

POLICY PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIETAL SECURITY IN EUROPE THROUGH FOSTERING COMMUNICATION, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION. A COMPARATIVE CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL RHETORIC OF EMMANUEL MACRON, URSULA VON DER LEYEN AND GEORGIA MELONI

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Abstract. *The evolving understanding of societal security in Europe has extended beyond traditional concerns of territorial defence to encompass social cohesion, democratic resilience, diversity and inclusion. In this context, political communication has become an important instrument through which policy priorities and responses to contemporary challenges are legitimised. This article examines the relationship between political rhetoric and societal security through a comparative critical discourse analysis of speeches delivered by Emmanuel Macron, Ursula von der Leyen and Giorgia Meloni. Representing different political traditions and institutional roles, these political leaders advance distinct perspectives on migration, identity, European integration and social inclusion. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study explores the linguistic choices, argumentative strategies and underlying assumptions that support competing policy approaches to societal security. The comparative analysis identifies both common themes and significant differences in the interpretation of security, diversity and inclusion, highlighting the way in which political rhetoric contributes to the public justification of policy decisions. The article argues that contrasting discursive approaches reflect broader ideological differences regarding the future of European governance and the balance between national priorities and collective European values. By integrating insights from political communication and security studies, the article contributes to current debates on societal security in the European context.*

Keywords: *societal security, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), political communication, diversity and inclusion, European Union.*

INTRODUCTION

The European Union is currently experiencing a period marked by profound political, social and security challenges that have expanded the meaning and relevance of societal security.

Issues such as migration, geopolitical instability, social polarisation, economic uncertainty and debates surrounding identity and belonging have intensified discussions about the resilience of European societies and the capacity of democratic institutions to

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respond to complex transformations. In this context, societal security has increasingly moved beyond traditional understandings of protection and stability, encompassing broader concerns related to social cohesion, inclusion, diversity and public trust.

Political communication plays a significant role in interpreting and addressing these challenges. Through public statements and policy-oriented discourse, political leaders define priorities and justify particular approaches to social and political issues. The language employed by political actors influences the way in which concepts such as security, diversity, migration, solidarity and European values are understood within public debates. Consequently, examining political rhetoric provides valuable insights into the different perspectives that guide contemporary discussions on societal security in Europe.

While existing scholarship has extensively explored societal security through the perspectives of security studies, migration governance and European policy-making, less attention has been given to the role of political discourse in articulating competing understandings of security and inclusion. In particular, further research is needed on how prominent European political figures communicate societal security concerns and how their rhetorical choices reflect different ideological positions regarding diversity and European cooperation. A comparative analysis of political discourse can therefore contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how societal security is discussed in contemporary Europe.

This article addresses this research by examining the political rhetoric of Emmanuel Macron, Ursula von der Leyen and Giorgia Meloni, these three leaders representing distinct political positions and institutional perspectives within the European context, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the context of protection of national identity and democratic sovereignty. Macron's discourse combines a commitment to European cooperation with an emphasis on republican values and social cohesion. Von der Leyen's communication reflects a supranational perspective centred on European unity and democratic resilience. Meloni's political rhetoric places stronger emphasis on national sovereignty, cultural identity and border governance while engaging with wider European debates. The comparison of these perspectives enables an exploration of the similarities and differences in the ways societal security is understood and communicated.

The article seeks to answer the following research questions: How is societal security presented in the political rhetoric of Emmanuel Macron, Ursula von der Leyen and Giorgia Meloni? And What similarities and differences emerge from their approaches to European societal security?

By focusing on the relationship between political rhetoric and societal security, this study contributes to ongoing debates in European studies, political communication and security research, highlighting the importance of discourse in understanding contemporary policy debates and demonstrating how different political perspectives contribute to competing interpretations of security, diversity and inclusion within the European Union.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

To investigate competing perspectives on societal security in contemporary Europe, this study applies a Comparative Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the political rhetoric of Emmanuel Macron, Ursula von der Leyen and Giorgia Meloni, and this is particularly suitable for analysing political communication because it enables an

examination of the relationship between language, political meaning and the legitimisation of policy preferences. The analysis focuses on the ways in which linguistic choices and argumentative strategies influence the interpretation of social and political issues within political discourse.

