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What about Sovereignty?

Security and Defence Integration within the EU and
Constructions of Sovereignty

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
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| AfD | Alternative für Deutschland |
| CARD | Coordinated Annual Review on Defence |
| CDU | Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands |
| CFSP | Common Foreign and Security Policy |
| CSDP | Common Security and Defence Policy |
| CSU | Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern |
| EDC | European Defence Community |
| EEAS | European External Action Service |
| EPC | European Political Cooperation |
| ESDP | European Security and Defence Policy |
| ESS | European Security Strategy |
| EU | European Union |
| EUGS | European Union Global Strategy |
| FDP | Freie Demokratische Partei |
| FI | La France Insoumise |
| FN | Front National |
| Grüne | Bündnis 90/Die Grünen |
| IR | International Relations |
| MLG | Multi-level governance |
| MoDem | Mouvement Démocrate |
| MPCC | Military Planning and Conduct Capability |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| PCF | Parti Communiste Français |
| PESCO | Permanent Structured Cooperation |
| R2P | Responsibility to Protect |
| REM | La République en Marche |
| SPD | Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands |
| UDI | Union des Démocrates et Indépendants |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| US | United States |

1. Introduction

French President Emmanuel Macron is not reluctant to use the term sovereignty. In fact, if one follows his public speeches, it becomes obvious that he uses the very term quite often. In early 2020, for example, Macron elaborates on sovereignty in a speech at the ‘École de Guerre’– the training facility for prospective senior officers of the French armed forces in Paris. In his speech, he clearly emphasises that defence is at the heart of French sovereignty (Macron 2020). This may not seem particularly remarkable: after all, few would challenge the fact that sovereignty is important to national leaders in one way or another. Macron, however, does not leave it at French sovereignty. The French President is also eager to give programmatic speeches on the European Union (EU), in which he calls for *European* sovereignty. In this context, Macron insists on a “Europe de la Défense” (Macron 2017c) and presents himself as a fierce advocate of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), which aims at deepening defence cooperation between 25 Member States of the EU (PESCO 2021). Some researchers and quite a few observers of the political sphere even regard PESCO as an institutional step towards a European army or at least a streamlined European Defence Union (von Achenbach 2017; Dembinski/Peters 2018: 1; Hughes 2018: 28). This obviously does not deter Macron from supporting the project – on the contrary, he too has proposed the creation of a European army (Bennhold/Erlanger 2018). Macron’s support of PESCO might seem surprising considering his statement on French sovereignty in front of the prospective officers at the ‘École de Guerre’: is sovereignty, especially in the crucial matter of defence, not something jealously guarded by states and irreconcilable with a ‘hand-over’ of power to international organisations? And if not, what *does* sovereignty mean? I am interested in this question both in the context of the French discourse around PESCO but also in, and in comparison to, the German discourse around this institutional landmark of European defence cooperation.

When examining the literature, it quickly becomes apparent that questions of sovereignty are widely debated and that attempts to tackle the issue include a whole range of various theoretical assumptions. After all, there will be no undisputed answer to the just-posed questions. Broadly speaking, sovereignty is a fundamental concept in the field of International Relations (IR) – it arguably brought IR into being (Ashley/R. Walker 1990; Cox 1981; R. Walker 1993) and still permeates the field as notions of sovereignty are deeply embedded in (Western) political thinking. Thus, it cannot be simply ignored or blanked out (Bartelson 1995: 14, 2014: 9; R. Walker 1993: 162).

While a supposedly stable concept of ‘state sovereignty’ still holds credence in some quarters, this has been challenged on several fronts. One buzzword here is globalisation with all its implications (Barkin 2013: 7-16; Sassen 1996). Also, in the wider context of the debate on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), it is repeatedly pointed out that the concept of state sovereignty is or has been transformed (Annan 1999; Deng 2004; Loges 2013). Particularly relevant to this thesis is, of course, European integration, as the EU arguably challenges notions of state sovereignty. There is a wealth of literature that discusses questions of sovereignty in the EU context. While some scholars claim that (state) sovereignty is waning in the course of European integration, I argue that sovereignty is not a fact or a property (Gammeltoft-Hansen/Adler-Nissen 2008: 3; N. Walker 2006), but rather a discursive construction. Thus, I do not regard sovereignty as a fixed concept that can easily be considered obsolete in light of empirical developments.

Instead, I will look at sovereignty’s constructions in the discourses around an ambitious integration project such as PESCO. To me, it seems especially interesting to closely examine how sovereignty is dealt with (whether intentionally or not) in the discussion around PESCO, as the field of security and defence is traditionally considered to be at the core of the state (Hoffmann 1966: 883-4) and, hence, arguably, constitutes a (discursively) prized area of sovereignty. Within this thesis, I look at French and German official political discourses as both countries are key players in the European integration process (Diez et al. 2011: 132; Wæver 2009: 171).

Thus, I ask *how sovereignty is constructed in discourses around PESCO and what these discursive practices imply for European integration in the field of security and defence.*

The research questions point to an important assumption that I have already indicated: I look at sovereignty as something (discursively) constructed (here I draw on a broad strand of literature, e.g. Biersteker/Weber 1996; Malmvig 2006; R. Walker 1993; C. Weber 1995). Historical and genealogic approaches further illustrate the discursive historicity of the concept (Bartelson 1995; Costa Lopez et al. 2018) and emphasise the need to account for the dynamic nature of the concept. Thus, I am aware of the “descriptive fallacy” (Werner/De Wilde 2001: 285) and will not give an *essentialist* definition of sovereignty when dealing with sovereignty. Considering the rich history of the concept, I conceive sovereignty as a *discursive claim to authority* that orders the world by establishing bounded polities (see N. Walker 2006: 6; Werner/De Wilde 2001: 287).

In respect to the specific discursive operationalisations and attached meanings in different contexts, however, there is significant room for variation *within* the concept of sovereignty.

For hundreds of years, arguably since the beginning of modernity, the first and foremost claimant to authority has been the state – which I conceive as a social construct as well. In that regard, poststructuralist scholars have repeatedly pointed to the exclusionist dimension of the modern territorial nation state (Borg/Diez 2016). As I will elaborate in the below, in the discourses of modernity, statehood and sovereignty are difficult to separate. In order to provide a reference points for my analysis, I thus draw on Neil Walker’s concept of ‘high sovereignty’ (N. Walker 2006). ‘High sovereignty’ is understood as a claim discursively made by (or on behalf of) the state over a territory and people (Mac Amhlaigh 2013: 42; Werner/De Wilde 2001: 292). As another useful reference point, I draw on the concept of ‘late sovereignty’ (N. Walker 2006). ‘Late sovereignty’, in contrast to ‘high sovereignty’, points to some kind of emancipatory potential as claims to authority appear to be more dispersed (e.g. high sovereignty claims can co-exist to claims not necessarily made on behalf of a territorial unified state [ibid.: 19, 23-4]). Finally, in the course of this thesis, I conceive ‘post sovereignty’ as an approach that breaks entirely with the conception of sovereignty – thus, no claims to authority in any kind of bounded polities are made.

I argue that, despite the supposed integration milestone it represents, a construction of sovereignty, which is closely tied to the state, is indeed still prevalent in the discourses around PESCO. Hence, *state* sovereignty clearly does not disappear in discourses around cooperation within the EU – on the contrary. Wouter G. Werner and Jaap de Wilde (2001: 284) still seem to be right in their assumption that, a state’s claims to authority are reinforced rather than weakened in times when *state* sovereignty seems to be challenged. I show that in the French as well as in the German debates on PESCO, constructions of sovereignty as ‘state sovereignty’ are reproduced. Hence, ‘high sovereignty’ seems to be very much alive. Consequently, my analysis underlines the continuing powerful role of state sovereignty (of each member state) and somewhat puts the view into perspective that looks at PESCO as some kind of symbol for the overcoming of statehood. Thus, the idea of a truly *European* army, which is often associated with PESCO, seems to be moving somewhat further away.

That being the case, I argue that the sovereignty constructions mirror (and reproduce) some of the specific conceptions of the state prevalent in French and German discourse. I aim to demonstrate that these respective constructions of state sovereignty integrate the European project in different ways. I argue that in the French discourse, the dominant construction of French state sovereignty is, in fact, not an obstacle to PESCO per se. Rather, there is a construction of ‘European sovereignty’ that can be read as a duplication of French state sovereignty. As a result, the EU is constructed as a ‘bigger France’, and thus, in state sovereignty terms. Ultimately, this arguably delimits the options for envisaging a defence project beyond a member state driven endeavour. Within the dominant discourse in Germany, notions of (German) state sovereignty are certainly prevalent as well. In contrast to France, however, I argue that the tentative construction of ‘European sovereignty’ can be read as an additional claim to authority that cautiously disrupts the idea of a unified, territorially delimited sovereignty. This suggests (albeit rudimentarily) a more dispersed form of sovereignty, but one that is still linked to the nation state, as I will elaborate on in more detail.

Furthermore, I aim to demonstrate that the just mentioned dominant constructions of sovereignty in France and Germany (that do integrate the European project in one way or another in their national identities), are challenged by French and German populist parties that construct sovereignty tied to the nation state as *endangered* by the EU.

Within the scope of my thesis, I am aware that there is not a simple causal relationship between the construction of sovereignty and foreign policy as it is not possible to identify clearly separable variables from a poststructuralist point of view (Hansen 2006: 23). Nevertheless, I wish to demonstrate that domestic constructions of sovereignty are insightful when dealing with the member state’s foreign policy towards the EU as they illuminate at least some of the struggles regarding the future of an autonomous European Defence Union.

Historical background

The discussion about a European army (i.e. a pan-European defence force) is in fact not particularly new; as early as 1950, a European Defence Community (EDC) was envisaged as part of the so-called Pleven-Plan. The ambitions then failed at the French National Assembly. In the literature, several reasons are advanced for the French opposition – including sovereignty concerns (Howorth 2017: 18).

Instead, European defence was closely tied to the United States (US) through the security guarantees provided by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (Hughes 2018: 1).¹ Within the European Community, the EDC's failure was eventually followed by intergovernmental cooperation within the European Political Cooperation (EPC). In a broad strand of literature, the EPC is considered the forerunner of the institutionalized Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). The CFSP, established in 1993, most notably intensified cooperation in the field of EU foreign and security policy (for an overview, see Schlag 2016: 103-5) and shaped the EU's image as a security actor (ibid.: 28). Within the framework of CFSP, the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) was established, under which the EU conducted its first civilian and military operation in 2003 (Dover/Friis Kristensen 2016: 250-3). With the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009, the ESDP became the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). It further strengthened the field of security and defence: inter alia, the European External Action Service (EEAS) was established. It is noteworthy that the Treaty of Lisbon sets the common defence policy as the ultimate goal, subject to the European Council's unanimous agreement (Amtsblatt der Europäischen Union 2012: Art. 42[2]). While this has not happened so far, the Treaty of Lisbon also legally enabled the establishment of PESCO, i.e. structural integration within the framework of CSDP that does not necessarily require all EU member states to participate. PESCO was not invoked immediately, but starting with the European Union Global Strategy (EUGS) in 2016, European defence became one of the Union's priorities (European Union 2016). Arguably fostered by a wide range of global developments such as the election of Donald Trump as President of the US and the British exit from the EU (Brexit) (Buhari Gulmez/Baris Gulmez 2020: 185; Hughes 2018: 10), several steps have been taken, for example, the establishment of the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC). Ultimately, in December 2017, the Council decided to activate PESCO by qualified majority (Official Journal of the European Union 2017). Twenty-five member states out of the (then) 28 member states decided to participate.² Within the framework of PESCO, the member states legally bound themselves to 20 individual commitments: these include that the member states must in-

¹ West Germany joined NATO in 1955.

² In order to participate, the states must fulfill two criteria: a) They have to further develop their military capabilities and b) in case of need, the respective states have to be able to provide military units and logistics within 5 to 30 days for a duration of 30 to 120 days (Deutscher Bundestag 2016). Malta, Denmark and the United Kingdom (UK) opted out. The UK did not participate in the face of Brexit.

crease defence spending and join common projects (ibid.). Having started with 17 projects in 2017, PESCO has developed 47 projects covering a broad spectrum of military cooperation. They include, for example, a common military medical centre, the development of a modernised European attack helicopter and the design of a new military ship. While 46 projects are still ongoing, one project aimed at harmonising military education has already been closed by now (for a list of all projects, see PESCO 2021).

To contextualise my thesis, this brief historical background could, of course, only highlight some developments of the security and defence policy of the EU. Nonetheless, I believe it does show that there has indeed been increasing cooperation in the field of security and defence in the EU – with the overall objective, stated in the Lisbon Treaty, to create a (genuine) “common security and defence policy” (Amtsblatt der Europäischen Union 2012: Art. 42[2], own transl.). With the establishment of PESCO, the EU seems to have taken a step towards this goal. While I do not oppose this assumption in general, I aim to show that conceptions of *state* sovereignty are still very dominant in the domestic discourses on PESCO – and to some extent act as constraints on the project.

Overview of the thesis

In order to answer my research questions, I present the theoretical basis of this thesis in the following chapter. I start with the concept of sovereignty that I conceive as a claim to authority and as a concept that is resilient in its ontological ordering function of politics. Drawing on a broad strand of poststructuralist and constructivist literature, I argue that there is nevertheless considerable variety in the constructions of sovereignty. Considering my specific interest of sovereignty constructions within discussions on PESCO, I proceed to introduce conceptualisations such as ‘late sovereignty’ (N. Walker 2006) that indicate a transformation of (state) sovereignty in the course of European integration. While I therefore want to allow for such potential within my research endeavour, I also touch upon literature that at least questions the EU’s alleged ‘postmodern promise’ (e.g. Borg/Diez 2016).

Further, within the course of my thesis, I am aware that constructions of sovereignty are always embedded in specific historical and cultural contexts. Hence, I contextualise state sovereignty in the French and German discourses. To that end, I critically discuss literature associated with the so-called “Copenhagen School’ of integration studies”

(Manners 2002: 17)³, which focuses (among others) on national “discursive codes” (Holm 1997: 128) regarding the ‘state’.

In the final part of Chapter 2, I then propose to combine the relevant insights from constructivist and poststructuralist literature on ‘sovereignty’ with literature, which is more concerned with structural constraints deriving from national contexts: while drawing on the insights provided by scholars associated with the Copenhagen School, I want to focus on articulations put forward by “discursive entrepreneurs” (Diez et al. 2016: 26) that reproduce (or change) these existing national contexts. By means of the comparison between two arguably major players in European integration, France and Germany, I want to assess similarities and differences, which might eventually hinder further integration. Within Chapter 2, I also elaborate on my understanding of discourse.

Following this, I present the research design in Chapter 3. After explicating my rationale for conducting a discourse analysis, I proceed to map out the key analytical choices within this paper: I elaborate on the reasons for looking at the two cases of France and Germany, the focus on the official political discourse and the chosen period of investigation. Thereafter, I present the set of questions that aims to guide my analysis. While I developed the questions based on the previously presented literature, I deliberately chose open *questions* instead of pre-given categories in order to openly explore constructions of sovereignty within the French and German discourses. Before I then conduct the analysis and discuss the (above already indicated) findings in more detail in Chapter 4, I critically reflect on the discursive methodology such as my own situatedness within the research process.

³ In the following, I employ the term ‘Copenhagen School’ regarding research conducted within the field of European integration. Thus, I do *not* refer to the “‘Copenhagen School’ of security studies” (Manners 2002: 17) that is well known for the theory of securitisation (Buzan et al. 1998).

2. Sovereignty, the state and the European Union

“And nowhere is the new series of questions over sovereignty more urgently, vigorously and significantly joined than in the context of the European Union and its relationship with its constituent states” (N. Walker 2006: vi).

The complicated issue of the role of sovereignty in the context of the EU, which Neil Walker points to, has not disappeared. On the contrary: from my perspective, it is particularly interesting in light of the recent cooperation efforts in security and defence. In order to answer my research questions, I will outline the theoretical foundation in this chapter. In 2.1, I introduce sovereignty as a discursive concept that is a fundamental ordering principle, mutable in its operationalisation. From this I derive the need actually to look at the discursive practices of sovereignty. Then, more specifically, I will elaborate on literature that deals with changes of sovereignty in the context of European integration.⁴ Here I introduce important points of reference for my analysis of the constructions of sovereignty in the discourses around PESCO.

In the majority of IR literature, sovereignty is closely tied to the state. Therefore, in 2.2, I will further include literature that focuses on the state in the context of European integration. This also serves to contextualise my two cases, France and Germany. In the last part of this chapter, I propose bringing the two strands of literature (literature on ‘sovereignty’ as a discursive concept and literature on the domestic understandings of the ‘state’ in the context of European integration) together, and I propose my theoretical framework.

2.1 Sovereignty as a discursive concept

2.1.1 Between continuity and change

Much literature in IR simply does not deal with the specific conceptualisation of sovereignty. This is mainly because ‘state sovereignty’ is more or less assumed to be an unquestioned starting point of any research really. Sovereignty thus fades, and even disappears completely, as an object of investigation (Malmvig 2006: xviii). In this thesis, however, I wish to put the spotlight on the concept of sovereignty. Therefore, I will

⁴ I understand European integration as a process that involves the creation of political institutions to which European states accede to (Wiener/Diez 2009: 3).

examine literature that deals with the rather complex, and at times controversial, issue of sovereignty.

Among scholars who do immerse themselves in sovereignty questions, quite a few understand sovereignty as an essentially static conception. The first modern account of sovereignty is associated with the French jurist and philosopher Jean Bodin. Living in the sixteenth century, he defines sovereignty as the “absolute, and perpetual power over the citizens and subjects in a Commonwealth” (as cited in Beaulac 2004: 107). Roughly a hundred years later, Thomas Hobbes proposed a similar conception of sovereignty and introduced the idea of a social contract in the *Leviathan* (Hobbes 1996). In the 20th century, British historian F. H. Hinsley describes sovereignty as “the idea that there is a final and absolute political authority in the political community [...] ‘and no final and absolute authority exists elsewhere’” (Hinsley 1986: 26). Political scientist Stephen Krasner, another contemporary researcher dealing with sovereignty, proposes four distinguishable logics of sovereignty: “international legal sovereignty, Westphalian sovereignty, domestic sovereignty, and interdependence sovereignty” (Krasner 1999: 3). While these conceptualisations certainly point to interesting aspects of sovereignty, they are all statist conceptions (Aalberts 2012: 38; Werner/De Wilde 2001: 285). Moreover, the underlying assumption of the mentioned conceptualisations is that the concept of sovereignty corresponds to reality. Thus, for example, sovereignty is quickly declared to be dead or lost. This, however, constitutes a descriptive fallacy (Werner/De Wilde 2001: 285-6). From a constructivist perspective, sovereignty is not just ‘out there’. Hence, it is not reasonable to simply claim that sovereignty has diminished or decreased in light of certain occurrences such as globalisation or Europeanisation.

The so-called ‘linguistic turn’ in IR gave rise to scholars that understand state sovereignty as an interpretive concept: sovereignty is not a concept with an essential and fixed definition. Instead, it must be established in actual (discursive) practices – and only by that means sovereignty becomes a powerful reality (Ashley 1988; Gammeltoft-Hansen/Adler-Nissen 2008).

For the course of this thesis – and in order to delimit the concept – I understand sovereignty as *a discursive claim to authority* (N. Walker 2006: 6; Werner/De Wilde 2001: 287). Assuming that sovereignty is a *claim* – and not a brute fact (Searle 1969: 50) – already implies that ‘having sovereignty’ is not a naturally given status. Thus, sovereignty needs to be upheld and tends to be at stake. To be meaningful, such claims

must be discursively accepted (N. Walker 2006: 17). In a similar vein, Thomas Biersteker (1999: 29) points out that authority needs some form of consent – in contrast to pure power. Hence, sovereignty needs some kind of legitimacy that refers to the belief in the rightfulness of governance (Hurd 2019).⁵ Overall, discursive claims to authority create a polity, i.e. a construct with an inside and outside. Hence, sovereignty fundamentally orders our world (N. Walker 2006: 8).

