy focus like the digital space, Csernaton manages to broaden an understanding of this intentionality from the EU by introducing an argument that any articulation of strategic autonomy without a fixed definition leads to

swaths of potential policy opportunities or actions in the future of the European security landscape. Additionally, Csernatori alludes to this conceptual stretching of the application of strategic autonomy as a building block for the organization in crafting an integrated imaginary of the European Union as a security, technology, and defence actor with autonomous capabilities. The throughline of academic discourse on a meta-narrative or imaginary presented by the European Union's intentional efforts at an ambiguous approach to strategic autonomy form the basis of this paper's argument that narrative framing of the body's global actorness in Eurobarometer questions are intrinsically if not concretely linked to the promulgation of the driving concept of strategic autonomy, much in the same way that technological sovereignty as presented by the aforementioned authors serves to uphold the organization's pursuit of a strategically autonomous role in the current and future world order.

A second consideration of the use of the term strategic autonomy is in its contestation both internally at the European Union and externally with third party partners, as introduced in Lippert et al.'s report definition. There are scholars that argue that while contested, the ambiguity of the term strategic autonomy in fact lends itself to a unique strength for European security and defence practices as a range of flexibly autonomous capabilities to be deployed logistically or as policy responses and as a marker of the potential strengthening of the Euro-Atlantic partnership when viewed through a collaborative opportunistic lens (Bozo, 2008 ; Zieliński, 2020). In contrast to this line of thinking, however, Olsen (2022) argues that EU efforts have been limited and subdued, only showing a diffuse support among policymakers for an ambiguous notion of strategic autonomy as a mere symbolic parlance rather than expectations of concrete policy actions. The author further argues that this cautious approach to strategic autonomy discourse at the policy level of European Union decision-making serves as a milder approach to regional

security rather than tying the organization off to any one-sided steps toward further polarization of the current European political landscape. It remains to be seen how the publication and subsequent communication promotion of documents like the Strategic Compass can or will answer similar questions and critiques of the lack of coherent strategic vision by the European Union, which as Sweeney and Winn (2022) emphasize in their contribution to the recent bevy of scholarly works on the autonomous ambitions of the organization, presents a plausible avenue for optimism for those eyeing a resurgence of a geostrategic, autonomous EU. While the Strategic Compass and Sweeney and Winn's more optimistic analysis of the potential impacts of the document would be a crucial consideration for authors like Koppa (2022) in her book, *The Evolution of the Common Defence and Security Policy: Critical Junctures and the Quest for EU's Strategic Autonomy*, she would likely point to that publication amidst a context of the shifting international order and furthered bolstering of NATO's political military positioning in the European region as one juncture of the evolution of a European security framework. Further, Koppa argues that in answer to internal rifts led by political polarization among national and transnational politics, European Parliament must centre itself through necessary engagement with public consent initiatives to successfully promote any externally required foreign policy actions, for example. The intersection of Koppa's argument for the importance of public consent to the European Parliament and the wider EU promotion of the ambiguous concept of strategic autonomy creates a gap for this dissertation's later analysis, as the structure of Eurobarometer survey questions as an institutional instrument for garnering public consent on the pursuit of strategic autonomy represents a new avenue for understanding intentional framing of EU policy narratives for public perceptions.

The Public Opinion Dimension

In the evolution of discourse on public opinion and wider efforts at delineating a field of public opinion research in the social sciences, the very term, public opinion, is a uniquely nebulous and yet altogether interdisciplinary vaguery that bridges intrinsic concepts of fundamental communication processes, democratic theory, and social psychology (Berelson, 1952 ; Burstein, 2003 ; Donsbach and Traugott, 2008 ; Young, 2017 ; Page et al., 1987). Public opinion from a political science perspective exists primarily at the intersection of opinion formation at the individual and collective level on the topics of public officials, political organizations, and wider conceptualizations of norms and values pertaining to sociopolitical interactions such as elections, referenda, and public policy initiatives (McGraw, 2002 ; Crespi, 1997). By capitalizing on the intersectional applicability of public opinion research in analysing overlapping social science elements apparent in a critical engagement with a similarly vague term as strategic autonomy and the Eurobarometer surveys themselves, this author argues that the following deeper contextualization of the current body of literature in public opinion research will illustrate foundational components of the chosen methodology in examining the public opinion survey questions and subsequent trends in EU citizen public opinion based on the Eurobarometer polls.

To begin narrowing an examination of the field of public opinion research, it is important for the thrust of this paper to highlight the interaction of public opinion and political polls. For example, Benjamin Ginsberg, writing in the very beginnings of a scholarly resurgence of critical engagement with public opinion research in the United States in the late 1980s, argues that polling fundamentally alters public opinion in three ways: 1) transforms opinion into an externally prompted versus voluntarily provided phenomenon, 2) publicly presents opinion as attitude versus behavioural data, and 3) partially constrains expressions of opinion to only poll themes versus freely given, spontaneously

provided subjects of opinion or debate (Ginsberg, 1989). Accordingly, Ginsberg asserts that "...with the use of surveys, publicly expressed opinion becomes less clearly an assertion of individuals' own concerns and more nearly a response to the interests of others" (p. 287). A critical questioning of the use of surveys to further institutional self-interest was the impetus for the beginning of this author's research into the EU's potential use of the Eurobarometer surveys.

Myles (2008) furthers the literature on transformational aspects of polls on political discourse through his review of a contemporary of Ginsberg, Pierre Bourdieu's, stance on the impact of 'Don't Know' response options. The author reviews Bourdieu's essays detailing how 'Don't Know' response trends when viewed from a class perspective are an indication of a working public shirking complex presentations of policy choices by the political elite. As evidenced by the almost twenty-year span between Ginsberg and Myles' contribution to the literature, it is therefore clear that decades of scholarship have critiqued more traditional, historical scholarly conceptualization of public opinion research as tertiary and observatory by outlining how research methodology and data collection modes of public opinion subsequently shift core elements of an individual's opinion when extrapolating it for public opinion mapping and measurement. In concert with this perspective on transformative elements of the study of public opinion, the authors Puchta and Potter (2002) and Osborne and Rose (1999) contributed to the literature through more technical analysis of social science research methodology such as market research focus groups and polling via representative samples respectively, concluding that surveys not only alter public opinion but create the phenomena of an opinionated society and ensure public attitudinal trends are 'discovered' in the interaction between poll questions and response trends. Splichal (2012) takes a further stance on the intersections of polling and the conceptualization of public opinion, arguing in line with public sphere

discourse scholars that public opinion does not in fact exist outside of measurement tools such as opinion surveys like the Eurobarometer. Specifically, Splichal indicates that a surveyed public opinion creates an amorphous, instantly formed and altogether random response to polls that can even be further from their true, personal opinions because of ‘measurement errors’, “such as vague wording, order of questions, interviewer bias, scaling error, and the context in which questions are asked” (p. 134). Lewis (2001) argues in parallel to this tension between an individual’s ‘true’ opinion versus the measured collective opinion presented in survey results by labelling polls as a cultural form framed by political elites creating questions that respondents take for granted as the proffered topic of debate rather than existing as a measurement tool purely reflecting a more ‘authentic’ view of the values most pressing in public debate. My analysis will stem from this offshoot public sphere discourse, namely in that European public opinion exists primarily in relation to the pervasive dominance of the Eurobarometer surveys as public opinion measurement tools of the European Union, by the European Union, and for the European Union.

The work of Page and Shapiro (1989) countered this more critical narrative by emphasizing that an intention of providing a certain quality of information, as the authors specify ‘correct and helpful political information’, to a citizenry denotes an institution focused on educational influence of a public’s policy stances (p. 307). Page and Shapiro therefore introduced a more positive approach to attempting to understand and engage with the guiding principles of a governing body’s choice to influence their constituents in the policymaking process. The case study work analysed by Christopher Page (2006) in his book, *The Roles of Public Opinion Research in Canadian Government*, furthered the application of an argument that governments use public opinion research tactics and in particular, polling, as a means for guiding public opinion through communicating political information. Page

concluded that unlike many other scholars focused on polling's influence on government public policy content formation, it was more accurate to analyse a government's use of polls in communicating and legitimizing public policy proposals to citizens. This paper will therefore utilize the perspective reviewed in Page and Shapiro alongside Christopher Page's more contemporary work as the foundation of an analysis of selected Eurobarometer questions. In particular, the framing of questions survey to survey by the Eurobarometer on the topic of the EU's role as a global actor slot nicely into a conceptualization of authentic public opinion leadership by the EU as an institution intent on measuring public approval of a controversial topic like strategic autonomy, understood better by the mass public in expressing its opinion on foreign policy goals when more plainly stated and explained to respondents through an informative communication process of public policy rollout.

In an effort to further contextualize the evolution of the public opinion research field, it is important to note both a historical precedent for critiquing government backed surveys at the outset of the public opinion polling industry as well as more contemporary engagement with the nexus of constructivism, manipulation, and political socialization in the field (Eisinger, 2008 ; Margolis and Mauser, 1989 ; O'Doherty, 2017). In his book, *The Politics of Large Numbers*, for example, Desrosières (1998) contributes groundwork principles of public sphere discourse by illuminating how the historical conceptualization of surveys stemmed from an applied intersection of the social science based concept of a public sphere and a political-administrative structure of statistical numbering crucial to governance. Desrosières discusses from his own French perspective how the period wherein the Eurobarometer surveys were created, the 1970s, called forth an evolution in public opinion research that paralleled a move from a nation-state constrained public sphere and census-taking practices to a wider European sphere of public debate. Accordingly, with a focus on constructing European values to govern, the advent of the

Eurobarometer public opinion surveys naturally followed a burgeoning EU presence as a body capable of institutional governance and therefore in need of a reflection of an augmenting relationship between its transnational public spheres and statistical measurement of sociopolitical pulse points.

Importantly for this paper, in an extension of the scholarly work on the constructivist sociopolitical elements of prior public opinion research, Lipari (2000) presents an overview of the discursive aspects of polling, which was a prescient addition to public opinion literature and therefore a jumping off point for this paper's analytic thrust. One of Lipari's central claims is that there are three distinct and yet often intersecting theoretical approaches to examining polls, which are: populist, critical, and constructionist. While Lipari defines a populist approach to polls as the belief that when conducted appropriately, polls are simply a reflection of the public will (p. 188). Lipari then presents a critical scholarly lens as one that arose in reaction to the populist approach, which contrasts the belief in polls as directly correlated with the public will to a critique of polls as manipulative endeavours by political elites (p.189). As we have reviewed various scholars above that fit into either the populist or critical camp, or indeed straddle the two academic approaches to craft their arguments, it is interesting to view Lipari's unique contribution of defining a third approach tied to a more minority view in public opinion academia, that of polls as not a pre-existing phenomenon perceived or measured accordingly, but rather as constructed through the interactions of a social communicative process (p. 190). Lipari cites pre-imminent mass communication scholars like Walter Lippmann writing in the early 1920s as instrumental in building a view of polls as intrinsically tied to the act of constructing socio-political discourse via language and information communication avenues. Therefore, this dissertation will pointedly choose to employ a constructionist, communication-based approach to investigating the

Eurobarometer surveys at the discursive meeting point between public opinion research and political will in policymaking practices by the European Union.

