

COVID-19 Implications to Transatlantic Security Community

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Abstract. Although there were many disagreements in transatlantic relations before COVID-19, the pandemic accelerated tensions in transatlantic relations even more. The inauguration of the new US president Joe Biden, however, has been perceived as a new chapter in transatlantic relations. The paper aims to assess the COVID-19 pandemic's possible security implications to a transatlantic security community (TSC), focusing on two aspects in particular: the transatlantic security community's perception of COVID-19 and adaptation to this challenge. The paper stems from the idea that transatlantic countries compose a transatlantic security community. It examines the COVID-19 implications to several tiers of features that should be present in every security community: namely, the perception of challenges to security, patterns of communication and policy coordination, as well as to institutional framework. The paper argues that COVID-19 has not transformed the transatlantic security community; however, it highlighted certain problematic aspects of transatlantic relations.

Keywords: transatlantic relations, COVID-19, security community, United States, European Union.

COVID-19 pasekmės transatlantinio saugumo bendruomenei

Santrauka. Nors transatlantiniuose santykiuose iki COVID-19 pandemijos būta nemažai nesutarimų, pandemija dar labiau padidino įtampą transatlantiniuose santykiuose. Vis dėlto naujo JAV prezidento Joe Bideno inauguracija buvo vertinama kaip naujas transatlantinių santykių skyrius. Straipsnyje siekiama įvertinti COVID-19 pandemijos pasekmes transatlantiniams santykiams ir atsakyti į klausimą, ar pandemija sustiprino, ar susilpnino transatlantinio saugumo bendruomenę? Straipsnis yra paremtas idėja, kad transatlantinės valstybės sudaro transat-

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lantinio saugumo bendruomenę ir nagrinėja COVID-19 pasekmes kelių lygmenų ypatybėms, kurios turėtų būti kiekvienoje saugumo bendruomenėje: COVID-19 pasekmes saugumo iššūkių suvokimui, komunikacijos modeliams ir politikos koordinavimui, taip pat – institucinei sistemai. Straipsnyje teigiama, kad COVID-19 netransformavo transatlantinio saugumo bendruomenės, bet išryškino tam tikrus probleminius transatlantinių santykių aspektus.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: transatlantiniai santykiai, COVID-19, saugumo bendruomenė, Jungtinės Valstijos, Europos Sąjunga.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is often described as one of the greatest security challenges the world had to face.¹ At the time of writing, there have been 259 632 803 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 5 178 454 COVID-19 related deaths.² Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic had a big impact on various security sectors (as to Barry Buzan: political, military, economic, societal, and environmental³). COVID-19 slowed down the world economy, undermined the movement of people, disrupted international trade, and directly affected countries' economic

¹ Ilana Bet-El, "COVID-19 and the Future of Security and Defence," *European Leadership Network*, 2020, accessed online November 2, 2022, https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep24723#metadata_info_tab_contents; Pamela Faber, "Why Pandemics are National Security Threats," CNA, 2021, accessed online November 2, 2022, [https://www.cna.org/our-media/indepth/2021/05/why-pandemics-are-national-security-threats/#:~:text=The%20pandemic%20provides%20VEOs%20with,issue%20and%20an%20international%20issue](https://www.cna.org/our-media/indepth/2021/05/why-pandemics-are-national-security-threats/#:~:text=The%20pandemic%20provides%20VEOs%20with,issue%20and%20an%20international%20issue;); Samantha Power, "How the COVID-19 Era Will Change National Security Forever," *TIME*, April 14, 2020, <https://time.com/5820625/national-security-coronavirus-samantha-power/>; Mahmudul Alam, Agung Masyad Fawzi, Monirul Islam, and Jamaliah Said, "Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on National Security Issues: Indonesia as a Case Study," *Security Journal*, 2021, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41284-021-00314-1>; Gunhild Hoogensen Gjør, "Coronavirus, Invisible Threats and Preparing for Resilience," *NATO Review*, 20 May 2020, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2020/05/20/coronavirus-invisible-threats-and-preparing-for-resilience/index.html>.

² United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Statistics. UN COVID-19 Data Hub," *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs*, 2021, accessed online February 2, 2022, <https://covid-19-data.unstats.un.org/>.

³ Barry Buzan, "New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century," *International Affairs*, Volume 67, Issue 3, July 1991, Pages 431–451, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2621945>.

security (GDP growth, inflation rates, etc.).⁴ In political security sector, the pandemic accelerated efforts to exploit existing political vulnerabilities and to undermine state authority as governments faced various challenges as a result of COVID-19.⁵ Moreover, the pandemic revealed a great power competition in information sphere as some governments used false narratives and disinformation against each other.⁶ The COVID-19 pandemic also inflicted damage to international conflicts management as it obstructed humanitarian aid flows, crisis diplomacy and conflict management operations.⁷ In military security sector, the pandemic caused reduction or cancelation of military exercises, reduction of military spending. Thus, the COVID pandemic disrupted the security of many countries and inflicted various security consequences.

Many countries in the transatlantic region ended up on the list of the countries affected by the pandemic the most.⁸ European leaders named the COVID-19 pandemic as “Europe’s biggest challenge since the Second World War”⁹ Some think tanks suggested invoking NATO’s Article 5 to confront the pandemic.¹⁰ Moreover, the

⁴ Mahmudul Alam, Agung Masyad Fawzi, Monirul Islam, and Jamaliah Said, “Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on National Security Issues: Indonesia as a Case Study,” *Security Journal*, 2021, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41284-021-00314-1>.

⁵ Pamela Faber, “Why Pandemics are National Security Threats,” CNA, 2021, accessed online November 2, 2022, <https://www.cna.org/our-media/indepth/2021/05/why-pandemics-are-national-security-threats/#:~:text=The%20pandemic%20provides%20VEOs%20with,issue%20and%20an%20international%20issue.>

⁶ Sven Biscop, “No Peace from Corona: Defining EU Strategy for the 2020s,” *Journal of European Integration* 42, no. 8 (2020): 1009–1023.

⁷ International Crisis Group, “The Covid-19 Pandemic and Deadly Conflict,” 2022, https://www.crisisgroup.org/pandemics_public_health_deadly_conflict; Katariina Mustasilta, “From Bad to Worse? The Impact(s) of Covid-19 on Conflict Dynamics,” EUISS, 11 JUNE 2020, <HTTPS://WWW.ISS.EUROPA.EU/CONTENT/BAD-WORSE-IMPACTS-COVID-19-CONFLICT-DYNAMICS>.

⁸ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “Statistics. UN COVID-19 Data Hub.”

⁹ Congressional Research Service, “Europe, COVID-19, and U.S. Relations,” *Congressional Research Service*, March, 2021, accessed online February 2, 2022, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11635>.