When looking at the existing literature, it is significant to see the close connection between ‘sovereignty’ and the ‘state’. In much of IR literature, ‘sovereignty’ abruptly comes into being with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. However, such an understanding of sovereignty – as suddenly emerging as ‘state sovereignty’ – is a bit too simplistic. By drawing on a Foucauldian approach, in “A Genealogy of Sovereignty” (1995), Jens Bartelson shows that the modern understanding of ‘state sovereignty’ evolved in interdependence with changing knowledge throughout the epochs. According to him, sovereignty functions as a “parergon” that constitutes an inside and outside – what is inside and outside, however, varies over the course of history (Bartelson 1995: 52). While I am aware that 1648 does not constitute a radical break from the past (Costa Lopez et al. 2018: 497-8), the modern state’s gradual emergence is undoubtedly a significant development when talking about sovereignty.⁶

Following Max Weber’s prominent definition, the state itself is “a human community that successfully claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory” (M. Weber 1997: 78, *emph. in orig.*). Only in the context of the modern, territorial state, the state system could emerge, i.e. *state* sovereignty distinguishes the domestic and the international sphere divided by a territorial border (N. Walker 2006: 9; Ruggie 1993: 151). While the development of the state system is without a doubt a fundamental (albeit gradual) development, it is especially important to bring it up because it shows that state sovereignty is not a natural construct: “the world did not drop out of heaven organized into the system of sovereignty units that seem so persuasive, elegant and eternal today” (Aalberts 2012: 41).

⁵ Hence, legitimacy also does not have an essentialist meaning.

⁶ I am aware that the narrative around the “Peace of Westphalia” is questionable. I will not elaborate too much on the emergence of the modern state as this is not the main focus of this thesis. Bartelson (2006) even argues that the modern territorial state only emerged in the 19th century (Costa Lopez et al. 2006: 512).

While Bartelson contributes in a valuable way to a better understanding of how sovereignty came about – and is a historically contingent and changeable concept – he examines sovereignty in interdependence with knowledge in three epochs: Renaissance, the Classical Age and modernity. Helle Malmvig rightly states that Bartelson “left us with a discourse on sovereignty that only very slowly changed as a result of sovereignty’s dependence on transformations in epistemes” (Malmvig 2006: 22). In my thesis, however, I do not want to focus on the genealogy of sovereignty over the course of several epochs. Rather, I am interested in the current discursive practices of sovereignty regarding developments within the EU.

Hence, I briefly wish to mention two poststructuralist scholars that look at practices of state sovereignty. Cynthia Weber (1995) illustrates in her book “Simulating Sovereignty” that sovereignty is continually underlying change. To show this, she looks at its presumed opposite: intervention. Without elaborating too much on her theoretical approach (while referring to Michel Foucault, she also criticises him and draws on Jean Baudrillard’s work), Weber argues that discourses around intervention arguably serve to temporally stabilise (or simulate) the discursive meaning of sovereignty (ibid.: 4). She illustrates this by examining the justifications of five interventions, beginning with the European Concert’s intervention in Naples in 1820, and leading up to the Reagan-Bush administrations’ interventions in Grenada and Panama in the 1980s and 1990s. Weber shows that in the discursive justifications of interventions, the ‘sovereign state’ discursively constructs⁷ different sources for its authority over time – from the monarch to the people.

In a similar vein, Malmvig (2006) illustrates that constructions of state sovereignty do not only vary over time but also over space. To this end, she examines discourses around the NATO intervention in Kosovo and the non-intervention in Algeria in the 1990s. She argues that in these – initially quite similar – two cases, the justifications of (non-)intervention ultimately produced the temporally defined meaning of sovereignty. In the course of her analysis, she shows that the meaning of state sovereignty was constructed in different ways: “which competencies and authorities states have, and in relation to whom; what falls within and outside of a state’s internal affairs; who has the (unquestioned) authority to decide over this differentiation and on which grounds” (Malmvig 2006: 170-1). Malmvig – drawing on Walker, Bartelson and Weber

⁷ However, Weber notes a limitation: “A state does not always monopolize control of the meanings of its mystical source of authority” (Weber 1995: 28).

– hence likewise points out that state sovereignty is a concept that has no essential meaning. Instead, her research on Kosovo and Algeria demonstrates how important it is to examine the actual discursive practices of (state) sovereignty.

Thus, these poststructuralist works show that sovereignty does not have a fixed meaning – it is rather constituted in its different contexts through discursive practices by heads of states, politicians or diplomats. Accordingly, sovereignty is understood as a contested concept (Besson 2004; Gallie 1956). Hence, claims to authority can vary considerably: I will not attempt to present a universally accepted or applicable definition of sovereignty; instead, I want to examine how the meaning of sovereignty is constructed in the context of PESCO. Nevertheless, as I have argued at the beginning of this section, I conceive sovereignty as a tool that orders our world. Sovereignty enables us to create an ‘inside’ and an ‘outside’; in the modern discourse, this means a differentiation between the international and the domestic sphere (Adler-Nissen/Gammeltoft-Hansen 2008: 199).

2.1.2 Sovereignty and Europeanisation

The previous section has already indicated that sovereignty and the state in modernity are closely tied together (N. Walker 2020: 372). As I have already made clear, this is not to say that ‘state sovereignty’ is a statist conception – in fact, it is considerably mutable, as I illustrated by drawing on constructivist and poststructuralist scholars.⁸ Consequently, claims to authority itself vary considerably – while the most prominent discursively accepted claimant to sovereignty in modernity remains the state. As Walker aptly puts it:

“No claims to authority other than by or on behalf of the state were seriously countenanced, notwithstanding the best efforts a long and distinguished historical line of global idealists and liberal internationalists embracing Kant, Bentham and Kelsen” (N. Walker 2006: 9).

This is what Walker (2006) calls ‘high sovereignty’: a claim discursively made by (or on behalf of) the state over a territory and people (Mac Amhlaigh 2013: 42; Werner/De Wilde 2001: 292). In order to provide a reference point for my thesis, I want to draw on this conception of ‘high sovereignty’ that distinguishes an internal (domestic) and external (international) sphere demarcated by a territorial border (Jones/Johnson 2016: 189). Accordingly, ‘high sovereignty claims’ are justified referring to the so-called

⁸ This also resonates with literature that emphasised that the state is not a stable entity (see Campbell 1998).

“classic tropes of high sovereignty such as constituent power, popular sovereignty, and self-determination” (Mac Amhlaigh 2013: 45). With these conceptual delimitations, I wish to illustrate the way that these concepts are predominantly understood in IR to be able to undertake a meaningful analysis. From an interpretivist perspective, of course, it is interesting to see how state sovereignty continues to be upheld and specifically constructed. Thus, the understanding of a territorial, state sovereignty – understood as an ideal type (Murphy 1996) – serves as a provisional reference point for my thesis. Still, the constructivist perspective that is employed opens up the possibility that there is a time after state sovereignty – that is not necessarily determined by a territorial state.

Needless to say, the emergence of the EU (and its predecessors) evoked a lively interest in scholarship regarding problems of (state) sovereignty. The EU supposedly constitutes another way of organising political life: to this day, the EU is not a state (Borg/Diez 2016: 142; Werner/De Wilde 2001: 304). At the same time, the exclusive, territorial state seems to be not the only locus of authority anymore (Biersteker 1999: 31). The conclusions drawn from Europeanisation in the literature are very different. In the following, I want to elaborate on some theoretical conceptions that scholars developed in this regard. As I have indicated before, it seems not very reasonable to simply dismiss the whole concept of sovereignty as this will not contribute to a better understanding of the concept (Walker 2020: 378) and often underlies the descriptive fallacy that I have indicated before. Similarly, the prominent “Multi-level governance approach” (MLG) (Hooghe/Marks 2001) is not very helpful for the purposes of my thesis as sovereignty within the concept is essentially understood in a statist way (for an extensive discussion of the MLG approach and its statist understanding of sovereignty see Aalberts 2004).

An interesting strand of literature, however, deals with a supposed transformation of sovereignty in the context of the EU (Saurugger 2013: 7-8). Sovereignty, accordingly, is not necessarily a zero-sum game in the context of the EU (Biersteker 1999: 21). Thus, it is valuable to look at the suggestions Werner and De Wilde make. They encourage researchers in the field of European integration to look at questions such as:

“In what context is a claim of sovereignty likely to occur? To whom is a sovereignty claim addressed? What normative structures are used to determine the legitimacy of a claim to sovereignty? What consequences follow from acceptance of a sovereignty claim?” (Werner/De Wilde 2001: 286).

To actually conceptualise the alleged changes of sovereignty in light of the EU and integration efforts, Walker develops the concept of ‘late sovereignty’ (N. Walker 2006) in addition to the afore introduced concept of ‘high sovereignty’. He does this by drawing on the legal theory of constitutional pluralism: “[...] constitutional pluralism stands beyond the perspective of any particular system in order to conceive of sovereignty in terms of a plurality of unities and in terms of the emergent possibilities of the relationships amongst this plurality of unities” (N. Walker 2006: 18).

‘Late sovereignty’ (that I will use as another conceptual reference point within this thesis) tries to make sense of the assumed new order while it still employs the language of sovereignty – in contrast to conceptions of *post*-sovereignty (N. Walker 2006: 19). The concept of ‘late sovereignty’ still assumes that polities claim authority. However, these claims are not necessarily made on behalf of a territorial state: they can also be made by a “late sovereignty polity” (N. Walker 2006: 19), i.e. the EU. Such a claim continues to constitute a political community: it continues to include and exclude (N. Walker 2006: 22). Hence, it is reasonable to still speak of ‘sovereignty’ as this construction of sovereignty does not negate sovereignty as an ordering claim to authority (Mac Amhlaigh 2013: 42). However, what differentiates ‘late sovereignty’ from ‘high sovereignty’, is that the distinction is made on functional terms (in contrast to the merely territorial claims made on behalf of the state). Further, a late sovereign claim is not exclusive within a territory; it is possible to make claims to authority that overlap with other claims (N. Walker 2006: 23). Late sovereignty claims are further increasingly justified by referring to functionalist considerations (Mac Amhlaigh 2013: 43). In this way, Walker’s conceptualisation moreover does not mean that late sovereignty claims necessarily replace high sovereignty: they can co-exist. Hence, the EU member states may make discursively accepted claims to authority regarding their territory, while simultaneously constructing the EU as an entity of late sovereignty (N. Walker 2006: 19, 23-4). In a similar vein, Richard Bellamy argues that the EU illustrates that it is possible to think of a ‘mixed sovereignty system’ (Bellamy 2006: 186). Samantha Besson suggests a similar concept of ‘cooperative sovereignty’ (Besson 2004: 11-13). Cooperative sovereignty also assumes that state authorities and European authorities can co-exist. Thus, neither of them loses sovereignty. Rather, as Besson argues, both state authorities as well as European authorities “[...] paradoxically fortifying rather than diminishing their individual sovereignties” (ibid.: 18). On a more general level, the con-

cepts of ‘late sovereignty’ as well as ‘cooperative sovereignty’ both suggest that sovereignty as such might further evolve and take on different operationalisations (N. Walker 2006: 28). Overall, sovereignty continues to have a structuring power in our world and thus it is still a concept that is worth examining (N. Walker 2020: 381-3).

While Walker’s concept of ‘late sovereignty’ still employs the term ‘sovereignty’, it nevertheless might bear considerable emancipatory potential. As Bartelson comments on Walker’s concept of ‘late sovereignty’:

“If we are to accept this, there is no way back from this new constellation, only a way forward: not only is the condition of late sovereignty here to stay, but it is also a powerful recipe for the piecemeal transformation of the international system into a world polity within which political authority is more decentralized and dispersed” (Bartelson 2014: 61).

Similarly, Jef Huysmans points to such a possibility – a polity such as the EU arguably challenges the territorial, statist conception of *state* sovereignty (Huysmans 2006: 220).

The argument that the European Community poses a challenge to the modern state (and thus *state* sovereignty), however, is by no means new. In 1993, John Ruggie spoke of the “emergence of the first truly postmodern international political form” (Ruggie 1993: 140). This is what Stefan Borg and Thomas Diez (2016) refer to as the ‘postmodern promise’:

“The EU, in this narrative, transforms the international society and offers a vista of alternative horizons, in which citizens no longer attach themselves to exclusionary identities, territorial boundaries no longer obstruct the freedom of movement and politics is organized in criss-crossing transnational spaces” (Borg/Diez 2016: 136-7).

In general, the modern nation state is perceived as problematic, given the construct’s violent consequences (Borg/Diez 2016: 137). Thus, the EU, as a non-state polity, promises to be quite different from such a modern nation state construct. Other scholars have similarly expressed this through the concept of ‘Neomedieval Renaissance’ (Friedrichs 2004). A change from the Westphalian system to a more post-modern system is also what Ian Manners (2008: 60) ultimately sees as the “long-term vision of an EU that is a normative power”. In the context of my thesis, the postmodern promise suggests that in the discourses around PESCO, sovereignty might be constructed in terms of post-sovereignty (I will come back to ‘post-sovereignty’ in the below) or at least in terms of the just mentioned ‘late’ or ‘cooperative sovereignty’.

In the literature, however, the so-called postmodern promise has been criticised by poststructuralist scholars (see Borg/Diez 2016: 137). In “Neues Europa, altes Modell”, Diez (1995) challenges the postmodern promise. He argues that the German national discourse regarding the future of the EU is predominantly split into two options: on the one hand, the model of intergovernmental cooperation and, on the other hand, the federal state. As a consequence, both of these options follow the overall principle of statehood, i.e.

“a hierarchical, centralized decision-making process; the construction of a homogeneous identity through exclusionary practices; a concept of democracy in which those ‘inside’ play a superior role to those ‘outside’ the so established society” (Diez 1995: 151).

Thus, the analysis illuminates that the principle of statehood is basically elevated to the European level.

In a similar vein, scholars from the side of critical geography question the alleged decline of the modern territorial state. For example, Reece Jones and Corey Johnson (2016) argue that through the practices of security at the EU border, i.e. the militarisation of the border, state sovereignty is re-articulated instead of in demise. According to them, states try to adjust to the new circumstances and actually expand their claims to authority. Similarly, Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen (2008) argues in his analysis of migration that EU member states delegate some of their rights in order to ensure their territorial sovereignty. Hence, the states “paradoxically, may end up strengthening their position vis-à-vis other actors not only in Europe but also on the global scene” (Gammeltoft-Hansen/Adler-Nissen 2008: 16).

In this light, the postmodern promise seems to be at least very limited (see also Borg/Diez 2016; Diez 1996, 2012). Having said this, however, Diez (1995, 1996, 1997) does show that there are possible alternatives embedded in the discourse around the future of the European Community. Here, he stresses the so-called ‘network model’ that differs from the predominantly in territorial-terms defined ‘state-model’ (and hence is called ‘postmodern’).

The focus in these analyses is on statehood in the context of the EU. Diez (1995) basically identifies two possibilities: the German domestic discourse regarding the EU’s future is either constructed in terms of state or non-state terms. Within his analysis, sovereignty is included: either sovereignty is reflected in the discourses as a characteristic of the state, i.e. internal and external sovereignty (1996: 23, 37), or it is simply

non-existent in the discourse around the future of the EU, i.e. the European Community is constructed in non-state terms. Of course, ‘sovereignty’ as a concept is not the focus of Diez’s analysis: he examines statehood. As I am interested in the constructions of sovereignty in the context of the EU, I want to include some of the insights of more recent literature (e.g. late or cooperative sovereignty) and thus broaden Diez’s two-part differentiation. While this work offers a valuable, poststructuralist criticism of the postmodern promise that I strongly build on, I want to focus on nuances of the concept of sovereignty specifically. Of course, sovereignty can be constructed in terms of ‘high sovereignty’, but there can be conceivable differences *within* the concept of sovereignty, for example, due to national specificities. Further, a conception such as ‘late sovereignty’ that is not necessarily bound to the modern, territorial state but might co-exist next to high sovereignty claims is conceivable (Mac Amhlaigh 2013: 42). Consequently, I contend that there are more possibilities than a dichotomous state or non-state construction. This, of course, makes the concept of sovereignty more complicated and twisted.

As I already indicated, I then conceive ‘post-sovereignty’ as a conception that goes even further than ‘late’ or ‘cooperative sovereignty’: it would totally break with any claims to authority on behalf of some kind of a bounded community. If one considers such a possibility, one question arises immediately: “What could it mean to imagine a politics outside a politics which is already constituted precisely as a distinction between insides and outsides?” (R. Walker 2009: 88-9). What a post-sovereign world might look like is not straightforward – especially not for researchers deeply embedded in the world of IR, usually dealing with the state in some way or another (R. Walker 2009: 84-9). It would appear at first sight that the answer is some form of a world society or cosmopolitan community (see, e.g. Buzan 1993; Held 2002). Rob Walker, however, points to the difficulties associated with such an approach: moving from a state system to universalistic claims might ultimately end up as an inherent imperialistic project (R. Walker 2009; see also Hardt/Negri 2003). This reminds of the long-standing debate regarding universalistic versus particularistic norms (for an overview, see Zapf 2016) and is certainly an important warning against rash euphoria concerning world politics. Bartelson, aware of such a danger, points to visions of a post-sovereign world that is not constituted of different bounded political communities that most political scientists have become so used to. Instead, he suggests a vision of a world community that does not subscribe to an opposition between the universal and the particular. Instead,

Bartelson points to a “shared human destiny as a consequence of inhabiting the same planet” (Bartelson 2009: 179) that is different from moral cosmopolitanism. While there continue to be different visions of a world beyond bounded sovereignty claims, this is probably what a critical engagement is all about. There is not a standard solution or a single idea, rather, contested visions that are inclined by an alternative narration of IR (see, e.g. R. Walker et al. 2011: 309).

In this section, I elaborated on different conceptualisations of sovereignty in the context of Europeanisation. I first touched upon the broad body of literature that conceptualises sovereignty in positivist terms but dismissed it in favour of a more interpretivist approach because it is important to understand sovereignty as an ever-changing construct. Thus, I drew attention to interpretivist literature. In order to discuss sovereignty in a meaningful way in the context of European integration and the EU, I presented Neil Walker’s conception of ‘high sovereignty’ that is closely tied to the modern territorial state. Then, I introduced literature around a supposed transformation of the concept of sovereignty in light of European integration (e.g. ‘late sovereignty’). Such approaches point to a ‘postmodern promise’, according to which the EU is at least challenging conceptions of ‘high sovereignty’. I also briefly touched on the possibility of a post-sovereign world, characterised above all by an alternative view of the political system. However, referring to poststructuralist scholars, I also demonstrated that the ‘postmodern promise’ associated with the EU is at least a questionable narrative (Borg/Diez 2016: 142) that I will come back to in my analysis.

2.2 Domestic discourses and European policy

While in the previous section, I introduced literature that deals with – and criticises – the transformation of sovereignty in the context of the EU, here I want to examine literature that looks at the specific contexts in which claims to authority emerge. Since I am conducting an analysis of discourses in France and Germany, this is of special interest to me. The literature concerned is primarily focused on the state. This is relevant because, as I have indicated in the above, sovereignty and the state are closely tied together in the age of modernity.

While I have illustrated before that state sovereignty is a discursive concept, which can vary considerably (see Malmvig 2006; C. Weber 1995), I am aware that such constructions are always embedded in a specific environment. At the beginning of this thesis, I

mainly focused on sovereignty as a ‘claim to authority’, and thus, it might seem that such claims are easily controllable. However, I do not want to leave it at such an actor-focused approach. Actors, such as leading politicians, cannot simply make up their own world. Thus, they cannot simply come up with haphazard constructions of sovereignty; they are rather part of specific discursive environments that they cannot easily escape from (Malmvig 2006: 3). Similarly, Lene Hansen argues that individuals are socialised into particular understandings of concepts (Hansen 2006: 16). Following from that, “it is obvious that the concept of sovereignty is inextricably intertwined with identity and history” (Sarooshi 2004: 1117), themselves both products and ingredients of discourse. In contrast to approaches of political culture, discourse analysis focuses on language. Within this approach, culture is not separate from discourses (Larsen 1997: 22). Hence, in this chapter, I first introduce literature linked to the so-called “‘Copenhagen School’ of integration studies” (Manners 2002: 17). In 2.2.2, I will specifically focus on literature concerning my two cases, France and Germany. In the concluding section of this chapter, I will elaborate on my theoretical framework that builds on the examined literature.

2.2.1 National discursive codes

Scholars within the Copenhagen School of integration studies primarily focus on specific national “discursive codes” (Holm 1997: 128) – among them predominantly the state. Thus, the state and claims to sovereignty are not natural or exogenous; they are part of their own historical and cultural environment. Scholars within this approach, therefore, all call for the use of discourse analysis when examining the EU member states’ European policy.

In 1990, Ole Wæver outlines in his article “Three competing Europes: German, French, Russian” that national discourses and their respective visions of Europe matter. The article is written in the context of German unification. However, the idea that there are competing visions of Europe in France, Germany and Russia that are tied to different conceptions of the state is nevertheless valuable for my thesis (Wæver 1990: 479-483). While the article does not present a more coherent theory, the idea of different national discourses is further developed in several later publications by scholars associated with the Copenhagen School.