[An examination of Eurobarometer surveys](#)

What are the Eurobarometer surveys, in brief? While this literature review will not dive into the intricacies of the Eurobarometer surveys to reserve that presentation of their composition for the research design section to follow, it will present a contextualization of the survey series at creation. In the early 1970s, Jacques-René Rabier as former Directorate general for Press and Information in the first iteration of the European Union's Commission and then in his retirement as Special Advisor to the Commission of the European Communities launched the Eurobarometer series as a transnational and cross-temporal survey set with a monitoring mission of the sociopolitical attitudes of EU Member State representative sample populations year-over-year (Reif and Inglehart, 1991). Reif and Inglehart collated a group of essays in honour of Rabier's contributions as a social scientist and leader in the metamorphoses years faced by the early institution now known as the European Union from a European values building perspective. These essays laud Rabier's spearheading efforts regarding the Eurobarometer surveys as one-of-a-kind in its ability to analyse social change trends in Western Europe through a process of consistent and cross-national comparative measurement unmatched at the time of its debut. To make the argument that the Eurobarometer is a nexus point between public opinion research and policymaking, it will also require a wider look at the current state of academic literature concerning the use of the Eurobarometer surveys. Some scholars in line with Reif and Inglehart's essays, have argued for the merits of the surveys as tools employed by the European Union in its efforts to measure public opinion levels broadly, yet accurately on a variety of sociopolitical topics, from the Standard Eurobarometer surveys like this paper will engage with in its analysis, as well as some of the more special issue versions created for more particular issue

salience or EU values measurement purposes (Jagodziniski and Moschner, 2008 ; Kropp, 2017 ; Schmitt, 2003). While one-dimensional, the body of literature recognizing the Eurobarometer series as the first of its kind on a transnational scale highlights the importance of applying a critical approach as presented in our analysis to such a Goliath of public opinion research structures.

As Heath et al. (2005) offer in their piece, “The Globalization of Public Opinion Research”, the Eurobarometer surveys lead a bevy of cross-national surveys dealing with measurement of public opinion and the globalized augmentation of these surveys necessitate the pursuit of a standardization of survey construction and performance to ward off pervasive methodological pitfalls. Yet even though the authors present a table for weighting a grade-scale of public opinion surveys performed worldwide, their presented conclusions on the feasibility of consistent data-driven methodological critiques of cross-national surveys ring hollow based on the paragraphs following the table which serve to undermine their previously established points (p. 328-329). The article from Heath et al., therefore, presents a perfect example of the almost never-ending hedging and questions that crop up for scholars attempting to both recognize transnational surveys such as the Eurobarometer series as the data goldmines they are and to introduce an application of reasonable doubt over the usability of these public opinion research results without appropriate methodological critique. This tension between exaltation and critique plays out more often in academic discourse than at the policymaker level, of course, which means that other international comparative research surveys in a reflection of the evolution of the Eurobarometer survey series from its beginnings as an academic pursuit to a political instrument driven by the Institutional Relations and Communications Commissioner of the European Union should be viewed holistically as both a sociological research tool for academics and a clear political information

mechanism in equal measure (Lagos, 2008). Such a balanced perspective on the purpose and use of the Eurobarometer surveys inspired the research question driving this dissertation and thereby orients the subsequent analysis as a contribution to the growing body of literature on the more active role of EU public opinion research and the polity's foreign policy goals.

The engagement with examining public opinion and foreign policy in the European Union through the Eurobarometer series particularly, built a map of knowledge in the academic space across a variety of avenues of analysis. Scholars have also previously engaged in analysis of Eurobarometer survey results in attempts at broadening foundational understanding of linkages between public opinion and the European Union's defence policy practices as a political-military question, for example (Peters, 2014 ; Mader et al., 2020). While Peter's analysis focuses on internal aspects of public support for EU defence policy practices as a mechanism for measuring democratic legitimacy and paths beyond intergovernmentalism, Mader et al. perhaps in a response to the contextual upheaval of publishing in 2020, highlights external elements of the intersection of public opinion and defence policy. More specifically, Mader et al. successfully re-examine these intersecting elements as an outward projection of the EU as a body, dovetailing into a parallel discourse on transatlantic foreign policy goals through elucidation of positive survey results for both EU defence policies and NATO as a primary security provider in the region. The work of Irondelle et al. (2015) counterbalances contemporary studies by not only investigating intersectional trends in public support for European defence found in Eurobarometer result datasets, but by expanding qualitative analytical practices in the scholarship through an application of thematic typologies. In using such a constructivist foundation for analysis, the study contextualizes an ambiguous phrase like 'strategic culture' in four distinct typologies to review as an impactful variable on European public opinion. This dissertation will build out from this model and perform a similar

typology-driven constructivist analysis of the Eurobarometer surveys. Unlike the scholars previously mentioned, however, my research will analyse the wider Standard Eurobarometer series of surveys over a ten-year period, focusing on the questions posed to respondents, with a typology linking global actorhood to strategic autonomy in recognition of similar levels of terminological ambiguity as applied to an examination of framing questions.

The impetus to shirk prior scholarship's one-dimensional secondary analysis of the Eurobarometer Standard or Special series is grounded in this author's perception of a dearth of application of critical analysis practices against the Eurobarometer series and a tacit acceptance by the academic community concerned with European Union internal and external affairs of the scholarly validity of a transnational survey we as an academic body should be sceptically engaging with to ensure appropriately balanced support and critiques alike of such a unique institution of governance as the European Union. Arguably the most detailed investigation of the European Commission's use of the Special Eurobarometer series is in the work of Haverland et al. (2016), which concretely questions the Special series of Eurobarometer surveys as an issue salience agenda-setting instrument through its findings that politicized topics like immigration and budget concerns are almost never asked of EU citizens, while shared national interests are much more commonly highlighted in poll questions. In line with this research, my dissertation will approach an analysis of survey question framing over the EU's global actorhood using a mixed-method design to delve deeper into whether the more politically contested concept of strategic autonomy is hinted at in Eurobarometer question wording year-over-year in the past decade.

Interestingly, most other critical scholars of the Eurobarometer series as an instrument of the EU write from a French perspective, which is a Member State often considered a proponent of increased autonomous action and

support of a stronger and more present European Union both as a regional and global actor and almost exclusively in the French language, which may limit a more global scholarly audience in building upon these more critical opinions. For example, Belot et al. (2017) in their piece, “La fabrique d’une opinion publique européenne” or “The making of a European public opinion”, craft the argument that surveys and other EU information messaging and consultation initiatives constitute a public policy instrumentation capitalized on by the EU as a governing body in creating a notable and at the same time malleable concept of European public opinion. In recognition of this effort at building a distinct European public opinion from which the European Union can apply institutionalized policy responses and governance parameters over, the authors conclude that the instrumentation of surveys are often in service to an increase in resources for the EU that reflects a self-constitutive program of measuring public opinion, building support for initiatives through information messaging, and then augmenting capabilities or resources accordingly, only to start the cycle again for further policy efforts. The argument by Belot et al. can be viewed as solidly connected to efforts by scholar Phillippe Aldrin in examining the Eurobarometer surveys as the primary example of this instrumentation by the European Union in inventing a measurable and mouldable European public opinion as the perfect midpoint between a social scientific endeavour and a political tool (Aldrin, 2010a ; 2010b). Similarly, the scholarly work of Nissen (2012) contributed to the more general French academic critique of the Eurobarometer surveys by analysing methodological pitfalls and by questioning the European Union as the contracting organization for the polls as a tool used in the body’s promotion of the concept of European integration.

Amidst the investigation of methodological aspects, the series of essays collated by Saris and Kaase (1997) in their book, *Eurobarometer: measurement instruments for opinions in Europe*, highlights the relevance of considering Eurobarometer questions specifically, as survey design elements

uniquely positioned for issues like mode effects on open-ended agenda questions. As a scholarly work introducing understudied elements of the Standard Eurobarometer questionnaire structure, Saris and Kaase's work provides a discourse gap wherein this dissertation's critical mixed-method analysis of question framing can further introduce calls for more questionnaire structure and data-driven critique of the Eurobarometer series and other international comparative public opinion surveys.

Methodology Summary and Research Design

Methodological underpinnings and reasoning

Importantly, the introduction of any research design and methodology section of a dissertation such as this, focused on an altogether unique exploration of the research question through more subjective than objectively driven efforts should clearly expound on the process used prior to later presentations and discussions of resulting outcomes. As a paper focused on text and communicated information, it is also crucial to clearly state the naming conventions applied to the research analysis, so that later works can either ground themselves in similar approaches or focus on one method or another with more analytical importance or diverge wholly into a different area of study to further contribute to the scholarly body of work intersecting with public opinion, communication, and foreign policy fields. With this transparency in mind, this dissertation will be driven from a particular structural approach outlined by Fetters (2022), wherein the taxonomy of naming conventions should not be an afterthought of research, but used to explicitly indicate the hierarchical machinations of any analysis with an intentionality that will later drive further discourse around the work. Fetters argues for building a scaffolded approach to any research design that specifically maps for the reader the analytical drivers as they were applied by the researcher, which is an element particularly applicable for this dissertation as one which does utilise quantitative considerations but is almost wholly interpreted from more qualitative endeavours, which should necessitate as

much clarity in the presentation of the research outline, findings, and discussion as possible. Therefore, the following section will be devoted to briefly illuminating and outlining this dissertation's design and chosen methodologies, specifically as an exploratory framing analysis couched in mixed-methods content analysis research design structures.

The choice of a methodological approach for any researcher is always a crucial one, never more so than for a dissertation such as this one that teeters on the edge between an exploratory and superficial nature. Namely, the analysis and argument housed in this research design therefore must be supported by a methodological foundation that fits as neatly as possible into a framework for understanding the contribution to academic discourse, while simultaneously recognizing the imbedded ambiguity of an attempt to bridge traditional communications studies and international studies-based thought. At the convergence of these seemingly differing social science research strands are foundational ontological and epistemological assumptions of a researcher's selected methodologies, however, that allow for broader, cross-disciplinary efforts at expanding academic thought. While the ontology of a chosen approach underscores a researcher's certainty around the intrinsic nature and question of existence surrounding the research question, epistemology orients a researcher's attempts to subsequently frame their research in pursuit of a particular discovery or outcome (Moon and Blackman, 2017). Specifically, in the study of the way in which Eurobarometer survey series questions were framed to audiences year-over-year as a potential information communication package of a particular policy goal such as strategic autonomy would call for analytical methodologies that could serve both communications and international policy fields in their applications. To bridge these policy fields requires not only an epistemological but an inherent ontological similarity.

Both framing analysis and content analysis stem from ontological relativism principles, wherein each approach's assumptive ontology rejects the idea of one distinct reality as correct, but rather with the possibility of the revelation of multiple relative realities (Clandinin and Murphy, 2009). Additionally, both analytical approaches are also epistemologically based on a constructivist stance, wherein foundationally a constructivist epistemology reflects the process of inductive reasoning, with an analytical pursuit of the particular producing the general (Dieronitou, 2014). Where framing and content analysis diverge is the interaction at the particular level and therefore the inferential subjectivity of resulting generalities. More specifically, content analysis and its starting unit of quantitative data coding allows for inductive patterns and inferences that align more on an objective scale of analysis than not, with a researcher's own bias impacting to a certain threshold within any research design. On the other hand, framing analysis begins from an identification of researcher informed particular frames using a qualitative data analysis backing that lends itself further along a subjective scale of inquiry. The minimal differences between the two approaches lend themselves to acting as a bridge between communication and international relations policy fields due to their similarities and yet distinct inferential results based on any given researcher's own bias or subjective experience during the analysis process. Contemporary research into the applicability of the mixed-methods approach of the use of computational corpus linguistics content analyses alongside qualitatively driven research designs, including framing analyses, influenced the choice to further test the complementarity of these methodologies across intersecting social science fields (Abulof, 2015 ; Crowston et al., 2012 ; Kermani et al., 2023). A framing approach complements content analysis because while it "relies on a constitutive understanding of causality, it [also] benefits from the perceived and communicated intersections between actors' respective realities" (Aukes et al., 2020 p. 9). Furthermore, these two types of analyses are independent of time variable considerations, as researchers may either

pinpoint data from one moment to examine or apply content and framing analysis approaches along a continuum of a longer timeframe, as this dissertation will perform when data mining questionnaires from Standard Eurobarometers along a ten-year change over time analysis between 2013 and 2023 (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). Hence why this dissertation will explicitly follow the aforementioned naming conventions of a framing analysis couched in mixed-method content analysis efforts to explore the potential presentation of strategic autonomy through global actorness frames within the formation of Standard Eurobarometer survey question content across a ten-year timeframe.

