Political online discourse on security and defence in Europe: a comparative analysis of the United Kingdom and Germany

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In recent years, the matters of security and defence have gained increasing prominence across Europe, motivated not only by the war in Ukraine but also by a wider constellation of factors, such as heightened geopolitical tensions and intensified migration flows. These developments have contributed to a climate of uncertainty, in which European states perceive their national protection as increasingly vulnerable. As a result, many countries have responded with substantial investments in defense capabilities. However, such measures require political justification, particularly in terms of resource allocation. Leaders must persuade domestic audiences that increased investments in defence are necessary, legitimate and proportionate. This involves framing security threats in ways that resonate with public perceptions, constructing narratives of national resilience, as well as appealing to shared values such as sovereignty, safety and international solidarity. This contribution proposes a comparative investigation into how security and defence are framed in political online discourse, focusing on the United Kingdom and Germany between 2022 and 2025. The aim of this research is to explore how political leaders in these contexts construct and legitimise security concerns in the digital sphere. The analysis is based on a corpus of Twitter (now X) posts by political actors in the United Kingdom and Germany, given the platform's role as a space where leaders engage directly with both domestic and international audiences. These messages are then subjected to discourse analysis. Particular attention will be paid to how security and defence are framed and what narratives are mobilised in order to legitimise further investments. To this end, the dataset consists of posts containing the keywords security and defence, as well as their German equivalents, *Sicherheit* and *Verteidigung*. This ensures that the analysis captures relevant discourse across both linguistic and national contexts, allowing for a comparative perspective. The collection of these messages not only facilitates the identification of recurring themes, patterns and rhetorical devices but also enables the study to examine how discourse varies across countries. As for methodology, the study adopts a mixed approach that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. First, a corpus of tweets will be examined through keyword analysis, identifying thematic clusters and recurring terms associated with security and defence. Second, a qualitative discourse analysis will be applied to a selected subset of posts, with a special focus on framing devices, evaluative language and how narratives of threat, responsibility and national identity are mobilised. This research aims to provide empirical evidence of how political leaders in different national contexts construct security and defence online, shedding light on the discursive foundations of policy change, showing how rhetorical practices in the online sphere can justify or contest concrete political actions. Through the examination of political online discourse, the study seeks to reveal the mechanisms through which security issues are made visible, prioritised and legitimised in public debate. In doing so, it emphasises that digital discourse is not merely a reflection of preexisting political realities but functions as an active site of meaning-making, where leaders shape perceptions of threat and national interests, thus shaping the trajectory of security politics in contemporary Europe.