In general, as I have already mentioned, the approach is focused on national spheres and their differing conceptions of Europe.⁹ Ulla Holm (1997), Henrik Larsen (1997), and Wæver (2001, 2005) have elaborated on the approach in more detail. Overall, they take inspiration from constructivist research while arguably employing a more post-structuralist approach (Wæver 2001: 21-6). In all their publications, the national discourses of concepts such as the 'state', 'nation', and 'people' are seen to be central building blocks of a state's European foreign policies: each European state has to include a vision of 'Europe' in its identity (constructed and adaptable in its nature [see also Anderson 2006]) in some way or another (Wæver 2005: 21, 2005: 33). A conception like the 'state' is thus more important than conceptions such as 'security' as it is a 'lens of identity' (Wæver 2001: 25).¹⁰ Accordingly, foreign policy must be able to include these key concepts in order to be feasible. National traditions are thus key in understanding foreign policy options. Following that, discourses delimit possible public statements (Wæver 2001: 29, 2005: 36). Overall, the approach aims to explain why some foreign policy options are unrealistic, while others might be more convincing in the national context (Wæver 2005: 59). Foreign policy choices have to make sense in the specific context of the country discourses in question. Thus, it is not about what an individual politician thinks personally or what the country's population believes: it is about the political arena, the discursive system, in which the public statements are held. The individuals, most prominently influential politicians, are part of this system (Holm 1997: 129; Wæver 2001: 26-7, 2009: 172). This is also the point of departure of Henrik Larsen's (1997) analysis: he argues that traditional accounts of IR focus too much on individual beliefs instead of a more structuralist-inspired focus on language (Larsen 1997: 11).

Consequently, Wæver argues: "Structures within discourse condition possible policies" (Wæver 2001: 27). For the course of my analysis, this suggests that the national "discursive code" (Holm 1997: 128) regarding the conception of the 'state' in each domestic sphere is of central importance when looking at integration in the field of security and defence. That being the case, interests are always part of the discourses and cannot be regarded as exogenous factors (Wæver 2001: 30). In light of these considerations, it is

⁹ From my perspective, the idea is especially relevant in the context of the European Union, however, as Wæver points out, the focus on national discourses and their specific codes are in general applicable to other contexts as well (Wæver 2009: 171).

¹⁰ Larsen (1997: 1) also includes the concept of 'Europe', 'security' and 'the nature of international relations' in the range of key concepts. I will not elaborate on this though, because on the one hand, I am particularly interested in conceptions of the state and on the other hand, I think the 'identity-argument' made by Wæver and Holm is quite convincing.

important to note that the discursive structure suggests an overall direction of foreign policy, e.g. “What kind of security order?” (Wæver 2005: 35); it does not determine concrete foreign policy decisions (Larsen 1997: 21; Wæver 2005: 35).

According to scholars within this approach, political discourses are built out of different layers. At the deepest layers are the key concepts of ‘state’, ‘nation’ and ‘people’. This ‘deep structure’ is the basic national understanding of these concepts and, as they are so foundational, they can be found in any document, speech or interview (Holm 1997: 129). Accordingly, each individual country has its own history and culture attached to the ‘state’ concept. Hence, the theory does not offer any generalisable assumptions regarding these key concepts because they differ from country to country (Wæver 2001: 35). While the ‘state’ is part of the deepest layer, the second layer consists of the respective state’s relation to Europe. The second layer has to make sense of ‘Europe’ in a way that is compatible with the first layer, i.e. the conception of the state (Wæver 2001: 37). Here, Wæver gives an interesting illustration:

“if a discourse constructs the external dimension of the idea of the state as one of power politics, then ‘Europe’ has to either offer the possibility of this country’s own pursuit of power politics, or, alternatively can itself be the one pursuing the power politics on the country’s behalf” (Wæver 2001: 38).

The third layer entails the concrete European policies. The two previous levels are played out here, in actual political action or political debates. Thus, methodologically, level three is essential (ibid.). Scholars cannot investigate a key concept like the ‘state’ directly; they must examine it at the level of political debate, i.e. level three (Holm 1997: 129). While the scholars within the Copenhagen School contend that the key concepts are quite stable or sedimented, the approach at least introduces the idea of change. Accordingly, level three is easier to change than level one. That the key concepts on level one change, however, is quite radical and not very likely, although in general, it is possible (ibid.: 129-30; Wæver 2001: 40, 2005: 37).

For my own thesis, this literature offers important theoretical ideas: it is very helpful in considering the specific national spheres as they, so to speak, set the framework for any political statement made. Hence, France and Germany are two different discursive political arenas, shaped by different historical developments and characterised by different languages (Wæver 2005: 39). Hence, to me, it seems convincing to be aware of their specificities when undertaking an empirical analysis. Further, scholars within the Copenhagen approach convincingly argue that French and German visions are central to European integration and European foreign policy in general. The French, as well

as the Germans, need to be able to integrate their conception of the state in European foreign policy (Wæver 2009: 171).

However, I want to refrain from a too structuralist point of view: of course, Wæver and his colleagues emphasise that key concepts can change in theory; still, such changes appear extremely unlikely. Wæver himself acknowledges that the approach is more structuralist than poststructuralist due to the notion of mainly stable discourses (Wæver 2009: 172). Diez points to a central problem of such an approach as it logically follows that “there is no systematic link back from policy statements to discourse” (Diez 2001: 13). Closely related is the problematic assumption that foreign policy choices are separable from discourses (Diez 2001: 13, 2014: 323; Nonhoff/Stengel 2014: 46). To distinguish foreign policy from discourse is, however, not possible. In fact, foreign policy choices are part of the discourse and rather reproduce (or change) certain discursive key concepts instead of being clearly separated from them. With this in mind, I nevertheless wish to briefly elaborate on some of the writings from the Copenhagen School concerning France and Germany, specifically, before I present my own theoretical framework.

2.2.2 The state in France and Germany

The central assumption within the Copenhagen School is the focus on language and its structuring role. While I have already indicated that I do not share the division between discourse and foreign policy, I want to elaborate on some of the research undertaken regarding France and Germany. To that end, the Copenhagen School literature on France (Holm 1997, 2004, 2009, 2013; Larsen 1997; Wæver 2005) and Germany (Wæver 2001, 2005) serves to contextualise the two cases. Further, this section illuminates how the abstract framework introduced in the previous section is put to practice. Holm intends to show that French policy “is ruled by the discursive code of the specific French political culture that regulate what works as meaningful policy” (1997: 128-9). For the course of my thesis, her focus on the state in France is very interesting. She contends that French policy is heavily influenced by the invention of the ‘state nation’ as a consequence of the French revolution in 1789.¹¹ State and nation are totally fused in France. The idea is that everyone can, in theory, become French as a French citizen becomes a citizen of the state (1997: 130-1). Holm argues that this has led to French

¹¹ As the state invented the nation, Holm (2009: 6) chooses to refer to the ‘state nation’ that may sound a bit unusual compared to the term ‘nation state’.

exceptionalism: The Republican elite has since the revolution contended that France can undertake actions on behalf of all humanity. French actions on behalf of the ‘state nation’ are constituted by values such as human rights and the notion of the ‘enlightened citizen’ (1997: 133). Thus, France is a strong, centralised and demarcated state with a mission to defend its values (Larsen 1997: 87; Wæver 2005: 43). Holm puts it like this: “It is unthinkable that the French state nation should hide behind the town gate, lying calmly, without being active beyond its frontiers. To act is necessary, but the question is in which way Europe is part of this acting” (Holm 1997: 133). Holm, in her writing on French policy regarding the European Community, illustrates how the conception of a fused state nation is mirrored in French policy. Overall, due to the fused state nation, there are limited possibilities in relation to Europe: either a Europe that is outside of the French ‘state nation’ or a concept of Europe that elevates the whole French nation state to the European level (a doubled French state nation or alternatively, a total replay) (Holm 1997: 130). Arguably, Charles de Gaulle was a strong proponent of a Europe that is outside of France, i.e. the promoted concept of Europe was a ‘Europe of the *States*’ (Wæver 2005: 45, my emph.). Holm, Larsen and Wæver argue that under later French presidents, the core concept of the fused ‘state nation’ remained; however, the relation to Europe changed. Under François Mitterrand, Europe was not simply to be an instrument for France, but Europe was to be like France (Larsen 1997: 83-4). Hence, in this discourse, state sovereignty is not lost (Larsen 1997: 108); rather, France alone is too small to pursue French exceptionalism on its own (Holm 2013: 146; Wæver 2005: 44). Such a conception of Europe as a ‘doubled France’ has been increasingly challenged after 1989.¹² Holm argues that Jacques Chirac, as well as Nicolas Sarkozy, attempted to balance both conceptions of Europe, i.e. de Gaulle’s ‘Europe of the states’ and Mitterrand’s ‘state-like Europe’ (Holm 2009: 25). What remains, is the core concept of a fused ‘state nation’ that is closely related to French exceptionalism and still regulates French foreign policy. Before critically evaluating such a narration of foreign policy, I want to briefly elaborate on Wæver’s analyses on Germany and the corresponding German core concept of the state.

To start with the German conception of the state, it is striking that it is very different from the French conception of a ‘state nation’. This German discourse constructs the nation as preceding the state. According to this discursive logic, the German nation has

¹² The worries centered around the resulting ‘France’, e.g. its banalization (Holm 1997: 133). Further, the unification of Germany led to concerns that the European project would not be able to tie such a strong Germany (Wæver 2005: 53-4).

existed in the absence of the state and is, in contrast to the French conception, much more tied to culture and language (Wæver 2005: 46). The state, in contrast, has developed along the line of a Hegelian ‘power state’ (Wæver 2001: 35). Since state and nation are distinguishable, more options exist regarding a conception of Europe (Wæver 2001: 35, 2005: 46). In Wæver’s reading of German foreign policy, the ‘power state’ became the “big, structuring *problem*” (Wæver 2005: 47, *emph. in orig.*) after the end of the Second World War. Germany’s largely pro institutional integrationist policy is apparently rooted in such a conception of the state: the idea is to divide power within the EU and remove itself from a rivalry between European states (Wæver 2005: 48). In contrast to France, the idea is to have a “low political profile” (Wæver 2005: 52). Nevertheless, a debate around a kind of ‘normalisation’ emerged in Germany after the Cold War. For example, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder was seen as supporting a ‘normalisation’, whereas foreign minister Joschka Fischer’s reasoning is rather attached to a ‘civilian power’. Beyond these differences, Wæver argues, the debates revolve around the core concept of the state as a ‘power state’ that remains stable in shaping German foreign policy (Wæver 2005: 57).

All mentioned analyses on French and German foreign policy regarding Europe cover quite a long time span. When reading the works that put the previously introduced framework into practice, it becomes obvious that such an approach tries to deal with foreign policy on quite an abstract level concerning very general directions of foreign policy. What I especially take away from such an account is the consideration of national discursive spheres marked not least by enormous historical events (again, these only become meaningful when constituted in discourse). To me, it makes sense not to overlook such differences. Consequentially, it is valuable to gain insights from a theory-led narration of French and German policy on the basis of their different conceptions of the state. Overall, foreign policy leaders want to pursue a foreign policy consistent with discursive constructions of identity (Hansen 2006: 16).

At the same time, however, I am convinced that the theoretical approach taken by the Copenhagen School has some deficits. In the previous section, I have already indicated that the key concepts of the state are considered to be very stable. This is probably also due to the wish to present a coherent theory. While a key concept such as the state might be an important, structuring variable, foreign policy debates are able to influence such a concept. A key concept such as the state might be historically aligned to a specific idea; however, the approach does obscure discursive struggles. To be fair, some

instabilities of the discourse are briefly mentioned by Holm (2004: 476), but overall, the focus is rather on one single discourse within each country. Due to the more recent developments in European integration, it is conceivable that in the respective French and German discourses, the state – and thus, state sovereignty – is understood in different terms (i.e. I might encounter competing discourses [for a similar idea, see Stahl/Harnisch 2009: 38]) or perhaps it has declined in importance since the above works were written. At the same time, however, foreign policy debates can of course also contribute to the reproduction of the above-given conceptions of French and German ideas of ‘the state’. In the following, I thus want to present my theoretical framework that combines the literature presented in the first part of Chapter 2 and the literature around the Copenhagen School that I presented in the second part.

2.3 Theoretical framework

After I have elaborated on literature concerning ‘sovereignty’ in the context of European integration in 2.1 and on literature dealing with national understandings of the ‘state’ in 2.2, I now wish to combine the two strands into my theoretical framework.

To recap (in 2.1), I rejected essentially statist conceptions of sovereignty that are proposed in a large part of the literature on sovereignty. Constructivist and poststructuralist scholars convincingly contend that sovereignty is mutable; sovereignty is a contested concept (Besson 2004; Gallie 1956). Drawing on a number of interpretivist scholars, I understand sovereignty as a ‘discursive claim to authority’ (Gammeltoft-Hansen/Adler-Nissen 2008: 6; N. Walker 2006: 6; Werner/De Wilde 2001: 287). Thus, sovereignty orders our world as it constitutes polities. While in modernity, the state is the first and foremost claimant to authority, I argue that there is considerable variety within state sovereignty. Further, this does not mean that sovereignty is inevitably tied to the modern territorial state. In order to account for this in my analysis, I introduced literature that provides reference points regarding sovereignty in the context of the EU. Arguably, ‘high sovereignty’ (understood as a claim by or on behalf of a state over a specific territory and people) has evolved to a conception of ‘late sovereignty’ (understood as a non-exclusive claim made by a political entity based on functional rather than merely territorial terms) (N. Walker 2006; Mac Amhlaigh 2013). This arguably carries emancipatory potential (Bartelson 2014: 61). Poststructuralist

literature, however, does not simply buy such an assertion and questions the ‘postmodern promise’ associated with European integration (e.g. Borg/Diez 2016).

Within my analysis, I want to examine the claims to authority made and the corresponding construction of sovereignty in the debate around PESCO. In terms of a theoretical framework, an understanding of sovereignty as a ‘claim to authority’ focuses on the actors within discourses as they articulate their understanding of sovereignty. Of course, this does not mean that actors can arbitrarily make up a concept of sovereignty; still, the focus is on the actual articulations put forward instead of merely referring to ‘foreign policy traditions’.

The second strand of literature that I have introduced, in contrast, highlights the national discursive contexts that constrain the foreign policy of individual states regarding the EU. According to scholars associated with the Copenhagen School, the ‘state’ is a key concept that is quite stable in its national understanding and thus, some policy options are more likely than others. In the previous section, I have criticized the theoretical framework proposed by Wæver and his colleagues because it assumes a great deal of stability of the ‘state’. Thus, the approach is for the most part more structuralist than poststructuralist. However, I want to draw on the idea that national (respective French and German) factors shape the discourses.

For my thesis, I intend to combine the two strands of literature as I want to examine claims to authority while being aware that these claims are made within a specific national context. This brings me to the understanding of ‘discourse’ as such. Basically, discourses are systems of articulations (Laclau/Mouffe 2014: 304; Renner 2016: 22). For the course of this thesis, I conceive articulations as linguistic practices that produce social meanings. While I focus very much on textual documents within this thesis (I will elaborate on this in 3.2), I also look at graphics that are part of these documents, as these visuals are ultimately also “linguistically mediated practices” (Torfing 2005: 7). All these (here: linguistic) articulations are then themselves embedded in a structure. The result is a circular process:

“The production and reproduction of meaning and social reality through social practices can thus be understood as a circular process, in which social actors interpret their world, act according to their interpretations and by this reproduce and modify the meaning structures that made their actions possible” (Renner 2016: 23).

Based on such an understanding of discourse, I want to introduce my theoretical framework that combines both strands of literature while trying to take advantage of

each approach's insights. As I have elaborated in the above, I understand sovereignty as a contested concept, which manifests itself in various claims to authority. Thus, I am convinced that articulations are indispensable when examining discourses. By focusing on articulations made by different actors, I counteract the notion of all-time stable national discourses that Wæver and his colleagues tend to fall for.

These articulations try to fix a specific reading (Hansen 2006: 18) of the concept of sovereignty. Within my thesis and its focus on sovereignty, I expect these readings to coherently refer to different discursive elements that I draw from the literature such as the realm of sovereignty (hence, an 'inside' and 'outside'), its legitimacy and references to identity (that is relational and adaptable in its nature [Campbell 1998: 9]). In this way, different discourses entail different patterns of argumentation that suggest/constrain specific actions (Nonhoff/Stengel 2014: 48-9).

Of course, out of all articulations made, some actors play a more prevalent role than others: Arguably, for example, influential politicians are particularly heard in the context of my thesis. Indeed, there are actors in the political realm that are not only particularly heard, but who also communicate 'strategically' in order to achieve a certain goal. They try to structure the discourse in a certain way and establish a specific understanding of a concept such as sovereignty. It is important to note, however, that a particular discourse does not depend on a single actor, such as a politician (Nonhoff/Stengel 2014: 50; Torfing 2005: 15). The point is that they cannot control the effects of their strategies (this is Foucault's [1991] understanding of power as permeating or circulating, rather than controllable).

Further, they are themselves embedded in a specific discursive context. This is an important realisation that I draw from the second strand of literature introduced before. Therefore, I will not speak of 'norm entrepreneur' as it is common in much of social constructivist research (e.g. Finnemore/Sikkink 1998; Ingebritsen 2002), but instead of "discursive entrepreneurs" (Diez et al. 2016: 26). While the concept of a 'discursive entrepreneur' acknowledges the importance of political articulation in discourse, it also includes the more structural aspects of discourse. For the course of my thesis, I ascribe the structural qualities of discourse to the national context, i.e. the respective French and German context. In my view, this is justified not least by the fact that it is ultimately the *French* and *German* policies that enable a project like PESCO. Arguably, the national realms further constitute distinguishable discursive arenas due to differ-

ent historical events and different language realms (Wæver 2005: 39). Here, I especially draw on the insights from scholars who, on a theoretical basis, identified particular structural features of the French and German conception of the state (e.g. Holm 1997, 2004, 2009 for France; Wæver 2005 for Germany). Thus, it is for sure reasonable to argue that articulations regarding a contested concept such as ‘sovereignty’ start from a somewhat different point of view and make some articulations more likely as they are more compatible with national traditions than others (Wæver 2005: 35). While I do not oppose such an understanding, such (alleged) differences are not simply given and immutable. In the end, structural qualities are (re)produced in discursive interventions in the form of articulations. Hence, I want to focus on constructions of sovereignty that in turn either reproduce or change the respective discursive structures. Certainly, a major advantage of such an approach is that it allows for the option that notions of statehood are mutable. Further, it also considers that sovereignty is not necessarily bound to statehood. In that sense, I try to go one step further than Wæver and his colleagues by focusing on the articulations of sovereignty while at the same time taking into account the insights of the Copenhagen School regarding long-standing national characteristics and incorporating them as theoretical templates in my analysis. Therefore, it is conceivable that discursive entrepreneurs reinforce specific notions of state sovereignty via articulations within national discourse. At the same time, it is plausible that discursive entrepreneurs change specific notions of (state) sovereignty.

Even if it should prove that constructions of sovereignty are quite stable in a respective country, it is important to point out that discourses are never completely closed or fixed. While language has a structuring role, a discourse is never closed: “Thus, neither absolute fixity nor absolute non-fixity is possible” (Laclau/Mouffe 2014: 321). It is the aim of a poststructuralist-inspired discourse analysis to point to the contingency of meanings (Renner 2014: 313). Such an approach further allows mapping the contentiousness of foreign policy since the “field of discursivity” (Laclau/Mouffe 2014: 323; see also: Larsen 1997: 19) might see competing discourses. Within this thesis, I consider discourses to be dominant if they are upheld by a significant group of the above introduced discursive entrepreneurs (this also allows the assignment of politicians from different parties to one group).

Based on a poststructuralist understanding, I *cannot* causally and conclusively explain foreign policy choices. Rather, it is valuable to examine the discursive environment

that makes some options more likely than others as they seem to be more appropriate or legitimate than others (Nonhoff/Stengel 2014: 48-9). Part of French or German foreign policy towards the EU thus means establishing a specific understanding of sovereignty discursively. Ultimately, the comparison between the French and German discourses enables me to illuminate similarities and differences in the respective constructions of sovereignty put forward by discursive entrepreneurs that might constitute hurdles in view of more profound integration efforts.

To summarise, for my thesis, I propose bringing literature together that focuses a) on sovereignty understood in an interpretivist way and b) on literature that focuses on national specificities. In order to combine them, I want to focus on articulations put forward by discursive entrepreneurs. Such discursive interventions are not only key to understanding change; they are also of central importance in upholding specific national discourses. To consider specific national characteristics, I refer to research conducted on Germany and France. Within my framework, however, these narrations are not considered as simply given – they have to be reflected in articulations by discursive entrepreneurs. Thus, my analysis is more open to change than research conducted on behalf of scholars associated with the Copenhagen School. Further, my framework allows for the possibility that sovereignty is detached from the state as it is simply assumed in large parts of literature concerning sovereignty. In the following Chapter 3, I elaborate on the way I want to translate these theoretical considerations methodologically.