From a broader perspective, as conveyed experience is at the core of survey questions as a medium of communication to be critiqued through content analysis and then further interpreted by framing analysis, this exploratory dissertation will examine what wider inferential frames reveal about foreign policy realities presented to audiences by the European Union through the Eurobarometer surveys as instruments in guiding perceptions for the average EU citizen. The hope in presenting the methodological basis of tackling this particular research question is that this introductory analysis will encourage further critical examination of the Eurobarometer series as a tool of the European Union and not simply as a social science results engine to be mined for convenient and automatically trustworthy data analysis by the academic community.

Research design structure and limitations

A basic outline of the structure of this dissertation's research design was a content analysis built from computational quantitative text mining of the Eurobarometer questions in surveys from 2013-2023 based on a human-produced coding of indicators for frequency testing. After the initial quantitative content analysis was performed, the individual text frequency results were examined by the researcher using qualitative framing analysis

inferences tied to the prior research in legitimating narrative creation linking EU global actorness to strategic autonomy. While the potential for researcher bias influencing both phases of the mixed-methods design is apparent, the recognition of this dissertation as an introductory analytical exploration of this topic, while not negating the likelihood of an impact on the results, at least clarifies the acknowledgement of a qualitative approach chosen as the best option application for this unfunded, master's degree level research dissertation undertaken by one researcher versus a larger team or funded project organization. With these inherent bias, funding, and manpower limitations in mind, the hope is that this research and subsequent findings are absorbed by the wider academic community as exploratory and ideally, inspirational in further efforts to examine the potential intentional framing of Eurobarometer survey questions as mechanisms for policy perception communication to citizens of the European Union.

A deeper dive into the research design of this dissertation starts with a discussion of the mechanical beginnings of this Eurobarometer analysis undertaking. First, accessing the data files through an official European Union website allowed for locating links to original data sources and publications of the full data reports on a research repository through the Leibniz Institute of the Social Sciences, or GESIS. So, while the Eurobarometer series is conducted on behalf of the European Commission, the primary data files are curated and made available through an archive monitored by GESIS. Upon first accessing the primary data file catalogue for the Eurobarometer surveys, it was determined that while specific software friendly computational analysis files were made available for scientific and academic purposes, these data files exclusively referenced the survey results and excluded the questions themselves. In order to analyse the survey question formatting directly, it was necessary to download the PDF files of the base questionnaires after filtering out any special series Eurobarometer surveys in favour of the Standard

Eurobarometer surveys for the indicated timeframe of 2013-2023 to ensure a comprehensive baseline for the text mining, as evidenced in **Appendix 1** (GESIS, 2023). It is important to note as well, that while the questionnaire files available for download from the GESIS repository represent comprehensive translations of the surveys as performed in the native languages of the Member States of the European Union, the primary or ‘base’ questionnaires available for download and analysis are bilingual English and French in format. Additionally, due to security restrictions on a few of the downloaded PDF files, it was also necessary to contact the GESIS Eurobarometer Dataservice contact to request full access to the selected files. Once all these steps were completed, the end available result culminated in an average of two base, English/French survey questionnaires of the Standard Eurobarometer series per annum, but with only one survey questionnaire from 2020 due to Coronavirus pandemic surveying operation restrictions and one survey from 2023 available to download according to the timing of this dissertation’s publication deadline. The resulting total for analytical review was 20 Eurobarometer Standard Survey series base, English/French questionnaire files. Secondly, it was necessary to prepare the disparate PDF questionnaire file downloads into one comprehensive master file for ease of analysis using both computational text mining software as well as for easier manipulation during human-driven interpretive framing identification efforts in the second phase of study. The preparation of the master file involved parsing only cover pages for identification of individual survey questionnaire sections and subsequent question sections, excluding demographic or instruction pages to lower the probability of outlier findings during the quantitative content analysis of indicator frequency testing portion of the research.

Finally, the final pieces of preparing the master file for both quantitative and qualitative phases of analysis were identifying a text mining software for the

computational content analysis phase and creating a researcher informed codex of terms to identify the indicators most closely aligned to the research drivers for this dissertation. To the former, the free, online availability of the tested software called KH Coder, was chosen for the frequency tests of the master file (Higughi, 2016a). While unable to process a PDF file format, KH Coder had a comprehensive instruction section for determining the best analytical parameters in conducting a computer-based text frequency analysis of the 815-page master file. Considering earlier mentions of a lack of funding, project assistance from outside team members, and also a researcher limitation of in-depth knowledge of data-analytics practices, KH Coder software was selected as the most optimal avenue for this dissertation's exploratory research approach. KH Coder as a software required a two-fold action for successfully performing frequency analysis, the first was exporting the PDF master file of all 20 questionnaires into an Excel spreadsheet format compatible with the software. To the latter, it was deemed most appropriate to create a researcher informed codex of indicators to search within the operational aspects of the KH Coder software as this deductive analytical approach, scholars argue, serves most aptly to align the organization of the data itself most closely with pertinent elements of the research question (Bingham and Witkowsky, 2021).

In an attempt to limit consequences of researcher bias beyond the inherent allowances for a human-led portion of the analysis creating room for critique within the results, it was determined that using the previously discussed defining themes of EU global actorness and strategic autonomy as applied in the literature review portion of this dissertation would build essential comprehension connections between the research's guiding academic principles and the findings themselves. For example, words such as 'actor', 'strategy', 'diplomacy', 'power', and 'international', among others, were drawn from the linguistic syntax of the definition of strategic autonomy and discourse surrounding the European Union as an actor in the global political

landscape to represent possible overlapping or concentric images imbedded in the Eurobarometer survey questions posed year-over-year. See **Appendix 2** for a complete list of identified indicators and the subsequent structuring of the resulting list of terms as ‘Rules’ per the requirements of the KH Coder software operations, which were added to the software and run simultaneously in a word frequency computational content analysis. It is important to note that additional exclusion parameter terminology in both English and French was also added at this point in running the word frequency computational content analysis per the recommendations from the developers of KH Coder to ensure as ‘clean’ results as possible. As such, lists of the 100 most frequently used words in English as well as in French were built into the software prior to running the frequency command to exclude more common words from skewing the final results overmuch. Following the results of the KH Coder driven text mining, the second phase of analysis shifted to building a framing analysis of each individual question highlighted in the software as pertaining to the list of indicators to draw inferences about the types of frames employed in the format of and any identifiable trends applied over time by the Eurobarometer survey questions. Results of both phases of analysis are discussed below in more detail to map findings and conclusions drawn pertaining to the research question of whether the Eurobarometer surveys in presenting EU global actorness year-over-year could be argued as intentionally packaging the more ambiguous policy of strategic autonomy for EU public perception.

Findings and Analysis

[A discussion of initial results from KH Coder content analysis](#)

As stipulated in the research design section above, the initial phase of analysis on the set of 20 Eurobarometer base questionnaires from 2013-2023 was performed via the KH Coder software application using a word frequency computational content analysis. The comprehensive list of both English and French language common linguistic nouns, articles, and verbs from the

exclusion range in combination with the simultaneous processing of the aforementioned **Appendix 2** rules, meant a first cursory result of partial match frequency word mapping from KH Coder. **Appendix 3** shows the first run partial match results set to a maximum of 150 terms as output for the computational frequency analysis in the application. Initial researcher conclusions drawn from this first attempt in analysis through KH Coder, however, were lacking in both exclusion of unnecessary outlier terminology from both languages of the base questionnaires, but also lacking in enough contextual information to perform the second phase of analysis. While not pertinent to this dissertation and its scope of research and analysis, one result from the KH Coder software application capabilities that was promising with the initial word count frequency outputs was the further mapping of co-occurrences of these partial match terms. The length requirements of this paper prevent a further deep dive into the analytical potentialities of the KH Coder software co-occurrences capacity, but the interesting map results of that co-occurrence process can be examined in **Appendix 4** for inspiration of a different approach to linguistic or wider discourse mapping using the KH Coder application. Considering this dissertation represents an exploratory research endeavour into the intersectionality of information communication, policy, public opinion, and framing analysis of narrative discourse, it could be beneficial for the wider academic community to explore the ways in which computational analysis software like KH Coder and the intricacies of co-occurrence of linguistic data could be used to investigate this complex field of inquiry further.

Although the co-occurrence software applicability of KH Coder was determined to be outside the scope of this dissertation, a small adjustment to the text mining computational content analysis in the first phase of research proved to successfully navigate the leap from software-led to researcher-led analysis. Built into the KH Coder software is an option to shift from casting a

wider text mining net through partial match searches to running a narrower scope search using only complete matches. This search element in the KH Coder software is described as a KWIC search, or a KWIC Concordance. KWIC is an acronym for Key Words in Context. In applying the rules outlined in **Appendix 2** to the KH Coder KWIC Concordance search function, it was possible to view the complete match of each rule’s indicators, both in simplistic tallies of word count frequencies, but also in context within the master PDF file of all 20 Eurobarometer Standard Survey Series questionnaires. This more in-depth analytical view of the extracted indicators in the master source file would later prove invaluable in bridging the quantitative to qualitative approaches of content and framing analysis, as evidenced in *Figure 1* below. While some versions of the complete match indicator searches were more successful than others, the full list of results paints an interesting picture of frequency counts, specifically considering certain basic word formation changes, such as: strategy versus strategic and diplomacy versus diplomatic. Additionally, the defence rule proved to reveal outputs that reflected the relationship between security and defence as paired policymaking terminology, meaning that each output for the defence indicator was simultaneously located within the security indicator search.

Figure 1: Frequency word analysis results from running KH Coder Researcher-Built Rules 1-12 via KWIC Concordance

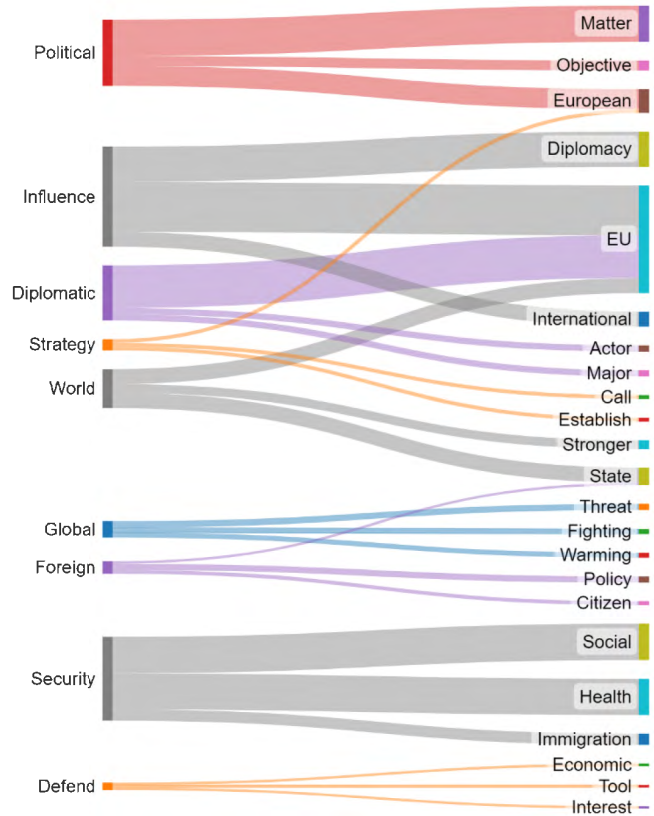
| Indicator | Frequency |
|----------------------|------------------|
| Political | 74 |
| Influence | 49 |
| Strategy/Strategic | 6/3 |
| Diplomacy/Diplomatic | 0/33 |
| Actor | 5 |
| World | 54 |
| Global | 17 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| International | 9 |
| Foreign | 5 |
| Policy | 35 |
| Security | 43 |
| Defence [Included in Security count] | 9 |

An additional feature of the KH Coder computational content analysis software was the option to display collocation statistics for any KWIC Concordance search. As described by KH Coder’s programmer, Higughi, the collocation statistics are valuable because they represent a statistical mapping of the most frequently used words around the KWIC search identified node term and therefore represent words that have the strongest relationship to the indicator input into KH Coder (Higughi, 2016b p. 39). Therefore, for all rules indicators that resulted in hits using the KWIC search feature, a subsequent collocation statistics analysis revealed further relational models of term frequencies across the survey questionnaires. Specifically, the KH Coder collocation statistics automatically trawled for the top five words before and after the node words, but in recognition of the length limitations of this dissertation research design, the successfully identified indicators listed above in *Figure 1* were input as node terms and then only analysed alongside the top three resulting collocated words. This feature further allowed for more focused efforts in identifying frames in the second phase of analysis because as discussed above, framing analysis within this dissertation would rely heavily on researcher-led qualitative inferential frames derived from the interpretation of relational elements of the presentation of survey questions in the Eurobarometer Standard Series to EU citizen survey respondents, which would necessitate viewing as broad of a relational map of the survey questions as possible. The first step in mapping the wider relationships between the indicator search terms and collocated words was to build out a visualization of

the flow of the occurrences of these relational keywords to each other to present a bird's eye view of the data outputs from KH Coder.