The study adopts a comparative perspective in order to identify both common elements and significant differences among the three selected political figures. The selection of cases is based on their distinct institutional roles and ideological positions within the European political landscape. Emmanuel Macron represents the perspective of a national executive leader advocating European cooperation while emphasising republican values, social cohesion and strategic autonomy. Ursula von der Leyen represents the supranational dimension of European governance as President of the European Commission, with a focus on European solidarity, democratic resilience and collective responses to shared challenges. Giorgia Meloni represents a conservative political perspective that places stronger emphasis on national sovereignty, cultural identity, migration control and the protection of social order. The comparison of these cases allows for an exploration of different political interpretations of societal security within the European context. The empirical material consists of selected political speeches and public statements delivered by the three leaders during the period 2019–2025.

2019 marks the beginning of Ursula von der Leyen's first mandate as President of the European Commission. It includes Emmanuel Macron's second presidential term (from 2022), when issues such as European sovereignty, migration, and social cohesion became prominent. It also includes Giorgia Meloni's rise to power in 2022 and her influence on European debates concerning migration, identity and security. And less but not least, it covers several major events affecting societal security debates: the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, increased migration pressures and debates over European values and democratic resilience.

The empirical material consists of campaign speeches, public statements, official addresses and politically significant interventions, including televised debates and media appearances, delivered in contexts of high public visibility. By combining discourse analysis with a comparative research design, the article provides an examination of the ways in which political language contributes to the interpretation and communication of security-related challenges (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1997)..

As with all qualitative discourse-based research, the study has certain limitations. The analysis focuses on selected speeches and public statements, and not necessarily on the entire body of communication produced by the three political actors. Moreover, the discourse analysis does not measure the direct effects of political communication on public opinion or policy outcomes, but provides an in-depth examination of the ways in which political actors express their concerns, priorities and proposed responses within a specific historical and political context.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of societal security has become increasingly significant in European political and academic debates, mainly in response to challenges such as migration, public health emergencies, geopolitical instability, democratic resilience and social cohesion. Unlike traditional understandings of security, which focus primarily on military threats and state sovereignty, societal security places greater emphasis on the protection of communities, identities, democratic values and the conditions that enable

societies to function effectively (Buzan, 1991; Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998). Within this perspective, security extends beyond territorial defence and incorporates social, political, cultural and institutional dimensions that influence the stability of democratic societies.

The development of societal security as a distinct analytical concept is closely associated with the Copenhagen School of Security Studies. Buzan et al. (1998) argue that security issues are socially and politically constructed through public discourse, where political actors identify specific developments as requiring exceptional political attention. Although the securitisation approach has generated extensive scholarly debate, it has also encouraged researchers to examine the ways in which political language contributes to defining collective vulnerabilities and legitimising policy responses (Huysmans, 2006; Balzacq, 2011).

Within the European context, societal security has become increasingly connected to questions of identity, migration, democratic governance and social cohesion. McSweeney (1999) argues that collective identities are not fixed entities but evolve through political and social interaction, making identity an important dimension of security debates. Similarly, Wæver (1993) emphasises that societal security concerns the preservation of collective identity under conditions of social and political change. Contemporary discussions recognise that communication plays a central role in defining both perceived threats and appropriate political responses.

Political communication provides the principal arena through which security-related issues are interpreted and communicated to citizens. As McNair (2018) observes, political communication is not limited to the transmission of information but also influences public understanding of political priorities and institutional legitimacy. Norris (2000) similarly argues that communication contributes to the relationship between democratic institutions and public trust, particularly during periods of uncertainty and crisis. Consequently, political speeches constitute valuable sources for examining how political leaders communicate security concerns, define collective responsibilities and establish legitimacy.