3. From discourse theory to a discursive methodology

This chapter aims to present the methodological approach of my research. I will begin with a few remarks on the chosen discursive approach. In doing so, I wish to highlight why discourse analysis is particularly suitable for answering my research questions. Afterwards, I elaborate both on my focus on the official political discourse and the reasons for the selected documents within my analysis. Subsequently, I will present the analytical steps and the questions that guide my research. Finally, I want to reflect on the limitations of the chosen methodological approach.

3.1 Remarks on a discursive approach

A discursive approach is not a rigid method that obeys a strictly specified procedure. Instead, a discursive approach is more of a ‘research perspective’ (Wedl et al. 2014: 538-9). This also means that the theoretical assumptions and the methodological approach cannot be strictly separated.

In the previous chapters concerned with theoretical considerations, I elaborated on sovereignty as an ‘essentially contested concept’: there is not a definition that everyone agrees on. Furthermore, sovereignty is not something simply ‘out there’; it is discursively constructed. While the term has proven to be quite resilient over the course of the last hundreds of years, its actual meaning is and has been contested. Recently, this has become especially obvious in the discussion around sovereignty and Europeanisation.

Overall, my theoretical assumptions resonate well with the underlying assumptions of discursive approaches: they assume that meaning is not simply inherent in a text or a term (Angermüller et al. 2014: 3.). Hence, discourses construct our reality; there is no meaning outside of them. This does not mean that reality does not exist; it rather means that we cannot grasp it outside of discursive engagement. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe illustrate this assumption with the example of an earthquake: it is “an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now [...]. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of ‘natural phenomena’ or expressions of the wrath of God’ depends upon the structuring of a discursive field” (Laclau/Mouffe 2014: 312). In my understanding, such a discursive approach is particularly plausible with regard to a concept such as sovereignty, which is inherently a quite abstract concept. For the analysis, in turn, it is important to stress that scholars undertaking a discourse analysis are themselves embedded in discourse as they cannot escape their respective discursive environments (Keller 2011: 65).¹³

One could argue that to examine ‘constructions of sovereignty’, a content analysis would be appropriate as well. A content analysis often appears convincing, considering its precise methodological steps. However, what distinguishes the *discursive* approach are its clear epistemic considerations that I have just mentioned. A pure content analysis, in contrast, often assumes that meaning is inherent in texts (Angermüller et al. 2014: 3.). To be fair, some scholars employ a content analysis with reference to a more

¹³ I will come back to this in 3.4.

hermeneutic approach (e.g. Mayring 2015) that might have conceptual overlaps with a discursive approach. Still, what distinguishes a discursive approach is its inherently critical perspective on the world. It is precisely because apparently given truths are regarded as constructed and contingent that concepts such as sovereignty are only examined in the first place. In the context of my research project, this is an important impetus. It is *discourse* that ultimately governs how ‘sovereignty’ is meaningfully talked about (see Hall 2001: 72). According to these considerations, a discourse analysis seems to be the most reasonable approach in answering my research questions as it aims to examine how our social world and order are constructed through discursive practices.

I just mentioned that a content analysis is quite restricted due to its exact predetermined methodological steps, whereas a discourse analysis is more closely adapted to the subject matter and generally allows more openness in the research process. In this context, Malmvig points out that it is not possible “for any (poststructuralist) studies to account in full all of the meticulous details of the research process, or all the analytical choices made. It is an illusive quest to achieve complete methodological transparency” (Malmvig 2006: 25). While this is important to note, Malmvig herself nevertheless calls for increased endeavours to make the methodological approach as transparent and comprehensible as possible to fulfil research standards (Malmvig 2006: 23-5; see also Milliken 1999). Every research project entails analytical choices which can be made transparent. Worth mentioning in this context is, for example, Hansen’s “Security as Practice” (2006) that provides much transparency concerning her analytical choices. Thus, in the next section, I want to give reasons for the key analytical decisions that I made in this thesis before I then elaborate more on the undertaken steps and guiding questions of the analysis.

3.2 Analytical choices to capture the discourses

In order to gather all important analytical decisions in one place¹⁴, I want to begin this chapter by briefly going back to the choice of my two cases, France and Germany. I have already indicated the main reasons in the introduction and within the theoretical framework, but there are some further considerations I wish to touch upon here. To

¹⁴ The analytical choices are loosely based on Hansen’s “Research design for discourse analysis” (Hansen 2006: 67).

recall, I decided to focus on the two countries due to their key role within European integration. Not only are Germany and France numerical heavyweights in the EU – Germany is the most populous member state of the EU, followed by France (Eurostat 2021). Both countries are also considered to be traditional key players in the European integration process (Diez et al. 2011: 132; Hyde-Price/Jeffery 2001: 698-9; Wæver 2009: 171). Not only their importance in the EU, but also their comparative difference vis-à-vis each other informs my choice. As Wæver (2005: 39) emphasises, France and Germany have different language realms, a distinct history and, perhaps connected to this, a distinct history of political thought. This leads me to assume that constructions of sovereignty could be very different in the two cases, especially when it comes to the field of security and defence that is traditionally thought to be at the core of the state (Aalberts 2012: 22; Hoffmann 1966: 883-884). This, however, does not mean that I testify any specific hypothesis in the sense of a positivist agenda. Rather, the differences pointed out by Wæver are particularly relevant for my analysis as these differences might be reflected in the discourses I find.

Previously, it could have been argued that the UK constitutes another important EU member state. In view of Brexit, however, I decided not to include the UK as it is most likely not very relevant regarding the further development of EU policies anymore. Lastly, of course, the limitation to two cases is also based on pragmatic considerations. It would be interesting to include other member states in the analysis, as well. However, this would go beyond the scope of this thesis. In general, I have *not* chosen the cases of France and Germany in order to derive some general assumptions regarding all member states of the EU. Even though case studies are often used for generalisations, it is clearly not the aim (neither within the scope) of my thesis to make some generalised statements regarding the constructions of sovereignty in other or even all EU member states. Rather, the idea is to illuminate the (different) constructions of sovereignty within integration efforts regarding the field of security and defence in the two key member states, France and Germany.

The second key choice that I want to elaborate on here is my focus on the official political discourse. Within this discourse, state leaders and other important politicians legitimise their foreign policy decisions and elaborate on their visions. With regard to my research questions, this is quite relevant as I assume leading politicians to construct ‘sovereignty’ in a way that resembles their foreign policy preferences. To capture the political discourse, I am thus interested in strategic documents on security and defence

published by the respective governments. Further, I look at speeches and interviews: the publicly most prominent politicians concerned with security and defence are the President and the Minister of Defence in France, and the Chancellor, and the Minister of Defence in Germany. Besides these key figures of the political debates in each country, I also include material created in parliament that provide (especially: oppositional) politicians with a stage to express themselves. I consider all the mentioned politicians as discursive entrepreneurs as they have institutional power and are in elevated positions of authority. Ultimately, they are the decisive figures when it comes to national decisions regarding foreign policy towards the EU. Further, these politicians are themselves embedded in their respective societies, and thus, they are inevitably influenced by societal debates and opinions.

Of course, it would be interesting and relevant to broaden the analysis, for example, to media coverage (apart from interviews with leading politicians), think tank publications or even to the field of pop culture. This would, however, again, extend beyond the thesis's scope. If, however, a political speech draws references to other sources, I include them in the analysis in the sense of intertextuality (Hansen 2006: 49). As I am interested in the national French and German discourse, I only included speeches, interviews etc., that were situated in the respective national environment. For example, I did not include French or German politicians' speeches in front of the European Parliament or during state visits as my focus is the national arenas. Of course, these national spheres are not closed off, for example, Macron's speech at the Paris-Sorbonne University elicited a considerable international response. Thus, it is difficult to neatly separate the national from the international spheres as they might overlap in reality. I will come back to this point in 3.4, however, in order to delimit the material, I decided to include material that originated in the respective country (e.g. speeches held in France or official documents published on the national government pages).

The next key decision regards the period of investigation. As I have mentioned previously, PESCO is arguably the most remarkable development concerning integration in the field of security and defence within the EU in the last years. Therefore, I chose to examine debates around PESCO. While PESCO was already legally established with the Treaty of Lisbon that entered into force in 2009, it was only evoked by the member states in December 2017. A broader discussion around the EU's developments in security and defence was particularly salient with the publication of the EUGS in 2016 that

replaced the European Security Strategy (ESS) from 2003. The EUGS was drafted under the EU High Representative and Vice-President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini and her team (Tocci 2017b). While I do not want to elaborate too much on the EUGS at this point, it arguably constitutes a landmark within the development of EU foreign and security policy (Pishchikova/Piras 2017: 105). Especially the field of defence gained attention in the EUGS and within the following discussions. The invocation of PESCO was certainly not an isolated decision but rather part of this broader strategic orientation. Therefore, I decided to take the publication of the EUGS in June 2016 as the starting point of my analysis. From my perspective, this is applicable to both the French and German context, i.e. it is not a specific French or German event. The endpoint marks the end of November 2020, as I started analysing the material in December 2020. Hence, the period of investigation constitutes roughly four and a half years.

The analytical choices that I have presented so far limit the conceivable material as they determine the focus on the French and German case, set the focus on certain components of the political discourse, and define the timeframe. While I started by reading very widely to gain a general understanding of the debates and gather relevant context information, I only examined documents in more detail that dealt with PESCO. Thus, the documents had to entail *keywords* representing PESCO. These keywords were ‘PESCO’, ‘Coopération Structure Permanente’, ‘CSP’ or ‘coopération renforcée’ for the French discourse and ‘PESCO’, ‘Ständige Strukturierte Zusammenarbeit’ or ‘SSZ’ for the German discourse. Further, as I want to examine the construction of *sovereignty*, the documents must entail either ‘sovereign’ or ‘sovereignty’. All analysed documents had to fulfil these and the above-given criteria. Further, in order to help me in answering my research questions, they had to be more specifically relevant in terms of content. This was based on whether a document offered some indications in relation to the guiding questions, which I will present in the following section. Of course, a single document must not refer to all aspects covered by the list of guiding questions. There were, however, documents that were too short of providing any interesting insights; others treated very technical aspects that were not helpful for the purpose of this thesis. Overall, the corpus of material that is relevant to me consists of 33 documents (mostly, only parts of the documents regarding PESCO are relevant to me). The French material comprises 17 documents, including two strategic documents, a total of seven speeches

and interviews by President François Hollande, President Macron and Defence Minister Florence Parly, and eight minutes of parliamentary sessions/committee meetings. Similarly, the German material comprises 16 documents, including the White Paper, two speeches by Defence Ministers Ursula von der Leyen and Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, as well as 13 documents published by the Bundestag (minutes of parliamentary sessions and so-called *Drucksachen*).

3.3 Approach to the material

As I have already elaborated on in my theoretical framework, I do not aim to present a given and coherent ‘foreign policy tradition’ of each country and narrate the story of PESCO accordingly. Rather, I focus on the articulations made by discursive entrepreneurs and the corresponding constructions of sovereignty. Of course, as I mentioned before, these may reflect some national specificities and thus uphold them. In a similar vein, I do not want to establish a pre-given set of ideal types of sovereignty. There is a danger that I would only hastily perpetuate existing constructions of sovereignty and not even allow for the possibility of other, new constructions of sovereignty. Therefore, I decided to pursue the analysis with the help of a set of guiding questions that I want to present in this chapter. Within the analysis, these questions are considered to offer some guidance when reading through the material. They are not to be understood as a strict manual that is followed rigorously: many documents do not provide answers to every single question; others answer some questions rather implicitly. Still, the set of questions helps in structuring a focused analysis. Further, they ensure a certain degree of comparability when analysing the two cases. The questions themselves are based on the theoretical discussion from Chapter 2 (see also the brief comments right next to the questions below). While theoretical concepts such as ‘high sovereignty’ and ‘late sovereignty’ were useful in developing these questions, they did not culminate in pre-given categories given from the outset of this analysis. This, again, is due to the consideration that completely new constructions of sovereignty could emerge in the debates around an ambitious project such as PESCO, which I am not aware of beforehand.

| Guiding questions | Theoretical considerations (for more details, see Chapter 2) |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what context does the claim emerge? How is authority represented in that context? | <p>As sovereignty is understood as a <i>'discursive claim to authority'</i> in this thesis, I want to draw attention to the context. Moreover, I want to look for indications that point to a specific understanding of <i>'authority'</i> as this might vary (see Malmvig 2006).</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who is the claimant to sovereignty? Or, who is said to be sovereign? | <p>In modernity, the state is the most important claimant to sovereignty. However, other claimants to sovereignty are conceivable, e.g. the EU (N. Walker 2006; Mac Amhlaigh 2013).</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the claim exclusive or can sovereignty be shared? | <p>While there are absolutist claims to sovereignty, claims to sovereignty might also overlap (Walker 2006: 23).</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does the claim cover, i.e. where are the boundaries? What is inside/outside the realm of sovereignty? | <p>A claim to authority always entails a specific realm. A prominent role is played by the territorial border within the literature (e.g. Jones/Johnson 2006). However, it is argued that so-called <i>'late'</i> claims to authority are based on functional borders (N. Walker 2006).</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the claim legitimised? | <p>Sovereignty (in contrast to power) needs some kind of consent (Biersteker 1999: 29). In general, however, and to reiterate from 2.1.1, legitimacy does not have an essentialist meaning. Weber (1995), for example, points to different sources of authority over time.</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What references are made to identity? | <p>Sovereignty, as a claim to authority, always creates an ‘inner’ and ‘outer realm’. Thus, it is intertwined with identity: constructions of sovereignty contribute to ideas about the community and its constructed and relational identity (Campbell 1998: 9; Sarooshi 2004: 1117-8).</p> <p>Within my analysis, I want to focus on articulations regarding the Self (including the relation to a ‘European identity’, Wæver 2005: 38) as well as relations to other identities that are manifested in proposed differences (Campbell 1998: 77-8). In this way, specific conceptions of the state (as a ‘lens of identity’ [Wæver 2001: 25]) might be reproduced. At the same time, I allow for other constructions of identity.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What actions are suggested? | <p>This might be insightful as I expect politicians to construct sovereignty in a way that is coherent with their suggested actions.</p> |

Following these guiding questions, I want to observe constructions of sovereignty within “the field of discursivity” (Laclau/Mouffe 2014: 323), i.e. recurring combinations of answers. At the same time, it is possible to identify competing constructions of sovereignty within a national arena due to the contested nature of the concept.

3.4 Reflection and limitations

As I previously pointed out, the individual researcher cannot escape the discursive environment (Keller 2011: 65). Based on this assumption, I want to mention that the analysis within this thesis is certainly influenced by the fact that I am a student socialised in Germany. For example, I might overlook some deeper meaning of specific *French* terms – even if the documents are translated correctly on a purely linguistic level.¹⁵ Perhaps this also has the effect that certain French articulations strike me more than some German ones, to which I am more accustomed.

Furthermore, as a student of political science, I have internalised some conceptions, e.g. the notion of the nation state. While I purposefully approach the material with guiding questions that are not meant to predetermine the answers, I probably cannot eliminate the chance of overlooking some aspects. Besides, I am of course prone to easily see certain aspects within the material that are based on the reviewed literature (which is of Western origin and coming from the field of political science).

In this context, I also want to point out that the choice of the analysed documents might constrain the constructions of sovereignty. Due to pragmatic considerations, I had to restrict the material to the documents listed in 3.2. Hence, I do not stumble across articulations or struggles that might be put forward in documents published by think tanks or material from the field of popular culture. Within the official political discourse examined in this thesis, politicians gain their authority based on their “right and ability to exercise power” (Hansen 2006: 49). Therefore, genres (understood as different kinds of texts, e.g. policy speech, travel writing, journalistic reportage etc. [ibid.]) that attain their authority from different sources function according to different rules and might produce other constructions of sovereignty than the ones I find within official political discourse.

The final limitation that I want to mention is my focus on the national spheres of France and Germany. Hence, I inevitably emphasise the national contexts due to the conceptual separation of the two spheres. This obviously has its benefits because I am able to consider national specificities within this thesis. Other research projects that focus on transnational spheres, in contrast, are prone not to pay sufficient attention to the national context. However, of course, our world today is quite connected, and thus,

¹⁵ For transparency reasons (and to enable the reader to draw own conclusions), I provide the original quotation in the footnotes. Within the body text, however, I decided to translate them into English in order to ensure readability throughout this thesis.

it is probably illusive to assume that national discourses are entirely separable. Arguably, political debate can go beyond the EU member states' national spheres, for example, on social media (Hänska/Bauchowitz 2019). Considering these aspects in depth would, however, go beyond the scope of this paper.

In spite of these limitations, this thesis can shed light on different constructions of sovereignty in France and Germany in the discussion around PESCO. Through the empirical analysis, I want to be able to discuss the concept of sovereignty in a way that does not downplay the actual complexity of the concept in the field. At the same time, I want to reveal how powerful the contestations over sovereignty are and how dominant constructions influence integration efforts. The comparison between France and Germany aims to illuminate differences that will certainly play a role in the future development of PESCO – and European integration in more general.

4. Analysis: Sovereignty as a discursive struggle

4.1 Setting the scene

European integration in the field of security and defence has always been a tough nut to crack. Even though there have been significant steps of integration in other policy fields, true common security and defence policy is not yet a reality. While the ESDP, later the CSDP, is the foundation for cooperation in terms of military means, real integration in this field has not been achieved. According to some observers, however, “after years of soul-searching on defence” (de France et al. 2017: 2), the EU has at least undertaken efforts to crack the nut in recent years. In 2016, after almost two years of drafting (Tocci 2017a: 29), the then High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, presented a renewed version of the EU's strategy. The EUGS aims to set out the Union's long-term goals and priorities. When reading the strategy, it becomes apparent that it is informed by a range of perceived issues, such as Brexit or an assertive Russia. Accordingly, one of the first sentences emphasises: “Our Union is under threat” (European Union 2016: 13). Overall, the EUGS calls for an increased focus on cooperation in the field of security and defence. In its last section, “From Vision to Action” (European Union 2016: 44), the strategy stresses how the EU needs to strengthen its hard power. In order to improve military capabilities, the strategy postulates that “Member States will need to move towards

defence cooperation as the norm. The voluntary approach to defence cooperation must translate into real commitment” (European Union 2016: 45). Embedded within these overarching strategic considerations, discussions about PESCO began to blossom again (as I mentioned in the introduction, PESCO has already been legally established in the Lisbon Treaty). Thus, the publication of the EUGS constitutes the beginning of my empirical analysis. Of course, there might have been non-public discussions about PESCO before. Publicly, however, the renewed discussion around PESCO only emerged in the member states after June 2016 to my knowledge. A few months after the publication of the EUGS, the then defence ministers of France and Germany, Jean-Yves Le Drian and von der Leyen, advocated for the establishment of PESCO (Kornelius 2016). Finally, in December 2017, the Council adopted the project. The core of PESCO consists of 20 binding commitments in five different areas. In sum, these commitments entail: “increase defence budgets, cooperating on joint defence capabilities projects, improving deployability of multinational formations, filling capability gaps and using the European Defence Agency for capability development” (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2020). Besides PESCO, projects such as the MPCC and CARD aim to improve cooperation between member states, too (Kempin 2020: 990). While my remarks so far indeed sound like a “defense honeymoon” (Major 2017), the fate and nature of security and defence integration are quite open. This is especially true for PESCO. Examples of the project’s ongoing development are the launch of 13 additional projects at the end of 2019 (Council of the EU 2019)¹⁶ and the option for third-state participation in PESCO projects that was only established under the German Council Presidency in November 2020 (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2020). Hence, the fate and future institutional design of PESCO is in no way predetermined.

To avoid any confusion, I want to reiterate that, at this stage, PESCO does in no way represent a fully integrated defence force: the strategic developments of PESCO are decided by the Council of the European Union, i.e. on an intergovernmental level. The various projects themselves are also not managed on a supranational level but on behalf of the individual member states. Nevertheless, as I stated earlier, the member states have increased their cooperation on a European level and legally bound themselves to certain obligations regarding security and defence, which is a novelty within EU integration.

¹⁶ Hence, in total, 46 projects are currently undertaken within PESCO (PESCO 2021).

While developments such as the election of US President Trump or Brexit, which are frequently highlighted in publications (e.g. Kempin 2020: 987-8; Ling 2020; Lippert et al. 2019: 6), have probably served as *discursive* accelerators for PESCO, I argue that the design and future development of PESCO also depend on “the elephant in the room” (de France et al. 2017: 3): sovereignty. As I have elaborated on in the above, the French and German constructions are of particular importance in this context as both countries are key players in the European integration process – including, of course, the field of security and defence. In the following analysis, I will, therefore, shed some light on the discursive struggles around sovereignty in both countries.