Figure 2: Author-built Sankey diagram of top three collocation frequency terms flowing from each original indicator input.



The resulting visualization of the collocation statistics feature through a Sankey diagram highlights the aforementioned relational flows of indicator inputs to keyword outputs and was selected as a unique method of data visualization used by other scholars to emphasize text mining data relationships in intersectional areas of study that require linking more quantitative work like content analysis with the beginning steps of crafting qualitative analysis processes (Jiang and Zhang, 2016). By cross-referencing counts of collocated keywords using the Sankey diagram, the Phase 2 framing

analysis to be performed below was initially built using the top four relational indicators: Political, Influence, Diplomatic, and Security.

These top four relational indicators were selected to forge the basis of the Phase 2 framing analysis based on a researcher-identified collocation frequency margin of over 50%, therefore reflecting in this particular research design, the most important indicators to consider in drawing inferences from the data. At this point, the author noted that Influence did not appear as clear cut in terms of a starting point of understanding as the other indicators. Therefore, this indicator was identified as needing an additional layer of analysis in deliberating on how the complexities of this frame, versus the more immediately understood presentation of frames constituted from politics, diplomacy, or securitization would appear in the context of this dissertation's research question and ultimately interpreted by the author when parsing findings for final conclusions. In consideration of the length limits of this paper, the next four results sections will denote the identified frame, discuss any relevant relation to the use of the frame compared to previously identified elements of the wider academic body of thought, and showcase a few examples of specific Eurobarometer survey questions in context from analysing the Base Questionnaire master file. Each subsection tied to a frame categorization will also attempt further analytical inferences, culminating in an overview of the relationships between the identified frames and the rest of the dissertation that can be examined briefly for success and relevance in the concluding section of the paper.

Political

Flowing from the Sankey chart collocation statistic visualization above, the political frame is built from the top three keywords found in context before or after the term throughout the master PDF file of survey questionnaires. Therefore, the largest portion of these search results tied the political indicator

to the words ‘matter’, ‘European’, and ‘objective’. All three of these words were researcher-interpreted through potential inferences about the conveyed experience of the survey respondents presented with the Eurobarometer Standard Survey questionnaire in receiving messaging tied to the node term of political and the related keywords of matter, European, and objective. While European is a more cut-and-dry related indicator pertaining to this research question and objective belies the more policy-focused element of interpreting the way in which politically framed questions are presented to the European public, the term matter is altogether more difficult to categorize. To matter, or rather, to denote something to matter to someone is an ambiguous concept, and yet is also an identifier of intrinsic value in crafting the political frame. For example, the initial KWIC Concordance search tagged a short question that upon further qualitative interpretation proved to be heavily weighted with a political frame steeped in what matters to the public as a primary driver for the creation of policies at the European Union. Notably, this question is found across all 20 survey questionnaires, reading:

"What does the EU mean to you personally?"

In parallel to the question weighted by the more amorphous acknowledgement of the influence of perceived experience on a person’s reception of message framing, the most politically aligned response offered in this multiple-choice question is phrased as:

“Stronger say in the world”.

To this end, a more nuanced understanding and follow-on illustration of the political frame may be necessary to adequately contextualize this element of political strength and position through an individual’s perceived reality. Outside of this intrinsically personal perception of the effect of politics within

a person's lived experience, the more traditional interpretation of the political frame as a primarily policy-based presentation of foreign affairs and defence considerations was revealed through consecutive multiple-choice questions running the duration of all 20 surveys offering a political frame for EU foreign policy and security decision-making. A unique example of a dichotomous question posed within each survey about EU policymaking, wherein citizens were polled on whether they were for or against certain policy choices and thereby only given a for, against, or do not know option in response reads:

"What is your opinion on each of the following statements? Please tell me for each statement, whether you are for it or against it."

While extraneous response categories may shift slightly year-over-year, the politically focused answer selections remain steadfast, reading most often one after another as:

"A common foreign policy of the 28 Member States of the EU" and "A common defence and security policy among EU Member States"

Framing political support for or against such similar policy approaches in the layperson citizens' eyes would potentially necessitate a lulling pattern in responses to this intentional categorization, wherein one response would be a follow-on to the next – whether for or against, or in the more ambiguous answer of don't know. In particular, while from a policy stakeholder perspective a common foreign policy and a common security and defence policy are distinct and debatable political discourse themes, it is interesting that the Eurobarometer Standard Survey base questionnaires would so often list these ideals as back-to-back answer options, as the possibility for the layman citizen to conflate the two phrasings would seem higher than not. One way to interpret the choice of listing the options for a common foreign policy

and a common defence and security policy in close proximity could be that in framing these policies as their true, distinct political entities, these two policies would be perceived by the public to be inextricably linked and therefore given a higher ranking, or lower ranking, in tandem.

Interestingly, a more pointed application of a political frame to the survey questions doesn't appear until the iteration of the Eurobarometer Standard Survey in June-July 2019, Eurobarometer 91.5 (European Commission, 2019a). While there was also an election held within the timeframe of survey research in 2014, the below question was posed for the first time to respondents only after the 2019 European Union parliamentary elections, reading:

"What are the issues which made you vote in the recent European Parliament elections? Firstly?"

While followed up by a second chance to answer with follow-on responses of salient issues that took that particular citizen to the polls, respondents were initially asked to choose simply one issue. Notably, while more specific actions like fighting terrorism or deciding the way the organization should function moving forward preceded the policy-based answer in spot 10 of the 16 total options, the politically framed response read as a more of a panacea issue pushing citizens to vote:

"Security and defence policy"

In framing the wider concerns of security and defence as one policy focus, a possible interpretation is that it was a simpler answer for the necessity of selecting only one, primary response to indicate what issue made that citizen vote in the most recent elections for European Parliament. Unlike the more

specific phrases mentioned above of fighting terrorism, a policy framed response like security and defence policy necessarily includes any more unique or concrete actions by the European Union.

These two examples of the political frame applied to Eurobarometer survey questions regarding EU global actorness were expected and unsurprisingly created the most consistent frame across all 20 survey questionnaires. As a baseline for understanding the relationship between the way the appearance of certain indicators can be interpreted in the structure of the surveys, these results laid a predictable foundation for further researcher-led exploration into what additional frames could be uncovered in the questionnaires.

Influence

In contrast to the Sankey chart collocation visualization of the selection of the political frame, the initial inferences drawn from the Sankey chart influence flows were not as clearly understood. Namely, with influence as the node word, the top three words collocated before and after the term by KH Coder were ‘EU’, ‘International’, and ‘Diplomacy’. With such general text mining terminology results combined with the ambiguity of the node keyword of ‘Influence’, it was determined by the researcher that this selected frame should be run again to attempt to find a more commonly understood association of more unique phrasing to successfully deduce any qualitative inferences as the frame is applied to any questions or response options in the Eurobarometer survey questionnaires. Therefore, the influence frame as a more ambiguous concept led to an additional analytical effort by the author to parse out more specific contextualization of an influence indicator as it appears in additional KWIC Concordance searches and collocation statistical analyses. In a similar vein to the discussion above of the ambiguous impact of a concept such as ‘matter’ in the interpretation of frames based in text mining content analysis, the perceived reality of any given survey respondent across the EU Member

States could give rise to several variations of understanding regarding a keyword like influence. That would then mean that any framing analysis based solely in that much more qualitative and inferential term would be mired in a level of analytical complexity that would be untenable for this research paper.

So, in recognition of the exploratory nature of this dissertation in its introductory attempts at a mixed-methods approach of framing analysis based in content data mining, it would be beneficial to attempt a second search for more concrete framing context words to associate with the wider influence frame provided by the initial attempt. Based on a one-further stair step approach to the use of KH Coder computational software, it was determined that Influence as an indicator was primarily associated with two specific contexts, wider economic and budgetary concerns as well as more external-facing frames that specifically poll extra-EU foreign policy and values promotion initiatives. The choice of the term external in this context was fashioned after the academic conceptualization of internal and external of a body such as the European Union as an approach to cataloguing certain policy choices or document verbiage, for example. External in the case of this dissertation topic will reference an understanding of any frame that presents an external element without a specific callback to the EU or any of its Member States, as that would be considered by this researcher as more internally facing, even if framing a question about foreign policy. Accordingly, the wider content driven influence frame now showed a narrowing in scope to two separate economic and external frames. Below are respective examples of more rarely applied concepts throughout the timeline of all 20 Eurobarometer survey questionnaires – a question on budget allocations and a question polling EU citizens on the organization's actorness outside of its nominal regional purview:

Economic – *"On which of the following do you think most of the EU budget is spent?"* and *"And on which of the following would you like EU budget to be spent?"*

External – *"Which of the following challenges do you consider the most pressing for the future of developing countries?"*

The above examples of economic frames applied to questions regarding EU citizen opinion of the organization's budgetary spending list a primary response option as the generic category of "*Defence and Security*" and serve to reflect a duality of survey question structuring favoured by the European Commission. The first of the economically framed questions asks for an estimate of which answer option is most of the EU budget spent, whereas the second clarifies that the answer options are now in the hands of the citizen to determine where they would like the EU budget to be applied.

Notably, the economic framing of necessary or in demand per the survey response options were apparent only in the 2018 and end of 2019, beginning of 2020 iterations of the Eurobarometer Standard Survey series, Eurobarometers 89.1, 90.3, 92.3, and 93.1, respectively (European Commission, 2018a ; 2018b ; 2019b ; 2020). As mentioned above in consideration of political frames pertaining to salient issue voting rates, the economic frames of how the budget is spent bookend the parliamentary election period of the beginning of 2019. An interpretation of this unique appearance of the economic framing of foreign policy and security issues would be tied to an attempt to 'make the case' through presenting the EU citizen with these survey questions that the European Union's actions abroad should be considered together with automatic budgetary spending requirements and not be contemplated as an extraneous economic burden.

On the other hand, in assessing the external framing of a question on the Eurobarometer Standard Survey questionnaire about a generic representation of challenges for the future of developing countries, it is interesting to mark the slight shift in answer wording, with an option reading:

“Peace and security”

An externalization of the framed presentation of the promotion of peace and security, rather than the more commonly associated ‘Defence and Security’ policy-focused phrasing, lends itself to a more global actors bent interpretation of the question. As mentioned above, in this question, no mention of the European Union as a body or any mention of individual Member States is conveyed, which inherently externalizes the audience understanding based on the way the question is framed. Also, the addition of a time-qualifier like the adjective ‘pressing’ in the questioning of what challenges would be considered as impediments to the future of external societies to the daily lives of Europeans could be interpreted as framing the issue with an urgency that would necessitate a response from the organization. Such an urgent response could be more easily carried out by an autonomous actor as deemed strategically appropriate for the interests of the body, for instance. Interestingly as well, this question stands alone in the Eurobarometer 91.5 questionnaire conducted just after the 2019 parliamentary elections (European Commission, 2019a). Thus, while a more policy-oriented focus could have been applied, it is possible that these framing analysis findings point to a more intentional use of this externally focused phrasing to encourage citizen support for a response from the EU as a capable, elected whole – positioned outward toward these heretofore labelled ‘pressing’ challenges abroad.