¹⁰ Frederick Kempe, “Why Trump Should Trigger NATO’s Article 5 vs COVID-19,” *Atlantic Council*, March, 2020, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/infection-points/why-trump-should-trigger-natos-article-5-vs-covid-19/>.

pandemic accelerated tensions in transatlantic relations.¹¹ President Trump's decision to impose a travel ban against Europe without any prior consultations with Europeans; US lack of interest in multilateral efforts (for instance, withholding funding for WHO that German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas compared to "throwing the pilot out the plane"); Americans allegedly trying to acquire exclusive rights to a vaccine of a German manufacturer contributed to transatlantic disarray and brought out US–EU limitations in coping with global challenges.¹² The inauguration of the US president Joe Biden, however, has been perceived as a new chapter in transatlantic relations. According to the High Representative of the European Union Josep Borrell, Joe Biden's presidency gives the EU a unique opportunity to work together again to tackle a variety of global challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic including.¹³

The paper aims to assess the COVID-19 pandemic's possible security implications to the transatlantic security community (TSC), focusing on two aspects in particular: the transatlantic security community's perception of COVID-19 and adaptation to this challenge. The paper addresses COVID-19 as a security issue/challenge and stems from the idea that transatlantic countries compose the transatlantic security community (as suggested by Vincent Pouliot; Bernhard Stahl, Robin Lucke and Anna Felfeli; Andrew L. Porter and Annegret Bendiek; Florian Boller).¹⁴ Consequently, it examines the

¹¹ Erik Brattberg, "The Pandemic is Making Transatlantic Relations More Toxic," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April, 2020, accessed online July 6, 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/04/29/pandemic-is-making-transatlantic-relations-more-toxic-pub-81675>>.

¹² Darlene Superville, "Trump faces Global Resistance to US Plan to cut WHO Funding," *AP News*, April, 2020, accessed online February 2, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/canada-united-nations-virus-outbreak-donald-trump-germany-9ceee082301f990568afb7050e711eb2>>.

¹³ Robin Emmott and John Chalmers, "EU calls on Biden to take Global Leadership on COVID-19," *Reuters*, January, 2021, accessed online July 2, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-eu-idUSKBN29O1RQ>>.

¹⁴ Vincent Pouliot, "The Alive and Well Transatlantic Security Community: A Theoretical Reply to Michael Cox. *European Journal of International Relations*" 12, no. 1 (2006): 119–127, DOI: 10.1177/1354066106061332]; Bernhard Stahl, Robin Lucke and

COVID-19 possible security implications to 3 tiers of features that are present in every security community (as discussed in section 1 of the paper): namely, the perception of the issue/challenge (i.e. COVID-19), implications to patterns of communication and policy coordination, as well as to institutional framework. The paper argues that COVID-19 has not transformed the transatlantic security community; however, it highlighted certain problematic aspects of transatlantic relations.

The pandemic and transatlantic relations recently have been a rather popular topic among researchers. Giovanna De Maio explored the COVID-19 effect on the military domain of transatlantic relations.¹⁵ Barry R. Posen,¹⁶ Riccardo Alcaro and Nathalie Tocci¹⁷ focused on Europe's ability to defend itself or the EU chances to reach strategic autonomy after COVID. Jackson Janes,¹⁸ Fabrice Pothier¹⁹ analyzed transatlantic relations under Donald Trump or Joe Biden briefly touching upon various aspects of the pandemic as well. Shota

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- Anna Felfeli, "Comeback of the Transatlantic Security Community? Comparative Securitisation in the Crimea Crisis," *East European Politics* 32, no. 4 (2016): 525–546, DOI: 10.1080/21599165.2016.1231670; Andrew L. Porter and Annegret Bendiek, "Counterterrorism Cooperation in the Transatlantic Security Community," *European Security* 21, no. 4 (2012): 497–517, DOI: 10.1080/09662839.2012.688811; Florian Böller, "A Breakdown of Trust: Trump, Europe and the Transatlantic Security Community," in *Mobilization, Representation, and Responsiveness in the American Democracy*, ed. Michael T. Oswald (Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2020), 301–319, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24792-8_16
- ¹⁵ Giovanna De Maio, "NATO's Response to COVID-19: Lessons for Resilience and Readiness," The Brookings Institution, October, 2020, accessed online July 2, 2022, <https://www.kas.de/documents/283221/283270/NATO%E2%80%99s+response+to+COVID-19.pdf/57f5043f-edff-6ff3-93ff-3186d007e377?version=1.1&t=1605028491109>>.
- ¹⁶ Barry R. Posen, "In Reply: To Repeat, Europe Can Defend Itself," *Survival* 63, no. 1 (2021): 41–49, DOI: 10.1080/00396338.2021.
- ¹⁷ Riccardo Alcaro and Nathalie Tocci, "The European Union in a COVID World," *Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)*, November, 2020, accessed online July 2, 2022, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep27576>>.
- ¹⁸ Jackson Janes, "Transatlantic Relations Under US President Joe Biden," *Z Außen Sicherheitspolit* 14, January 2021, 57–73, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12399-021-00841-0>
- ¹⁹ Fabrice Pothier, "Joe Biden's Post-Transatlantic Moment," *Survival* 62, no. 6 (2020): 95–102, DOI: 10.1080/00396338.2020.1851088.

Gvineria,²⁰ Erik Brattberg,²¹ Constantine Arvanitopoulos²² discussed transatlantic relations during COVID-19. However, the number of works that attempted to explore COVID-19 related processes in transatlantic countries through the lens of the security community is still scarce. Moreover, there is a lack of scholarly works on security community's adaptation to certain security challenges in general. To add to that, security community related scholarly debates are rather superficial in terms of methodology. Although literature on security community is enormous, it mostly focuses only on several aspects: what effect the development of security communities has on global politics (Alex Bellamy²³); nontraditional security threats in security communities (Alan Collins²⁴) or certain specific security communities (like ASEAN or TSC). The article aims to make several contributions to scholarly debates. It puts emphasis on TSC, and addressing COVID-19 as a security issue highlights the adaptation of security community (in the paper, TSC) to the security issue, taking into consideration 3 tiers of security communities' features.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, the theoretical framework of the research is discussed: specifically, the concept and features of the security community. Then, COVID-19 implications to Tier 1, Tier 2 and Tier 3 features of the transatlantic security community are

²⁰ Shota Gvineria, "Euro-Atlantic Security before and after COVID-19," *Journal on Baltic Security* 6, no. 1 (2020): 5–21, accessed online July 2, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.2478/jobs-2020-0005>>.

²¹ Erik Brattberg, "The Pandemic is Making Transatlantic Relations More Toxic," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April, 2020, accessed online July 6, 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/04/29/pandemic-is-making-transatlantic-relations-more-toxic-pub-81675>>.

²² Constantine Arvanitopoulos, "Transatlantic Relations after the Covid-19 Pandemic," *European View* 19, no. 2 (2020): 164–171, doi:10.1177/1781685820975876.