Within my analysis, the respective chapters on France (4.1) and Germany (4.2) begin with a brief overview of the more general stances towards European integration in the past as well as relevant key political developments in the countries. Then I will record the constructions of sovereignty that I found in my empirical analysis. Subsequently, I elaborate on the dominant constructions within each country before I discuss how these constructions reflect specific national narratives and what these discursive patterns imply. Finally, in 4.3, I compare the two cases and reflect on the political weight of sovereignty discourses across the cases.

4.2 France

4.2.1 Introductory remarks

Looking back at the past, the French position regarding integration in the field of security and defence has not been entirely uncontested. A good example of this is the so-called Pleven-Plan from 1950, which envisaged a fully integrated defence policy. Although proposed by a French politician, the then Prime Minister René Pleven, it ultimately failed in France itself. The National Assembly opposed the plan – one of the overarching arguments concerned the fear of losing sovereignty (Howorth 2017: 18; Schlag 2016: 129, 134). This, however, certainly does *not* mean that France is and has been a general opponent of a more integrated security and defence policy within the EU.

At this point, I briefly want to recall some of the relevant national specificities that are emphasised in the literature. As I have already elaborated on in 2.2.2, French policy arguably is about a powerful state. The French Revolution of 1789 is said to be the major event that shaped the country’s political culture and arguably still does so today

(Holm 2009: 5; Kempin 2017: 261). As I described in more detail above, political universalism and French exceptionalism are argued to be key building blocks within French policy. Within the Fifth Republic, all Presidents arguably aspired to the “spirit of Gaullism” (Holm 2009: 14), which envisaged a strong role for France. After the rejection of the Pleven-Plan, the French governments traditionally supported further cooperation within the field of security and defence. Arguably, in French discourse, the EU has been portrayed as a “power multiplier” (Rayroux 2016: 233) for the country. Thus, France welcomed the ESDP (later: CSDP) as a project outside NATO (Schlag 2016: 156).¹⁷ Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that on a more general level, integration was not always unanimously welcomed within the French political and public discourses. At the latest during the 90s – the time of the Maastricht Treaty – it became evident that a number of diverse soft or hard Eurosceptic parties or movements emerged in France (Ivaldi 2018).

Looking at the last presidencies, Chirac and Sarkozy were moving between a ‘Europe of the states’ and a ‘state-like Europe’ (Holm 2009: 25)¹⁸. This can probably also be said to be true for Hollande. While some of the most recent steps taken in the field of security and defence (e.g. PESCO), were initiated at the end of Hollande’s presidency, quite a few observers of the political sphere attested him to have no real vision for Europe (e.g. Grillmayer 2017: 212; Ricard 2017). Since only a few months of his presidency fall into the timespan of my analysis, this thesis is more focused on the following presidency of Macron.

In 2017, the election campaigns crystallised more and more into a battle between Macron, considered an outsider initially with his movement *La République en Marche* (REM), and Marine Le Pen, candidate of the then called *Front National* (FN). Already during his election campaign, Macron presented himself as a convinced supporter of the EU and full of visions for the future of the Union. With regard to the EU, one can certainly speak of an election between two extremes: between the pro-European Macron and the anti-European Le Pen. While it does not surprise that Le Pen and her right-wing party emphasised ‘national sovereignty’ in their campaign, Macron decided to

¹⁷ France left NATO in 1966. Under President Sarkozy, in 2009, France re-entered NATO’s military structure (Holm 2009: 25-8).

¹⁸ The desire for a strong role for France united the two. In achieving this goal, however, they oscillated between the emphasis on ‘national sovereignty’ (and thus, a focus on intergovernmental cooperation but not supranational integration) and the opposite: European integration as a mean to secure a strong position for France.

make use of the term ‘sovereignty’ as well – until today, quite some time after his election, he uses the term very frequently. Sovereignty, it became clear then at the latest, is surrounded by discursive struggles. Thus, in the following, I will present the constructions of sovereignty that I identified in the debates around PESCO within the empirical analysis.

Before I present them, however, I want to add a brief explanation regarding the heavy focus on the French President that is apparent in this introductory section as well as in the actual analysis. This is mainly due to the strong role of the President within the Fifth Republic in France. Foreign and security policy lies within the so-called ‘*domaine réservé*’ of the President. This is especially true for European policy as international treaties are negotiated and ratified by the President (Conseil Constitutionnel 2015: Art. 52). Overall, the President determines the direction and foci concerning European policy. Naturally, then, the President has considerable discursive power when it comes to foreign and security policy. The parliament, the ‘*Assemblée Nationale*’, in contrast, is relatively weak compared to other democracies (Stahl 2009: 170-1). Thus, the material from these debates is not very extensive as the opposition’s role is traditionally quite limited. Besides, Macron’s party holds a large majority¹⁹ in the French parliament that is also reflected in a more limited role for oppositional politicians. At this point, however, I want to reiterate that “discursive positions” (Diez 2014: 321) can transcend party alignment. This is especially true in the French context, which is characterised by a relatively unstable party landscape (Schild 2017: 201).

4.2.2 Constructions of sovereignty

In the following, I will elaborate mainly on two French constructions of sovereignty that I identified within the analysis. As I aim to present these constructions as clearly as possible, it is almost unavoidable that the individual constructions are presented in a somewhat ideal-typical way. Nonetheless, I found that the discourses were well distinguishable since the discursive entrepreneurs’ political language appeared quite consistent within the analysed period of time. In the next sections, I will begin by mostly describing the constructions of sovereignty. Following this, in 4.1.3, I will then discuss them and elaborate on the power of these discourses.

¹⁹ Until May 2020, REM even had an absolute majority in the National Assembly (Lemarié/Faye 2020).

Enlarging French sovereignty

The commitment to Europe could hardly have been clearer. On the evening of 7 May 2017, Macron made his first appearance as the newly elected French President in front of the crowd gathered near the Louvre in the heart of Paris. Heading towards the stage, the orchestra did not play the French anthem; no, on the way to the state, the orchestra played the European anthem, based on ‘Ode to Joy’ composed by Ludwig van Beethoven. When Sarkozy won the election a few years earlier, Mireille Mathieu sang the French national anthem. After Hollande’s victory in 2012, Edith Piaf’s ‘La Vie En Rose’ was played. Macron, in contrast, opted for the European anthem – thus doing the same as the socialist Mitterrand, a fierce advocate of European integration, did after his victory in 1981 (Wiegel 2018: 177-8). Since the failed constitutional referendum in 2005 (the majority of French voters rejected the adoption of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe [Ministère de l’Intérieur 2005]), French Presidents had avoided such a strong endorsement of Europe. As sitting President, Macron continues to promote the European project. Already during his inauguration speech, he claimed that Europe²⁰ is the instrument of French sovereignty (Macron 2017a). This might seem surprising because the concept of sovereignty is often associated with Eurosceptic representatives (I will return to this in more detail in 4.1.2.2). Macron, however, aims to present his understanding of sovereignty – including the label ‘*European sovereignty*’ that he uses in various speeches later on. Consequently, in a speech in front of French Ambassadors, the President claimed that France needs “to *revisit* the terms of sovereignty, including European sovereignty” (Macron 2017b, own transl., my emph.)²¹. How is sovereignty constructed then? I will elaborate on this in the following. Just a brief remark at the beginning: for the sake of clarity, I divided this specific construction of sovereignty into ‘*European sovereignty*’ and ‘*national sovereignty*’. They are, however, intertwined constructions (and thus, constitute a *single* discourse of sovereignty) as will become clearer later on.

²⁰ As Holm (2009: 5) notes, French politicians often do not distinguish between ‘Europe’ and the ‘European Union’. Due to the context, I assume that within the material analysed here, the politicians mostly refer to the EU in the sense of an institutional framework.

²¹ In the body text, I translated all the original French and German quotations myself. In the following, I will therefore omit the addition “own transl.”. As I mentioned in 3.4, I will provide the original quotations in the footnotes throughout the analysis. Here, the original quotation says: « revisiter les termes de la souveraineté y compris européenne » (ibid.).

European sovereignty

When French politicians publicly engage with PESCO, the first thing that stands out is that it is very often embedded in a larger debate about the future of the EU. This is certainly not least due to the President, who is known for his grand visions for Europe.²² Within these speeches, Macron presents himself as a strong supporter of PESCO. According to his reasoning, PESCO is needed as a building block for a crucial purpose: to achieve the aforementioned ‘European sovereignty’. Unlike some pro-Europeans who prefer to avoid the term ‘sovereignty’, Macron has made the term a kind of rallying cry of his presidency. Especially in his so-called Sorbonne speech, he focuses on ‘European sovereignty’ (Macron 2017c). The famous speech in front of French students in Paris’ oldest university is, without a doubt, a core document that is referred to very often throughout the discourse. Within this speech, he elaborates on his demand to build ‘European sovereignty’. To realise ‘European sovereignty’, Macron calls for six keys to sovereignty. The first key he speaks of is most relevant for this thesis: it is security. This includes the field of defence:

“In the field of defence, our objective must be Europe's capacity for autonomous action, as a complement to NATO. The foundations for this autonomy have been laid, with historic progress in recent months. Last June, we laid the foundations for this Europe of Defence; the Permanent Structured Cooperation, enabling us to make greater commitments, to move forward together and to coordinate better [...]” (Macron 2017c).²³

In order to better understand the construction of ‘European sovereignty’ in the Sorbonne speech and the debate around PESCO, I will loosely draw on the guiding research questions from Chapter 3.3. Hence, I first draw attention to the context and its embedded claims to authority.

²² At this point I want to make a brief methodological remark: As PESCO is mentioned in *all* the documents that are examined in the following (see Chapter 3.2), I assume that sovereignty is constructed with PESCO in mind – even if it is not always explicitly referred to throughout the material. Nevertheless, I have paid particular attention to those sections of speeches etc. that deal specifically with European defence cooperation.

²³ « En matière de défense, notre objectif doit être la capacité d'action autonome de l'Europe, en complément de l'OTAN. Le socle de cette autonomie a été posé, avec des progrès historiques intervenus ces derniers mois. En juin dernier, nous avons posé les bases de cette Europe de la Défense ; une coopération structurée permanente, permettant de prendre des engagements accrus, d'avancer ensemble et de mieux nous coordonner [...] » (ibid.).

The demand for European sovereignty fundamentally arises in an environment presented to be challenging for Europe in various speeches and documents. These apparent threats and risks surrounding Europe are vividly illustrated in the graphic below, published by the French Ministry of Defence in preparation for the Foreign Affairs Council in order to discuss defence cooperation within the EU, including PESCO (Ministère des Armées 2018).

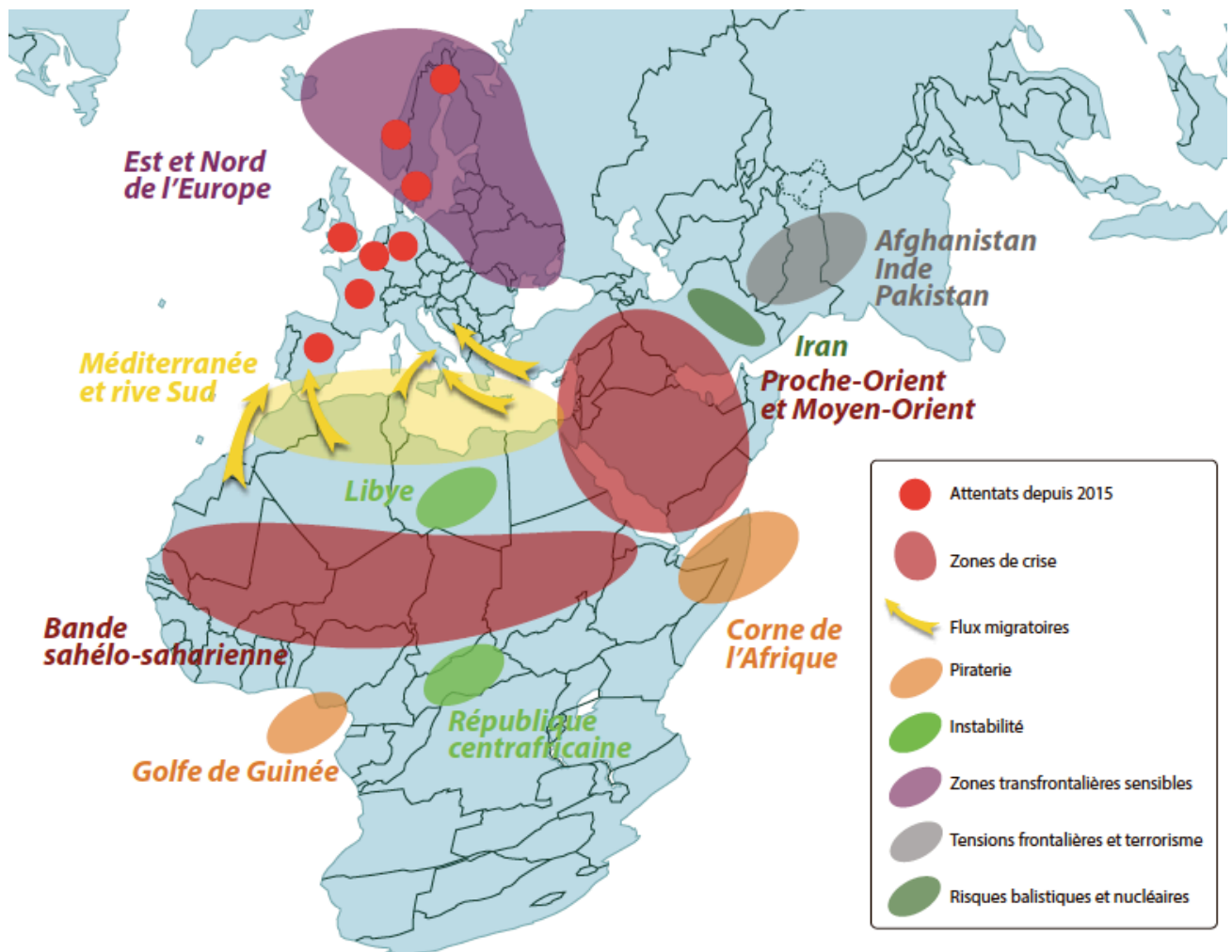


Figure 1: « Pourquoi une Europe de la défense ? Les menaces et les risques » (Ministère des Armées 2018: 3)

The map's legend constructs a Europe surrounded by various problems. To some extent, it reminds of the EUGS 2016 that portrayed the EU as a “Union under threat” (European Union 2016: 7). Besides geopolitical risks, the French discursive entrepreneurs in the broader debate on PESCO and on enhanced cooperation in the field of defence also repeatedly point to diffuse dangers such as globalisation in general, cybercrime or climate change (Assemblée Nationale 2017c; Macron 2017c; Parly 2018). From this multitude of threats and risks results the consequence that these challenges

can only be coped with together, i.e. in close European cooperation. For example, this is stressed in the strategic review on security and defence, published by the French government (République Française 2017). Hence, the desire for a ‘European sovereignty’ arises within this evoked context.

Sovereignty, as a claim to authority, is thus constructed in a two-fold manner: on the one hand, it is about being able to protect the EU and being free of external influence. In this context, Macron and his government call for a ‘Europe de la defense’ of which PESCO is a core component (Ministère des Armées 2018: 6). This resembles some kind of an inner, protective dimension of sovereignty. On the other hand, sovereignty is seen as the ability to act in an independent manner on the global scene. This aspect of sovereignty is especially vivid in the French debate. The French government repetitively emphasises that the EU must be a power that can stand its ground in the comparison of great powers. In terms of military capabilities, this also means being (more) independent from the US. This has already become clear in the quote I gave earlier from the Sorbonne speech and is repeatedly stressed by the French government (e.g. Le Grand Continent 2020; Macron 2018). In an interview with the French magazine *Le Point*, Macron states he wants Europe to be as powerful as the US or China (Dupont et al. 2017). In a similar vein, the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs (and former Defence Minister) Le Drian iterates that “the aim is to build a Europe capable of acting as a global power” (Assemblée Nationale 2017c).²⁴ The ambition to be a global (military) power is also illustrated in another graph published by the government, which compares 2017 defence spending between the EU, the US, China and Russia.

²⁴ « l’objectif est de construire une Europe capable d’agir comme une puissance globale » (ibid.)

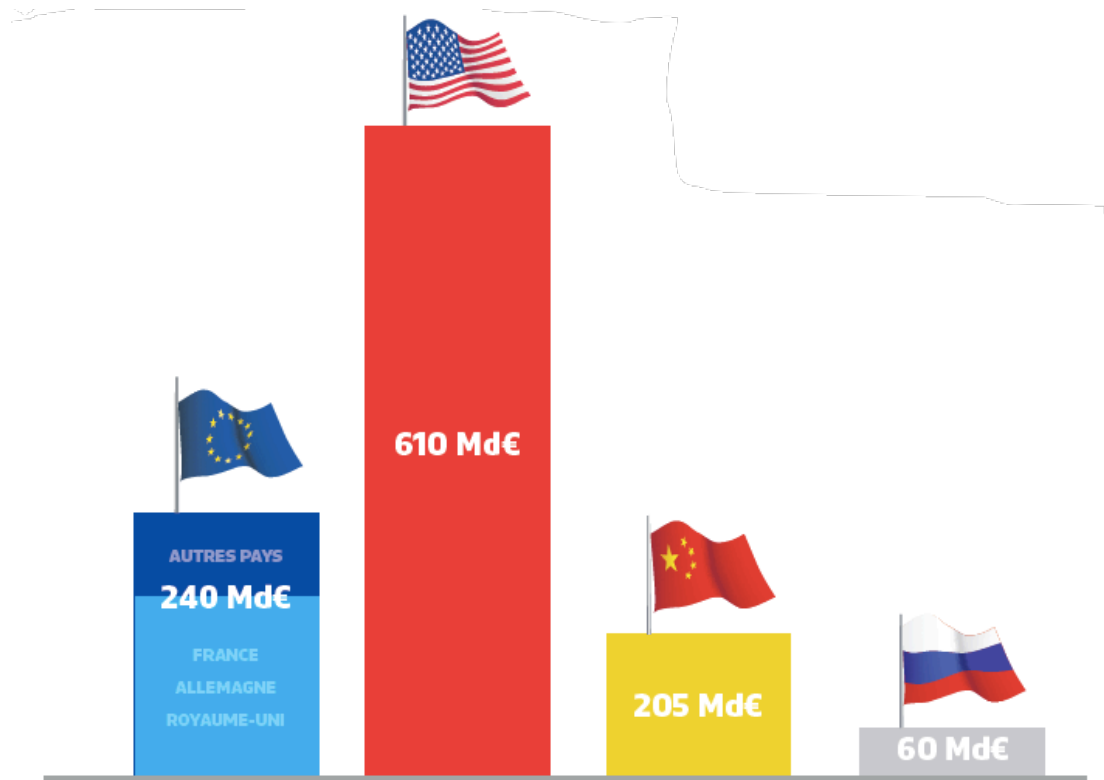


Figure 2: « L'effort de défense des Européens » (Ministère des Armées 2018: 5)

The message being conveyed by the defence spending figures in this graph is that the European states can only be strong if they work together. Only in this way can they influence world events and shape global developments, and, hence, be 'sovereign' (Assemblée Nationale 2017c). PESCO, in this context, is a means to increasingly take Europe's fate into one's own (autonomous) hands (Assemblée National 2017c; Parly 2018).

When exploring constructions of sovereignty, the question of boundaries is particularly interesting. The very concept of 'Europe de la Défense' already indicates a bounded community. Looking closer, it becomes clear that sovereignty is constructed in territorial terms. Only such a border enables politicians to speak of the previously mentioned inner realm that needs to be protected and the world stage on which governments can negotiate and interact with other powers. Macron, as well as his predecessor Hollande, are very clear on the 'inner' and 'outer' sphere on several occasions. Both Presidents demand to protect European external borders. Macron, for example, urges strict border security through a European border police force (Macron 2017c; see also Hollande 2016).

Such an understanding of ‘European sovereignty’ is, to a large extent, legitimised through its outcome. Accordingly, Macron argues: “What our citizens expect of Europe is to protect them from the course of the world events, that is the legitimacy of this Leviathan” (Macron 2017b)²⁵. Similarly, in the aforementioned interview with the French magazine *Le Point*, he points to the Leviathan and its function to protect the citizens (Dupont et al. 2017). PESCO, accordingly, contributes to such protection as it makes sure that military capabilities are better coordinated and deployable (Assemblée Nationale 2018b). It is remarkable that Macron associates the EU with the Leviathan, which is one of the most famous doctrines of *state* formation. In order to rescue themselves, Hobbes’s idea stipulates, people are willing to submit themselves to a sovereign, i.e. the state. Only the sovereign state, in the end, can bring about peaceful existence. Within the Leviathan, Hobbes is open about the precise form of the state. While he himself holds sympathies for monarchy, he also considers a democratic or aristocratic polity (Hobbes 1996: 129-138). In this respect, it seems consistent that Macron and his government are further promoting a (stronger) democratic structure for the EU on various occasions. For example, Macron advocates for pan-EU parliament lists (Assemblée Nationale 2017c).