Along the same vein, subsections of Eurobarometers 97.5 and 98.2 also featured an extensive list of response options regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which took the externalization frame to a point that allowed for listing much more starkly concrete foreign policy and, in particular, security and defence measures than previously noted in any of the 20 Eurobarometer Standard Survey series that were examined in this study (European Commission, 2022 ; 2023). Interestingly, the type of question posed was another instance of a rarer form of the Likert Scale to gauge the extent of agreement or disagreement from the respondent. While there are 15 total answers in which the attitudinal Likert Scale requires a choice of one of the following ratings: ‘Totally Agree’, ‘Tend to Agree’, ‘Tend to Disagree’, ‘Totally Disagree’, or ‘Don’t Know’; the first five answers were excerpted here as the most pertinent to this dissertation’s scope for brief analysis:

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><i>"Please tell to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:"</i></p> | <p><i>"The invasion in Ukraine is a threat to the security of the EU"</i></p> |
| | <p><i>"The invasion in Ukraine is a threat to the security of (OUR COUNTRY)"</i></p> |
| | <p><i>"By standing against the Russian invasion in Ukraine, the EU is defending European values"</i></p> |
| | <p><i>"Co-operation in defence matters at EU level should be increased"</i></p> |
| | <p><i>"More money should be spent on defence in the EU"</i></p> |

The above answer options reflect the influence of wider global contextual crises on the framing of question and survey response options within the Eurobarometer Standard Survey series. Within the analysed timeframe of 20 surveys across the ten years between 2013-2023, never before the Russian invasion context were the phrasing of agreement or disagreement question formats possible to the concrete extent exhibited by the response options above. For example, the first two options indicate a primacy denoted to the impact of the external security crisis on the supranational body of the European Union first. Following that, the Likert Scale response options are used to measure agreement or disagreement with whether the external security challenge of the Russian invasion framed from a Member State perspective may have a parallel national sentiment. Further, the third answer option in particular, shows the complex intersectionality of an external framing of foreign policy. There is no question as to agreeing or disagreeing with the choice for the European Union to stand against the invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces, outlining the presentation of a concrete foreign policy action undertaken by the polity. Then, in the second part of the answer option phrasing, an extra layer of framed interpretation is added to that externally facing action wherein the supranational body is acting in defence of European value systems. By framing the top three answer categories using explicit mentions of external actors, in this case Ukraine and Russia, as well as the added element of a further layer of framing applied to the defence of European values as an ambiguous concept to be perceived as a more concrete, actionable stance to either agree or disagree with, this question in particular presents an interesting sub-case study. The Russian invasion of Ukraine thereby represented an external crisis with compounding European consequences on the doorstep of the region, which in turn offered the Eurobarometer Standard Survey series questionnaires the ability to frame question responses in a more

forward or concrete policy decision-making orientation than any prior, more amorphous inferential suggestions toward the public audience of survey respondents.

Diplomatic

In reviewing the Sankey chart relational flows for another prominent frame to use in analysing the Eurobarometer Standard Survey questionnaires, it was revealed that the nod word of 'Diplomatic' was collocated most frequently with the terms, 'EU', 'actor', and 'major'. In this sense, the diplomatic framing device was most closely aligned with the initial thrust of this dissertation's research question. At the core of the argument of this paper is the idea that the construction of frames around any EU initiatives are intentionally utilized through the instrumentalization of the Eurobarometer survey series year-over-year as a data-led information communication tool on behalf of the overarching goals of the European Commission. In communicating from a particular frame regarding stated objectives for the EU as a whole acting as a major diplomatic force globally, necessarily skirts outside any national versus supranational leadership obstacles amidst policymaker debates by presenting for public perception the thrust of the idea that the European Union will take the action of augmenting its own legitimate diplomatic influence without brooking further argument or input from either its own political elites or its own citizenry. In arguably the most pointed use of framing in the survey questionnaires, the diplomatic frame results emphasized a relationship between foreign policy goals of the EU as a diplomatic body with an evolution toward global actorhood and potentially more strategically autonomous decision-making. A leader can be diplomatic, but can a diplomat be an autonomous leader in the simplest public connotation of the term?

Below are two examples of survey questions and corresponding responses that highlight the shift from diplomat to actor on the international stage for the

European Union in a more direct phrasing than many other more generic wordsmithing than previously seen in analysing prior frames in this study. First, a set of questions polling about what is and what should be “*the main objective in the building of Europe*” contextualises the scene wherein the Eurobarometer survey question phrasing is following a through-line on the necessity of the furtherance of the building of the region of Europe overall. Both offered a multiple-choice response that read:

"To make the EU a major diplomatic actor on the international stage"

It is worthwhile to note that the question phrasing indicates a need for a driven, primary objective in the building of Europe; a region that is not entirely under the purview of the European Union as a governing body. So, in the presentation of the answer option indicated above, the Eurobarometer Standard Survey series is insinuating through a diplomatic framing approach in drafting this response that the European Union is an autonomous leader of wider Europe, that therein lies the necessity of strategizing a path for the EU to achieve a higher diplomatic status, and that the EU as a supranational organization should function as a global actor in its own right.

Importantly, this set of questions and corresponding responses were only found in the first three Eurobarometer Standard Surveys analysed in the chosen timeframe, Eurobarometers 79.3 and 80.1 from 2013 and the first survey conducted in 2014, Eurobarometer 81.4 (European Commission, 2013a ; 2013b ; 2014). In the phrasing of this diplomatic framing of the EU’s position globally, the author would posit that this is both a recognition of the progression of the build-up of Europe’s status as a global actor, but also a markedly intentional phrasing that offers only the option to support the effort to elevate the EU to major diplomatic actorness if that response is selected. For instance, the phrasing does not indicate that a main objective in building

Europe in 2013 or 2014 should be augmenting diplomatic relations or leading diplomatic initiatives alongside allies, but clearly exhibits an intention for the body to pursue global actorness to its pinnacle.

Second, in contrast to the short-lived set of questions reviewed above, a subset of questions in the survey series throughout all 20 Eurobarometers analysed with a diplomatic frame also led to an interpretation that the EU remains intent on presenting the pursuit of global diplomatic actorness as a positive outcome, by reading:

"Which of the following do you think is the most positive result of the EU? Firstly? And then?"

Among other answer selections, similarly to the above response presented here, the diplomatic frame of the following phrase shows a clear intent of again, not offering a dichotomous choice of agreeing or disagreeing with the proffered pursuit, but only providing multiple chances for agreeing with the more active course of action. It reads:

"The political and diplomatic influence of the EU in the rest of the world"

Now the previously reviewed three frames of political, diplomatic, and influence converge in one answer option to position the organization's intent to make its mark on the international landscape. Also of note, this subset of questions asking for first and then subsequent answers for the most positive results of the existence and therefore actorness of the European Union, while in 2013 were asked in the order of around QD5 or QD6, by the first poll of 2023 had risen to subset number QC3 (European Commission, 2013a ; 2013b ; 2023). The upward momentum of the opportunity to choose the diplomatic influence of the EU globally as the organization's most positive result reflects

a parallel effort to prioritize for EU public perception the idea that the European Union should be a strategic actor capable of political and diplomatic clout on the world stage.

Security

Interestingly, while a security frame would presumably be most closely linked to any considerations of EU global actorness and subsequently any implications that strategic autonomy as a policy buzzword was being packaged for public consumption through global actorness, the initial KWIC Concordance searches and collocation statistics resulted in many more relational results because of public policy social security themes, health and education security phrasing in the survey, and other mentions of wider human security focused initiatives. Specifically, as evidenced by the relational flows shown in the above Sankey chart, for the node term 'Security', the top three resulting collocated words were 'Social', 'Health', and 'Immigration'. While social security and health security for example are worthwhile frames to study in reference to the presentation of public policy and national level initiatives for public perception, for the purposes of this dissertation, only the third collocated term of 'Immigration' could be housed under the more foreign policy focused frame to be applied to this particular research. Therefore, it was necessary to perform a more manual trawling of the KH Coder results pertaining to the security frame to weed out any outlier themes not pertaining to the more traditional understanding of foreign policy-oriented security, that of defence and security efforts. There were 125 results found in the KWIC Concordance content analysis that when qualitatively re-run with the more foreign policy focused framing of the issue of security in mind, narrowed the scope of results to be studied by more than half. From this narrowed field of analysis, a selection of the security frames is discussed below in further detail in an attempt to conceptualize the most applicable elements of a security frame to this dissertation's scope of work.

Perhaps most unsurprisingly in the wider global context of elections and referendums, the following Likert Scale question polled to EU citizens primarily in 2015 and 2016 to inquire about more nuanced attitudinal scale opinion results toward various issues, including the blanket response of “*Security*”, reading:

"Could you please tell me for each of the following, whether the term brings to mind something very positive, fairly positive, fairly negative or very negative."

So, rather than opting for a multiple-choice selection as the Eurobarometer Standard Survey series usually offer, the 2015 and 2016 editions of Eurobarometers 84.3, 85.2, and 86.2 required a positive or negative rating of among other issues, security in its totality and complexity presented as an ambiguous catch-all term (European Commission, 2015 ; 2016a ; 2016b). Additionally, the security response fell at 11th out of 13 rating scales, burying the term deep within the Likert Scale question structure opening up the potential for skewed results from question fatigue considering the first three options were “*Large companies*”, “*Small and medium-sized companies*”, and “*Free trade*”. Although, it is also possible to interpret this Likert Scale order of question responses as a recognition of survey respondent general comfortability with more traditionally associated European Union relational terminology with business buzzwords or growth and trade-oriented indicators, than to more alien or commonly misinterpreted concepts like security. For example, in opening this survey question with an economic framing of the response options, it could allow for a more open categorization of later, more hot-button or less-understood topics such as security because of the sense of familiarity with the beginning options offering a heightened sense of instinctively knowing where one stands regarding a positive or negative attitude scale.

Additionally, as mentioned previously in the discussion of the other frames applied to questions and answer selection options in Eurobarometer 91.5 tied to the European parliamentary elections held just before that survey, it was a similarly ripe survey for teasing out further denotations of self-legitimacy construction by the European Commission through a security frame lens (European Commission, 2019a). Multiple choice question #3, exclusively found in the subsection QF of the Eurobarometer 91.5 survey and not phrased in the same way within any of the other 19 Eurobarometer Standard Survey series iterations examined in this dissertation, reads:

“Which of the following are the main reasons for thinking that (OUR COUNTRY) has benefited from being a member of the EU?” (p. 20)

Unlike some of the other questions analysed previously, this question structure specifically ties the national allegiance of the EU citizen responding to the poll to the broader conceptualization of the benefits of being part of the overarching organizational body of the European Union. Each answer selection option following this question similarly mentions ‘(OUR COUNTRY)’ or ‘(NATIONALITY)’ to specifically knit these national to EU connections together, except for one:

“The EU contributes to maintaining peace and strengthening security”.

The above response is listed as the #2 answer option out of 15 total and specifically frames security as an action that the EU contributes toward the maintenance of peace and the strengthening of security in a general sense. There are no ties to a specific Member State or Nationality in this response choice, but rather a securitizing frame that serves to present a narrative

construction of the European Union as a supranational body purpose-fit for positively impacting the future of global affairs.

Ultimately, the results of the security frame analysis were compelling in spite of their lukewarm frequency counts and necessary collocations upon further review. It is also possible that in pursuing data-interpreted initial frame creation, that the security elements of any collocation results were not adequately parsed out by the software to build a sufficient map of distinct categorizations, but rather allowing the more broadly applied concept of security that the European Union favours to mean that that particular frame was not accurately counted by the complete match analysis approach through KH Coder and a different computational software analysis could be a boon. Certainly though, security framing as a multi-faceted dimension inspires a further investigation outside the scope of this research paper. Furthermore, the intentional framing results showcased in the above analysis of the question from Eurobarometer 91.5 offer the most concrete linkages between the presentation of foreign policy objectives and supranationally autonomous actions in a positive security frame for public perception.