Research on political rhetoric has demonstrated that language performs important political functions beyond persuasion. Charteris-Black (2011) argues that metaphorical language allows political leaders to simplify complex realities and generate emotional engagement, while Chilton (2004) emphasises that political discourse contributes to representing power, legitimacy and ideological differences. These perspectives are relevant for understanding how concepts such as security, sovereignty, solidarity and identity acquire political significance within public communication.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers an appropriate theoretical perspective for examining these processes. Fairclough (1995, 2003) conceptualises discourse as a form of social practice through which political and institutional realities are represented, interpreted and reproduced. Wodak (2001) also demonstrates that political discourse must be interpreted within its historical and institutional context, while van Dijk (1998, 2006) highlights the role of discourse in expressing and legitimising political ideologies.

Political identity has become an increasingly important topic in European studies, following successive economic, migration, health and security crises. Castells (2010) argues that collective identities emerge through processes of social interaction and political representation, while Hall (1996) emphasises that identities are continuously negotiated. These perspectives are relevant for analysing how European political leaders

define the communities they represent and how concepts such as citizenship, belonging, diversity and inclusion are communicated within contemporary political debates.

Recent scholarship has also explored the relationship between diversity and democratic resilience. Modood (2013) argues that democratic societies require institutional mechanisms capable of accommodating cultural diversity while preserving social cohesion. Meer and Modood (2012) similarly demonstrate that debates concerning multiculturalism increasingly intersect with broader discussions of citizenship, equality and democratic participation. Within the European Union, diversity and inclusion have become central policy objectives, reflecting the recognition that social cohesion contributes to both democratic legitimacy and societal resilience (European Commission, 2020).

European political leadership represents another important field of research relevant to this study. Schmidt (2006) argues that political leaders play a crucial role in legitimising European integration through public discourse, while Rosamond (2000) highlights the importance of ideas and communication in shaping European governance. More recently, scholars have examined the crises that have transformed political leadership by increasing the importance of communication and symbolic representation (Risse, 2010; Fabbrini, 2015). These developments have reinforced the central role of political rhetoric in communicating societal security and managing public expectations.

Despite the growing body of research on political communication, societal security and European leadership, comparatively fewer studies have examined how different European political leaders communicate societal security through distinct rhetorical strategies while simultaneously addressing diversity and inclusion.

The present study seeks to contribute to this area of scholarship by comparing the political rhetoric of Emmanuel Macron, Ursula von der Leyen and Giorgia Meloni, and through a Comparative Critical Discourse Analysis, it examines how lexical choices, identity representation, metaphorical language and moral evaluations contribute to different understandings of societal security. In doing so, the article integrates perspectives from security studies, political communication and discourse analysis to demonstrate the manner in which political leaders communicate competing interpretations of belonging and responsibility legitimacy within contemporary Europe.

ANALYTICAL DIMENSIONS

The analysis is organised around four main discursive dimensions, which function as analytical categories for examining the manner in which societal security is communicated through political rhetoric:

1) *Lexical fields and semantic polarisation* through the identification of ideologically significant vocabulary, recurring concepts and oppositional semantic structures through which political meanings are established;

Pronominal strategies and identity representation by examining how collective identities, social boundaries and relations between groups are expressed through the use of pronouns such as “we” and “they”;

Metaphorical language and emotional intensification consisting of the analysis of figurative expressions, symbolic references and affective elements that contribute to the interpretation of political issues;

Moral dichotomies and discursive simplification by identifying binary value structures through which complex political and social issues are presented in terms of opposition, responsibility or legitimacy.

1. Lexical fields and semantic polarization. A comparative analysis of Macron, von der Leyen and Meloni

Macron's televised address "We're at war" (16 March 2020) is a very strong case for our first analytical category because it contains a highly visible example of lexical militarisation, semantic polarisation and the redefinition of societal security during a crisis. The speech repeatedly uses the vocabulary of war, mobilisation, protection and collective responsibility. The repeated use of military terminology transforms a public health emergency into a matter of societal security, positioning the state and citizens within an exceptional situation requiring unity and coordinated action. The central expression, "We are at war," repeated throughout the speech, represents a powerful semantic choice that frames the pandemic as an existential challenge requiring extraordinary measures and collective discipline (Macron, 16 March 2020).