Related to legitimacy is another aspect of ‘European sovereignty’ that I want to highlight: identity. As I expected, is the construction of a ‘European sovereignty’ clearly associated with a European identity. Europe, according to Macron, is a “cohesive geographic space in terms of values” (Le Grand Continent 2020)²⁶ that needs to be defended. The French government especially builds this on its difference from the US, but also from China. In a long and exclusive interview given by the French President to the magazine *Le Grand Continent*, which focuses on political debates in Europe, Macron says:

“[...] I am sure of one thing: we are not the United States of America. They are our historical allies, we cherish freedom, we cherish human rights like them, we have deep attachments to them, but we have, for example, a preference for equality that we do not have in the United States of America. Our values are not quite the same. Indeed, we have an attachment to social democracy, apart from equality, our reactions are not the same. I also believe that culture is more important here, much

²⁵ « Ce que nos concitoyens attendent de l’Europe, c’est qu’elle les protège, du cours du monde, c’est cela la légitimité du Léviathan » (ibid.)

²⁶ « un espace géographique cohérent en termes de valeurs » (ibid.)

more so. Finally, we project ourselves into another imaginary world, which is connected to Africa, the Near and Middle East” (Le Grand Continent 2020)²⁷.

In addition to these European values, which differ from the US, the President also refers to the Enlightenment as well as the social market economy (Macron 2017b; Macron 2017c). With specific regard to the military sphere, however, differences within the Union are observed. That is why French representatives call for creating a common strategic culture (Macron 2017c; Assemblée Nationale 2017a; Assemblée Nationale 2017b). While drawing on a constructed common identity (and its further strengthening regarding the strategic cultures), Macron stresses that Europe is not a homogenous entity (Macron 2017c). Each member state – within the national context, of course, especially France – is to be protected as an individual entity within a European polity. This already points to the fact that the construction of ‘European sovereignty’ by the French government is only to be understood together with an understanding of ‘national’ or ‘French sovereignty’. Thus, before I draw more interpretative conclusions from the above mentioned various elements of a ‘European sovereignty’, I will now focus on the corresponding notion of *national* sovereignty.

National Sovereignty

The French government’s demand for European sovereignty, which is prominent in the debates around PESCO, in no way implies that France, as a nation state, should or will lose sovereignty. On the contrary: the government always points out that ‘European sovereignty’ does not constitute a loss of sovereignty for France. Defence minister Parly, for example, emphasises that cooperation in the field of defence does not mean to give up national sovereignty (Assemblée Nationale 2018c). The above presented ‘European sovereignty’ only enables France to be heard on the world stage: “[it] allows France to make its voice heard, to advocate for its interests on the international scene, the kind that allows it to influence the course of the world rather than being its hostage” (Macron 2017b).²⁸

²⁷ « [...] je suis sûr d’une chose : nous ne sommes pas les États-Unis d’Amérique. Ce sont nos alliés historiques, nous chérissons comme eux la liberté, les droits de l’homme, nous avons des attachements profonds, mais nous avons par exemple une préférence pour l’égalité qu’il n’y a pas aux États-Unis Amérique. Nos valeurs ne sont pas tout à fait les mêmes. Nous avons en effet un attachement à la démocratie sociale, à plus d’égalité, nos réactions ne sont pas les mêmes. Je crois également que la culture est plus importante chez nous, beaucoup plus. Enfin, nous nous projetons dans un autre imaginaire, qui est connecté à l’Afrique, au Proche et au Moyen-Orient » (ibid.).

²⁸ « [Elle] permet de faire entendre à la France sa voix, de faire valoir ses intérêts sur la scène internationale, celle qui permet d’influencer le cours du monde au lieu d’en être l’otage » (ibid.).

‘French sovereignty’ in turn is tied to the state of France. Thus, in debates around PESCO, it is implied that ‘French sovereignty’ refers to French citizens as well as the French territorial borders (e.g. République Française 2017: 6). Probably due to its largely unquestioned meaning of sovereignty that is tied to the nation state among the population, French sovereignty is not as extensively dealt with regarding its elements compared to ‘European sovereignty’. Nevertheless, Macron presents himself as a strong supporter of the principle of Westphalian sovereignty. In the interview with *Le Grand Continent*, he states: “I have not found a better system than Westphalian sovereignty. If it is the idea of saying that a people within a nation decides to choose its leaders and have people to vote for its laws” (Le Grand Continent 2020).²⁹ A few sentences later, he even stresses: “So I am deeply committed to that [Westphalian sovereignty]. Deeply” (ibid.).³⁰ Thus, the French government repeatedly emphasises sovereignty that is tied to the French nation state in the debates on PESCO and hence, discursively (re-)produces it.

Within the debate, specific elements of French identity are stressed. Especially, French universalism and its specific, global responsibility play an important role (Assemblée Nationale 2019a; Hollande 2016). In the articulations, certain narratives of the French nation state are upheld. Macron, as well as Hollande, refer to the history of France and its exceptional role. Following from this, he argues, “A France that would close down [...] such a France would not be in line with our history and would have no future” (Hollande 2016³¹; similarly see Macron 2017b). Accordingly, the French identity obliges French foreign policy to influence history. At the same time, France is portrayed as embedded and belonging to Europe (ibid.).

How exactly are these two aspects (what I called ‘European sovereignty’ and ‘French sovereignty’), which are portrayed as two sides of the same coin, made to fit together? Sovereignty is constructed in the sense that ‘French sovereignty’ can only be enlarged thanks to ‘European sovereignty’ that must be achieved. If France’s sovereignty is to be fully realised, the construction goes, the country must play a strong role at the European level. This is what is demanded throughout the debate around PESCO. Ultimately, French sovereignty, which is tied to the nation state, is in no way discursively

²⁹ « je n’ai pas trouvé de meilleur système pour ma part que la souveraineté westphalienne. Si c’est l’idée de dire qu’un peuple au sein d’une nation décide de choisir ses dirigeants et d’avoir des gens pour voter ses lois » (ibid.).

³⁰ « Donc je suis profondément attaché à cela [Souveraineté westphalienne]. Profondément. » (ibid.)

³¹ « Une France qui se fermerait [...] cette France-là ne serait pas conforme à notre Histoire et n’aurait pas d’avenir » (ibid.)

weakened by more defence cooperation. On the contrary, European cooperation (here in the form of PESCO) is instead a matter of enlarging the role of the French state. In the end, the guardians of ‘European sovereignty’ are the member states (Assemblée Nationale 2018a). A core part of this is played by the French identity that is evoked throughout the debates. In this respect, it is not surprising that Macron, while emphasising his European ambitions, demands that France must become a great power again (Dupont et al. 2017). The understanding of sovereignty put forward here thus attempts to reconcile the national and European level. The demands are discursively aligned and united in the call for sovereignty.

Accordingly, the discursive entrepreneurs associated with this discourse, which is dominant in the debate around PESCO, strongly support European defence cooperation as it is understood as a means to enlarge *French* defence and security capabilities on the European level. Before I want to discuss this discourse in more detail and refer it back to the literature, however, I want to describe the competing discourse that I identified within the material.

The French people’s sovereignty

While the French President and his supporters invoke the term ‘sovereignty’ a lot and thus, lively contribute to the “sovereignty games”³² (Gammeltoft-Hansen/Adler-Nissen 2008: 7), the invocation of ‘sovereignty’ is traditionally associated with soft or hard Eurosceptic parties and movements. As I mentioned before, these became particularly salient after the Maastricht Treaty and are, until today, part of the French political debates. The field of these parties and movements, though, is a broad and heterogeneous one, ranging from the extreme right to the radical left. Within the actual debate around PESCO in the National Assembly, I could mainly identify one specific construction of sovereignty upheld by leftist politicians. Compared to the previous construction of sovereignty (represented by the President, among others), the construction presented here is built out of fewer contributions. Still, however, it combines specific elements of sovereignty in a cohesive way which are mainly advocated by politicians of the radical left movement *La France Insoumise* (FI) and, rudimentarily in the analysed material, by the *Parti Communiste Français* (PCF).

³² I employ the term “sovereignty games” following the understanding of Rebekka Adler-Nissen and Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen (2008: 7). They use the term to capture that ‘sovereignty’ is played out in (discursive) practices. Thus, to be clear, the term does not refer to rational choice theory.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who (ultimately unsuccessfully) ran for President in 2017, founded the FI in 2016 as a political, populist³³ movement in contrast to the established parties. In the elections for the French Parliament, his left party reached 17 seats. Like the PCF, the party holds a Eurosceptic stance: FI demands an extensive reform of the treaties that include ending the EU's austerity policy. If this fails, the party considers a withdrawal of France from the EU (La France Insoumise 2019: 8).

While the previous claims to sovereignty by Macron and his supporters portrayed the context of the EU as threatened due to various problems such as geopolitical dangers, the politicians of the FI and the PCF focus on the neo-liberal orientation of the European Union (Assemblée Nationale 2017c). In that regard, the discursive entrepreneurs demand French protectionism to regain 'sovereignty' (e.g. Assemblée Nationale 2017c). Hence, the EU itself poses a problem as it is portrayed as a cruel neoliberal entity.

How do the respective politicians then understand sovereignty in the debate around PESCO? In a session of the National Assembly in October 2017, shortly after Macron's Sorbonne speech and a few weeks before the Council finally agreed on PESCO, the parliamentarians debate about the future of Europe, including the future of European defence. At the beginning of his speech in Parliament, Mélenchon unmistakably rejects Macron's construction of sovereignty: "For the first time, a President of the French Republic is defining the sovereignty of France as being conditioned by that of Europe. [...] I completely disagree with this formula" (Assemblée Nationale 2017c).³⁴

Mélanchon then proposes a definition of sovereignty that reminds of the classic Westphalian definition. He states: "Sovereignty is the undivided authority of a group over the population composing it and the territory it occupies. And the legitimacy of this undivided authority, that is democracy" (Assemblée Nationale 2017c).³⁵ This definition of sovereignty which Mélenchon puts forward, sounds like an excerpt from a handbook in political science. Sovereignty, according to this definition, is an inherent *absolute* claim. It follows that only the state (comprising a specific territory and a population)

³³ While observers have called the movement populist, this is something that the movement around Mélenchon also subscribes to. Inspired by the philosopher Mouffe, the movement aims to mobilise the 'ordinary' people and install a participatory democracy (Hamburger 2018).

³⁴ « Pour la première fois, un président de la République française définit la souveraineté de la France comme étant conditionnée par celle de l'Europe. [...] Je suis en désaccord complet avec cette formule » (ibid.).

³⁵ « La souveraineté, c'est l'autorité sans partage d'un groupe sur la population qui le compose et le territoire qu'il occupe. Et la légitimité de cette autorité sans partage, c'est la démocratie » (ibid.).

can be sovereign. In the French context, this is the *French* state (Assemblée Nationale 2017c). Here, more defence integration seems absurd. Mélenchon's party colleague Bastien Lachaud comments on the approach of the government concerning cooperation in the field of security and defence as follows: "It's time to change the reading grid. When we talk about defence, we are not talking about conquering market share, but about preserving the integrity of the Republic's territory, the security of the French people and its sovereignty" (Assemblée Nationale 2019b)³⁶. Here, he seems to be referring to the economic advantages that PESCO is often said to offer, for example, for the French armaments industry. Lachaud, however, follows the dictum of *not* putting French sovereignty above economic factors. After all, France's sovereignty, in contrast to the previously mentioned construction of a 'European sovereignty', cannot be extended via the European level.

Heavily stressed within this construction of sovereignty is the role of the people. This might not surprise considering that FI is deliberately built after the image of a populist party, i.e. against the 'political elites' and for the 'ordinary people'. Hence, the will of the people must not be watered-down within a European cooperative foreign policy. Thus, the discursive entrepreneurs call for a restoration of popular sovereignty (Assemblée Nationale 2017c). The people, according to this construction that ties sovereignty to the French state, are the French people. Following this argumentation, there is not a European people, and, thus, there cannot be a European polity. Lachaud clearly states: "Emmanuel Macron and his ministers want a 'real European army'. This is absurd and dangerous! The army only exists in the service of a sovereign people. But there is not one, but many European peoples" (Assemblée Nationale 2019b).³⁷ Accordingly, the French people, as the legitimate holders of state sovereignty, differ from other peoples. What references do the discursive entrepreneurs draw to identity in this regard? First of all, the politicians stress that France is different from the other European states, which Mélenchon even describes as "competitors" (Assemblée Nationale 2017c).³⁸ Especially salient is also the difference drawn to the US, who are portrayed as an imperialist power (Assemblée Nationale 2019b). Traits of Gaullism are certainly evident here. These are also visible regarding the role of the French nation state. The

³⁶ « Il est temps de changer de grille de lecture. Quand on parle de défense, on ne parle pas de conquérir des parts de marché, mais de préserver l'intégrité du territoire de la République, la sécurité du peuple français et sa souveraineté » (ibid.).

³⁷ « Pendant ce temps, Emmanuel Macron et ses ministres veulent « une véritable armée européenne ». C'est absurde et dangereux ! L'armée n'existe qu'au service d'un peuple souverain. Or il n'y a pas un mais des peuples européens » (ibid.).

³⁸ « concurrents » (ibid.)

French nation, following the discursive entrepreneurs, is a political nation with an assigned leading role, i.e. it must be instrumental in the future of the European continent and the EU (Assemblée Nationale 2017c). Accordingly, the Communist André Chassaigne demands: “We must ensure that it is no longer a simple golden constellation of a flag that now blends in with the folds of the flag of each of the peoples that make it up!” (Assemblée Nationale 2017c)³⁹ Consequently, the idea of France constituting an ordinary, unexceptional part of the EU is utterly undesirable. In this context, Lachaud also cautions against an imbalance with Germany, which must not be allowed to arise (Assemblée Nationale 2017c).

Looking at the construction of the French nation, it is portrayed as being universalist (Assemblée Nationale 2017c), i.e. based on French citizenship and a secular understanding. It is, contrary to the previous construction, not additionally connected to a European identity. Hence, Mélenchon states: “France is neither Western nor European, France is universalist because it is present on all five continents. France is French-speaking, and French will soon be the third most spoken language in the world” (Assemblée Nationale 2017c).⁴⁰ Thus, while the French nation is based on citizenship (and not on ethnicity, for example), it still entails exclusionary tendencies that are illustrated by the reference to the French language (for the problems associated with such a concept of nation see Diez 1996: 262; Silverman 2002: 19-27).

From all these remarks, it follows that enhanced cooperation in the field of defence at the European level is seen as a threat to the sovereignty of France. Arguably, the proposal of a European army is anti-democratic, since the legitimacy of such a key issue, which concerns the sovereignty of France, can only be legitimized by the French people (Assemblée Nationale 2019b). Consequently, defence cannot be a cooperative project. In this vein, the communist politician Jean-Paul Lecoq says:

“I am surprised that there is still talk of an integrated European army rather than cooperation between the armies of the states [...]. When they are given the opportunity to speak, the peoples of Europe are likely to respond ‘sovereignty of the States’ and ‘Europe of the States’, because that is what they have wanted from the outset” (Assemblée Nationale 2018a)⁴¹.

³⁹ « Faisons en sorte qu’elle ne soit plus une simple constellation d’or sur un drapeau qui se mêle désormais aux plis des drapeaux de chacun des peuples qui la constituent ! » (ibid.).

⁴⁰ « La France n’est ni occidentale ni européenne, la France est universaliste parce qu’elle est présente sur les cinq continents. La France est francophone, et le français sera d’ici peu la troisième langue la plus parlée dans le monde » (ibid.).

⁴¹ « je m’étonne que l’on persiste à évoquer une armée européenne intégrée plutôt qu’une coopération entre les armées des États [...]. Quand l’occasion leur sera donnée de s’exprimer, les peuples d’Europe

Thus, loose cooperation is conceivable – however, as has become clear, a project like PESCO with its binding commitments that is often framed as a first step towards a European army is rejected from the outset. In this construction of sovereignty, special emphasis is placed on the will of the people, which is the only way to legitimise the authority of the state. This is certainly characteristic of a movement like FI that claims to stand up for the people. Within the construction of sovereignty and the corresponding French state that is the rightful and only claimant of sovereignty (legitimised by the French people), a certain patriotism becomes obvious. In that regard, while France must make independent decisions on questions of defence, it is also expected to play a leading role on the global stage.

There is certainly some overlap between this construction of sovereignty, represented by the leftist parties in the National Assembly, with parties from the political right. For example, the republican deputy Pierre-Henri Dumont also speaks of a watering down of sovereignty that suggests a similar understanding of sovereignty (Assemblée Nationale 2017c). However, I could not identify further defining elements of sovereignty as the statements concerning PESCO were too limited. One party, the far-right FN (today: Rassemblement National), is especially known for stressing ‘French sovereignty’ and demanding an exit from the EU (Rassemblement National 2021). Within the debates around PESCO, however, FN does not play a role in the National Assembly.⁴² While I thus cannot say much about differences or overlapping elements of a sovereignty construction with the just explained constructions of sovereignty from my own empirical research, the general stance of the party regarding European integration is clear-cut. Thus, it might be interesting to look for a construction of sovereignty of the party regarding other issues and its similarities and/or differences to the construction by Mélenchon and co. The literature that focuses on the extreme right party at least strongly suggests that while politicians of the FN also frequently evoke state sovereignty and the will of the people, they especially refer to ‘nativism’. Thus, only an ethnically defined nation can serve as ‘the French people’ that ultimately legitimises authority (e.g.

risquent de vous répondre « souveraineté des États » et « Europe des États » car, depuis le début, c’est ce qu’ils souhaitent » (ibid.).

⁴² While Le Pen, leader of the FN, was able to reach the run-off in the presidential elections, there are only eight FN-deputies in the French parliament. The party, for example, is much more visible in the European Parliament (Europäisches Parlament 2019).

Borriello/Brack 2019; Ivaldi 2018). Hence, while I could only identify a clear construction of sovereignty by the populist left, I do *not* want to imply that every (soft or hard) Eurosceptic construction of sovereignty is the same in its different dimensions.

4.2.3 Discussion of the French discourses

Following the presentation of the two constructions of sovereignty that I could identify in the examined material, I now wish to discuss them on a more general level and point to the power of these discourses. To begin with, I want to stress that the first construction that connects the national level with the European level is the dominant one in the here examined official political discourse. I have already indicated that the construction is proposed in much of the material and by many discursive entrepreneurs: beside the President and his government, the politicians belonging to the REM overwhelmingly support such an understanding. It is moreover worth pointing out that a remarkable number of politicians across party and faction lines are subscribing to this discourse on sovereignty such as politicians from the *Union des Démocrates et Indépendants* (UDI) or the *Mouvement Démocrate* (MoDem) (Assemblée Nationale 2017c).

This, however, does by no means suggest that there is no real struggle around the meaning of sovereignty: my analysis demonstrates that the debates around PESCO are “sovereignty games” (Gammeltoft-Hansen/Adler-Nissen 2008: 7). Hence, an invocation of sovereignty is not at all restricted to Eurosceptic parties (and, as I indicated, even their constructions are not necessarily homogenous). The pro-European elite in France heavily engages in these struggles, which becomes obvious in the (ultimately successful) attempt to establish the term ‘European sovereignty’ alongside the usual ‘French’ or ‘national sovereignty’. While the terminology might have occurred in some circles before, Macron managed to establish the terminology in the parliamentary debates. Furthermore, the contentiousness is apparent in the attempts to associate positively connoted terms such as ‘autonomous action’, ‘protection’ and ‘power’⁴³ with the use of ‘European sovereignty’.

In regard to the EU and European politics in general, such constructions of sovereignty carry considerable political weight. The first construction of sovereignty that I identified as being the dominant one stresses (state) sovereignty on the national, French level

⁴³ I consider the term “power” to be positively associated in France. Arguably, this might be different in Germany.

as well as on the European level. While Macron and his supporters are firmly in favour of more European cooperation in the field of defence, they certainly do not give up on the idea of sovereignty as closely tied to the state. In their construction, French sovereignty is heavily based on the French nation state that entails a distinguished French nation and a clear territorial border. Therefore, the discussion about stronger cooperation in the field of defence is in no way accompanied by a more restrained emphasis on French statehood and the sovereignty tied to it. In fact, as Werner and De Wilde (2001: 284) note, claims to authority are rather reinforced in times when sovereignty might be questioned.