[An evolutionary view of Eurobarometer survey frames](#)

The four sections above described the initial Phase 2 of framing analysis performed based on cross-referencing the KH Coder KWIC file results to amass a wider picture of framed questions in an attempt to deduce a pattern of Eurobarometer survey questions presenting a framed perception of various elements of strategic autonomy as the natural evolution of the European Union as a global actor in the past decade. While focused on the individual potential of select questions filtered through the KWIC Concordance and collocation statistical efforts for more inferential, qualitative analysis – the forest was lost through the trees.

Arguably, the most interesting findings ascertained pertaining to the exploratory impetus of this dissertation was the broader evolution of frames charted from 2013 to 2023. The in-detail dissection of the Eurobarometer Standard Survey series questionnaires was crucial in interpreting the four indicator-produced frame categories of Political, Influence, Diplomatic, and Security. Subsequently, these same four categories can be reordered and re-presented as five distinct frames based upon the in-depth, researcher-led review of the computational inputs to create more qualitatively based outputs. These five frames can be described as the European Union's presentation of foreign policy elements of wider themes of global actorness and strategic autonomy for public perception as: 1). Diplomatic Influence, 2). Political Strength of the European Union, 3). Security of Europe, 4). Economic Considerations, and 5). External Position of the European Union.

As this dissertation's research design stemmed from an exploratory intersectional approach of qualitative framing analysis efforts couched in quantitative computational content analysis, the author recognizes the inherent pitfalls of such a 'reframing' of the indicator-driven frames, ripe for critique of base inductive versus deductive reasoning as applicable. However, upon a review of the Phase 2 framing analysis initial processes and findings through a visualization of the data as a complete table, as shown in, re-ordered chronologically by occurrence across the individual surveys called for a re-assessment of the frame categorization. **Appendix 5** includes the Phase 2 Content and Subsequent Framing Analysis Results Table document alongside the accompanying Question Legend table document identifying the Eurobarometer Standard Survey Series questions and response options reviewed by the author. Perhaps most importantly, the need for further complexity in the elucidation of the frame descriptions meant a shift from four indicator frames to five researcher frames.

The reshaping of the full list of all five frames resulting from the dual phases of analysis as part of this research design was a necessary response to a burgeoning understanding of the connecting pathways between quantitative and qualitative analysis. It is therefore fruitful to provide greater transparency on the reworking of each of the five frames. First, the diplomatic frame was renamed diplomatic influence in recognition of the more actor-oriented aspects of the framed questions and response options that consistently market an approach zeroed in on carving out an influential space in the international relations landscape for the European Union. It was important for the choice in frame label to accurately portray not just the more traditionally perceived collaborative diplomatic approach, but to weight the frame with a clearer indication of the pursuit of ‘major’ diplomatic status or influence as a leader among other international actors. Second, the political strength of the organization reworked into the name, highlights not only the policy focus of the framing device, but also the more ambiguous and ambitious element of striving for a stronger position in political matters. While a political frame could be assumed to package a perception of any strategic actions as drive by policy implications alone, it was important to further contextualize the identified trends within the frame after additional qualitative conclusions were drawn. Namely, that the political objectives of the European Union were presented on the whole throughout the surveys studied as mattering much more if they were politically strategic choices in the pursuit of a stronger position or say in the world order. Third, security proved in application to be too wide a net cast in relation to the broad use of the term in EU communication messaging, so the addition of Europe contextualizes the use of security to the more traditional sense of the word. It is possible, then, to ensure that this framing device is appropriately narrowed to an application directly tied to a security and defence position versus risking confounding results based on social security public policy indicators, for example. Based on this narrower framing description of the Security of Europe also ensures that the

most promising findings from that particular framing analysis are sufficiently labelled to encourage further academic inquiry into the intentionality of an internally focused public diplomacy framing initiative through the Eurobarometer survey series. Fourth, the creation of this economic frame and in particular, the insertion of the term considerations recognizes the frame's inherently sporadic use in relation to the originally too ambiguous frame of influence, in the collocated relevance of foreign policy and security indicators.

Almost surprisingly, it seemed that the economic frame, while worthwhile enough in the findings to ensure that it was highlighted in this dissertation, was not as commonplace as assumed for an institution founded from an entirely economic approach to global affairs. Finally, the fifth frame was created to highlight the intentional framing of the externalization of EU actions and influence on the global stage, without callbacks to more internal elements. This choice was an important framing distinction as it both ties a frame that was inclusive of questions ranging from the promotion of peace and democracy in developing countries to the potentially beneficial societal impact of artificial intelligence in the world together into one comprehensive, externally positioned frame resulting from the researcher-led second phase of analysis.

As illuminated in the aforementioned **Appendix 5: Phase 2 Content and Framing Analysis Results Table and Question Legend**, with the added layer of further interpretation provided by the reframing of the list of frames, an evolution in the use and appearance of the five frames was revealed. In noting the most consistently used questions and connected frames as well as the tapering off or spiking use of various frames provides an opportunity for an additionally applicable moment of analysis through a year-over-year trend perspective. For example, the Diplomatic Influence and Political Strength of the European Union frames, while the most consistently polled throughout the

last decade, have seen an individual evolution in the approach of a more heavily diplomatic focus at the beginning to a more weighted political approach in the following years. Additionally, as evidenced by those two frames consistently rising in the order of questions asked year-over-year, it also represents an evolution in the priority place of importance placed on the diplomatic and political influence of the European Union as a body as it is hoped to be perceived by the public opinion polling of the Eurobarometer mechanism. In contrast, the other frames of the Security of Europe, Economic Considerations, and External Position of the European Union are frames that are sporadically applied as wider sociopolitical landscapes permit to create more pointed results pertaining to the public opinion of the European Union from an economic, foreign power, or securitization perspective. While this exploration into the applicability of framing analysis to the Eurobarometer survey questionnaires cropped the length of time considered for this research question based on the first use of the term strategic autonomy in European Union policy documents in 2013, it would be interesting to see wider timeframe applicability through one framing lens, for example, to understand the longer trend impacts of how certain topics or individual questions were polled year-over-year.

[Further structural lines of analytical inquiry revealed](#)

In addition to the potential for further in-depth analysis of the evolution of identified frames, the research processes followed during this dissertation also revealed further structural elements to the Eurobarometer survey collections overall that should be openly pursued through analytical inquiry across social science. Notably, in a content analysis of survey questionnaires and therefore as a call for further critical bodies of literature on the validity of the Eurobarometer surveys as research tools and public opinion instruments, it is vital to dive further down the paths outlined briefly in the individual framing analysis sections. For example, in a few instances within this paper, the type of question posed was referenced, from the more commonly asked multiple

choice question format, to the less used dichotomous or Likert Scale question structures. In spite of the space limitations of this dissertation, critical consideration of the effects of the particular type of question polled were introduced as exemplary of one element of the impact of structural survey decision-making that can be applied to deeper looks at the Eurobarometer Standard Survey series, or perhaps even in potential differences between the format of the Standard series versus the Special series produced by instruction of the European Commission.

Moreover, in comparison with the type of question posed, it could also prove fruitful to examine the order in which certain questions or response options appear. As investigated in the earlier findings section, there were highlighted instances of the order in which a response option was listed in the individual question structure format. It could prove useful for further avenues of research to focus on one question type or one unique question that appeared across all Eurobarometer Standard Survey base questionnaires examined to determine whether a more micro-level change in the order of a question annually or the order in which a response is listed could impact the resulting response rates or the perception of the overall narrative frame of the topic by the respondent. If a particular question jumps in order over a 10-year period from question place #14 to question place #7, what inferences can be deduced from this trend change? Ideally, this further analytical avenue of inquiry serves as an example of the potential applications of this dissertation's scope of work and subsequent empirical analysis for determining any marked changes in the level of importance of a particular frame communicated to the wider public domain.

Also, as noted in reference to the **Appendix 5: Phase 2 Content and Framing Analysis Results Table and Question Legend** showing the overarching trends in questions posed to the average EU citizen pertaining to the selected frames as they may be linked to global actorness soft-launching aspects of strategic

autonomy, the order of when a question is asked can trend upward, or perhaps conversely downward and should be viewed in combination with the overall occurrence rates of the type or topic of the question itself for the fullest picture of the data to be reviewed. While this structural pattern of question order can be viewed from quantitative analysis measures, a mixed-method approach, as this paper's research design followed, lays a solid data foundation for researcher interpretation and conclusions drawn about any reasoning for shifts in question order from survey to survey or year-over-year. Finally, further analytical investigations into any yearly pattern trends regarding the occurrence of individual questions could also shed light on wider implications for any potential capitalization on global context challenges or successes by the European Union for complementary data indications. For example, as discussed above with the more rarely polled Likert Scale of positive or negative attitudinal views on security appearing with most frequency around the end of 2015 and throughout 2016 could indicate a recognition by the European Union that any results pertaining to the appearance of that individual question would be beneficial considering the wider world context of its top allies of the United States and the United Kingdom experiencing election and referendum upheavals heavily influenced by security issues. In another example, the interpretation of the set of more concrete, externally framed questions regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine also exhibit an area of opportunity for determining what contextual spike in a certain type or proximal location of a wider global crisis could have an impact or not on the way questions are framed within the Eurobarometer Standard Survey series base questionnaires for public perception. Exploration through mixed methods approaches to the Eurobarometer surveys by this dissertation will ideally encourage further academic inquiry into the social science research elements of structural survey analysis from either quantitative or qualitative avenues.

Conclusion

The concluding inferences drawn from the above empirical analysis section offer altogether a mixed methods reflective set of findings that point to individual inferential outcomes as well as an awareness of a change-over-time trend found in the umbrella view of the summative findings. Also, further structural lines of academic inquiry are identified as potential analytical paths forward in applying a parallel or similarly inspired empirical process to other research designs investigating the intersections of foreign policy and public opinion research, but also wider categories of scholastic efforts from a quantitative and qualitatively blended approach. Overall, this dissertation represents the intersection not only of what at the core were thought of as traditionally diverging methodological approaches, but also fields of study that while conjoined in the realm of the social sciences can be stoically siloed in research design and thought. Mixed methods research designs are increasing in legitimate use across interdisciplinary fields of study. This paper will contribute an extra layer of proof-of-concept effort in combining quantitative and qualitative analysis practices to further the body of thought in the social sciences. Furthermore, the choice of a research question that is driven by a focus on foreign policy initiatives, but that also actively engages with the opportunity for analytical understanding mapped through elementary tenets of communications studies will hopefully fruitfully encourage scholars to investigate similar avenues of intersectionality in the social science fields of study.

At the outset, the idea for this paper was to approach the Eurobarometer Standard Survey series from a distinctly different perspective and, hopefully, further conceptualize the often stretched-academically thin buzzwords of global actorness and strategic autonomy. The terms are ambiguous, amorphous, and seem to shift in and out of the academic community consciousness in contrast to or alongside policymaker willingness to speak the

words or simply infer the meanings. To find a way to explore the communicated inferences to these concepts was the impetus of tackling this research question. The literature review collates, synthesizes, counters, and agrees with a host of scholars on topics such as: public opinion research, information communication, legitimation, and strategic autonomy. The review of the literature further adds a contextualization of framing theory beyond the traditional analytical application of the methodology using news media frames to fill the opportunity gap of attempting to apply frames to the construction of public survey instruments. A discussion of prior studies on the use of the Eurobarometer surveys as instruments of messaging laid the foundations for a methodological discussion of the applicability of content and framing analysis to the surveys as data, rather than the more common approach of using the data from the surveys as the basis for underpinning other avenues of intellectual discovery. In exploring the convergence of computational data mining, quantitative content analysis, and researcher-informed framing analysis, the two phases of analysis offered opportunities for learning, reworking, and narrowing in scope to ensure that the empirical effort produced sufficient findings for conclusions to be drawn about parallel interpretations of question framing and the potential packaging of the hushed, hot-button topic of strategic autonomy into inferences to EU global actorness in the Eurobarometer surveys. The perceived absence of academic engagement with public opinion in regard to strategic autonomy discourse drove the formulation of this particular research question. Specifically, the identified gap of critical engagement with the Eurobarometer Standard Survey series as an intentional communication messaging instrument of the European Commission offered an initial spark of academic inquiry into how best to synthesize, analyse, and interpret the surveys directly as data points. In reviewing both the avenues for further research revealed in the findings section of this dissertation as well as the more contemporary trend in publication dates of the scholarly works in the wider academic body of thought reflected on in the literature review, the

relevance of study involving the more ambiguous foreign policy concepts and their impact on various fields of research seems to be growing. The European Union itself continues to publish documents tracking the evolution of the topic of strategic autonomy in European politics, think-tank circles, and expert reports, so ideally there will be further organizational paths for content analysis on the term. Within this wider narrative of EU strategic autonomy, this dissertation carved out new understandings of intentional framing of policy initiatives year-over-year to coincide with a more active participation by the European Union on the global stage, exploring closer linkages between an ambiguous policy expression like strategic autonomy with more active indicators of the EU as an externally-focused, diplomatic security actor pursuing an augmented strength of position and influence worldwide.