Through this lexical strategy, Macron expands the meaning of security beyond military concerns and connects it with the preservation of public health and collective solidarity. The population is positioned not as an audience receiving governmental instructions but as an active participant in a collective effort. Another significant lexical field concerns unity and solidarity. Macron's discourse repeatedly refers to the collective dimension of the crisis, emphasising shared responsibility and the necessity of coordinated action. Expressions such as "we must act" and references to collective mobilisation contribute to the construction of a political community united against a common challenge. The pronoun "we" is closely linked to the vocabulary of national cohesion, reducing internal divisions and presenting citizens, institutions and public services as parts of a common effort.

From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, the lexical choices in this address reveal a movement from a traditional understanding of security based on external threats towards a broader conception centred on societal resilience and collective responsibility. The vocabulary of war provides legitimacy for exceptional measures, while the language of solidarity supports the idea that security can only be achieved through coordinated social action. Therefore, Macron's discourse presents societal security through an inclusive but highly mobilising vocabulary.

Both leaders, Macron and von der Leyen address the COVID-19 crisis, but from different political positions: Macron speaks as a national executive leader addressing French citizens, while von der Leyen speaks as the President of the European Commission, addressing European citizens and Member States. The lexical analysis of Ursula von der Leyen's State of the Union Address delivered on 16 September 2020 reveals a discourse centred on the concepts of solidarity, resilience, unity and collective European responsibility. Delivered in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the speech presents societal security primarily through the capacity of European institutions and Member States to cooperate in response to shared challenges. Unlike Macron's nationally oriented vocabulary of mobilisation and resistance, von der Leyen's discourse relies on a Europeanised lexical field in which security is associated with coordination, mutual support, and common action. The repeated use of collective references to "Europe" and "we" creates a semantic association between security and unity, presenting cooperation

as the principal response to contemporary vulnerabilities. The dominant lexical field includes terms such as resilience, solidarity, protection, common response and European values. These concepts establish a semantic opposition between European cooperation and fragmentation. Whereas the absence of coordination is implicitly associated with weakness and vulnerability, collective European action is presented as the basis for overcoming crises. The pandemic is therefore not only described as a health emergency but also as a test of European cohesion and institutional capacity.

Another significant aspect of von der Leyen's discourse is the connection between security and social protection. References to protecting "lives and livelihoods," citizens' health and economic stability expand the meaning of security beyond emergency management towards a broader understanding of societal resilience. Compared with Macron's discourse of crisis mobilisation, von der Leyen's lexical choices construct a different political community of security. Macron's "we" primarily refers to the French nation united against an exceptional threat, whereas von der Leyen's "we" refers to a European community capable of overcoming challenges through cooperation. Both discourses rely on unity and collective responsibility, but they locate the source of security at different levels: national civic mobilisation in Macron's case and supranational solidarity in von der Leyen's case (von der Leyen, 16 September 2020).

Giorgia Meloni's inaugural speech to the Chamber of Deputies on 25 October 2022 introduces a different lexical configuration, centred on nation, identity, sovereignty, responsibility and protection. Her discourse constructs societal security through the preservation of the political community and the defence of national interests within the European context. While emphasising Italy's interests and sovereignty, she also refers to Europe as a common space where nations participate while preserving their distinct identities. This produces a discourse in which European integration is accepted but interpreted through the principle of national contribution and recognition. Consequently, security is associated with maintaining the balance between cooperation and sovereignty rather than prioritising supranational coordination. Meloni's discourse prioritises identity, sovereignty and protection, presenting security as closely connected to the preservation of the national community and its values (Meloni, 25 October, 2022).

Therefore, the lexical choices of the three political leaders reveal different understandings of legitimacy and belonging. Macron's political community is primarily civic and republican, von der Leyen's is European and institutional, while Meloni's is national and identity-oriented. These differences demonstrate how political language contributes to competing interpretations of societal security, diversity, and inclusion in contemporary Europe.