Consequently, the call for a 'European sovereignty' instead aims at enlarging French influence and power that might otherwise diminish due to globalisation. Thus, 'European sovereignty' does in no way discursively pave the way for a dissolution of the French nation state and its sovereignty, or its subordination to Europe. While it might be somewhat predictable that the President and his government within a national discourse draw on elements of French statehood, it is remarkable how much the construction of European sovereignty is based on these core elements, too, such as a strong external border and a common demarcated identity (albeit one that is partially yet to be created in terms of a military culture). Following the proposed construction of sovereignty, French sovereignty and European sovereignty do not contradict each other.

Thus, while PESCO might transcend national go-it-alone and at least prevent exclusionary tendencies between the participating states, 'European sovereignty' always refers back to the aim of improving *French* influence on the global stage. Accordingly, for example, Macron emphasises that the French army will remain the leading European army (Dupont et al. 2017). Therefore, the narrative mentioned before in which cooperation in the field of defence is mainly seen as an extension of France's power seems to persist in its main features in the debates around PESCO. When Macron demands more cooperation and, in the long-term, a (so far only *very* vaguely proposed) European army, the discourse here suggests that France must play an important role in it and is not lost as a 'state nation'.

In light of these findings, it becomes apparent that certain specific national narratives, which I elaborated on in 2.2.2, continue to be upheld. Especially salient within the analysed material is the prominent place that France should play on the global stage. The dominant construction of sovereignty tied to ideas of statehood that is located on the

European as well on the national level reminds of the discourse from the 1980s, the time of President Mitterrand (Holm 2009: 18). Mitterrand was also in favour of a state-like Europe that is able to protect the French citizens without dissolving the French nation state. Thus, today, one could even argue that the dominant construction of sovereignty resembles what Holm described as the idea of a ‘doubled France’ (Holm 1997: 130). Holm’s analysis of the role of the French President might be somewhat exaggerated, nevertheless, it reflects some of the traits found within the analysis: “The strong French President rules from a place where he is in control of French-European state affairs, from a place where defence identity [...], values of civilization and the recognition of status emanate” (Holm 2009: 18).

While my analysis cannot explain specific institutional details of PESCO, the dominant discourse around sovereignty suggests that future cooperation is made valuable and necessary. Increased defence integration, however, is only to be envisaged if France continues to play a key role within such a project and presupposes a more aligned strategic culture that is apparently missing for a state-like Europe.

The dominant construction of sovereignty that strongly supports defence cooperation to enlarge French influence, however, is not unchallenged. As I elaborated on in 4.1.2.2, FI and PCF politicians understand sovereignty in terms of a zero-sum game. While the suggested actions are radically different from the proposed visions by the government, sovereignty is also based on the ‘state nation’ and the special role of France – this, again, certainly reflects the potency of the construction of an ‘exceptional’ role of the French ‘state nation’. Sovereignty, in contrast to the dominant discourse, however, cannot be expanded to the European level. According to the respective discursive entrepreneurs, the sovereignty of France is only legitimised by the French people. Because there are no European people (constituted in this discourse), there cannot be a legitimate, strongly integrated European defence. Hence, only a ‘Europe of the states’ is discursively desirable. The future development of defence cooperation is thus certainly also dependent on the strength of this understanding. While this construction suggests quite different actions to the previous one, both conceptualisations share an understanding that heavily relies on ideas around French statehood.

The strong ties to statehood are especially salient due to the topic under discussion: defence. At least the *official* French political discourse does not seem to envisage a form of sovereignty that does not rely on the French ‘state nation’ (and a European polity heavily framed in terms of statehood). While the nation states within Europe are

not questioned, some ambivalences within the discourse point to a more inclusive and bottom-up approach. This is evident, for example, when the Foreign Minister Le Drian points to the need for democratic conventions in the broader debate around European defence (Assemblée Nationale 2017c). In this context, for instance, Valérie Gomez-Bas-sac, REM member and responsible for these democratic conventions within France, proposes decentralised instruments in Europe in order to hear all citizens. While these democratic conventions are proposed for each individual nation state, she does, for example, not indicate an exclusivist identity. Rather, she points to common interests such as “music, reading, sports” (Assemblée Nationale 2017c)⁴⁴. Further, she mentions the student mobility programme Erasmus (that is, however, inherently restricted to the European sphere) as a role model for achieving openness towards others. While these few remarks do not constitute a coherently different construction of sovereignty, they nevertheless indicate at least moments of reflexivity and a counter-model to the top-down nation state. However, within the here examined debates around PESCO, these rudiments are not deepened.

4.3 Germany

4.3.1 Introductory remarks

The other key player in the process of European integration that I examine alongside France is Germany. In general, past German governments have certainly pursued a policy favourable of European institutional integration, including the field of security and defence policy. The strong orientation towards the process of European integration can certainly not be fully understood without considering the atrocities of the Nazi era. After the end of the Second World War, the European Community served West Germany to facilitate reconciliation (especially with France) and peace between the European states (Böttger/Jopp 2021: 18; Bulmer 2020: 150). At this point, I want to recall Waever's (2005: 46-8; 2001: 35) argument that German foreign policy debates are heavily guided by the specific fear of the ‘power state’. Thus, the argument goes, European integration constitutes a way to contain the danger of an excessive nation state.

⁴⁴ « la musique, la lecture, le sport »(ibid.)

To illustrate this positive stance on integration, for example, the German government welcomed the initial plan to build an integrated EDC – although the rearmament of Germany demanded by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer was highly controversial. By means of the EDC, Adenauer was also trying to obtain a change in the occupation status at the time (Schlag 2016: 130-3). Hence, for the West-German government, European integration constituted a path to become a ‘sovereign’ state (ibid.: 133; Böttger/Jopp 2021: 18).

After the failure of the EDC and West Germany’s entry into NATO, the European Community played only a minor role in German security and defence policy. German reunification in 1990 and the end of the East-West conflict eventually led to a different environment in terms of security but did not bring a radical break in German foreign policy (Schlag 2016: 171-2). The following renewed efforts to cooperate more closely on a European level within the ESDP received significant German government support. Here, the country particularly pushed for *civilian* components (Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet 2021: 427). Germany’s cautious attitude towards actual *military* operations – especially in comparison to France – is repeatedly emphasised in the literature with reference to the concept of a ‘civilian power’ (Maull 1990; Roos 2017: 7) – even though there are recurrent debates about this alleged role (see, for example, the debate on the ‘normalisation’ of German foreign policy [e.g. Roos 2010: 24-47]).

In the context of the renewed discussions on more cooperation in the field of defence that arose in 2016, the German government, together with the French government, promoted PESCO (albeit in a more inclusive way; France initially envisioned a smaller group with stronger military capabilities [Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet 2021: 431]). While the vast majority of the political elite in Germany can still be described as pro-integrationist (although, as in France, the so-called end of the ‘permissive consensus’ did also make its way to Germany in the 1990s [Niedermayer 2021: 198]), a hard Eurosceptic party, the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD), entered the German Bundestag for the first time after the 2017 federal elections. Though the AfD emerged as an arguably soft Eurosceptic party, its 2016 programme even considered an exit from the EU (Niedermayer 2021: 202-3). Thus, while Angela Merkel (*Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands* [CDU]) remained chancellor after the 2017 elections, the German Bundestag distribution changed considerably.

Due to the decision process within the Council of the European Union (that ultimately invoked PESCO), the German executive plays a strong role in the development of European cooperation in the field of defence. However, it is important to note that the deployment of German soldiers in military ‘out-of-area’ missions generally need the approval of the German Bundestag (BVerfGE 1990). Overall, the role of the German Bundestag regarding European policy debates is comparatively large – this is reflected in the high number of debates on such issues that take place. European policy is discussed in various formats in the Bundestag, for example, in plenary debates concerned with European policy, in the so-called ‘Aktuelle Stunde’ and Major and Minor Interpellations tabled by members of the Bundestag and their parties (Abels 2021: 135). In the following, I take a closer look at the discussions around PESCO and present the constructions of sovereignty that I identified in the case of Germany.

4.3.2 Constructions of sovereignty

Within the German debates, I could identify two constructions of sovereignty that I will elaborate on in the following. Similar to the previous chapter on France, I will discuss them on a more general level in 4.2.3.

German sovereignty embedded in a European polity

At the very beginning of my period of investigation, in the summer of 2016, the German government, led by Chancellor Merkel, presented an updated White Paper (the last White Paper was published in 2006), which focuses particularly on the principal orientation of German security policy. In this central strategic document, the German government emphasises the need to strengthen European approaches and points to the possibility of PESCO. The government clearly demonstrates an unchanged commitment to the EU, but what is new is the particular reference to the framework of PESCO and, thus, the renewed willingness to enter into legally binding commitments in the field of defence and the associated long-term goal of a defence union (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2016: 73). Today, a large part of the German political elite is still committed to such a project. As I will show in the following, however, this does certainly not mean that ‘German state sovereignty’ is discursively abandoned in the debates around the framework; however, I will point to some ambivalences within the discourse which can be read as an understanding of sovereignty that is detached (albeit very cautiously) from the unified territorial nation state.

The constructions of sovereignty around the debate on German foreign policy regarding the EU draw on a context characterised by various issues. The above mentioned White Paper, for example, points to lines of division within Europe and calls for upholding solidarity between the member states themselves (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2016: 33). Furthermore, the strategic document points to challenges outside of the Union, such as an assertive Russia in Ukraine (ibid.: 31-2). In a similar vein, manifold crises and issues are expressed in numerous documents examined: from geopolitical changes, terrorism to cyber-attacks (e.g. Deutscher Bundestag 2019d: 1; Kramp-Karrenbauer 2020: 2-5). Accordingly, German Defence Minister Kramp-Karrenbauer (CDU) states in her second keynote speech at the Bundeswehr University in Hamburg: “Our security, our prosperity, our peaceful living together are under very real threat” (Kramp-Karrenbauer 2020: 5).⁴⁵ On other occasions, the government also explicitly refers to the EUGS (Deutscher Bundestag 2019e: 5), which paints a similarly bleak picture of the overall political situation (European Union: 2016). It is in this oft-invoked context that the proposed understandings of ‘sovereignty’ are embedded in.

National sovereignty

As I have already indicated, German national sovereignty is (re)produced in the German debate on PESCO: the specific cooperation in the field of defence appears to make politicians underline Germany’s authority. For example, the federal government expresses that “national sovereignty remains unaffected by this [PESCO]” (Deutscher Bundestag 2017a: 14)⁴⁶ or that PESCO “is an unchanged manifestation of nation state sovereignty” (Deutscher Bundestag 2019c: 3).⁴⁷ Looking at this specific construction of sovereignty, it is clear that sovereignty is closely tied to the German nation state. Accordingly, the German state is responsible for key decisions regarding the protection of the *German* territory as well as the protection of the *German* citizens (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2016: 24). The authority that the German state has is then fundamentally based on its assigned core task: in her speech at the Bundeswehr University, Kramp-Karrenbauer emphasises that security is the “absolute core task of the state” (Kramp-Karrenbauer 2020: 12).⁴⁸ This quite traditional, statist conception of

⁴⁵ „Unsere Sicherheit, unser Wohlstand, unser friedliches Zusammenleben werden ganz real bedroht“ (ibid.).

⁴⁶ „nationale Souveränität bleibt davon [PESCO] unberührt“ (ibid.)

⁴⁷ „unverändert Ausweis nationalstaatlicher Souveränität“ (ibid.)

⁴⁸ „absolute Kernaufgabe des Staates“ (ibid.)

the state and its legitimacy is further enriched with references to the German people. Thus, in regard to defence, the discursive entrepreneurs point to the so-called ‘Parlamentsvorbehalt’ (the prerogative of the parliament regarding substantial questions such as military interventions [BVerfGE 1990]) (Deutscher Bundestag 2019c: 3; Deutscher Bundestag 2017b: 262, 269) and the budgetary authority of the German Bundestag in the matter of security and defence (Deutscher Bundestag 2017a: 14). Overall, then, the dominant narrative reads as the German state (legitimised by the parliament) continues to decide on key matters such as funding and the actual deployment of soldiers in armed operations. How is the German identity then constructed in this understanding of sovereignty? In general, Germany is considered to be a part of the ‘West’; defence minister Kramp-Karrenbauer (2020: 4), for example, describes Germany as part of the Western community – including the US that is considered to be the most important ally in terms of defence (ibid.: 8) – characterised by “open society, democracy and the rule of law” (ibid.: 4)⁴⁹ and as distinguished from authoritarian regimes. Moreover, the German identity specifically is very much defined by “lessons from our history” (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2016: 22)⁵⁰. This affects the military sphere: the government states, for example, that the Bundeswehr’s Self is based (besides, e.g. on the geopolitical situation) on history (Deutscher Bundestag 2019f: 14). In response to a Minor Interpellation asking how to define Germany’s military culture, the government thus also expressed an uneasiness about the notion of a military element within the German identity construction. The exact answer reads as follows: “The Federal Government does not use the term ‘military culture of the Federal Republic of Germany’” (Deutscher Bundestag 2019e: 4).⁵¹ Instead, German identity is heavily constructed with reference to the EU. The White Paper, for example, states that “German identity [is] inextricably linked to the European [identity]” (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2016: 22).⁵² Further, it goes: “The European Union is a constitutive part of our country’s identity” (ibid.: 70). Therefore, the German identity clearly reflects lessons of the Second World War in providing a construction of identity that presents the country as an actor that is very much a proponent of multilateralism. This certainly resonates with the fear of the ‘power state’ that Wæver emphasises so strongly (Wæver 2005: 47). In accordance with that, Germany strongly

⁴⁹ „offenen Gesellschaft, der Demokratie und der Rechtsstaatlichkeit“ (ibid.)

⁵⁰ „Lehren aus unserer Geschichte“ (ibid.)

⁵¹ „Die Bundesregierung nutzt den Begriff „militärische Kultur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland nicht“ (ibid.).

⁵² „die deutsche Identität [ist] untrennbar verbunden mit der europäischen“ (ibid.)

agrees on having interdependencies in the field of defence (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2016: 23). This includes not only the EU but also the close alliance with the US in NATO that is heavily stressed within the debate around PESCO as well (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2016: 23; Kramp-Karrenbauer 2020: 8; von der Leyen 2018). Overall, a certain degree of dependence on, and embeddedness in, the EU (and with the US in NATO) is thus consistent (in fact: constitutive) with this specific understanding of German national sovereignty. Consistently, the 2016 White Paper states that Germany can only protect its territory and its society in alliance with others (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2016: 25).

The ambiguous demand for European sovereignty

Until recently, the German political elite only emphasises the just presented understanding of ‘national sovereignty’ in the debate around PESCO, i.e. sovereignty that is closely tied to the German state, which, in turn, is deeply linked to the multilateral framework of the EU. In contrast to France, however, German politicians seem to be hesitant to use ‘sovereignty’ with specific regard to the EU. For the first two years in my examined material, for example, they do not employ the term ‘European sovereignty’ (I will return to this observation in 4.2.3). However, this seems to be in the process of changing and more recently German politicians start using ‘sovereignty’ in relation to the EU. Defence minister Kramp-Karrenbauer, for example, refers to Macron’s “sovereignty of Europe” (Deutscher Bundestag 2020b: 24469)⁵³. Similarly, Merkel states in a parliamentary debate that Europe needs to develop *sovereignty* in all kinds of areas (Deutscher Bundestag 2019g: 13619). Looking at these articulations, it is apparent that the discursive entrepreneurs talk about the capacity to act. This is emphasised in parliamentary motions (e.g. Deutscher Bundestag 2019b: 1), in interpellations (e.g. Deutscher Bundestag 2018a: 2), as well as in speeches by the former (von der Leyen 2018) and current defence minister (Kramp-Karrenbauer 2020: 9). For example, the Greens state that Europe must respond to issues of the future in a self-determined way (Deutscher Bundestag 2018a: 1). Only in this way, the understanding of sovereignty implies, the EU is able to be a big player in world politics (Deutscher Bundestag 2019b: 1), i.e. having “a common and strong voice on the world stage” (ibid.:

⁵³ „Souveränität Europas“ (ibid.)

2)⁵⁴. It is apparent that the German political elite calls for a *unified* voice that represents the common European interests of a European polity. The retreat into the national, accordingly, is not sufficient to react to a globalised world (Deutscher Bundestag 2019d: 1). While such a construction appears in the wider debate around PESCO, European sovereignty is demanded in all kinds of policy fields, such as digital technology or food. Kramp-Karrenbauer states accordingly: “The question of European sovereignty entails certainly not only foreign and security policy, but many other aspects as well” (Deutscher Bundestag 2020b: 24469).⁵⁵ The EU, i.e. the entity that is supposed to become more sovereign, is constructed as a community of 500 million citizens (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2016: 72) that are living in a demarcated territory represented by the reference to the external borders (ibid.: 71). This territoriality further becomes apparent in the debate around PESCO, for example, when Kramp-Karrenbauer (2020: 3) refers to the ‘European neighbourhood’ (and thus implies, that there is a territorially defined Self). The inner realm, i.e. the identity of the EU, is constructed as a “peaceful power” (Deutscher Bundestag 2019b: 1)⁵⁶ that is “[...] free, secure, tolerant and abides by human rights” (von der Leyen 2018)⁵⁷. Similarly, various politicians point to European values and principles (e.g. Deutscher Bundestag 2017b: 259). These values are also emphasised with reference to the ‘Copenhagen Criteria’ – the principles that all states wishing to join the EU must fulfil (Bundesministerium der Verteidigung 2016: 70). Such a value-based European identity is differentiated from others. Merkel, for example, stresses the difference to China (Deutscher Bundestag 2019g: 13618); Kramp-Karrenbauer (2020: 4-5) more generally differentiates the EU from authoritarian systems. Regarding the US, however, Merkel clearly states that they are similar in terms of their values (Deutscher Bundestag 2019g: 13618). With respect to security and defence, the EU is apparently characterised by a specific European approach that not only focuses on military means but also on civilian and diplomatic options. The European strategic approach, however, needs to be further strengthened (von der Leyen 2018). The here described demand for ‘European sovereignty’ that emerged very slowly in the German discourse after quite some time is mostly legitimised through its output as the EU is constructed to provide peace and stability. Fur-

⁵⁴ „eine gemeinsame und starke Stimme der EU auf der Weltbühne“ (ibid.)

⁵⁵ „Die Frage der Souveränität Europas umfasst sicherlich nicht nur die Außen- und die Verteidigungspolitik, sondern auch viele andere Aspekte wie die Klimapolitik oder andere Punkte mehr“ (ibid.).

⁵⁶ „Friedensmacht“ (ibid.)

⁵⁷ „frei, sicher, tolerant und der Rechtsstaatlichkeit verpflichtet“ (ibid.)

thermore, von der Leyen (2018) points to a democratic legitimacy that seems necessary. At this point, she does, however, not demand legitimacy provided by the European parliament but demands a more efficient inclusion of the *national* parliaments. Hence, she still points to the German ‘Parlamentsvorbehalt’. I read this as a cautious disruption of a unified, territorially delimited sovereignty. I find it very interesting to observe that the demand for ‘European sovereignty’ within the debate on PESCO is always accompanied by an emphasis on the *German* Bundestag. Accordingly, the consent of the German parliament is supposed to persist within the construction of a ‘European sovereignty’ – especially within the perspective of particularly volatile questions of armed operations. This is particularly noteworthy given that this demand is very dominant and is emphasised across party lines (e.g. Deutscher Bundestag 2019c: 3; Deutscher Bundestag 2017b: 262, 269). Thus, while the emerging call for ‘European sovereignty’ is seemingly tied to a European polity that draws on characteristics of statehood (such as a European people and external borders), it is always linked back to the German state in terms of legitimacy regarding particularly substantial questions. In my view, this can be interpreted as a form of sovereignty that (albeit cautiously) breaks a conception of sovereignty that is necessarily tied to one single, unified state. Overall, this does, of course, not mean that this constitutes a complete transformation of the traditional notion of state sovereignty. As I elaborated on, German state sovereignty is still very much alive. The cautious demand for European sovereignty in the field of security and defence, however, can be read as a form of sovereignty that is not simply tied to a European state-like polity, but as a more complex construction (albeit, as I mentioned before, the construct still draws on elements of statehood). Overall, the German elite is joining the (initially French) demand for ‘European sovereignty’; however, in a form that can be viewed tentatively as a form of ‘late sovereignty’. Before I elaborate on this in 4.2.3, I will shed light on another construction of sovereignty that I could identify within the German debate.

Nation state sovereignty without the European Union

As the previous section made clear, a large part of Germany’s political elite follows an understanding of sovereignty that does embrace and emphasise nation state sovereignty but is simultaneously interwoven with the European project as the German identity is so closely tied to Europe. I will discuss in more detail in what ways this reflects a specific German conception of the state in 4.2.3.