²³ Alex J. Bellamy, "Security Communities and Their Neighbours" (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

²⁴ Alan Collins, „Forming a Security Community: Lessons from ASEAN,” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 7 (2007): 203–225, doi:10.1093/irap/lcl007; Alan Collins, "Bringing Communities Back: Security Communities and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' Plural Turn," *Cooperation and Conflict* 49, no. 2 (2014): 276–291, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836713517567>.

explored. Section 2 of the paper focuses on the pandemic's implications to security challenges perception within transatlantic countries, whereas section 3 presents the analysis of COVID-19 implications to communication, policy coordination and institutional framework in TSC.

1. Transatlantic countries as a security community

The idea of a security community on an international level is relatively new. In sociology, "community" is understood as a combination of shared identities and values; interactions, and reciprocity.²⁵ The original meaning of "security community" was suggested by Karl Deutsch who defined it as a group of people that reached such level of integration and as a result have a "real assurance that the members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way."²⁶ Deutsch (1957), Adler and Barnett (1998)²⁷ gave the term international dimension, integrated it to international security studies, and focused on conditions under which security communities are likely to emerge. They describe a security community as an integrated entity where integration is defined as the attainment of a sense of community, accompanied by formal or informal institutions or practices, sufficiently strong and widespread to assure peaceful change among members of a group with 'reasonable' certainty over a 'long' period of time (Deutsch, 1954: 33).

In other words, the Deutschian security community implies a deeper relationship and integration.²⁸ The idea of security communi-

²⁵ Hakan Wiberg, "Security Communities: Emmanuel Adler, Michael Barnett and Anomalous Northerners," *Cooperation and Conflict*, September, 35, no. 3 (2000): 289–298, accessed online July 6, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45083944>.

²⁶ Karl Deutsch, *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area* (Princeton University Press, 1957).

²⁷ Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, *Security Communities* (Cambridge University Press: UK (Cambridge), 1998).

²⁸ Simon Koschut, "Regional Order and Peaceful Change: Security Communities as a Via Media in International Relations Theory," *Cooperation and Conflict* 49, no. 4 (2014): 519–535, DOI: 10.1177/0010836713517570.

ty is also based on thinking that security community generates peaceful relations and consists of 3 tiers of features. The first tier is characterized by collective identity features and by the salience of the “self/other” or “in-group/out-group” distinction. Although this dimension of security community is often called ‘not tangible’ and challenging to measure by scholars,²⁹ other experts suggest focusing on shared identities, values and perception of common behavior; threat perception and response to it, the mutual responsiveness to certain questions (related to external threats, changes in technology, economy, the environment, and others).³⁰ The second tier of security community is represented by stable interactions that can be measured by combined indicators for trade, foreign investment, and capital flows.³¹ Thomas Risse, however, suggests only economic indicators. Other scholars refer also to people movement, mail, social platforms, political communication.³² The third tier of security community features highlights the importance of strong institutionalization.³³ In short, security communities are bound together by shared identity, values, and threat perceptions; institutions and various types of interactions.

Scholars expanded the original scope of security community concept and adjusted it to contemporary international relations studies.³⁴ The aforementioned ideas imply that the security community is a highly integrated (regional) entity that shares collective identity and val-

²⁹ Ondrej Ditrych, “Security Community: A Future for a Troubled Concept?” *International Relations* 28, no. 3 (2014): 350–366, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117814545952>.

³⁰ Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, *Security Communities* (Cambridge University Press: UK (Cambridge), 1998); Thomas Risse, “Beyond Iraq: The Crisis of the Transatlantic Security Community,” *Die Friedens-Warte* 78, no. 2/3 (2003): 173–193, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23773694>.

³¹ Thomas Risse, “Beyond Iraq: The Crisis of the Transatlantic Security Community,” *Die Friedens-Warte* 78, no. 2/3 (2003): 173–193, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23773694>.

³² Alex J. Bellamy, “Security Communities and Their Neighbours,” (PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2004).

³³ Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, *Security Communities* (Cambridge University Press: UK (Cambridge), 1998).

³⁴ Simon Koschut, “Regional Order and Peaceful Change: Security Communities as a Via Media in International Relations Theory,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 49, no. 4 (2014): 519–535, DOI: 10.1177/0010836713517570.

ues, and peaceful reciprocal interactions resulted from a common perception of external threats and/or security challenges and institutional framework that creates preconditions for closer relations. Communication is the key feature of a security community since it enables a group “to think together, to see together, and to act together.”³⁵

This paper focuses on transatlantic security community and COVID-19 implications to transatlantic security community. The scholarly debate on what entities constitute transatlantic security community is still unfolding. Some authors limit the perception of transatlantic security community to NATO only³⁶ and highlight the continuing evolution of NATO from a military alliance to a security community.³⁷ Others recognize the importance of NATO as a core institution of transatlantic security community but present a broader perception of transatlantic security community that also encompasses such entities as European Union and individual countries in Europe and North America.³⁸ They define transatlantic security community as “the overall set of relations between the European Union and the United States, within the broader framework of the institutional and other connections maintained via NATO and other institutions.”³⁹ The latter definition of transatlantic se-

³⁵ Karl Deutsch, *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area* (Princeton University Press, 1957).

³⁶ Anders Fogh Rasmussen, “Renewing the Transatlantic Security Community in the Age of Globalisation,” Speech by the NATO Secretary General at the Central Military Club, Sofia, 2010, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_63773.htm (accessed 8 March 2011).

³⁷ Michael C. Williams and Iver B. Neumann, “From Alliance to Security Community: NATO, Russia, and the Power of Identity,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29, no. 2 (2000): 357–387.

³⁸ Michael Rühle, “The Future of the Transatlantic Security Relationship,” *American Foreign Policy Interests* 35, no. 5 (2003): 283–287; Andrew Porter and Annegret Bendiek, “Counterterrorism Cooperation in the Transatlantic Security Community,” *European Security* 21, no. 4 (2012): 497–517; Marianne Riddervold and Akasemi Newsome, “Introduction: Out With the Old, in With the New? Explaining Changing EU–US Relations,” *Politics and Governance*, Volume 10, Issue 2 (2022): 128–133, <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v10i2.5597>; Patricia Greve, “Ontological Security, the Struggle for Recognition, and the Maintenance of Security Communities,” *J Int Relat Dev* 21 (2018): 858–882. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41268-017-0108-y>.

³⁹ Michael Smith, “The EU, the US and the Crisis of Contemporary Multilateralism,” *Journal of European Integration* 40, no. 5, 539–554.

curity community has been chosen to apply in this paper due to several reasons: NATO and the EU share a big number of the same members (countries of transatlantic region); moreover, as a result of strengthening ties between the EU and NATO, and increasing number of joint activities in security domain, it would be challenging, and not logical, to limit the perception of transatlantic security community to NATO only. In short, despite the diverse opinions about the composition of transatlantic security community, scholars do agree about its existence since transatlantic countries has a convergence of threat perceptions, as well as policy coordination with the help of established institutional frameworks and intensive communication.