2. Pronominal strategies and identity representation

The analysis of *pronominal strategies* reveals the way in which political leaders define collective identities, establish boundaries of belonging and communicate ideas of responsibility and security. The use of first-person plural pronouns such as "we" and possessive forms such as "our" plays a central role in political discourse because it allows leaders to create imagined communities, establish relationships with audiences and indicate who is included within the protected social group. Conversely, references to "they" or implicit external actors contribute to the identification of threats, challenges or competing interests.

In Emmanuel Macron's televised address on the COVID-19 pandemic of 16 March 2020, the dominant pronominal strategy is centred on the construction of a unified

national “we”. The statement “we are at war” does not only introduce a metaphorical vocabulary of conflict but also creates a collective subject responsible for confronting the crisis. Through this inclusive use of “we,” Macron reduces internal distinctions and emphasises shared duty, discipline and solidarity.

The use of “we” establishes a relationship between citizens and the state based on mutual responsibility: institutions protect citizens, while citizens contribute to the protection of society through collective action. The implicit opposition is therefore not constructed between different social groups, but between the responsible collective “we” and behaviours that threaten collective security. In this sense, Macron’s pronominal strategy reinforces a vision of societal security based on civic unity and shared obligations.

Ursula von der Leyen’s State of the Union Address (2020) employs a different form of collective identification. While Macron’s “we” refers to the French national community, von der Leyen constructs a wider European “we”, positioning citizens, Member States and European institutions within a shared political space. References to “Europe” and collective responsibility create an identity based on cooperation and common purpose.

The pronominal strategy in von der Leyen’s discourse contributes to the construction of a supranational identity. The repeated association between “we” and European action creates a sense of collective ownership over the European project. The main distinction is established between a united Europe capable of responding to challenges and a fragmented Europe weakened by division. Unlike Macron’s discourse, where unity is achieved through national mobilisation, von der Leyen’s discourse constructs unity through institutional cooperation and shared European responsibility.

Giorgia Meloni’s inaugural speech to the Italian Chamber of Deputies on 25 October 2022 presents a different configuration of collective identity. Her use of “we” is strongly connected to the concepts of nation, people, history and democratic representation. The collective subject is constructed mainly around the Italian political community and its historical continuity. References to “our nation,” “our people” and “our identity” contribute to a representation of society as a community united by common cultural and historical references.

Unlike Macron’s civic “we” and von der Leyen’s European “we”, Meloni’s pronominal strategy places greater emphasis on belonging and identity. The collective subject is defined through attachment to the nation and the responsibility of political institutions to protect its interests. The implicit distinction between “we” and external actors is more visible, particularly in relation to sovereignty, migration and European decision-making. In this discourse, societal security is closely connected to maintaining the boundaries and continuity of the national community.

The comparative analysis demonstrates that the three leaders employ the pronoun “we” as a central mechanism for constructing different political communities of security. Macron’s “we” represents a civic community united by responsibility and solidarity in a moment of crisis. Von der Leyen’s “we” represents a European community whose security depends on cooperation and collective resilience. Meloni’s “we” represents a national community grounded in identity and historical belonging.

3. Metaphorical language and emotional intensification

The third analytical category, *metaphorical language and emotional intensification*, is particularly relevant for our study because metaphors are not only

stylistic devices. In political discourse they provide interpretative frames through which audiences understand responsibilities and collective identities. For our three cases, the comparison is especially strong because each leader relies on different emotional and symbolic resources:

Macron → crisis metaphor: *war, battle, resistance, mobilisation*

von der Leyen → collective recovery metaphor: *journey, resilience, rebuilding, strength through unity*

Meloni → identity and protection metaphors: *roots, homeland, defence, renewal*

Below is a CDA section written in the same academic style as the previous two categories.

In Emmanuel Macron's televised address of 16 March 2020 concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, metaphorical language is dominated by the conceptualisation of the crisis as a **war**. The repeated declaration that "we are at war" transforms a health emergency into an existential struggle requiring exceptional mobilisation. Through this metaphor, the pandemic is represented as an opponent that must be confronted through discipline, unity, and collective sacrifice. The emotional intensity of military vocabulary—associated with combat, resistance, and defence—creates a sense of urgency and reinforces the legitimacy of extraordinary governmental measures.