With the AfD's entry into the Bundestag in 2017, however, a party that constructs a distinct form of sovereignty came to the fore as the largest opposition party. In the debate on CSDP and, more specifically, on PESCO, politicians of the AfD put a construction of sovereignty forward that is nationalistic in character.

Previously, I mentioned that a construction of sovereignty could transcend party alignment. Within the German debate, I showed this in the dominant understanding of sovereignty presented above. Its individual elements, which are used in a coherent form, are shared by multiple representatives of different parties. The construction presented here, in contrast, is only represented in this clarity by the AfD in the material I examined. The AfD – as I expected from a populist party – actively participates in the “sovereignty games” (Gammeltoft-Hansen/Adler-Nissen 2008: 7). In the here examined material, this manifests itself in debate contributions in parliament as well as in parliamentary motions and interpellations.

According to the AfD, the EU is in crisis. In a Minor Interpellation posed by the party on the “Vision of a ‘European army’/‘Army of the Europeans’” (Deutscher Bundestag 2018b: 1)⁵⁸, the authors speak of “the EU in a state of faltering” (ibid.)⁵⁹. In a motion, the party especially stresses that *citizens' trust* in the EU is in crisis (Deutscher Bundestag 2020a: 8). Against this background, the demand for restored ‘nation state sovereignty’ is emphasised (e.g. Deutscher Bundestag 2020a: 8; Deutscher Bundestag 2019a: 2).

The understanding of sovereignty becomes apparent when politicians claim that the nation state must regain the competencies that have already been handed over to the EU (Deutscher Bundestag 2020a: 2). Sovereignty – which is undoubtedly tied to the nation state – thus implies the final authority of the state, which cannot be shared. Numerous AfD politicians particularly emphasise the people as the basis of this sovereignty (e.g. Deutscher Bundestag 2020a: 2; Deutscher Bundestag 2018b: 2). Accordingly, they demand that people should be given (back) ‘power’ (Deutscher Bundestag 2020: 2). As PESCO is seen as a precursor to a European army, which, according to the AfD, aims to abolish the parliamentary prerogative, it is considered profoundly undemocratic (Deutscher Bundestag 2018b: 1-2). The EU, in that regard, cannot be legitimate as there is and will be no European people (Deutscher Bundestag 2020a: 2).

⁵⁸ „Vision ‚Europa Armee’/‚Armee der Europäer“ (ibid.)

⁵⁹ „der ins Wanken geratenen EU“ (ibid.)

Instead, only the German nation state (legitimised by the German people) should have authority as there is a German people with an associated German identity. In one motion within my examined material, for example, the party states: “Cultures, languages and national identities have emerged through centuries of historical development” (Deutscher Bundestag 2020a: 5)⁶⁰. What is particularly remarkable is that no reference is made to the EU or the European project in all the AfD articulations on identity that I examined.

In line with this construction of sovereignty, the party opposes the project of PESCO altogether as any competencies in the field of defence must remain within the authority of the nation state (Deutscher Bundestag 2020a: 6; Deutscher Bundestag 2019a: 4). Hence, the AfD demands the withdrawal of German membership from PESCO (Deutscher Bundestag 2017b: 261). Instead, according to the party, all aspects of foreign and security policy must be organised in a very loose confederation of states (Deutscher Bundestag 2020a: 6).

Overall, the discursive constructions put forward by the AfD challenges the previously presented German discourse on sovereignty. The European level is presented as a *threat* that aims to (progressively) take authority away from this German nation state. The proposed German nation state’s exclusivist construction of sovereignty is tellingly constituted in a statement by AfD politician Rüdiger Lucassen. Addressing the government, he states: “You want to establish joint decision-making processes at the European level and at the same time maintain the parliamentary prerogative. That is squaring the circle. You cannot do that” (Deutscher Bundestag 2017b: 260)⁶¹. This arguably demonstrates the extent to which politicians of the AfD subscribe to a thinking that ties sovereignty solely to the unified, territorial nation state, as other possibilities are made completely unthinkable.

⁶⁰ „Kulturen, Sprachen und nationale Identitäten sind durch Jahrhunderte dauernde, geschichtliche Entwicklungen entstanden“ (ibid.)

⁶¹ „Sie wollen gemeinsame Entscheidungsprozesse auf europäischer Ebene etablieren und gleichzeitig den nationalen Parlamentsvorbehalt erhalten. Das ist eine Quadratur des Kreises. Das geht nicht“ (ibid.).

4.3.3 Discussion of the German discourses

Within the German debate around PESCO, the discourse that embeds German state sovereignty within the European project is the dominant one: this is apparent within articulations by the German Chancellor, the former and current defence ministers, by politicians of the governing parties (CDU/CSU and *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* [SPD]) as well as by politicians of *Bündnis 90/Die Grünen* (Grüne) and the *Freie Demokratische Partei* (FDP). Although they stress certain elements to varying degrees (the Greens, for example, highlight the ‘civilian’ element of German identity to a larger extent than politicians from the other parties), they overall abide by the same discourse of sovereignty.

Looking at the overall German debate, the constructions of sovereignty in Germany reproduce German state sovereignty, i.e. sovereignty remains closely tied to the German state. Accordingly, authority is tied to the territorial state and mainly legitimised through references to the political inclusion of the German people through parliament. What is particularly salient about the dominant construction of sovereignty, however, is that such a construction of sovereignty (that creates an ‘inside’ and ‘outside’) very much embeds the corresponding *German* identity within the EU. In this way, the exclusionary tendencies of the (German) nation state are at least mitigated – although, of course, this remains limited to the European space. The firm link to the EU and the European integration project generally arguably represents an unchanged commitment to escape the past – and thus, the ‘power state’. Accordingly, the associated discursive entrepreneurs generally support a project like PESCO that is in alliance with a construction of German sovereignty that is so closely tied to the EU. At this point, I want to add that the German push for an inclusive PESCO (in contrast to the French idea of a more ambitious, core group of a handful states) can be read as an attempt to strengthen the inner cohesion of the Union and thus, as a reflection of the idea of the EU as a peace project.

As I mentioned above, the term ‘European sovereignty’ only slowly made its way into the dominant German discourse. While some observers argue that ‘sovereignty’ is traditionally strongly used in terms of a particular legal conception in Germany (Lippert et al. 2019: 6), I would subscribe to the argument that this is because the term ‘European sovereignty’ that understands authority mainly in the sense of power and influence might sound odd in Germany due to historical reasons. Nevertheless, as I elaborated on before, German politicians are starting to use the term (albeit not as much as

many French discursive entrepreneurs), demanding a common foreign policy that is influential on the global stage. Thus, as I demonstrated before, ‘European sovereignty’ reminds of a ‘state-like’ European polity as it is supposed to speak with *one* voice. However, such a construction of ‘European sovereignty’ is characterised by ambivalences within the German discourse. While the French construction of a ‘European sovereignty’ discursively suggests a duplication (and hence magnification) of the French nation state’s sovereignty to the European level, this appears to be more complicated within the German discourse. As I elaborated on above, the discursive entrepreneurs heavily stress the continuing role of the parliamentary prerogative while speaking of ‘European sovereignty’ within the German debate. This can certainly be read as an expression of German uneasiness concerning military missions and an attempt to prevent hasty military interventions. Of course, one could also argue that this expresses a constraining form of German state sovereignty. While I believe these arguments are valid, I argued that the persistent emphasis on the parliamentary prerogative – while speaking of ‘European sovereignty’ – can be understood as an (albeit cautious) conception of sovereignty that is not only tied to one single territorial nation state. Thus, while it is demanded that the EU as a polity must gain more influence and speak with one single voice, the here attributed authority is legitimised with reference to the German parliament. This becomes evident, for example, in von der Leyen’s demand for strengthened cooperation between the European and the German parliament (von der Leyen 2018). At least in the here examined material, such an incorporation of national parliaments within a European polity seems not to be constructed as a transitional solution; the parliamentary prerogative is rather presented as a quality that should remain intact.

The interpretation of such a cautious adaption of sovereignty that is not only tied to one single territorial nation state echoes to some extent ideas of the conception of ‘late sovereignty’ (N. Walker 2006: 19-25) that I outlined in 2.1.2. In that sense, “[the language of late sovereignty] suggests a distinctive phase in the discursive career of the term” (N. Walker 2006: 19). While the states (in the here examined material: the German state) still make claims to territorial bounded and unified authority, another polity with authority (the EU) is constructed (that is, however, intertwined with national parliaments). While Walker focuses much on the functional (instead of comprehensive territorial) authority of the EU, I find that his ideas especially resonate within my examined material as the “continuing sovereignty of the [...] member states” (N. Walker

2006: 23-4) is not questioned, but the idea that authority can be designed in a more dispersed way. However, I want to reiterate that this does not suggest a giving up of German state sovereignty.

Overall, the dominant discourse around ‘sovereignty’ reflects German national specificities and generally welcomes integration within the field of security and defence in the EU. Discursively, however, the often invoked truly European army is not suggested here; rather, ‘European sovereignty’ and the demand for a common voice do indeed indicate the wish to strengthen the EU, but at the same time, refer to the inclusion of the national parliaments (instead of a pan-European legitimisation).

Within the German debate, the AfD challenges the dominant discourse, proposing a different construction that suggests fundamentally different actions, and draws heavily on the territorial, national state as the sole claimant of sovereignty and represents it as endangered by European integration. In this respect, the AfD seems to break with the German fear of the ‘power state’ and the concomitant commitment to the European project.

4.4 Comparing the cases and discussing implications

Having mainly discussed the respective discourses in France and Germany individually, I now wish to draw more comparative conclusions and point to some implications for European integration in general. To begin with, it is important to note that the concept of ‘sovereignty’ is not losing its significance in the discussion on further European cooperation. Instead, the “sovereignty games” (Adler-Nissen/Gammeltoft-Hansen 2008: 7) are very much alive, and the contestation of the concept is reflected in both cases.

As became clear in my analysis, the discourses in France and Germany construct sovereignty as closely tied to the respective nation states. These conceptions of nation state sovereignty reproduce certain historically grown national notions of statehood. Particularly evident from my analysis is the emphasis of the French discourse is the emphasis on France’s prominent role in the world – thus, the narrative attributed to French statehood, which researchers associated with the Copenhagen School have identified (e.g. Holm 1994, 2004), is clearly mirrored in the discussion on PESCO. I read the dominant German construction of state sovereignty, in contrast to the French, as reflecting the aim of presenting a somewhat “low political profile” (Wæver 2005: 52).

Overall, I believe that this underlines the continuing relevance of the discursively produced, national differences in European integration, here in the field of security and defence.

In general, both dominant discourses in France and Germany construct state sovereignty in a way that includes the European project in their overall understandings of sovereignty. The dominant German discourse, for example, strongly ties the assigned German identity to a European identity. The bond with the EU is also apparent within the dominant French discourse, as Europe is integrated into its national narrative. Here, the French pro-European elite heavily uses the term ‘European sovereignty’, which is very much tied to aspects of statehood, such as an external border and a (European) people. Such an idea of European sovereignty, as I elaborated on before, however, does in no way imply the dissolution, or watering down, of the French nation state; rather, European sovereignty can be read as a duplication and magnification of French sovereignty. This undoubtedly shows the continuing pertinence of the discursive narrative that surrounds the French state, which Holm (1997), among others, described more than two decades ago. In the German discourse, European cooperation is perceived to strengthen the role of the German state as well – although this is in no way as prominent as in France. As I elaborated on in the above, the German discourse also certainly does not imply the dissolution of German state sovereignty. However, it at least cautiously suggests that sovereignty can be organised in a more dispersed way. This means that a separate European sovereign authority is constructed, which is, at the same time, bound to democratic legitimisation via the *parlamentarischer Vorbehalt*. This differs to the way in which French state sovereignty is retained/not given up, as in the German discourse, different claims to authority coexist and are discursively compatible (part of what seems like an integrated and more diffused system of authorities), while in the French discourse, European sovereignty is merely an extension of French sovereignty (rather than a separate claim to authority as in the German discourse that suggests a form of sovereignty that can be read as a first, rudimentary form of ‘late sovereignty’ or ‘cooperative sovereignty’).

What do these insights mean for PESCO and the future of European integration? My findings suggest that the idea of a ‘truly European army’ is somewhat limited by these constructions of sovereignty. According to the French discourse, any institutional steps must at least ensure that *France* continues to play an influential role. It thus seems

hard to imagine an army that operates under a common European flag that is detached from the (French) 'state nation'. However, as long as the French state is in a position to exert influence – as in PESCO – the idea of further cooperation in the field of security and defence will arguably persist unabated. In general, the discursive entrepreneurs in *Germany* also welcome processes of European integration in the field of (military) defence. This arguably underlines the commitment to the European project and the idea of the EU as a safeguard and part of the pursuit of peace, which – following these discursive patterns – also includes greater cooperation in terms of military capabilities. However, this is not to say that the German discourse suggests an unrestricted 'transfer of sovereignty' to a supranational European level: While German state sovereignty referring to the German territory is at no point questioned, the cautious idea of 'European sovereignty' is indeed organised in a more dispersed way, but it still includes a link to the nation state via the *parlamentarischer Vorbehalt*.

A comparison of the German and French constructions of sovereignty also suggests a difference in the relationship to the US. The French construction of sovereignty (with its associated identity) is partly based on a differentiation from the US that is not found in the German construction of sovereignty. While I do not want to delve into this here, there are certainly tensions at play that will presumably continue to matter.

Besides the prominent discourses in France and Germany, I have also shed some light on alternative constructions in both countries. These are offered by populist parties that propose constructions of sovereignty that oppose (stronger) European cooperation in the field of defence altogether. Depending on whether these discourses will rise to (further) prominence in the coming months and years, this will certainly substantially constrain, possibly even dismantle, European integration processes in the field of defence.

Within both cases, as I elaborated on above, the *dominant* constructions of sovereignty incorporate European integration in the field of defence in one way or another. Thus, it can certainly be argued that the European project softens the boundaries between individual (European) nation states and their attached sovereignties. On the other hand, however, it is also important to reflect on the demand for a state-like 'European sovereignty' that is particularly (but not solely) stressed within the French discourse. The idea of establishing a state-like polity, first of all, is problematic in light of the 'postmodern promise' (Ruggie 1993) that the EU ostensibly seems to offer. The hope

for a less exclusionary, alternative construction of polity is also inherent in the concept of Manners' 'Normative Power Europe', which ultimately aims for a more post-sovereign world (Manners 2008: 60). My findings seem to suggest, however, that this promise takes a back seat in the French discourse.

This is not necessarily because enhanced military capabilities (as clearly envisaged in the framework of PESCO) are fundamentally opposed to the concept of a Normative Power Europe. According to several scholars, military means and normative power can go hand in hand (e.g. Björkdahl 2011; Manners 2006). Even if one follows this argument, the call for a state-like 'sovereign Europe' put forward within the examined material must be critically questioned. Regarding this call for a powerful European polity that can stand its ground vis-à-vis great powers, it seems imperative to recall Manner's statement that "we have built the EU precisely to escape great power mentality" (Manners 2006: 183). While it is not the intention of my paper to present any concrete proposals for the development of PESCO, I do wish to at least critically question the demand for a state-like 'European sovereignty', which is so prominent here.

5. Conclusion

The point of departure for this thesis was my curiosity about the concept of sovereignty and the question of what happens to this ascribed core concept of IR in the discussion on PESCO, which is often understood as a sort of precursor to a truly European army. I began by elaborating on the discursive nature of sovereignty (Biersteker/Weber 1996; Malmvig 2006; R. Walker 1993; C. Weber 1995; Werner/De Wilde 2001) and its role (and, in parts of the literature, sovereignty's apparent transformation [e.g. Bellamy 2006; Besson 2004; N. Walker 2006]) within the European integration process. This led me to focus on how sovereignty – understood as a *discursive claim to authority* that orders the world – is discursively practised in the debate around this institutional landmark of European defence cooperation. These reflections then brought me to the national (French and German) arenas where PESCO is much debated. In order to pay sufficient attention to the respective contexts in which the articulations on sovereignty are made, I introduced literature from researchers associated with the so-called Copenhagen School of integration studies that focuses on statehood within the national French and German realms (Holm 1997, 2004, 2009, 2013; Larsen 1997; Wæver 2001, 2005). In the following, I proposed my understanding of discourse and a framework

that intended to focus on claims of authority (articulated by “discursive entrepreneurs” [Diez et al. 2016: 26]) that either change or reproduce these national specificities. In this way, I allowed for perceiving nuances of sovereignty and, thus, differences between the countries. Moreover, sovereignty must not necessarily be tied to a unified territorial nation state. Methodologically, I decided to approach the discursive practices of sovereignty with the help of a set of guiding questions that did not predefine specific answers while allowing for reflecting some of the national specificities that I mapped within the literature.

In conclusion, I find that the concept of sovereignty closely tied to statehood is still very much alive within the debates on PESCO. Hence, the respective discursive entrepreneurs emphasise the nation state sovereignty of France and Germany. While doing so, both dominant discourses integrate the European project in their discourses. However, I could map differences within the respective countries. The dominant French discourse in the debate on the defence project can be understood as a doubling of France, which is mainly about a magnification of France’s state sovereignty. Within the dominant German discourse, such patterns are more difficult to see. While in the German discourse, the EU is to some extent constructed in terms of statehood as well, I have observed a delicate breaking of the concept of state sovereignty that can be read as a more dispersed system of authority (here I made the point that ideas like ‘late sovereignty’ [N. Walker 2006] can be useful analytical concepts). Moreover, I have also elaborated on two distinguishable constructions of sovereignty within both countries that construct sovereignty as solely tied to the respective, exclusionist nation state: here, the EU is rather constructed as an entity trying to overtake the rightful authority from the respective French and German state. Thus, I also want to point out here that more marginalised constructions are not automatically the normatively more desirable constructions (Diez 2014: 326) as is apparent in my analysis.

Overall, this thesis is certainly not an attempt to draw perpetual conclusions on the concept of sovereignty; instead, I have aimed to examine and reflect on the discursive practices of sovereignty. While I believe, it is fruitful to engage with the concept of sovereignty in IR – and the purpose it serves in foreign policy and the European integration project – I am aware that my thesis sees several limitations. In chapter 3.4, I already reflected that I cannot escape my own discursive environment: consequently, my analysis is certainly biased in one way or another. Hence, this thesis is not an ‘innocent’

project as I inevitably contribute to a reproduction of certain notions of sovereignty. In the above, I further mentioned that my findings are limited due to the examined material and the focus on the national (French and German) spheres. The resulting limitations certainly lead to further research avenues: for example, it would be interesting to examine constructions that are not brought forward by (national) politicians in office as their self-legitimation is certainly entrenched within notions of *state* sovereignty. Besides, I am aware that my focus on the two cases here is quite narrow: thus, for example, research on discourses in other European countries might be insightful, too. I also imagine discourses within the EU itself (e.g. within the European Commission) to be interesting as they might differ from the discourses found in the national arenas.

Furthermore, I am aware that my thesis lacks attention to some aspects that deserve more discussion. This includes, for example, the concept of legitimacy. While I dealt with it as one of several characteristics within notions of sovereignty, I believe it is necessary to reflect upon how (albeit arguably very cautiously) changing constructions of state sovereignty affect democratic legitimacy. Indicating that, I do *not* want to imply that sovereignty that is not (only) tied to a unified nation state is inevitably illegitimate; however, this is certainly another grand avenue for further research.

Apart from that, my thesis is heavily based on European and Anglo-American literature concerned with sovereignty. Certainly, one should further reflect on the concept beyond such a Eurocentric approach, including a regionally more dispersed body of literature (see, e.g. Milner/Munirah Kasim 2018; Picq 2019). Related to that, it would be interesting to pursue more research on the concept of sovereignty in the context of other integration projects (see, e.g. Welz 2013), such as the African Union Commission's Peace Support Operations Division (also referred to as the African Standby Force).

The final limitation that I wish to address is the focus on discourses, and thus, the analysis of language proposed here. Scholars associated with the so-called 'practice turn' have made the fair point that the sole analysis of language obscures the analysis of social action, i.e. actual practices (Leander 2011; Neumann 2002). While this was not within the scope of this thesis, it certainly would be insightful to examine how the newly established everyday practices within the framework of PESCO might affect the concept of sovereignty before this may be reflected in discourse. Thus, the focus on linguistic practices within discourse is likely not able to substitute research on practices

really. Especially an ethnographic research that aims at observing practices within a specific PESCO project might be valuable. While research on the ground could be difficult to conduct, it would at least be insightful to talk to experts in the field or to examine documents that reconstruct such practices (Bueger 2014: 399-402).

Looking back on this paper with all its theoretical considerations, my presented empirical findings in the French and German discourses and the further avenues of research I suggested in this concluding chapter, I want to end this thesis with the words of Martti Koskenniemi (2010: 222), who aptly stated that “the time of sovereignty is hardly over”.

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