Although security community conception developed by Deutsch, Adler and others made a huge contribution to international relations theoretical debates, scholars (for instance, Ditarych) note that in the security community theory certain aspects remain underdeveloped: for instance, some elements of the complex 3 tier security community structure are underspecified. Moreover, the 3 tier security community model mostly focuses on political elites and limits the research to formal institutions do not addressing other actors within security communities or other types of institutions. In addition, the security community conception is very superficial in terms of methodology.

Trying to navigate between security community conception's valuable contribution to international relations theoretical debates and theory's aspects that need further studies, the paper builds the empirical part upon the security community theory's idea that every security community consists of 3 tiers features. As indicated in the introduction, the paper aims to explore COVID-19 implications to the transatlantic security community (TSC), focusing on security challenges' (i.e. COVID-19) perception and TSC adaptation to the security challenges. Due to the scarce methodological discussion related to security community (and the absence of widely accepted methodological model that could be applied), methodologically the paper is based on qualitative research methods to gather and to analyze the information, as well as events data-sets, and follows previously presented 3 tiers features of the security communities logic (please, see Table 1).

Table 1. COVID-19 Implications to TSC: Methodological Framework of the Research

		Research methods (Qualitative Approach)	Analysis Criteria
<i>Tier 1:</i> “Collective Identity”	PERCEPTION OF CHALLENGES TO SECURITY	*Documents analysis ⁴⁰ *Speech analysis ⁴¹	-Perception of challenges’s importance
<i>Tier 2:</i> “Stable Interactions”	ADAPTATION TO THE CHALLENGE <i>(i.e. COVID-19)</i> -Communication -Policy Coordination	*Documents analysis ⁴² *Speech analysis ⁴³ *Events data-sets ⁴⁴	-Was communication maintained? -Was there pol. coordination? -Which TR channels were used for pol. coordination? -Who took the leading role in pol. coordination? -Were new channels created for pol. coordination?
<i>Tier 3:</i> “Strong Institutionalization”	-Institutional Framework		EU–NATO Framework: was it functional? How?

Source: composed by the author.

⁴⁰ Qualitative document analysis is conducted exploring official documents of NATO, EU, transatlantic countries (documents had to be related to COVID-19 and to foreign and security policy): various strategic documents (National Security Strategies; Strategic Concepts etc.) were taken into consideration. Documents were gathered from official websites of NATO (www.nato.int), EU (european-union.europa.eu), transatlantic countries (for instance, www.whitehouse.gov and others).

⁴¹ Qualitative speech analysis is conducted exploring official rhetoric of NATO, EU, transatlantic countries’ highest ranking officials (heads of state, NATO Secretary General etc.) (speeches had to be related to COVID-19 and to foreign and security policy). Speeches were gathered from official websites of NATO (www.nato.int), American Presidency Project website and others.

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⁴³ Qualitative speech analysis is conducted exploring official rhetoric of NATO, EU, transatlantic countries’ highest ranking officials (heads of state, NATO Secretary General etc.) (speeches had to be related to COVID-19 and to foreign and security policy). Speeches were gathered from official websites of NATO (www.nato.int), American Presidency Project website and others.

⁴⁴ The event-based database is a valuable research tool that facilitates analysis of different types simultaneously or in different domains implemented foreign policy instruments

Thus based on the aforementioned security community theoretical framework and 3 tier logic, the paper proceeds as follows: first, on the basis of document and speech analysis it explores perception of a challenge posed by COVID-19 focusing on importance that various TSC entities assigned to this challenge. Second, COVID-19 implications to Tier 2 and Tier 3 features of the security community are analyzed in order to disclose how TSC adapted to the COVID-19 challenge to security: namely, patterns of communication, policy coordination efforts to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, and developments in the transatlantic institutional framework.

2. Perception of challenges to security in transatlantic security community during the COVID-19 pandemic

As it was outlined in the previous section, countries that belong to the security community should behave similarly in response to a certain crisis.⁴⁵ Accordingly, members of the transatlantic security community should have a consolidated perception of the COVID-19 pandemic and the response to it. This section examines the perception of security challenges by NATO, EU, and other actors that constitute the transatlantic security community focusing on the COVID-19 pandemic in particular.

(Rosenau and Ramsey 1975). Event-based databases are usually generated from events reported in newspapers' articles (Schrodt 1994, 826). In the paper, event data-sets were used to gather information about COVID-19 related events/actions in foreign and security policy domain in transatlantic security community. The event data-sets were constructed on the basis on articles in CNN and Politico.eu websites (these websites produce many articles about foreign and security policy related events, and provide free access to their content). Event data-sets consisted of such categories as: date of the event (when), an event (what happened: who did what to whom and where?).

⁴⁵ Bernhard Stahl, Robin Lucke, and Anna Felfeli, "Comeback of the Transatlantic Security Community? Comparative Securitisation in the Crimea Crisis," *East European Politics* 32, no. 4 (2016): 525–546, DOI: 10.1080/21599165.2016.1231670; Oyvind Svendsen, "Security Communities in Crisis: Crisis Constitution, Struggles and Temporality," *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 17, no. 3 (2021): 334–448, accessed online July 6, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.30950/jcer.v17i3.1050>.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, transatlantic security community (TSC) actors were not on the same page about COVID-19: the perception of the challenge's importance differed. These differences partly might be explained by the fact that COVID-19 hit transatlantic countries at a different time (in Europe, the first COVID-19 cases were detected in January of 2020 in France; in February of 2020 a major COVID-19 break out was registered in Italy. In the United States, public health emergency was declared at the end of January). NATO's Strategic Concept (2010) lists "health risks" as concerns for NATO in the future.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, during the first year of pandemic, called times of the pandemic "unprecedented times" and referred to COVID-19 as to "invisible enemy" that is on the top of the NATO security agenda.⁴⁷ Some transatlantic think tanks even suggested invoking NATO Article 5 against "this deadly pathogen."⁴⁸ Thus, there has been a transformation in challenges to security perception in NATO during the pandemic, the seriousness of COVID-19 being acknowledged eventually. Some experts suggest that the pandemic might make NATO reconsider once again its strategic geography from East–West to North–South (as migrants' flows – where 1 from every 4 has COVID – are increasing once more).⁴⁹

The EU's, having been an epicenter of the pandemic, perception of COVID-19 and response to the challenge can be described as "a

⁴⁶ NATO, "Strategic Concept," NATO, November, 2010, accessed online July 6, 2022, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_82705.htm>.

⁴⁷ NATO, "Pre-ministerial Press Conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg," NATO, April, 2020, accessed online July 7, 2022, NATO - Opinion: Pre-ministerial press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, 01-Apr.-2020>.