The war metaphor also contributes to a specific understanding of societal security. By presenting the pandemic as an attack on society, Macron constructs citizens as members of a collective defence effort rather than passive recipients of state protection. Emotional appeals based on courage, solidarity, and responsibility reinforce the idea that security depends on collective behaviour. However, the metaphorical construction of the crisis also produces a clear distinction between those who contribute to the collective effort and those whose actions may undermine it. Therefore, Macron's metaphorical language combines reassurance and mobilisation, presenting unity as the essential response to uncertainty.

Ursula von der Leyen's State of the Union Address (2020) employs a different metaphorical repertoire, centred on resilience, recovery and collective reconstruction. Her discourse presents Europe as a political community capable of overcoming difficulties through cooperation and solidarity. The pandemic is interpreted as a test of European capacity, but also as an opportunity to strengthen common action and institutional cohesion.

The metaphor of resilience is particularly significant because it presents Europe as an actor capable of adapting, recovering and becoming stronger after adversity. This metaphorical construction shifts attention from confrontation to transformation. The emotional dimension of von der Leyen's discourse is therefore based less on fear or urgency and more on confidence, responsibility and collective achievement. Europe is represented as a community that can overcome challenges by remaining united, with solidarity functioning as the central emotional resource.

In comparison with Macron's language of battle and von der Leyen's language of resilience, Giorgia Meloni's inaugural speech of 25 October 2022 relies more strongly on metaphors associated with roots, identity, continuity and protection. Her discourse frequently connects political responsibility with the preservation of a historical and cultural community. References to Italy's traditions, heritage and national identity contribute to a metaphorical representation of the nation as a living community with historical foundations that must be protected and transmitted.

The metaphorical construction of society in Meloni's discourse emphasises continuity between past, present and future. The nation is presented not only as an administrative entity but as a community connected through shared experiences, values and cultural references. This produces a stronger emotional emphasis on belonging and collective identity. Security is therefore associated with safeguarding the symbolic and cultural elements that define the national community. The emotional intensification in Meloni's discourse differs from the crisis-oriented mobilisation of Macron and the collective optimism of von der Leyen. While Macron appeals primarily to emotions of courage and solidarity, and von der Leyen appeals to confidence and European unity, Meloni mobilises emotions related to attachment, pride, responsibility and protection. The underlying conception of security is thus connected to the preservation of identity and social continuity.

The comparative analysis demonstrates that metaphors function as important indicators of different political understandings of societal security. Macron's war metaphor constructs security as a collective struggle against an exceptional threat. Von der Leyen's resilience metaphor constructs security as the capacity of a European community to adapt and recover through cooperation. Meloni's identity-based metaphors construct security as the protection and continuation of a national community.

These metaphorical differences reveal contrasting approaches to political legitimacy. Macron legitimises action through emergency mobilisation and collective responsibility; von der Leyen through solidarity and the promise of European renewal; Meloni through the protection of identity, belonging and continuity. Therefore, metaphorical language contributes significantly to the ways in which political actors communicate security concerns and define the communities they claim to represent.

4. Moral dichotomies and discursive simplification

The fourth analytical category, referring to *moral dichotomies and discursive simplification*, is a very important component of CDA because it examines how political actors reduce complex social and political issues into morally meaningful oppositions. In security-related discourse, these oppositions help leaders identify desirable behaviours and the boundaries between inclusion and exclusion.

In Emmanuel Macron's televised address of 16 March 2020, the dominant moral opposition is constructed between collective responsibility and individual irresponsibility. The COVID-19 crisis is presented as a situation requiring discipline and compliance with collective measures. Through the repeated appeal to unity and mobilisation, Macron establishes a moral distinction between citizens who contribute to protecting society and actions that may weaken the collective response. The central message is that societal security depends not only on governmental intervention but also on citizens' willingness to assume responsibility towards others. This moral structure transforms individual behaviour into a matter of collective ethics.

