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The Rationality of Unpredictability: "Madman Theory" And Transatlantic Realignment

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Abstract

This paper investigates the strategic benefits of deliberate unpredictability in international relations, specifically examining how the "Madman Theory" attributed to President Donald Trump has acted as a catalyst for structural shifts in European governance. traditional diplomatic discourse prioritizes stability and transparency, however, this research argues that the "America First" doctrine creates a necessary security shock that pushes European Union member states to accelerate efforts toward strategic autonomy. the study explores how perceived volatility in the Transatlantic alliance serves as a functional mechanism to overcome long-standing inertia within the Economic and Monetary Union and European defense cooperation. Using a realist framework, the analysis demonstrates that diplomatic unpredictability forces allies to internalize security costs and reassess their reliance on external guarantees. Moreover, the paper examines the institutional effects of this shift and highlights how the EU's transition from a regulatory entity to a proactive strategic actor is fundamentally tied to the recalibration of U.S. foreign policy. In conclusion, his research posits that the perceived irrationality of the "Madman" framework provides a rational incentive for European integration which transforms a period of geopolitical uncertainty into a foundational moment for a more resilient and self-reliant European security architecture. This perspective offers a nuanced understanding of contemporary diplomacy where volatility functions as a tool for burden-shifting and regional empowerment.

Keywords: Autonomy; Burden-shifting; Diplomacy; Integration; Realism