⁴⁸ Frederick Kempe, "Why Trump should trigger NATO's Article 5 vs COVID-19," *Atlantic Council*, March, 2020, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/inflection-points/why-trump-should-trigger-natos-article-5-vs-covid-19/>

⁴⁹ Nikolas K. Gvosdev, "The Effect of COVID-19 on the NATO Alliance," Foreign Policy Research Institute, March, 2020, accessed online July 7, 2022, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2020/03/the-effect-of-covid-19-on-the-nato-alliance/>>.

slow start, and then a sprint.”⁵⁰ Although the EU foreign and security documents list pandemic as an important element of international security, the EU’s initial response to the pandemic was slow and did not demonstrate the unity within the European part of the transatlantic region. When Italy, the first EU country heavily hit by COVID, asked to activate the “European Union Mechanism of Civil Protection” to get medical equipment, no one EU member responded. Other EU member states’ steps also disclosed the EU internal struggles: despite being part of the Schengen area, some countries closed their borders (Lithuania, Poland, Denmark, and others). France and Germany prohibited the export of medical supplies to other countries (including the EU members). Despite the slow initial reaction, the EU has taken the COVID-19 challenge seriously and demonstrated a coordinated response to the pandemic: the President of the European Council proposed an international treaty on pandemic; pandemic has been included in threat assessment by the European External Action Service.

Contrary to institutional pillars of TSC, the separate transatlantic countries’ stance towards the COVID-19 has been mixed. Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel which identified the pandemic in the White paper as one of the top nine challenges to country’s national security and its economy, strongest in the EU, named COVID-19 the “toughest challenge” in the EU history.⁵¹ The UK, which has the biggest military capabilities in the European part of the transatlantic region, described pandemic as a Tier 1 risk to its national security in its strategic documents. The United States, the most powerful country of TSC, however, had a destructive effect on TSC cohesion during Trump presidency. The US National Security Strategy released

⁵⁰ Riccardo Alcaro and Nathalie Tocci, “The European Union in a COVID World,” Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), November, 2020, accessed online July 2, 2022, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep27576>>.

⁵¹ Esme Nicholson, “EU Leaders Meet to Discuss Economic Impact of COVID-19,” NPR, June, 2020, accessed online July 19, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2020/07/17/892195769/eu-leaders-meet-to-discuss-economic-impact-of-covid-19>>.

during Trump's presidency focused on a narrow list of threats and challenges and mostly ignores nontraditional security threats. US president himself denied the importance of COVID and gave misleading statements. For instance, at the beginning of the pandemic, Trump claimed that "The pandemic is fading away. It's going to fade away."⁵² He also stated that "The claim: "99%" of COVID-19 cases are "totally harmless."⁵³ Moreover, Trump blamed Europeans for spreading COVID-19 in the US ("A number of new clusters in the United States were seeded by travellers from Europe").⁵⁴ The US closed borders with transatlantic countries without prior consulting about that. The US refused to join international efforts to produce a vaccine (COVAX). In other words, the country that usually is expected to lead international efforts in dealing with international security challenges was the destabilizing actor of TSC.

COVID-19 was not the only security challenge that transatlantic actors disagreed about. Although the paper focuses specifically on COVID-19 as a challenge that might impact the military domain, Russia and China factors are worth discussing since they were active actors in the transatlantic region in the pandemic managing process. Russia has sent medical specialists and supplies to Italy, one of the first EU countries hit hard by the pandemic, tried to discredit Western governments and institutions,⁵⁵ actively spread desinformation in transatlantic countries (such false narratives as: Western govern-

⁵² Christian Paz, "All the President's Lies About the Coronavirus," *The Atlantic*, November, 2020, accessed online July 19, 2022, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/11/trumps-lies-about-coronavirus/608647/>>.

⁵³ Christian Paz, "All the President's Lies About the Coronavirus," *The Atlantic*, November, 2020, accessed online July 19, 2022, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/11/trumps-lies-about-coronavirus/608647/>>.

⁵⁴ Politico, "Should have Happened Yesterday': Republicans press Trump to restart Economy," *Politico*, April, 2020, accessed online July 10, 2022, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/04/15/republicans-trump-economy-coronavirus-186452>>.

⁵⁵ Eastern Europe Studies Center, "The Struggle for Covid-19 Narratives – Implications for European Security," Eastern Europe Studies Center (EESC), Vilnius, May, 2020, accessed online July 5, 2022, <https://www.eesc.lt/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/The-Struggle-for-Narratives-Summary.pdf>>.

ments are massively incompetent or that the West derails global efforts to combat COVID-19).⁵⁶

Despite China's "masks diplomacy," during the COVID-19 pandemic, China's image in the EU deteriorated. There have been signs of the EU more assertive position towards China: the EU joined the WHO initiatives to investigate COVID-19 origins, the debate has been started about reducing the EU dependency on China for supplies of critical goods.⁵⁷ However, the EU seemed to be willing to cooperate with China on multilateral issues. China was named "systemic rival" and "strategic competitor" in the EU–China Strategic Outlook.⁵⁸ Some experts claimed that the COVID-19 crisis moved Europe closer to the US view on China.⁵⁹ In the US NSS (2017)⁶⁰ China together with Russia was named as Tier 1 threat to the US. Moreover, the US president numerous times accused China of the origin of the virus, and named the COVID-19 virus "Chinese virus." The transatlantic record towards Russia has been mixed. While NATO and the strategic documents of the US referred to Russia as a threat, the rhetoric of some transatlantic countries raised doubts about the unified trans-

⁵⁶ CEPA, "Jabbed in the Back: Mapping Russian and Chinese Information Operations During COVID-19," CEPA, December, 2021, accessed online July 5, 2022, <https://cepa.org/jabbed-in-the-back-mapping-russian-and-chinese-information-operations-during-covid-19/>.

⁵⁷ Janka Oertel, "The New China Consensus: How Europe is Growing Wary of Beijing," European Council on Foreign Relations, September, 2020, accessed online June 3, 2022, https://ecfr.eu/publication/the_new_china_consensus_how_europe_is_growing_wary_of_beijing/; Policy Department of External Relations, "Post Covid-19 Value Chains: Options for reshoring Production Back to Europe in a Globalised Economy," Directorate General for External Policies of the Union, March, 2021, accessed online June 4, 2022, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/653626/EXPO_STU\(2021\)653626_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/653626/EXPO_STU(2021)653626_EN.pdf).

⁵⁸ European Commission, "EU-China – a Strategic Outlook," European Commission, March 12, 2019, accessed online July 5, 2022, <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf>.

⁵⁹ Johannes Gullestad Ro, Ingeborg Bjur, Karen-Anna Eggen, and Robin Allers, *The Global Pandemic, Transatlantic Security and National Defence* (Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies, Oslo, 2020), ISSN 1894-47.