Additionally, this dissertation critically engaged with the structural foundations of the Eurobarometer Standard Survey series as representative of an intentional re-prioritization of certain question frames or individual response selection frames year-to-year based on global socio-political contexts to place foreign policy positions higher in the polling order, paralleling an increased emphasis on strategic actions over diplomatic support by the European Union in its interactions globally. In spite of the initial exploratory academic review and empirical analysis of this dissertation identifying much of its own limitations and methodological hiccups, overall, this beginning contribution to wider academic engagement on an understudied area of convergence between communications studies and international relations proved relevant and useful. In consideration of the fact that the timeframe of identified Eurobarometer surveys to study is contemporary to the previous decade, there could be further relevance and use in either studying a more historical set of Eurobarometer survey question and answer sets as well, to better understand and explain prior policymaking and public opinion intersectional realities. Ideally, this dissertation will be seen as specifically

contributing to new understandings within the wider narrative framing of the often contested and ambiguous policy concept of strategic autonomy through linking the public perception of the EU as an international security actor in practice based on an examination of the published Eurobarometer Standard Survey series questionnaires from 2013-2023. In the same vein, it is the hope of this author that other similar academic research and public policy intersections and understudied public opinion research instruments will be the source of further critical engagement by social scientists.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Standard Eurobarometer Selection Document from GESIS

Appendix 2: Indicators and Rules List for KH Coder Phase 1 Content Analysis

Appendix 3: Initial KH Coder Phase 1 Content Analysis Frequency Text Mining Results

Appendix 4: KH Coder co-occurrence network of rules visualization

Appendix 5: Phase 2 Content and Framing Analysis Results Table and Question Legend

Appendix 1: Standard Eurobarometer Selection Document from GESIS



Overview of Eurobarometer surveys with standard EU and trend question modules

In addition to the Standard Eurobarometer and starting with wave 34 (1990) special topical surveys have been conducted intermittently, usually on request of the in each case responsible EC Directorate-General. Herewith the number of surveys conducted under each main wave in spring or autumn has considerably increased (dot-separated sub-numbers). Usually only one survey per main wave includes the standard or trend module with focus on general European Unification issues and on behalf of EC Directorate-General Communication with results published in the official Standard Eurobarometer reports. The following list identifies all surveys from wave 34 onwards which contain the general standard module, a reduced set of standard indicators (subset), or standard European Unification issues in a special topic context, e.g. "Future of Europe" or "European Parliament Eurobarometer".

| Standard and EU trend Surveys | Fieldwork | GESIS Study ID | Standard Report | Subset | Special Topic |
|-------------------------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------|---------------|
| Eurobarometer 98.2 | Jan-Feb 2023 | ZA7953 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 97.5 | June-July 2022 | ZA7902 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 97.3 | April-May 2022 | ZA7888 | | | X |
| Eurobarometer 96.3 | Jan-Feb 2022 | ZA7848 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 96.2 | Nov-Dec 2021 | ZA7847 | | | X |
| Eurobarometer 96.1 | Sept-Oct 2021 | ZA7846 | | | X |
| Eurobarometer 95.3 | June-July 2021 | ZA7783 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 95.1 | March-April 2021 | ZA7781 | | | X |
| Eurobarometer 94.3 | Feb-March 2021 | ZA7780 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 94.2 | Nov-Dec 2020 | ZA7750 | | | X |
| Eurobarometer 94.1 | Oct-Nov 2020 | ZA7749 | | | X |
| Eurobarometer 93.1 | July-Aug 2020 | ZA7649 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 92.3 | Nov-Dec 2019 | ZA7601 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 92.2 | October 2019 | ZA7580 | | | X |
| Eurobarometer 91.5 | June-July 2019 | ZA7576 | X | | X |
| Eurobarometer 91.2 | March 2019 | ZA7562 | | | X |
| Eurobarometer 91.1 | Feb-March 2019 | ZA7561 | | | X |
| Eurobarometer 90.3 | November 2018 | ZA7489 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 90.2 | Oct-Nov 2018 | ZA7488 | | | X |
| Eurobarometer 90.1 | September 2018 | ZA7484 | | | X |
| Eurobarometer 89.1 | March 2018 | ZA6963 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 88.3 | November 2017 | ZA6928 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 88.1 | Sept-Oct 2017 | ZA6925 | | | X |
| Eurobarometer 87.3 | May 2017 | ZA6863 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 87.2 | April 2017 | ZA6862 | | X | |
| Eurobarometer 86.2 | November 2016 | ZA6788 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 86.1 | Sept-Oct 2016 | ZA6697 | | | X |
| Eurobarometer 85.2 | May 2016 | ZA6694 | X | | |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|--------|---|---|---|
| Eurobarometer 84.3 | November 2015 | ZA6643 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 84.1 | September 2015 | ZA6596 | | | X |
| Eurobarometer 83.3 | May 2015 | ZA5998 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 83.1 | Feb-Mar 2015 | ZA5964 | | X | |
| Eurobarometer 82.4 | Nov-Dec 2014 | ZA5933 | | | X |
| Eurobarometer 82.3 | November 2014 | ZA5932 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 81.4 | May-June 2014 | ZA5928 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 81.2 | March 2014 | ZA5913 | | X | |
| Eurobarometer 80.1 | November 2013 | ZA5876 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 79.3 | May 2013 | ZA5689 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 78.1 | November 2012 | ZA5685 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 77.4 | June 2012 | ZA5613 | | | X |
| Eurobarometer 77.3 | May 2012 | ZA5612 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 76.3 | Nov 2011 | ZA5567 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 75.3 | May 2011 | ZA5481 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 74.2 | Nov-Dec 2010 | ZA5449 | X | | X |
| Eurobarometer 73.4 | May 2010 | ZA5234 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 72.4 | Oct-Nov 2009 | ZA4994 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 71.3 | Jun-Jul 2009 | ZA4973 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 71.1 | Jan-Feb 2009 | ZA4971 | | | X |
| Eurobarometer 70.1 | Oct-Nov 2008 | ZA4819 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 69.2 | Mar-May 2008 | ZA4744 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 68.1 | Sep-Nov 2007 | ZA4565 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 67.2 | Apr-May 2007 | ZA4530 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 66.1 | Sep-Oct 2006 | ZA4526 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 65.2 | Mar-May 2006 | ZA4506 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 65.1 | Feb-Mar 2006 | ZA4505 | | | X |
| Eurobarometer 64.2 | Oct-Nov 2005 | ZA4414 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 63.4 | May-Jun 2005 | ZA4411 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 62.2 | Nov-Dec 2004 | ZA4231 | | | X |
| Eurobarometer 62.0 | Oct-Nov 2004 | ZA4229 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 61 | Feb-Mar 2004 | ZA4056 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 60.1 | Oct-Nov 2003 | ZA3938 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 59.1 | Mar-Apr 2003 | ZA3904 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 58.1 | Oct-Nov 2002 | ZA3693 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 57.2 | Apr-Jun 2002 | ZA3640 | | X | |
| Eurobarometer 57.1 | Mar-May 2002 | ZA3639 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 56.3 | Jan-Feb 2002 | ZA3635 | | X | |
| Eurobarometer 56.2 | Oct-Nov 2001 | ZA3627 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 55.1 | Apr-May 2001 | ZA3507 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 54.1 | Nov-Dec 2000 | ZA3387 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 53 | Apr-May 2000 | ZA3296 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 52.0 | Oct-Nov 1999 | ZA3204 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 51.0 | Mar-Apr 1999 | ZA3171 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 50.0 | Oct-Nov 1998 | ZA3085 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 49 | Apr-May 1998 | ZA3052 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 48.0 | Oct-Nov 1997 | ZA2959 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 47.2 | Apr-Jun 1997 | ZA2937 | X | X | |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------|--------|---|---|
| Eurobarometer 47.1 | Mar-Apr 1997 | ZA2936 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 47.0 | Jan-Feb 1997 | ZA2935 | X | X | |
| Eurobarometer 46.1 | Oct-Nov 1996 | ZA2899 | | X | |
| Eurobarometer 46.0 | Oct-Nov 1996 | ZA2898 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 45.1 | Apr-May 1996 | ZA2831 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 44.2bis | Jan-Mar 1996 | ZA2828 | X (45) | | X |
| Eurobarometer 44.1 | Nov-Dec 1995 | ZA2690 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 44.0 | Oct-Nov 1995 | ZA2689 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 43.1bis | May-Jun 1995 | ZA2639 | X (44) | X | |
| Eurobarometer 43.1 | Apr-May 1995 | ZA2637 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 43.0 | Mar-Apr 1995 | ZA2636 | | X | |
| Eurobarometer 42 | Nov-Dec 1994 | ZA2563 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 41.1 | Jun-Jul 1994 | ZA2491 | | X | X |
| Eurobarometer 41.0 | Mar-May 1994 | ZA2490 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 40 | Oct-Nov 1993 | ZA2459 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 39.1 | May-Jun 1993 | ZA2347 | | X | |
| Eurobarometer 39.0 | Mar-Apr 1993 | ZA2346 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 38.1 | Nov 92 | ZA2295 | | X | |
| Eurobarometer 38.0 | Sep-Oct 1992 | ZA2294 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 37.0 | Mar-Apr 1992 | ZA2141 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 36 | Oct-Nov 1991 | ZA2081 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 35.0 | March 1991 | ZA2031 | X | | |
| Eurobarometer 34.0 | Oct-Nov 1990 | ZA1960 | X | | |

Appendix 2: Indicators and Rules List for KH Coder Phase 1 Content Analysis

Indicators & KH Coder Rules List

*Chosen based on Strategic Autonomy definition & Global Actorness themes prior to analysis

Ability | Capabilities | Priorities | Decision(s)/Decision-making | Foreign/Security/Defence Policy | Institutional | Political | Power | Role/Logistical/Material | Cooperation/Partners/Allies | Diplomacy/Diplomat/Diplomatic | Actor/Act/Actorness | Autonomy/Autonomous | Strategy/Strategic | Global/International/World

1: *Autonomy_Rule

Autonomy or autonomy or Autonomous or autonomous or Independent or independent

2: *Capabilities_Rule

Capability or capability or Capabilities or capabilities or Ability or ability

3: *Political_Rule

Political or political or Politics or politics

4: *Power_Rule

Power or power or Influence or influence

5: *Role_Rule

Role or role or Roles or roles

6: *Allies_Rule

Cooperation or cooperation or Partners or partners or Partner or partner or Allies or allies or ally or Ally

7: *Strategy_Rule

Strategy or strategy or Strategic or strategic

8: *Diplomacy_Rule

Diplomacy or Diplomatic or Diplomat or diplomacy or diplomatic or diplomat

9: *Actor_Rule

Actor or Actorness or Act or act or actor or actorness or Action or action

10: *World_Rule

World or world or Globe or globe or Global or global or International or international