Ursula von der Leyen's State of the Union Address (2020) constructs a different moral dichotomy, centred on the opposition between European unity and fragmentation. Her discourse presents cooperation and common action as essential values for addressing challenges that affect European societies. In contrast, division and lack of coordination are implicitly associated with weakness and vulnerability. The moral dimension of her discourse therefore lies in the representation of European solidarity as not only an institutional necessity but also an ethical commitment. Through this opposition, von der Leyen presents the European Union as a political community based on shared

responsibility. The moral legitimacy of European action derives from the idea that collective challenges require collective responses. The simplification of complex crises into a choice between unity and fragmentation reinforces the importance of European cooperation and strengthens the symbolic connection between solidarity and security.

In Giorgia Meloni's inaugural speech of 25 October 2022, moral dichotomies are organised around the opposition between protection and vulnerability, as well as between the defence of national interests and perceived external pressures. Her discourse presents political authority as having a responsibility to protect citizens and social stability. Security is therefore associated with the capacity of the state to preserve order, defend its community, and maintain control over decisions affecting the nation.

The moral dimension of Meloni's discourse emerges through the distinction between responsible political action aimed at protecting the national community and approaches perceived as weakening sovereignty or neglecting citizens' interests. Issues such as borders and national priorities are presented within a moral vocabulary of responsibility and protection. This creates a discourse in which security becomes closely linked to the duty of political leaders to defend the collective identity and interests of the nation.

The comparative analysis demonstrates that all three leaders rely on moral simplification as a means of communicating societal security concerns, but they construct different moral boundaries. Macron's discourse creates a distinction between solidarity and irresponsibility, presenting citizens' cooperation as the foundation of collective protection. Von der Leyen's discourse contrasts European unity with fragmentation, presenting cooperation as the ethical basis of resilience. Meloni's discourse contrasts protection with vulnerability, presenting sovereignty and identity preservation as essential responsibilities of political leadership.

These different moral structures reveal competing understandings of legitimacy and belonging. Macron's discourse derives legitimacy from collective civic responsibility; von der Leyen's discourse derives legitimacy from shared European values and cooperation; Meloni's discourse derives legitimacy from the protection and representation of the national community. Thus, moral dichotomies contribute to the simplification of complex political debates while simultaneously revealing the deeper ideological assumptions underlying contemporary European discussions of societal security.

Table 1. Comparative discursive patterns in the political rhetoric of Emmanuel Macron, Ursula von der Leyen and Giorgia Meloni

Analytical category	Macron	von der Leyen	Meloni
Lexical fields	war, mobilisation, solidarity	resilience, unity, European values	nation, sovereignty, protection
Pronominal strategies	civic "we"	European "we"	national "we"
Metaphors	war/resistance	recovery/resilience	roots/protection/continuity
Moral dichotomies	responsibility vs. irresponsibility	unity vs. fragmentation	protection vs. vulnerability

CONCLUSIONS

The findings demonstrate that societal security is not presented as a fixed or universally understood concept but as one whose meaning varies according to political priorities and institutional contexts. Emmanuel Macron communicates societal security through the language of civic responsibility and collective mobilisation. His discourse builds security as a shared obligation requiring citizens to act together in response to common challenges. Ursula von der Leyen, by contrast, places greater emphasis on European cooperation, institutional coordination and resilience, presenting societal security as a collective European endeavour grounded in shared values and mutual responsibility. Giorgia Meloni foregrounds national sovereignty and cultural identity of the political community, linking societal security to the preservation of national continuity and the representative role of the state.

The comparative analysis further indicates that the three leaders construct different political communities through their rhetorical choices. Macron's discourse is centred on a civic community united by common responsibility, von der Leyen's on a European community sustained through solidarity and cooperation, and Meloni's on a national community defined by historical continuity and democratic representation. These differences illustrate the way in which political discourse contributes to competing interpretations of inclusion, diversity and belonging within the broader European context.

The study also highlights that political communication plays an important role in influencing public understandings of societal security. Lexical choices, pronoun use, metaphorical expressions and moral evaluations do more than communicate political priorities; they organise perceptions of collective responsibility, identify the communities to be protected and justify particular policy responses and consequently, discourse becomes an important element in the relationship between political leadership and public trust.

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