⁶⁰ "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America," The White House, December 2017, accessed online July 5, 2022, <https://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nss/NSS2017.pdf?ver=CnFwURrw09pJ0q5EogFpwg%3d%3d>

atlantic position vis a vis to Russia. For instance, France president E. Macron called for dialogue with Russia.

In conclusion, transatlantic actors that are considered TSC did not have a consolidated perception of the COVID-19 pandemic and the response to it. Surprisingly, the destabilizing factor in coping with pandemic was the United States: a country that traditionally demonstrated leadership in transatlantic relations. However, it would be too bold to claim that it was COVID-19 that weakened TSC. COVID-19, like other challenges in transatlantic relations, highlighted the problematic issues in transatlantic relations and lack of cohesion in TSC.

3. COVID-19 implications to Tier 2 and Tier 3 features of transatlantic security community

Having discussed Tier 1 aspects of transatlantic security community during the COVID-19 pandemic, this part of the article analyzes COVID-19 implications to Tier 2 and Tier 3 features of the transatlantic security community. It starts with the examination of transatlantic communication during COVID-19; then it focuses on the state of transatlantic policy coordination during the pandemic, and finally, it examines COVID-19 implications to the transatlantic institutional framework.

3.1. Transatlantic Communication: Misleading statements but Maintained Communication

COVID-19 has had a dynamic effect on transatlantic countries' communication. However, in the whole context, COVID-19 has been an intervening (but not a determining) factor that led to increased tensions within TSC. In other words, COVID-19 highlighted the problems that existed on both sides of the Atlantic and was a symptom rather than a cause in the communication domain.

The US, during the Trump presidency, did not take the leading role in managing the COVID pandemic in TSC. Moreover, the Trump administration often shared misleading statements about the

virus and publicly attacked some European countries (he harshly criticized strict lockdowns in Europe, for instance).⁶¹ US president denied the severity of COVID (“It’s going to disappear. One day – it’s like a miracle – it will disappear”),⁶² told that testing for coronavirus might be “overrated,” claimed that COVID could be treated by injecting disinfectant into a human body, and refused to wear a mask.⁶³ At the peak of the pandemic, the Trump administration urged the states to reopen the economy and to ease COVID related restrictions (the step strongly supported by Republicans in Congress and strongly criticized by democrats).⁶⁴ In addition, the US president blamed Europeans for spreading COVID (according to Donald Trump, the EU “failed to take the same precautions”)⁶⁵ and introduced a travel ban for travellers from the EU without prior consulting with its transatlantic partners.

Such domestic pandemic management by the Trump administration was perceived as “chaotic” and as “damaging the United States’ reputation overseas” within the transatlantic community. It cast doubts about the Trump administration’s willingness and ability to guide the transatlantic community in the time of crisis, and about the US reliability as a transatlantic partner in general. German Foreign

⁶¹ Jason Hoffman, Devan Cole, and Daniel Dale, “Trump Criticizes Lockdowns in Europe as Covid-19 Cases surge on the Continent and in US,” CNN, 2020, accessed online July 2019, 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/11/01/politics/trump-europe-lockdowns-criticism/index.html>>.

⁶² CNN, “Trump says Coronavirus will ‘disappear’ Eventually,” CNN, February, 2020, accessed online June 7, 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/02/27/politics/trump-coronavirus-disappear/index.html>>.

⁶³ The Guardian, “Debate of Trump’s Coronavirus Disinfectant Comments could be tipping Point,” The Guardian, April, 2020, accessed online June 7, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/apr/25/donald-trump-coronavirus-disinfectant-sarcastic-tipping-point>>.

⁶⁴ Politico, “Should have Happened Yesterday’: Republicans press Trump to restart Economy,” *Politico*, April, 2020, accessed online July 10, 2022, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/04/15/republicans-trump-economy-coronavirus-186452>>.

⁶⁵ France24, “Trump suspends Travel to US from 26 European Countries for 30 Days over Coronavirus,” France24, March, 2020, accessed online July 10, 2022, <https://www.france24.com/en/20200312-trump-announces-emergency-coronavirus-measures-30-day-suspension-of-us-europe-flights>>.

Minister Heiko Maas pointed out that the US stance towards COVID during Trump presidency is not a suitable “model” for Europe to follow.⁶⁶

The puzzling rhetorics of the Trump administration has affected transatlantic communication as well. On the one hand, inconsistency between the White House and working-level professionals in the US COVID management approach has sent mixed signals to Europeans.⁶⁷ Moreover, some personal convictions of the US president prevented transatlantic partners from having a consolidated position towards pandemic management. For instance, in March 2020, the US and European diplomats failed to agree on a joint communique regarding COVID-19 because the Americans insisted on using the term “Wuhan virus.”

On the other hand, however, the US officials sought to coordinate more with the European partners and to clarify the US position regarding COVID-19 as a result: video meetings were held between the highest rank officials of transatlantic countries (Trump and Angela Merkel, Emmanuel Macron, Boris Johnson, Andrzej Duda and others; Mike Pompeo and Josep Borrell, Jean-Yves Le Drian). Regular calls were held between the US State Department and European officials as well.

The intensity of transatlantic communication was maintained (and was set as a priority) by Biden’s administration that declared that “America is back.” Biden administration officials participated in bilateral and regional formats with European countries. Moreover, the Biden administration actively utilized various other “channels” of transatlantic relations such as NATO, G7, the EU to foster closer

⁶⁶ Federal Foreign Office, “That is EU Solidarity in Action,” Federal Foreign Office, April, 2020, accessed online July 10, 2022, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/maas-spiegel/2333072>>.

⁶⁷ Erik Brattberg, “The Pandemic is Making Transatlantic Relations More Toxic,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April, 2020, accessed online June 10, 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/04/29/pandemic-is-making-transatlantic-relations-more-toxic-pub-81675>>.

transatlantic relations in the face of pandemic: the US president Biden participated in the EU Council meeting (the first time since 2001); the US Secretary of State Blinken attended the EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting, NATO and G7 ministerial meetings.

Thus, on the one hand, the COVID-19 pandemic cast doubts about transatlantic countries' ability to maintain effective communication during COVID-19 as a result of the Trump administration's puzzling rhetorics about COVID-19. On the other hand, the eccentric statements of the US president were not limited only to COVID-19 and could be called a continued pattern of the Trump administration; therefore, it was not the COVID-19 pandemic that instigated this kind of rhetoric in the American part of the transatlantic community. Moreover, the analysis of Tier 1 features in the transatlantic region demonstrates that the transatlantic community has been able to adapt to certain rhetorical challenges and eventually established intensive transatlantic communication to cope with the COVID-19 challenge.