11: *Foreign_Rule

Foreign or foreign

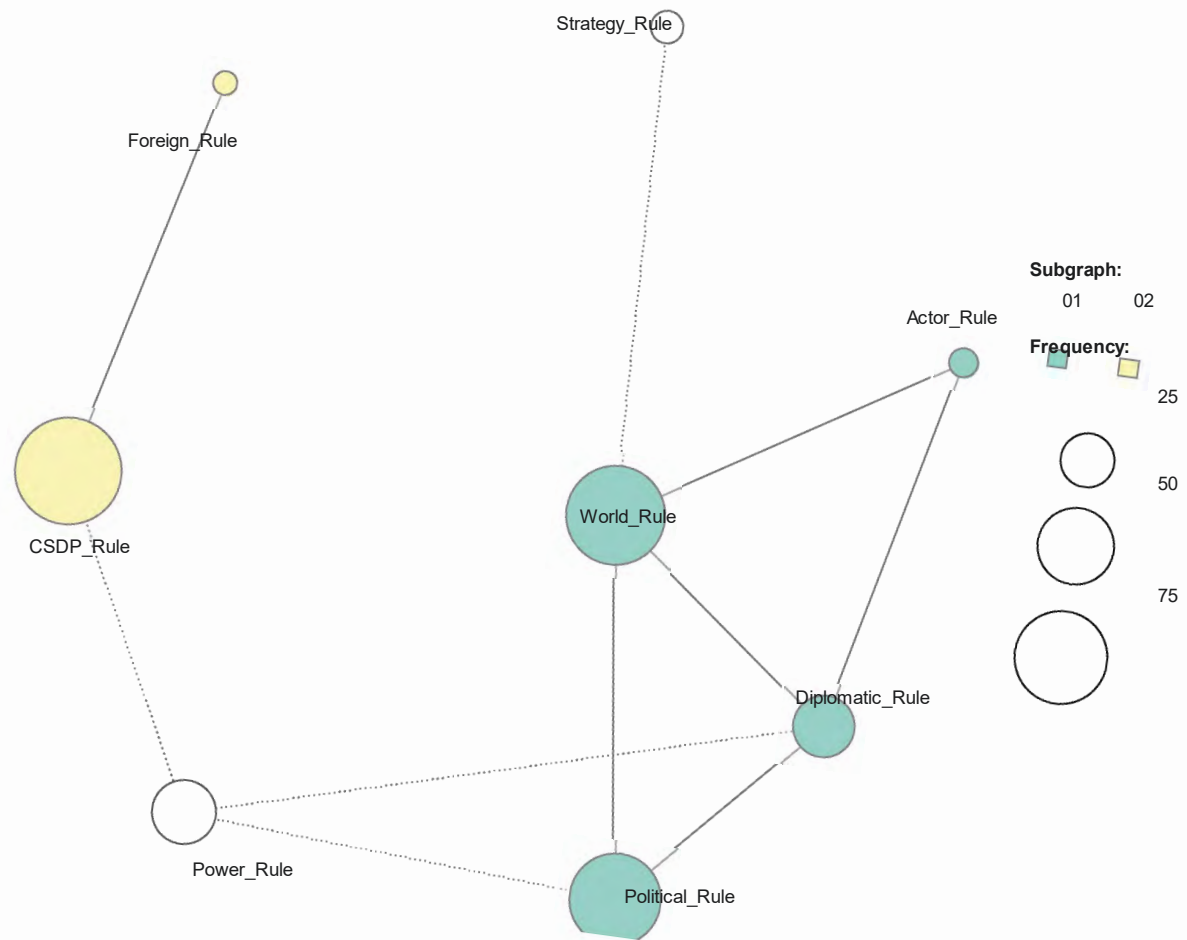
12: *CSDP_Rule

Policy or policy or Security or Defence or security or defence

Appendix 3: Initial KH Coder Phase 1 Content Analysis Frequency Text Mining Results

| Words | Term Frequency | Words | Term Frequency | Words | Term Frequency |
|-------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|------------|----------------|
| LA | 487 | issue | 94 | respect | 58 |
| EU | 480 | Plutot | 94 | instead | 57 |
| CY | 453 | have | 91 | peace | 57 |
| tcc | 431 | inform | 90 | qa3a | 57 |
| PAR | 226 | protection | 90 | | 57 |
| NSP | 223 | NEW | 88 | tout | 56 |
| spontaneous | 220 | thing | 86 | qa4a | 55 |
| very | 219 | country | 85 | think | 55 |
| EU27 | 216 | States | 84 | refusal | 54 |
| LE | 216 | economic | 83 | Terrorism | 54 |
| RCDUM002a | 206 | COUNTRY | 81 | world | 54 |
| ALLER | 196 | it | 81 | AFFICHER | 53 |
| go | 188 | OUR | 80 | display | 53 |
| M | 177 | QD4b | 80 | Taxation | 53 |
| UNIQUEMENT | 176 | benefit | 76 | choose | 52 |
| ECRAN | 168 | du | 76 | LIEU | 52 |
| SEULE | 165 | SPONTANEOUS | 76 | QA3b | 52 |
| SPONTANE | 164 | well | 76 | television | 52 |
| | 158 | follow | 75 | TOUS | 52 |
| situation | 157 | good | 75 | culture | 51 |
| normal | 154 | I | 75 | qa6a | 51 |
| none | 150 | service | 75 | rcdum002a | 51 |
| fairly | 147 | Très | 75 | inflation | 50 |
| EU28 | 142 | bad | 74 | RC002 | 50 |
| EXCLUSIVE | 139 | NE | 74 | rise | 50 |
| PAS | 137 | political | 74 | UK | 50 |
| ALL | 134 | REPONSES | 74 | FILTER | 49 |
| researcher | 133 | energy | 73 | influence | 49 |
| row | 133 | SP | 73 | national | 49 |
| UE28 | 132 | climate | 72 | people | 49 |
| satisfied | 125 | positive | 72 | system | 49 |
| modify | 122 | environment | 71 | we | 49 |
| AUTRE | 121 | pay | 69 | website | 49 |
| EN | 119 | satisfait | 69 | AUCUN | 48 |
| scripter | 119 | AU | 68 | Health | 48 |
| european | 118 | L'ECRAN | 68 | Party | 48 |
| list | 117 | please | 68 | EST | 47 |
| MODIFIED | 117 | statement | 67 | EXCLUSIF | 47 |
| RESPONSE | 117 | what | 67 | negative | 47 |
| column | 114 | level | 65 | QE4b | 47 |
| CODES | 113 | pour | 63 | tend | 47 |
| AUTRES | 109 | tell | 63 | Time | 47 |
| pension | 108 | économique | 62 | citizen | 46 |
| number | 106 | Immigration | 62 | condition | 46 |
| GO | 102 | N | 62 | measure | 46 |
| ROTATION | 100 | TREND | 62 | such | 46 |
| education | 97 | price | 61 | DK | 45 |
| MEMBER | 97 | unemployment | 61 | Parti | 44 |
| social | 95 | PipinInstruction20 | 60 | politique | 44 |
| A | 94 | crime | 59 | qa6b | 44 |

Appendix 4: KH Coder co-occurrence network of rules visualization



Appendix 5: Phase 2 Content and Framing Analysis Results Table and Question Legend

| Chart Legend: <i>Frame</i> Question Label Corresponding Survey Question | Publication Year & Eurobarometer Standard Series Number | | | | | | |
|--|---|------|------|------|------|------|--|
| | 2013 | | 2014 | | 2015 | | |
| | 79.3 | 80.1 | 81.4 | 82.3 | 83.3 | 84.3 | |
| <i>Diplomatic</i> | | | | | | | |
| A | QA23 | QA20 | QA20 | | | | |
| B | QA24 | QA21 | QA21 | | | | |
| Ca | QD5a | QD6b | QD4a | QD4a | QD3a | QD4a | |
| Cb | QD5b | QD6c | QD4b | QD4b | QD3b | QD4b | |
| <i>Political</i> | | | | | | | |
| D | QA14 | QA12 | QA11 | QA13 | QA12 | QA11 | |
| Ea | | | | | | | |
| Eb | QA20 | QA17 | QA17 | QA19 | QA18 | QA15 | |
| F | | QD12 | | | QD11 | | |
| Ga | | | | | | | |
| Gb | | | | | | | |
| <i>Security</i> | | | | | | | |
| H | | | | QA10 | | QA10 | |
| I | | | | | | | |
| J | | | | | | | |
| <i>Economic</i> | | | | | | | |
| Ka | | | | | QE2a | | |
| Kb | | | | | QE2b | | |
| La | | | | | QE3a | | |
| Lb | | | | | QE3b | | |
| <i>External</i> | | | | | | | |
| M | | | | | | | |
| N | | | | | | | |
| O | | | | | | | |

| 2020 | 2021 | | 2022 | | 2023 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 93.1 | 94.3 | 95.3 | 96.3 | 97.5 | 98.2 |

| | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| QC3a | QC3a | QC3a | QC3a | QC3a | QC3a |
| QC3b | QC3b | QC3b | QC3b | QC3b | QC3b |

| | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-----|------------|-----|-----|
| QA7 | | QA7 | QA7 | QA7 | QA7 |
| QB5 | QB6 | QB6 | QB6 QC8 | QB3 | QB2 |

| | | | | | |
|------|--|--|--|--|--|
| QE2a | | | | | |
| QE2b | | | | | |
| QE3a | | | | | |
| QE3b | | | | | |

QE4

QE3

| Question Label | Question Type | Question Text Content | Response Text Analysed |
|----------------|----------------------|---|--|
| A | Multiple Choice | "In your opinion, at the current time, what is the main objective of the building of Europe?" | "To make the EU a major diplomatic actor on the international stage" |
| B | Multiple Choice | "And what should be the main objective of the building of Europe?" | "To make the EU a major diplomatic actor on the international stage" |
| Ca | Multiple Choice | "Which of the following do you think is the most positive result of the EU? Firstly?" | "The political and diplomatic influence of the EU in the rest of the world" |
| Cb | Multiple Choice | "And then?" | "The political and diplomatic influence of the EU in the rest of the world" |
| D | Multiple Choice | "What does the EU mean to you personally?" | "Stronger say in the world" |
| Ea | | | "A common foreign policy of the 28 Member States of the EU" |
| Eb | Dichotomous Question | "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" |
| F | Multiple Choice | "And whether or not you think you might make use of it or not, if you were to do so, in which of the following fields would you be most likely to use the European Citizens' Initiative?" | "Common foreign and security policy" |
| Ga | Multiple Choice | "What are the issues which made you vote in the recent European Parliament elections? Firstly?" | "Security and defence policy" |
| Gb | Multiple Choice | "And then?" | "Security and defence policy" |
| H | Likert Scale | "Could you please tell me for each of the following, whether the term brings to mind something very positive, fairly positive, fairly negative or very negative." | "Security" |
| I | Multiple Choice | "Which of the following do you think are the main challenges for the EU?" | "Terrorism and security issues" |
| J | Multiple Choice | "Which of the following are the main reasons for thinking that (OUR COUNTRY) has benefited from being a member of the EU?" | "The EU contributes to maintaining peace and strengthening security" |
| Ka | Multiple Choice | "On which of the following do you think most of the EU budget is spent? Firstly?" | "Defence and Security" |
| Kb | Multiple Choice | "And then?" | "Defence and Security" |
| La | Multiple Choice | "And on which of the following would you like EU budget to be spent? Firstly?" | "Defence and Security" |
| Lb | Multiple Choice | "Any others?" | "Defence and Security" |
| M | Multiple Choice | "Which of the following challenges do you consider the most pressing for the future of developing countries?" | "Peace and security" |
| N | Multiple Choice | "Which statements below, if any, would you select to finish the statement: Artificial intelligence can be best used ..." | "... to improve the safety and security of society" |
| O | Likert Scale | | "The invasion in Ukraine is a threat to the security of the EU" |
| | | | "The invasion in Ukraine is a threat to the security of (OUR COUNTRY)" |
| | | | "By standing against the Russian invasion in Ukraine, the EU is defending European values" |
| | | | "Co-operation in defence matters at EU level should be increased" |
| | | "More money should be spent on defence in the EU" | |
| | | "Please tell to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements." | |