3.2. Transatlantic Policy Coordination:

Lack of coordination of actions and no Transatlantic coalition to fight COVID

Despite the common perception of security challenges of both sides of the Atlantic and efforts to keep communication channels open and functioning, there have been challenges in the transatlantic policy coordination domain: since those transatlantic relations' channels that had not been properly coordinated/aligned staggered during COVID-19, the pandemic did not turn out to be a stepping stone for new initiatives for closer cooperation implementation. The potential has been demonstrated by those transatlantic channels that used to function well before and had well-developed crises management mechanisms (like NATO, for instance).

Regardless of the initial lack of solidarity, NATO members eventually started helping each other to deal with COVID: Germany sent ventilators to Spain; Italy received help from the US. Hospitals in Germa-

ny took COVID patients from Italy and France. The US and the Czech republic delivered medical supplies to Italy and Spain. Doctors from Poland and Albania went to Italy to help. On March 25, 2020, NATO activated its Crisis management mechanism (crisis management is considered as one of the core tasks of the alliance) and coordinated the response to pandemic through the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC). NATO also established the NATO Pandemic Response Trust Fund that facilitated the division of medical supplies among allies: in such a way ventilators, medical personnel, medical supplies were provided for the Czech Republic, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania and other NATO members.⁶⁸

During the pandemic, NATO continued to be the main platform for military cooperation between European countries and facilitated transatlantic cooperation as well in the format of missions, training and exercises, and China and Russia deterrence. In face of the pandemic, NATO managed to maintain its functions in 3 previously mentioned areas. In terms of missions, Enhanced Forward Presence in the Baltic states and NATO missions in Kosovo continued and also served for delivering medical aid and transporting patients. NATO's training and exercises were maintained going but some of them were reduced in scale (like BALTOPS, for instance): according to Giovanna de Maio, Military activities including training and exercises were reduced by 33%.⁶⁹ Some of the exercises had to be cancelled: regional "Cold Defender" exercise, "European Defender." Overall, NATO adjusted to pandemic rather smoothly, according to experts.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ NATO, "NATO's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic," NATO, March, 2021, accessed online June 10, 2022, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/3/pdf/2103-factsheet-COVID-19-en.pdf>.

⁶⁹ Giovanna De Maio, "NATO's Response to COVID-19: Lessons for Resilience and Readiness," The Brookings Institution, October, 2020, accessed online July 2, 2022, <https://www.kas.de/documents/283221/283270/NATO%E2%80%99s+response+to+COVID-19.pdf/57f5043f-edff-6ff3-93ff-3186d007e377?version=1.1&t=1605028491109>>.

⁷⁰ Giovanna De Maio, "NATO's Response to COVID-19: Lessons for Resilience and Readiness," The Brookings Institution, October, 2020, accessed online July 2, 2022, <https://www.kas.de/documents/283221/283270/NATO%E2%80%99s+response+to+COVID-19.pdf/57f5043f-edff-6ff3-93ff-3186d007e377?version=1.1&t=1605028491109>>.

In case of bilateral relations within the transatlantic region, national interests outweighed the interests of the transatlantic community and the lack of coordination of actions in managing the COVID crisis has manifested during the pandemic. Europeans blamed the Trump administration for the lack of coordination and the advancement of American interests at the expense of transatlantic ones. When Trump ordered the US borders to be closed for foreigners from 26 European countries without prior consultations with transatlantic partners on 11 March 2020 (accusing the EU of failing to take “the same precautions” as the US against COVID-19),⁷¹ European leaders condemned such step and emphasized that addressing the pandemic “requires cooperation rather than unilateral action.”⁷² Once the US withdrew from WHO in July of 2020, the EU countries that advocated for WHO reform instead called such a step “a setback for international cooperation.”⁷³ Furthermore, the US did not join the COVAX global initiative; allegedly sought to acquire a German vaccine manufacturer. The US was not the only one responsible for the fact that the transatlantic coalition to fight COVID-19 had not been built, however: in face of medical supplies shortages, Europeans also contributed to competition within TSC rather than fought against it. For instance, the EU banned the export of face shields, gloves, masks, and protective garments.⁷⁴ This policy was later exploited by Russia and China that sent medical personnel and supplies to Italy, Spain

⁷¹ BBC, “Coronavirus: Trump suspends Travel from Europe to US,” BBC, March, 2020, accessed online June 10, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-51846923>>.

⁷² BBCa, “Coronavirus: EU condemns Trump Travel ban on 26 European Countries,” BBC, March, 2020, accessed online June 10, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-51857462>>.

⁷³ FoxNews, “Europe reacts to US withdrawing from WHO, calls for Reform Instead,” *FoxNews*, July, 2020, accessed online June 11, 2022, <https://www.foxnews.com/world/europe-reacts-us-withdrawing-world-health-organization>>.

⁷⁴ Karen Donfried and Wolfgang Ischinger, “The Pandemic and the Toll of Transatlantic Discord,” *Foreign Affairs*, April 18, 2020, accessed online June 11, 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-04-18/pandemic-and-toll-transatlantic-discord>.

and other European countries and eventually received the name of “masks diplomacy.”

Moreover, the pandemic once again confirmed the fact that the European part of TSC is not ready to take a leading role in transatlantic relations as a result of insufficient experience, resources, will. During the pandemic, multiple European leaders criticized the US for not taking leadership in managing the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, the EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell pointed out that “American leadership has been weak.”⁷⁵ Moreover, during the pandemic, European talks about the EU strategic autonomy have intensified.⁷⁶ Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president, claimed that now is “the moment for Europe to lead the way from this fragility towards a new vitality.”⁷⁷ While the EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell suggested the EU should “learn to use the language of power.”⁷⁸ At the same time, in face of pandemic, however, certain European leaders referred to potential initiatives for EU strategic autonomy more often. French President Emmanuel Macron claimed that “Europe must rise to the major economic, educational, migra-

⁷⁵ EUObserver, “EU Bluntly criticises US Handling of Pandemic,” *EUObserver*, April, 2020, accessed online June 11, 2022, <https://euobserver.com/coronavirus/148130>>.

⁷⁶ Maria Gulia Amadio Vicere, Matteo Bonomi, “The EU’s Search for “Effective” Strategic Autonomy in the Neighbourhood,” IAI Commentaries, Rome, IAI, January 2021, 5 p., accessed online June 11, 2022, <https://www.iai.it/en/publicazioni/eus-search-effective-strategic-autonomy-neighbourhood>>; Niklas Helwig, “COVID-19 Calls for European Strategic Autonomy,” Finnish Institute of International Affairs, May, 2020, accessed online June 11, 2022, https://www.fiia.fi/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/comment13_covid-19-calls-for-european-strategic-autonomy.pdf>; Riccardo Alcaro and Nathalie Tocci, “The European Union in a COVID World,” Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), November, 2020, accessed online July 2, 2022, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep27576>>.

⁷⁷ The Atlantic Council, “Experts React: Von der Leyen Outlines Vision for Europe’s Post-COVID Future,” The Atlantic Council, September, 2020, accessed online June 12, 2022, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/experts-react-von-der-leyen-outlines-vision-for-europes-post-covid-future/>>.

⁷⁸ European Parliament, “Hearing with High Representative/Vice President-designate Josep Borrell,” European Parliament, October, 2019, accessed online June 12, 2022, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20190926IPR62260/hearing-with-high-representative-vice-president-designate-josep-borrell>>.

tion and military challenges,” while taking over the EU presidency.⁷⁹ Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban called for the EU strategic autonomy in defence, nuclear energy and farming sectors.⁸⁰ Thus, COVID-19 also attributed to intensified discussions about the EU strategic autonomy.

In other words, COVID-19 accentuated certain transatlantic relations’ problems that had also manifested earlier (during the Trump presidency and other transatlantic crises) once again and prompted seeking better transatlantic relations’ coordination using certain institutional channels. However, the initiatives on the rhetorical level have not been turned into actions so far.

3.3. Transatlantic Institutional framework: Functioning but with problems

The COVID-19 pandemic has tested not only the rhetorical level of TSC but the institutional framework of transatlantic relations as well: the EU–NATO cooperation that was highlighted in transatlantic relations as one of the most important “transatlantic channels” on multiple occasions has been put to a test as well.

During COVID-19, TSC employed the EU–NATO cooperation format to solve logistical issues of pandemic management, improve information sharing within the community, organize exercises to prepare for future challenges. To begin with, the EU and NATO have been consulting regularly during the pandemic: there have been weekly coordination calls; EU and NATO officials briefed their counterparts during the EU Foreign Affairs Council meetings; EU–NATO bi-an-

⁷⁹ DW, “France takes over EU Presidency with push for ‘Strategic Autonomy’,” DW, 2022, accessed online June 12, 2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/france-takes-over-eu-presidency-with-push-for-strategic-autonomy/a-60308915>>.

⁸⁰ Reuters, “Meeting Macron, Orban says Europe needs ‘Strategic Autonomy’ in Defence, Nuclear Energy,” *Reuters*, December, 2021, accessed online June 12, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/meeting-macron-orban-says-europe-needs-strategic-autonomy-defence-nuclear-energy-2021-12-13/>>.

nual meeting was held on 19 May 2020.⁸¹ The EU has used NATO logistics apparatus to deliver aid: NATO procedures for aid delivery flights have been simplified; aid was delivered to the EU countries (for instance, Romania sent a 17-Strong medical team to Italy) and beyond. Medical planning for the EU military staff was facilitated by the NATO Multinational Medical Coordination Centre/European Medical Command (MMCC/EMC) (that supports medical planning for NATO).⁸² NATO Multinational Medical Coordination Centre/European Medical Command has also hosted (November 2020) the Exercise RESILIENT RESPONSE that consisted of attendees from NATO and EU. On the other hand, however, information emerged that in the EU–NATO cooperation during the COVID-19 coordination of actions was lacking and there was a duplication of functions. According to EU Policy Department for External Relations,⁸³ substantial duplication if not the entire range of military support was conducted by both organizations and in the same.

Thus, one can claim that the transatlantic institutional framework, established in 2016 to foster greater integration of transatlantic countries, was functioning once it was put to a test during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, however, the COVID-19 pandemic disclosed certain weaknesses/deficiencies in the EU–NATO cooperation format that need to be addressed to strengthen the institutional dimension of TSC.

⁸¹ European Parliament, “NATO’s Response in the fight against Coronavirus,” European Parliament, 2020, accessed online June 12, 2022, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2020/651955/EPRS_ATA\(2020\)651955_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2020/651955/EPRS_ATA(2020)651955_EN.pdf)>.

⁸² NATOa, “NATO’s Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic,” NATO, May, 2020a, accessed online June 12, 2022, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/5/pdf/200525-factsheet-COVID-19_en.pdf>.

⁸³ EU Policy Department for External Relations, “How the COVID-19 Crisis has affected Security and Defence-Related Aspects of the EU,” EU Policy Department for External Relations, January, 2021, accessed online June 21, 2022, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EXPO_IDA\(2021\)653623](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EXPO_IDA(2021)653623)>.

Conclusions

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has been an unprecedented challenge that the transatlantic security community had to deal with, it has not transformed the transatlantic security community. However, one should not claim that the pandemic has not had any implications to the transatlantic security community either.

In case of perception of security challenges that constitute Tier 1 aspects of a security community, the COVID-19 crisis did alter security challenges' perception that was present in the transatlantic security community before the pandemic; however, for the transatlantic countries it took time to be on the same page: health security eventually has gained stronger positions in the transatlantic security communities' agenda (in strategic documents of NATO, the European Union, and separate transatlantic countries).

As for Tier 2 features, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the communication, policy coordination in the transatlantic security community, as well as its institutional framework, and revealed the imperfections that need to be addressed to make the functioning of the transatlantic security community more smoothly. During COVID-19, the importance of transatlantic institutional channels increased while inter-state transatlantic channels went into the background as actions of certain separate countries were not sufficient to address such a complex security challenge as the pandemic. The most effective "transatlantic channels" to facilitate transatlantic communication and to coordinate the transatlantic response during the pandemic proved to be the ones already tested by time, like NATO. Like during other crises, during the pandemic NATO acted as the primary transatlantic channel that connected European and American countries and provided various institutional options to address the COVID-19 challenge. Moreover, COVID-19 was a factor that accelerated NATO's preparation for nontraditional security threats (in a form of new institutions creation, for instance). The pandemic also indicated that the EU–NATO framework is still a work in progress

and would not be sufficient to deal with complex challenges since crisis management procedures still require improvements (as during the pandemic, the duplication of functions has manifested).

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic cast doubts on the US reputation and reliability in the transatlantic security community and showed that even one political personality (like Donald Trump, for instance) may cause an imbalance in the transatlantic security community for some time. Moreover, COVID-19 highlighted the potential consequences of the Trump administration's policy to transatlantic relations and brought the real transatlantic expectations (looking for the leadership in the US in case of transatlantic crisis) into the light. At the same time, COVID-19 together with the Trump administration's fluctuating transatlantic stance contributed to the EU aspirations to develop stronger capabilities to cope with various international crises.

Thus the COVID-19 pandemic has been the latest episode in a series of disagreements in transatlantic relations (among arguments over defence spending or trade disputes). However, despite being an unprecedented security challenge that affected all the members of the transatlantic region it does not qualify to be called a wake-up call in the transatlantic security community: the research shows that whenever the transatlantic community faced the COVID-19 challenge, eventually it returned to the previous state. Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that transatlantic countries can be perceived as a transatlantic security community that can adjust to security challenges (although such dimensions as a time of decision-making and planning should be improved, as well as institutional processes for decisions' implementation).

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